



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR2650

Admission Authority: Hampshire County Council for Foxhills Junior School, Ashurst, near Southampton

Date of decision: 13 November 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 Foxhills Junior School for 2025/26.

I determine that for admission to Year 3 in 2025/26 the published admission number shall be 70.

The referral

1. Hampshire County Council (the Admission Authority, the Local Authority) has referred to the adjudicator a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements (the Arrangements) for Foxhills Junior School (the School) for 2025/26.
2. The School is a community school for children aged 7 to 11 years in Ashurst, near Southampton. It is a co-educational, non-selective school with no designated religious character. The School is part of the Foxhills Federation and it is federated with Foxhills Infant School.
3. The School was judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted in March 2020 and it was deemed to be maintaining this standard at its last inspection in June 2025.
4. Parties to the request are the Local Authority and the School.
5. The proposed variation is that the published admission number (PAN) be reduced from 90 to 70 for admissions to Year 3 (Y3) in the academic year that began in September 2025. .

Jurisdiction and procedure

6. Section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act) makes provision for variations to determined arrangements. Paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the School Admissions Code (the Code) say (insofar as is 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”.

7. The Arrangements were determined by the Admission Authority on 20 February 2024.

8. The Admission Authority has provided me with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified of the proposed variation in line with the Code.

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

10. In considering the variation request, I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the Code.

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

- the referral from the Admission Authority dated November 2025, which was received by the OSA on 6 November 2025, and supporting documents;
- the determined Arrangements for 2025/26 and the proposed variation to those Arrangements;
- a map showing the location of the School;
- information available on gov.uk websites (including ‘Get Information About Schools’ (GIAS), ‘Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool’ (FBIT) and Ofsted) and the websites of the Local Authority and the School; and
- a previous OSA determination (VAR2438) in relation to the School.

12. I have not needed to seek any information from the Local Authority or the School further to that originally provided to me.

13. There is no formal consultation required for a variation and so parents and others do not have the opportunity to express their views. Clearly it is desirable that changes to arrangements 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.

14. I note here that the Arrangements for 2026/27 have been determined. This means that if I agree to the Admission Authority's request to vary the Arrangements for 2025/26 by reducing the PAN from 90 to 70 as proposed, it will be for that year only and will not have a bearing on subsequent years.

15. In the interests of dealing speedily with this and other requests for variations for schools, I have not considered other aspects of the Arrangements. Therefore, nothing in this determination should be taken as indicating that other aspects of the Arrangements do or do not conform with the requirements relating to admissions.

Consideration of proposed variation

16. The Local Authority, as the Admissions Authority, has proposed that the PAN of the School is reduced from 90 to 70 for entry to Year 3 in 2025/26. The proposed variation has the support of the School's governing body.

17. 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 proposed variation is justified by the change in circumstances.

18. The Local Authority told me that the reasons for it seeking a variation for the School are:

"On the national notification day for September 2025 admissions [April 2025], the school made 68 offers for Year 3. The planning area of Totton Primary made a total of 338 Year 3 offers.

There are 372 Year 3 places available within that planning area, following the approval to reduce the PAN at Bartley CE Junior School agreed by the OSA to go from 98 to 68 (VAR2573).

As of 30 October 2025, there were 67 children on roll at Foxhills Junior School and 335 children were on roll in Year 3 at the junior schools in the planning area demonstrating local capacity for any in-year applicants.

With numbers a long way short of 90 in three-year groups, the school cannot continue to run its historic 12 class model. The PAN for the school for September 2024 was varied by the OSA (VAR2438) to take the school from 90 to 70. This variation meant

the school could go from a 12-class structure to a 10-class structure, by running only two classes in the year 3 and year 4 cohorts. The table below shows that as of 24 September 2025, and because of continued low intake numbers, the school is currently operating 9 classes across the school with 2 classes in years 3, 4 and 5 and 3 classes in year 6.

Class	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
1	33	-	-	-
2	34	-	-	-
3	-	34	-	-
4	-	34	-	-
5	-	-	35	-
6	-	-	35	-
7	-	-	-	25
8	-	-	-	27
9	-	-	-	29
Total	67	68	70	81
PAN	90	70	90	90

Because the offers for September 2025 were low, failure to reduce the PAN and maintain a PAN of 70 for the 2025/2026 academic year opens the school up to risk and could result in the school needing to open an additional class. Without a variation, the school will need to continue admitting children up to 90 if applications are made naming the school.

The most recent number on roll data confirms that, even with the proposed PAN reduction, there will continue to be sufficient places available within the planning area. The Local Authority has not previously proposed a lower PAN in its formal arrangements due to the mismatch between forecast demand and the number of children in the linked infant schools. For example, reducing the PAN to 70 without considering offer data could risk frustrating demand from families at Eling Infant School, which would be unfair to those parents. Therefore, while a PAN of 70 may be viable from a planning perspective, the Local Authority only pursues such changes through an OSA application when specifically requested by the school and its governing body.”

19. I have given careful consideration to the latest available data in order to form a view about the sufficiency of school places in the local area if the PAN of the School is reduced

from 90 to 70 for 2025/26. I have also considered the demand for places at the School, the reasons given for the change in demand, the potential effect of the proposed PAN reduction on meeting parental preference, and whether the proposed reduction is justified taking into account all relevant circumstances.

20. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient places for the children in its area. To fulfil this duty the Local Authority assesses the likely future number of places to be needed and plans to meet that need. The Local Authority uses planning areas, which are geographical areas each containing a number of schools, for this purpose. The School is based in the Totton Primary planning area of the Local Authority. There are 13 schools in the planning area, nine are infant or primary schools and admit children into Reception Year. The remaining four, including the School, are junior schools and admit children into Year 3.

21. Table 1 summarises the data supplied to me by the Local Authority for the junior schools in the planning area; the number of children admitted in each of the previous three years, including 2025; and the forecast numbers for 2026.

Table 1: School places in the planning area and allocation to Year 3

	2023	2024	2025	2026
The sum of the PANs across the area	400	380	372	364
The number of children admitted to Year 3 or forecast to be admitted	347	328	335	313
The number of vacant places	53	52	37	51
The number of vacant places as a percentage of the total number of places	13.3	13.7	10.0	14.0

22. Table 1 shows that there has been a high number of vacant places for children entering Y3 in the planning area since 2023. The DfE document, “Basic need allocations 2026-27 and 2027-28: Explanatory note on methodology”, refers to the need for two per cent surplus capacity “to provide an operating margin for local authorities ... to support parental choice, pupil population movement, and general manageability of the system”. Despite the Local Authority’s actions to reduce the sum of the PANs across the planning area in recent years, the proportion of vacant places in the planning area remains higher than two per cent and would remain so if I were to agree to the proposed variation for 2025/26.

23. At this point in the school year, the great majority of children who will require a Year 3 place during the current academic year have already been allocated a place. From the data in Table 1, I am satisfied that if the PAN of the School were to be reduced to 70 for 2025/26, there would be sufficient places available in the planning area for any parents seeking a Year 3 place for their child.

24. I will now consider the demand for places at the School. Table 2 summarises recent admissions to the School.

Table 2: The number of children admitted to Year 3 at the School

	2023	2024	2025
The PAN for the School	90	70	90
The number of first preferences	71	69	66
The number of children admitted to Year 3	72	67	67
The number of vacant places	18	3	33
The number of vacant places as a percentage	20.0	4.3	36.7

25. As already stated, most families seeking a Year 3 place for their child in 2025/26 will have already secured one and Table 2 shows that all the children whose parents applied for a Year 3 place at the School were admitted. Table 2 also shows that if the proposed reduction in the PAN is agreed, there will still be three places available in Year 3. I am, therefore, assured that a reduction in PAN would result in minimal frustration of parental preference.

26. If the PAN remains at 90, the School is required to admit any child during the 2025/26 academic year whose parents request a Year 3 place at the School until 90 children have been admitted. Although there is no maximum class size for children in a junior school, classes of larger than 35 are unusual and they can become more challenging to manage in terms of the demands on teacher time and the space available in the classroom. If more than three children were admitted to the School, it is likely that classes would need to be reorganised and additional staff recruited during the year. This is potentially disruptive and unsettling for children and staff alike. Such a restructure is also likely to have a negative impact on the School's financial situation. By reducing the PAN to 70, the School will be able to plan with certainty knowing the number of classes and staff that will be required across the year.

27. Taking everything into consideration, I am of the view that the variation is justified by the circumstances, and I approve the proposed variation to reduce the PAN for 2025/26 to 70.

Determination

28. 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 Foxhills Junior School for 2025/26.

29. I determine that for admission to Year 3 in 2025/26 the published admission number shall be 70.

Dated: 13 November 2025

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Catherine Crooks