



Determination

Case reference: VAR2713

Admission Authority: Hampshire County Council for Sun Hill Infant and
Preschool

Date of decision: 18 May 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 Hampshire County Council for Sun Hill Infant and Preschool, for 2025/26.

I determine that for admission in 2025/26 the Published Admission Number will be 30.

The referral

1. Hampshire County Council (the Admission Authority) has referred to the adjudicator a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for Sun Hill Infant and Preschool (the School) for 2025/26 (the Arrangements).
2. The School is a community school for children aged three to seven in Alresford, Hampshire. It is a co-educational, non-selective school with no designated religious character. The School is located in the area of Hampshire County Council.
3. The Admission Authority for the School is the Local Authority (LA). As the LA is the Admission Authority, both terms are used throughout this determination.
4. The proposed variation is that the published admission number (PAN) be reduced from 45 to 30 for admissions to Reception Year (YR) in the academic year that began in September 2025.

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 20 February 2024.

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.

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 20 March 2026 and supporting documents;
- the determined Arrangements for 2025/26 and the proposed variation to those Arrangements;
- a response from the LA to my requests for further information;
- maps, including Google Maps and those showing the location of the School; and
- information available on gov.uk websites (including ‘Get Information About Schools’ (GIAS) and ‘Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool’ (FBIT)) and the websites of the School and the Local Authority.

11. I would like to extend my thanks to the LA for their responses to my requests for further information.

12. 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.

13. 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 School's PAN from 45 to 30 as proposed, it will be for that year only and will not have a bearing on 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 for the 2025/26 academic year the PAN be reduced from 45 to 30. Currently, the School only has 30 pupils in YR. The proposed reduction in PAN, if granted, will have the effect of preventing any in-year admissions to YR at the School for the remainder of the current academic year. The application is supported by the School.

16. 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 likely 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. The School is situated in the Alresford Primary Planning Area (the planning area). There are four other schools in this planning area which admit children to YR.

17. For the academic year 2025/26, there are a total of 150 YR places available across the planning area. Currently, there are just 126 YR pupils on roll in these schools. The School in particular has experienced a notable reduction in demand, with intake falling from 38 in 2023/24 to 30 in 2025/26. The LA has told me that this emerging pattern of fewer YR children at the School appears sustained rather than temporary and the current PAN of 45 is now higher than the level of demand the School is attracting.

18. The LA told me that the reason for seeking a variation is that the School has organised its classes in such a way as to have one class of 30 children in YR. This reflects the lower number of applications for 2025/26. The School is affected by the provisions of the School Admissions (Infant Class Size) (England) Regulations 2012 which require that infant classes (those where the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven during the school year) must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single qualified schoolteacher except in specific exceptional circumstances. Accordingly, the School had planned for, and employed, staff to run four classes in total for the year 2025/26 as set out in Table 1.

19.

Table 1: Current class structure of the School

	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 1	
Class	YR	Y1	Y2	Total
1	30			30
2		20		20
3		11	15	26
4			24	24
Total	30	31	39	100

20. If numbers in the current YR were to increase, the School would either be required to organise the children into five classes, in order to remain compliant with infant class size regulations or change its organisation and curriculum to have a mixed Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class. Moving from four to five classes would necessitate employing an additional qualified teacher and would substantially increase staffing costs, placing the School under significant financial pressure. Likewise, having to reorganise the children into mixed Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes mid-year would have resource implications around the curriculum. Reducing the current YR PAN to 30 will protect the School from being compelled to make these significant changes mid-year and will enable it to maintain a sustainable four-class structure.

21. I have been advised by the LA that the PAN for 2026/27 has been set at 45 and 38 offers of a YR place have been made for September 2026. Reducing the PAN for 2025/26 means that the School can maintain a four class structure next year, consisting of one YR class, one mixed YR/Y1 class, one mixed Y1/Y2 class and one Y2 class. This prevents the School from being required to open a fifth class should pupil numbers increase towards the existing PAN of 45. The proposed structure for 2026/27, based on offers for 2026/27 and a reduction in PAN, is set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Proposed Class Structure for 2026/27

	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 1	
Class	YR	Y1	Y2	Total
1	28			28
2	10	15		25
3		15	6	21
4			25	25
Total	38	30	31	99

22. I am told that the proposed PAN reduction will have a clear positive financial impact. The benefits will start to be realised from 2026/27, when the in-year deficit is forecast to

improve from £94,131 to £55,282. In 2027/28, the in-year deficit is forecast to improve from £165,145 to £97,368. Overall, the change would reduce the projected cumulative deficit by around £106,600 by 2027/28, supporting a more sustainable class structure and staffing model.

23. The LA has told me that should there be an application to the School for an in-year admission and there were no available spaces, then it is highly likely that there would be spaces at one of the other schools in the planning area. Table 3 shows the current spaces available.

Table 3: Current availability in Year R at schools in the planning area

School	PAN	Current number on roll	Current Spaces
Cheriton Primary	15	11	4
Ropley CE Primary	25	23	2
Four Marks CE Primary	48	46	2
Preston Candover CE Primary	20	12	8

24. Data provided by the LA also shows that over the last four years, the School has had either one or zero in-year admission applications. At this point in the school year, the great majority of children who will require a place in YR during this academic year have already been allocated a place. I am satisfied that if the PAN of the School were to be reduced to 30 for 2025/26, there would be sufficient places available in the planning area for any parents seeking a YR place for their child.

25. 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 30.

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 Sun Hill Infant and Preschool, for 2025/26.

I determine that for admission in 2025/26 the Published Admission Number will be 30.

Dated: 18 May 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Miranda Barnett