

Press release: 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 2015 to 31 August 2016, is published today (26 January 2017). The report records the progress made by admission authorities in England in complying fully with the [School Admissions Code](#) and on the first year of operation of a new timetable for the determination of arrangements by admission authorities and for making objections to those arrangements.

In her report, Ms Scott states that the new timetable for admissions is to be welcomed and serves parents well.

Concerns about admission arrangements continue to make up the largest part of the work of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) and accounted for 200 of the total of 238 new cases of all types referred to OSA.

The Chief Adjudicator has included a number of main findings and recommendations in her report. These take account of the changing school landscape, including the growth in the number of academies and multi-academy trusts. In particular, Ms Scott recommends that the Department for Education consider whether:

- guidance might be provided to admission authorities on how to maximise the benefits of feeder schools in terms of continuity of education and shared work across schools, while ensuring that the selection of feeder schools does not cause unfairness to other local children
- guidance might be provided to multi-academy trusts to ensure that the responsibility for determining admission arrangements is clearly set out and reflected in schemes of delegation to local governing bodies as appropriate
- to bring forward proposals for local authorities to have a duty to co-ordinate all in-year admissions

The Chief Adjudicator said:

In this, my first annual report as Chief Adjudicator, I have been particularly pleased to be able to welcome the benefits of a new timetable for admissions and to recognise some good practice seen by adjudicators in the course of our work as well as having to draw attention to some failures to comply with what the law requires. The number of cases referred to the OSA was lower than in recent years with objections about admission arrangements continuing to form the largest part of our work. More objections came from parents than from any other group.

I am grateful for the work done by adjudicators, our administrative

staff and legal advisers, and for their support. The OSA aims to consider each case referred to us impartially, honestly and objectively and in full accordance with the legislation that governs our powers and duties and I am confident that all my colleagues have done everything possible to meet that aim. I am confident too that in their dealings with parents, schools, academy trusts, religious bodies, local authorities and others, adjudicators and OSA staff appreciate how important the matters raised are to those concerned and that they deal sensitively and fairly with all.

1. Read the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/osa-annual-report>.
2. Ms Shan Scott was appointed as an adjudicator in 2013 and to the post of Chief Adjudicator on 4 April 2016.
3. There are currently 8 adjudicators, including the Chief Adjudicator. All are part time and paid only for the work they are asked to undertake.
4. 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 local-authority-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
5. The Chief Adjudicator can also be asked by the Secretary of State to provide advice and undertake other relevant tasks.
6. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator is a tribunal and until its abolishment in August 2013 was supervised by the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council. Once published, decisions can only be challenged through the courts.
7. Adjudicators do not deal with complaints from parents whose child has not been offered a place at a particular school.