

Dane Court Grammar School

Admission Appeal School Defence Statement – Year 7 September 2024 Entry

Background

Dane Court Grammar School is a co-educational selective school, with an academic and challenging curriculum. We have high expectations of our students. We expect our students to work hard and treat others with respect at all times.

Curriculum and expectations

Students are expected to work at a very high level throughout their time at Dane Court Grammar School. Our students are continually challenged. They experience a fast-paced curriculum which involves studying 17 different subjects in Year 7. As an IB World School, our curriculum is broad and internationally-minded; all students study two modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3. Students admitted to the school must have strong reading and writing skills and be very confident in the application of mathematics to a wide range of subjects. They must be able to cope with a demanding academic programme from the very start of Year 7. Students who have not been grammar-assessed in the Kent Test can face significant difficulties accessing the full curriculum, keeping pace with their peers and securing expected outcomes.

We have very high standards and expectations of all students. Our GCSE and IB outcomes indicate that we are one of the most academically successful schools in East Kent. We are very proud of the education we provide. We feel strongly that we have a very important role to work with our most disadvantaged students to give them every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Number on roll/offers

Our net capacity for Years 7- 11 is 825 students and we currently have 876 students on roll in Years 7-11. We are therefore already 51 students over capacity. Admission to Dane Court is limited to those deemed selective on the basis of their performance in the Kent selection tests. We will offer 165 places on 3rd March 2024. The school is oversubscribed for September 2024, with 569 applications. The school is also oversubscribed in Years 7, 8 and 11 and it has a large Sixth Form.

There are currently 1179 students on roll at Dane Court. There are between 165 and 198 students in each year group in Years 7 to 11, made up as follows:

Year Group	Total
Year 7	172
Year 8	169
Year 9	165
Year 10	198
Year 11	172

How does the school admit students?

Details of students whose parents have expressed a preference for a place at Dane Court Grammar School, together with results of the Kent Test, are given to the school by Kent County Council. Where the number of applications for places from those deemed 'selective' exceeds the school's published admission number (currently 165), the school's admissions officer applies the following set of admissions criteria. Preference is given to:

1. Students in Local Authority care or previously in Local Authority care;
2. Students with medical/health and special access reasons;
3. Students in receipt of Pupil Premium
4. Students with a sibling, currently on roll who will be in school at the time of entry;
5. Students living closest to the school, measured in a straight line from a central point on the school site.

Where the number of students in each year group exceeds the school's published admission number, these students have been admitted as a result of the decision of appeals panels, either into Year 7 or through subsequent in-year appeals.

The work of the school's admissions officer is supervised personally by the Headteacher to ensure that the above criteria are correctly followed and that it complies with the admissions code. Appeals for admission are handled independently of the school by Education Clerk Services Ltd.

What is the school's published admission number, and how many students has it accepted above this number?

Our published admission number (PAN) is 165 students (200 in the current Year 10). Three of our year groups at present contain more than the PAN; the additional students above the PAN have all been accepted through Year 7 appeals and in-year appeals.

In 2020, due to an unexpected increase in the number of grammar assessed pupils in Thanet, and following a request from Kent County Council, the school agreed to admit an additional 35 students into Year 7 in September 2020, taking our total number of Year 7 students to 200.

How is the school organised?

In Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3), students are taught in form groups for most subjects. Most form groups contain up to 30 students; the average form size is 28.2. As a result of the limited capacity of many classrooms (more than half of our classrooms are smaller than the Department for Education recommendation for class sizes of 30), classes of more than 30 students are exceptionally difficult to accommodate and timetable.

In Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4), students are taught in option groups for many of their lessons. The size of these groups depends on the demand for the subject, most being around 24-32 students. Mathematics, English and the sciences are taught in seven groups in Years 10 and 11. Students are set by ability in mathematics; high ability sets may have up to 32 students; lower ability sets may have as few as 20 students.

What impact has the admission of additional students above the PAN had on students educationally and in terms of Health and Safety?

Educational impact

Following Year 7 and in-year admissions appeals over recent years, additional students have led to larger classes in Key Stage 3 and larger GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11. This inevitably has an impact on the amount of individual attention for each student. Additionally, class sizes in excess of 30 cannot be satisfactorily accommodated in more than half of our classrooms.

The admission of additional students in 2024 would affect the amount of individual attention for students, with a significant effect on vulnerable students and those with special educational needs or disabilities.

In many smaller rooms, particularly in the older part of the school, larger class sizes would limit space and restrict movement within the lesson, making it difficult for the teacher to circulate in order to monitor and support students. This would affect all students but, once again, it would have a disproportionate effect on vulnerable students and those with special educational needs.

The admission of additional students would also have a negative impact on other important school events. For example, if assemblies had to be redesigned and limited to reduce student numbers, opportunities for students to come together as a community would be curtailed.

Health & safety implications

In terms of health and safety, the school has made the necessary assessments of risk and taken a number of measures to ensure that the potential hazards associated with the additional numbers are minimised and contained. Special arrangements are also in place for students with temporary or long-term mobility needs.

Dane Court benefited from a rebuilding programme under the 'Building Schools for the Future' scheme in 2010, including four new suites of teaching rooms, the provision of wider corridors, 'plazas' and open communal spaces. Part of the school was not rebuilt but was reordered, opening up some of the smaller classrooms and installing additional staircases in the older part of the building.

Members of staff are on duty during break and lunch times to make sure that students use corridors appropriately. As a result of these measures, there have been no reported incidents of injury attributable to overcrowding.

Any pupils allocated through the admission appeals process in 2024 will put additional strain on the school. To admit more students can only be at the expense of the safe and efficient education of those already on roll.

What is the capacity schedule for the school? i.e. how big is each classroom and how many students each classroom can hold?

The Department for Education recommends that a classroom should be 55m² or larger to accommodate 30 students and one teacher. Dane Court has 30 classrooms smaller than 55m² and 21 classrooms that are 55m² or larger. All classrooms 55m² or larger are equipped with 30 chairs and desks. Some of the smaller classrooms are used for teaching smaller groups, such as some sixth form classes; others, between 45m² and 55m², are equipped with 30 desks and chairs for whole-class teaching, but space is restricted. In these rooms, additional students would make it difficult for the teacher to circulate in order to monitor work and support students.

Of the larger classrooms, six are between 58m² and 65m², and three are larger than 66m². In addition, there are six 'plazas' (large open-plan spaces which can be used for teaching up to two classes at a time) and a number of specialist workshops and laboratories of varying sizes.

Other areas of the school are already at full capacity. For example, our school hall, where we hold assemblies, and our canteen, have limited space. Any additional students would make a difference to the smooth running of the school.

Please be advised that each parent/carer who lodges an appeal will have a personalised defence statement forwarded to them as part of their case papers.

Martin Jones
Headteacher
February 2024