

Consultation

Workington Academy: Increase in total student capacity figures

What is a consultation?

A consultation is a process where, over a set period of time, feedback is gathered on a new idea or proposed change to the way something works. In this case, Workington Academy, part of Cumbria Education Trust, is consulting on a proposal to increase the number of students the school is allowed to accommodate.

Who is consulting?

Cumbria Education Trust (CET) is the multi-academy trust of schools which includes Workington Academy. Therefore, CET is consulting all the relevant groups of people who may have a view, opinion, or feedback for us on the proposed increase to overall student capacity.

What is the proposal?

As part of its agreement with the Department for Education, Workington Academy is permitted to accommodate 1200 students. It is allowed to go slightly above this, up to 1230 students to allow for bulges in admission numbers (e.g. high birth rate years etc).

The academy has become increasingly popular for local children and due to an increase year on year in intake, total student numbers will rise above 1230 in September 2023.

The proposal is therefore to expand the academy's total capacity number from 1200 to 1360. The academy is able to accommodate this increase through the use of portacabin accommodation which was erected on site last year.

Who is involved in this consultation?

We are sending this document, plus a covering letter to the following groups:

- Parents and carers of current students.
- Local Authority representatives.
- Local schools in our area.
- The local MP, Mark Jenkinson.
- Our neighbours.
- Local Advisory Board.
- Stakeholders

We will also be hosting in-person and virtual meetings, open to any member of the public who may wish to attend. Additionally, we will include information on our school website to ensure the information about this consultation is accessible to as many people as possible.

Why does the academy wish to increase its total capacity?

The current capacity figure of 1200 is based on a published admission number (PAN) of 208 students joining the school each year. This number was set when the academy opened.

Year on year, the academy has received an increase in applications from local students (those with Workington postcodes). Since September 2020, the academy has consistently been asked to admit more students than the PAN in order to accommodate local need and choice, with the 2022 student intake sitting significantly above PAN at 275. The academy is the only non-faith-based school serving year 7 students in the town.

The steady rise in student numbers each year means that the academy will exceed its permitted total capacity numbers in September 2023, due to the cumulative effect of taking more than the PAN since 2020.

Due to the increase, the academy erected portacabins on site last year, which means that we are able to physically house 1360 students.

Whilst we will not need to accommodate this many students immediately, we are planning ahead for future intakes and wish to maximise the potential student numbers we are permitted to take. We are therefore consulting about a change to capacity from 1200 to 1360, as this is the maximum number of students we could currently manage in our existing accommodation (including the portacabins).

How will this improve education for students?

By increasing our total capacity number, we aim to be in a position to accept applications from students wishing to come to Workington Academy. If we do not increase our capacity figures, we will have to reject a significant number of applicants, meaning that they will need to attend a different school. With the vast majority of applicants coming from local postcode addresses, we feel it is important to try and accommodate as many as possible.

We believe that students should be able to attend a local school of their choosing and have a peer group made up of local children.

Is accommodation in portacabins suitable?

The additional portacabin accommodation is working well and the units are providing the academy with suitable teaching space. Longer term, we would like to replace this temporary accommodation with permanent accommodation. However, this requires both funding and further consultation.

Does the increase impact on local infrastructure?

The academy already has almost 1200 students. Numbers will not rise to 1360 immediately and the increase to this maximum capacity simply matches the available accommodation. It is not envisaged that there will be any noticeable increase in traffic or pedestrian movement and there is no anticipated increase in school buses coming in or out of the site. The academy also has ample parking.

How can I share my views?

There will be two meetings held as part of this consultation process, they are: 'In Person' at Workington Academy on Wednesday 7 December 2022 @ 5:00pm and 'Virtually' via TEAMS on Friday 9 December 2022 @ 5:00pm. If you wish to attend any of these events, please email Consultation@cumbriaeducationtrust.org.

For virtual meetings we will then send you the required meeting link. If you don't want to attend the meetings but have questions or feedback on this proposal, please email: Consultation@cumbriaeducationtrust.org.

When does the consultation end?

The consultation will close on Thursday 5 January 2023. Please share your views by this date.