



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: ADA4497

Objector: Surrey County Council

Admission authority: The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust for Connaught Junior School

Date of decision: 21 August 2025

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I do not uphold the objection to the admission arrangements for September 2026 determined by The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust for Connaught Junior School, Surrey.

The referral

1. Under section 88H(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act), an objection has been referred to the adjudicator about the admission arrangements (the arrangements) for Connaught Junior School (the school, Connaught), a non-selective primary academy for children aged seven to eleven years old for September 2026.
2. The objector is Surrey County Council (the objector, the Local Authority, the LA)
3. Other parties to the objection are The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust (TAMAT, the trust) and the Good Shepherd Academy Trust, the admission authority for Valley End C of E Primary School (Valley End).

Jurisdiction

4. The terms of the academy agreement between the trust and the Secretary of State for Education require that the admissions policy and arrangements for the school are in accordance with admissions law as it applies to maintained schools. These arrangements were determined by the trust, which is the admission authority for the school, on that basis.

5. The objector submitted their objection to these determined arrangements on 7 May 2025. I am satisfied the objection has been properly referred to me in accordance with section 88H of the Act and it is within my jurisdiction.
6. The objection is in relation to the school's admissions arrangements for 2026/27.
7. I am grateful to all parties for their speedy and diligent responses to my requests for information. I commend both the LA and TAMAT for dealing with issues they agreed were in breach of the School Admissions Code during the consultation on the school's arrangements.

Procedure

8. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the Code.
9. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
- a. a copy of the consultation document issued by the trust, and the draft arrangements proposed;
 - b. responses made to that consultation by the LA;
 - c. minutes of the Trust Board Admissions Consultation Meeting on 30 January 2025;
 - d. the academy funding agreement for the trust;
 - e. a copy of the determined arrangements for 2026/27, including the supplementary admissions form;
 - f. the objector's form of objection dated 7 May 2025 along with supporting documents and other correspondence;
 - g. information on school and the LA's websites;
 - h. information on the Department for Education (DfE) website "Get Information About Schools" (G.I.A.S.); and
 - i. Ofsted reports on the schools concerned;

Although I may not directly refer to it in my determination, I have read and taken account of all the information provided to me.

The Objection

10. The objection is in multiple parts:
- that the determined arrangements do not meet the requirements of the Code, specifically paragraph 1.15 "The selection of a feeder school or schools **must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds" and paragraph 14 "admission

authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of places are fair, clear and objective.”

- that the determined arrangements do not meet the needs of the local community, as defined by the area from which the school has previously admitted children and evidence from previous admissions rounds and predicted likely need in future years.
- that the arrangements as determined create unfairness for a group of applicants.

Background

11. Connaught Junior School is situated in the town of Bagshot. The point of entry to the school is Year 3 (Y3). The school has a capacity for 480 pupils, with 470 currently on roll. At its last inspection by Ofsted in May 2023 the school was designated “Outstanding”.

12. Connaught and its three feeder schools are all in the Windlesham, Bagshot and Lightwater planning area. A planning area is a device used by local authorities to meet their duty to make sure that there are sufficient school places for the children in their area and try to ensure a balance between demand for school places and capacity. A planning area is a geographical area containing named schools and an administrative construct that does not restrict the opportunity for parents to express preferences for other schools outside that area.

13. There are considerable impediments to free movement around the planning area, especially for pedestrians. The M3 motorway runs from northeast to southwest just 400 metres to the south of the school, with a major dual carriageway running from southeast to northwest only 400 metres to the east.

14. The school organisation of provision for children of primary school age in the planning area and more broadly in Surrey Heath is generally in the form of children attending small infant schools up to age seven, followed by transition to larger junior school settings for education between seven and eleven years of age.

15. The other junior school in the planning area is listed by the LA and GIAS as Hammond Junior School. Lightwater Village School is the other primary school in the planning area. Confusingly, Hammond Junior School appears to have been joined the GLS Academy Trust, the proprietor of Lightwater Village School, and styles itself as Lightwater Junor School. The school website states that those two schools together provide all-through education from nursery to Year 6, but there is a formal point of transfer where students have to apply for Year 3 places. The two settings present each other in their arrangements as linked. The school in Lightwater which serves pupils between Year 4 and Year 6, however named, is substantially below capacity in terms of the number of pupils on roll, with declining first preferences in the last three years.

16. Connaught’s Published Admission Number (PAN) is 120.

17. After the admission of children with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) which names the school, the oversubscription criteria for Connaught are in summary as follows:

- i. Looked after and previously looked after children.
- ii. Exceptional social/medical need.
- iii. Children of staff who a) have been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission is made, and/or b) who have been recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skills shortage.
- iv. Siblings of pupils on roll at Connaught Junior School and Windlesham Village Infant School, Bagshot Infant School and Valley End C of E Infant School who are expected to still be on roll at either school on the date of admission.
- v. Children attending Windlesham Infant School as part of The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust (ranked by distance to the school).
- vi. Children attending Bagshot Infant School and Valley End C of E Infant School (ranked by distance to the school).
- vii. Any other children (ranked by distance to the school).

If within any category there are more children than places available, any remaining places will be offered to children who meet that criterion on the basis of proximity of the child's home address to the school.

18. Reviewing children allocated places at the school in the 2023, 2024, and 2025 admissions rounds, around half the children allocated places come from Bagshot itself. There are two other communities which contribute a cluster of children to the intake, which are Lightwater just under a mile away to the other side of the M3, and Windlesham a mile to the east.

19. The school's designated feeder schools, have the characteristics shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the feeder schools of Connaught Junior School

Name of school	Distance from Connaught Junior School	Type of school	Number of pupils on roll, July 2025	Capacity	PAN	Number of preferences expressed for YR 2025	Number of places offered for YR 2025, (2024 in brackets)	Ofsted status
Bagshot Infant School	0.25 miles	Primary, Community School, pupils aged 4 to 7 years old	163	187	60	91	45 (49) – all first preferences met	October 2023, Good

Windlesham Village Infant School	1.33 miles	Primary, Academy, The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust, pupils aged 4 to 7 years old	59	90	30	98	26 (24) – all first preferences met	January 2024, Good
Valley End Church of England Infant School	2.45 miles	Primary, Academy, the Good Shepherd Trust, pupils aged 5 to 7 years old	180	161	60	149	60 (60) – final allocation made to a child on criterion 5, distance, 2.93 miles (2.75 miles)	November 2024, Outstanding

20. These schools were designated as feeder schools in the 2025 admissions arrangements and continue to be so in the 2026 arrangements. In the 2024 and 2025 arrangements, Bagshot Infant School (Bagshot) was the only one of the three that gave any priority in its own oversubscription criteria for admission to Year R to siblings of children attending Connaught, the school which it feeds.

21. Children have been able to secure places at Connaught from a considerable distance away. In 2025 that included a child 3.33 miles to the northeast in Sunningdale, and also a child 3.61 miles away from the school southwest in Camberley. These are not exceptional findings. In 2024 children were allocated places who resided in Bisley and Chobham, a similar distance away. The school takes a considerable number of pupils from the Camberley / Frimley conurbation two to three miles to the southwest.

22. Parents expressed a total of 138 first preferences for Connaught in 2023, and 135 first preferences for Connaught in 2024 with 120 places offered for admissions in 2024.

23. In 2024 the school admitted up to its published admission number with applicants in Criterion 5, the feeder school criterion, with the final place being allocated to a child attending a feeder school and living 3.97 miles from the school.

24. In 2025 all of the children who expressed a first preference for Connaught who were enrolled at a feeder school were allocated places. The last of the 120 places allocated was on the final criterion, any other children, and that child lived 280 metres from the school.

Consideration of Case

25. I shall firstly consider the part of objection that the determined arrangements do not meet the requirements of the Code, specifically paragraph 1.15 “The selection of a feeder school or schools **must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds” and paragraph

14 “admission authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of places are fair, clear and objective.”

26. The objector said:

“In the determined admission arrangements for 2026, TAMAT has given a higher priority within criterion 5, to children attending Windlesham Village Infant School (another school in TAMAT), ahead of children attending Bagshot Infant School and Valley End C of E Infant School (schools which are not in TAMAT). Prior to 2026, these schools had equal priority in the admission arrangements....The LA does not consider it reasonable to give higher priority to children attending one particular school just because it is in the same Trust when another school is closer and has historically sent a higher number of children to the school i.e. Bagshot Infant School.”

27. The wording chosen by Connaught in the criterion is, “Children attending Windlesham Infant School as part of The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust”. This may give the impression that it is mere membership of the same academy trust in terms of its proprietorship which has led Windlesham Infant School (Windlesham) to be given a higher priority in 2026 as a feeder school in oversubscription criteria than the other two schools.

28. I offered the Good Shepherd Academy Trust, the admission authority for Valley End the opportunity to express views on the objection, given that the 2026 arrangements reduce the degree of priority in the oversubscription criteria given to children enrolled in that school. They have not made a submission.

29. The school has provided commentary to elaborate on its reasons for the arrangements determined. They have stated that elevating Windlesham in the oversubscription criteria would give certainty to pupils at the school of their pathway through to the end of Year 6. They further elaborated on what they see as the benefits of a shared Executive Headteacher; a unified curriculum; joint staff training and development; the schools having a shared Business Manager and Family Support Worker; and staff working across both schools.

30. In stating this, the trust has looked to demonstrate that the selection of its feeder schools has been made on reasonable grounds. It has looked to refute the claim of the objector that the extra priority given to Windlesham as a feeder is based only on it being part of TAMAT.

31. I have read the minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board which took place on 30 January 2025 specifically to consider responses to the consultation on the new arrangements. This provided extensive evaluation of all points of view but was particularly useful to evidence the reasoning of the school for its revised feeder arrangements. The grounds given by the school are individually and together reasonable grounds for the position given to Windlesham both as a feeder school at all, and as one given additional priority over other feeder schools.

32. I do not find persuasive the argument from the objector that Bagshot should have at least the same priority as Windlesham because it is closer to Connaught.

33. I therefore do not agree that the feeder school arrangements are unreasonable. I do not uphold that element of the objection.

34. I shall secondly consider whether the determined arrangements will meet the needs of the local community, as defined by the area from which the school has previously admitted children and evidence from previous admissions rounds and predicted likely need in future years. To do this I have considered the information available on the number of children currently on roll in the three feeder schools, and the LA projections of demand versus capacity in the planning area for 2026 and beyond.

Table 2. The number of pupils on roll at feeder primary schools of the school as of July 2025

	Year R – enter junior 2027	Year 1- enter junior 2026	Year 2 – enter junior 2025
Bagshot	48	58	56
Valley End	57	48	54
Windlesham	23	17	18
Total	128	123	128

Table 3. The LA projections of the need for Year 3 places in the planning area and the number of Y3 places available at the two junior schools within it

Year of entry to Y3	2026	2027	2028
Forecast demand	163	155	162
Places available	180	180	180
Surplus capacity	17	25	18

35. Table 2 shows that there is a close match between the number of pupils moving on from the three feeder schools to junior schools in the planning area. In each year there may be a single figure deficit in the ability of Connaught to take all feeder school children, but some will not make the school their preference. There is no expectation in the Code that a school allocates places to all children applying from schools it has named as feeder schools. The school has stated that they specifically considered such data and felt that the feeder schools “are unlikely to reach full capacity in the near future.” This means the

number of places needed by children from feeder schools and the number of places available are well aligned.

36. Table 3 shows that there is surplus capacity in the planning area specifically in 2026, and no projected trend of increased demand.

37. On that basis, I see no reason to conclude that the arrangements do not meet local need, and I do not uphold that element of the objection.

38. I shall finally consider whether the arrangements create unfairness for any group of applicants.

39. The objector provided highly specific modelling of the way the determined criteria for 2026 would have impacted had they been applied in the 2023 admissions round. The highly forensic analysis cannot be included as it might reveal individual confidential data, but the objector summed it up as follows

“Had these criteria existed, 5 children at Windlesham Village would have displaced 2 children at Bagshot and 3 children at Valley End.”

40. It is clear that TAMAT specifically considered the possible detriment to other applicants if Windlesham was given higher priority as a feeder than the other two feeder schools. The trust took the view that there would be no disadvantage to children in other feeder schools because of the number on roll in those schools, projected demand, and the likelihood that a small number of parents will not express a preference for Connaught.

41. My assessment of the determined arrangements for 2026 is that the great majority of parents who express a first preference for Connaught are likely to be allocated places. This is true of applicants from all three feeder schools. As the school intends, parents of pupils at Windlesham who express a first preference for Connaught would be overwhelmingly likely to be allocated a place. This is not unfair. All oversubscription arrangements act to ration places by advantaging students with one characteristic over another.

42. Those applicants least likely to be allocated places are those living some distance from the school: on recent evidence, they are unlikely to face a significant additional travel distance compared to the journey to Connaught. This was very much the case for most of the displaced children in the 2023 modelling.

43. In fact, if the 2023 modelling done by the LA had a similar effect in terms of pupils not allocated in 2026, their likely allocation will be to a junior school closer than Connaught, possibly even the junior school closest to their place of residence, with a shorter journey.

44. The LA's own submission goes on to state that in 2024 only one feeder school child would have been displaced by an extra child admitted from Windlesham had the 2026 arrangements been in effect. In 2025 no displacement would have occurred.

45. Some discussion at the Trust Board meeting and in the consultation responses focused on possible detriment to the chance of admission of pupils from Bagshot as opposed to further afield. Such children would be highly prioritised under the 2026 arrangements if they attend Bagshot Infants. If they do not attend a feeder school, they would qualify under the “other children” criteria, starting with the applicant residing closest to school. This is clear and fair. The 2026 arrangements have no differential effect on the chances of admission of families living in Bagshot compared to 2025.

46. I therefore find compelling the argument of the school that no detriment is likely from the 2026 arrangements to the chances of successful application for children attending Valley End and Bagshot. If detriment did occur, any displaced child would be a feeder school child who would be allocated a lower preference school but with no substantial burden of additional travel compared to a child from Windlesham who would be allocated a place. They would be a feeder school enrolled child but living relatively far from the school. This is not unfair in terms of the Code.

47. On that basis, I see no unfairness in the arrangements, and I do not uphold that element of the objection.

Summary of findings

48. I find that the school has determined arrangements including the adoption of named feeder schools, and giving one feeder higher priority than the others.

49. In my view, the arrangements are clear, reasonable, and do not lead to unfairness.

Determination

50. In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I do not uphold the objection to the admission arrangements for September 2026 determined by The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust for Connaught Junior School, Surrey.

Dated: 21 August 2025

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Patrick Storrie