



Office of  
the Schools  
Adjudicator

## **DETERMINATION**

**Case reference:** VAR774

**Admission Authority:** The governing board for St Andrew's Church of England School, Croydon

**Date of decision:** 20 November 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 governing board for St Andrews Church of England School, Croydon for September 2018.**

**I determine that the published admission number for September 2018 will be zero.**

### **The referral**

1. The board of governors of St Andrews Church of England School (the school) has referred a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for the school, for September 2018 to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The school is a voluntary aided school for children aged 11 to 16 in Croydon.
2. The proposed variation is to reduce the published admission number (PAN) to zero.

### **Jurisdiction**

3. 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”.*

4. The school initially requested that the PAN was reduced to zero for both 2018 and 2019 admissions. In the course of establishing my jurisdiction it emerged that the governing board had not determined the admission arrangements for 2019 as it is required to do by section 88C of the Act. Subsequently, the governing board determined the admission arrangements for 2019 on 1 November 2018 with a PAN of zero. It is therefore not necessary for me to consider a variation to those arrangements. The arrangements for 2018 had been properly determined by the governing board on 8 February 2017 and I am satisfied that the proposed variation is within my jurisdiction.

### **Procedure**

5. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation, and the School Admissions Code (the Code).
6. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
  - the referral from the board of governors dated 12 July 2018, supporting documents and responses to my enquiries;
  - the determined arrangements for 2018 and the proposed variation to those arrangements; and
  - a copy of the notification sent to the appropriate bodies about the proposed variation.

### **Consideration of the case**

7. The arrangements included a PAN of 150. The oversubscription criteria for half of these places are based on faith and for the other half on siblings, feeder schools and proximity to the school. In the event just 19 first preferences were received for the school and 39 children were offered places.
8. The school has been identified by Ofsted inspectors as requiring improvement since September 2014. In the last four years three new secondary schools have opened in Croydon and places have been added at others meaning there is currently an oversupply of places in the area. These factors have had a significant impact on the school.
9. In the previous two years, 2016 and 2017, the number of first preferences were 37 and 22 respectively with 44 and 96 children taking up places. This low level of recruitment has resulted in the school finding it difficult to stay within its budget and to provide the required curriculum at Key Stage 3 and it would struggle further when these children moved into Key Stage 4.
10. In partnership with Croydon Council (the local authority) and the Diocese of Southwark (the diocese) a number of strategies have been

tried to address the issues facing the school. None of these has so far been successful. A new approach was agreed between the governing board, the local authority and the diocese to support the education of children at the school in July 2018.

11. This approach was to allow the school to focus its resources on the children who would be in Years 10 and 11 in September 2018 following their examination courses through to completion in 2019 and 2020. To allow this, parents of children in what would be Years 8 and 9 and those who would be starting in Year 7 in September 2018, were asked to consider transferring their children to other schools. There would be no admission in September 2019 allowing a fresh start with just a Year 7 in September 2020 or consultation to take place on other options for the future of the school.
12. During the summer term of 2018 meetings were held for parents of children who were allocated places to start in Year 7 at the school in September 2018. These meetings involved the school, the diocese and the local authority. Following those meetings the parents of those children all decided to send their children to other schools and no children are, or ever have been, on the roll in Year 7 at the school beginning in September 2018.
13. The PAN applies for the whole of the normal year of admission, in this case Year 7, until the end of the school year. There are no children on roll at the school in this year group and I think it extremely unlikely that any parent would apply for a place for their child given the circumstances. Should they do so, a place could not be refused unless I agree to set the PAN at zero as requested. In order to ensure that no child could be placed on roll in Year 7 this year, which would not be beneficial to them, I approve this request.

#### **Other matters**

14. In my communications, with the school I was told that all but two children who were on roll at the school in Years 7 and 8 had transferred to Years 8 and 9 at other schools. I was told that these two children, although on roll, were not attending the school. This matter is not within my jurisdiction; however, in those communications I expressed my concern over possible safeguarding issues for these two children. I hope that the school has already taken steps to address those concerns, but I will repeat them here in case action has not yet been taken.

#### **Determination**

15. 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 governing board for St Andrews Church of England School, Croydon for September 2018.

16. I determine that the published admission number for September 2018 will be zero.

Dated: 20 November 2018

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Phil Whiffing