

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR/000589 and VAR 590

Admission Authority: London Borough of Redbridge

Date of decision: 8 August 2012

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I agree to the proposed variations to the admission arrangements determined by the London Borough of Redbridge, the admissions authority, for The Glade Primary School and Newbury Park Primary School, two community schools. I determine that for admissions in September 2012 the published admission numbers shall be 90 and 150 respectively.

The referral

1. The London Borough of Redbridge, the local authority, (the LA) which is the admission authority for community and controlled schools, has referred two variations to the Adjudicator. The variations requested are to increase the published admission number (PAN) of each school by 30 places for September 2012 for:

- The Glade Primary School, an increase from 60 to 90; and
- Newbury Park Primary School, an increase from 120 to 150.

2. The LA states that the variations have been requested as a result of the need to increase provision in the area, to meet the additional demand that has been created by a significant number of late applications for admission to reception classes in September 2012.

Jurisdiction

3. The referral was made to me in accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 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”.

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 (the Code).
5. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
 - the letter of referral from the LA dated 23 July 2012, and supporting documents;
 - the determined arrangements for 2012/13 which were agreed by the LA's Cabinet on 22 March 2011 and the proposed variations to those arrangements dated 23 July 2012;
 - a letter of 17 July 2012 from the governing body of Newbury Park Primary School, and a letter of 23 July 2012 from the governing body of The Glade School, each agreeing to the admission of an extra form of entry for September 2012;
 - a copy of the letter of notification sent to all primary schools in the area;
 - a copy of the LA's booklet for parents seeking admission to primary schools in the area in September 2012;
 - maps showing the location of schools in Redbridge;
 - the Net Capacity Assessments for the each school;
 - LA data which provides evidence of the increase in the permanent provision of places since 2006 and of temporary places since 2008; and
 - data showing the recent trend of late applications for reception class places in the area.

Other matters

6. A revised School Admissions Code came into force on 1 February 2012 and applies to admission arrangements (arrangements) for admissions in September 2013. However, this request is for variations to arrangements that were determined in March 2011 when the previous 2010 Code was still in effect. I must therefore have regard to that Code in making this determination. References to "the Code" which I shall make here are therefore to the 2010 Code.

Background and Consideration of Factors

6. The demand for school places in Redbridge has risen significantly in

recent years and projected pupil numbers show that this trend is expected to continue. Since September 2006 the LA has provided an additional 25.5 forms of entry in primary schools and has added 960 temporary primary school places, by changing the use of existing premises or by providing mobile classrooms. A new voluntary aided primary school, Avanti Court Primary School, will open in September 2012, providing a further four forms of entry, that is, 120 places.

7. The number of 'on time' primary school applications has increased from 2366 in 2005 to 4311 this year. However, since the closing date for primary school applications, an additional 439 late applications have been made. The LA is continuing to receive further applications from families requiring Reception Year places, with a further 70 applications in one three week period alone; and requests for places in Years 1 and 2 for September 2012. To secure sufficient provision the LA plans to open additional classes in all three year groups. Despite making earlier requests to the Adjudicator to increase the admission numbers of several schools, late applications continue to be made.

8. Although plans are being implemented to increase the amount of permanent provision in the borough, the impact of late applications being received for Reception Year places means that the LA now has to make still further provision available at very short notice. The LA has decided that this continuing pressure constitutes a major change in circumstances which is unavoidable and therefore, in line with paragraph 4.26 of the Code. The LA is therefore seeking a variation to increase provision by 30 places at The Glade Primary School that is, from 60 to 90, and at Newbury Park Primary School, from 120 to 150 places.

9. The governors at Newbury Park Primary School say they recognise the urgency and importance of the issue and are willing to assist the LA to provide additional places. The net capacity of the School is 840 with an indicated admission limit of 120 and this temporary additional class will be housed by converting the ICT room for classroom use. In 2008 there were 217 preferences for the 120 places at the School and this rose to 347 in 2011. The pupil projections for 2012 were 444 and this will increase to 727 by 2014. Governors believe that priority for any additional places should be given to those parents currently on the Newbury Park waiting list for the reception places, so that the maximum number of parental preferences for the School is met and so that places can be freed up in other local schools for their local families. This approach would reduce the subsequent number of admission appeals and would have the advantage of reducing the number of families who have children in more than one primary school.

10. Governors at The Glade Primary School have noted that the number of preferences expressed for the 60 places at the School has increased over the past four years from 84 in 2008 to 136 in 2011. The projected number of pupils indicates a continuing upward trend from 184 in 2012 to 335 in 2014. The net capacity of the School is 417 places. Governors have agreed that

they could house a temporary class of 30 pupils by converting an existing ICT classroom.

11. This variation request was submitted after the deadline of January 15, for parents to express a preference for school places for September 2012 but I accept that the unprecedented number of both on-time and late applications has caused tremendous pressure on the number of available places in the primary phase, this year. The LA will be aware of the views expressed by governors, about the position of parents from the local areas whose applications were unsuccessful due to the level of demand, and who remain on the waiting lists.

Conclusion

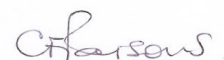
12. I accept that the London Borough of Redbridge has faced an unexpected increase in demand for school places and that the increase in the PAN of each School is an appropriate response. The LA has considered the net capacity of the schools and has consulted the governing bodies, who have agreed to convert specialist accommodation to classroom use as a temporary measure. The LA has also consulted and notified relevant parties and all local schools.

13. In my view, the lateness of the requested variations has been unavoidable, although it is unfortunate that the deadline for parental preferences to be expressed has passed, and that some parents may feel that they have been disadvantaged as a result. However, I am satisfied that the continuing need to find school places for all children for September 2012 means I should approve the variation.

14. For the reasons stated above, I am therefore persuaded that an increase in admission numbers is needed to meet the demand for reception places in primary schools in the London Borough of Redbridge for September 2012.

15. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I agree to the proposed variations to the admission arrangements determined by the London Borough of Redbridge, the admissions authority, for The Glade Primary School and Newbury Park Primary School, community schools. I determine that for admissions in September 2012 the published admission numbers shall be 90 and 150 respectively.

Dated: 8 August 2012



Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Carol Parsons