



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR788

**Admission Authority: Isle of Wight Council for Cowes Primary School,
Cowes, Isle of Wight**

Date of decision: 25 October 2018

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by the Isle of Wight Council for Cowes Primary School, Cowes, Isle of Wight for September 2018 and September 2019.

I determine that for admissions in September 2018 and September 2019 the published admission number shall be 30.

The referral

1. The Isle of Wight Council (the local authority) has referred a proposed variation for Cowes Primary School (the school), for September 2018 and September 2019 to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The school is a community primary school for children aged 3 -11 in Cowes, Isle of Wight. The local authority for the area is the Isle of Wight Council.
2. The proposed variation is to reduce the published admission number (PAN) from 60 to 30 for September 2018 and September 2019.

Jurisdiction

3. The referral was made in accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act) which states that:

“where an admission authority (a) have in accordance with section 88C determined the admission arrangements which are to apply for a particular school year, but (b) at any time before the end of that year consider that the arrangements should be varied in view of a major change in circumstances occurring since they were so determined, the authority must [except in a case where the authority’s proposed variations fall within any description of variations prescribed for the purposes of this section] (a) refer their proposed variations to the adjudicator, and (b) notify the appropriate bodies of the proposed variations”.

4. I am satisfied that the proposed variation is within my jurisdiction.

Procedure

5. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation, and the School Admissions Code (the Code).
6. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
 - the local authority's referral dated 21 September 2018 and supporting documents;
 - the determined arrangements for 2018 determined on 28 February 2017 and 2019 determined on 28 February 2018 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
 - a copy of the local authority's booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2019;
 - The notification sent to the bodies required by the Code; and
 - comments on the proposal from the school's governing board.

The proposed variation

7. The proposed variation was received on 21 September 2018. The effect of the variation would be to reduce the PAN for September 2018 and for September 2019 from 60 to 30. This variation is sought because the pupil number projections for the area show that for the number of children in the area has reduced. The school has admitted fewer than 30 children for September 2018.

Consideration of the case

8. Population forecasting and pupil place planning data analysis show a reduction in demand for school places in the area of Cowes. The significant reduction in admissions in comparison to the PAN has led to the school experiencing some financial difficulty. The school has organised itself with one form of entry and this will enable it to maximise its educational and financial effectiveness. Even if the PAN is reduced to 30, the local authority pupil number forecasts show that there will still be surplus places across the area.
9. The school has been undersubscribed in recent years as shown in the following table supplied by the local authority:

September	PAN	Number of first preferences	Number of places allocated	Number of appeals lodged	Number of appeals upheld
2015	60	35	38	0	0
2016	60	39	40	0	0
2017	60	34	34	0	0
2018	60	21	23	0	0

10. The local authority's forecast for the number of places expected to be required at the school in the next three years are as follows:

	Number of places forecast to be required
2019	30
2020	25
2021	27

11. The forecast for the school place planning area, shows a reduction in the number of children expected to be seeking places in Cowes Primary and the West Cowes school place planning area as follows:

	PAN	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/22	2022/23
Cowes Primary	60	23	30	25	27	27
Gurnard Primary	60	40	49	39	42	42
Lanesend Primary	60	63	64	51	54	54
Northwood Primary	30	27	30	24	25	25
Total	210	153	173	138	147	147
Surplus against 210 places available		57	37	72	63	63
Surplus if Cowes PAN reduces to 30		27	7	43	33	33

12. It is evident to me that the need for places in this area is reducing. In the current academic year, this school has admitted only 23 children to Reception against a PAN of 60. It is also evident that both the school governing board and the local authority are agreed that it is difficult for the school to plan its finances with certainty with the knowledge that it has over 30 vacant places. I am satisfied that the local authority has informed those bodies that the Code requires about the proposed variation and the governing board has been consulted. I am also satisfied that by removing these places from the area there will continue to be sufficient places across the local planning area to meet demand. If the variation is agreed, the school will still have some places available in its Reception class if

families with children of Reception age move into the area. I am satisfied also therefore that there will not be a reduction in the council's ability to meet parental preferences for schools. I therefore approve this request for a reduction of the PAN from 60 to 30 for the current year beginning in September 2018 and for September 2019.

Summary

13. The local authority with the agreement of the school governing board has requested this reduction in PAN to 30 from September 2018 and September 2019 to help give the school stability of numbers to assist with budget planning and curriculum delivery. The reduced PAN will not adversely affect the local authority's ability to secure the provision of school places nor do I find that it means that parents who wish their child to attend the school will not be able to secure a place there. The council has already determined the arrangements for this school including the PAN of 60. Following discussion with the school's governing board about updated pupil number forecasts a decision was made to request a variation. The council has taken the necessary steps to make the request and I approve it.

Determination

14. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by the Isle of Wight Council for Cowes Primary School, Cowes, Isle of Wight for September 2018 and September 2019.
15. I determine that for admissions in September 2018 and September 2019 the published admission number shall be 30.

Dated: 25 October 2018

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones