

## **GUIDANCE FOR CHURCH SCHOOLS**

### **CONSIDERING CHANGING THEIR PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBER (PAN)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This guidance is designed for Church of England Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools within the Diocese of Rochester that fall under the DBE Measure (1991).

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the RDBE's own guidance for admission and the School Admissions Code (2014) which can be found here: <http://www.rdbe.org.uk/governance/admissions-guidance>

All Church schools must consult with the Diocesan Board of Education and seek its agreement before making changes to their Admissions arrangements, oversubscription criteria or a change in the Published Admissions Number (PAN).

#### **PUBLISHED ADMISSIONS NUMBER (PAN)**

The School Admissions Code (2014) defines the Published Admissions Number (PAN) and the statutory requirements which relate to the PAN in Section 1. This can be found in appendix 1 of this document.

The PAN is a public statement of the number of school places available for each cohort or year group of children within your school. It is published by the Department of Education and Local Authority and is widely available to provide relevant, accurate information to parents and other stakeholders.

The School Admissions Code (2014) states that all maintained schools must consult with the Local Authority if they wish to change to their PAN and this is required whether the proposal is to increase or decrease the PAN.

Where schools or academies act as their own Admissions Authority, consultation with the Local Authority and in the case of a Church of England Voluntary Aided or Foundation school, the Diocesan Board of Education, is still a requirement although the Local Authority does not have the power to prevent the change to the Pan providing it has been consulted.

For Church schools, the Diocesan Board of Education, as the Diocesan Authority for its Church schools must give its consent before the PAN can be changed.

#### **CHANGING THE PAN**

Before coming forward with a proposal to change the PAN, Church schools are strongly recommended to explore the implications for such a change as sometimes there are unintended consequences that are not always obvious especially if a change in the PAN has not been proposed by the school before.

In the first instance, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors should always contact the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) to discuss these proposals and the rationale for any change. This initial contact does not replace the requirement for the consultation with the Diocesan Board of Education, although the Director will give an indication on whether such proposals will be acceptable to the DBE.

After exploring with the Director of Education, governing bodies should consider the following points:

### **1. Financial implications**

If the PAN is increased, then normally the school will receive increased revenue funding for the additional pupils that it will offer places to in each year group. This additional funding is often offset by the need for the school to upgrade or improve its infrastructure and resources (for example toilet facilities, dining areas, classroom sizes) so additional funding should not be seen as the primary motivation for increasing the PAN.

Likewise, if a reduction in PAN is being proposed, this will reduce the amount of revenue funding available to the school and could threaten the financial viability of the school particularly if there are contracts commitments in place for the school staff.

It is important to explore whether the change to the PAN can be sustained in the long term (more than three years) as any change which only meet the short term needs of the school should be carefully considered as it may not be financially viable.

### **2. Implications for neighbouring schools**

Changing the PAN for your school may have implications for neighbouring schools particularly if schools are located close together and have a small number of pupils.

Before, proposing a change to the PAN for your school, it is strongly recommended that you contact and consult widely with all neighbouring schools so that they are aware of the proposal to change the PAN and can make you aware of the impact of such changes on their own schools.

In the first instance, a letter should be sent to the Chair of Governors of each school outlining the proposals to changing the PAN asking for their response to the proposals. This should be followed by an informal meeting of the Chairs of Governors of nearby schools so your school can explain the rationale behind the changes.

As part of this informal consultation process, you may want to carry out a short impact analysis of any proposed changes to your PAN by finding out how this might affect the intake of other schools, the number of pupils who may move schools as a result of any change and the future viability of other schools.

### **3. Impact on existing pupils and parents**

A change in PAN can have an impact on the existing pupils, staff and school community. There may be many beneficial reasons why a change in PAN is desirable and this may have a positive impact on the education of existing pupils for example, standardised class sizes, more efficient school organisation.

There may also be some negative effects on existing pupils within the school which might be unintended including larger class sizes, congestion at dropping off and collection times and a strain on the existing school facilities and resources. Any proposal to change the PAN needs to carefully assess the positive and negative impact and weigh these up carefully.

Although parents and children do not have to be formally consulted as part of the process, the school could include some form of parent survey to gauge the views of parents and give children the opportunity to feed into the decision making process.

### **4. Leadership and Staffing Structure**

It is important to consider the impact of any proposed changes to the PAN on the leadership and staffing structure. A larger number of pupils on roll may require additional teaching and support staff, which in turn could require a larger leadership team to line manage staff.

If you are planning a reduction in PAN, this could require a re-structuring process to ensure that the school is not overstaffed for the number of pupils on roll. A re-structuring process requires a separate consultation with staff and their union representatives and can often take a number of weeks to complete. Any staff consultation needs to take place before the formal consultation on the change to the PAN otherwise this can lead to difficulties which can prove extremely problematic for the school.

## **5. Requirement for consultation**

Any proposed changes to the PAN requires a formal consultation process with a number of key stakeholders including the Local Authority, the Diocesan Board of Education, your neighbouring schools and the school community.

It is important that you discuss the proposed changes with your Local Education Officer (LEO), the Diocesan Director of Education and that you also consult formally with your neighbouring schools.

## **MAKING A FINAL DECISION**

Once you have considered the key points outlined above and completed your consultation with key stakeholders, the school can seek permission/consent to the relevant authority to change the PAN.

In the case of a Church school, the school will need to request formal consent from the Diocesan Board of Education and share the details of its consultation process with the Diocese.

Only when the school has received written confirmation from the Diocesan Board of Education, can it proceed and make the changes to its PAN for the next academic year or mid-year if this has been applied for.

The Local Authority should always be consulted on a proposed change of PAN and will need to give its agreement to a proposed change in PAN for a Voluntary Controlled (VC) Church school where it acts as the Admissions Authority.

If the school is unsure or has any queries regarding the process, it is important to check with the Diocesan Board of Education before the proposed change to the PAN is put forward.

**Diocesan Director of Education**

**July 2015**

## **APPENDIX 1**

*1.2 As part of determining their admission arrangements, all admission authorities **must** set an admission number for each 'relevant age group'*

*1.3 Own admission authorities are not required to consult on their PAN where they propose either to increase or keep the same PAN. For a community or voluntary controlled school, the local authority (as admission authority) **must** consult at least the governing body of the school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same PAN. All admission authorities **must** consult in accordance with paragraph 1.42 below where they propose a decrease to the PAN. Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish. There is a strong presumption in favour of an increase to the PAN to which the Schools Adjudicator **must** have regard when considering any such objection.*

*1.4 Admission authorities **must** notify their local authority of their intention to increase the school's PAN and reference to the change should be made on the school's website. If, at any time following determination of the PAN, an admission authority decides that it is able to admit above its PAN, it **must** notify the local authority in good time to allow the local authority to deliver its co-ordination responsibilities effectively. Admission authorities may also admit above their PAN in-year.*

*1.5 Any admissions above the PAN as set out in paragraph 1.4 above will not constitute an increase to the PAN14. Information on variations to the PAN in-year is set out in paragraph 3.6 of this Code.*