

Apply to become a volunteer school appeals panel member

- **Are you interested in education and would like to get involved?**
- **Do you have excellent listening skills?**
- **Do you have an open and enquiring mind and the ability to make considered and balanced decisions?**
- **Would you like to take part in an enjoyable and challenging role that really does contribute to the local community?**
- **Would you like to become involved in an important, impartial service provided to parents and schools?**

If you have answered yes to any of the above why not apply to become a Volunteer School Appeals Panel Member.

1. What will I be doing?

- You will be sitting on independent admission appeal panels
- Ensuring that parents feel they have had a fair and independent hearing, have been given every opportunity to put their case and have been taken seriously

2. What skills or experience do I need?

- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Good literacy and listening skills
- Able to remain firm and calm
- Integrity
- Fairness
- Ability to work with other panel members

3. How much time do I need to give?

This can vary depending on the level of commitment you wish to give. While appeals are held throughout the year, the peak months are between May and July. The appeals are arranged so that they are heard for half a day or a full day depending on the amount of appeals received.

4. Where will the hearings be held?

Hearings will be held at a Corby venue.

5. Can anyone be a panel member?

Yes, unless you are a Brooke Weston Trust employee.

6. Do panel members receive training?

Yes, all panel members are trained before sitting on a panel and this is refreshed at least every two years.

7. Do panel members get paid?

Panel Members provide a very important volunteer service which is unpaid. However, Panel Members are entitled to expenses, such as travel when attending panel hearings and training.

Independent Appeal Panels – Further Information

What is an independent appeal panel?

Section 94 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 makes provision for the establishment of independent appeal panels, so that a parent can appeal against a decision not to admit a child to their preferred school.

The School Admission Appeals Code (the Code) has been issued under this Act. The Code sets out the requirements and guidelines for Independent Appeal Panels. All panel members will receive training and a copy of this code.

What is the role of an appeal panel?

At key times, a parent or a person with parental responsibility may make an application for a school place. School places are allocated according to strict admissions criteria and it is not always possible for an admissions authority to offer a child a place at their preferred school.

All parents or carers with parental responsibility have the right to make an appeal to an independent appeal panel if their child is not offered a place at their preferred school.

The role of the panel is to decide whether a child who has been refused a place by an admission authority, should be given a place.

The appeal panel is independent of the local authority and its decisions are binding, unless overturned by the courts.

Appeal panels perform a judicial function and need to be transparent, accessible, independent and impartial, and operate according to the principles of natural justice.

Although panels act independently of the local authority they must consider very carefully any legal or procedural advice given by the clerk.

What types of appeals are there?

There are generally two types of appeals against an admission authority's decision to refuse a place. A different decision-making process applies to each:

- the admissions authority has determined that the published admissions number (number of pupils that the admission authority has agreed can be admitted to the school each year) has been reached and to admit another child would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources at the school
- the admissions authority has determined that to admit another child to a reception, year 1 or year 2 class would breach the statutory limit of 30 pupils in a class with a single qualified teacher. This is known as an 'infant class size' appeal

Do I need any specific qualifications?

No. There are no specific qualifications required to become a panel member. We welcome applicants from any background and with a diverse range of knowledge and experience.

To assist you in formulating balanced and reasoned decisions, it is desirable that you have the ability to:

- put nervous parents at ease
- listen to information carefully
- assimilate complex information and to question in a structured manner
- raise questions on information provided to the Panel both in written form and orally
- remain calm and be fair at all times

- be independent and impartial
- work with other panel members
- take advice
- consider evidence and to understand and apply legislation
- make reasoned, balanced and objective decisions to ensure a fair appeal hearing
- look beyond individual personal circumstances to form a just conclusion

More information about School Admission Appeals Panels and how to volunteer is available from:

Jane Harrison, Senior Clerk to the Admission Appeals Panel

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