



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR2035

Admission authority: The London Borough of Lewisham for Lucas Vale Primary School, Deptford, Lewisham

Date of decision: 20 November 2020

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 London Borough of Lewisham for Lucas Vale Primary School for September 2021.

I determine that the Published Admission Number will be 30 for admissions to the school in September 2021.

The referral

1. The London Borough of Lewisham has referred a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for September 2021 for Lucas Vale Primary School (the school), to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The school is a community primary school for children aged 3 to 11 in Lewisham.
2. The proposed variation is a reduction to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the school from 60 pupils to 30 pupils.

Jurisdiction

3. The referral was made to me 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:

- a. the referral from the local authority dated 19 October 2020 and supporting documents;
- b. the determined arrangements for 2021 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
- c. evidence that the governing board for the school has been consulted;
- d. a map showing the location of the school and other relevant schools;
- e. a copy of the email notifying the appropriate bodies about the proposed variation; and
- f. comments received on the proposed variation from the appropriate bodies.

The proposed variation

7. The school is a co-educational community primary school with a nursery class located in Deptford, Greater London. Although the school has a PAN of 60 for admissions to Reception, it has been undersubscribed for at least the last three years. The local authority has informed me that it is now in a position to be able to predict that the school will admit 30 pupils, or less, in September 2021. The governing board of the school has requested that the PAN be reduced to 30 so that the school is able to plan on the basis of having one form of entry only. The local authority, as the admission authority, has considered the school's request, and now proposes a variation to the determined arrangements for September 2021 to reduce the PAN from 60 to 30.

8. Paragraph 3.6 of the Code requires that admission arrangements, once determined, may only be changed, that is varied, if there is a major change of circumstance or certain other limited and specified circumstances. I will consider below whether the variation requested is justified by the change in circumstances.

9. Paragraph 3.6 of the Code also requires that appropriate bodies in the relevant area are notified of a proposed variation. The local authority has provided me with a copy of its notification on the proposed variation and the list of schools and other bodies to which it

was sent. I have seen confirmation from the school's governing board that it supports the request for the variation. I am satisfied that all appropriate bodies have been notified and that views expressed have been taken into consideration. I find that the correct procedures were followed.

Consideration of proposed variation

10. The major change of circumstances identified by the local authority is a more significant fall in the number of admissions to the school than was predicted at the point in time when the admission arrangements for the school were determined. The local authority has produced the two tables which I have set out below which show the PANs for primary schools in the North West Planning Area of the Borough, and the number of children admitted to these schools for the past three years.

Published Admissions Numbers for North West Locality					
School	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Ashmead Primary School	60	60	60	60	60
Childeric Primary School	60	60	60	60	60
Deptford Park Primary School	90	90	90	90	90
Edmund Waller Primary School	60	60	60	60	60
Grinling Gibbons Primary School	30	30	30	30	30
Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple Grove	60	60	60	60	60
Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple Grove Free School	60	60	60	60	60
John Stainer Primary School	60	60	60	60	60
Kender School	60	60	60	60	60
Lucas Vale Primary School	60	60	60	60	30
Myatt Garden School	60	60	60	60	60
Prendergast Vale School	30	30	30	30	30
Sir Francis Drake Primary School	60	60	60	60	30
St James Hatcham C E Primary School	30	30	30	30	30
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Lewisham)	30	30	30	30	30
St Stephen's CE Primary School	30	30	30	30	30
Tidemill Academy	60	60	60	60	60
Turnham Academy	90	90	60	60	60
Locality Total	990	990	960	960	900

National Offer Day outcome for each new year			
School	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Ashmead Primary School	59	53	60
Childeric Primary School	60	44	41
Deptford Park Primary School	41	41	48
Edmund Waller Primary School	60	60	53
Grinling Gibbons Primary School	30	25	30
Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple Grove	60	60	60
Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple Grove Free School	60	60	60
John Stainer Primary School	60	60	60
Kender School	60	48	54
Lucas Vale Primary School	53	24	22
Myatt Garden School	60	60	60
Prendergast Vale School	30	30	30
Sir Francis Drake Primary School	56	38	27
St James Hatcham C E Primary School	30	26	23
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Lewisham)	24	27	23
St Stephen's CE Primary School	30	18	30
Tidemill Academy	60	60	60
Turnham Academy	45	28	26
Locality Total	878	762	767

11. It is clear from this information that for the last two years, the school has admitted less than 30 children to Reception in the main round of admissions. The number of admissions to the school are predicted to fall further for September 2021. The Local authority was planning to consult upon reducing the PAN for the school to 30 for admissions in September 2022 but is now of the view that the PAN reduction needs to come into effect for admissions in September 2021. A PAN reduction to 30 will allow the school to plan for one form of entry, bringing cost savings and enabling a more prudent use of resources.

12. I asked the local authority whether parental preference is likely to be constrained in any way if the proposed variation is granted. The authority has confirmed that the children of parents for whom the school is a first preference will be offered places if the PAN is reduced to 30. The fall in the number of applications to the school began at the point when a neighbouring school increased its PAN but has been exacerbated by a general fall in the number of applications to primary schools within the London Borough of Lewisham during the last two years.

13. I noted that, in relation to the primary schools within immediate proximity to the school, Myatt Gardens admitted 60 children in the admission year 2020/21 (PAN 60), Ashmead 60 (PAN 60) and St Stephen's 26 (PAN 30). I asked what the alternative options for parents are and how accessible alternative schools in the North West Planning Area would be. I wanted to know what the situation would be in the event that the PAN was reduced as proposed but the authority did receive more than 30 applications for Lucas Vale Primary School. The local authority sent me a table showing the pattern of applications for admission in September 2020, which was helpful, and which is set out below. This shows a

surplus of almost 200 places within the North West locality on National Offer day. The authority has confirmed that there are plenty of alternative options within the place planning locality.

Location	Name of School	PAN	1st Preference	2nd Preference	3rd Preference	4th Preference	5th Preference	6th Preference	L A Allocation	SEN	Grand Total
NW	Ashmead Primary School	60	48	6	3	1	1	1			60
NW	Childeric Primary School	60	35	3	2				1		41
NW	Deptford Park Primary School	90	45	2						1	48
NW	Edmund Waller Primary School	60	49	2		2					53
NW	Grinling Gibbons Primary School	30	28				1		1		30
NW	Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple G	60	59	1							60
NW	Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple G	60	57	3							60
NW	John Stainer Primary School	60	53	3	1	1				2	60
NW	Kender School	60	50	3			1				54
NW	Lucas Vale Primary School	60	19			2			1		22
NW	Myatt Garden School	60	54	5	1						60
NW	Prendergast Vale School	30	22	2	4	1		1			30
NW	Sir Francis Drake Primary School	60	25	2							27
NW	St James Hatcham C E Primary School	30	21	1	1						23
NW	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Lewis)	30	22	1							23
NW	St Stephen's CE Primary School	30	16		1			1	12		30
NW	Tidemill Academy	60	55	5							60
NW	Turnham Academy	60	23	3							26
	Total NW	960	681	42	13	7	3	3	16	2	767

14. I tested out on Google Maps how easy it would be to get from the area in which Lucas Vale Primary School is located to some of the other schools with vacant places. This appeared straightforward, with Deptford Park Primary School being a 30 minute walk or 20 minutes by bus, and Childeric Primary School being a 15 minute walk or 10 minutes by bus. The bus services are very regular. Some of the schools with surplus places (St Stephen's, St James's Hatcham and St Joseph's) appear to be within close proximity. My view is that the proposed PAN reduction is unlikely to cause further traffic congestion or to have an adverse impact on public transport services.

15. The local authority has provided a further table setting out the projected number of Reception places which will be needed in the North West Planning Area. There are currently 960 places available (930 if the PAN for this school is reduced), which is more than sufficient for the projected number that will be needed.

North West Locality Projections for Reception Places	
2020/21	818
2021/22	812
2022/23	787
2023/24	753

16. Given the extent of surplus places in the North West Planning area of the Borough, I do not consider that the proposed PAN reduction will have adverse implications for other primary schools in the area. I have considered the views of the school, the pattern of admissions to the school in recent years, the projected pupil numbers for primary schools in the area, and the responses from Myatt Garden and St Stephen's primary school (both supportive of the proposed variation). Having taken into account all relevant information, I approve the proposed variation to reduce the PAN for the school to 30 for admissions in September 2021.

Determination

17. 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 London Borough of Lewisham for Lucas Vale Primary School for September 2021.

18. I determine that the Published Admission Number will be 30 for admissions to the school in September 2021.

Dated: 20 November 2020

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Marisa Vallely