



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case references: VAR2789 and VAR2790

Admission Authority: Hampshire County Council for Breamore Church of England Primary School

Date of decision: 10 September 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 Breamore Church of England School for 2026/27.

I determine that for admission in 2026/27 the Published Admission Number shall be 15.

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 Breamore Church of England School for 2027/28.

I determine that for admission in 2027/28 the Published Admission Number shall be 15.

The referral

1. The Hampshire County Council (the Admission Authority, the LA) has referred to the adjudicator a proposal for variations to the admission arrangements for Breamore Church of England Primary School (the School) for 2026/27 and 2027/28 (the Arrangements). The reasons for the requests for variations are based on the same reasoning and similar facts, so I have dealt with them together in this determination, setting out where there is any distinction between them.

2. The School is a voluntary controlled school for children aged four to eleven in Fordingbridge, Hampshire. It is a co-educational, non-selective school, designated as having a religious character. It is part of the Forest Edge Learning Federation (the Federation).

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 religious character of the School is Church of England. The religious authority for the School is the Diocese of Winchester (the Diocese).
5. The proposed variations are that the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the School be reduced from 17 to 15 for each of the admission years 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Jurisdiction and procedure

6. 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”.

7. The Arrangements were determined by the Admission Authority on 12 February 2025 for the year 2026/27 and 24 February 2026 for the year 2027/28.
8. The Admission Authority has provided me with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified of the proposed variations in line with the Code.
9. I find that the appropriate procedures were followed, and I am satisfied that the proposed variations are within my jurisdiction.
10. In considering the requests, I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the Code.
11. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:
 - the referral from the Admission Authority dated 17 July 2026 and supporting documents;
 - the determined Arrangements for 2026/27 and 2027/28 and the proposed variations to those Arrangements;

- responses from the School and the Diocese to my request for further information;
- maps, including Google Maps and those showing the location of the School; and
- information available on the websites of .gov.uk. (including the 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) and 'Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool' (FBIT) websites), the LA, and the School (including its Arrangements for 2026/27 and 2027/28).

12. I have not needed to seek any information from the LA further to that already provided to me. I would like to extend my thanks to the School and the Diocese for their responses to my requests for further information.

13. 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.

14. I note here that the Arrangements for 2028/29 have not yet been determined. This means that if I decide to approve the proposed variation to the Arrangements for 2027/28 by reducing the PAN from 17 to 15 as proposed, it will have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for subsequent years.

Consideration of proposed variations

15. 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 variations are justified by the change in circumstances.

16. The Arrangements set out oversubscription criteria summarised below:

- a) Looked after or previously looked after children
- b) Children with an exceptional medical/social need
- c) Children of staff (in certain circumstances)
- d) Children living in the catchment area of the School with a sibling at the School
- e) Children living in the catchment area with a parent who qualifies on religious denomination grounds
- f) Other children living in the catchment area
- g) Children living outside the catchment area of the School with a sibling at the School

- h) Children living outside the catchment area with a parent who qualifies on religious denomination grounds
- i) All other children.

17. The Admission Authority has proposed that the PAN at the School be reduced from 17 to 15 for 2026/27 and 2027/28. For the admission year 2026/27 the School has only allocated places to nine pupils against a forecast of 14, and it is only forecasting 14 pupils for the year 2027/28. In September 2026, the School is opening a school-based nursery provision for up to 15 children aged three, by accommodating them within a mixed-age combined Nursery and Reception class. Reducing the PAN to 15 will enable the School to establish a nursery provision while bringing the PAN more closely in line with forecast demand. Whilst children in the Nursery class will be educated with those in the Reception class, they will have to apply for a place in the Reception class at the School and be allocated a place in accordance with the Arrangements.

18. The Admission Authority told me that the reason for seeking variations for the School is to align the PAN with current and projected pupil numbers so that the School can move from a financial deficit to a position of stability. The School and the Diocese support the variations.

19. 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 LA's Fordingbridge Planning Area (FPA) and is one of six schools in the Planning Area of which five (four primary schools and one infant school) admit pupils into Reception Year (YR).

20. The LA has told me that the sum of the PANs for schools admitting pupils into YR in the FPA is 132. For September 2026, 88 places were offered (against a forecast of 112) leaving a surplus of 44. This means 33 per cent of all places available were unfilled. For the admission year 2027/28, the LA forecasts 115 places will be required. Against a sum of PANs of 132, this means 17 places would be surplus, which is 12.8 per cent of the total number of places available. It is clear that by reducing the PAN at the School from 17 to 15, the reduction of two places in the sum of the PANs for the FPA would not impact on the LA's ability to provide places.

21. Given that the LA has forecast 14 applications for the School for 2027/28 and the proposal is to reduce the PAN from 17 to 15, I have considered historic parental preference for the School, and the other schools in the FPA admitting children into YR, from data provided by the LA and this is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: First parental preferences for schools admitting pupils into YR in the Fordingbridge Planning Area

School	PAN	2026/27	2025/26	2024/25
Breamore CE Primary School	17/15*	10	14	11
Fordingbridge Infant School	60	44	51	37
Hale Primary School	17	7	10	7
Hyde CE Primary School	10	3	4	6
Western Downland CE VA Primary School	28	25	15	14

*If PAN reduction agreed

22. The data show that, historically, every school in the FPA has been able to meet first parental preference for that school. I have been provided with class structure data for the School by the LA and this shows that for the last seven years the School has not exceeded 15 in a year group. In addition, for 2026/27, the School is still far short of its PAN so would be able to accommodate any in-year applications that specify the School as a first preference. For 2027/28, as set out in paragraph 17 above, the LA's projection of 14 offers for the School means that, with a PAN reduction to 15, first parental preference for the School would still be able to be met.

23. I have also considered the position should parental preference for the School exceed the LA's projections. Table 2 shows the availability of places at other primary schools in the FPA, and the distance of those schools using the School as a reference point. The distance travelled to school for individual children would vary depending on their home address.

Table 2: Availability of YR places in the FPA and distance from the School

School	PAN	Forecast 2027/28	Expected 2026/27	Admitted 2025/26	Admitted 2024/25	Distance from the School**
Breamore	17/15*	14	9	14	11	N/A
Fordingbridge Infant School	60	53	43	57	39	1.8 miles
Hale Primary School	17	12	8	10	7	3.1 miles
Hyde CE Primary School	10	12	2	4	7	4.3 miles

School	PAN	Forecast 2027/28	Expected 2026/27	Admitted 2025/26	Admitted 2024/25	Distance from the School**
Western Downland CE VA Primary School	28	24	26	15	14	3.7 miles

*If PAN reduction agreed

**Walking route according to Google maps

24. Table 2 shows that were demand for the School to exceed a reduced PAN of 15 in 2027/28, there would be places at Fordingbridge Infant School which is less than 2 miles away from the School.

25. The LA has told me that part of the rationale for reducing the PAN is to enable a mixed-age Nursery and YR class comprising 15 children in each year group. It is likely that most children in a Nursery cohort would apply for entrance into YR at the School. If the YN intake were to be full, this could provide the majority of the intake into YR for the School. If children attending YN were given priority in the admission process for the School, then reducing the PAN to 15 could mean that children who have not attended the nursery would be disadvantaged in applying for admission. I have therefore considered the oversubscription criteria for entry into the School at YR which are set out in paragraph 16 above. These do not give preference to children attending the nursery, and I am therefore satisfied that reducing the PAN to 15 will not disadvantage children who have not attended the nursery.

26. I have considered the impact of decreasing admission numbers on school finances balanced against the impact reducing the School's PAN will have on meeting parental preference. 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. Additionally, infant class sizes are limited to 30 (as set out in The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 and in paragraph 2.16 of the Code). The cost of a teacher and the resources necessary for an infant class, when compared to, say, a junior or secondary school teacher / class (where numbers are not limited), has to be borne by proportionately smaller income from the children admitted to infant classes.

27. The LA has raised the issue of the School's finances. For the financial year 2025-26 the School had an in-year deficit of just over £50 thousand. Set against a surplus carry-forward, this has resulted in a surplus of nearly £118 thousand. However, projecting forwards, on a PAN of 17, the School will be in a deficit of over £10 thousand by 2027-28. I am told that if the PAN is reduced to 15, then the School will be in a surplus of around £118 thousand by 2027-28.

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

29. I accept that the LA has provided compelling evidence that it will be able to manage school places in the planning area if I agree to reduce the PAN at the School for 2026/27 and 2027/28. I have taken into consideration that parental preference for places at the School is unlikely to be impacted and that as a result of the reduction in PAN, the financial stability of the School will be assured.

30. I, therefore, agree that for 2026/27 and for 2027/28, the PAN of the School shall be reduced from 17 to 15.

31. 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 2026/27 or 2027/28 than it currently expects to, there remains the capacity in the building for it to do so.

Determination

32. 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 Breamore Church of England School for 2026/27.

33. I determine that for admission in 2026/27 the Published Admission Number shall be 15.

34. 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 Breamore Church of England School for 2027/28.

35. I determine that for admission in 2027/28 the Published Admission Number shall be 15.

Dated: 10 September 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Miranda Barnett