

## **DETERMINATION**

**Case reference:** VAR/000601

**Admission Authority:** The Governing Body of Radnage Church of England Infant School, Buckinghamshire

**Date of decision:** 4 April 2013

### **Determination**

**In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by the governing body, the admissions authority for Radnage Church of England Infant School.**

**I determine that for admissions in September 2013 the Published Admissions Number shall be 14.**

### **The referral**

1. The Governing Body of Radnage Church of England Infant School (the School), a Voluntary Aided infant school, has referred a variation to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for the school for September 2013. The school wishes to reduce its Published Admissions Number (PAN) from 22 to 14.

### **Jurisdiction**

2. 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”.

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

### **Procedure**

4. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code (the Code).

5. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
  - a. the request from the Chair of Governors and supporting documents sent on 12 March 2013;
  - b. the determined arrangements for 2013-2014 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
  - c. a copy of the Primary Schools Directory, the booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2013, issued by Buckingham County Council, the Local Authority (the LA);
  - d. a copy of the letter notifying the appropriate bodies about the proposed variation; and
  - e. a copy of the letter consulting the relevant bodies about the proposed variation.

### **Background and consideration of Factors**

6. On 28 September 2012 the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills of Buckinghamshire County Council formally agreed that the status of the school be changed from an infant school for children age 4-7 years to a combined school for children age 4 to 11 years with nursery provision. This would take effect from September 2013 and would be achieved on a phased basis. The process whereby the decision was reached followed all the legal protocols of notification and consultation. There has certainly been no suggestion that the processes were not followed.

7. This approval was subject to two conditions. The first was a revision of the admissions arrangements. The second was to secure from the Schools Adjudicator an in year variation to reduce the currently determined PAN of 22 to 14.

8. The decision to change the status of the School from an infant school for children from 4-7 years of age to a combined school with primary provision for children from 4 to 11 years of age and nursery provision for children aged 3 years, was made in response to a request by the governing body which was concerned about the future viability of the school.

9. Children currently leave the School when they have completed Year 2 and apply for admission to Stokenchurch Primary School. Currently there are not enough places there to accommodate all the children from its three feeder schools (the School, The Mary Towerton School and Ibstone Church of England Infant School). As a result of the pressure on places at Stokenchurch some parents, who might have elected in the past to apply for admission to the School for the infant phase of education and then to transfer to Stokenchurch in Year 3, have decided instead to seek admission into the Reception year, thus reducing the intake to the reception class at the School. If this pattern of applications were to continue there would be a potential threat to its future viability.

10. The most recent Ofsted report in September 2010 described the School as 'outstanding' in most areas. By providing continuity of education to the end of the primary phase, the school hopes to build on this and to guarantee its future viability within the community it seeks to serve.

11. Local parents are supportive of the plan, and it is hoped that it will strengthen the School's future.

12. During the processes of consultation about the proposed change from an infant to a combined school general questions were raised about access to the school, the impact of proposed arrangements on other schools, levels of under/oversubscription at the schools in question, and projected pupil numbers in the area. These were all considered prior to the decision being made.

13. My task is not to question that decision, but to satisfy myself that the reduction proposed is congruous with the decision. In the past four years the School has accepted all children who have applied. In 2009/10, 12 children were admitted; with 18 in 2010/11, 7 in 2011/12 and 12 in 2012/13. Throughout the consultation process, nobody suggested that a PAN of 14 was unrealistic, either too small or too great. Furthermore, reducing the PAN to this level will enable the School to accommodate the combined school numbers within the existing building with only minor alterations.

14. Other schools within a 3 mile radius are all admitting up to or nearly up to their PAN, so for the School to have a PAN that reflects the actualities of its current admissions will have no detrimental effect on neighbouring schools.

15. By reducing the PAN to 14 from September 2013, the LA and the governing body believe that no additional accommodation will be required. There will need to be some improvements to the toilet facilities by 2014, but that cost, together with other additional costs for ICT equipment, furniture and other resources will be funded from within existing school resources.

## **Conclusion**

16. I am satisfied that the School and the LA have consulted and notified all those who should have been consulted and notified. I am also satisfied that reducing the PAN is a realistic and necessary step towards transforming the school into a combined school over the coming years as planned.

17. The deadline for application for school places for September 2013 has passed, but I am satisfied that in order for the school to become a combined school with effect from September 2013, albeit in a staged way, it is important that the PAN for 2013/2014 reflects the need for the new school to accommodate all its pupils in the current buildings.

## **Determination**

18. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by the governing body, the admissions authority for Radnage Church of England Infant School.

I determine that for admissions in September 2013 the Published Admissions Number shall be 14.

Dated: 4 April 2013

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Dr Stephen Venner