



EDUCATION APPEAL PANELS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What sort of appeals do the panels hear?**

Under the Education Acts, parents have a right to appeal if they have been refused a place at the school they would prefer their child to attend.

The appeals could concern children going to infant, junior or secondary school. Most admission appeals relate to years when children start school for the first time or when they move on to secondary school but there may be times when appeals relate to other years.

- **Who sits on the panels?**

Panels consist of three members who must be a mixture of people with and without experience in education. The panels are independent of the local authority. To ensure this, certain types of people are ruled out from sitting on panels. County Councillors and employees of the County Council (apart from teachers) cannot serve on panels at all. Anyone who has or has ever had a connection with the local authority may be ineligible to sit, if there could be a doubt about their impartiality.

Someone might be ruled out from hearing appeals for a particular school if they have a connection with that school, for example, as a teacher or governor or as a parent, relative or someone with a close relationship to a child at that school. It is important that there is no doubt about panel members' impartiality.

The County Council has a pool of potential panel members from which individuals are drawn to serve on panels according to their availability etc. We are looking for new people to join this pool.

- **Who else attends the panel meetings?**

Each panel is advised by an officer who acts as clerk on matters of law and procedure. Also present may be someone to take notes and look after the practical needs of the panel.

An Admission Officer will present the case for the local authority in relation to a community school. Where the appeal is for a place at an academy, someone from the academy presents their case. Usually the child's parents come to give their reasons for wanting a place at the school.

- **What happens at an appeal?**

In a nutshell, the Admission Officer puts the argument for the school being full, and the parents present their reasons why they want their child to go to the school. The two parties ask each other questions, and the panel members question both parties too. After summing up their cases, the two parties leave and the panel decides whether or not to uphold the appeal. Panel members are encouraged to give the reasons for their decision.

- **Where are appeals held?**

We try to find locations convenient for parents. For schools in the south of the county, most of the appeals are heard at County Hall. For schools elsewhere, panels meet in Mansfield, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Newark, Worksop and Retford.

Due to restriction brought in because of Covid-19 we currently hear appeal hearings virtually via MS Teams. This will continue until it is felt appropriate to commence face to face hearings again.

- **When do panels meet?**

Most appeals are heard during the daytime, but for some popular schools, there is an evening session for all parents, followed by individual appointments over the following days. The panel members have to attend both the evening and the daytime sessions of such an appeal. If there are just one or two appeals, a meeting might be over in a couple of hours. On the other hand, appeals for popular schools can take a whole day or longer.

- **Is there training?**

We will provide training, as well as the opportunity to observe some appeals. This is in addition to more detailed written information on the procedures which appeals panels must follow.

- **What skills do I need for this?**

Panel members come from a variety of backgrounds. Each member brings their own perspective to the case being heard. However, panels operate within a legal framework, and panel members must have particular skills and attributes. Please see the separate sheet which lists panel members' duties and skills and attributes.

- **Are expenses paid?**

Panel members are volunteers, but they can claim travel allowances and for loss of earnings in certain circumstances. Refreshments, including lunch as appropriate, are provided at the hearings for panel members. We also provide an allowance towards printing costs.

- **How do I become a panel member?**

Fill in the application form which is included in this information pack, and return it to us. We plan to invite people for an informal discussion to find out more about their experience and to discuss what would be involved.

- **How can I find out more?**

Contact a member of the team in the Chief Executive's Department at County Hall which deals with school admission appeals:

- **Peter Astbury 0115 977 3141**