



ADMISSIONS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25 APPEAL STATEMENT FOR BEAM COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

BEAM COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

The school's circumstances

Beam is a larger-than-average-sized primary school where over two-thirds of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, and some of these are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above those found nationally. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Their wide range of needs includes specific learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, complex needs, language and emotional difficulties.

The Published Admission Number for Beam County Primary School is 84. All the available places in Reception have been allocated and the year group is full for September. These pupils will be organised into 3 classes, each of 28 pupils which is the maximum number allowed before qualifying measures must be taken to ensure that class numbers remain within the statutory Infant class size limit.

The school has a net capacity assessment which gives an indicated admission number of 84, suggesting that the school's present buildings and classroom sizes are just appropriate to their numbers.

The new building can facilitate disability access; however, the original 1930s building has many stairs on three different levels, which makes it inaccessible for wheelchair use or for pupils with mobility issues. The new build houses:

- 2 x Year 4 classes,
- 3 x Year 5 classes
- 3 x Years 6 classes

Educational concerns

28 is the maximum class size considered by the Headteacher, the staff and the Governors of the school to be desirable on educational grounds and with the resources and small size of accommodation available to them. The Authority expects that classes should not normally exceed this figure unless required to do so under the Fair Access Protocol. Class numbers have previously increased from 27 to 28 per class. A further increase in numbers would necessitate either larger groups, which would become far less effective with the available room, or more groups, which would make the system inoperative.

The Authority expects classes not to exceed this figure to give the children the best possible start to their formal education. Specialists in the Early Years Foundation Stage consider that reception classes, particularly those that include children who are not yet 5, should be well below 30 and that good practice is a ratio of 1 adult to 15 children. This also ensures that young children have space to move about and use a variety of

equipment safely, as good EYFS teaching requires a good deal of practical and investigative work, from which the children are encouraged to learn.

Children also need individual and small group attention in the early stages of learning to read, write, contribute to class discussion and record their work. All these skills are more difficult to develop in larger classes.

Children need as many opportunities as possible to talk to the teacher, both to develop their oral skills and so that the teacher can assess their progress and understanding of their work. This is also vital so that any difficulties or problems are identified early, can be addressed as soon as possible, and ensure work is set that is appropriate for each child's ability and learning style. Every additional child that is admitted to a class would detract from the amount of time that the teacher can spend with each pupil, undermining the quality of their learning.

The organisation of teaching and learning methods requires classrooms to be set out so that the children can interact with each other and their teacher. The approach places particular emphasis upon developing oral work and extended dialogue both between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves. The tables are laid out in smaller blocks in classes at Beam County Primary to facilitate this wherever possible. The larger the size of the class, the more difficult this becomes. Any additional pupils will exacerbate the difficulties.

Due to the building, the Reception, Year 1, and Year 3 classrooms have two doors for access and egress. As they also interlink with the other classrooms, this limits the space within the classroom.

The school uses data on each child's progress to identify any unevenness in performance and to intervene to support pupils at risk of falling behind. Every additional child that is admitted to a class would detract from the amount of time that the teacher can spend with his or her pupils to assess their progress.

Health and Safety concerns

The Government Area Guidelines for mainstream schools – Building Bulletin 103, June 2014 EYFS statutory guidance outlines the recommended minimum requirements of 2.3 m² of free indoor space per child aged 3-5 years x 30 children = 69 m². The largest size of the classrooms at Beam measure 52m² square metres in a newer block and most other classrooms are only 45m² and are therefore much smaller than is recognised to be the minimum standard for the number of pupils that will be using them. In addition, each classroom has a sink with a surrounding 'wet' area and various cupboards for storage further limiting the available teaching and circulation space.

The Government introduced Universal Infant Free School Meals in September 2014 which has had an impact on the numbers of children eating a hot meal. This initiative restricts the capacity of the school dining hall to accommodate more children.

A key feature of the educational approaches undertaken from Year 1 in this school requires the movement of children and staff around the classroom for the purposes of demonstrating and modelling answers at the front of the room. It is therefore vital to keep pathways clear for adequate safe movement around the room. Any additional reception pupil would impact on the quality of this work in the class when they transfer to Year 1 as the classrooms are small. In these, already crowded rooms, if made to accommodate extra

children, it will inevitably mean that some children's view of the whiteboard will be seriously impaired. They may have to be placed in a position where they are looking at an extreme acute angle to the board and probably behind the teacher whilst he or she leads a lesson. Looking at an acute angle at a flat display board is not good Health and Safety practice.

Many classes have children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who require an extra adult to support them and/or an individual workstation, in order to help them make progress with their individual education plan. The school has well above average of its pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and well above average school number on roll (Inspection Data Summary Report 2022).

The precious space that can be created in a room of 28 pupils is vital for the effectiveness of the teacher, or other adults, to support children and provide an environment that doesn't feel overcrowded. Children do not work well in a room that is overcrowded, particularly those with SEND and disabilities.

Resource implications

The school is now at maximum capacity. If more children were to be admitted there would be insufficient space for staff to move freely around the room when children are working. There are no spare tables and chairs and no room in a class if more were to be purchased.

The school would undergo severe financial hardship because of having to employ an additional teacher unexpectedly and suitably equip an additional classroom accordingly. For this to have to take place at such short notice would culminate in necessary resource purchases having to be deferred and a reduction in the amount of teaching assistants being employed. In other words, a greater number of children would receive less intensive support.

Summary

We have applied the correct and lawful admission arrangements to this application and cannot offer the child a place at this school.

The Head teacher, Staff, and Governors would not wish to see the classes grow any larger for educational, health, and safety reasons. In a climate of decreasing budgets, it would not be possible to open another class without financial loss to the school.

The Headteacher and Governors do not want to lower the quality of the education offered to the reception pupils at the school. 28 pupils per teacher is the maximum ratio that the school can deliver effective education, and it does not wish to go above this number. The school's resources would be severely stretched if another class had to be created and further teaching staff employed. There is also a statutory requirement to restrict infant classes to a maximum of 28 pupils with a qualified teacher. This would negatively affect the amount and quality of the resources currently enjoyed by all the pupils attending the school.

The LA maintains that, for the above reasons, it would prejudice the provision of effective education and the efficient use of resources if a further pupil were to be admitted to Reception at Beam County Primary School because of the relevant measures the school would need to take to comply with the infant class size limit.

SEND Information for Admissions: correct as 27.02.23

Year Group	No. of pupils with EHCP	EHCP Pending/ to be applied for	Total number of pupils requiring school support	Total SEND	Total number of EAL pupils
Nursery	0	4	3	7	43
Reception	0	1	8	9	57
Year 1	1	4	7	12	55
Year 2	0	4	12	16	58
Year 3	1	2	14	17	68
Year 4	0	2	8	10	51
Year 5	1	4	9	14	62
Year 6	1	5	9	15	58
Totals:	4/ 606	26/606	70/606	100/606	452/606