



Determination

Case reference: VAR2653

Admission Authority: Warwickshire County Council for Thomas Jolyffe Primary School

Date of decision: 16 January 2026

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 Warwickshire County Council for Thomas Jolyffe Primary School, for 2026/27.

I determine that for admission in 2026/27 the published admission number will be 30.

The referral

1. Warwickshire County Council (the Admission Authority, LA) has referred to the adjudicator a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements (the Arrangements) for Thomas Jolyffe Primary School (the School) for 2026/27.
2. The School is a community school for children aged four to eleven in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. It is a co-educational, non-selective school with no designated religious character.
3. Parties to the request are the Admission Authority and the School.
4. The proposed variation is that the published admission number (PAN) for admission to Reception Year in September 2026 is reduced from 60 to 30.

Jurisdiction and procedure

5. 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.”

6. The Arrangements were determined by the Admission Authority on 13 February 2025.

7. The Admission Authority has provided me with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified of the proposed variation in line with the Code. The School has provided me with confirmation that the governing body of the School has been consulted on the proposed variation.

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

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

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

- the referral from the Admission Authority dated 29 October 2025 and supporting documents;
- the determined Arrangements for 2026/27 and the proposed variation to those Arrangements;
- responses from the Admission Authority and the School to my requests for further information;
- information available on the websites of the DfE and Gov.uk (including the ‘Get Information About Schools’ (GIAS) and ‘Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool’ (FBIT) websites) and websites of the LA and the School;

11. 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.

12. I note here that the Arrangements for 2027/28 have been consulted upon but have not yet been determined. The consultation seeks to reduce the PAN from 60 to 30 for admission to Reception Year in 2027.

13. If I decide to vary the Arrangements for 2026/27 by reducing the PAN from 60 to 30 as proposed, it will have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for subsequent years.

Consideration of proposed variation

14. 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.

15. The Admission Authority has proposed that the PAN for admission to Reception in 2026 be reduced from 60 to 30.

16. The Admission Authority told me that the reason for it seeking a variation for the School is "the number of applications received by the school has dropped significantly for September 2025 with 33 children on roll. The School is already in a budget deficit and therefore, would like to safeguard its budget further by reducing the number of places for 2026 while we go through the formal consultation process of reducing the PAN for 2027."

17. The Admission Authority went on to describe how "the School is already having to undertake a plan to reduce the deficit budget. Low numbers in 2026 will significantly impact on that plan." The School is currently part of a Deficit Recovery Group working with the LA. This means that the School is already having to restructure curriculum provision and adjust staffing and resource levels to meet the financial challenges caused by falling pupil numbers.

18. The variation is intended to reduce costs for the School and support it in reducing an ongoing deficit and mitigate the risk of future in-year deficits.

19. The School has confirmed that the governing body of the School support the request to reduce the PAN and state that;

"The governing board understands that the proposed change to the PAN is based on demographic trends, specifically lower birth rate, and the high level of capacity within the local planning area. If the variation is agreed, the School will be better positioned to manage resources effectively and maintain high standards of education without unnecessary financial strain. Conversely, if the variation is not agreed, the School may face challenges in balancing staffing and class sizes, which could lead to inefficiencies and increased pressure on the budget."

20. In support of the variation request, and illustrating the financial challenge faced by the School, the Admission Authority provided the financial information in Table 1 about the School.

Table 1. Financial position of the School based on current structures if the PAN reduction is or is not approved based on figures supplied by the LA in Autumn 2025

-	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Estimated in-year balance.	£81,957	£62,817	-£19,078	-£86,479
Forecast balance with PAN reduction.	-£182,837	-£119,020	-£138,098	-£224,557
Forecast balance without PAN reduction	-£227,166	-£266,472	-£381,260	-£546,748

21. The information in Table 1 demonstrates that the PAN reduction is likely to reduce the School's deficit position significantly compared to maintaining the current PAN with low pupil numbers. The School state that:

"If the PAN reduction is agreed, it will help align staffing and resources with actual pupil numbers, reducing financial pressure and supporting long-term sustainability. If the variation is not agreed, the school will continue to face staffing inefficiencies and escalating costs, which will exacerbate the existing deficit."

22. This is because, with a PAN of 60, the School is obliged to admit pupils up to that number. In September 2025, the School admitted 33 pupils to Reception. The School is restricted to classes of no more than 30 in Reception by the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 (the Infant Class Sizes Regulations). This means they necessarily must provide two classes, two teachers, support staff, and resources for 33 pupils (unless they are able to adopt a model of teaching in mixed year groups, which is not always feasible). Funding received is based on pupil numbers. Where there are two classes and pupil numbers of just above 30, the funding received is significantly less than the cost of running two classes, thereby increasing financial deficit and potentially damaging the sustainability of the School.

23. FBIT confirms that in the financial year April 2024 to March 2025 the School had an in-year balance of -£33,991 and revenue reserve of -£264,794.

24. The LA has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient places for the children in its area. To fulfil this duty the LA assesses the future number of places to be needed and plans to meet that need. The LA uses planning areas, which are geographical areas and the schools within those areas, for this purpose.

25. The School is in a planning area with seven other primary schools. The LA provided information on the current and projected demand for places in the planning area, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Reception places available at schools within the planning area, and the number of children admitted to or forecast to require a place

Year	Forecast or actual number of Reception pupils	Current Capacity	Current Surplus	Capacity if variation is approved	Surplus if variation is approved
2025/26	299	330	9%	330	9%
2026/27	280	330	15%	300	7%
2027/28	277	330	16%	300	8%

26. The proposed reduction in PAN would reduce the number of places in the planning area by 30 pupils and the proportion of surplus places to 7-8% of projected demand. I am satisfied that the LA have demonstrated that there is adequate capacity in the area and that they are able to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient places. The LA also provided information that five out of the eight schools in the planning area recruited numbers significantly below their PANs in 2025.

27. I noted that in the information provided, the School has had more than 30 first preference applications for the last three years. Table 3 illustrates the first preferences for the School over the last three years.

Table 3: Number of first preferences applications for the School.

-	First preferences	Currently on roll in year group
2023/24	41	54
2024/25	35	41
2025/26	33	33

28. A reduction in PAN at the School means that it is possible a small number of pupils will not be offered a place in their preferred school. However, the LA duty is to provide sufficient places in the area and it has been demonstrated above that the LA is complying with this duty.

29. I have considered the competing needs of providing school places that parents want for their children and the financial viability of the School.

30. I accept that the LA has provided compelling evidence that it will be able to allocate a sufficient number of school places to meet the demand in the planning area. I also accept that by reducing the PAN at the School, the financial sustainability position of the School will improve significantly, although it will remain challenging.

31. I, therefore, approve the proposed PAN reduction for 2026/27 from 60 to 30 pupils in the Reception Year.

32. I note here that reducing the PAN does not reduce the overall capacity of the School unless accommodation is being removed from the premises. It is not being suggested that accommodation is being removed and so the physical capacity of the School remains the same. Reducing the PAN will not change that. What this means is that should there be a need for the School to increase its PAN and / or admit more children in subsequent years than it currently expects to, there remains the capacity in the building for it to do so.

Determination

33. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by Warwickshire County Council for Thomas Jolyffe Primary School, for 2026/27.

34. I determine that for admission in 2026/27 the published admission number (PAN) will be 30.

Dated: 21 January 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Mr Philip Lloyd