



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference:	REF 3619
Referrer:	The Governing Board of St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Southwark.
Admission authority:	The Governing Board of St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Southwark.
Date of decision:	18 June 2019

Determination

I have considered the admission arrangements for September 2019 for St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Southwark in accordance with section 88I (5) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and find that in relation to a number of details within the admission arrangements, as outlined in this determination, the arrangements do not conform with the requirements.

Following discussion with the school, the governing board have produced draft admission arrangements which rectify the matters which are not compliant with the Code.

The School Admissions Code requires the admission authority to publish the revised admission arrangements as soon as possible and within two months of the date of the determination. By virtue of section 88K (2) the adjudicator's decision is binding on the admission authority.

The referral

The governing board of the school requested a variation to the published admission arrangements for September 2019. This variation was agreed by the adjudicator and the determination was published. During the variation process, a number of issues in the arrangements were identified as non-compliant with the Code. I have decided to use the power conferred under section 88I (5) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to

consider whether the arrangements conform with the requirements relating to admission arrangements.

Jurisdiction

1. These arrangements were determined under section 88C of the Act by the school's governing board, which is the admission authority for the school. I am satisfied the referral has been properly referred to me in accordance with section 88I of the Act and it is within my jurisdiction.

Procedure

2. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code (the Code).

3. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:

- a. the variation request from the school and its determination;
- b. correspondence with the school;
- c. correspondence with the Catholic Diocese of Southwark; and
- d. a copy of the determined arrangements.

I have also taken account of information received during a meeting I convened on 8 May 2019 at the school and correspondence received after the meeting. Present at the meeting were the Headteacher and Chair of the Governing Board, a representative from the Catholic Diocese of Southwark and two representatives from the local authority of Southwark.

The Referral

4. The admission arrangements for admission in September 2019 were determined by the school's governing board on 20 September 2018 and published on the school's website. The following areas are non-compliant with the Code;

- a) The admission arrangements published on the website are incomplete; there is no supplementary information form (SIF) or the parish reference form. These forms are constituent parts of the arrangements and as such should be published in line with the Code at paragraph 15a which states that *"All schools **must** have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school"*.
- b) The SIF requires two parents to complete it, this is contrary to paragraph 2.4 of the Code which states that *"They [admission authority] **must not** ask both parents to sign the form"*.

- c) The arrangements state that the governors will admit up to 30 pupils when, at the time, the published admission number (PAN) was 60. This is contrary to paragraph 1.2 of the Code which states that *“As part of determining their admission arrangements all admission authorities **must** set an admission number for each relevant age group”*.
- d) The arrangements state that there is a single point of entry in September for all pupils in the reception year (YR). This is contrary to paragraph 2.16 of the Code which makes provision for parents to defer a child’s admission.
- e) The arrangements state that parents may request deferred entry or part time entry. This is contrary to paragraph 2.16 of the Code which makes it clear that deferral or part time admission are an entitlement for parents.
- f) The definition of looked after and previously looked after children is out of date and does not comply with the Code’s definition at paragraph 1.7.
- g) Reference is made in the oversubscription criteria to *“religious commitment”* and this term is not defined. This makes it unclear and contrary to paragraph 14 of the Code which states that *“In drawing up their admission arrangements, admission authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated”*.
- h) Reference is made in the admission arrangements to the priest’s endorsement of the application but there is no indication of how this happens; this is contrary to paragraph 14 of the Code.
- i) In the definition section of the arrangements there is mention of rank ordering applications from information on the SIF but this is not fully explained and is therefore contrary to paragraph 14 of the Code.
- j) The section of the arrangements which deals with waiting lists does not specify a timeframe in line with paragraph 2.14 of the Code. This states that *“Each admission authority **must** maintain a clear, fair and objective waiting list until at least **31 December** of each school year of admission.”*

Background and consideration of arrangements

5. On the 18 February 2019 a variation request was received by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA). This request was for a reduction in PAN for September 2019. This variation was considered by me and agreed and the determination (VAR830) was published on 23 April 2019. During the consideration of the case it became clear that there were a number of non-compliant areas of the arrangements and these were communicated to the school. Subsequent revisions to the arrangements made by the governing board did not fully address the issues and other non-compliant issues were introduced. The non-compliant issues are set out above. I arranged a meeting on the 8 May 2019 in order to

discuss the non-compliance. The school has been supportive throughout the process and the headteacher has been very keen to make sure the arrangements are compliant. After the meeting the school and the diocese discussed the arrangements and have, subsequently, produced a set of draft arrangements which address the non-compliant issues.

6. I am satisfied that the school's draft amended arrangements are now compliant with the Code and these now need to be formally determined (that is agreed by the governing board) published on their website and communicated to parents and the local authority. This should be completed as soon as possible. These changes can be made without consultation, in line with paragraph 3.6 of the Code which states that *"Once admission arrangements have been determined for a particular school year, they cannot be revised by the admission authority unless such a revision is necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement of this Code, admission law, a determination of the Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements"*.

Determination

7. I have considered the admission arrangements for September 2019 for St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Southwark in accordance with section 88I (5) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and find that in relation to a number of details within the admission arrangements, as outlined in this determination, the arrangements do not conform with the requirements.

8. Following discussion with the school, the governing board have produced draft admission arrangements which rectify the matters which are not compliant with the Code.

9. The School Admissions Code requires the admission authority to publish the revised admission arrangements as soon as possible and within two months of the date of the determination. By virtue of section 88K (2) the adjudicator's decision is binding on the admission authority.

Dated: 18 June 2019

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Ann Talboys