



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case references: ADA4273-74 / ADA4280 / ADA4302 / ADA4321-23 / ADA4327 / ADA4329-31 / ADA4337

Objectors: Gorsemoor Primary School and eleven parents

Admission authority: John Taylor Multi Academy Trust for Kingsmead School, Hednesford, Cannock, Staffordshire

Date of decision: 14 August 2024

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I partially uphold the objections to the admission arrangements for September 2025 determined by John Taylor Multi Academy Trust for Kingsmead School in the local authority area of Staffordshire County Council.

I have also considered the arrangements in accordance with section 88I(5) and find there are other matters which do not conform with the 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 the date of the determination.

The referrals

1. Under section 88H(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act), 12 objections have been referred to the adjudicator about the admission arrangements for September 2025 for Kingsmead School (the arrangements). Kingsmead School (Kingsmead) is a co-educational academy secondary school for children aged 11 to 18. The objections are to:

- 1.1. the consultation undertaken prior to a change to the admission arrangements;
- 1.2. the admission arrangements not being published as required;

- 1.3. the selection of the feeder schools in the oversubscription criteria;
 - 1.4. the effect of the use of the named feeder schools in the admission arrangements;
 - 1.5. the arrangements being unfair to more disadvantaged children; and
 - 1.6. a higher priority being given to children of staff than children who live locally.
2. The parties to the objections are:
- 2.1. the eleven parent objectors (the objectors);
 - 2.2. Gorsemoor Primary School (Gorsemoor);
 - 2.3. the governing body for Kingsmead (the governing body, Kingsmead);
 - 2.4. John Taylor Multi Academy Trust, which is the admission authority for Kingsmead (the trust); and
 - 2.5. Staffordshire County Council (the local authority).

Jurisdiction

3. 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 academy school are in accordance with admissions law as it applies to foundation and voluntary aided schools. These arrangements were determined by the trust, which is the admission authority for the school, on that basis. The objectors submitted their objections to these determined arrangements before 15 May 2024. I am satisfied the objections have been properly referred to me in accordance with section 88H of the Act and they are within my jurisdiction. I have also used my power under section 88I of the Act to consider the arrangements as a whole.

Procedure

4. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code (the Code). The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
- a. a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the governing body at which the arrangements were discussed and determined, and a copy of the determined arrangements;
 - b. the objectors' emails and forms of objection;
 - c. the governing body's responses to the objections and to my enquiries including information on the most recent consultation on the arrangements;

- d. the modelling provided in response to the consultation by the local authority in December 2023 based on applications for year 7 (Y7) for admissions in 2024 showing the potential effects of the 2024 arrangements and the proposed arrangements for 2025 (the modelling);
- e. information provided at my request by the local authority including maps showing the home locations of pupils in year 5 (Y5) attending primary schools in the area, the number of children living in the catchment area, the catchment areas for other secondary schools in the area, and data showing parental preferences and offers made for admissions;
- f. information on the websites for the Department for Education (DfE), the trust and Kingsmead including the admission arrangements for 2024.

5. I have also taken account of information received during a meeting I convened on 17 June 2024 held at Kingsmead and attended by representatives of Kingsmead, the governing body, the trust, Gorsemoor, the local authority, and parent objectors; and a fellow adjudicator who kindly took notes for me (the meeting). Gorsemoor represented some of the objectors at the meeting who were unable to attend.

The Objections

6. The objections have considerable similarities, which is why I am considering them in one determination. The objections relate to the change to the arrangements so that a priority is given to children attending feeder schools and no priority is given to those who live in the previous catchment area for the school. Not all objectors objected to all the matters listed below. I have put in brackets the most relevant paragraphs of the Code.

- 6.1. The consultation undertaken before changing the admission arrangements for 2025 did not meet the requirements of the Code (1.45 to 1.48).
- 6.2. The admission arrangements were not published on Kingsmead's website as required by the Code (1.50).
- 6.3. The feeder schools have not been named reasonably; the number of children attending the named feeder schools is significantly higher than the published admission number (PAN) for Kingsmead (14, 1.8, 1.13, 1.14 and 1.15) and some are further from Kingsmead than other primary schools, in particular Gorsemoor.
- 6.4. The oversubscription criterion giving priority to those attending named feeder schools, a change from the criterion giving priority to those living in the catchment area used for 2024 admissions and previously, is unfair (14, 1.8, 1.13, 1.14 and 1.15).
- 6.5. The feeder schools which have been named have more affluent intakes and therefore less affluent children attending schools not named will be unfairly disadvantaged (14, 1.8 and 1.15).

6.6. It is unfair that children of staff are given a higher priority than children living locally (14, 1.8 and 1.39 – 1.40).

7. The majority of the objectors are parents of children attending Gorsemoor. They expressed their concern that a change which has been made to the arrangements will mean that their children will not be admitted to Kingsmead.

Background

8. Kingsmead is a school for children aged 11 to 18 and situated in what the DfE website, 'Find and compare schools in England', describes as an "Urban major conurbation". The catchment area used for Kingsmead for admissions in 2024 and previous years (the catchment area), has a southern boundary very close to Kingsmead and it spreads north to include the rural area of Cannock Chase. In this area are three villages, Hazel Slade, Prospect Village and Rawnsley with a primary school in Hazel Slade. In my determination, I will refer to the rural geographical area including these three villages as Cannock Chase.

9. Ofsted judged Kingsmead to require improvement in 2018. Ofsted judged the school to be good in 2021 and it has become increasingly successful and popular in recent years. Kingsmead's PAN is 224. Due to the high number of first preferences for Kingsmead and demand for secondary school places in the area, Kingsmead admitted 300 children to Y7 in 2022 and did not apply the oversubscription criteria. Kingsmead admitted 261 children in 2023 and plans to admit 261 children in 2024. Kingsmead could not commit to admitting above its PAN of 224 for 2025 and future years. Parents can apply for any school; it is only where the school is oversubscribed, that is where there are more applications than can be met by its PAN, that the oversubscription criteria are applied.

10. The oversubscription criteria for Kingsmead for 2024 and previous years were (in summary):

- 1) Looked after and previously looked after children;
- 2) Children living in the catchment area for the school;
- 3) Siblings of existing students;
- 4) Children of staff in specified circumstances;
- 5) Distance of the home from the school with those nearest having priority.

11. I have no jurisdiction for the arrangements for 2024, and the objections are to the arrangements for 2025. I will, however, refer to the arrangements for 2024 as there has been a change in the oversubscription criteria as explained above. When I refer to the catchment area, I am referring to the catchment area which is being used now for admissions in 2024 and has been applied in previous years since at least 2015. The local authority provided details of the number of children admitted under each criterion in recent years and this is provided in table 1 below.

Table 1: number of children admitted or offered a place for 2024 under the oversubscription criteria for 2024 and previous years. The data for 2024 is based on information provided on 12 April 2024 and there will have been changes since that date.

	2022	2023	2024
EHCP¹	2	3	5
1) Looked after and previously looked after children	6	12	9
2) Children living in the catchment area	95	97	130
3) Siblings of existing students	85	85	93
4) Children of staff	1	3	2
5) Distance	111 (up to 6.6 miles)	64 (up to 1 mile)	22 (up to 0.6 miles)
Total	300	264	261

12. The number of children of the relevant age living in the catchment area has been, for every year for which I have seen records, below the PAN for the school. Table 1 illustrates that, after the first four criteria have been applied, some children have been offered places under the fifth criterion, distance. Under this criterion, those living nearest in a straight line have the highest priority. The furthest distance at which a child has been offered a place under this criterion has reduced each year since 2022. If the trust had admitted only to its PAN of 224 for 2022 and 2023 then all those living in the catchment area, who put the school as their first preference, would have been offered a place. Based on the data provided on 12 April 2024, if Kingsmead had only admitted to its PAN for 2024, 13 siblings of existing students, the children of staff and any other child not living in the catchment area would not have been admitted.

13. For admissions in 2022, there were 206 year 6 (Y6) children living in the catchment area and the data provided shows a reducing number of children living in the catchment area since then. Kingsmead admitted above its PAN in 2022, 2023 and will in 2024. One effect is that children living just outside the catchment area and near to Kingsmead, were likely, if they so wished, to be admitted to Kingsmead. The governing body consulted to change the arrangements for 2025 and determined changes to the arrangements so that the oversubscription criteria for 2025 are, in summary:

- 1) Looked after and previously looked after children;
- 2) Siblings of existing students;

¹ EHCP refers to where the school is named in the child's education, health and care plan and admission is offered before other children are considered.

- 3) Children of staff in specified circumstances;
- 4) Children who attend a named feeder school;
- 5) Distance of the home from the school with those nearest in a straight-line having priority.

14. The arrangements for 2025 do not include the priority for those living in the catchment area used for 2024 admissions as that criterion has been removed. For 2025 admissions, those who attend feeder schools is the fourth priority. Kingsmead admitted 300 children in 2022 of which 111 children would have been admitted under the distance criterion and did not live in the catchment area. Under the arrangements determined for 2025, any siblings of children previously admitted will have a higher priority than those attending a feeder school for admissions.

15. There are 12 primary schools within two miles walking distance of Kingsmead, of which seven are named as feeder schools and are a mixture of community and academy schools. Details of the primary schools within two miles are in table 2 below in order of the walking distance from Kingsmead. The location of a school is not necessarily where a child lives. A child attending a particular primary school may or may not live close to that primary school and may or may not live in the catchment area determined for 2024 for Kingsmead even if the primary school is in the catchment area. Seven of the schools, including Gorsemoor, are not in Kingsmead's catchment area for 2024. There is not a direct correlation between schools in the catchment area for 2024 and those named as feeder schools for Kingsmead.

Table 2: information on the primary schools within two miles walking distance of Kingsmead

Name of school	In catchment area for 2024	Named as a feeder to Kingsmead	Proportion of children eligible for free school meals	Walking distance from Kingsmead in miles
St Joseph's Catholic	Yes	No	11.7%	0.238
St Peter's Church of England	Yes	Yes	18.1%	0.456
Five Ways	Yes	Yes	16.3%	0.902
West Hill	Yes	Yes	29.6%	0.999
Chadsmoor Junior	No	No	42.7%	1.147
Gorsemoor	No	No	16.4%	1.158
Heath Hayes	No	Yes	22%	1.421
Redhill	No	No	68.3%	1.531
Pye Green	No	Yes	21.9%	1.592
Hazel Slade	Yes	Yes	32.8%	1.758
Moorhill	No	No	45.4%	1.801
Poppyfield	No	Yes	8.3%	1.941

16. The local authority uses planning areas in order to assess the number of places available and the demand for places so that it meets its duty to make sure that there are sufficient school places for the children in its area. Kingsmead is in the local authority's planning area H (the planning area), which is based on catchment areas for the schools and used by the local authority for its planning purposes. There are five state-funded secondary schools in the planning area. Three of the other secondary schools have a priority for those who live in their catchment areas in their oversubscription criteria and Cardinal Griffin Catholic College (Cardinal Griffin) has oversubscription criteria mainly based on faith.

17. Across the five secondary schools in the planning area for admissions to Y7 in 2024, Staffordshire University Academy (SUA) and Kingsmead admitted above their PANs; Cannock Chase High School (Cannock Chase High) allocated places to its PAN of 220; and Cardinal Griffin and Norton Canes High school (Norton Canes) have vacant places. Demand for secondary school places in the planning area is forecast to decrease from 2024.

Consideration of Case

18. I will consider the merits of the case in the whole context and not just how it may affect those who have objected. In other words, I take into account all the matters brought to my attention by the parties in this case, but my decisions are based on the effect on all children.

The consultation undertaken before changing the admission arrangements for 2025 did not meet the requirements of the Code

19. Paragraphs 1.45 to 1.48 of the Code are the pertinent paragraphs and say:

“1.45 When changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements (including any supplementary information form) that will apply for admission applications the following school year. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period.

1.46 Consultation **must** last for a minimum of 6 weeks and **must** take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.

1.47 Admission authorities **must** consult with:

a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;

b) other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;

- c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
- d) whichever of the governing body and the local authority is not the admission authority;
- e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority; and
- f) in the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.

1.48 For the duration of the consultation period, the admission authority **must** publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed PAN) on the school's website or its own website (in the case of a local authority) together with details of where comments may be sent and the areas on which comments are not sought. Admission authorities **must** also send, upon request, a copy of the proposed admission arrangements to any of the persons or bodies listed above inviting comment. Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals."

20. The trust has delegated authority to the governing body for admission arrangements, therefore the governing body undertook responsibility for the conduct of the consultation process. Kingsmead said that the consultation process consisted, in part, of displaying the details of the proposed changes to the admission arrangements on Kingsmead's website on 27 November 2023. Clearly, those who were required to be consulted would not have had any reason to look at the website unless they had been alerted to the consultation. Kingsmead provided me with a copy of the letter sent out to some of the local schools on 27 November 2023 regarding the consultation. The letter was sent by post and so would have been received on 28 November 2023 at the earliest. The letter gave a closing date for comments on the proposed changes as Friday 5 January 2024. As above, the Code requires that consultation is for a minimum of six weeks. Six weeks equals 42 days. The dates provided to me show that the consultation period was for a maximum of 40 days. Kingsmead explained that it considered responses received up until at least 9 January 2024 but acknowledged that those being consulted would not have known that. The consultation did not meet the requirements of the Code as consultees were not knowingly given the required time to respond.

21. Paragraph 1.47a) of the Code requires that admission authorities consult with "parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen". The challenges that this creates are often at least partly addressed by asking other schools to alert parents to the consultation and Kingsmead told me that this is what it had done. However, when I asked for the letter or communication that asked other schools to do this, Kingsmead told me that all that was sent out was the consultation letter. The consultation letter contains no request for it to be shared with parents, or for any other steps to be taken to raise awareness. I understand that the consultation letter was sent to parents of children at Kingsmead. However, as these children are already students at Kingsmead, the majority of parents are

unlikely to take an interest in future admissions unless those students have younger siblings of primary school age.

22. Apart from displaying the consultation letter on the school's own website and sending letters to parents of children already at Kingsmead, I can see no evidence that Kingsmead took reasonable steps to comply with the requirement of the Code to consult with parents of children between the age of two and eighteen. Steps it could reasonably have been expected to undertake were to ask if the other schools could circulate the consultation letter to their parents. In addition, to reach parents of children under school age, it is common to ask the local authority to circulate information to early years providers for their parents to see. Kingsmead did not take sufficient steps to meet the requirements of the Code to consult with parents of children aged between two and eighteen.

23. Gorsemoor is a community school for which the admission authority is the local authority and the Code, as shown above, requires admission authorities in the relevant area to be consulted. Gorsemoor said that it believes it should also have been consulted as a school within one mile of Kingsmead and falling within paragraph 1.47b) of the Code as a person or body with a possible interest in the proposed admissions. Certainly, it is evident that the parents of children attending Gorsemoor were likely to be adversely affected by the proposed change and would therefore have had an interest. I agree. Kingsmead stated that it did write to Gorsemoor and inform it of the consultation. Gorsemoor says it did not receive any such letter and only learnt of the consultation from a parent of a child at Gorsemoor who also had a child at Kingsmead. Gorsemoor wrote to the parents of children at Gorsemoor on 20 December 2023 informing them of Kingsmead's consultation.

24. That there was a lack of adequate and effective consultation is evidenced by the fact that the only responses to the consultation, with the exception of the local authority, came from Gorsemoor, some of the parents of children attending Gorsemoor and the MP responding to concerns raised by parents with children at Gorsemoor. I would have anticipated that an effective consultation would, for a change of this magnitude, have gained many more responses from a range of interested parties both supporting and objecting to the proposals. For example, none of the proposed feeder schools responded to the consultation, let alone the parents of children attending those schools, and which I would have expected to be supportive of such a proposal. In addition, parents of children who would be likely to lose the priority given to them by living in the catchment area and who do not attend a feeder school, and so negatively affected, did not respond.

25. As set out in paragraph 1.47b) of the Code, admission authorities must consult with other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions. The relevant area within which the admission authorities for schools must be consulted is defined by the local authority every two years. The local authority defined this as follows: "Staffordshire County Council's relevant area for consultation is contained within the administrative area of Staffordshire County Council." The list of consultees provided to me by Kingsmead in response to my enquiries named 16 schools with which it consulted. This is not all the schools in the relevant area as required by the Code. The local authority explained at the meeting that the local authority advises

schools to consult with schools within two miles and so it appears that Kingsmead followed the local authority's advice. Unfortunately, the local authority's advice was not in line with the Code in this matter. In addition, it is not clear whether all the schools within two miles were consulted as the information provided varies on this matter. For all of these reasons, my view is that the consultation was inadequate and did not meet the requirements of the Code.

26. The local authority gave a detailed response to the consultation, including modelling based on 2024 admission applications as of December 2023. This included maps showing the home locations of the children for whom applications had been made and whether they would have received an offer of a place under the 2024 arrangements and under the proposed arrangements. I will refer to this information provided by the local authority in more detail below. The local authority also raised concerns that the sum of the PANs of the proposed feeder schools was in excess of the number of places available at Kingsmead and said,

“The Local Authority is concerned that including named feeder schools in the oversubscription criteria, does give parents of children attending those schools, the impression that their child will have a good chance of being offered a place.”

27. The local authority quoted from several annual reports of the Chief School Adjudicator to the Secretary of State for Education which illustrated the local authority's concerns that,

“the local authority is concerned about the adverse impact on children who reside in Prospect Village and Hazel Slade areas, since they may have to travel an unreasonable distance to access an alternative school place which in turn will increase pressure on the local authority's transport budget if children then become eligible for home to school travel assistance as a result.”

28. I can see from the minutes of the meeting of the governing body that it considered the responses received but nevertheless determined the arrangements as proposed.

29. I uphold this part of the objection as the consultation did not last for the minimum of six weeks, not all the admission authorities in the relevant area were consulted and no reasonable attempt was made to consult with parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen effectively. I note that paragraph 1.48 of the Code says, “Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals”. However, as has been explained to the parties, even though I have concluded that the consultation fell short of the relevant requirements, I have no power to require the admission authority to consult again or require Kingsmead to return to previous arrangements.

The admission arrangements were not published on Kingsmead’s website as required by the Code

30. Paragraph 1.50 of the Code says,

“Once admission authorities have determined their admission arrangements, they **must** notify the appropriate bodies and **must** publish a copy of the determined arrangements on the school’s website or their own website (in the case of a local authority) by 15 March in the determination year and continue displaying them for the whole offer year (the school year in which offers for places are made).”

31. When I first saw the objections, I looked at Kingsmead’s website and only saw the arrangements for 2024 and previous years and so assumed the arrangements for 2025 were not published. However, at a later stage, I looked again and followed different links, which were further down the page, and did find the arrangements for 2025 in a different place. I commented at the meeting that the route to finding the arrangements was confusing and not straightforward and asked to be told the date that the 2025 arrangements were put on Kingsmead’s website.

32. Kingsmead told me that the arrangements were put on its website on 28 February 2024. This is by the date required by the Code. I accept that this is the case and think it is likely that the objector was not able to find the arrangements because of the way that the website is organised as the route to the arrangements can be misleading. Although the arrangements are not easily found and it would be helpful for the governing body to rectify this, they have been published. Therefore, I do not uphold this part of the objection.

The feeder schools have not been named reasonably; the number of children attending the named feeder schools is significantly higher than the PAN for Kingsmead and some are further from Kingsmead than other primary schools, particularly Gorsemoor.

33. Paragraph 1.15 of the Code says,

“Admission authorities may wish to name a primary or middle school as a feeder school. The selection of a feeder school or schools as an oversubscription criterion **must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.”

34. Paragraph 1.8 of the Code requires that oversubscription criteria are fair and reasonable. I will therefore first consider the reasons for the use of feeder schools in the oversubscription criteria. Kingsmead said that three main reasons for the changes to the admission arrangements are, in summary:

- 34.1. the catchment area system was no longer working as other secondary schools had changed to feeder schools;
- 34.2. Kingsmead had a vision of working in partnership with the feeder schools to create “an outstanding education for our local children and community all the way through from primary to secondary whilst supporting each other”, and

34.3. parents who live close to Kingsmead could not understand why their children were not being admitted when children who lived further away were.

35. I will consider these objections in the order above. The trust explained that catchment areas across all secondary schools in an area created a patchwork and an efficient system but when some schools, as had happened, stopped using catchment areas as their main oversubscription criterion, the catchment area system became less effective as there were 'holes'. I therefore looked at arrangements locally and note that the secondary schools in the planning area mainly have catchment areas as their main criterion (Cardinal Griffin as a Catholic school has criteria mainly based on faith). The map of the existing catchment areas used for admissions to secondary schools in the planning area shows that the whole planning area is covered. This means that when the arrangements for 2024 and previous years were in operation in the school's planning area, every child, wherever they lived, had a high priority for at least one school.

36. The trust referred to Erasmus Darwin Academy (Erasmus) as a local school that had moved to feeder schools in its oversubscription criteria. Erasmus is about five miles from Kingsmead and is in a different planning area. It does not have a catchment area and names three feeder schools and then distance from the school as the main oversubscription criteria. As the sum of the PANs of the feeder schools is just over half the PAN for Erasmus, it is likely that most local children whose parents wish them to attend Erasmus will be admitted whatever primary school they attend. Another secondary school, Harts, which is about four miles from Kingsmead, has changed its arrangements so that the main oversubscription criterion is distance so it is fair to assume that most of those admitted, if the oversubscription criteria are applied, will be local children. There is little evidence to support the trust's argument that there has been a significant change in the admission arrangements in the area which would provide a rationale for the school to change from using a catchment area as the main oversubscription criterion. I make no comment on the arrangements determined for Erasmus or Harts, and nor do I see that the arrangements for Erasmus or Harts have any relevance to the arrangements for Kingsmead. I was told that at one time parents were preferring Erasmus to Kingsmead. However, as Kingsmead had 356 first preferences for 224 places for 2024, there does not appear to be a rationale for Kingsmead to change its admission arrangements in response to changes to the admission arrangements of Erasmus. I therefore do not see the arrangements of other secondary schools in the area as a reason for the use of feeder schools in the oversubscription criteria.

37. In terms of its vision, Kingsmead said in its initial response to the objections,

"Kingsmead has a strong working relationship with 8 primary schools, which it has maintained for over 20 years in some cases. All of these schools are in close proximity to Kingsmead School. All 8 of these schools work closely with Kingsmead in terms of governance, academic support, pastoral support, SEND support, safeguarding expertise and sharing of resources (visits and subject specific experiences). As part of the early discussions in this process all 8 primary partner schools were approached to consider working more closely with Kingsmead School

and bringing a greater level of clarity for families about admission to Kingsmead through the admission arrangements.”

38. This is a compelling vision. However, Gorsemoor, as one of these eight schools, expressed the view that the description of the close working relationships is not accurate based on its own experiences. Gorsemoor has not been named as a feeder school as it did not wish to be named before it had clarified what the expectations of closer collaboration meant. For example, Gorsemoor was unclear whether there would be expectations about what curriculum was taught and how. I note here that there were communications between Gorsemoor and Kingsmead but both parties expressed frustration that the other party had not responded effectively. The outcome was that Gorsemoor was not named as a prospective feeder school in the consultation and is not one of the named feeder schools in the 2025 admission arrangements. This is the underlying cause of the objections.

39. In the event, seven primary schools were named as feeder schools. One, Poppyfield, is a relatively new school and is growing from reception year up and will not have any children of an age to join Y7 until 2026. Admission arrangements are determined annually, and it is open to an admission authority to change its arrangements if circumstances change. It is not reasonable to name a school as a feeder school in the 2025 arrangements that has no children who could attend Kingsmead in 2025, therefore the admission arrangements will need to be revised accordingly.

40. The sum of the PANs for the feeder primary schools, which are relevant for admissions in 2025, excluding Poppyfield, is 330. Kingsmead’s PAN is 224, which is a difference of 106 places. In other words, if the feeder schools were all full in the relevant year group and all parents chose to make Kingsmead their first preference there would be a shortfall of 106 places. The feeder schools are not all full in Y5 (the relevant year group for admissions to secondary education in 2025), the number of pupils in Y5 at the feeder schools is 298. Therefore, if all the parents of the children at the feeder schools wished their children to be admitted to Kingsmead, there would be a shortfall of 74 places before any other factor is taken into account. Kingsmead said,

“Not every family at our primary partner schools will select Kingsmead as their school of choice. There are a number of secondary schools within the area, which historically some parents from our primary partner schools choose for their child to attend. During this process we carefully modelled approximate numbers of potential choices against our PAN; we did this using the proportion of children in each Year 6 cohort at all of our primary partners and using that percentage figure as a guide. This resulted in close to or just under our PAN.”

41. For admissions in 2024, the lowest percentage of children putting Kingsmead as a first preference was 38 per cent (Pye Green) and the highest, 88 per cent (St Peter’s). The modelling provided by the local authority is a snapshot in time provided as an indication of what could happen under the proposed arrangements. The modelling, applying the 2024 applications to the 2025 oversubscription criteria, showed 20 children attending a feeder school who would be refused admission under the 2025 arrangements. The modelling was

based on 261 children being admitted, whereas the PAN is 224. Therefore, the truer indication is that 57 (20 plus 37) children attending a feeder school whose parents put Kingsmead as a first preference in 2024, would have been refused a place under the 2025 arrangements with the PAN at 224. Obviously, and as already stated, the modelling only provides an indication. It is nevertheless a useful indication of the potential effects of adoption of the named feeder schools, and it shows that based on the applications of data for 2024, there would not be sufficient spaces for all the children attending the feeder schools who put Kingsmead as a first preference. The vision will not therefore be achieved and so this rationale for the oversubscription criterion is flawed.

42. Kingsmead said that the selection of feeder schools followed “working with all of our closest primary partners that make up 90% of our Year 7 cohort each year.” In other words, the school says 90 per cent of the students at Kingsmead already come from the feeder schools. This is the other way around of looking at the data, not the number of children at the feeder schools who may wish to feed into Kingsmead, but the proportion of children from the feeder schools at Kingsmead. I have tested the data and found that this is an overestimate, and the more accurate figure is around 67 per cent or around two thirds. In any event, this does not affect the issue of children attending feeder schools who would not gain a place at the school.

43. Around two thirds of children admitted to Kingsmead in 2023 and 2024 attended what are to be feeder schools for 2025. Kingsmead has not argued that this would not have continued to be the case if the 2024 oversubscription criteria were applied for 2025. Kingsmead explained that it introduced feeder schools as it wished to make the partnership closer with a shared vision and closer collaboration; the concept of a golden thread leading from primary education to adulthood was described. I would understand this if it were hoped and intended that a higher proportion of children from the feeder schools would be admitted to Kingsmead. However, Kingsmead has said that it does not seek to attract a higher proportion of children from the feeder schools. The rationale for changing the oversubscription criteria to name feeder schools is therefore not clear to me.

44. Paragraph 14 of the Code 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.”

45. It would be understandable for a parent to anticipate that children attending a feeder school would be admitted, although nothing is guaranteed. This is not the case here by a considerable margin and so parents may be led into a false understanding that their child would be admitted to Kingsmead if the child attended one of the named feeder schools. The rationale given by the school for adoption of the named feeder schools (namely community, strong links and continuity) can only be considered a reasonable one if the objective is likely to be achieved. In other words, it must be more likely than not that the children at the feeder schools whose parents apply for a place at Kingsmead will be admitted to the school. The

vision of continuing education would not make sense otherwise. However, there would not be sufficient places at Kingsmead for all those at the feeder schools to be offered a place at Kingsmead with a PAN of 224 (or even admitting 261, the number admitted in 2023 and to be admitted in 2024). It is unreasonable to name schools as feeder schools with a stated objective of close links and continuity when that objective is unlikely to be fulfilled for a significant number of children.

46. The third reason given for the use of feeder schools in the arrangements is to address the confusion and concern of families living very close to the school who were not able to gain admission; so I will now consider the situation for those living close to Kingsmead. Kingsmead said to me in its response to my enquiries, “We have multiple appeals this year from families that, door-to-door, live closer to Kingsmead than families within the catchment who have attained a place, although they live further away from Kingsmead.” I understand this to mean that children living in Cannock Chase have had a higher priority than those who live closer to the school. Of course, siblings of those who have been admitted in previous years will have a higher priority than those who attend a feeder school and so could live at any distance from the school. Kingsmead, in its consultation letter said, “the catchment boundary for Kingsmead does not reflect the needs of the local community.” I assume the term ‘local community’ in this context takes its usual meaning of those who live close to the school.

47. For 2024 admissions, there are 139 children on the waiting list for Y7 at the school who did not gain admission and clearly some parents find this very difficult. I pause here to note that under the 2024 arrangements, those living in the catchment area had a higher priority than siblings of existing students. A significant change for admissions in 2025 is that siblings have a higher priority than those attending a feeder school. In other words, in 2025, where there is oversubscription, siblings of existing students will be admitted before those attending feeder schools. Under the 2024 oversubscription criteria siblings were only considered after children living in catchment and, had the school not admitted over PAN some siblings would not have gained a place. Kingsmead has admitted high numbers of children in previous years and many of these children will have younger siblings who will have a higher priority for admission under the 2025 oversubscription criteria. Also, a combination of factors has meant that when the last criterion has been applied, decided by distance from the school, the distance at which the last child has been admitted has reduced. This would be true using the 2024 or 2025 arrangements.

48. The local authority modelling applying the 2025 arrangements to the 2024 applications shows around 20 children who lived very close to Kingsmead and in the previous catchment area would not be admitted, as those children were not attending one of the feeder schools. No children would have been admitted under the distance criterion even if the school admitted up to 261 children. Therefore the arrangements for 2025 will not address the concern that children who live very close to the school will not be admitted. The change is not going to have the stated desired effect of improving the ability to meet the needs of the local community if that means that those living closest will be admitted.

49. I will now consider the situation for children attending the nearest primary school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (St Joseph's), which is situated 0.16 miles from Kingsmead in a straight line and 0.2 miles walking distance. No objections have been made in relation to children at St Joseph's. That does not prevent the situation of children who attend St Joseph's being relevant. The PAN for St Joseph's is 30. The local authority told me that 22 children (73 per cent) from St Joseph's had Kingsmead as their first preference for 2024. Twenty of these 22 children were offered a place at Kingsmead for 2024. This large proportion challenges the assumption that, as mainly Catholic children, the children will come from a wider geographical area and their parents will want them to attend Cardinal Griffin. It is likely that under the arrangements for 2025, because St Joseph's is not a named feeder school, none of these children, unless they have a sibling at Kingsmead, will be admitted to Kingsmead. I acknowledge that Kingsmead say they found the leadership at St Joseph's unwilling to collaborate but the consequence of changing to a priority for feeder schools and not naming this very close school as a feeder school, is that these children who live, in the main, very close to Kingsmead and who will not be in the catchment area of any other school, will be disadvantaged. It is possible that these children could gain admission to Cardinal Griffin as a Catholic school, but most parents in 2024 made Kingsmead their first preference.

50. One objector said, "The new arrangements for admissions of future pupils do not take into account children living in close proximity to the school...My son, who lives 0.4 miles away from Kingsmead will now be unlikely to gain a place as other schools, [...] over two miles away are being prioritised over the needs of local children." The adoption of the named feeder schools means priority will be given to those who may live around two miles from Kingsmead, much closer to another secondary school and attend, for example, Pye Green, to the disadvantage of those who live close by but do not attend a feeder school. Part of the objections is that it is unreasonable to name schools that are further away from Kingsmead than schools that are closer but not named as feeder schools. The walking distances are shown in table 2 above.

51. Chadsmoor Junior School (Chadsmoor) is the fifth nearest school to Kingsmead and has not been named as a feeder school. Kingsmead said that it was not named as a feeder as hardly any children came from the school. For admissions in 2024, the parents of 13 children at Chadsmoor put Kingsmead as their first preference which is 24 per cent of the Y6 cohort at Chadsmoor and lower than the proportion of any of the named feeder schools. There are therefore rational reasons for not naming Chadsmoor as a feeder school.

52. Gorsemoor is the sixth nearest school. For admissions in 2024, the parents of 63 per cent of the children put Kingsmead as their first preference. There has been much local debate about the reasons for its inclusion or otherwise as referred to above. While the communications are opaque, however, I find that in essence Gorsemoor was not named as a feeder school because Gorsemoor and Kingsmead did not reach agreement on its inclusion prior to the launch of the consultation in 2024.

53. Redhill Primary School (Redhill) is the eighth nearest primary school to Kingsmead. Again Kingsmead cited the low numbers of children coming from Redhill as its reason for

not naming the school and this rationale can be justified by only four parents naming it as first preference for 2024.

54. Moorhill Primary School (Moorhill) was not chosen for the same reason with the parent of only one child naming Kingsmead as a first preference.

55. Kingsmead also made reference to the proximity of some of the above schools to SUA. I note that Poppyfield, Pye Green and West Hill are similarly close to SUA so that in itself would not have been a sufficient reason to name some schools and not others. Overall there are valid reasons why St Joseph's, Chadsmoor, Gorsemoor, Redhill and Moorhill have not been named as feeder schools even though they are closer to Kingsmead than schools which have been named.

56. In conclusion, I find that the evidence shows that the three objectives given for naming the feeder schools will not be met. There is little evidence that the existing catchment area system has 'holes'. There is substantial evidence that the vision of continuing education with partner feeder schools cannot fully be achieved as there will be insufficient places at Kingsmead for the number of children from the feeder schools likely to have Kingsmead as a first preference. The naming of feeder schools does not help Kingsmead meet the needs of its local community as significant numbers of local children will not gain a place. I therefore uphold this part of the objection that the feeder schools have not been named on reasonable grounds and therefore do not meet the requirements of paragraphs 1.8 and 1.15 of the Code to be reasonable.

Replacing an oversubscription criterion giving priority to children living in the catchment area with an oversubscription criterion giving priority to those attending named feeder schools will cause an unfairness.

57. Oversubscription criteria by their very nature advantage some children and disadvantage others. It is not my role to compare different oversubscription criteria or say that one is better than another. Parents prefer schools for all sorts of reasons, and it is possible that in a short period of time, a school that was oversubscribed becomes under subscribed and vice versa. The trust explained to me that this had happened to Kingsmead. The Ofsted judgement that it required improvement in 2018 made the school less popular but now it has been oversubscribed since 2022.

58. In addition, parents choose schools for convenience, family links and other reasons. Therefore, when I look at the maps showing home locations of children in Y5 at the primary schools in the area, I see a pattern of clusters near the actual primary schools and then, often a sprinkling across a far wider area with some children travelling several miles and past other primary schools to get to their primary schools. In other words, parents do not always want their children to attend their local school. However, there could be unfairness if admission arrangements result in a situation where some children have no alternative other than to undertake an unduly long or difficult journey to an alternative school.

59. I pause here to set the context for children attending Gorsemoor as Gorsemoor is the source of most of the objections. Gorsemoor, while not in the catchment area itself, is close

to Kingsmead; many of the children attending Gorsemoor live less than a mile from Kingsmead and some live in the catchment area for Kingsmead. Gorsemoor is in the catchment area for Norton Canes which is around two miles from Gorsemoor. I wish to make this point clear as there have been some misunderstandings regarding the relationship between Gorsemoor and Kingsmead in terms of admissions. Gorsemoor has never been a feeder school for Kingsmead and Gorsemoor itself has been in the catchment area for Norton Canes for many years. This has not changed.

60. The majority of children at Gorsemoor whose parents wanted them to go to Kingsmead would not have been admitted to Kingsmead under the arrangements for 2024 if the admission authority had not increased the school's PAN from 224 to 261. This is not a reflection on the arrangements for 2024 but to clarify the changes that have been made and the effect or possible lack of effect on those children attending Gorsemoor. My conclusion above, that the oversubscription criterion for feeder schools is unreasonable, would not have been different if Gorsemoor had been included as a feeder school.

61. Children living close to Kingsmead do have other secondary schools nearby. Some of the matters raised in the objections were around the difficulties of children getting to Norton Canes. Parents have expressed the wish that their children walk to school for fitness and environmental reasons, and I understand this. I have seen for myself that the obvious route to Norton Canes includes a busy road with a lack of safe crossing places. However, I am also aware that there is public transport available and that some children from the area of Gorsemoor already attend Norton Canes. Some do by preference and others because of not being able to achieve admission to Kingsmead.

62. One objector referred to the disadvantage for her child who lives in the catchment area for Kingsmead and attends another primary school, Gentleshaw Primary School. I am confident that there are numerous examples of children who attend other primary schools who may be disadvantaged by the naming of feeder schools in oversubscription criteria. I note that where a school is oversubscribed, there will always be children who are disadvantaged by the oversubscription criteria. My consideration is whether children are unfairly disadvantaged. No child has a right, apart from those for whom a school is named in an EHCP, to attend a particular school. I do understand, however, the frustration of being very close to one, highly desirable school, and not being able to gain admission but rather to have to travel perhaps two miles to another school.

63. I will now consider the situation of children who live in Cannock Chase. The local authority expressed concerns, which it illustrated during the consultation, that the feeder school criterion may unfairly affect those living in the more rural area that had been in the catchment area (Cannock Chase). Kingsmead could not admit all the 346 children whose parents put Kingsmead as a first preference for 2024. However, living in the catchment area provided a near certainty of admission as the number of children living in the catchment area has always been below the PAN. And so, twenty-two of the children attending Hazel Slade, which mainly serves those who live in Cannock Chase, had Kingsmead as a first preference in 2024 and 21 were offered places. I assume that the child who was not offered a place did not live in the catchment area.

64. The arrangements for 2025 say if there is oversubscription within a criterion, then it is the distance of the home to Kingsmead which would decide the priority. The distance would be by straight line, not walking route. The addresses of the primary schools can only provide an indication of where children may live, but it is an indication.

65. Excluding Poppyfield, Hazel Slade is the furthest of the named feeder schools, and children who attend it may live further away still. It would be these most distant children who would be refused admission to Kingsmead if there were, as forecast, oversubscription within the criterion. A likely outcome of the 2025 arrangements is that most of the children attending Hazel Slade and living in Cannock Chase whose parents put Kingsmead as a first preference will not be admitted.

66. These children will not be in the catchment area of any of the other local secondary schools. Setting aside the faith-based criterion for Cardinal Griffin, if any of the other secondary schools were to be oversubscribed then these children are likely to fall under the last criterion, distance, for all the schools in the planning area.

67. I note that the local authority would have to meet the school transport costs where a child is over eight and must travel more than three miles to the nearest school with places. The local authority believes that the nearest secondary school to Cannock Chase, with places for those who do not live in its catchment area, would be Norton Canes. The local authority demonstrated that safe walking routes from examples given to me of homes in Cannock Chase to Norton Canes were over three miles or simply not available and so it is likely that there would be additional costs to the local authority, and thus the public purse, created. Some of the children attending Hazel Slade, albeit that this is a feeder school for Kingsmead, are therefore likely to have to travel further to an alternative school because of the arrangements for 2025.

68. These distances are not great, but the effect will be additional and avoidable cost to the local authority's school transport budget. Naming Hazel Slade as a feeder school is potentially misleading as at least some pupils there for whom the school is a first preference are unlikely to secure a place. In addition, it is not appropriate to create additional and avoidable costs to the local authority without good reason.

69. Children living in the area of Pye Green Primary School and, in due course, Poppyfield, will, if admitted, pass close to SUA to get to Kingsmead. A consequence of the named feeder schools is that a particular group of children, those living in Cannock Chase, is likely to be most disadvantaged. They are the ones who will have more difficult journeys to school because children who live nearer to secondary schools other than Kingsmead, will have a higher priority to a place at Kingsmead. Or to put it another way, so many feeder schools have been named it is highly likely that some of the children living in Cannock Chase and attending Hazel Slade will be disadvantaged

70. I find that the arrangements are unfair as most children living in Cannock Chase are unlikely to be offered a place at Kingsmead even if they attend one of the named feeder schools. The children who are likely to be refused admission because they do not live sufficiently close to Kingsmead are also likely to live further from an alternative school than

many of the children attending the other named feeder schools who do gain places at Kingsmead. These children will not have a high priority for any other secondary school (unless Catholic) as they will not live in the catchment area for any of those schools and will have more difficult routes to school as a result.

The feeder schools which have been named have more affluent intakes and therefore less affluent children attending schools not named will be unfairly disadvantaged

71. Some of the objections also raised the concern that the majority of the primary schools selected to be feeder schools were in areas where child poverty was low compared to those not selected. One objection said,

“I believe Kingsmead ha[s] ‘hand picked’ feeder schools and in doing so they will exclude children from a specific social economic group i.e. those children whose families live in less affluent areas.”

72. The indicator referred to in objections was the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI). Another indicator of deprivation is eligibility for free school meals (FSM). Nationally, for primary schools the average proportion eligible for FSM is 25.9 per cent. All my figures on FSM are based on the information available on the DfE website, ‘Get information about schools.’ I will use the proportion of those eligible for FSM in my considerations of this matter as that relates directly to the children attending a school rather than the area in which the school is situated as provided by IDACI. Table 2, above, shows the proportion of children eligible for FSM at each of the primary schools within two miles of Kingsmead.

73. Deprivation can affect a child’s ability to succeed and it is not uncommon for children whose home life is less affluent, to achieve less well than their peers. In general terms, in education there is often a gap in attainment between those eligible for FSM and those who are not. The primary schools selected as feeder schools vary in the proportion of FSM between 8.1 per cent (Poppyfield, which I have discounted for the reasons set out above) and 32.8 per cent (Hazel Slade). The primary schools not selected as feeder schools vary between 11.7 per cent (St Joseph’s) and 68.3 per cent (Redhill).

74. I raised the objectors’ arguments about the relative levels of deprivation of children attending feeder schools and those not attending feeder schools with Kingsmead; and the allegation that those attending the feeder schools are less likely to be deprived than those not attending feeder schools. Broadly it is a fact that the schools with the highest proportions of FSM have not been selected as feeder schools. Kingsmead assured me that the schools had not been selected on this basis and there was no intention for any social engineering. In other words, Kingsmead said it was accidental that the effect of the oversubscription criterion for feeder schools was that more children would be admitted who were more likely to achieve academically. St Joseph’s and Gorsemoor, not selected as feeders, have proportionally low numbers of children eligible for FSM, but be this as it may, the selection of feeder schools and their relatively low proportions of children eligible for FSM creates the effect that the intake will be skewed towards the children of more affluent parents by the feeder schools selected in the arrangements.

75. In this context I note that Kingsmead is a successful school. The indicators for what the students achieve there are all very good. For example, in 2023 GCSEs, students achieved above local authority and national averages. It is understandable that parents would want their children to attend there. I also know from my experience in education, and what objectors have told me, that parents are willing to go to great lengths to get their children to the school which they believe is best for them. In some areas this can include moving house or moving primary schools. On the latter, Gorsemoor said that some of its parents are considering moving their children from Gorsemoor to a feeder school to increase their chances of being able to transfer to Kingsmead for Y7. More affluent parents are more likely to be able to do this.

76. The feeder schools contain a higher proportion of more affluent families than some of the schools not named. However, some of those not named as feeder schools also have a low proportion of children eligible for FSM. Under the 2024 arrangements parents could gain an advantage by moving into the catchment area and it may be that some did so. Because the better off tend to have a greater ability to exercise choices relevant to school oversubscription criteria than those who are less well off, it could probably be said of most school's oversubscription criteria that there is a potential advantage to better off parents. In this case, there are rational reasons for the selection of feeder schools and I have not seen sufficient evidence to justify a conclusion that the effect of the adoption of these particular feeder schools will unfairly disadvantage those from poorer backgrounds. I do not uphold this part of the objection.

It is unfair that children of staff are given a higher priority than children living locally

77. Paragraph 1.39 of the Code says,

“Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances:

- a) where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or
- b) the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post at the school for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.”

78. As this part of the objections relates to fairness, both paragraphs 1.4 and 1.8 are relevant. The arrangements echo the wording in paragraph 1.39 of the Code. As noted above, for 2024 and previous years, this priority was given for staff, but it was the fourth priority after looked after and previously looked after children; those living in the catchment area; and siblings of existing students. In the arrangements for 2025, the priority for children of staff is the third criterion after looked after and previously looked after children and siblings of existing students, and so before those attending feeder primary schools and those allocated on distance. This does mean that children of staff are likely to be admitted before those living locally who do not have a sibling already at Kingsmead or attend feeder schools.

79. This part of the objection raised concerns that this criterion did not meet the stated objective of serving the local community. The trust explained that Kingsmead was a school deemed to require improvement in a previous Ofsted report and this had affected its ability to recruit staff. Kingsmead saw itself as part of the local community and having a good school served the needs of the local community and a good school needed to recruit good staff and keep them. As several of the objectors had referred to in their objections, it is most helpful if travelling to school and work is as time efficient as possible, so it is an advantage to staff to have their children at the same school. The trust referred to the increasing national problems in recruiting staff particularly in some subject areas. The few staff who gained a place for their child under this criterion may include those who would have gained a place under another because they also lived locally. The priority given to school staff was seen as contributing to the recruitment and retention of staff, serving the needs of the local community and affecting very few places as, based on previous records, about two or three children were allocated places under this priority each year.

80. I found the trust's reasons for giving priority to children of members of staff to be justified; such priority is expressly permitted by the Code, and taking into account all relevant circumstances, I do not find giving children of staff a higher priority than children living locally to be unfair. I do not uphold this part of the objection.

Other matters

81. When I considered the arrangements, I thought that there may be other matters that did not meet the requirements of the Code. I therefore brought these to the attention of the trust and I have used my power under section 88I of the Act to consider the arrangements as a whole. The other matters are as described below. Paragraph 14 of the Code, as above, requires arrangements to be clear and so is relevant.

Looked after and previously looked after children

82. Paragraph 1.7 of the Code requires that the first priority in any oversubscription criteria is for looked after and previously looked after children and provides definitions.

83. The first priority in the oversubscription criteria is:

“Children in care and children who ceased to be in care because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order), including those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. See ‘Additional Notes’”

The additional notes say,

“Looked after Children means children who are in the care of a local authority in accordance with section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989 and who (a) in care of a Local Authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a Local Authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see definition in Section 22 (1) of the

Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school. This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders).”

84. The additional notes have taken wording from paragraph 1.7 of the Code and the footnotes to that paragraph, but they include part of the definition for previously looked after children as if it applied to looked after children. This makes the arrangements unclear and does not meet the requirement for clarity in paragraph 14 of the Code.

Priority for school staff

85. Paragraph 1.39 of the Code, as above, permits admission authorities to give priority to staff “employed **at** the school” or to “to fill a vacant post **at** the school” in certain circumstances (my emphasis in bold). The arrangements refer to “Children of Kingsmead School employees”. It is my understanding, and I have received no denial, that the staff are employed by the trust. It therefore makes the arrangements unclear by referring to “Children of Kingsmead School employees” as no such persons exist. I note this as a separate matter to the part of the objection relating to children of staff considered above.

Information on admission other than the normal age group

86. Paragraph 2.18 of the Code says, “Admission authorities **must** make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group.” The information in the arrangements refers to applications both to the local authority and the governing body of Kingsmead and so the arrangements are not clear about to which body applications need to be made. They do not therefore meet the requirements of paragraph 2.18 of the Code.

Summary of Findings

87. I have considered all the evidence provided to me and found that:

87.1. I uphold the part of the objections relating to the consultation.

87.2. I do not uphold the objection regarding the admission arrangements not being published on the school’s website as required by the Code as I accept that Kingsmead published the arrangements on 28 February 2024.

87.3. I uphold the objection that the selection of feeder schools was not transparent and made on reasonable grounds in the current circumstances.

87.4. I uphold the objection that the priority given to those attending the named feeder schools will unfairly disadvantage those living in Cannock Chase and attending Hazel Slade.

87.5. I do not uphold the objection that the oversubscription criterion for feeder schools particularly disadvantages children from less affluent areas.

87.6. I do not uphold the objection to giving children of staff at the school a higher level of priority than children who live locally.

88. I also find that other parts of the arrangements do not comply with the Code as explained above.

Determination

89. In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I partially uphold the objection to the admission arrangements for September 2025 determined by John Taylor Multi Academy Trust for Kingsmead School in the local authority area of Staffordshire County Council.

90. I have also considered the arrangements in accordance with section 88I(5) and find there are other matters which do not conform with the requirements relating to admission arrangements in the ways set out in this determination.

91. 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 the date of the determination.

Dated: 14 August 2024

Signed:



Schools Adjudicator: Deborah Pritchard