



Office of  
the Schools  
Adjudicator

## Determination

**Case reference:** VAR 897 Grange Infant School, Hampshire

**Admission authority:** Hampshire County Council for The Grange Infant School, Gosport, Hampshire

**Date of decision:** 12 December 2019

## Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variations to the admission arrangements determined by Hampshire County Council for The Grange Infant School, Gosport, Hampshire.

I determine that for admissions in September 2019 and September 2020 the Published Admission Number will be 75.

## The referral

1. The local authority (Hampshire County Council) has referred variations to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements for admissions in 2019 and 2020. Grange Infant School is a 4 to 7 infant school in Gosport, Hampshire. The referral requests a reduction in the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 90 to 75 for admissions in September 2019 and 2020.

## 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 variations are 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 local authority's referral of 28 October 2019 and subsequent correspondence;
- b) the determined arrangements for the school;
- c) comments on the variations from the school;
- d) governing body minutes recording consultation on the variations;
- e) maps of the area showing local schools; and
- f) a copy of the local authority's booklet for parents seeking admission to schools in the area in September 2020.

## The proposed variations

6. Paragraph 3.6 of the Code requires that admission arrangements, once determined, may only be changed, that is varied, if there is a major change of circumstance or certain other limited and specified circumstances. I will consider below whether the variations requested are justified by the change in circumstances.

7. Paragraph 3.6 of the Code also requires that relevant parties be notified of proposed variations. I have seen confirmation from the school's governing board that it supports the request for the variations.

## Consideration of proposed variations

8. The school is a 4 to 7, community infant school. It is in the local authority of Hampshire County Council which is the admission authority for the school. The admission arrangements for admission in September 2020 were determined by the local authority on 22 February 2019 and published on the local authority and the school's website. These arrangements include a published admission number (PAN) of 90. This is the same PAN as previous years. At the school's governing body meeting on 17 September 2019 the PAN was discussed with the local authority and a decision was made to reduce the PAN from 90 to 75 for admission in September 2019 and 2020. The local authority submitted the variation request to the OSA on 28 October 2019.

9. The referral states that there has been a reduction in applications for the school in the past few years and that the forecast for admissions in the next five years is significantly below PAN. These can be seen in the table below;

<b>September</b>	<b>PAN</b>	<b>Places allocated</b>
<b>2016</b>	90	79
<b>2017</b>	90	90
<b>2018</b>	90	74
<b>2019</b>	90	74
		<b>Forecast figures</b>
<b>2020</b>		57
<b>2021</b>		70
<b>2022</b>		64
<b>2023</b>		59
<b>2024</b>		59

10. The school's capacity is able to accommodate annual PANs of 90. However, the governing board considers it to be financially unviable to plan staffing and accommodation for 90 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. 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 90 pupils in a year group where the numbers are actually only 70 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.

11. The school has a planned reduction of one class (with a consequent reduction in staffing) for the 2021/22 academic year but would like to bring this in sooner; this would help the governing board manage the budget more effectively.

12. 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. I have also considered the current and forecast numbers for admission to the 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.

13. I therefore approve the variation requested by the school. The PAN for admission to the school in September 2019 and 2020 will be 75.

## Summary

14. The school plans class numbers and staffing to accommodate a PAN of 90 for admission in September 2019 and 2020. Forecast numbers from the local area show that it is highly unlikely that 90 pupils will be admitted; the predicted numbers for the next five years range from 57 to 70. A reduction in numbers will lead to a reduction in budget and the governing board report that this would lead to a deficit budget. The school and the local authority have suggested a plan to reduce the number of classes by one with a consequent reduction in staffing; this would be facilitated by a reduction in PAN to 75. I consider this a sensible plan and therefore agree the variations requested.

## Determination

15. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the variations to the admission arrangements determined by Hampshire County Council for The Grange Infant School, Gosport, Hampshire.

16. I determine that for admissions in September 2019 and 2020 the Published Admission Number will be 75.

Dated: 12 December 2019

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Ann Talboys