



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR784

Admission Authority: Coventry City Council for Richard Lee Primary School, Coventry

Date of decision: 25 September 2018

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by the Coventry City Council for Richard Lee Primary School, Coventry for September 2018 and September 2019.

I determine that for admissions in September 2018 and September 2019 the published admission number shall be 60.

The referral

1. Coventry City Council (the council) has referred a proposed variation for Richard Lee Primary School (the school), for September 2018 and September 2019 to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The school is a community primary school for children aged 3 -11 in Coventry. The local authority for the area is Coventry City Council.

The proposed variation is to reduce the published admission number (PAN) from 90 to 60 for September 2018.

Jurisdiction

2. The referral was made 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, and the School Admissions Code (the Code).
5. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
 - the council's referral dated 1 August 2018 and supporting documents;
 - the determined arrangements for 2019 agreed on 17 January 2018 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
 - The notification sent to the appropriate bodies; and
 - a copy of the local authority's booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2018.

The proposed variation

6. The proposed variation was received on 1 August 2018. The effect of the variation would be to reduce the PAN for September 2018 and for September 2019 from 90 to 60. This is because the pupil number projections for the area show that the number of children in the area has reduced. The school has admitted 58 children for September 2018.

Consideration of the case

7. Population forecasting and pupil place planning data analysis show both city wide and localised demand for school places in Coventry. The figures show a drop in demand in the local area of this school. This school has been experiencing a significant level of financial difficulty, which has been exacerbated by the reducing demand in their normal year of entry. The school has organised itself with two forms of entry and this will enable it to maximise its educational and financial effectiveness. Even if the PAN is reduced to 60 the council and the governing board show that there will still be some available spaces across the area.
8. The school has been undersubscribed in recent years as shown in the following table:

	PAN	Number of first preferences	Number of places allocated	Number of appeals lodged	Number of appeals upheld
September					
2015	90	63	76	0	0
2016	90	70	80	0	0
2017	90	47	60	0	0
2018	90	48	56	0	0

9. Projections until 2021 are as follows:

	Number of places forecast to be required
2019	64
2020	64
2021	59

10. The council explains that where these figures show 64 places to be required in a year, this is due to an increase in births in the catchment area rather than an increase in demand for the local school. In recent years, the numbers admitted to this school have been less than forecast as some parents have chosen other local schools for their children. Although the births in the catchment area of the school are forecast to increase slightly, the trend for births in the planning area of local schools is reducing.

11. The council has provided a table showing the 12 schools that are closest to this school and the number of available places for Reception children in 2018. In future years the council anticipates an increase in the number of surplus places.

	Distance from Richard Lee Primary School	Available Places for Reception 2018
Richard Lee	0 Miles	32
St Gregory's Catholic	0.19 Miles	0
Ravensdale	0.39 Miles	0
Clifford Bridge	0.65 Miles	15
Ernesford Grange	0.71 Miles	0
Wyken Croft	0.81 Miles	0
John Fisher Catholic	0.9 Miles	0
Sacred Heart Catholic	0.96 Miles	0
Pearl Hyde	0.97 Miles	0
Stoke	1 Mile	8
Aldermoor Farm	1.06 Miles	14
Gosford Park	1.38 Miles	2

12. I am satisfied that the need for places in this area is reducing and that in the current year this school has admitted 58 children against a PAN of 90. It is evident that both the school governing board and the council are agreed that it is difficult for this school to plan its finances with certainty with the knowledge that it has 30 vacant places. I am satisfied that the council has notified the bodies that it is required to inform by the Code. I therefore approve this request for a reduction of the PAN from 90 to 60 for the current year beginning in September 2018 and, also, for September 2019.

Summary

13. The council with the agreement of the school governing board has requested this reduction in PAN to 60 from September 2018 to help give the school stability of numbers to assist with budget planning and curriculum delivery. If the variation is

agreed, the school will still have some places available in its Reception class if families with children of Reception age move into the area. There are reception places available in four other schools within a mile and a half of this school and I am satisfied that the council is not removing places that it will require in years to come or that parental preferences will be less satisfied by the removal of these places. The council has already determined the arrangements for this school including the PAN of 90. Following discussion with the school's governing board about updated pupil number forecasts a decision was made to request a variation. The council has taken the necessary steps to make the request and I approve it.

Determination

14. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by Coventry City Council for September 2018 and September 2019 for Richard Lee Primary School, Coventry.
15. I determine that for admissions in September 2018 and for September 2019 the published admission number shall be 60.

Dated: 25 September 2018

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones