



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR2665

Admission Authority: Hampshire County Council for Church Crookham Junior School, Church Crookham, Fleet

Date of decision: 15 December 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 Church Crookham Junior School for September 2025.

I determine that for admission in 2025/26, the published admission number will be 99.

The referral

1. Hampshire County Council (the local authority) has referred a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for September 2025/26 for Church Crookham Junior School (the arrangements) to the adjudicator. The local authority is the admission authority for Church Crookham Junior School (the School). The School is a school for children aged seven to eleven years in the village of Church Crookham adjacent to the town of Fleet. I will, for the sake of clarity, refer to schools which provide for children aged seven to eleven years as junior schools and schools which provide for children aged from four to eleven years as primary schools although in law, both types are primary schools.
2. The proposed variation is that the published admission number (PAN) be reduced from 120 to 99 for admissions to year 3 in 2025/26.

Jurisdiction and procedure

3. 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”.

4. The arrangements were determined by the local authority on 20 February 2024. The local authority has provided me with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified of the proposed variation in line with the Code and confirmation that the governing body of the School has been consulted on the proposed variation.

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

6. In considering the variation request 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 dated November 2025 and provided 24 November 2025, supporting documents and further information provided at my request;
- b) the determined arrangements for 2025 and the proposed variation to those arrangements;
- c) a previous determination I made for a variation to the arrangements (case reference VAR2546). I will refer to this as the previous determination;
- d) a map showing the location of the School and other relevant schools; and
- e) information available on government websites including:
 - ‘Get Information About Schools’ (GIAS);
 - Find and compare schools and colleges in England (the DfE website); and
 - ‘Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool’ (FBIT).

7. 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.

8. In my previous determination I agreed that the PAN for 2025/26 could be reduced from 150 to 120. The arrangements for 2026 have been determined with a PAN of 120. This means that my decision in this case will only affect admissions for the current year, 2025/26.

9. In the interest 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

10. 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.

11. The local authority determined the PAN for 2025/26 as 150. In my previous determination I agreed a variation to a PAN of 120. In its request for the variation the local authority explained that 100 children are currently on roll at the School in year 3. The class organisation is four classes of around 25 pupils each as the School wishes to teach in classes with single year groups. Schools are mainly funded on pupil numbers and if there are many small classes in a school, this can lead to financial difficulties. The local authority therefore proposes setting the PAN at 99 and the School would be able to provide three classes rather than the current four. Each class would have around 33 children. This would be more financially effective. The governing body told me that the average cost of a classroom teacher is £43,606 per annum. In other words, three classes rather than four classes would, over a year, save the School at least that amount of money.

12. No pupil would have to leave the School, and 100 pupils would remain in year 3. If, however, a child were to leave, the local authority would seek to keep the number in year 3 at 99, which would be possible if the PAN were set at 99. Of course, any parent could appeal if refused a place.

13. In considering whether there would be sufficient school places in the area if the PAN were to be reduced to 99 for 2025/26, I will begin by exploring the geographical context. GIAS describes the School as “Urban city and town”. The DfE website, which measures distances in straight lines, shows eleven primary schools which educate year 3 children within three miles of the School and none within one mile. Four of these 12 schools are junior schools meaning that their year of entry is year 3, like the School. Pupils at primary schools which educate children between four and eleven years are likely to stay at their schools and generally will not be seeking a place in year 3.

14. 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 three

other junior schools; there are also four primary schools that educate children in year 3. There are five infant schools in the planning area which children leave at the end of year 2, mainly to join a junior school.

15. 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. Parents will take no account of planning areas when applying for a school place. However, as the children have already been admitted for 2025/26, there is clear data available on the number of pupils in year 3 and a summary is shown for the planning area in table 1 below.

Table 1: summary of places available in the planning area for year 3 provided November 2025

Number of vacant places in year 3 in primary schools	10
Number of vacant places in year 3 in junior schools	58

16. The sum of the PANs for the junior schools is 452. The variation request is for a reduction of 21 places. If I were to agree, the number of vacant places in year 3 in junior schools would reduce to 35. Thirty-five vacant places would be approaching eight per cent of the total of year 3 places in junior schools. This would be a generous proportion and sufficient to meet the needs of a child requiring a place in year 3 in the planning area. There are also ten vacant places in the primary schools in the planning area. I am therefore assured that if the PAN were reduced to 99, there would be sufficient places for a child requiring a place in year 3 in 2025/26.

17. The intention of reducing the PAN at the School to 99 is so that the School can have three classes of 33 for year 3 rather than four of 25. If the PAN is not reduced, any child for whom their parent applies for a place in year 3 at the School in 2025/26 would have to be admitted until the PAN of 120 is reached. An example of this is that there were 99 children admitted to year 3 in September 2025 at the School and then a further child admitted on 30 September bringing the total to 100 pupils. Reducing the PAN to 99 would prevent this happening automatically if an application were to be made, although the right of appeal would continue.

18. The governing body, in response to my enquiries, told me,

“If the PAN is reduced to 99 we will be able to put the current Year 3 children in three classes (and not keep, as we currently have, four classes)...Whilst we already have set an in-year deficit budget this academic year, moving forward we can't continue with the staffing structure of 4 teachers for this year group and reducing the school budget by £43,606 (i.e. one teacher) would make a considerable difference...We are planning a restructuring process to reduce some staff, such as Support Staff, Senior Leaders, etc. as our pupil numbers are reducing and, having the same number of

staff moving forward, we would have to reduce the number of roles we have in school.”

19. The FBIT website shows that the School, at the end of the last financial year, had an in-year balance of just under minus £300,000 with a reserve of nearly £240,000. This means that if the School continues to operate as previously, the School will be in a financial deficit. This must be avoided.

20. In summary, if the PAN were reduced to 99 there would be sufficient places for year 3 in nearby schools to meet any potential demand from children seeking a place in the academic year. Therefore there is very little risk of parental preference being frustrated and minimal risk of not being able to meet demand.

21. The School is likely to go into financial deficit if no changes are made to class organisation and changes to year 3 are reliant on reducing the PAN. I therefore determine that the variation is justified by the circumstances and agree the 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 Church Crookham Junior School for September 2025.

23. I determine that for admission in 2025/26, the published admission number will be 99.

Dated: 15 December 2025

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Deborah Pritchard