

## **DETERMINATION**

**Case reference:**           **VAR/000603 Long Lane Primary School**  
**VAR/000604 Purley Church of England Infant**  
**School**

**Admission Authority:** **West Berkshire Council**

**Date of decision:**       **25 June 2013**

### **Determination**

**In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variations to the admission arrangements determined by West Berkshire Council for 2013/14; to reduce the published admission number at Purley Church of England Infant School from 17 to 15 and to remove the published admission number of 17, for Year 3 at Long Lane Primary School and the related catchment area from September 2013.**

### **The referral**

1. West Berkshire Council (the council), which is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, has referred linked proposals to the Adjudicator, seeking to vary the determined admission arrangements of two schools for 2013/14. The first variation proposes a reduction of the published admission number (PAN) from 17 to 15 at Purley Church of England Infant School (Purley), a voluntary controlled school, for admissions from September 2013. The second and linked request relates to Long Lane Primary School, a community school, (Long Lane) for September 2013 and proposes to remove the relevant age group for the admission of children into Year 3 at the school, for admissions from September 2013 by removing the PAN of 17 which had been determined in 2012 and by removing the catchment area associated with it.

### **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 copy of the council’s determined admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled school for 2013/14;
- the School Admissions Guide published by the council for 2013;
- the in-year variations to the arrangements for admissions to Long Lane and Purley submitted by the council on 10 May 2013;
- minutes from the governing body meetings at Long Lane dated 15 September 2010, 24 November 2010 and 9 January 2013 and the governing body meetings at Purley dated 30 September 2010, 20 October 2010 and 21 January 2013;
- the net capacity assessments for Long Lane dated 25 October 2010 and for Purley dated 8 May 2013;
- the design and access statement for the new build at Purley dated November 2011;
- copies of council consultation notifications to headteachers and other councils dated January 2013;
- catchment area maps for the current schools and maps of the proposed catchment areas that would take effect if the variations were approved;
- a copy of the consultation document for the statutory proposal to extend the age range at Purley dated 26 November 2012 and of the public notice issued on 26 February 2013;
- a copy of the formal decision to approve the statutory proposal to extend the age range at Purley to 4-11 years of age, dated 2 May 2013.

### **Background**

#### **Purley**

6. Purley is a small voluntary controlled infant school located on the edge

of a large residential area, in the centre of Purley Village four miles from Reading. Children attending Purley have, in previous years, transferred at the end of Year 2 to Long Lane, a primary school approximately half a mile away from the village, on the other side of the Reading to Pangbourne railway line and the busy A329.

7. In 2012, a PAN of 17 was determined by the council for the school, for admissions in 2013/14. However, in the period after the admission arrangements were determined, the governing body decided that the catchment area was large enough to support an all through primary school in the village and governors subsequently put forward a proposal to extend the upper age limit from 7 to 11 years of age, with effect from September 2013.

8. Following consultations with all stakeholders in the community and discussions with the governing bodies of both schools, a statutory proposal for an extension of the upper age range from 7 to 11 years of age, from September 2013 was approved by the council on 2 May 2013. The decision was made with the caveat that it was conditional upon the subsequent approval by the adjudicator, of the proposal to vary and reduce the PAN from 17 to 15 at Purley and to remove the PAN of 17 for Year 3 at Long Lane from September 2013.

9. Purley will develop over a four year period, from 2013 to become an all-through primary school. Funding has been agreed to build two additional classrooms and the new capacity has been assessed at 105. The council has requested the variation to reduce the PAN from 17 to 15 so that the primary school is able to accommodate all the children as it increases in size.

### **Long Lane**

10. Long Lane is a community school, with approximately 275 children on roll, in nine classes. In the light of the statutory proposal which has been published for Purley, the council has agreed with the school that there is a need to vary the arrangements that were determined in 2012, to remove the entry point to Year 3 and to cease to maintain a catchment area for Year 3 pupils. The council has determined arrangements for 2014/15 for Long Lane, without a relevant age group and entry into Year 3, to take account of the fact that pupils from Purley will no longer be transferring to Long Lane at the end of Year 2.

### **Consideration of the factors**

11. Both governing bodies discussed with the council as early as 2010, the strategic issues relating to the proposal to have two primary schools in the community, and were advised that if one school extended its age range to retain children into Year 3 and beyond, then the other local school (Long Lane) would have to agree to the corresponding reduction.

12. Governors at Long Lane took the opportunity afforded by the statutory proposal to extend the age range at Purley, to explore the impact of the proposed changes and to consider issues such as staffing levels and financial

viability. Long Lane had originally been designed as a one form entry primary school with 30 children per year group but with the introduction of a Year 3 entry, the school had installed temporary classrooms to accommodate the increased number of pupils. Governors noted that the integration of the children joining in Year 3 had not always been smooth and that 50 children in that year group was not an easy number to organise. It was decided that if two primary schools were best for the community then Long Lane could revert to a one form entry school.

13. Long Lane, has two relevant age groups and a PAN of 30 children for Year R and 20 for Year 3. There are separate catchment areas for admissions to Year R and to Year 3. The majority of pupils admitted in the past into Year 3, transferred from Purley but following the decision by the council to approve the statutory proposal at Purley to extend the age range, there is no longer a need to retain the junior places at Long Lane. The catchment area for entry into Year 3 also needs to be formally removed but the current catchment area for Year R admissions will remain in place.

14. During the period when parents expressed preferences for primary schools, the council worked with the schools to assist parents to understand the implications of the impact on admissions in September 2013, of the council's approval of the proposal to extend the age range at Purley. Six families elected to transfer to Long Lane and the council has provided resources to manage the additional pupils. Ten families have elected to remain at Purley in to Year 3, less than the proposed reduced PAN of 15. Twenty places were allocated for Year R and one was declined.

15. The proposal to decrease the PAN from 17 to 15 for Year R at Purley will result in a net reduction of places for future admissions to Year R in the area. The council provided pupil projections and explained that the PAN for Year R at Long Lane has been increased by two places from 28 to 30 for 2014/15 and therefore there will be no reduction in the overall number of places available.

16. In 2012/13 the PAN for Year R Long Lane was 28 and this was increased for 2013 to 30. It is the council's view, supported by pupil projections that Long Lane has enough places to meet demand from its own catchment area and has extra capacity within the PAN of 30 to take additional children so that the net reduction of two places was covered by the additional capacity at Long Lane.

## **Conclusion**

17. The council has carried out wide consultation on the proposal to extend the age range at Purley with effect from September 2013 and in a linked change, to cease to admit pupils to Year 3 at Long Lane. Parents in the area have been made fully aware of these changes and the council and the schools have agreed to flexible arrangements during this transitional period in order to ensure that parents were able to express preferences based on the arrangements that had been determined.

18. As a result, Long Lane has agreed to admit six children exceptionally to Year 3 in September 2013, to meet the preferences of parents who wanted their children to transfer 'as planned' from Purley. Ten children at Purley will be staying on into Year 3 and twenty places have been offered in Year R at the school. I am satisfied that the council has made every effort to accommodate the wishes of parents by agreeing transitional arrangements with the schools. These have enabled parents to express preferences based on the arrangements that had been determined and published in 2012 and, although this is not a requirement of the Code, for those preferences to be met.

19. The new classrooms planned for Purley will increase its capacity to 105 and a recent assessment of the total enhanced capacity indicates an admission of 15 per year group. There is capacity at Long Lane to accommodate this net reduction of two places per year group and I am therefore satisfied that there will still be sufficient places to meet parental demand.

20. In my view the variation to reduce the PAN from 17 to 15 at Purley from September 2013 is sensible and necessary in order to prevent overcrowding as the school develops and pupil numbers increase. As the majority of pupils will no longer transfer to Long Lane, it is also practical to remove the relevant age group and the PAN for Year 3 and the catchment area that relates to it and for these reasons and those explained above I approve the two variations.

21. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variations to the admission arrangements determined by West Berkshire Council for 2013/14; to reduce the published admission number at Purley Church of England Infant School from 17 to 15 and to remove the published admission number of 17, for Year 3 at Long Lane Primary School and the related catchment area from September 2013.

Dated: 25 June 2013

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Mrs Carol Parsons