

Report of the Chief Schools Adjudicator: September 2019 to December 2020

Press release

Office of the Schools Adjudicator report of our work for September 2019 to December 2020.



The report of the Chief Adjudicator, Ms Shan Scott, to the Secretary of State for Education, covering the period 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2020 is published today, 13 May 2021. 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, the Chief Adjudicator 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.

The Chief Adjudicator notes that local authorities reported that despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, they were able to process applications and make offers in accordance with the timetable set out in the school admissions code. There remain concerns about how well some vulnerable children fare when they need a place during the school year or at the beginning of school years which are not normal points of entry to school. The Chief Adjudicator notes that a number of local authorities welcomed the government's consultation on a new school admissions code that contains more detailed provisions about such in-year admissions.

Adjudicator casework in the period covered by the report was dominated by requests for variations to determined arrangements in the light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Adjudicators considered in excess of a thousand such cases, compared with 80 variations requested for other reasons.

The great majority came from schools with a religious character wishing to change the requirements to attend worship to gain priority for a place. These were necessary to take account of the fact that places of worship had been closed or access to them had been restricted in the interests of public health. Other cases concerned testing for selective schools where changes to testing arrangements had to be changed again in the interests of public health.

1. Read the [report of the Chief Schools Adjudicator for 2019 to 2020](#).
2. The period covered by this report was extended to take account of the COVID-19 pandemic by giving local authorities more time to submit their reports to the Chief Adjudicator and to allow her to include the adjudicators' work considering variations to admission arrangements necessitated by the pandemic.
3. Ms Shan Scott was appointed as an adjudicator in 2013 and to the post of Chief Adjudicator on 4 April 2016.
4. There are currently [10 adjudicators](#), including the Chief Adjudicator. All are part-time and paid only for the work they are asked to undertake.
5. Adjudicators have a number of statutory functions.

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
6. The Chief Adjudicator can also be asked by the Secretary of State to provide advice and undertake other relevant tasks.
 7. Adjudicators do not deal with complaints from parents whose child has not been offered a place at a particular school.
 8. In June 2020, the Department for Education launched a consultation on changing the school admissions code with the aim of improving the

admissions system in relation to in-year admissions, particularly for the most vulnerable children who are more likely to move school in year. All changes to the code will be subject to Parliamentary procedure.

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