



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR798

Admission Authority: The governing board for St John the Baptist Church of England Junior School, Richmond upon Thames

Date of decision: 8 January 2019

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 John the Baptist CE Junior School, Richmond upon Thames 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. The governing board of St John the Baptist Church of England Junior School (the governing board) has referred a proposed variation for St John the Baptist CE Junior School (the school), for September 2018 and September 2019 to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA). The school is a voluntary aided primary school for children aged 7 -11 in Richmond upon Thames. The local authority for the area is Richmond upon Thames Council (the local authority) and the religious authority for the area is the London Diocesan Board for Schools (the diocesan board).
2. The proposed variation is to reduce the published admission number (PAN) from 90 to 60 for September 2018 and September 2019.

Jurisdiction

3. 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".

4. 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:

- a) the governing board's referral dated 28 November 2018 and supporting documents;
- b) the determined arrangements for 2018 and 2019 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
- c) comments on the proposed variation by the diocesan board;
- d) comments from the local authority with supporting documents;
- e) the local authority's information for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2019; and
- f) the notification sent to the bodies required by the Code.

The proposed variation

7. The proposed variation was received by the OSA on 28 November 2018. The effect of the variation would be to reduce the PAN for September 2018 and for September 2019 from 90 to 60. This variation is being sought because the number of pupils applying for and being allocated places at the school has reduced. The school allocated places to 71 children for September 2018 but only 60 of these places were actually taken up. The school reports that each year a proportion of the children offered places do not take them. Many gain places in local private schools.

Consideration of case

8. The school is situated within the Teddington and Hampton Wick school place planning area, which contains Hampton Wick Infant School, which feeds into St John the Baptist CE Junior School, and three all-through primary schools: Collis Primary School, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School and St Mary's and St Peter's CE Primary School.

9. The school says that in the current (2018/2019 school year) Year 3, there are two vacancies across the three primary schools. In addition, however, the local authority confirms that there are 17 vacancies, more than enough to accommodate the likely number of children moving into the area, at Stanley Primary School, which, though it

in an adjoining planning area, is within a mile and a half of any home within the Teddington and Hampton Wick planning area. For those families living in Hampton Wick, where St John the Baptist is located, there are also nearby options in the neighbouring Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The school reports that as the cohorts progress through their respective schools, it is likely that vacancies will arise in other local primary schools because each year there is usually a small but significant reduction in school numbers as a result of families, who may have the means and the desire for their children to be privately educated, changing schools.

10. Population forecasting and pupil place planning data provided by the local authority show a reduction in demand for school places at this school. The significant reduction in admissions in comparison to the PAN has led to the school experiencing some financial difficulty. The school has organised itself to maximise its educational and financial effectiveness. If the PAN is reduced to 60, the local authority pupil number forecasts show that there will still be surplus places across the area.

11. The school has been undersubscribed in recent years as shown in the following table supplied by the local authority:

September	PAN	Number of first preferences	Number of places allocated	Number of appeals lodged	Number of appeals upheld
2015	90	74	84	0	0
2016	90	89	90	0	0
2017	90	79	84	0	0
2018	90	70	71	0	0

12. The forecast for the school place planning area shows that there are surplus places in the area and that the reduction in the PAN at this school will not have an impact on the ability for children in the area seeking a place at Year 3 to gain a place.

13. In the current academic year, this school has admitted 60 children to Year 3 against a PAN of 90. It is evident that the school governing board and the local authority are agreed that it is difficult for the school to plan its finances with the knowledge that it has 30 vacant places. Both the local authority and the diocesan board have responded to my enquiries by saying that they support this proposal for a reduction in the PAN. I am satisfied that the school has informed those bodies that the Code requires about the proposed variation. I am also satisfied that by removing these places from the area there will continue to be sufficient places across the local planning area to meet demand and the evidence provided shows that all parents who wished to gain places for their children at the school have been allocated them and that this situation is not projected to change. If the variation is agreed, the school will not have any places available in its Year 3 classes if families move into the area in the current school year, however, the local authority has assured me that there are

sufficient places in nearby schools to meet any such demand. I am satisfied therefore that there will not be a reduction in the council's ability to meet parental demand for places in Year 3. I therefore approve this request for a reduction of the PAN from 90 to 60 for the current year beginning in September 2018 and for September 2019.

Summary

14. The governing board has requested this reduction in PAN from 90 to 60 from September 2018 and September 2019 to assist the school with stability of numbers to enable budget planning and curriculum delivery. The proposal has the support of the local authority and the diocesan board. The reduced PAN will not adversely affect the local authority's ability to secure the provision of school places nor has any evidence been provided that parents who wish their child to attend the school will be unable to secure a place there. The governing board has already determined the arrangements for this school including the PAN of 90. Following review of the pupil number forecasts a decision was made to request a variation. The governing board has taken the necessary steps to make the request and I approve it.

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 John the Baptist CE Junior School, Richmond upon Thames for September 2018 and September 2019.
16. I determine that for admissions in September 2018 and September 2019 the published admission number shall be 60.

Dated: 8 January 2019

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones