



## **DETERMINATION**

**Case reference:** VAR783

**Admission Authority:** Coventry City Council for Little Heath 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 Little Heath 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 30.**

### **The referral**

1. Coventry City Council (the council) has referred a proposed variation for Little Heath 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 60 to 30 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;
  - a copy of the local authority's booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2018;
  - The notification sent to the bodies required by the Code: and
  - comments on the proposal from the school's governing board.

## 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 60 to 30. This is because the pupil number projections for the area show that for the number of children in the area has reduced. The school has admitted fewer than 30 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 and an overall reduction in the birth rate year on year 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 one form of entry and this will enable it to maximise its educational and financial effectiveness. Even if the PAN is reduced to 30 the council and the governing board show that there will still be surplus places across the area.
8. The school has been undersubscribed in recent years as shown in the following table:

September	PAN	Number of first preferences	Number of places allocated	Number of appeals lodged	Number of appeals upheld
2015	60	19	27	0	0
2016	60	12	25	0	0
2017	60	16	19	0	0
2018	60	20	22	0	0

Projections until 2021 are as follows:

	Number of places forecast to be required
2019	27
2020	32
2021	26

9. The council explains that where these figures show 32 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.
10. There are ten schools within a mile of Little Heath Primary School. Of these, eight have surplus places totalling 66 spare places in the local area against an area PAN of 480 places. This represents 4.8 per cent of surplus places which is consistent with the margin that Coventry City Council considers to be reasonable. This surplus would be 10.4 per cent if this PAN reduction did not take place. The council provided a table showing where there were spare places for September 2018 as follows

	Distance from Little Heath	Available Places in Reception 2018
Good Shepherd Catholic Academy	0.046 Miles	0
Courthouse Green Academy	0.3 Miles	1
St Laurence's CE Academy	0.37 Miles	2
Edgewick	0.45 Miles	0
Holbrook	0.5 Miles	12
St Elizabeth's Catholic	0.57 Miles	2
Longford Park	0.6 Miles	0
Stanton Bridge	0.75 Miles	3
Broad Heath	0.9 Miles	10
Alderman's Green	1 Miles	5

11. It is evident to me that the need for places in this area is reducing and that in the current year this school has admitted only 22 children against a PAN of 60. It is also 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 school has informed those bodies that the Code requires about the proposed variation. I therefore approve

this request for a reduction of the PAN from 60 to 30 for the current year beginning in September 2018 and also for September 2019.

### **Summary**

12. The local authority with the agreement of the school governing board has requested this reduction in PAN to 30 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 seven other schools within a mile of this school and I am satisfied that the council is not removing places that it will require in years to come and there will not be a reduction in the council's ability to meet parental preferences for schools. The council has already determined the arrangements for this school including the PAN of 60. 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**

13. 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 Little Heath Primary School, Coventry.
  
14. I determine that for admissions in September 2018 and for September 2019 the published admission number shall be 30.

Dated: 25 September 2018

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones