



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR740

Admission Authority: Buckinghamshire County Council for
Winslow Church of England Voluntary
Controlled Primary School, Winslow,
Buckinghamshire.

Date of decision: 23 November 2017

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve two variations to the admission arrangements determined by Buckinghamshire County Council for Winslow Church of England Primary School.

I determine that for admissions in September 2017 the published admission number at Year 3 shall be reduced from 30 to 4 and in September 2018 the published admission number at Year 3 shall be reduced from 30 to 4.

The referral

1. Buckinghamshire County Council, as the local authority and admission authority, has referred two variations to the Adjudicator. The variations are to the admission arrangements for Winslow (CE) Primary School (the school), a voluntary controlled school for September 2017 and September 2018. The variations requested are a reduction in the school's published admission number (PAN) at Year 3 to reflect a change in the local organisation of schools and the reduced need to accept admissions at the beginning of Year 3 for September 2017 and September 2018.

Jurisdiction

2. The referrals were 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 variations are within my jurisdiction.

Procedure

3. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation, guidance 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 31 October 2017 and supporting documents;
 - b) the determined arrangements for 2017 and 2018 and the proposed variations to those arrangements;
 - c) a copy of the local authority’s booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2018; and
 - d) a copy of the letter notifying the appropriate bodies about the proposed variations.

Background and consideration of factors

5. The school has prior to September 2017 had a published admission number (PAN) of 60 for Reception (Year R) and a PAN of 30 pupils for Y3. The Y3 PAN took account of junior transfer age from four named feeder schools: Mursley CE Infant School (PAN 15); East Claydon CE Infant School (PAN 15); Whaddon CE Infant School (PAN 18) and Padbury CE School (PAN 15).
6. This application for a variation to the arrangements is the result of a local change in circumstances. The governing body of East Claydon CE Infant School consulted on proposals to change its age range from 1 September 2017. The age range prior to this change was four to seven years of age and after the publication of statutory notices and a formal decision by the local authority in May 2017, the upper age limit from 1 September 2017 was extended from seven years to eleven years of age and the school became a primary school. This means from September 2017 children can remain at East Claydon CE School to continue their education into Keystage Two.
7. The decision by the local authority to approve these proposals occurred after the local authority determined the admission arrangements for voluntary controlled and community schools in the area in February 2017.
8. The local authority publishes a map showing the catchment areas of schools in this area for admission to Reception. There are some primary schools, some infant schools and some junior schools.

A further map shows the catchment areas for admission at Y3 for children moving on from the infant schools either to a junior school or to join a primary school in Y3. This map shows that at Y3 there are some parts of the area within the catchment of more than one junior or primary school. In the published arrangements, four schools are identified as feeder schools for Winslow School at Y3. However, few children have joined Winslow School from these named schools in recent years.

9. The reasons for this can be summarised as follows. Padbury CE School converted to a primary school in 2012 which has meant that since then its pupils could complete their primary education there. However, it has not been removed as a named feeder school from Winslow's arrangements. Mursley CE Infant School has, since 2008, been part of a federation of three schools (with Drayton Parslow CE Infant and Swanbourne Junior School) and as a result whilst still a named feeder school for Winslow, children have progressed within the federation to Swanbourne Junior School. Whaddon Infant School is also a named feeder school for Great Horwood School and most children from Whaddon Infants have progressed to Great Horwood as it is closer than Winslow School.

10. As a result of these changes and affiliations, the only children joining Winslow School at Y3 in recent years have been from East Claydon. The change to East Claydon's age range has therefore resulted in both the local authority and Winslow School wishing to review the school's Y3 PAN to reflect the fact that the school no longer has any active feeder schools and it wishes to reduce the potential risk that the school ends up with uneconomical class sizes at KS2.

11. Children from the Whaddon Infant and Mursley Infant schools could potentially be affected by this decision, but the local authority considers that the admission data for previous years from these schools shows that the change would not have a significant impact on any families. For admission in September 2017 five preferences were expressed for places at Y3 but none was a first preference and all were offered places at schools for which a higher preference was expressed. As a result, no places were allocated and the school has had no Year 3 admissions in the current year. In 2016, three children were admitted all of whom moved in from other areas of the county. In 2015 three children were admitted, two from East Claydon and one from another local school that is not a feeder school for Winslow school.

12. The governing body at the school agrees with the proposed variation and comments that a recent capacity assessment of the school reduced the number of classbases from 18 to 14 because of adaptations to rooms and redesignation of spaces to address suitability issues. This reduced capacity fits with the proposed reduction in numbers. The governing body also noted that it was likely that all the children at East Claydon would continue in the school now it had become a primary school. The variation is necessary to mitigate the risk that the school could end up

with unviable class sizes at KS2 if the PAN is not changed.

13. The local authority's composite prospectus for 2018 shows that there are 19 community of voluntary controlled primary schools in its area that have Y3 admissions, Winslow school has a PAN of 30, but 13 of these schools have a Y3 PAN of two, three or four pupils. In requesting a reduction of the PAN from 30 to 4 for the school the local authority as the admissions authority is retaining this pattern. In the future, the local authority and the school could agree to consult on reducing the Y3 PAN to zero if there continues to be no requirement for places at this age.

Conclusion

14. In considering this request I note that no families are likely to be affected by this change. All the children at East Claydon can now remain in that school for their primary education. The likelihood of there being admissions from the other feeder schools has been shown to be very small. The school agrees with the proposed change so that it can avoid the need to create an uneconomic Y3 class if there were to be significant in-year admissions in 2017 or a large increase in Y3 numbers in September 2018 beyond those children already in the school who will be moving up from Y2.

Determination

15. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve two variations to the admission arrangements determined by Buckinghamshire County Council for Winslow Church of England Primary School.

16. I determine that for admissions in September 2017 the published admission number at Year 3 shall be reduced from 30 to 4 and in September 2018 the published admission number at Year 3 shall be reduced from 30 to 4.

Dated: 23 November 2017

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones