

ROLE DESCRIPTION

SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS

PANEL MEMBER

Purpose of Role

The independent appeal panel is an independent body that considers school admission appeals made by parents and carers.

The appeal panel consists of 3 trained volunteers who have no connection with the family, the school or the Trust (the admission authority).

The Trust liaises with panel members, in advance of hearings, to confirm their availability.

The panel members are required to:

- read the appeal documentation that is made available prior to the hearing
- attend the hearing and arrive punctually
- consider the case that is presented by the parents/carers and the admission authority and/or the academy
- ensure that a fair, transparent, independent and impartial hearing is conducted
- follow the School Admissions Appeals Code when making decisions
- uphold or dismiss the appeal

Appeal panel hearings take place during term time throughout the school year. The peak period is between May and July. During this peak period in the summer, appeals may take more than 1 day if there is a high number of appeals for the school/year group; these must be heard by the same panel members.

Appeal hearings may be in person or conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams. Parents/carers and schools find that remote meetings are more convenient and avoid travel time and costs.

To maintain the impartiality of the independent appeal panel, the panel member role is entirely voluntary and not paid, however, travel expenses will be fully reimbursed.

Support for Panel Members

Panel members are supported by the Trust's Governance Team who administer the appeals, arrange the hearings and provide advice and guidance on the process and legalities.

The Trust appoints the independent panel clerk to attend the hearings and ensure the correct procedures are followed as set out in the Appeals Code throughout the process.

Comprehensive training is provided to all new volunteers. Ongoing support and training will be available to all panel members throughout the year.

Skills and Qualities

- to communicate effectively
- to actively listen and assess information and identify the key points of the case
- to ask clear and relevant questions in a calm, non-confrontational manner to elicit the relevant information and facts
- to analyse information, the quality of evidence and determine conclusions
- to fully participate in the decision-making process by considering all the relevant information
- to form reasoned decisions based on the relevant law and facts
- to understand and apply the rules of natural justice (fairness)
- to be sensitive and respectful of the need for confidentiality
- to recognise and disclose any potential conflict of interest
- to uphold the principles of independence and impartially whilst fulfilling the role
- to embrace and promote equality
- to demonstrate commitment and integrity

Volunteers become panel members for a variety of reasons

- they are interested in education
- they enjoy meeting and working with other panel members
- they wish to know more about the school admission and appeals process
- they want to be of service to parents/carers and the schools
- they want to support families and schools in the local community
- they have relevant experience and skills that they wish to use
- they may have been through the appeal process as parents themselves
- they have a background in education or law from other roles such as a teacher or headteacher or as a school governor or magistrate
- they wish to develop their skills and knowledge for their current or future career

Please note: there are regulations that disqualify certain categories of people from panel membership, such as employees of the local authority.

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