



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR636

Admission Authority: The Governing Body of St Ambrose Barlow Roman Catholic High School

Local Authority: Salford City Council

Date of decision: 16 July 2014

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation requested to the admission arrangements determined by the governing body of St Ambrose Barlow Roman Catholic High School.

I determine that for admissions in September 2015 the Published Admission Limit for the school shall be reduced from 210 to 180.

The referral

1. The governing body of St Ambrose Barlow Roman Catholic (RC) High School (the school) has referred a variation to the Office of the School Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for the school, a voluntary aided secondary school, for September 2015. The variation is to reduce the published admission number (PAN) from 210 to 180. The school is located within the Salford City Council area which is also the local authority (LA).

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”*. I am satisfied that the proposed variation in relation to the reduction in the PAN for 2015 is within my jurisdiction.

3. In its request for a variation, the school asked for the PAN to be reduced for September 2015 and for September 2106. I do not have jurisdiction to consider the 2016 admission arrangements since they have not yet been determined. Paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 of the School Admissions Code (the Code) will apply for the 2016 arrangements and subsequent years. It

says “..as part of their admission arrangements all admission authorities **must set an admission limit..... Own admission authorities are not required to consult on their PAN where they propose to either increase or keep the same PAN”.**

Procedure

4. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation, guidance and the Code.
5. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
 - a. the school’s letter of referral of 15 May 2013 and supporting documents;
 - b. the determined arrangements for 2015/2016 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
 - c. a copy of the LA’s booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2014;
 - d. a copy of the letter dated 4 April 2014 notifying the appropriate bodies about the proposed variation;
 - e. a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the school’s governing body on 3 April 2014 where the decision to seek the variation was made; and
 - f. confirmation letters from the LA and the Diocese of Salford (the diocese) that they are in support of the requested variation.

Background and consideration of factors

6. The school is part of a “Building Schools for the Future” development in Salford. Within this overall development a decision was made to close St George’s RC High School with effect from 31 August 2014 and the school’s admission number was increased to 210 in order to accommodate the displaced pupils and to add two additional primary schools from St George’s School catchment area to the list of the school’s feeder primary schools.

7. In September 2013 an additional 60 Year 10 pupils and a further 60 Year 7 pupils (from St George’s School feeder primaries) were admitted to St Ambrose Barlow School over and above the school’s net capacity at that time of 750.

8. In September 2014 the remaining 60 Year 8 and 60 Year 9 pupils will transfer to the school when St George’s School finally closes on 31st August 2014. The additional pupils moving upon the closure together with the additional Year 7 pupils from two additional feeder primary schools will cause a bulge in the school population for 2014 and 2015. With the admissions in September 2014 the school will have fulfilled its commitment to accommodate all the displaced pupils from the closing school. This has caused a bulge in the number of pupils at the school. The school is seeking a reduction in its

PAN for 2015 to help manage the temporary bulge of pupil numbers passing through the school. In the letter requesting the change the school requested a reduction in the PAN for two years. However as explained above, I only have jurisdiction to consider a variation for 2015 and it will be for the school to determine its PAN for 2016 onwards.

9. The bulge in the pupil numbers is shown in the following table:

September	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Year 7	210	210	210	210	210
Year 8	150	210	210	210	210
Year 9	150	250	210	210	210
Year 10	250	250	250	210	210
Year 11	150	250	250	250	210
Total No of pupils	910	1,170	1,130	1,090	1,050

10. Pupil numbers are likely to remain at the PAN because there have been consistently more applications than there are places available in recent years as shown in the following table:

	Admission number	Number admitted	Number of applications	Number of appeals
2009/2010	150	150	381	13
2010/2011	150	150	367	0
2011/2012	150	150	344	7
2012/2013	150	151	366	4 (1 successful)
2013/2014	210	209	424	12
2014/2015	210	210	444	8 so far

11. The school is a new build designed for 750 pupils. It is having an extension built onto the existing new school to provide additional classrooms to accommodate the increased number of pupils. The capacity of the school, once the extension is completed will be 1050. The new extension will not be complete until mid-way through September 2014 and this will mean a staged intake at the start of the new term. The school is concerned that there will be a severe shortage of space in the school from September 2014 with particular pressures on the dining facilities, the circulation areas and the play areas.

12. The school is planning changes within its accommodation to alleviate these issues. The dining room was built for 300, and the school will increase the number of lunch sittings from two to three with three staggered lunch periods at 11.30, 12.15 and 1.00 p.m. Control measures will be put in place to manage congestion in play spaces and communal areas and corridors.

13. The LA observes that a consequence of the requested reduction in the PAN will be a reduction in the number of places that are allocated to pupils from the Walkden, Little Hulton, and Swinton and Irlam-o'th-height areas who are seeking places by parental preference rather than from feeder schools. The LA confirms that its current projections for the next three academic years (2014/15, 2015-16 and 2016/17) show there is sufficient capacity across the whole of the secondary estate to accommodate high school pupils and provide a sufficient level of surplus. In particular across Walkden High School, Harrop Fold High School, The Swinton High School Academy Trust and All Hallows RC High School (for those pupils wishing to attend to a RC school).

14. The LA is anticipating that additional capacity will be required from the by 2017/18 academic year onwards as secondary age pupil numbers rise across the area. This coincides with the point at which all the children admitted from St Georges RC High School will have passed through St Ambrose Barlow RC High School.

15. The LA and the diocese have both given their support to the requested reduction in PAN. The LA has sought some reassurance from the school that the PAN will be increased back to 210 when the bulge has passed. This will be a matter for the school and the LA to discuss when the PAN for September 2017 is determined by the school.

Conclusion

16. The LA and the diocese support the school's request to reduce its PAN from 210 to 180 for September 2015. The school has accommodated the displaced pupils from a closing school and this has led to a bulge in pupil numbers for September 2014. The reduction in PAN for 2015 will help mitigate the effects of the bulge as it passes through the school. The LA has confirmed that the 30 pupils who might otherwise have obtained a place at the school by parental preference can be accommodated at other local secondary schools that have capacity; one of these is a RC school. I conclude therefore that this request to reduce the PAN from 201 to 180 for September 2015 should be approved. It will be for the school to determine its PAN for subsequent years in line with the requirements of the Code.

Determination

17. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation requested to the admission arrangements determined by the governing body of St Ambrose Barlow Roman Catholic High School.

18. I determine that for admissions in September 2015 the Published Admission Number will be reduced from 210 to 180.

Dated: 16 July 2014

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones