



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR2355

Admission authority: Wigan Council for Beech Hill Community Primary School, Wigan

Date of decision: 21 July 2023

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 Wigan Council for Beech Hill Community Primary School for September 2024.

I determine that the published admission number for admissions in 2024/25 shall be 30.

The referral

1. Wigan Council (the local authority (LA)), the admission authority for Beech Hill Community Primary School (the school), has referred a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for September 2024 (the arrangements) to the adjudicator.
2. The school is a community primary school for children aged 3 to 11 in Beech Hill, Wigan. The school was judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted in 2022.
3. The proposed variation is for the reduction of the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 45 to 30.
4. Parties to the request are the LA and the school's governing board.

Jurisdiction and procedure

5. The referral was made to me in accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act) which deals with variations to determined arrangements. Paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the School Admissions Code (the Code) say (insofar as relevant here):

“3.6 Once admission arrangements have been determined for a particular school year, they cannot be revised by the admission authority unless such revision is necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement of this Code, admissions law, a determination of the Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements. Admission authorities may propose other variations where they consider such changes to be necessary in view of a major change in circumstances. Such proposals **must** be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for approval, and the appropriate bodies notified. Where the local authority is the admission authority for a community or voluntary controlled school, it **must** consult the governing body of the school before making any reference.

3.7 Admission authorities **must** notify the appropriate bodies of all variations”.

6. The LA has provided me with confirmation that:

- the arrangements for 2024/25 were determined in accordance with paragraph 1.49 of the Code (the arrangements were determined on 16 February 2023);
- the appropriate bodies have been notified and that no comments were received by the LA from those bodies in respect of that notification; and
- the school’s governing board has been consulted on the proposed variation.

7. I find that the appropriate procedures were followed, and I am also satisfied that the proposed variation is within my jurisdiction.

8. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation, and the Code.

9. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:

- a. the referral from the LA dated 23 June 2023, supporting documents and further information provided at my request;
- b. the determined arrangements for 2024/25 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
- c. comments on the proposed variation from the school and further information provided at my request; and
- d. information available on the websites of the local authority, the school, the Department for Education (DfE) (including ‘Get Information About Schools’ (GIAS) and ‘Schools Financial Benchmarking’ (SFB)) and Ofsted.

10. I note here that the arrangements for 2025/26 will not yet have been determined. This means that if I decide to vary the arrangements for 2024/25 by reducing the PAN from 45 to 30, this will have the effect of forming the ‘baseline’ for the following years’ arrangements. I have borne that in mind when making my determination.

11. There is no formal consultation required for a variation and so parents and others do not have the opportunity to express their views. Once the PAN has been set for a particular year then no body, except the governing board of a community or voluntary controlled school, can object if that PAN remains the same in subsequent years. Clearly it is desirable that PAN reductions are made via the process of determination following consultation as the consultation process allows those with an interest to express their views. It also allows for objections to the adjudicator. None of this is afforded by the variation process.

12. I note here that, in respect of future consultations, the LA stated on the variation request form: "The Local Authority will consult on a reduction for 2025-26 to give stakeholders an opportunity to comment". About this, I make the following point. The LA appears to have misunderstood the way that a change in the PAN for 2024/25 at the school would work in future years. As I explained above, reducing the PAN for 2024/25 at this point would have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for the following years' arrangements. Should I determine to reduce the PAN, then there will be no need to consult on a reduction to the PAN in 2025/26 as this would be carried forward from the amended 2024/25 arrangements. However, for the avoidance of doubt, there is nothing in the statutory scheme that would prevent the LA from consulting if it wished to do so; it is simply that it would not be required to.

Consideration of proposed variation

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

14. The LA has a duty to make sure that there are sufficient places for the children in its area. To fulfil this duty the LA assesses the likely future number of places to be needed and plans to meet that need. The LA uses planning areas, which are geographical groups of schools, for this purpose. The school is one of eight schools in the LA's primary planning area 3 (the planning area) which is made up of five schools in Wigan North and three schools in Wigan North West (the latter includes the school). The other schools in Wigan North West are (with distance from the school's postcode in miles in brackets taken from the GIAS website): Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School (0.18); and Wigan St Andrew's CofE Junior and Infant School (0.43). Schools in Wigan North are: Woodfield Primary School (0.82); Mab's Cross Primary School (1.08); St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School (1.11); St Patrick's Catholic Primary School (1.57); and St Catharine's CofE Primary School (1.64). All schools admit to Reception Year (YR). The number of places for YR for the planning area in 2023/24 and 2024/25 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of places in the planning area for 2023/24 and 2024/25

Schools in the planning area	PANs 2023/24	PANs 2024/25
Wigan North		
Mab's Cross Primary School	70	70
St Catharine's CofE Primary School	30	30
St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School	30	30
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	45	45
Woodfield Primary School	30	30
Total YR places for Wigan North:	205	205
Wigan North West		
Beech Hill Community Primary School	45	45 *
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	45	45
Wigan St Andrew's CofE Junior and Infant School	30	30
Total YR places for Wigan North West:	120	120
Total YR places:	325	325 *

* If I agree to the variation requested for the school for September 2024, this would reduce the number of places for admission into YR at the school to 30 and in the planning area to 310.

15. I now turn to look at whether there will be a sufficient number of places in the planning area in September 2024 and in future years if I agree to reduce the PAN at the school. The LA has provided the following data for schools in the planning area:

- data for numbers of children admitted 2020/21 to 2022/23;
- the number of offers made for places 2023/24; and
- projections of first preference numbers for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

I have put this data into Tables 2 and 3.

16. In respect of Table 2, the figures should be viewed in the context of the PAN at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School for that period having been 60 (the PAN was reduced to 45 from 2023/24), the total number of YR places available in Wigan North West therefore being 125 and the total number of YR places in the planning area being 340. All other schools' PANs during the period covered by Table 2 were unchanged from those shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Numbers of children admitted to schools in the planning area 2020/21 to 2022/23:

Schools in the planning area	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Wigan North			
Mab's Cross Primary School	68	62	69
St Catharine's CofE Primary School	29	27	27
St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School	32	29	27
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	37	45	45
Woodfield Primary School	30	30	30
Total YR admissions for Wigan North:	196	193	198
Wigan North West			
Beech Hill Community Primary School	45	40	31
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	53	39	48
Wigan St Andrew's CofE Junior and Infant School	29	28	31
Total YR admissions for Wigan North West:	127	107	110
Total YR admissions:	323	300	308

Table 3: Number of offers made for 2023/24 and projected first preference data for 2024/25 to 2026/27 for schools in the planning area

Schools in the planning area	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Wigan North				
Mab's Cross Primary School	70	52	62	53
St Catharine's CofE Primary School	30	23	28	24
St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School	30	29	35	30
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	41	38	47	40
Woodfield Primary School	30	46	56	48
Totals for Wigan North:	201	188	228	195
Wigan North West				
Beech Hill Community Primary School	31	38	29	40
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	53 **	38	29	40
Wigan St Andrew's CofE Junior and Infant School	30	28	22	30
Totals for Wigan North West:	114	104	80	110
Totals:	315	292	308	305

** The LA told me that Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School have offered up to 60 places (15 more than PAN) due to being oversubscribed. The LA say that if that school continues to admit up to 60 children in future years, "it has the potential to increase surplus and be detrimental to the surrounding schools."

17. I note the following observations about what the data show in the two tables:

17.1 In Table 2, it is apparent that admissions rose slightly (by two children) in schools in Wigan North during 2020/21 to 2022/23 and decreased (by 17 children) in the same period at schools in Wigan North West. Overall, there was a decrease in admissions in that period across the planning area (of 15 children).

17.2 In Table 3, offers for places across the planning area are lower than in 2023/24 (though higher in Wigan North and much lower in Wigan North West). Projections of first preference places in the Wigan North West schools in the planning area for 2024/25 and 2025/26 show a marked decrease in the demand for places (though there is a decrease in demand for Wigan North schools in 2024/25, demand rises again in 2025/26 to the highest point in the period covered by the data in both tables, before dropping again). At its lowest point (in 2025/26) in Wigan North West schools, the demand for places will be 47 places lower than in 2020/21 (the highest number admitted to schools in Wigan North West in the three years data shown on Table 2). This is a substantial drop in the need for places.

17.3 When I applied a linear trend line to the data in both Tables 2 and 3, although the trend is slightly up over the period 2020/21 to 2026/27 in Wigan North, I can see that there is a much more significant drop in the schools in Wigan North West in the same period. This means the data show a decrease in demand overall in the planning area in that period.

17.4 If I agree to reduce the PAN to 30 at the school, Table 3 shows that there would not be enough places at the school to meet projected demand in 2024/25 and 2026/27. I will return to this particular issue at relevant points below.

18. Using the data in Tables 1 to 3, I calculated the change in the surplus number of places through the period 2020/21 to 2022/23 (when the total number of places in the planning area was 340) and for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 (when the total number of places in the planning area, based on PANs, will be 325 (assuming no change to the school's PAN)). I have put that data into Table 4.

Table 4: Number of surplus places in the planning area 2020/21 to 2023/24 (actual) and 2024/25 to 2026/27 (projected)

Years	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Number of surplus places	17	40	32	10	33	17	20

19. I have then looked at how the number of surplus places would change for the same period for three different scenarios (S1 to S3), taking into account changes to the school's PAN and admissions to the Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School:

S1 – Number of surplus places with no change to the school's PAN in 2024/25, if Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School admit to 60 between 2023/24 to 2026/27.

S2 – Number of surplus places if the PAN is reduced at the school in 2024/25 from 45 to 30 and Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School admit only up to the PAN of 45 from 2024/25.

S3 – Number of surplus places if the PAN is reduced at the school in 2024/25 from 45 to 30 and Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School continue to admit up to 60 children.

I have put the resulting data into Table 5.

Table 5: Surplus places 2020/21 to 2023/24 (actual) and 2024/25 to 2026/27 (projected) arising from scenarios S1 to S3

	2023/24 (actual)	2024/25 (projected)	2025/26 (projected)	2026/27 (projected)
S1	25	48	32	35
S2	25	18	2	5
S3	25	33	17	20

20. Tables 4 and 5 show ongoing surplus places in the planning area in the period covered by the data provided.

21. After considering data in Tables 3 to 5, I raised the following concerns with the LA:

21.1 Data for S2 in Table 5 show that in 2025/26 and 2026/27 there would be a surplus of only 2 to 5 places in the planning area, providing little flexibility should demand be higher.

21.2 Data in Table 3 for the school show projected demand for places in 2024/25 and 2026/27 is to be higher than the PAN of 30 that is being requested by the LA. In 2026/27, this could mean that there will not be enough places in the three schools in the Wigan North West area.

22. I asked the LA for its view about these concerns. The LA responded by telling me that:

“Although applicants have chosen to apply for schools in [the planning area], the map shows that in some cases there are other local schools close[r to] the family's home address. The projections show demand, rather than need.”

23. I pause to explain this further. Planning areas, whilst useful constructs for assisting pupil place planning for LAs, are artificial. By that I mean that they do not represent how all parents in an area might express their preference for schools for their children. For example, a family residing in one planning area might choose to express a preference for a school or schools in one or more planning areas. Schools in different LA planning areas may well be in close proximity to each other geographically (particularly with primary schools which are more numerous than secondary). An example is Marsh Green Primary School, which is in the Wigan West planning area. This is close to schools in the Wigan North planning area. According to GIAS, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is only 0.96 miles away from Marsh Green Primary School and the school is only 1.09 miles away from Marsh Green Primary School. Reductions in PANs in one planning area can therefore have a knock-on effect in others.

24. To illustrate its point, the LA provided me with a dot map showing that the demand for places in the school in 2023/24 was not made up entirely by applications from those resident in the Wigan North West area. The map showed me that 10 applicants were from outside the Wigan North West area and most of those were from postcodes some distance from the school in all directions.

25. The LA provided data for the projected number of surplus places between 2024/25 and 2026/27 for all of the planning areas in Wigan from which there were first preference applications in 2023/24, which I have put into Table 6:

Table 6: Projected surplus places across planning areas from which there were first preference applications for places at the school in 2023/24

Planning Area / Year	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Ince	62	49	35
Shevington	27	28	33
Whelley	8	-10	10
Wigan North and Wigan North West	33	17	20
Wigan West	52	34	45
Total surplus places	182	118	143

26. The LA went on to argue that:

“Based on the surplus projected in neighbouring planning areas and given that projected 1st preferences [at the school] will not necessarily come from children living within [the planning area], we are of the opinion that any children not accommodated within [the planning area] due to a reduction in PAN could be accommodated at an alternative local school.”

27. In its response in respect of S2 in Table 5, the LA also said:

“[...] the LA believes there will be sufficient capacity to meet overall demand, even if this is not at a preferred school.

Physical capacity at Beech Hill Primary and Sacred Heart Catholic Primary will not be removed, so should the need for additional places arise in the future the places can be reintroduced and pupils admitted over PAN.”

28. It was clear from the data provided by the LA, that it has a picture of projected demand in schools in the planning areas in Wigan. Therefore, it appeared to me that the surplus places in 2024/25 would have been obvious in enough time for what has been requested to have been dealt with through the consultation process prior to the determination of the 2024 arrangements. I raised this concern with the LA. Its response was:

“We acknowledged a need to address excess capacity for the 2023 intake in the planning area and this was met in part by Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School who consulted on a PAN reduction.

The LA’s intention was to wait to see the impact this reduction had on surplus places before making further reductions. This meant that we did not consult on a reduction to other PANs in the area for 2024 as we were waiting to know the number of preferences that would be received for the 2023 intake. We would then have considered consulting on a reduction for 2025.”

29. I also asked the LA to explain why it has not waited to consult on this reduction for 2025/26 (certainly as Table 3 indicates the number of first preferences expressed for places at the school is projected to be less than 30). It responded by saying:

“A variation is being sought now [...] because the Governing Body and Head Teacher of Beech Hill Primary requested the LA consider a reduction in PAN. This is due to the impact that falling rolls on Beech Hill Primary’s ability to set and maintain a balanced budget. It is believed that setting a PAN of 30 from 2024, rather than waiting until 2025 will assist the school with its financial planning whilst still ensuring sufficient school places in the area.”

30. The LA also told me that:

“The Governing Body and Head Teacher of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary [School] were asked to give an update on their intentions for future cohorts. Following a meeting with the Governing Body, the Head Teacher relayed verbally today that:

- The school would likely not have reduced its PAN had it known that Beech Hill Primary [School] and Marsh Green Primary [School] would reduce their PANs (Marsh Green Primary has reduced from 60 to 45).

- Governors have indicated that if future preferences are high and the school has a waiting list, it's likely that they will offer places over PAN again in the future.”

31. The LA has projected a surplus of places in the planning area for future years up to 2026/27, and a sizeable surplus across those planning areas in Wigan from which a first preference has been expressed from those living in those areas for a place at the school in 2023/24. Applying a linear trendline to the data in Table 6, I can see that the surplus across the relevant planning areas decreases between 2024/25 and 2026/27. However, at the point of the lowest surplus in 2025/26, it is projected that there will still be surplus places for the equivalent of just under four classes of 30 children. In 2024/25, when at its highest, it is projected that there will be surplus places for the equivalent of just over six classes of 30 children across the same schools (the equivalent of a small to medium sized infant school). It is also likely that the number of surplus places will be higher if the governors at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School seek to continue to admit over PAN during that period. This will reduce admissions into other schools even further and create a larger surplus overall.

32. Turning now to the school, the governing board told me in respect of the variation requested that:

“The governing board is in full support of the request for a variation in PAN.

The school is in an urban area and primarily serves a local authority housing estate. Within the locality there is no scope for additional building of new houses and families already allocated local authority housing tend towards very long tenancies. There are very few new arrivals of families with children within the vicinity. Projected numbers show a falling roll in the years to come which impacts significantly on school finances, jeopardising the stability of the school.

The shortfall in numbers this year alone has resulted in a minimum funding reduction of £180,605 (based on national funding formula and October 2022 census). The previous year saw a funding cut of approximately £110,000 because of surplus places. The school is unable to sustain its current provision and set a balanced budget.

We have narrowly avoided setting a deficit budget this year because of voluntary redundancies and natural wastage. Following a full consultation with a DfE School Resource Management Advisor [SRMA], without a school restructure and reduction in PAN, the school faces setting deficit budgets from the next financial year into the foreseeable future. Conservative deficit predictions for the financial years 24/25 and 25/26 are £62,366 and £235,400.”

33. I note from the SFB website that in 2021/22, the school had an in-year deficit balance of -£85k. Although it had a positive revenue reserve of £128.2k, if the school has sustained the reduction in income it describes and the in-year deficit shown on SFB, the revenue reserve will be reducing significantly if the school has to maintain the level of staffing and resources necessary to fulfil its current PAN. This is because schools are

funded per child. A reduction in the number of children admitted, therefore, results in a reduction in income. The governing board and LA are concerned that continuing to staff and resource the school for a higher number of children than is currently being or projected to be admitted is an unsustainable situation for the school. The school would be expected to work with the LA to ensure a balanced budget. That is what the governing board of the school have tried to do by requesting that the LA request this variation.

34. I asked the school to provide me with the current numbers of children in each class in the school. This allows me to look at how the school organises its classes, to see if mixed-age classes might be a solution to reduce costs as income declines as a result of falling admission numbers, rather than reducing the PAN. I have put those numbers into Table 7 (the total number of children on roll at the school at the point the numbers were provided was 286):

Table 7: Current numbers of children in each class in the school

Year / Classes	YR	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1/2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3/4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5/6
1	15	30	30	-	28	28	-	30	30	-
2	16	-	-	29	-	-	21	-	-	29
Totals:	31	30	30	29	28	28	21	30	30	29

35. It is clear the school are already employing mixed-age class teaching as a method of reducing costs in Years 1 to 6. Therefore, I asked the school to show me how it would intend to structure classes in 2024/25 if the PAN is reduced and also if it is not. I have put that data into Tables 8 and 9. In Table 8 there would be approximately 256 children and in Table 9 around 248. The difference is due to the fact that, as shown on Table 3, it is projected that there would be around 38 first preferences expressed for places at the school in 2024/25. The LA told me that eight of those children would be admitted to other schools if the PAN is reduced (for the reasons explored earlier), and so the total number of children on roll at the school in Table 9 is less.

Table 8: Proposed class structure in 2024/25 if PAN is not reduced

Year / Classes	YR	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1/2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3/4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5/6
1	19	20	30	-	30	30	-	30	30	-
2	19	-	-	9	-	-	25	-	-	14
Totals:	38	20	30	9	30	30	25	30	30	14

Table 9: Proposed class structure in 2024/25 if PAN is reduced

Year / Classes	YR	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3/4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5/6
1	30	28	31 ***	30	30	-	30	30	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	14
Totals:	30	28	31	30	30	25	30	30	14

*** It is likely that the school would be expecting a pupil to have left by this point in order to stay within infant class size regulations.

36. A reduction in PAN would allow the school to reduce the number of classes from 11 to 9, resulting in the need for less staffing and resources and reducing the pressure on the budget. It would also require, over time, less need to employ mixed-age classes. About that, the school told me:

“The mixed age classes present a real challenge in delivering the National Curriculum. The school has accommodated this by having a two-year cycle for many subjects, however, some subjects have very specific year group objectives. For example, the delivery of mathematics is particularly difficult as there are two very specific curricula to be taught. This means either teaching in year groups of 40+ (there is no reasonable physical space in which to do this) or using support staff (several of whom have taken voluntary redundancy or sought more stable employment elsewhere). Similar situations occur in the delivery of computing, music (Years 4 and 5 learn instruments) and swimming lessons in Year 3. Planning two separate curricula for mixed age classes causes additional stress and workload for staff which is why we try to limit the number of pupils in these classes where possible. As support staff numbers are being cut, the workload on remaining staff is unreasonable.”

37. Further, the school told me that:

“The school has an exceptionally high number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at 39%. We have a high percentage of pupils with EHCP plans and children who need one-to-one support. The school will not have the capacity to support children in a mainstream setting should further redundancies be necessary to set a balanced budget. The school has acted upon all the recommendations of the SRMA, including redundancy and reductions in contracted hours. Without a complete restructure following an agreed variation in PAN the school will be neither viable nor safe.”

38. The school, in its original letter to the LA requesting the reduction in PAN (dated 24 April 2023) provided data showing the increase in the actual / projected number of surplus places in the school from 2021/22 to 2026/27 (assuming that the PAN is not reduced on 2024/25). I have put that data into Table 10.

Table 10: Increase in the number of actual (A) (2021/22 and 2022/23) and projected (P) (2023/24 to 2026/27) surplus places in the school

Year Groups	2021/22 (A)	2022/23 (A)	2023/24 (P)	2024/25 (P)	2025/26 (P)	2026/27 (P)
YR	41	31	28	38	29	40
Year 1	44	41	31	28	38	29
Year 2	40	44	41	31	28	38
Year 3	34	40	44	41	31	28
Year 4	42	34	40	44	41	31
Year 5	45	42	34	40	44	41
Year 6	44	45	42	34	40	44
Totals	290	277	260	256	251	251
Surplus	25	38	55	59	64	64

39. Reducing the school's PAN from 45 to 30 from 2024/25 will mean the PAN is 30 indefinitely (unless it is increased as permitted under paragraph 1.3 of the Code or reduced further after an approved variation or a consultation). It is also projected to be the case that in 2024/25 and 2026/27 there will be more first preferences than places at the school. However, the projected first preferences (38 and 40 respectively – as shown in Table 3) would result in economically unviable classes in YR (such as is indicated in Table 8). These classes would follow through the school for five to six years causing further, and cumulative, financial concerns for the school.

40. I pause here to consider the impact of balancing decreasing admission numbers on school finances by reducing the school's PAN with meeting parental preference. Whilst the right for parents to express a preference as to where their children go to school is enshrined in law, admission authorities cannot give any guarantee that preferences will be met. Additionally, infant class sizes are limited to 30 (as set out in The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 and in paragraph 2.16 of the Code). The cost of a teacher and the resources necessary for an infant class, when compared to, say, a junior or secondary school teacher / class (where numbers are not limited), has to be borne by proportionately smaller income from the children admitted to infant classes. At its current PAN of 45, this means the school has to run two classes in YR with an average of only 22.5 children per class. This will be challenging for the school budget as the cost of the two teachers is being met from a smaller pupil income already. In 2024/25 only 38 first preferences are projected for places in YR. As shown in Table 8, this would mean the school organising YR into two classes of 19 children. A higher proportion of the school's overall income would have to be apportioned to the salaries for two YR teachers and this would cause an increased pressure on the school's budget.

41. I have tried to ensure that I have considered the competing needs of providing the school places that parents want for their children and the financial viability of the school. In

making my decision, I have taken into account that the LA has confirmed that there would not be a reduction in the capacity of the school (currently 326 according to GIAS). Should it be necessary in the future, the LA would seek to increase the PAN at the school. The LA has provided compelling evidence that it will be able to manage demand for places in the period covered by the data provided by using the surplus places in the planning area and in surrounding planning areas where the schools in those areas are close to Wigan North West. Agreeing to the request would not appear to frustrate the LA's duty to ensure a sufficiency of places in its schools in 2024/25 and beyond.

42. I therefore determine that the PAN at the school will be reduced from 45 to 30 for 2024/25.

Determination

43. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by Wigan Council for Beech Hill Community Primary School for September 2024.

44. I determine that the published admission number for admissions in 2024/25 shall be 30.

Dated: 21 July 2023

Signed:

Schools adjudicator: Dr Robert Cawley