

DETERMINATION

Case reference: VAR/000586

Admission Authority: The London Borough of Redbridge

Date of decision: 25 July 2012

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 London Borough of Redbridge. I determine that for admissions in September 2012 to Downshall Primary School, the published admission number shall be 90.

The referral

1. The London Borough of Redbridge (the Council) has referred a variation to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for Downshall Primary School (the School), a community school, for September 2012. The variation is to increase the published admission number (PAN) from 60 to 90.

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”.

I am satisfied that the proposed variation is within my jurisdiction.

Procedure

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

The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:

- a. the Council's letter of referral of 28 June 2012 and supporting documents including a detailed analysis of the demographic pressures on the Council and the School;
- b. a copy of the Council's composite prospectus for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2012;
- c. the School's determined arrangements for entry in 2012 and email from the School dated 18 July 2012; and,
- d. a copy of the letter dated 28 June 2012 notifying the relevant bodies about the proposed variation.

Background and consideration of factors

4. The Council has applied for a variation in the PAN of the School to increase it from 60 to 90. The application was received on 12 July 2012 which is after parents have made their applications for places in September 2012. The Council claims that the increase in applications from a rapidly growing and mobile population is a major change in circumstances as referred to in paragraph 3.6 of the Code.
5. In common with many other London local authorities, the Council continues to experience a rising birth rate which has increased demand for school places. Data supplied by the Council indicate that births have increased by 21% over the last seven years and that the increase in demand for school places across London has not subsided and is forecasted to increase over the coming years.
6. The Council states that it has, over the last five years, provided an additional 4,635 permanent primary school places (Reception to Year 6) or 25.5 forms of entry by expanding existing schools or opening new provision. Planning for this increase is made more difficult by the transient population and mobility within London boroughs. The Council says that it also receives a large volume of casual applications for school places in both primary and secondary year groups.
7. The governors of the School have confirmed that they are in agreement with the variation. The School has many more applications than places, for example for 2011 entry there were 283 applications for 60 places. This figure is predicted by the Council to increase to 430 by 2014. With a net capacity of 416, the School has the capacity to accommodate the additional numbers and for 2009 entry had an identical increase in its admission number.
8. Data supplied by the Council show that other local schools are being similarly expanded to cater for the borough wide increase in applications and that other admission authorities and community schools in the borough were notified of the proposed changes.
9. I am persuaded by the above that the Council is monitoring and modelling the population increases in the borough and is making every attempt to plan school places, but that the transient and mobile nature of some of its

population make this very difficult.

Conclusion

10. I am convinced, therefore, that the London Borough of Redbridge has faced an unpredictable increase in demand for school places and that the increase in the PAN of the School is an appropriate response. I accept that the submission of the variation, although referred to the Adjudicator after the deadline for applications had passed, was unavoidably delayed.
11. Although I am concerned that the deadline for applications and allocation of places for school places for September 2012 has passed and that a small number of parents may be unfairly disadvantaged by having the PAN changed at this stage, I am satisfied that the continuing need to find school places for all children for September means I should approve the variation.

Determination

12. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variation to the admission arrangements determined by the London Borough of Redbridge.
I determine that for admissions in September 2012 to Downshall Primary School, the published admission number shall be 90.

Dated: 25 July 2012

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Dr Melvyn Kershaw