



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR670

Admission Authority: Surrey County Council, for William Cobbett Primary School (previously William Cobbett Junior School) Farnham.

Date of decision: 15 September 2015

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by Surrey County Council for William Cobbett Primary School (previously William Cobbett Junior School) for September 2016.

I determine that for admissions in September 2016: Weybourne Infant School will be removed as a feeder school in criterion 4 of the admissions arrangements for Year 3, the published admission number at William Cobbett Primary School for Year 3 will be reduced from 90 to 50; and that Weybourne Infant and William Cobbett Junior schools will be removed from Appendix 2 of the admission arrangements which shows those schools which will be described as operating a shared sibling priority.

The referral

1. Surrey County Council, which is the local authority and admission authority for community schools has referred a variation to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for September 2016 for William Cobbett Primary School (the school), now a community school for pupils aged 3-11 years. The school was a junior school for pupils age 7-11 years until 31 August 2015. The variation requested is that: Weybourne Infant School be removed as a feeder school in criterion 4 of the oversubscription criteria in the admissions arrangements for admission to Year 3: the published admission number at William Cobbett Primary School for Year 3 be reduced from 90 to 50; and Weybourne Infant and William Cobbett Junior schools be removed from Appendix 2 of the admission arrangements which shows those schools which will be described as operating a shared sibling priority.

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 is within my jurisdiction.

Procedure

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

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

- a. the local authority’s letter of referral of 23 July 2015 and supporting documents;
- b. the determined arrangements for 2016/2017 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
- c. a copy of the local authority’s booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2015 and September 2016;
- d. documents relating to the proposal to extend the age range of the school and close the nearby infant school to form a single primary school; and
- e. a copy of the email notifying the appropriate bodies about the proposed variation.

Background and consideration of factors

5. The school serves the Weybourne area of northern Farnham and was a junior school on a site with an adjacent infant feeder school, Weybourne Infant School. The local authority reports that the “*vast majority of students who attend Weybourne Infant School naturally transfer to William Cobbett Junior School.*”

6. The admission arrangements for the admission to Year 3 of the school are, in summary:

- a) Looked after and previously looked after children
- b) Exceptional social/medical need
- c) Siblings

d) Children attending a named feeder school. In alphabetical order these are:

- i. Badshot Lea Village Infant School
- ii. Folly Hill Infant School
- iii. Weybourne Infant School

e) Children for whom the school is the nearest to their home address

f) Any other children

7. In Appendix 2 of the arrangements, which is '**Community and voluntary controlled schools in Surrey which will operate shared sibling priority for admission in 2016**' the schools are listed thus "Weybourne Infant and William Cobbett Junior. The PAN for the school is shown as 90 and the PAN for Weybourne Infant school is 40.

8. Between 26 February 2015 and 19 April 2015, the local authority consulted on a proposal to close Weybourne Infant School from 31 August 2015 and extending the age range of William Cobbett Junior School from 1 September 2015 thus creating a single primary school. The LA published a statutory notice 27 April 2015 and took the decision approving the proposal 11 June 2015.

9. During the period of consultation prior to publishing the statutory notice the local authority determined the admission arrangements for September 2016 on 17 March 2015 as required by regulation 17 of the School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and paragraph 1.46 of the Code to determine arrangements by 15 April. The local authority determined the arrangements for the school as a junior school, even though the consultation about amalgamation was on going, as it should not pre-empt a later decision.

10. The local authority argues that as a consequence of the changes to the schools, the pupils of Weybourne Infant School, which had a PAN of 40 are now pupils of William Cobbett Primary School and, as such, will transfer automatically to Year 3. Weybourne Infant School no longer exists so cannot be named as a feeder and a decrease in the PAN to 50 is needed to take account of the children now in Years R to 2 of the school. The total number of places provided in Years 3-6 remains at 90 so there is no change in the provision of places overall.

11. The local authority is also seeking an amendment to the appendix of the admission arrangements which lists schools which operate a shared sibling priority by removing Weybourne Infant and William Cobbett Junior schools from Appendix 2 of the admission arrangements. This is because, following the change to these schools, children will automatically receive sibling priority if they have a sibling expected to be on roll in any year group at William Cobbett Primary School on the date of their admission.

12. The local authority has provided evidence of notification and consultation on the changes in the admission arrangements within the consultation about the proposal to bring about the amalgamation of the schools. I see that the proposal to do so was well supported in the responses.

13. The local authority considers that the changes to the schools to be an exceptional circumstance requiring a variation. I find that the appropriate procedures were followed and the relevant parties notified. The school will not be able to offer 90 places in Year 3 as 40 will be taken by pupils already on roll at the school. Weybourne Infant School no longer exists so it is sensible to remove it from the admission arrangements. I am satisfied that the proposed variation addresses the circumstances described.

Conclusion

14. I consider that the local authority properly set admission arrangements in advance of the completion of the consultation about extending the age range of the school and discontinuing the infant school. As the two schools now form a single primary school I approve the variation requested for the reasons given above.

Determination

15. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by Surrey County Council for William Cobbett Primary School (previously William Cobbett Junior School) for September 2016.

16. I determine that for admissions in September 2016: Weybourne Infant School will be removed as a feeder school in criterion 4 of the admissions arrangements for Year 3, the published admission number at William Cobbett Primary School for Year 3 will be reduced from 90 to 50; and that Weybourne Infant and William Cobbett Junior schools will be removed from Appendix 2 of the admission arrangements which shows those schools which will be described as operating a shared sibling priority.

Dated: 15 September 2015

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Jill Pullen