



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: ADA4602

Objector: A parent

Admission Authority: Bracknell Forest Council for Crowthorne Church of England Primary School

Date of advice: 8 July 2026

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I partially uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by Bracknell Forest Council for Crowthorne Church of England Primary School for 2027.

I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that they do not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the ways set out in this determination.

By virtue of section 88K(2) the adjudicator's decision is binding on the admission authority. The School Admissions Code requires the admission authority to revise its admission arrangements within two months of this determination unless an alternative date is set by the adjudicator. In this case I determine that the 'other matters' I have raised are addressed within two months.

The aspects relating to the objection to the catchment area that I have upheld must be addressed by 28 February 2027 for the reasons I have given in my determination.

The referral

1. Under section 88H(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act), an objection has been referred to the adjudicator by a parent (the objector), about the admission arrangements for September 2027 for Crowthorne Church of England Primary School (the arrangements). Crowthorne Church of England Primary School (the School) is a voluntary controlled school for children aged between four and eleven years. It is located in Crowthorne

in the local authority area of Bracknell Forest Council which is also the admission authority for the School.

2. The parties to the objection are:
 - a. the objector;
 - b. Bracknell Forest Council (the local authority);
 - c. Wokingham Borough Council (Wokingham); and
 - d. the Diocese of Oxford which is the faith body for the School which has a Church of England religious character (the faith body).
3. The faith body has not engaged with this matter despite various communications and requests for information made by the case manager on my behalf.
4. The objection is to the catchment area for the School which is used in the oversubscription criteria. The objector says that the current catchment area is contradictory to the local authority's own policies and is unfair. The objector raises various matters to support this view.

Jurisdiction

5. These arrangements were determined under section 88C of the Act by the local authority on 12 February 2026. The objector submitted her objection to the determined arrangements on 12 March 2026. I am satisfied the objection has been properly referred to me in accordance with section 88H of the Act and it is within my jurisdiction.
6. I have also used my power under section 88I of the Act to consider the arrangements as a whole and to determine whether or not they conform with the requirements relating to admissions and, if not, in what ways they do not so conform. I will refer to these as 'other matters' and they are covered in the section of the determination under the title of that name.

Procedure

7. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code 2021 (the Code).
8. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:
 - a) the objection received 12 March 2026 and supporting documents;
 - b) a record of the determination of the arrangements and a copy of the determined arrangements for 2027;
 - c) responses from the local authority to the objection and to my requests for further information;

- d) information provided by Wokingham at my request;
- e) information on a recent consultation on the arrangements and the responses to it;
- f) maps showing the location of the School, other local schools, their catchment areas, schools in other local authority areas and the locations of pupils attending them;
- g) information available on the websites of gov.uk including:
 - a. 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS); and
 - b. 'Compare school and college performance for schools in England' (the DfE website);
- h) information I received during a meeting I convened on 12 June 2026 at the School attended by the objector, representatives of the local authority, Wokingham and the School. I will refer to this as the meeting. My thanks to the School for providing a venue for the meeting.

9. I am grateful for the information provided to me by the objector, the local authority, the School and Wokingham, and the time taken to respond to my queries and to attend the meeting.

Background

10. GIAS shows that the School is for children aged four to eleven years and there are 208 pupils on roll with a capacity for 210. The published admission number (PAN) for the School is 30. The PAN is the minimum number of children to be admitted to reception year if there is sufficient demand. The School has seven classes with one for each year group.

11. The School was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2025 and was judged to be outstanding in all areas; similar judgements were made in previous inspections.

12. The arrangements set out that children with education, health and care plans (EHC plans) which name the school will be admitted. Then, if oversubscribed, children will be prioritised according to the oversubscription criteria. These can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Looked after and previously looked after children
- 2) Children who need to attend the School for medical or social reasons
- 3) Children of staff employed at the School

- 4) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission and whose parents meet the faith based requirements
- 5) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission
- 6) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a parent who meets the faith based requirements
- 7) Children who live in the catchment area for the School
- 8) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School and have a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission with a parent who meets the faith based requirements
- 9) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School and have a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission
- 10) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School with a parent who meets the faith based requirements
- 11) All other children.

13. The catchment area is what can be described as a 'bow-tie' shape with the School located in the knot of the tie and therefore at the narrowest point of the catchment area.

14. There are three other local authorities in close proximity to the School. These are the local authority areas of Surrey County Council, Hampshire County Council and Wokingham. The School's playground is aligned with the border between Wokingham and the local authority.

15. Relevant paragraphs of the Code are:

- a. Paragraph 14 which says: "In drawing up their admission arrangements, admission authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear, and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated. "
- b. Paragraph 1.8 which says: "Oversubscription criteria **must** be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. Admission authorities **must** ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs".

- c. Paragraph 1.14 which says, “Catchment areas **must** be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined. Catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school.”
- d. Footnote 24 to paragraph 1.14 which says, “R v Greenwich London Borough Council, ex parte John Ball Primary School (1989) 88 LGR 589 [1990] Fam Law 469 held that pupils should not be discriminated against in relation to admission to the school simply because they reside outside the local authority area in which the school is situated. Section 86(8) of the SSFA 1998 places an equal duty on local authorities to comply with parental preference in respect of parents living within and outside their boundary.”

16. Catchment areas are geographical areas used in oversubscription criteria where a child living in the catchment area has priority over those not living in the catchment area, as used in the oversubscription criteria for the School. The local authority uses the term ‘designated area’ but I will use the term ‘catchment area’ as used in the Code. Both terms have the same meaning. The local authority consulted and expanded the catchment area for the School in 2017.

17. A Cabinet paper dated 4 February 2026 (the Cabinet paper) explained that:

“the designated area for Crowthorne CofE Primary School was expanded to include the new development of Bucklers Park. The expansion was intended to account for an additional primary school to be constructed in Bucklers Park c. 2025, which would act as an expansion to Crowthorne CofE Primary School itself.”

18. Bucklers Park is an area designated for housing development. At the time of the meeting I called, some of the housing is occupied, particularly closer to the School, and other areas are yet to be developed. In the event, the additional primary school was not built because the anticipated increase in children created by a new and large housing estate had not transpired. The local authority decided that the designated site would be used for other educational purposes.

19. The Cabinet paper went on to say:

“the designated [catchment] area for Crowthorne CE school no longer represents the needs of local residents, specifically it excludes residents living close to the north westerly and south easterly border of the school grounds who are geographically close to the school but outside of the designated area. Conversely, residents living a significant distance to the north east and south west have a high chance of admission due to the shape of the existing designated area. The proposal put forward for

consultation was to revert back to the original designated area prior to the 2017 expansion. Sibling protection would be put in place for those siblings residing in the Bucklers Park development at the time of the change.”

20. The Cabinet report made a recommendation which was described as:

“made in light of the feedback received concerning fairness, inclusivity, and uncertainties arising from parallel consultations in neighbouring local authorities. Keeping the status quo will allow further exploration of alternative options, including awaiting the outcome of related policy changes in Wokingham Borough, gathering information on the approach from local academy schools, and reviewing whether a wider analysis of designated areas is appropriate.”

21. The Cabinet report summarised the responses to the consultation explaining that there were 77 responses with 44 (57 per cent) in support of the change proposed to the catchment area and 33 (43 per cent) against. The responses of those supporting the change were summarised in the Cabinet report as:

“families living closer to Crowthorne CofE Primary School would benefit from improved access. Additional advantages were highlighted, such as reduced traffic around the school and positive environmental impacts if priority was given to those living closer. Some feedback suggested that the proposals could go further to ensure fairness for families with children already attending the school, such as considering a higher priority for siblings within the oversubscription criteria. Those in support of the proposed change raised concerns about the potential disadvantage to Bucklers Park residents, with suggestions that reshaping the designated area, rather than reverting to a previously used one, might offer a fairer solution.”

22. The responses of those opposing the change were summarised as:

“• Reduced School Choice: Removing Bucklers Park from the designated area would substantially limit school options for families living in the development, creating uncertainty and potential disadvantage compared to other local communities. Wokingham Borough Council has recently conducted their own consultation on a proposal to remove designated areas completely from all maintained primary schools in their area. If academy schools in the Wokingham area adopt a similar approach, there is a potential risk that Bucklers Park could be left without any designated area schools. This scenario would lead to uncertainty for families regarding school admissions and could impact community expectations further around local school access.

• Impact on Homebuyers' Expectations: Many families expressed that they purchased properties in Bucklers Park with the clear understanding that the development fell

within the designated area for Crowthorne CofE Primary School and that changing this now undermines those expectations.

- **Community Cohesion:** Respondents expressed strong concerns that excluding Bucklers Park from the designated area would weaken its connection to the Crowthorne community, leaving residents feeling disregarded and excluded from the local identity they were promised and have been a part of.
- **Fairness and Inclusivity:** Respondents felt strongly that proceeding with the proposals as currently drafted risks creating a new form of unfairness. The changes do not reflect true inclusivity within the local area. A more balanced approach, such as reshaping the designated area rather than reverting to an outdated boundary, was widely suggested as a fairer solution.
- **School Sustainability:** School representatives of Crowthorne CofE Primary School highlighted that housing affordability within Crowthorne itself limits young families' ability to buy locally. Excluding Bucklers Park could accelerate declining pupil numbers, threatening the school's long-term viability and its ability to serve the wider community.
- **Securing places for siblings:** Concerns were raised over the ability for siblings within Bucklers Park to secure places at Crowthorne CofE primary school after being removed from the designated area and expressed concerns that although the 'Protected Sibling Status' offers some reassurance, respondents felt it only provides a short-term safeguard and does not address the long-term implications for growing families within the development."

23. The Cabinet report said:

"the decision cannot be based solely on the numerical balance of support versus opposition. Equal weight must be given to all arguments presented.

Given the feedback highlighting concerns around fairness in the proposed designated area, together with the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Wokingham Borough Council's consultation on removing designated areas, which could further impact the same area already affected by the proposed change to Crowthorne CofE Primary School, it is clear that proceeding with the proposals in their current form would not be fair or equitable to all parties. We therefore believe it would not be appropriate to move forward at this time and that further consideration of alternative options is required.

Not proceeding with the change at this time will provide an opportunity for further consideration and allow time for:

- The outcome of the consultation conducted by Wokingham Borough Council to remove designated areas from all its maintained primary schools to conclude.
- Further information to be obtained on the likelihood of local Wokingham academy schools adopting the same approach as Wokingham Borough Council regarding removing designated areas for their maintained primary schools.
- Further consideration to be given to the shape of the proposed designated area for Crowthorne CofE Primary School to ensure fairness for all residents.
- Consider if there is value in a wider review of all designated areas as opposed to just that of Crowthorne CofE Primary School.
- Allow time for the new School Place Plan and Capacity Strategy to be consulted on and finalised which focuses on adaptability of the school estate to deliver high quality education for all children within the borough.
- Ensure any future proposal is fair and equitable to all those in the community.”

24. The local authority therefore determined the arrangements for 2027/28 as they were for 2026/27 and retained the catchment area for the School as previously set in 2017.

25. Wokingham has removed the catchment area criteria for all the schools for which it is the admission authority. At my meeting Wokingham summarised its reasons for doing so as being the difficulty in maintaining rational catchment areas with new housing developments continuing to take place, and that parents understand distance, now the main oversubscription criterion. The primary schools nearest to the School, whether located in the local authority or Wokingham, are academies and the admission authorities for these schools have retained the use of catchment areas within their oversubscription criteria for 2027.

Consideration of Case

26. The objection is to the catchment area of the School and, as described above, it is roughly a bowtie shape with the School at the narrowest point.

27. The objector explained the local situation from her perspective and I have summarised the points made.

- a. The local authority said in its consultation, “There should be a reasonable expectation that parents can obtain a place at their local school. The Council’s principle is that there should be ‘local schools for local children’.” The children living locally to the School cannot attend their local school and so the local authority is not following its own policy.

- b. The current arrangements are unfair to those children and families who live very close to the School but not in the catchment area. Particular note is made that siblings may not be able to attend the same school and this will negatively impact families.
- c. An effect of children who live further away getting priority is that there are more car journeys to school creating traffic, parking and road safety problems as well as negatively affecting the environment.
- d. There is unfair discrimination as priority is given to those who live within the local authority's area as opposed to those who live locally. The objector refers to what is known as the Greenwich judgement which is referred to in the Code under footnote 24" (as set out earlier in this determination). says:

28. Not all of these are matters which are referred to in the Code. That does not make them irrelevant, but I must judge arrangements and objections by the law relating to admissions and the Code. Matters such as the effect on traffic and car parking are not part of admissions law and are, therefore, not within my jurisdiction. However, the Code does require that admission arrangements are fair and reasonable.

29. Fairness is a concept that is used in the Code but is not defined. Fairness can be described as a 'protean concept', in that it cannot be defined in universal terms, but its requirements will depend on the circumstances. Fairness is focussed on the effect of the arrangements on any relevant group. A factor which is relevant in the consideration of substantive unfairness is the reasons (or justification) for adopting a particular oversubscription criterion. These must be considered in context. It may be the case that the justification for the adoption of a particular set of oversubscription criteria could override any unfairness.

30. Oversubscription criteria by their very nature discriminate where there is more demand for places than places available. This means that some families will, where there is oversubscription, be disadvantaged. This is not unfair in itself. A child should be able to attend a primary school within a reasonable travelling distance of his or her home but cannot always expect to be able to go to the nearest school. In addition, what is considered a reasonable distance will depend on the local context and the age of the child concerned. Potential unfairness can be created if admission arrangements result in there being a significant number of children unable to attend a primary school within a reasonable travelling distance of his or her home.

31. Paragraph 1.8 of the Code requires that oversubscription criteria are reasonable. Reasonableness is not defined in the Code and I view it as the rationale for the arrangements and whether that rationale is followed. I am also aware that the terms 'unfair' and

‘unreasonable’ can be used interchangeably in common parlance. I will, therefore, consider unreasonableness as well as unfairness when considering this objection.

32. Clearly oversubscription criteria only become relevant where there is oversubscription. I have, therefore, looked at demand for places at the School in recent years as shown in table 1 below. My jurisdiction is for the arrangements for 2027/28 but previous patterns provide indications for what may happen in the future.

Table 1: demand for places at the School for 2025/26 and 2026/27

	2025/26	2026/27
Number of first preferences	48	39
Number of children admitted or offered a place	30	30
Number of first preferences not admitted or offered a place	18	9
Number of siblings not admitted	2	0

33. Table 1 shows that if there were to be a similar pattern to 2026/27 in 2027/28, that all those with siblings at the School but living outside the catchment area are likely to be admitted.

34. Table 2 provides more detailed data on those admitted and those not admitted in September 2025. No children were admitted with an EHC plan in September 2025 and none are anticipated for admissions in September 2026.

Table 2: further information on offers made for admissions in September 2025 to reception

Oversubscription criteria under which offered place	Number of offers	Furthest distance (miles)
1) Looked after and previously looked after children	0	N/A
2) Children who need to attend the School for medical or social reasons	2	0.713
3) Children of staff employed at the School	0	N/A
4) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission and whose parents meet the faith based requirements	1	0.624
5) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission	11	0.896

Oversubscription criteria under which offered place	Number of offers	Furthest distance (miles)
6) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a parent who meets the faith based requirements	2	0.347
7) Children who live in the catchment area for the School	12	1.056
8) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School and have a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission with a parent who meets the faith based requirements	0	N/A
9) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School and have a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission	2	0.44
10) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School with a parent who meets the faith based requirements	0	N/A
11) All other children	0	N/A

35. Table 3 provides the same information as table 2 for the offers of admission to reception made for September 2026.

Table 3: further information on offers made for admissions in September 2026

Oversubscription criteria under which offered place	Number of offers	Furthest distance (miles)
1) Looked after and previously looked after children	0	N/A
2) Children who need to attend the School for medical or social reasons	1	N/A
3) Children of staff employed at the School	0	N/A
4) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission and whose parents meet the faith based requirements	0	N/A
5) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission	10	1.018

Oversubscription criteria under which offered place	Number of offers	Furthest distance (miles)
6) Children who live in the catchment area for the School with a parent who meets the faith based requirements	1	0.502
7) Children who live in the catchment area for the School	11	1.118
8) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School and have a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission with a parent who meets the faith based requirements	0	N/A
9) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School and have a sibling who will still be attending the School at the time of admission	3	0.579
10) Children who do not live in the catchment area for the School with a parent who meets the faith based requirements	3	0.583
11) All other children	0	N/A

36. From the data provided by the local authority, no child included in tables 2 and 3 lives much more than a mile from the School and those children will be within the existing catchment area and likely to live at the furthest edges of the catchment area. Those who are admitted from outside the catchment area lived a maximum of half a mile from the School and either had a sibling at the School or met the faith requirements. Wokingham provided data on those who live in its area, but outside of the catchment area for the School and put the School as their first preference in 2025 and 2026. This information was:

“In 2025, there were 7 first-preference applications for Crowthorne CofE School from WBC (Wokingham) children, of which 2 resulted in offers. The remaining 5 children were offered places at Oaklands Infant School (WBC), their catchment school, located between 0.1 and 0.5 miles from their home addresses. One of these children subsequently attended an independent setting...

In 2026, there were 8 first-preference applications for Crowthorne CofE School from WBC children, of which 5 resulted in offers. Of the remaining 3 children, one was offered Oaklands Infant School (WBC) as their second-preference school. Oaklands is their catchment school and is 0.351 radial miles from their home address. The other 2 children were offered another preferred WBC school, which was refused, and they subsequently attended an independent setting...

In both years, children who did not receive a place at Crowthorne CofE School had access to other WBC schools within 0.5 miles of their home, with some families choosing instead to take up an independent setting.”

37. I will now consider the elements of the objection in turn. The first part is that the local authority is not following its policy of local schools for local children. The objector believes that a local school should be the one nearest to the child’s home. There are homes where their back gardens border the School’s boundary (separated by a footpath), but are outside the catchment area, and I understand how irrational this must seem.

38. The local authority explained that it must consider all children and that some children live a long distance from all schools and that if there were not catchment areas then these children could be considerably disadvantaged. The child that lives close to the school will have other schools within less than a mile. GIAS shows three schools that admit children to reception year within a mile (distances in a straight line) of the School and the furthest is 0.64 miles. The local authority takes the view that a local school does not have to be the nearest but one that is easily accessible. In all cases these children live in catchment areas for other schools.

39. I share the view that all children have to be considered and that it is reasonable and fair to have arrangements that try to achieve equity so that every child has priority for at least one school. I also believe that it can be reasonable to give priority to a child who lives further away from a school but for whom the School may be their nearest school, over one who lives very close to the school but also close to other schools, in order to achieve fairness.

40. The nearest school is clearly a local school but a school that is less than a mile away, in an urban situation is also a local school. I do not uphold the aspect of the objection that the local authority is not following its own policy in the arrangements by not giving higher priority to those living very close to the School.

41. The second aspect of the objection is that the arrangements are unfair to those children and families who live very close to the School but not in the catchment area. Particular note is made that siblings may not be able to attend the same school and this will negatively impact families. I am aware that particularly where young children are concerned, it becomes difficult if siblings attend different schools. However, that difficulty does not in itself make the arrangements unfair and, as the local authority brought to my attention, parents know the likely arrangements for a school when they apply for a school place for the first child and it is their responsibility to think of how this will affect their personal arrangements.

42. I also note that no sibling was refused a place for admissions in 2026, whether they lived in the catchment area or not.

43. However, in this instance there is a lack of logic to the catchment area itself. It does not follow the local authority boundary and parts are in Wokingham. It is oddly narrow where the School is located and widens at the furthest points. The catchment area, apart from the addition made in 2017 in light of the new housing development at Bucklers Park, has not been reviewed as far as the parties are concerned and the logic for its shape is only that it is historically so. The objector suggested at the meeting that, prior to 2017, the catchment area was based on the local parish but the faith body provided no view on this when asked.

44. The local authority explained at the meeting that it had realised that in consulting on reducing the size of the catchment area by removing the part added in 2017, it had been too simplistic. At the meeting we stood by properties that are right by the School, but outside the catchment area. There was no full explanation for why they are outside the catchment area. This leads me to the view that the catchment area is unreasonable, in that there appears to be limited reasons why it is as it is; in other words there is a lack of rationality. As above, I accept the rationale that those who live further from any school should have priority for a school and this can be above those who live close to several schools, but this approach does not explain the catchment area. I, therefore, believe the catchment area is unreasonable and uphold this aspect of the objection.

45. The third aspect of the objection was the effect on traffic, car parking and, therefore, the environment. The School has no parking near for parents dropping off children and is located by a busy road. Therefore, the more children who come by car, and this is more likely for those who live some distance from the School, the more traffic difficulties there can be. However, parents often drop their children off on their way to work even if they live a short distance from a school. In addition, there are many schools who have similar problems with traffic. Lack of car parking and increased traffic is not, in itself, a reason to deem arrangements to be unreasonable or unfair and there are no other grounds in the Code for this aspect of the objection. I, therefore, do not uphold this aspect of the objection.

46. The last part of the objection is that there is unfair discrimination as priority is given to those who live within the local authority's area as opposed to those who live locally and the objector referred to the Greenwich judgement (above). No parent is prevented from applying for a place at the School because they do not live in the local authority's area. The catchment area includes part of Wokingham and is not exclusively in the local authority's area. I see no grounds for unlawful or unfair discrimination in this matter. I do not uphold this aspect of the objection.

47. Overall therefore, I partially uphold the objection because there is limited rationale for the existing catchment area and the context has changed but not the catchment area.

48. Catchment areas are not easy matters to change because, such as in this situation, they are part of a patchwork of catchment areas designed to make sure that every child has a priority for at least one school. There is no quick fix to this. Changes to one catchment area

has bigger implications and can lead to unfairness to others. I note, for example, that the governing body opposed the proposed reduction in the size of the catchment area as it considered there to be a potential risk to the long term viability of the School due to the national reduction in the number of young children.

49. However, in this instance the catchment area is unreasonable as it stands. This will be complicated to address and this will take time and thorough consultation across the area, including with the admission authorities for the schools in Wokingham. It is even possible that the catchment area could, following consultation continue as it is, if there are good and sufficient reasons to do so. However, currently, it appears to me to be illogical.

50. Understanding the complexity involved, I wish to give ample time for a thorough consultation and therefore will set 28 February 2027 as the date by which the arrangements must be revised. For avoidance of doubt, this means that parents will apply for places and the current arrangements will apply for admissions in 2027/28 and any revisions to the arrangements will take effect for admissions in 2028/29 (28 February 2027 is the date by which the admission arrangements for 2028/29 must be determined).

Other matters

51. Having considered the arrangements as a whole it appeared to me that there are other matters which do not conform with requirements of the Code and so I brought them to the attention of the local authority. These matters are:

- a) The arrangements say: "If the number of requests for places is equal to or less than the number of places available, then all applicants could be offered a place at that school." I have added underlining for emphasis.

Paragraph 15d) of the Code says, "If a school is undersubscribed, any parent that applies **must** be offered a place."

Paragraph 1.6 of the Code says: "If the school is not oversubscribed, all applicants **must** be offered a place (with the exception of designated grammar schools - see paragraph 2.8 of this Code)."

Paragraph 2.8 of the Code says, "With the exception of designated grammar schools, all maintained schools, and academies, including schools designated with a religious character, that have enough places available **must** offer a place to every child who has applied for one, without condition or the use of any oversubscription criteria."

The use of the term 'could be' in the arrangements implies that all applicants may not be offered a place in these circumstances (and it does not appear that any of

these schools are designated grammar schools). Therefore, the arrangements are unclear and do not comply with the Code (14, 15d), 1.6 and 2.8).

- b) The arrangements say, "In circumstances where more applications than places are received, the following criteria will be used." The arrangements explain that children with EHC plans that name the school will be admitted and then say, "After this requirement has been satisfied the following rules will apply:" and the oversubscription criteria are provided. Paragraph 1.6 of the Code says: "The admission authority for the school **must** set out in their arrangements the criteria against which places will be allocated at the school when there are more applications than places and the order in which the criteria will be applied."

However, the reference to 'rules' does not make it clear that the oversubscription criteria are in order of priority. The arrangements do not meet the requirements of the Code in this regard because they are not clear.

- c) The arrangements say, "Where demand exists, schools admit up to their admission number and no places are reserved for pupils moving into their designated area."

It may be that this means that there is no guarantee of a place under any criteria, including for those living in the designated area. However, it is not clear to me why there is a specific reference to those moving into the designated area and this makes the arrangements unclear, and, therefore, not compliant with the Code, as it could imply that places are reserved for pupils already living in the designated area.

52. The local authority has told me that it will address these matters, as permitted by paragraph 3.6 of the Code, which is welcomed. As the local authority has accepted that changes are required, I will not discuss them further other than to make clear that the Code requires that the arrangements be amended to address the points set out here.

Determination

53. In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I partially uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by Bracknell Forest Council for Crowthorne Church of England Primary School for 2027/28.

54. I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that they do not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the ways set out in this determination.

55. By virtue of section 88K(2) the adjudicator's decision is binding on the admission authority. The School Admissions Code requires the admission authority to revise its admission arrangements within two months of this determination unless an alternative date is

set by the adjudicator. In this case I determine that the 'other matters' I have raised are addressed within two months.

56. The aspects relating to the objection to the catchment area that I have upheld must be addressed by 28 February 2027 for the reasons I have given in my determination.

Dated: 8 July 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Deborah Pritchard