Office of the Schools Adjudicator

Determination

Case reference: **ADA4718 and ADA4719**

Objectors: **Two parents**

Admission Authority: **The Chelmsford Learning Partnership for The Beaulieu Park School, Chelmsford**

Date of advice: **19 November 2026**

Determination

In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I uphold the objections to the admission arrangements determined by The Chelmsford Learning Partnership for The Beaulieu Park School for 2027/28.

I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that they do not comply with 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 this determination, unless an alternative timescale is specified by the schools adjudicator. In this case, since the deadline for parents to express their preference for Year R places is 15 January 2027, the Trust must revise its arrangements no later than Friday 18 December 2026.

The referral

1. Under section 88H(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act), objections have been referred to the adjudicator by two parents (the objectors), about the admission arrangements (the arrangements) for September 2027 for The Beaulieu Park School (the school). The school is an academy (free school) for children aged four to nineteen, located in Chelmsford, Essex.

2. The Local Authority (LA) for the area in which the school is located is Essex County Council.

3. The LA is a party to this objection. Other parties to the objection are:

- The objectors
- The Chelmsford Learning Partnership (the Trust), which is the admission authority for the school.

4. Both objectors say that the distance measurement used in the arrangements for admissions to the school at Year R makes the arrangements unfair (contrary to a requirement concerning admission arrangements as a whole in paragraph 14 of the Code), and unreasonable (which is a requirement concerning the oversubscription criteria which are used in admission arrangements in paragraph 1.8 of the Code). The Trust has seen the objections and has commented on them.

5. I would like to take the opportunity to give my thanks to all parties for the way in which they presented their views, responded respectfully to each other's submissions, and for their prompt responses to my requests for further information / data.

Jurisdiction

6. 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.

7. These arrangements were determined under section 88C of the Act by The Chelmsford Learning Partnership, which is the Admission Authority for the school, although it delegates responsibility for admissions matters to the governing body of the school.

8. The objectors submitted their objections to the determined arrangements on 13 May 2026. They have confirmed that their objections are in respect of Year R admissions to the school. 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.

9. The objectors have made a suggestion as to how the arrangements for 2027 for the school could be changed to make them, in their view, 'fairer' and compliant with the Code. My jurisdiction is for the arrangements as determined and to decide whether they comply with all relevant legal requirements. It is not open to me to determine what the arrangements should say.

10. My jurisdiction is solely for the determined arrangements for 2027 for the school. Therefore, I do not consider the following matter, referred to by the objectors, to be within my jurisdiction:

- That the public consultation carried out in 2022 in connection with the establishment of the school's second site at Remembrance Avenue, Chelmsford no longer represents the community affected by the school's admission arrangements.

11. I have also used my power under section 88I of the Act to consider the arrangements as a whole and to determine whether or not they conform with the requirements relating to admissions and, if not, in what ways they do not so conform. I will refer to these as 'other matters' and they are covered in the section of the determination under that heading.

Procedure

12. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the Code.

13. The information I have considered in reaching my decision includes:

- the objections dated 13 May 2026, and material supplied with those objections;
- a copy of the minutes of the meeting at which the arrangements were determined. This was by the school's governing body (with delegated authority) on 2 December 2025;
- the determined arrangements for 2027 and those for 2026;
- responses from the LA, and the Trust to the objections and to my requests for further information;
- maps showing the location of the school and other local schools;
- information available on the websites of GOV.UK (including the 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) website), the LA, the school and Ofsted.

14. I have been provided with a substantial amount of information / data by the objectors, LA, and the Trust. I have referred only to that which has a bearing on my determination.

Background

15. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2023 when it was judged to be outstanding in all categories. The school is heavily oversubscribed for both Year R and Year

7 admissions. The Trust has told me that for September 2026 entry, the school received 324 expressed preferences from parents for Year R places.

16. The published admission number (PAN) for admissions to the school in September 2027 in Year R is 120, and 120 for admissions to Year 7.

17. The arrangements start by saying that "Part 1 of this policy relates to the Primary Phase. Part 2 of this policy relates to the Secondary Phase." Under the heading "Part 1 - Primary" there are details of the admission number and the "application process" but nothing further. The remainder of the admission arrangements appear under the heading "PART 2 – Secondary."

18. The arrangements set out that children with education, health and care (EHC) plans will be admitted first. Then, in times when the school is oversubscribed, children will be prioritised according to the oversubscription criteria. These apply for admissions to both Year R and Year 7, and can be summarised as follows:

a. Looked after and previously looked after children (as defined).

b. Children with a sibling (as defined) attending the school.

c. Children of staff (although I have not raised this with the admission authority, I note on further inspection that the arrangements do not appear to comply with the requirement of paragraph 1.40 of the Code which says that: "Admissions authorities **must** specify in their admission arrangements how this priority will be applied, for example, which groups of staff it will apply to").

d. Children who live in the school's "Priority Admissions Area" with priority given to those "living nearer" to the school. The coordinates for the location at the school's Armistice Avenue site which are used for distance measurement are cited here.

e. Under the heading "Remaining applications Tie break" [sic] the following text appears:

"In the event of a tie-break, priority will be determined by straight line distance from the home to the school (Coordinates: Easting 572477, Northing: 209797), with those living nearest having highest priority. If undersubscription should occur priority will be determined without regard to the Priority Admissions Area."

I shall have more to say about this last oversubscription criterion below.

19. The document which sets out the arrangements contains a section under the heading "PART 3 - 6th form" which includes the following statements:

- "Applicants will sign an agreed working contract."

- "Students will not be admitted to the sixth form that have had 2 or more fixed-term, behaviour related exclusions …. References will be sought from a previous school prior to the place being confirmed for any external applicants."

20. The document which sets out the school's admission policy also includes (between sections giving information on waiting lists and on appeals against unsuccessful admission requests) a section under the heading "Primary site allocation", which for reasons which I shall explain below is not a matter related to admissions to the school, but to the manner in which the school is organised, which is different. However, it is helpful briefly to say what this section describes, for reasons which will become apparent. The section says that:

> "The Beaulieu Park Primary phase operates over two sites. One on Armistice Avenue and the other on Remembrance Avenue. The Remembrance Avenue site is a satellite campus. The Department for Education requires one site address, and our DfE number is registered to the Armistice Avenue site (Easting: 572477, Northing 209797), **where all distances are calculated from** [not my emphasis] by Essex County Council, to three decimal places. This is a requirement by the Department for Education and not the decision of the school."

21. There follows a description of how the 120 Year R children are allocated "a place at one site" (or the other) based on the presence or otherwise of an older sibling in the school's primary phase and the distance between the home and the Armistice Avenue site. Children are allocated to the same site as an older sibling, and if there is no sibling they are allocated to the Armistice Avenue site based on the distance of their home from this site (with nearest first) until there are no remaining places there. The remaining children go to the Remembrance Avenue site.

22. The school opened in September 2018, according to GIAS. This website also states that the school has capacity for 2020 pupils, and currently 1609 on roll. Correspondence between the Trust and the local MP (given to me by one of the objectors) explains that from September 2024 (following a consultation in 2022 as referred to above) a new building on Remembrance Avenue was opened to accommodate an expansion of primary provision at the school by providing an additional 60 places each year.

23. At my request, the Trust provided the number of children in each year group at each of the school's two sites which it expects to be educated there in both September 2026 and September 2027. I have put that data into Table 1 to provide the reader with a picture of the context in which the arrangements will operate in 2027.

Table 1. The number of children in each year group (years R to 7) at the school's two sites in 2026 (and 2027 as currently anticipated).

Site	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Armistice Avenue	60 (60)	60 (60)	60 (60)	90 (60)	92 (90)	91(92)	61 (91)	180
Remembrance Avenue	60 (60)	60 (60)	60 (60)	0 (60)	0 (nil)	0 (nil)	0 (nil)	n/a
TOTAL	120 (120)	120 (120)	120 (120)	90 (120)	92 (90)	91 (92)	61 (91)	180 (180)

24. Before the Remembrance Avenue site was opened in 2024, the school provided a "bulge class" in Year R for admissions in 2021 to 2023 to meet the growing local demand for places. It can be seen from the table that the first of these larger year groups will transfer to the school's Year 7 in 2028. The first primary year group of 120 children coming though the school will reach Year 7 in 2031, when the Trust expects to reduce external admissions to Year 7 to 60.

Consideration of Case

25. I will now set out my consideration of the matters raised by the objectors. I will conclude each section with a statement as to whether or not I uphold that particular aspect of the objection, preceded by my reasons for that conclusion. Where I state that I uphold an aspect of the objection, that does not necessarily imply that I fully endorse the reasoning expressed by the objectors, nor that the objectors have necessarily correctly interpreted which Code provision applies. Rather, it means that I have found that the particular aspect of the arrangements drawn to my attention by the objectors does not conform with a requirement of the Code identified by me and is in breach of the Code for the reasons I have given.

26. Both objectors say that the distance measurement used in the school's arrangements causes these to be unfair. Both refer to paragraphs 14 and 1.8 of the Code and say that the arrangements fail to be fair, clear and objective. Both have also said that use of a single distance reference point for applying the oversubscription criteria which give priority to children living nearest to the school makes the arrangements unreasonable.

Are the arrangements fair, clear and objective?

27. 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."

28. One of the objectors expressed the following view in his objection:

"The school's admissions policy uses a single distance reference point, the Armistice Avenue main building, to measure distance for all applicants regardless of which site they would attend. This means families living immediately adjacent to the Remembrance Avenue site are assessed as though they live 0.75 miles further from the school than they physically do in relation to the building their child would attend. Families on our estate, within a five-minute walk of Remembrance Avenue, are being passed over in favour of families living in areas such as Channels, who are further from the Remembrance Avenue building but closer to the Armistice Avenue reference point. Children on our estate are being allocated places at schools in Springfield requiring a 20 to 30 minute drive, while families from further away drive to the school our children could walk to.

I submit that the use of a single distance reference point for a school operating across two geographically distinct sites produces an outcome that is demonstrably unfair to those living closest to one of those sites and does not reflect the physical reality of where places are being provided. This is not compliant with the fairness requirement of the School Admissions Code 2021."

29. The objector attached correspondence with his MP, which included a letter from the Trust (dated 1 May 2026) responding to her enquiries. This letter included the following statement:

"It is important to note that the new site on Remembrance Avenue is not a new school. It is an expansion of The Beaulieu Park School that operates as a 'satellite site' of the main school building, which is located on Armistice Avenue.

The new site on Remembrance Avenue is therefore covered by the Beaulieu Park School Admissions Policy, as it is part of one school, albeit now operating some places on a satellite site from the main school building. The Department for Education requires one site address, and school's DFE [sic] number is registered to the Armistice Avenue address. As a result, when it comes to allocating places based on distance from the school, the distance is measured from the main school building which is in Armistice Avenue."

30. A letter from the Trust to the objector dated 13 May 2026 included the following statement:

"The status of the Remembrance Avenue provision was determined by the Department for Education, which approved it as a satellite site of The Beaulieu Park School, not a separate school. The school is legally required to operate admissions as a single school with one admissions policy and has no discretion to redefine this arrangement. As a result, places cannot be allocated or prioritised by site, and all applicants must be assessed using the same distance reference point."

31. When the Trust gave me its response to the objections, it refuted the objection that the distance measurement used in the arrangements rendered them not fair, clear or objective. It said that:

(i) "Places are allocated to the Beaulieu Park School, not to a particular site."

(ii) "The satellite site was established to create an additional 420 primary places within the school. All pupils in Year 7 and above are educated at Armistice Avenue. The Admission Authority therefore considers it the most appropriate location from which distance should be measured."

(iii) "The Admission Authority deliberately chose to identify the measurement point through precise coordinates…….The use of coordinates removes……ambiguity by identifying a single fixed point capable of consistent application in every case."

(iv) "The suitability of the distance measurement point has been considered by both the Local Governing Body and the Trust Board following the opening of the satellite site. In doing so, the Admission Authority considered whether alternative methodologies, including the use of a nodal point between the two sites or a measurement point linked directly to the satellite site, would provide a fairer basis for allocating places."

32. I shall return to this final point (and further correspondence sent to me by the objectors and by the Trust) below, since these all concern the rationale for the use of the single measurement point and therefore the reasonableness of that decision, as I shall explain. For the moment, I am concerned with the objection that the arrangements are not fair, clear or objective.

33. Let me dispose first of the questions of clarity and objectivity. I have raised with the Trust other matters which concern the clarity of the arrangements, and I shall set out my consideration of these below. At this point, I am considering the objections that relate to clarity and objectivity of the distance measurement employed in the arrangements. The arrangements define an exact location from which distance is measured using geographical coordinates. This is, in itself, both clear and objective from a procedural point of view, and I

do not need to concern myself further with the question of clarity and objectivity in relation to it.

34. The objectors say that the arrangements are unfair, and the Trust has responded to me in correspondence that:

> "The existence of applicants who would secure a different outcome under a different methodology does not, of itself, demonstrate that the current arrangements are unfair. Different methodologies will inevitably advantage some applicants and disadvantage others."

> "The fact that some children residing within the Priority Admissions Area do not secure places reflects demand exceeding the number of places available rather that any unfairness in the admission arrangements themselves."

35. The test which I must apply is not whether there is the sort of "fairness" which I think both the Trust and the objectors have in mind, which is whether there is an even-handedness in how the arrangements allocate places, but rather whether the effect of the arrangements in practice is to cause an actual unfairness to a person or persons. In this case, the person would be a child, and an unfairness would arise for example if the effect of the arrangements were that a child denied a place at a school because of them cannot be provided with the education to which they are entitled within a reasonable travelling distance or time from their home. Such a child would suffer a meaningful, and in all likelihood, a harmful disadvantage which could have been avoided had different admission arrangements allowed them a place at the school in question.

36. The arrangements for admissions in 2026 are still available on the school's website and are essentially the same as those determined for 2027 in respect of the operation of the distance measurement. I have been given no information that indicates that those for 2024 or 2025 were any different, and indeed the Trust has referred to the adoption of a single measuring point at its Armistice Avenue site having been determined at the point the school expanded, in 2024.

37. I need to emphasise at this point that my concern is in respect of the school's admission arrangements for 2027 and that my reference to evidence which relates to admissions in previous years, such as that presented in Tables 2 and 3 below, is for the purpose of coming to a view about how admissions in 2027 are likely to operate.

38. I asked the LA to tell me whether any parents living in the school's priority area for admissions who had expressed a first preference for a Year R place at the school in 2024, 2025 and 2026 had been refused a place and if so the alternative school at which a place was offered and the distance of such places from the homes of the children concerned. I also

asked the Trust to give me the data for these years which shows how places were allocated under the school's oversubscription criteria.

39. The LA's information is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. On-time Year R unsuccessful first preferences from parents living in school priority area (all live less than one mile from school)

Effect of arrangements	2024	2025	2026
Number of children	1	6	9
Number for which alternative school more than 2 miles from home (walking distance)	1	5	5
Range of distances for the above (miles)	3.4	2.0 to 2.5	2.3 to 4.4

40. The application of the oversubscription criteria in these years had been (in summary):

Table 3. Admissions by oversubscription criterion for all expressed preferences

Data	2024	2025	2026
Number of preferences	311	329	324
Siblings admitted	36	35	55
Preference area admitted (furthest distance, miles)	76 (0.85)	82 (0.82)	63 (0.72)
Others admitted (furthest distance, miles)	7 (0.63)	nil	nil

41. The Trust's data shows that the school was oversubscribed with preferences from the school's priority area in 2025 and again in 2026, but that it admitted seven children from outside the preference area in 2024. It is not clear to me why the LA data nevertheless showed one unsuccessful preference area application in 2024. However, the two sets of data are perfectly compatible for 2025 and 2026. The LA data showed that the unsuccessful

candidates in these years who lived within the school's priority area resided further away from the school than the last child admitted under the oversubscription criterion.

42. I am left with the picture that the school has been oversubscribed from within its priority admissions area for Year R admissions in the last two years and I have been told by the Trust that there is continuing and increasing pressure for places locally. That is, it seems probable that oversubscription from parents living locally will continue. Two of the three areas of housing development shown in a map provided by the LA (at my request) are nearer to the Armistice Avenue site than to the Remembrance Avenue site (the Beaulieu Park I and Beulieu Park II developments). Under the arrangements, children failing to secure a place at the school will be those living furthest from the Armistice Avenue site, since that is from where the determining distances are measured, and so the location of housing developments probably increases any effects in 2027 and beyond in this regard which are already occurring.

43. As an aside, I note that the objectors' point is that the method used in the arrangements to determine the distance of homes from the school means that they are unlikely to secure a place at the school. I have checked what the objector said about this adding an additional 0.75 miles to the distance measurement for homes nearer to the Remembrance Avenue site, compared to for example an alternative measurement which was based on that site. Googlemaps shows that the straight-line distance between the school's two sites is just over 0.6 miles, so while the objector's assessment may be a slight exaggeration it can nevertheless be seen that the effect of an additional 0.6 miles would be significant, given the furthest distance at which places have been offered in 2025 and 2026.

44. I must be clear however that my consideration at this point is not a comparison of the arrangements with potential alternatives, but to come to a view about whether the arrangements as determined are, or are not, fair in themselves.

45. There is no definition of what is likely to be an unreasonable travelling distance for a Year R pupil, since this depends on the local context, in particular the sparsity of population and the distance between schools. The statutory walking distance given in section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996, which is the distance a child could generally be expected to walk to school without requiring home-to-school transport provided by the local authority, is two miles for a child below the age of eight years. While this is a guide, I am also aware that in previous determinations a mile and a half, even for children of secondary school age, has been considered a reasonable maximum in an urban context by the adjudicator. Here, the location is clearly urban for some children and semi-urban (or semi-rural) for others, and I am considering the effect of the admission arrangements on the very youngest children. I think that in an urban context two miles, or something very close to it, can be taken as reference point for Year R children.

46. I have shown in Table 2 the number of unsuccessful children in recent years for whom the travelling distance from their home to an alternative school was more than two miles. There are number of alternative schools to which children are travelling, but the two most common are Springfield Primary School in Chelmsford (as referred to in one of the objections) and Little Walsham Church of England Primary School outside Chelmsford itself, to the northwest.

47. While other alternative schools have required greater distances to be travelled (as shown in Table 2), I will consider for the moment those children travelling to Springfield Primary School from within the school's priority area. Geography dictates that their journeys, wherever they start in this area, will be largely or exclusively through an urbanised area and will also almost certainly take them very close to the Armistice Avenue site because it is on the priority area's southern boundary. In 2025, two of the children shown in Table 2 travelling more than two miles to their alternative school went to Springfield Primary School and another child (not shown in the table) travelled more than 1.9 miles to reach it. In 2026, four displaced children (also not shown in the table) had to travel over 1.9 miles to go to Springfield Primary School as their alternative school. Given the geography of the school's priority admissions area and the effect for example of the busy A12 dual carriageway which forms its southeastern boundary, it seems to me that it is very probable that children living near to the school's Remembrance Avenue site, will predominantly be those travelling into Chelmsford to go to Springfield Primary School. The Trust has seen this assertion made by one of the objectors and has not challenged it.

48. I have considered above the effect of the arrangements in 2025 and 2026 and can see that in both years a number of children needed to travel a distance which I consider unfair for those of their age in order to go to one particular alternative school (Springfield Primary School). That being the case, I have not needed to set out a consideration of the other cases shown in the table (which can be seen however to involve greater distances). I have been given no reason to believe that the effect of the admission arrangements in 2027 would be any different, and indeed the continuing pressure for places because of housing developments which I have already mentioned is likely to mean that the trend which can be seen in the data in Table 3 of a steadily decreasing distance from the school of the last child admitted will continue.

49. The Trust has pointed out to me that a school's admission arrangements are intended to advantage some children and to disadvantage others, and this is of course the case. What the Code requires, however, is that those disadvantaged should not suffer an unfairness as a result, considered in the way that I have explained. The evidence that I have seen, and that I have presented and referred to above, is that the arrangements for 2027 will in all probability have the effect that a number of Year R children living locally and within the school's priority admissions area will fail to secure a place at the school, and that their nearest alternative

school will be at a distance from their homes which makes their daily travel unfair, as was the case in 2026.

50. I uphold the aspect of the objections that the arrangements as determined are unfair, in breach of paragraph 14 of the Code.

51. It is of course the case that revised arrangements will impact on other children, and I will discuss below the rationale which has been employed by the Trust to determine the arrangements and the alternatives which might be available to it. It will be for the Trust as the school's admission authority to wrestle with these issues in the light of this determination.

Are the arrangements reasonable?

52. Paragraph 1.8 of the Code says:

> "Oversubscription criteria **must** be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation."

53. I have already said how the Trust justified its use of a single point for measuring distances in its correspondence with the local MP and with the objector. Essentially, the Trust at that point stated that this was not a matter on which it had any discretion and indeed the arrangements themselves say:

> "The Remembrance Avenue site is a satellite campus. The Department for Education requires one site address and our DFE [sic] number is registered to the Armistice Avenue site ……**where all distances are calculated from** [not my emphasis] by Essex County Council, to three decimal places. This is a requirement by the Department for Education and is not the decision of the school."

54. However, when the Trust provided its comments to me concerning the objections it stated that when the satellite site opened, both the school's Local Governing Body and the Trust Board "considered whether alternative methodologies, including the use of a nodal point between the two sites or a measurement point linked directly to the satellite site, would produce a fairer basis for allocating places." It went on to say that it had been concluded by the Trust that "such approaches would not necessarily be fairer and would instead produce different outcomes for applicants."

55. When the objectors saw this, one wrote to me suggesting that this revealed that the Trust was aware that alternative methodologies existed and that "the current arrangement" was not "the only available option". The Trust said that this "should properly be viewed as evidence of a robust and thorough decision-making process rather than evidence that the adopted arrangements are flawed." It added that "The existence of an alternative approach does not mean that the chosen approach is unfair or unreasonable". It stated that its decision

to use a single point at the Armistice Avenue site resulted from its view that a nodal point between the two sites "would not necessarily produce a fairer outcome" and that "a measurement point linked to the satellite site would place disproportionate weight on one element of the school's estate, rather than reflecting the institution as a whole." It had earlier said that "Armistice Avenue most appropriately represents the school as a whole for the purposes of distance measurement", having stated again that "Places are allocated to the school as a whole, rather than to individual sites."

56. I am considering here whether, as the objectors claim, the use of the Armistice Avenue site for measurements of distance in connection with admissions to the school renders the relevant oversubscription criterion, and so the arrangements which contain it, unreasonable. The test of reasonableness which I shall apply is whether the decision that was taken was within the range of reasonable decisions which were open to the Trust. If this were not the case, its decision-making would have been unreasonable. Equally, if the reasoning which led to the decision was flawed in some way, then it would also be unreasonable by virtue of being "irrational".

57. The Trust has repeatedly made the comment that children are admitted to the school and not to one of the two sites where primary education is provided. It does so in support of the arrangements as they have been determined, that is to say, concerning the decision to use a single point for measuring distances for admission purposes. I point out that while what the Trust says about admission being to the school and not to one of its sites is obviously correct, the section in the arrangements which sets out how children in Year R, once admitted to the school, are allocated to one or the other of the two sites makes it clear there is no equivocation as to what happens. The school is perfectly entitled to make these arrangements of course, since the organisation of a school is a matter solely for the Headteacher. However, as far as children and their parents are concerned what the school does has exactly the same effect as if children were admitted to one site or the other, since it is clear that they spend the entirety of their primary education at the site to which they have been allocated.

58. I can only understand the Trust's stated reason for not using "a measurement point linked to the satellite site" in the context of its other comments about the school as a whole, and in particular those made earlier and in the arrangements themselves about there having to be a single address for the school and as a result a single point for measuring distances for the purpose of school admissions. The Trust has clearly stated that this is its view in correspondence (dated 13 May 2026, already referred to) with one of the objectors where it said:

> "The school is legally required to operate admissions as a single school with one admissions policy and has no discretion to redefine this arrangement. As a result,

places cannot be allocated or prioritised by site, and all applicants must be assessed using the same distance reference point."

59. So I understand that what the Trust has said about considering different options concerning the satellite site means that what was being considered was the use of the Remembrance Avenue site instead of the main school site for this purpose. However, this reasoning on the part of the Trust is based on a misappreciation of what the Code requires. I am aware of other schools which operate on split sites which give priority for admissions based on the distance from a child's home to the nearer of its two sites, and this is perfectly in accordance with what the Code requires, since there is no reason why such an approach cannot be both clear and objective and so in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 14, or indeed of paragraph 1.13 of the Code, which says only that:

> "Admission authorities **must** clearly set out how distance from to the school and/or any nodal points used in the arrangements will be measured."

If an admission authority did adopt such an approach, it would also not interfere with the assignment of children to one of a school's sites for the provision of their education, since these are separate matters.

60. I have come to the conclusion that the Trust's consideration of the available options will have been based on a mistaken understanding that there must be a single reference point for measuring home-to-school distances in all circumstances. That means that there was a serious flaw in its reasoning when determining the arrangements, since there is nothing to support such a view, and as a result the decision it made fails to be reasonable, making the arrangements also unreasonable. As such, this decision also cannot have been within the range of reasonable decisions open to the Trust. I uphold this aspect of the objections.

Other matters

61. Having considered the arrangements as a whole it appeared to me that there are other matters which do not conform with requirements of the Code and so I brought them to the attention of the Trust. These matters are (paragraphs of the Code are indicated where relevant):

(i) It is not clear to the reader where Part 1 (Primary) and Part 2 (Secondary) begin and end. For example, the stated oversubscription criteria which presumably apply to applications for places in both Year R and Year 7 at the school appear to be under the heading Part 2 – Secondary (Code, paragraph 14).

62. The Trust has acknowledged that "additional signposting and formatting may assist readers in navigating the document." However, the arrangements as determined are insufficiently clear to meet the requirements of paragraph14 of the Code.

(ii) The reference to distance measurements under oversubscription criterion d. appears to be unclear to the reader. The stated coordinates are objective but would not be meaningful to parents and area therefore unclear. These are explained much later in the arrangements as "The Armistice Avenue site", which in itself is insufficiently clear. (Code paragraphs 14, 1.8 and 1.13).

63. The Trust has acknowledged that the arrangements would be clearer for the reader if any reference point for distance measurement was given a meaningful and precise written description. However, the arrangements do not do this sufficiently clearly.

(iii) The section in the list of oversubscriptions criteria under the heading "Remaining applications Tie Break" appears to be unclear because:

- it makes no clear statement either about the admission of applications from children living outside the school's priority area or
- about the tie break which would be applied within any oversubscription criterion in the event of a tie, and
- because distance cannot itself operate as a tie-break, for example if children live in the same block of flats.

(Code paragraphs 14, and 1. 8).

64. The Trust has acknowledged that the drafting may not have made its intentions clear. The arrangements fail to be sufficiently clear for the reasons I have given.

(iv) Statements made under "PART 3 – 6th form" of the arrangements, that:

a. “Applicants will sign an agreed working contract”, and

b. “Students will not be admitted to the sixth form that have had 2 or more fixed-term, behaviour-related exclusions ……References will be sought from a previous school prior to a place being confirmed for any external applicants.”

appear to fail to comply with the prohibitions concerning school admissions in paragraph 1.9a) and 1.9 g) of the Code respectively. These say:

> “1.9 It is for admission authorities to formulate their admission arrangements, but they **must not**:
>
> a) place any conditions on the consideration of any application other than those in the oversubscription criteria published in their admission arrangements;
>
> g) take account of reports from previous schools about children’s past behaviour, attendance, attitude, or achievement, or that of any other children in the family.”

65. The Trust has told me that the former statement “was not intended to operate as an admissions criterion” and that the latter “was not intended as a punitive measure nor as an arbitrary barrier to admission.” If that is the case, neither statement should appear in the admission arrangements for the school’s sixth form, since they plainly fail to conform to what the Code sets out as mandatory requirements.

66. Amendments to a school’s admission arrangements are permitted in line with paragraph 3.6 of the Code which states, in part:

> “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 Schools Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements.”

67. The Admission Authority must address these matters, as permitted by paragraph 3.6 of the Code, by the date which I shall give below.

Determination

68. In accordance with section 88H(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I uphold the objections to the admission arrangements determined by The Chelmsford Learning Partnership for The Beaulieu Park School for September 2027.

69. I have also considered the arrangements under section 88I(5) and find that they do not comply with requirements relating to admission arrangements in the ways set out in this determination.

70. 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 this determination, unless an alternative timescale is specified by the schools adjudicator. In this case, since the deadline for parents to express their preference for Year R places is 15 January 2027, the Trust must revise its arrangements no later than Friday 18 December 2026.

Dated: 19 November 2026

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Dr Bryan Slater