



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case references:	VAR2779 and VAR2803
Admission Authority:	The governing body for Ashwicken Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Local Authority:	Norfolk County Council
Date of decision:	13 October 2026

Determination

In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variations to the admission arrangements determined by the governing body for Ashwicken Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

I determine that for admission in 2026/27 and 2027/28 the catchment area will be as set out in this determination.

The referral

1. The governing body for Ashwicken Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School has referred to the adjudicator a proposal for variations to the admission arrangements for Ashwicken Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School (the School) for 2026/27 (the 2026 arrangements) and 2027/28 (the 2027 arrangements).
2. The School is a voluntary aided school for children aged five to eleven years. The governing body is the admission authority for the School. The School is designated as having a Church of England religious character and the Diocese of Norwich is its religious authority.
3. The proposed variations are that the catchment area is extended to include an area that was previously part of the catchment area of another primary school which has now closed.

Jurisdiction and procedure

4. 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”.

5. The 2026 arrangements were determined by the governing body on 29 January 2025. The 2027 arrangements were determined by the governing body on 8 July 2026. This is after the deadline for determining arrangements which was 28 February 2026. This does not affect the standing of the 2027 arrangements or my power to consider them or the proposed variation to those arrangements.

6. I have been provided with confirmation that the appropriate bodies have been notified of the proposed variations in line with the Code. I find that the appropriate procedures were followed, and I am satisfied that the proposed variations are within my jurisdiction.

7. In the interest of dealing speedily with this and other cases, I have not considered other aspects of the arrangements. Therefore, nothing in this determination should be taken as indicating that other aspects of the arrangements do or do not conform with the requirements relating to admissions.

8. In considering the variations requested, I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the Code. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:

- 1) the referral from the governing body regarding the proposed variation for the 2026 arrangements dated 14 July 2026, an email confirming the proposed variation for the 2027 arrangements dated 10 September 2026 and further information provided at my request;
- 2) the 2026 arrangements and the 2027 arrangements;
- 3) a consultation report dated 8 July 2026 (the consultation report); and
- 4) my determination for a similar case for West Winch Primary School (case references: VAR2782 and VAR2804).

9. 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.

10. In this instance, there has been considerable consultation. The variations requested follow the closure of Middleton Church of England Primary Academy (Middleton) from September 2026. The consultation that took place regarding that closure included proposing sharing the catchment area for Middleton amongst three other primary schools so that every child living in the area lives in a catchment area. The schools concerned are:

- 1) The School;
- 2) Gayton Primary School (Gayton) for which the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT) is the admission authority; and
- 3) West Winch Primary School (West Winch) for which Norfolk County Council is the admission authority.

11. Therefore the three schools concerned are a voluntary aided school, a community school and an academy. All three will require variations to their determined admission arrangements for both 2026 and 2027 and requests have been made to the OSA for variations for the School and West Winch. The request for variations to the admission arrangements for Gayton will be made to the Department for Education (DfE) via the regional commissioner. As there are inter-relationships and in the interests of cohesion, I decided that the interested parties were:

- 1) The governing body for the School.
- 2) Norfolk County Council as the local authority for all three schools and admission authority for West Winch.
- 3) The governing body for West Winch.
- 4) DNEAT as the admission authority for Gayton.
- 5) The regional commissioner for the East of England for the DfE.
- 6) The Diocese of Norwich as the faith body for the School and Gayton (the faith body) as Ashwick and Gayton are schools designated as having Church of England religious characters.

12. The arrangements for 2028/29 have not yet been determined. Therefore, if I agree the proposed variation for 2027/28, this will have the effect of forming the 'baseline' for subsequent years.

Consideration of proposed variation

13. 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.

14. The local authority explained:

“The proposed redistribution of the former catchment area has been developed in collaboration with the affected schools and relevant admission authorities.

The proposal:

- Ensures no address is left outside a catchment area.
- Provides clarity and certainty for parents.
- Reflects local geography and travel patterns.
- Takes account of available school capacity.
- Supports effective administration of school admissions.”

15. The consultation report provides details of the consultation undertaken regarding the proposed closure of Middleton and maps showing the catchment areas for the schools concerned and the proposed catchment areas. The 2026 arrangements have already been applied and have the same oversubscription criteria as those in the 2027 arrangements. The oversubscription criteria in the 2027 arrangements are summarised below, as they would apply to the School:

- 1) Looked after and previously looked after children
- 2) Children with a medical or social need
- 3) Children living in the catchment area of the School with a sibling attending the School
- 4) Children living in the catchment area of the School
- 5) Children living outside of the catchment area of the School with a sibling at the School
- 6) Children living outside of the catchment area of the School who meet the faith criterion
- 7) Other children.

16. Figure 1 below provides a map showing the catchment area of the school which recently closed, Middleton, and how it would be shared amongst the three schools concerned. Figure 2 shows the proposed catchment area for the School as the area ringed in blue. The existing catchment area for the School is in white and the proposed extension is in pink. Figures 1 and 2 were provided in the consultation document and will not be to scale.

17. Figure 1: the catchment area for Middleton, closed from September 2026, and the proposed extensions to the catchment areas of the three relevant schools

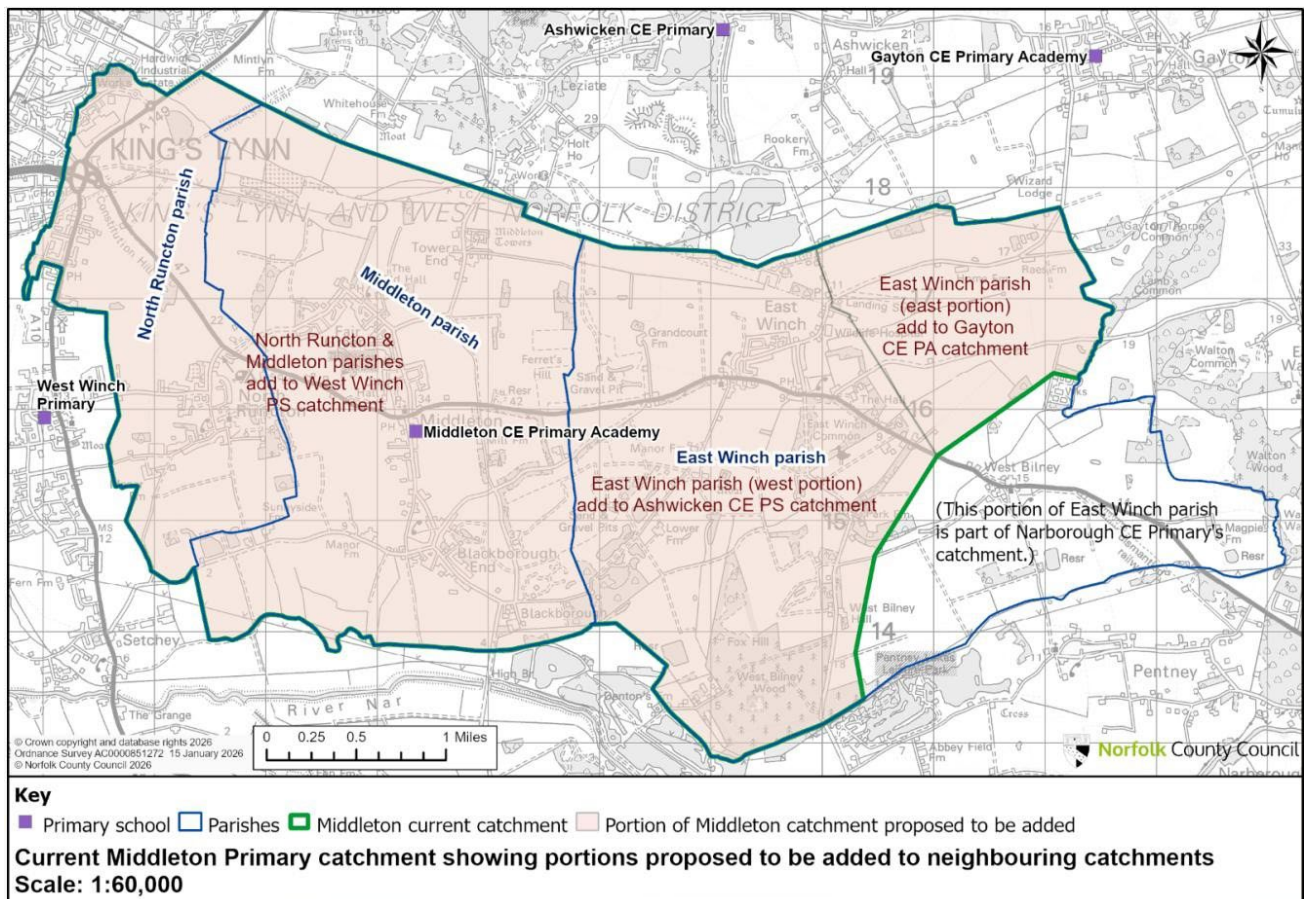
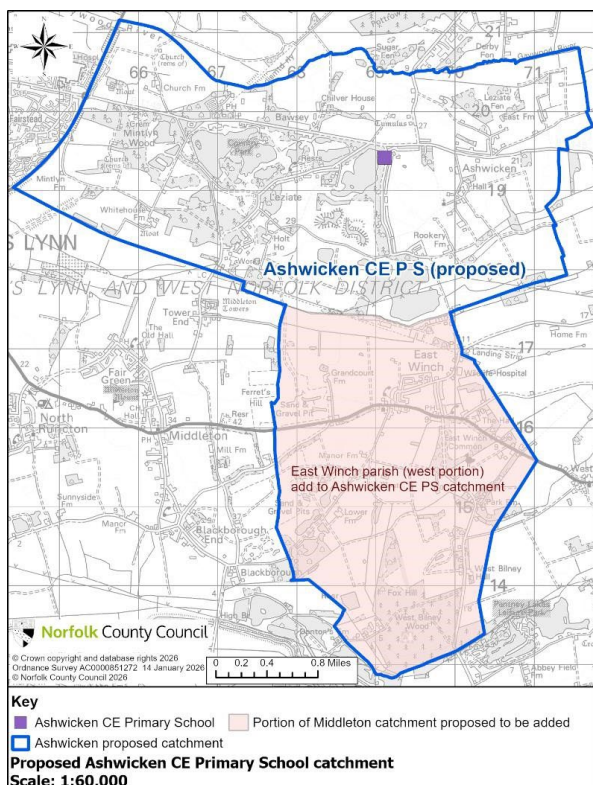


Figure 2: the catchment area for the School with the proposed additional section from the catchment area of Middleton in pink



18. No concerns have been raised by any of the parties. There has been considerable consultation on the proposed variations. As the local authority said:

“The Council has no concerns regarding the requested variation and considers it to be a reasonable and practical solution that provides clarity for families and supports the effective administration of school admissions following the closure of Middleton.”

19. In light of the previous consultation and the collaborative approach taken, I agree with the local authority and have decided that the variations are justified by the circumstances. I agree the proposed variations.

Determination

20. In accordance with section 88E of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I approve the proposed variations to the admission arrangements determined by the governing body for Ashwicken Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

21. I determine that for admission in 2026/27 and 2027/28 the catchment area will be as set out in this determination.

Dated: 13 October 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Deborah Pritchard