



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: ADA4721

Objector: Staffordshire County Council

Admission Authority: Affinity Learning Partnership for Richard Wakefield Church of England Primary Academy

Date of advice: 18 August 2026

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by the Affinity Learning Partnership for Richard Wakefield Church of England Primary Academy, for 2027/28.

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.

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 Staffordshire County Council (the Objector or LA), about the admission arrangements (the Arrangements) for September 2027 for Richard Wakefield Church of England Primary Academy (the School). The School is an academy for children aged between three to eleven years old, located in Tutbury in Burton-upon-Trent. The Admission Authority for the School is the Affinity Learning Partnership (the Trust). The School is one of seven schools in

the Trust which includes three secondary schools, one other primary school, one infant school and one junior school.

2. The Local Authority for the area in which the School is located is Staffordshire County Council (the LA or Objector). The School has a Church of England religious character and the Diocese of Lichfield is the faith body.
3. The parties to this objection are:
 - The Objector
 - The Trust
 - The Diocese of Lichfield (the Diocese).
4. The objection is to the decision of the Trust to reduce the published admission number (PAN)¹ for entry to Reception (YR) at the School from 45 to 30 for 2027/28.
5. I would like to take the opportunity to give my thanks to the Objector and the Trust for the way in which they presented their views and for their prompt responses to my requests for further information / data. I did not receive any response from the Diocese.

Jurisdiction

6. The terms of the academy agreement between the Trust and the Secretary of State for Education require that the admissions policy and arrangements for the School are in accordance with admissions law as it applies to maintained schools.
7. These Arrangements were determined under section 88C of the Act by the Trust for the School.
8. A consultation period took place prior to the determination of the Arrangements between 18 December 2025 and 29 January 2026.
9. The Objector submitted their objection to the determined Arrangements on 15 May 2026.

¹ As part of determining their admission arrangements, all admission authorities **must** set an admission number for each relevant age group. The relevant age group is the age group at which pupils are or will normally be admitted to the school e.g. Reception, Year 7 and Year 12 where the school admits external applicants to the sixth form.)

10. 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.
11. I note here that the Arrangements for 2028/29 have not yet been determined. My jurisdiction is for the 2027/28 arrangements only. This means that if the objection is not upheld, the current PAN will have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for subsequent years.
12. 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

13. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code (the Code).
14. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:
- the objection dated 15 May 2026 and supporting documents;
 - a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Trust on 24 March 2026 at which the arrangements were ratified (having been determined by email in the interim on 12 March 2026);
 - the determined Arrangements for 2027/28;
 - responses from the LA and the Trust to the objection and to my requests for further information;
 - confirmation of when consultation on the Arrangements last took place and information of the nature of the consultation and responses to it;
 - maps, including Google Maps, and those showing the location of the School and other relevant schools; and
 - information available on the websites of gov.uk (including the 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS), 'Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool' (FBIT) and Ofsted websites), the LA, the School and the Trust.

Background

15. According to GIAS, the school is a non-selective, co-educational, primary academy with a Church of England religious character. I note the capacity of the School is set at 300 and the current population is stated to be 255.
16. The School is located in the Objector's North West Burton (NWB) planning area and is one of five primary schools in that area. It serves a large rural catchment area with the majority of children living in Tutbury, a village in the north west of Burton-Upon-Trent, close to the Staffordshire border with Derbyshire.
17. The School was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2023 and the School was rated as Good.
18. The PAN of the School for 2027/28 was determined to be 30. In previous years, including 2026/27, the PAN was 45.
19. The Arrangements set out that children with education, health and care plans will be admitted first. Then, in times when oversubscribed, children will be prioritised according to the oversubscription criteria. These can be summarised, in order of application, as follows:
 - Looked after children and those who were previously looked after;
 - Children of staff in certain circumstances;
 - Medical grounds or exceptional circumstances;
 - Children with a sibling at the School;
 - Children resident in the School's catchment area;
 - Distance from the School.
20. At my request, the Admission Authority provided me with data showing the number of children in each year group (as of July 2026). I have put that data into Table 1 alongside data provided by the LA showing the number of births in the School's catchment area for each year group.

Table 1: Number of children in each year group as of 6 July 2026 and births in the School's catchment area for each year group

Year group	No. of children	Birth year	Births in catchment area relating to that year group
Reception Year	36	2020/21	38
Year 1	26	2019/20	38
Year 2	30	2018/19	33
Year 3	49	2017/18	29
Year 4	26	2016/17	28
Year 5	44	2015/16	47
Year 6	43	2014/15	No data

21. The LA has told me that the sum of PANs for the NWB planning area will be 225 for 2026/27. It was previously 255 but John of Rolleston Primary School (JRPS) has reduced its PAN from 60 to 30 with effect from 2026/27. I have been told by the LA that future projections for primary applications are as shown in Table 2. I have included calculations for vacant places based on the sum of the PANS as 225, which is based on the School having a PAN of 45, and also on 210 which will be the total number of places based on the School's reduced PAN of 30.

Table 2: Projected applications and vacant places for the NWB planning area

Reception Year entry	Births in catchment area relating to that cohort	Projection for NWB planning area	Vacant based on sum of PANs of 210/225	Surplus places as a percentage of total places available based on sum of PANs of 210/225
2026/27	45	211	-1/14	-0.5/6.2
2027/28	26	191	19/34	9.0/15.1
2028/29	42	210	0/15	0/6.7
2029/30	26	191	19/34	9.0/15.1

22. 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”. Although I only have data for the NWB planning area, it is evident the LA will struggle with an operating margin for 2028/29 if the PAN at the School remains at 30. The projected cohort for 2028/29 looks very similar to the places offered for 2026/27, whereas the projected cohort for 2027/28 looks very similar to that projected for 2029/30. It is clear there is significant fluctuation between consecutive years.
23. In December 2025, the Trust Board agreed to consult on reducing the PAN at the School from 45 to 30. It is not clear from the minutes of the meeting exactly why the decision was made, although it is evident that for 2027/28 alone, it is unlikely that the School would receive 45 allocations. However, for 2026/27, the School has been allocated 43 pupils with 40 being a first preference. In its response to my request for further information, the Trust told me that it has been using 40 children as a projected estimation for 2027/28. On this basis, the allocation for 2028/29 would be likely to be even higher.
24. The Trust sent out a consultation letter dated 18 December 2025. In the letter, the Trust set out that the rationale for the proposal was three-fold: current and projected pupil numbers suggested that a smaller intake better reflects local demand; adjusting the PAN would help ensure optimal class sizes, high-quality teaching, and appropriate use of school facilities; and a lower PAN would allow the School to allocate resources effectively to provide the best possible education for all pupils. No data were provided in the letter to support the rationale.
25. The letter also stated that the proposal was “in consultation with the Local Authority” and that the Trust had considered the effect on local families and nearby schools and believed the proposed PAN would continue to meet community needs. There was no evidence in the letter of what consideration of the impact had taken place and how the conclusion had been reached. There was nothing setting out what the position of the LA was, and indeed the letter might have led some readers into believing that the LA supported the proposal. There were no references to any potential negative impacts of the proposal.
26. It is clear that the School, if not already aware, could have sought the birth data provided to me by the LA, in order to consider the needs of the

community. This information was relevant to the proposal. I would have expected the notice to include it, to enable consultees to properly understand the proposal and express their views on it, in accordance with the requirements that apply to public consultations set out in the judgement in *R v Brent LBC ex p Gunning* (1985) 84 LGR 168.

27. I am told by the Trust that it published the consultation on the School and Trust websites, emailed it to local schools, nurseries and neighbouring authorities and sent it to the Diocese of Lichfield. Paragraph 1.47 of the Code requires that “admission authorities **must** consult with: (a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen.” For a primary school, the people most likely to have a view about the proposed changes would be parents of children not yet in school. Examples of good practice to ensure these parents are aware of the proposals would include placing information about the consultation in local newspapers, GP surgeries, libraries, local supermarkets and using social media. In addition, merely emailing the consultation to nurseries and schools without asking them to publicise it to potential parents means that the Trust cannot be certain the consultation reached the intended audience.
28. An “information” meeting for parents was held on 21 January 2026, but no one attended and the only objection received was from the LA. The LA responded to the consultation on 27 January 2026 setting out its objections to the reduction in PAN and subsequently met with the Trust on 24 April 2026. I note here that the LA is not concerned about its ability to provide school places for 2027/28 but it is concerned about 2028/29, as it would not be able to bring an objection in respect of 2028/29 if the School maintains the PAN of 30 for that year (in accordance with paragraph 3.3 b) of the Code).
29. I have not been provided with any evidence to show that the LA’s response to the consultation was discussed. There are no minutes of Trust Board meetings other than a meeting on 17 December 2025 which agreed the consultation should go ahead, and a meeting on 24 March 2026 which ratified a decision to reduce the PAN. When asked by me, the Trust told me that the arrangements were determined by email on 12 March 2026. The Trust provided me with an undated paper titled “Richard Wakefield CE Primary Academy Admissions Arrangements 2027” which appears to be a recommendation for the Board to reduce the PAN to 30.
30. The paper does not address the LA’s specific issue with projected admissions for 2028/29. Any reasoning is contained in an appendix to the paper which is a draft response to the LA. The draft response stated that

the Trust had given careful consideration to the LA's concerns on future sufficiency of places but did not consider that the evidence justified retaining a PAN of 45. In relation to future demand it says only that "should there be a material and sustained increase in demand in future years, the PAN can be reviewed at that point in line with statutory processes." Therefore, the PAN remains set at 30 for 2027/28, in future years, unless and until it is changed again.

Consideration of Case

31. Because of the School's rural location, it is important to the LA that the School can accommodate all children in its catchment area requiring school places, so as to avoid unnecessary transportation of young children outside of the local area, and to ensure that parents can secure places at their local school.
32. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 requires that the LA secures that sufficient primary education is available to meet the needs of the population in their area. In addition, local authorities have statutory duties to provide free school transport to children attending their nearest suitable school where a child under eight would have to travel over two miles to school, and a child over eight would have to travel over three miles.
33. The LA is concerned that, due to the anticipated demand for places in 2028/29, a PAN of 30 at the School would result in some refusals being made to children that live in the catchment area of the School. This concern also reflects the current oversubscription criteria, which place children living in the catchment area below four other priority categories. If children displaced are those in the catchment area, the fact of the School's location means that those children are likely to be eligible for school transport, for which the LA would be financially liable until the children leave the primary phase of their education.
34. In relation to the oversubscription criteria, the LA told me that in 2025, there were five children who do not live in the catchment area who were offered places, as they ranked above catchment children, due to having an older sibling at the school.
35. The Trust has told me:

"The Local Authority suggested that the Over Subscription criteria could be amended to prioritise catchment area to second, behind Children in Care. This would prioritise them over children of staff,

children with medical conditions, and siblings. This was something that the Admissions Authority was prepared to consider as a compromise.”

This has not materialised in the Arrangements so I am not able to take it into account.

36. The LA has provided me with detailed analysis of the potential impact of a PAN of 30 on the 2028/29 cohort. The analysis shows that twelve children would not be allocated a place at the School. This is based on children born in the catchment area of the School if all children resident in the catchment area were ranked solely on distance. This does not account for children who have older siblings at the School who do not reside in the catchment area but who will be ranked higher than children in the catchment area based on the current Arrangements. This potentially adds more children to this list.
37. The analysis shows that, using the 2026/27 allocation data, eight of the twelve children in the catchment area displaced by the PAN of 30, would not be able to be accommodated at one of the three next nearest schools. They would, therefore, require transport to be provided by the LA. Of the four remaining children who could be accommodated at one of their three nearest schools, two children would still require LA funded transport, as the home to school distance would exceed the two miles set as reasonable for children aged under eight.
38. The LA has told me that the School has historically had a PAN of 40 to 45 for over 20 years, despite fluctuations in pupil numbers. I do not consider a long history of a PAN to be relevant. It is the projections of requirement that are the key consideration in determining whether the objection should be upheld. I have instead looked at the recent history of admissions and the projections for the next few years which are a better indicator of demand. It is clear from the data that both recently and in the near future, demand has and will fluctuate from year to year.
39. I note that the majority of the School’s population is from its catchment area and that the majority of children living in the catchment area attend the School. Tables 3 and 4 below illustrate this.

Table 3: The catchment areas where children attending the School live as at October 2025

Catchment area	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Richard Wakefield	28	19	25	37	22	33	34
Other Burton schools	4	4	1	7	3	4	5
Derbyshire	4	1	4	5	1	7	4
Total cohort	36	24	30	49	26	44	43
Percentage of total cohort living in the School's catchment area	77.8	79.2	83.3	75.5	84.6	75.0	79.1

Table 4: Schools attended by children living in the School's catchment area as at October 2025

Catchment area	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Richard Wakefield	28	19	25	37	22	33	34
The Mosley Academy	3	1	3	4	3	2	2
John of Rolleston (JRPS)	3	4	2	3	2	3	1
William Shrewsbury	0	0	0	1	2	0	1
Other Staffordshire schools	3	1	1	4	4	2	1
Derbyshire schools	0	1	2	1	3	2	2
Total cohort	37	26	33	50	36	42	41
Percentage of children living in the School's catchment area who attend the School	75.7	73.1	75.8	74.0	61.1	78.6	82.9

40.I have taken into account that the reduction in PAN from 60 to 30 places from September 2026 at JRPS means that the demand for the School may

increase for those children who would otherwise have attended JRPS, but might now be displaced on the distance they live from the JRPS. For 2027/28, JRPS have catchment area as their fourth oversubscription criterion (below looked after children, children of staff and siblings).

41. I have also been told by the LA that there is increased demand for school places from housing developments in the area close to The Mosley Academy which means there will be increased demand from children local to The Mosley Academy in the future.

42. With the exception of the 2024/25 YR cohort, all recent cohorts admitted to the School at YR have exceeded the PAN of 30 set for 2027/28. The Trust said, in its draft response to the LA's consultation response, that:

“...fluctuations above 30 can be managed through the school's existing admissions processes, including the ability to admit above PAN in exceptional circumstances where this is required to meet statutory duties”.

I asked the Trust for more information on this and it told me that:

“Where admissions above PAN are necessary, the school would implement appropriate operational measures—for example, adjusting class organisation, deploying additional staff where required, or making temporary use of available teaching spaces—to ensure that the quality of education and pupil welfare are maintained... The expectation is that any admissions above PAN would be limited, exceptional, and managed within the school's established planning and resource arrangements.”

43. A school is not obliged to admit children over its PAN although a parent can appeal. In addition, the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 and paragraph 2.16 of the Code would effectively deter the School from admitting above its PAN of 30 for YR, as once a class exceeds 30 children, an additional teacher needs to be employed. A school may exceptionally admit additional children to a class of 30 but only in limited circumstances (paragraph 2.16 of the Code). This is not, therefore, a solution for “fluctuations above 30” as set out by the Trust.

44. I accept the Trust's position, as stated in its draft response to the LA, that the School has rarely admitted to PAN and has instead operated mixed-age classes in order to manage fluctuating cohort sizes. The Trust does

not consider this is “optimal for long-term planning”. Many schools deal with the issue of infant classes in excess of 30 by using mixed-age teaching, as do most schools with a PAN that is not a multiple of 30. This is particularly common in small and rural schools. The Trust has told me that for 2026/27 it will be deploying mixed-age teaching in Years 1 and 2. This means that it will have two classes of 30 children each instead of having to have two smaller Year 1 classes and one Year 2 class.

45. I asked the Trust about 2027/28. They project 40 children in YR (if the PAN reverts to 45) and have responded on that basis stating they would need two YR classes.

46. In its response to the consultation, the LA also raised the issue of parental preference and I asked the LA to provide me with parental preference data for the School. Table 5 shows the number of first preferences expressed for the School from 2023/24 onwards.

Table 5: Number of first preferences expressed for the School

Year	No. of first preferences for the School
2023/24	26
2024/25	28
2025/26	32
2026/27	40

47. It is clear that parental preference for the School has been slowly increasing, and for the last two years has exceeded the PAN of 30. Parents have a right to express a preference as to where their children go to school. However, admission authorities cannot give any guarantee that preferences will be met. In the case of a rural primary school, it is likely that many parents would express a preference for the closest school, particularly where it is the only school within a reasonable distance from their home address, and as borne out by the data in Table 3. Given the projected number of applicants for 2028/29, if a PAN of 30 were to be in place, several parents would be likely not to have their preference satisfied. The Trust said in its draft response to the LA that it received no objections on the basis of restricted parent preference, but in my view, this possibility was not made clear to parents in the consultation document.

48. In its note to the Board asking it to approve the PAN reduction, the Trust stated that the proposal to reduce the PAN was driven by sustained falling

rolls and the operational and financial challenges of maintaining a PAN of 45. It said that any intake above 30 pupils requires the school to staff two classes resulting in inefficient use of staffing resources and ongoing financial pressure. I have set out above the points relating to mixed-age teaching which mean the School does not necessarily have to run two classes, although it is likely for reception year.

49. I have considered information about the School's financial position that is available on the DfE's FBIT website. I note that in the financial year 2024-25 (the most recent year for which data is available) the School's reserve was £276,859. I asked the Trust for more information on the School's financial position. The Trust told me that it operates pooled reserves and cash balances for its schools and it had in fact allocated a reserve of £160,853 to the School for monitoring and budget purposes. It has not told me how much income it allocates to the School. The Trust also told me that the in-year deficit for the 2025/26 academic year is forecasted at £108,747 resulting in a reduced reserve of £52,106. The 2026/27 budget, provided by the Trust, forecasts an in-year deficit of £134,395.
50. I also asked for projections for the 2027-28 financial year based on a PAN of 30 and a PAN of 45. I was provided with figures for the academic year 2027/28 based on a PAN of 30 which forecasts an in-year deficit of £57,544.
51. Looking at the accounts of the Trust for the year 2024-25, the expenditure for the School was just short of £1.5 million. FBIT gives a figure of £1.6 million and also gives the average across the comparator set as £1.7 million. I also note that as at 31 August 2025, the Trust held just under £6 million in reserves.
52. I appreciate that for 2027/28, the School runs a risk of admitting a number very close to 30 children, which could then leave it vulnerable to having to have two very small YR classes and/or accepting in-year admission applications, which could disrupt planning and incur costs.
53. I have considered whether the Arrangements are fair, clear and objective as required by paragraph 14 of the Code with particular reference to the reduction of the PAN to 30.
54. 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 focused on the effect of the Arrangements on any relevant

group. A factor which is relevant in the consideration of substantive unfairness is the reason (or justification) for adopting a particular position. This must be considered in context. It may be the case that the justification for the adoption of a particular PAN could override any unfairness. I should also add that where the available evidence does not establish any disadvantage, there cannot be any unfairness.

55. In this case, there was an ostensibly fair reason for setting the PAN at 30, that is, to avoid a situation where the School is required to take more than 30 children, which would require it to either bear the cost of an additional teacher without the funding to match it, or use mixed-age teaching. With the previous PAN of 45, the School utilised both mechanisms and it now wishes to streamline the School with one form of entry going forwards. The Trust says that this reflects a history of falling rolls together with projected numbers showing a smaller intake and reduced demand. It relies on its consultation, and the lack of all but one response, to support this.

56. I find that the Trust's reasoning for reducing the PAN is unfair for the following reasons:

- (a) the consultation was fundamentally flawed. The letter was potentially misleading in suggesting the LA was in agreement; it did not include any data or evidence to support the Trust's rationale or assumptions; it ignored the LA's data on projected figures for 2028/29; it did not include any details of the concerns of the LA that would impact potential parents; and was not circulated appropriately such that the requirements of paragraph 1.47 a) of the Code were met.
- (b) There is no evidence of any meaningful consideration of the LA's objection on the basis of availability of places and costs of transport. There was no recorded discussion of the objection by members of the Trust Board; the Trust did not specifically address the LA's concerns in its draft letter to the LA; and the Trust did not respond to my request for its comments on the objection. The only evidence I have is its draft letter and I do not know if this was sent to the LA.
- (c) The reasons provided by the Trust to support its rationale in the consultation letter are: current and projected pupil numbers suggest that a smaller intake better reflects local demand; adjusting the PAN will help ensure optimal class sizes, high-quality teaching, and appropriate use of school facilities; and it allows the School to allocate resources effectively to provide the best possible education for all pupils. In the paper for the

Board, the Trust said a PAN of 45 meant inefficient use of staffing resources and ongoing financial pressure.

- (d) As set out above, the projected pupil numbers for 2028/29 do not support a claim of a smaller local demand. In terms of mixed-age teaching, many schools, especially small and/or rural schools rely successfully on mixed-age teaching. In relation to finances, the Trust has provided me with different figures for the School from those on FBIT because it is using a pooled resources model. The Trust itself is in a secure financial position.

57. I have considered whether the reduction in PAN causes disadvantage to any relevant groups. I find that it causes disadvantage to prospective parents, to prospective pupils and to the LA. Based on the characteristics of the School and the projected applications for 2028/29, I consider there would be a disadvantage to parents who wish their children to attend a local school and for their children not to have to travel an unreasonable distance to school. There is a potential disadvantage to the LA who would be likely to have to provide transport for those children for up to a period of seven years and for any younger siblings who would be likely to follow.

58. In summary, therefore, I uphold the objection. I find that the Trust did not take account of all the relevant considerations, in particular the LA's response, when it determined to reduce PAN from 45 to 30. The reduction in PAN in the circumstances is unreasonable and unfair to pupils, and their parents, who are likely to need a place at the School. It has the potential to frustrate the expression of parental preference contrary to section 86(1) of the Act, displacing children who would otherwise be allocated a place at the School, and is not justified by the need to manage financial resources. Given the LA's assessment of the likely pressures on school places in the area in 2028/29, it is not clear to me that there would be enough other suitable school places for such children. A reduction in the PAN for the School is likely to exacerbate the challenges for the LA, clearly articulated in its objection, in meeting its statutory duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available for children in its area.

59. I note that in several documents, the Trust has referred to keeping the situation under review. However, I find that this does not give the LA the certainty it requires for 2028/29.

Other matters

60. 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 Admission Authority. These matters are (paragraphs of the Code are indicated where relevant):

- All admission authorities **must** determine their admission arrangements, including their PAN, every year by 28 February in the determination year. The Trust did not determine the School's arrangements for 2027/28 until 12 March 2026. This is in breach of paragraph 1.49 of the Code.
- The Arrangements (including the oversubscription criteria) contain references to both "the Academy" and "the preferred school". Given parents are allowed to express more than one preference for a school in the admissions process, it is not clear that these Arrangements only apply to Richard Wakefield Church of England Primary School and are, therefore, in breach of paragraphs 14 and 1.8 of the Code.
- The Arrangements include an oversubscription criterion (Criterion 5) based on the catchment area of "the preferred school". A catchment area is part of the arrangements and thus must be clear and published. The catchment area is not defined in the Arrangements, although there is a reference in the notes to copies of school catchment area maps being "available from the Local Authority or individual schools". It is not clear where there is a copy of the map on the School's website and there is no direct link to the Local Authority's map in the Arrangements or on the School's website. It is not, therefore, clear on looking at the Arrangements how places will be allocated where the catchment area is a factor. The Arrangements are, therefore, in breach of paragraph 14 of the Code.
- The Arrangements provide that "where it is not possible to accommodate all children applying for places within a particular category then the Local Authority will allocate the available places in accordance with the remaining criteria". It is not clear how or in which order those remaining criteria will be applied. The Arrangements are, therefore, in breach of paragraphs 14 and 1.8 of the Code.

61. The Admission Authority told me that copies of the proposed arrangements were sent to the LA and, as the LA did not raise any concerns, the Trust published the Arrangements in good faith that they met the requirements of the Code. I point out that it is the responsibility of the

Admission Authority to ensure that admission arrangements are compliant with the Code.

62. The Code requires that the Arrangements be amended to address the points set out here. Such amendments are permitted in line with paragraph 3.6 of the Code which states, in part:

“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 Schools Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements.”

The Admission Authority must address these matters, as permitted by paragraph 3.6 of the Code, within two months of this determination.

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I uphold the objection to the admission arrangements determined by the Affinity Learning Partnership for Richard Wakefield Church of England Primary Academy, for 2027/28.

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.

Dated: 18 August 2026

Signed:
Schools Adjudicator: Miranda Barnett