

Email: [customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk)

Please address enquiries to the School Organisation  
and Place Planning Team

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to inform you of some important changes that will be happening within the Wokingham primary school system over the next few academic years, together with the reasons for these.

As you will be aware, birth rates have been dropping. This is the case nationally and reflects in local trends, which we anticipate stabilising around 20-25% below their highest point. The inescapable conclusion is that the fall in births is now so significant that it warrants urgent consideration of reductions in primary school capacity across the system. Fundamentally, in the current funding climate, it is not sustainable to maintain this level of surplus capacity within the system, since per pupil funding cannot cover the necessary staffing and resources if one-in-five places are left vacant.

It is noteworthy that the reduction in pupil numbers isn't evenly distributed across the Borough and its schools. In some areas, the fall in birth rates has been counterbalanced by substantial housebuilding, whilst in other areas the relative demographics of house-ownership surrounding a certain school can mean that it has experienced a significant reduction in applications, whilst its closest neighbouring school has no such issues. In practice, this means that substantial reductions in the Published Admission Number (PAN) will be required at a subset of the Borough's primary schools, whilst others will be unaffected. This fact notwithstanding, there will still be a significant number of schools that PAN reductions are required at, if we are to adjust our system-wide capacity to the fact of lower demand for places. To this end, Wokingham Borough Council has been working with primary schools over the course of 2024 to determine where adjustments can most readily be made. The first stage of this process involves proposed PAN reductions at eleven schools for the 2026/27 academic year. Public consultation on these proposals will commence in the Autumn Term 2024. It is highly likely that further PAN reductions will be required for the 2027/28 academic year and planning for this will commence shortly, in partnership with local school leaders.

Further detail on the issues outlined in this letter is provided within the Council's School Place Planning Strategy 2024/25 – 2029/30, located at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-admissions/planning-new-school-places>

I trust that the information in this letter provides useful context on the current challenges facing the local primary school system, as well as Wokingham Borough Council's plans to manage them. If you require any further information in relation to these issues, then please do feel free to talk to your child's Headteacher via the school office or to get in touch with Wokingham Borough Council via the contact details provided at the top of this letter.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ming Zhang'.

**Ming Zhang**

Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education & SEND)