



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR828 Charlotte Sharman Primary School

Admission authority: The governing board of Charlotte Sharman Primary School Southwark

Date of decision: 23 April 2019

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by the governing board for Charlotte Sharman Primary School, Southwark.

I determine that for admission in September 2019 the Published Admission Number will be 30.

The referral

1. The Chair of the governing board of Charlotte Sharman Primary School, Southwark (the school), on behalf of the governing board, has referred a variation to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for admission in 2019. Charlotte Sharman Primary School is a 2 to 11, foundation primary school in the London Borough of Southwark. The referral requests a reduction in the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 60 to 30 for admissions in September 2019.

Jurisdiction

2. 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”.

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, guidance and the School Admissions Code.

5. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include

- a) the school’s referral of 14 February 2019 and subsequent correspondence with the school;
- b) the determined arrangements for the school;
- c) comments on the variation from the local authority;
- d) a copy of the local authority’s booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2019; and
- e) a copy of the letter consulting the relevant bodies about the proposed variation.

Other matters

6. In reviewing the arrangements, I noted a number of elements of the arrangements which appeared not to conform with the requirements relating to admissions and brought these to the attention of the school. The school has addressed some, but not all of the required amendments and in doing so has introduced other elements which appear not to conform with the requirements. For this reason, I have decided to hold discussions with the school so that there is a clear understanding of the requirements. After these discussions, I will provide a second determination which outlines the required changes. This process will be in line with section 88I of the Act and will be treated as a referral. This section of the Act provides that, if a set of arrangements is drawn to the attention of the adjudicator the adjudicator may consider the admission arrangements as a whole and determine whether the arrangements conform with the Code and the Law and if not, in what ways they do not conform.

Background and consideration of the factors

7. The school is a 2 to 11, foundation primary school. It is in the local authority of Southwark. The admission arrangements for admission in September 2019 were discussed and determined by the governing board on 10 December 2018.

8. The referral states that there has been a reduction in primary school applications across the local authority in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and this has resulted in a corresponding reduction in the number of first preference applications for the school. The number of first preferences in the last three years has been well below the PAN (60) and in only one of these years has the number of places allocated exceeded the PAN of 30 now requested. That was in 2016 when 31 places were allocated. The forecast for the next three years shows that numbers expected are below the requested PAN as indicated by the table below:

September	PAN	First preferences	Places allocated
2016	60	24	31
2017	60	18	26
2018	60	34	26
		Forecast places	
2019		28	
2020		27	
2021		27	

9. The governing board which is the admission authority for the school, has requested this reduction for admission in September 2019. The school's capacity is able to accommodate annual PANs of 60. However, the governing board considers it to be financially unviable to plan staffing and accommodation for 60 pupils being admitted in reception (YR) when, in reality, the number is much smaller. This planning has added considerably to the financial and organisational burden on the school which is already in a financial deficit position. In the delegated budget scheme, funds are allocated to the school based on a number of factors. Most important among these factors is the allocation of funds based on actual pupil numbers on roll. A sustainable financial plan based on 60 pupils in a year group where the numbers are actually only 30 or fewer could prove difficult for governors to manage. I agree that this situation may render the school's budget financially unviable in the future.

10. The local authority states that the reduction in PAN for YR for the school will not lead to a shortage of school places in the planning area given that there are already 271 spare reception places (29 per cent of all reception places) in the borough. I have also

considered the number of preferences expressed for places at this particular school. The school has been able to admit every child whose parent wished them to attend this school in the past few years and is forecast to be able to continue to meet parental preferences in the future with the reduced PAN.

11. I therefore approve the variation requested by the school. The PAN for admission to the school in September 2019 will be 30.

Conclusion

12. In order to maintain a viable number of classes in the school and to aid the financial and organisational planning of the Governing Board I approve the variation request to reduce the PAN from 60 to 30 for September 2019.

13. Amendments are required to the admission arrangements in order for them to conform to the Code and the Law and these will be dealt with as a separate matter.

Determination

14. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by the governing board for Charlotte Sharman Primary School, Southwark.

15. I determine that for admission in September 2019 the Published Admission Number will be 30.

Dated: 23 April 2019

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Ann Talboys