

DETERMINATION - Variation

Case reference: VAR 498 - 499

Admission Authority: London Borough of Redbridge

Date of decision: 15 February 2011

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 London Borough of Redbridge (the LA).

I determine that for admissions in September 2011 the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for Coppice Primary School shall be 90 and for Parkhill Infants School shall be 120.

The referral

1. The London Borough of Redbridge has referred a variation to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for Coppice Primary School (Coppice) and Parkhill Infants School (Parkhill), both community schools, for September 2011. They wish to increase the PAN of Coppice from 60 to 90, and of Parkhill from 90 to 120.

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, guidance and the School Admissions Code.

5. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:

- The completed request forms for each school, which include
 - ◇ Capacity calculations for each school
 - ◇ A map showing neighbouring schools
 - ◇ 2010 admission numbers for all the schools in the area
- Supplementary information from the LA supporting the request.
- A letter from Coppice Chairman of Governors dated 26 January 2011 confirming the governors' support for the proposal together with the minutes of their meeting dated 16 November 2010
- A letter from Parkhill Chairman of Governors dated 28 January 2011 confirming the governors' support for the proposal together with the minutes of their meeting dated 17 November 2010
- a copy of the letters dated 28 January 2011 notifying the appropriate bodies about the proposed variation
- A copy of the council's booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2011
- Determination (ADA 1768) of the Schools Adjudicator setting the September 2011 PAN of Ilford Jewish Primary School at 45

6. In addition to considering the matters raised for the variation I have also reviewed the admission arrangements as a whole and considered whether I should use my power under section 88J(2)(b) of the Act. I am not using my powers under the Act to make further changes to the arrangements.

Background and consideration of factors

7. In common with many other London Boroughs, Redbridge is experiencing a rising birth rate and a growing demand for school places. Over the last 5 years the Council has been increasing the provision of primary school places. In addition, Ilford Jewish Primary School is to move to new premises ready for September 2012 and in preparation, following a determination by the Schools Adjudicator, will reduce its PAN by half a form of entry for September 2011.

8. The Cabinet has already approved plans to provide an additional 10.5 permanent forms of reception entry for September 2011, and there are further plans to continue this increase in 2012 and 2013. Additional capacity for 2011 was expected to be achieved in a number of ways, including a new 4 forms of entry (fe) primary school, which is currently under competition and will be determined by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA).

9. Plans for the enlargement and expansions of existing schools to provide reception provision for September 2011 are progressing. However,

plans for the new primary school on the Ilford Jewish Primary School site are not only open to competition and subject to determination by the OSA, but are entirely dependent on the Council acquiring the site and premises from the current owners. There is now real doubt as to whether the new school will be ready in time.

10. Actual numbers applying for reception places in September 2011 are proving to be higher than forecast. By 28 January, following the official deadline for applications, there were already 183 more applicants from within the borough than in 2010. Late applications are always submitted, and previous experience leads the LA to expect about 17 per week up to the beginning of the autumn term.

11. This is the first year of new co-ordinated Pan-London arrangements for admissions to Reception. So numbers from out of the borough who applied in time are not yet known. In previous years, under previous arrangements, out-of-borough applications amounted to an additional 6%.

12. The LA considers that all of this constitutes “a major change in circumstances” (School Admissions Code 2010 para 4.26), and I agree that this is the case. Furthermore, I do not consider that parents’ choices will be prejudiced as a result of the timing of this variation. On the contrary, more difficulties would arise were the variation not to be approved.

13. As a result of these developments, the LA believes that it needs to provide an additional 4fe.

- a. Plans are progressing with a Free School provider to provide a 2fe primary school
- b. The LA has identified two schools, Parkway and Coppice, which can each receive an additional 1fe in September 2011.

14. The physical capacity at the two schools identified to meet this shortfall is not adequate to cater for the additional classes.

- a. At Parkhill, the LA and Governors are investigating the possibility of permanently expanding the school by 30 children (1fe) to 4fe. A feasibility study is being undertaken, and it is hoped that this will be ready for September 2012. In the meantime, temporary accommodation will be provided for an additional 30 reception children in September 2011. The governors and headteacher support these proposals.
- b. At Coppice, discussions are already under way to accommodate the additional 30 children (1fe) in temporary mobile accommodation. Additional money will be provided to furnish and equip the classroom and to fund the additional children in the first year. The governors and the headteacher are fully in support of the proposal, moving to 3fe in 2011.

Conclusion

15. There is clearly on-going pressure for school places in Redbridge. The LA believed that it had made adequate provision for this increase, but numbers applying by the deadline were greater than expected. Further, plans for a new primary school may not materialise in time for the September 2011 intake. As a result, it is having to work expeditiously to provide an additional 4fe for September 2011, including a further 30 places in each of these two schools.

16. Coppice and Parkhill are willing and able to expand and, as no objections have been received either from those notified or from parents, it can be presumed that this is an appropriate way forward.

Determination

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I determine that for admissions in September 2011 the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for Coppice Primary School shall be 90 and for Parkhill Infants School shall be 120.

Dated: 15 February 2011

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Dr Stephen Venner