



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: VAR2808

Admission Authority: Warwickshire County Council for Glendale Infant School

Date of decision: 30 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 Warwickshire County Council for Glendale Infant School, for 2027/28.

I determine that for admission in 2027/28 the published admission number will be 60.

The referral

1. Warwickshire County Council (the Admission Authority, the Local Authority) has referred to the adjudicator a proposal for a variation to the admission arrangements for Glendale Infant School (the School, Glendale) for 2027/28 (the Arrangements).
2. The School is a community school for children aged four to seven years in Nuneaton. It is a co-educational, non-selective school with no designated religious character.
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. Parties to the request are the Local Authority and the School.
5. The proposed variation is to reduce the published admission number (PAN) from 90 to 60 for admissions to the Reception Year (YR) in September 2027.

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 2026.

8. The Local Authority has provided me with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified of the proposed variation in line with the Code. It has also provided me with confirmation that the governing body of the School has been consulted on, and is in support of, the proposed variation.

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

10. In considering the variation request, 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 11 September 2026 and supporting documents;
- the determined Arrangements for 2027/28 and the proposed variation to those Arrangements;
- responses from the LA and the School to my requests for further information;
- a map showing the location of the School; and
- information available on the websites of .gov.uk. (including ‘Get Information About Schools’ (GIAS) and ‘Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool’ (FBIT)), the LA and the School.

12. I would like to extend my thanks to the LA and the School 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 as proposed, it will have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for subsequent years.

15. The Admission Authority has indicated that it intends to consult on the admission arrangements for the School for 2028/29, to include a PAN of 60. As I explained above, reducing the PAN for 2027/28 at this point would have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for the arrangements in subsequent years. Should I determine to reduce the PAN, then there will be no need to consult on a reduction to the PAN in 2028/29. However, for the avoidance of doubt, there is nothing in the Code that would prevent the Admission Authority from consulting if it wished to do so; it is simply that it would not be required to.

Consideration of proposed variation

16. 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.

17. The Admission Authority has proposed that the PAN of the School is reduced from 90 to 60 for entry to YR in September 2027.

18. The Admission Authority told me that the reason for it seeking a variation for the School is as follows:

"This request follows careful consideration of pupil numbers, local demographic trends, financial sustainability, and the school's long-term ability to continue delivering a high-quality education. We believe that a PAN of 60 more accurately reflects both current and projected demand for places and will enable the school to operate in a financially sustainable manner while continuing to meet the needs of the local community.

The current PAN of 90 no longer reflects the level of demand for Reception places at the school. The financial implications of continuing with this PAN are considerable. Like many schools, Glendale Infant School is operating within an increasingly challenging financial environment. Funding is closely linked to pupil numbers and under-recruitment places increasing pressure on the school's budget. This affects

the Governing Body's ability to plan staffing, maintain educational resources, and invest in school improvement. Reducing the PAN will support more effective financial planning and help safeguard the long-term sustainability of the school.

There have been significant changes in the local community. The housing developments that have taken place in recent years have largely been completed on the opposite side of the town and are naturally served by schools within that locality. Consequently, these developments have not generated additional demand for places at Glendale Infant School.

In contrast, the community traditionally served by the school has undergone a demographic shift. The estate has an increasingly ageing population, with fewer families of Reception/Infant age living within the school's traditional catchment. In addition, a number of younger families have been rehoused into newer housing developments elsewhere in the town, further reducing the number of children seeking places at the school. Therefore, the current PAN no longer reflects the level of demand."

19. The Governing Body fully supports this request for a reduction in PAN. It stated:

"The current PAN of 90 no longer reflects the level of demand for Reception places and creates a mismatch between the school's admission arrangements and the number of pupils who realistically seek admission each year. Maintaining an artificially high PAN does not increase parental demand and results in significant surplus capacity within the school.

The Governing Body has carefully considered whether reducing the PAN could adversely affect the availability of school places within the local area. Based on Local Authority place-planning information, we are satisfied that sufficient Reception places will continue to be available across the town to meet projected demand. The proposed reduction therefore represents a better alignment of admission capacity with actual need rather than a reduction in parental choice.

Our primary responsibility is to ensure that the school remains financially viable while continuing to provide an excellent education for the children it serves. A PAN of 60 will enable the school to organise classes more efficiently, deploy staffing appropriately, and maintain the high standards of teaching, learning, pastoral care, and safeguarding that our pupils deserve.

The Governing Body has considered all relevant information, including Local Authority forecasts, demographic evidence, historical admissions data, and the school's financial position. We are satisfied that reducing the Published Admission Number from 90 to 60 is a reasonable, proportionate, and evidence-based response to changing local circumstances."

20. I have given careful consideration to the latest available data in order to form a view about the sufficiency of school places in the local area if the PAN of the School is reduced from 90 to 60 for 2027/28. I have also considered the demand for places at the School, the reasons given for the change in demand, the potential effect of the proposed PAN reduction on meeting parental preference, and whether the proposed reduction is justified taking into account all relevant circumstances.

21. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient places for the children in its area. To fulfil this duty the Local Authority assesses the likely future number of places to be needed and plans to meet that need. The Local Authority uses planning areas, which are geographical areas each containing a number of schools, for this purpose. The School is part of the Nuneaton South West planning area. There are nine schools in this planning area: three primary schools, three infant schools (including Glendale) and three junior schools. The primary and infant schools admit children into YR.

22. Table 1 summarises the data supplied to me by the Local Authority for the schools in the planning area which admit children to YR and shows the total number of YR places at those schools; the number of children admitted in each of the previous three years; and the number of places forecast to be required for 2027/28.

Table 1: School places in the planning area and admission to YR

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28 current	2027/28 if PAN reduction agreed
The sum of the PANs	420	420	420	390	360
The number of children admitted to YR or forecast to be admitted	375	367	339	355	355
The number of vacant places	45	53	81	35	5
The number of vacant places as a percentage of the total number of places	10.7	12.6	19.3	9.0	1.4

23. Table 1 shows that the number of vacant places for children entering YR in the planning area has grown year on year since 2024/25. The Local Authority has already taken action to reduce the sum of the PANS in the planning area by 30 for admissions in September 2027. If I were to agree to the proposed variation for 2027/28, there would, potentially, only be five YR places available in the planning area, or the equivalent of 1.4 per cent surplus capacity. This is below the minimum two per cent surplus capacity referred to in the DfE document, 'Basic need allocations 2026-27 and 2027-28: Explanatory note on methodology', which is recommended "to provide an operating margin for local authorities ... to support parental choice, pupil population movement, and general manageability of the

system". It is also below the LA's own target for there to "be a surplus capacity of approximately 4% across all planning areas."

24. In response to my concern about this the LA said:

"...pupil forecasts are updated three times each year, as new data becomes available... We regularly check the accuracy of the forecast utilising previous versions or live admissions data... We are confident that the forecast model is as accurate as possible based on the information we have available and is more likely to be slightly over-forecasting than under-forecasting."

25. This is supported by recent data where, for YR admissions in September 2026, the LA forecast 343 places would be required and 339 children were admitted. This is an overestimate of approximately one per cent.

26. The LA went on to say:

"Whilst 2027 looks tight in the forecast, we are still expecting there to be surplus places in the planning area. 2028 would see that surplus increase to 8% and then 6% for 2029 and 2030. Therefore, we feel reducing the number of places to 360 is likely to be sufficient."

27. From the GIAS website, I can see that there are 11 schools, some of which are located in a neighbouring planning area, within two miles of Glendale that admit children to YR.

28. I will now consider the demand for places at the School. Table 2 summarises admissions to the School.

Table 2: The number of children admitted to YR at the School between September 2024 and September 2026

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
The PAN for the School	90	90	90
The number of first preferences	64	80	55
The number of children admitted to YR	77	89	68
The number of vacant places	13	1	22

29. Table 2 shows that the number of parents selecting the School as their first preference for a YR place for their child has fluctuated in recent years, as has the number of children admitted to YR. However, the number of children admitted has been consistently above 60. If the PAN were to be reduced to 60 then there would be a risk that parental preference may be frustrated if children living near to Glendale were unable to get a place in the School.

30. In response to this concern, the LA said:

“On average only 74% of residents in the Nuneaton South West planning area choose a school within the planning area. 17% of residents choose schools in the neighbouring Nuneaton South East planning area.

There has been a 15% decrease in the number of Reception age children living in the planning area between 2023 and 2026. Whilst the NHS data shows 7 more children in the planning area for 2027 than in 2026 [419 children compared to 412], based on the number of 1st preferences from in area children in 2026, [the LA] would expect all on time 1st preferences for children living in the priority area for 2027 to get a place.”

31. On this basis, there would be 310 children living in the Nuneaton South West planning area seeking a YR place and 355 places available.

32. The School is affected by the provisions of the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (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. The infant class sizes regulations apply to YR, Year 1 and Year 2.

33. Schools are largely funded based on the number of pupils on their rolls, and the highest cost to a school budget is its staff. Most infant and primary schools aim to have close to 30 pupils in a class. If a school has class sizes that are many fewer than 30, this can mean that the income from the number of pupils is less than the costs of providing a class. When this happens over several classes, a school can face significant financial challenges.

34. The School currently has 228 pupils on roll split across 9 classes, as shown in Table 3. On average, there are 25 pupils per class.

Table 3: Current class structure at the School

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Reception	23	23	22	68
Year 1	30	30	27	87
Year 2	25	26	22	73
Total	-	-	-	228

35. In September 2027, based on current pupil numbers, the School will have 68 children in Year 1 and 87 children in Year 2. As the School is subject to the Infant Class Sizes Regulations, the governing body is of the view that there is little scope for the School to consider organising classes any differently, for example in mixed-age classes, and I agree.

36. If the PAN remains at 90, the School would be required to admit any child during the 2027/28 academic year whose parents request a Reception place at the School until 90 children have been admitted. By reducing the PAN to 60, the School will be able to plan with certainty knowing that two YR classes will be required across the year.

37. In support of the proposed variation, the Governing Body said, in part:

“If the PAN reduction is approved:

This would mean admitting up to 60 children into Reception from that point onwards, while allowing the existing year groups that currently have three classes to progress through the school and complete their infant education with us.

This would provide a managed and gradual reduction in the number of classes rather than requiring an immediate change to the existing structure. The school would therefore move towards becoming two-form entry across all year groups...

Reducing the PAN would enable the school to bring its staffing structure more closely into line with actual pupil numbers. This would improve the school's financial position and support a more sustainable staffing model.

If the PAN reduction is not approved:

There will be a continued effect on the deficit budget, which will result in forcing school to cut back even further on an already trimmed down resource budget.

The continuing financial pressure would require the school to consider further reductions in its support staffing. This would have a direct impact on our capacity to provide additional support to children with a wide range of needs.

Our feeder nurseries and pre-schools have already been impacted on falling numbers into their intake for this academic year.”

38. I have considered the impact of decreasing admission numbers on school finances, balanced against the impact that reducing the School's PAN will have on meeting parental preference. In summary:

- Based on the evidence provided by the Local Authority, I am of the opinion that there are highly likely to be sufficient places for local children in Glendale in September 2027 and, failing that, there will be places in a school within two miles of a child's home. I note that, whilst parents have a right to express a preference as to where their children go to school, admission authorities cannot give any guarantee that preferences will be met.
- Reducing the PAN to 60 for 2027/28 will allow the School to manage its finances and provide certainty on the number of classes and associated staffing required.

39. I, therefore, agree that the PAN for the School should be reduced from 90 to 60 for 2027/28.

40. 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 2027/28 than it currently expects to, there remains the capacity in the building for it to do so.

Determination

41. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variation to the admission arrangements determined by Warwickshire County Council for Glendale Infant School, for 2027/28.

42. I determine that for admission in 2027/28 the published admission number will be 60.

Dated: 30 September 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Catherine Crooks