

Annual report of the Chief Schools Adjudicator for England

The annual report of the Chief Adjudicator, Ms Shan Scott, to the Secretary of State for Education, covering the period 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019, is published today, 24 February 2020. The report records the progress made by admission authorities in England in complying fully with the School Admissions Code, and achieving fair access to schools for all children.

In her report, Ms Scott states that, as in past years, the overall impression from adjudicator casework, and reports from local authorities, is of an admissions system that as a whole works effectively in the normal admissions rounds, and in those rounds the needs of vulnerable children, and those with particular educational or social needs, are generally well met. There remains concern about how well some vulnerable children fare when they need a place at other times.

The Chief Adjudicator said that, for many of the challenges or problems identified by a school, academy trust or local authority, there will be accounts elsewhere of schools, trusts or local authorities that have successfully addressed those same challenges or problems. In the course of their case work, adjudicators see much good practice, as well as some failures to comply with requirements. She has sought to reflect good practice from local authority reports and adjudicator casework in this report.

As in previous years, there are concerns that parents looking for determined admission arrangements on school and, in particular, council websites, may have difficulty finding the most up to date documents, effectively reducing their opportunity to make an informed choice of school place, or challenge those arrangements. More positively, many local authorities provide advice and guidance to other admission authorities in their areas, before those other admission authorities determine their own arrangements. Such an approach is likely to mean that any concerns the local authority has, or any questions the admission authority wishes to raise, can be dealt with before arrangements are determined. This in turn avoids the situation of a local authority's having to challenge arrangements that it believes do not comply with the Code.

Notes to editors:

- read the [annual report 2018 to 2019](#)
- Ms Shan Scott was appointed as an adjudicator in 2013, and to the post of Chief Adjudicator on 4 April 2016
- there are currently 10 adjudicators, including the Chief Adjudicator. All are part time and paid only for the work they are asked to undertake
- adjudicators resolve differences over the interpretation and application of legislation and guidance on school admissions, and statutory proposals concerning school organisation

In relation to all state-funded schools, adjudicators:

- rule on objections to, and referrals about, determined school admission arrangements

In relation to maintained schools, adjudicators:

- decide on requests to vary admission arrangements
- resolve disputes relating to school organisation proposals
- resolve disputes on the transfer and disposal of non-playing field land and assets
- determine appeals from admission authorities against the intention of the local authority to direct the admission of a particular pupil

The Chief Adjudicator can also be asked by the Secretary of State to provide advice and undertake other relevant tasks.

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator is a tribunal and its published decisions can only be challenged through the courts.

Adjudicators do not deal with complaints from parents whose child has not been offered a place at a particular school.

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