



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR2539

Admission authority: Hampshire County Council for Clanfield Junior School, Clanfield, Waterlooville

Date of decision: 14 March 2025

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 Hampshire County Council for Clanfield Junior School for September 2025.

I determine that the published admission number shall be 64.

The referral

1. Hampshire County Council (the local authority) has referred a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for September 2025 (the arrangements) for Clanfield Junior School (the School) to the adjudicator. The School is a school for children aged seven to eleven and its normal year of admission is year 3 (Y3). The School is what is commonly referred to as a junior school and is located in Clanfield, Waterlooville.
2. The proposed variation is that the published admission number (PAN) be reduced from 90 to 64.

Jurisdiction and procedure

3. 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 (in so far 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”.

4. The local authority has provided me with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified. I have seen confirmation that the School’s governing body has been consulted on the proposed variation and supports it. I find that the appropriate procedures were followed, and I am also satisfied that the proposed variation is within my jurisdiction.
5. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation, and the Code. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:
 - a. the referral from the local authority received 14 February 2025, supporting documents and further information provided at my request;
 - b. the determined arrangements for 2025 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
 - c. comments on the proposed variation from the governing body and further information provided at my request;
 - d. a map showing the location of the School and other relevant schools; and
 - e. information available on the websites of the local authority and the Department for Education (the DfE) including ‘Get information about schools’ (GIAS) and ‘Find and compare schools and colleges in England’ (the DfE website).
6. The local authority has requested variations to four other primary schools in its area and I am the adjudicator appointed to consider all five requested variations. No decision in one case sets a precedent for another. In this instance, the School is not near any of the other schools so there is no or minimal impact from whatever decision I make in this case on the other schools.
7. 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 certain other limited and specified circumstances. I will consider below whether the variation requested is justified by the change in circumstances.

The proposed variation

8. The local authority has requested that the PAN for the School is reduced from 90 to 64 for admissions in 2025 and said in its referral,

“The reduction of the PAN to 64 will protect the school from financial difficulties and will enable them to plan their staffing and curriculum with certainty for future academic years.”

Consideration of proposed variation

9. 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 body 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.

10. The PAN for 2026 has been set at 64. Therefore, my decision only affects admissions in 2025.

11. I will first consider if there would be sufficient school places in the area if I were to agree the variation, then the demand for places at the School and then the reasons for the variation request. In considering whether there would be sufficient school places in the area if the PAN were to be reduced to 64 for 2025, I will begin by exploring the geographical context and the information available relating to the demand for places at the School. The map provided by the local authority shows the School as located on the edge of the village of Clanfield located in a mainly rural area. The DfE website, which measures distances in straight lines, shows one other junior school, which also admits children to Y3, within three miles of the School. The only other schools within three miles of the School are infant schools that do not admit children to Y3.

12. Local authorities have a duty to make sure that there are sufficient school places for the children in their area. Normally they assess need and provision on the basis of geographical areas known as planning areas. The School is in a planning area with five other schools. The planning area is unusual in that four of the schools admit children to reception year (YR) and two are junior schools. Of the four schools that admit children to YR, three are infant schools where the pupils join from YR, leave at the end of year 2 (Y2) and join another school for Y3. The remaining school, Rowlands Castle St John's Church of England Primary School (Rowlands Castle) admits children to YR and provides education until the end of year 6 (Y6). There is no need for pupils to leave Rowlands Castle for Y3 for a junior school but parents may wish to take this step. It is likely that those children seeking a place at the junior schools will attend one of the infant schools. In this case the oversubscription criteria in the arrangements include priorities for children or siblings of

those children attending “the linked infant school, Catherington CE Infant School or Petersgate Infant School”. The number of pupils attending a linked infant school and requiring a place in Y3 are known and this gives some certainty regarding demand for places compared to children joining YR.

13. I am conscious that parents have applied for places in Y3 in the expectation that the PAN for the School was 90. In these circumstances, if parental preferences were to be frustrated by the reduction in PAN, there would need to be strong justification for the reduction, especially as there is only one other state funded primary school that admits children to Y3 within three miles of the School. Rowlands Castle may have spaces in Y3 but it is not a normal year of admission for that school. Parents can apply for admission wherever they wish and will make their decisions based on their circumstances and will consider factors such as convenience, family connections and reputation.

Table 1: numbers of school places, first preferences and children admitted to Y3 in the planning area

	2023	2024	2025
Sum of PANs of schools for Y3	218	218	218
Number of first preferences	207	178	157
Number of children admitted	200	182	N/A
Vacant places	18	36	N/A

14. Table 1 shows that the number of first preferences in the planning area has been similar to the number of overall admissions, which could be expected in these circumstances. A first preference is the school to which a parent would most like their child to be admitted. The children will be offered a place to the highest preference school that could be achieved. The number of first preferences for 2025 is 157, which is 61 fewer than the sum of the PANs so, assuming that the number of first preferences does reflect the likely number of children to be admitted, if the PAN for the School were to be reduced by 26 places to 64 from 90, there would still be 35 vacant places remaining in the planning area. This would be 18 per cent of the sum of the places available (192) and a generous proportion to meet demand. I am therefore assured that if the PAN were to be reduced to 64, there would be sufficient places for local children.

15. I will now consider the demand for places at the School and the reasons why the governing body supports the reduction in the PAN to 64. A PAN of 64 would allow the School to plan on the basis of two classes rather than three classes for Y3 in September 2025. Table 2 summarises the admissions to the School.

Table 2: numbers of first preferences and children admitted to the School

	2023	2024	2025
The PAN for the School	90	90	90
The number of first preferences	85	72	57
Number of children admitted to Y3	82	75	N/A
Number of vacant places	8	15	N/A

16. Table 2 shows a significant drop in the number of first preferences for the School for 2025. The local authority has forecast that 55 children will be admitted to YR at the School in 2025. This is slightly lower than the number of first preferences and nine lower than the PAN requested.

17. Schools are largely funded on the number of pupils and the highest costs to a school budget are staff. Most primary schools aim to have around 30 pupils to a class. The School is not constrained in this by any regulations, as a junior school it could have more than 30 children to a class. Table 3 shows the class organisation at the School.

Table 3: class organisation at the School as provided in the referral

Year group	Number of pupils	Class sizes
Year 3	76	24
		26
		26
Year 4	77	23
		28
		26
Year 5	77	24
		26
		27
Year 6	59	29
		30

18. Currently the School has several classes which are relatively small with 23 or 24 pupils to a class. If a school has classes that are many less than 30, then this can mean that the income from the number of pupils is less than the costs of providing a class. If this happens over several classes, a school can have severe financial challenges. The numbers in the year groups are such that it would be difficult, without mixing children from different year groups, to organise the classes so that their sizes are financially efficient. The only year group where the classes are 30 or close to 30 is Y6 and these children will be leaving the School in July 2025.

19. I asked the governing body to provide further information on its budgetary situation. The information provided showed that the School was experiencing in year deficits which

were partly addressed by an existing carry forward. However, if the School were to continue to provide three classes for Y3 in September 2025, it was anticipated that the School would have an overall deficit of over £90,000 by the end of the 2025 – 2026 financial year. If the School were able to provide two classes for Y3 from September 2025 rather than three, a financial deficit is still anticipated, presumably due to the small classes throughout the School, but the School forecasts that this would reduce to close to £60,000.

20. The local authority forecast, following the closing date for applications, is that 55 children will be admitted to Y3 in September 2025. This would allow the School to provide only two classes. If the PAN remained at 90, if any parent wished their child to join the School, that child must be admitted until the PAN of 90 were reached. This could occur until the end of the summer term in July 2026. If it did occur, the School may have to reorganise its classes and be at risk of disrupting children’s education part way through the year and having higher costs than can be met by the budget allocated.

21. I have therefore concluded that there will be no frustration of parental preference if I agree this variation. In addition, the variation will help the budgetary situation although not entirely address it. Reducing the PAN to 64 will provide certainty for the School to organise its classes in an efficient manner. I therefore find that the variation is justified by the circumstances and approve the proposed variation.

Determination

22. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by Hampshire County Council for Clanfield Junior School for September 2025.

23. I determine that the published admission number shall be 64.

Dated: 14 March 2025

Signed:

Schools adjudicator: Deborah Pritchard