

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS & APPEAL FORM GUIDANCE NOTES

This guidance is intended to be read alongside the admission appeal form to provide parents with guidance in completing the appeal form and information relating to the admission appeal process. The guidance applies primarily to appeals against the decision of the local authority (where the Local Authority is the admission authority) to admit your child to a school however, some information is also included which will be applicable to appeals against the decision of a governing body of a voluntary aided school or foundation school or of an academy not to admit a child.

We would strongly advise all parents to carefully read this guidance before completing and submitting their appeal form.

YOUR RIGHTS

Parents have the right to appeal if they do not accept the decision of an admission authority not to offer a place at a particular school. The admission authority may be the local authority, the governing body of a school or an academy depending on the type of school that has been applied to. Independent Appeal Panels ("IAP") will be set up to hear appeals relating to admission and the local authority, governing body or academy will have to abide by any decision that the IAP reach.

IAP and appeals within Leicestershire County Council are administered by the Legal Services Department on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance. They are not administered by the part of the local authority which is responsible for education or the allocation of school places. The County Council is responsible for any appeal in relation to a community or voluntary controlled school. Where an appeal is in relation to an academy, foundation school or voluntary aided school the responsibility for arranging an IAP rests with that school/academy. However, in some instances Legal Services may be asked to make the necessary arrangements in relation to an appeal, and to convene an IAP, on behalf of the governing body of a school or academy. For the purposes of this guidance, any reference to admission authority is intended to relate to the local authority however much of it will also be relevant to appeals where a governing body or academy are responsible for their own admissions and appeals. Where you wish to appeal against the decision of the governing body of a foundation school or voluntary aided school, or of an academy, not to admit your child, then you should contact that school/academy regarding their appeal process in the first instance details about admission appeals will be in the school's website.

The IAP that will look at your appeal will usually consist of three members, although in some cases they may be five. At least one of the members will be a lay person which will be a person without personal experience in the management of any school or the provision of education in any school (except as a school governor or in another voluntary capacity). There must also be a person on the IAP who has experience in education and is familiar with the educational conditions in Leicestershire or who is a parent of a pupil registered at school. It is important to note that the IAP are completely independent of the admission authority and the school to which your appeal relates. No member of the

IAP will have had anything to do with the decision against which you are appealing or any connection to the school you are appealing for.

At the hearing, a clerk will also be present to act as an independent adviser to the IAP. The clerk's role is primarily to provide independent advice on procedure and admissions law to the IAP and to keep an accurate record of proceedings. It will also be the clerk that writes to you once an IAP has made a decision on your appeal to confirm that decision and to explain the reasons for it.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Admission Authority and the IAP work to the requirements set out within Part 3 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the Department for Education's School Admission Appeals Code 2022 and School Admissions Code 2021. A copy of the codes can viewed clicking on the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

THE APPEAL FORM AND WHAT TO DO WITH IT

The Appeals Code states that that your appeal must be in writing and must state why you are appealing. The form is aimed at finding out some basic information about you and your child and your reasons for appealing. Further information regarding your reasons for appealing is set out below.

If you wish to appeal, you should complete the online form giving as much information as possible and send the completed form so that Legal Services receive it within the specified time limits. Further information regarding these time limits can be found on the County Council's website:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions/appeal-a-school-place-and-check-waiting-lists-online>

or you can contact the Customer Service Centre on 0116 3056684, and request a printed appeal form. For voluntary aided or foundation schools or academies you should look at the school website or contact that school for information regarding their appeals timetable.

When you submit the appeal form to school.appeals@leics.gov.uk you should also include any documentation that you wish to be considered in support of your appeal (the email address where to send the form listed below).

We recommend that you send information you think may be relevant to your reasons for your appeal at this time. Additional documents received after this date, should be sent to the school appeals team at school.appeals@leics.gov.uk, additional documents should be received no later than 10 clear working days prior to the hearing. If you provide documentation later than 10 clear working days prior to the hearing, then it will be up to the IAP as to whether they will take such documentation into account. You should also note that if you have provided a large quantity of documentation at a late stage (even if it is more than 10 clear working days) then it may be necessary for the hearing to be adjourned to a later date.

Please ensure your submission and any supporting evidence does not give any personal information about someone else who is not relevant to your appeal. For example, the details of a landlord on a tenancy agreement. If you have any doubt about the details of someone else being provided with your appeal, please contact us for advice. The Council is committed to protecting your privacy and ensuring all personal information is kept confidential and safe. For more details see the County Council's privacy notices.

HOW THE APPEALS ARE HANDLED

When you have submitted your appeal, Legal Services will request paperwork to be provided from the relevant admission authority setting out their case in writing. This will then be sent to you approximately 7 days before the hearing, from this, you will then be able to see the detail as to why the admission authority is unable to admit any more children. Approximately 10 school days before the hearing, you will also be notified of the date and time that the IAP will meet in order that you can make any necessary arrangements to attend the hearing if you wish. You may also request a hearing at shorter notice (see the school appeal form). There is no obligation on you to attend an IAP hearing however it can be helpful for IAP's to hear your reasons for appealing in person and to ask your questions to ensure that they have all the information that they need.

Approximately 7 days before the IAP hearing to discuss your appeal, each member of the IAP will be sent a copy of your completed appeal form together with any other supporting documents which you may have sent, and a copy of any evidence submitted by the admission authority. The IAP will review this documentation in advance of the hearing and, in doing this, we have found that appellants do not need to go over everything they have written but can focus on their important points. The emphasis on the appeal hearing is informality although the IAP's are required to follow certain procedures by law.

The IAP hearing will consist of a presentation by or on behalf of the admission authority following which you and the IAP will have the opportunity to ask questions of the admission authority. After this, you will then have the opportunity to tell the IAP about your reasons for appealing and both the IAP and the admission authority will also have the opportunity to ask you questions about what you say. You and the admissions authority representative will have the opportunity to sum up your position at the end of the hearing if you wish to do so.

Taking Part in your Appeal Hearing

The form will ask how you would like to attend your appeal (via video call / face to face / not attending). It is important that you complete this section carefully and select all options you are happy with, to help us arrange your appeal as quickly as possible. We recommend that you attend the appeal hearing if possible so that you can hear the case from the school, present your case to the panel, and answer any questions the panel may have to help them make their decision.

Please note, if, during the process, you change your mind about how you want to attend your appeal, we may need to rearrange you appeal hearing to a later date. Please see the guidance relating to remote hearings via video conferencing which will be conducted Microsoft Teams, on the website.

IAP hearings are held in private, and we regard them as confidential. As such, IAP hearings are not open to the public or press. The key aim of these hearings is to give every appellant a fair opportunity to put their point of view to the IAP.

Often there are a number of appeals for the same school. In that case, we try to arrange for the same IAP to deal with all the appeals for that school where possible. If there are a lot of appeals for the same school, the IAP will probably have to meet on more than one day but, in any event, it will not reach a decision until it has listened to all those appeals.

Where an IAP is handling more than one appeal, we have found that it helps all concerned if appeals are looked at in groups. In this instance, the IAP will hear the case on behalf of the admission authority with all appellants present, only at the first part of the hearing. These are called multiple appeals.

At the second part of the hearing, to ensure that appellants are able to speak to the IAP confidentially, without other appellants being there we arrange hearings so that appellants will be given the opportunity to tell the IAP about their particular case on an individual basis. At this stage in the hearing, only the IAP, clerk and admission authority representative will be in the room although the IAP will not make any decisions until it has heard each appellant's case.

REASONS FOR APPEALING

The appeal hearing is your chance to put forward your views and to ask questions. But there is more to it than that - as stated above, we will send to each member of the IAP, in advance of the hearing, copies of anything you send us to support your appeal. In this way the IAP will know why you are appealing.

We would therefore recommend that you complete section 5 of the appeal form as fully as you can. In writing down your reasons for appealing, you ought to bear in mind the following points:

- Unless you tell us about it, neither we nor the IAP will know about what you have said to the admission authority in earlier stages of the allocation process. We have had nothing to do with your case before now and it is up to you to put forward all your points now, even though you may have covered them all before with the admission authority. If you do have any documentation which supports or proves your reasons for appealing, then we would recommend you provide these when submitting your appeal.
- If you enclose original documents with the appeal form and you would like them back, please tell us and we will copy them and return them to you either straight away or after the IAP has met.
- The IAP may decide that it should allow some but not all the appeals that it hears for a particular school. The IAP will form its own view of any case and may have to decide between individual cases. It will consider the circumstances of individual children in detail and with care, based on all the information put before it. You should therefore ensure that you cover any points which you feel will convince the IAP to allow your appeal and back that up with documentation where you are able.
- The IAP is not bound by the decision that has been made by the admission authority refusing your child a place. The IAP can allow all, some or none of the appeals
- Where the appeal is not an infant class size appeal* then the IAP will consider the following:
 - i. whether the admission arrangements complied with the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
 - ii. whether the admission arrangements were correctly and impartially applied;
 - iii. whether the admission of an additional child/children would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources.

Where the IAP find that the admission arrangements did comply with the mandatory requirements, they were correctly and impartially applied and that prejudice would be caused through the admission of an additional child/children, the IAP will then have to balance the prejudice to the school against the reasons that you put forward for expressing a preference for that school. More information can be found within the Appeals Code.

*For further information regarding infant class size appeals, please see below.

ATTENDING THE APPEAL

If you say that you wish to attend the IAP hearing and then do not come to the hearing, the IAP will decide your appeal in your absence on the basis of any written information you may have sent us beforehand. Further information regarding written appeals is provided below.

If you do attend, then you may wish to be accompanied by a representative or supporter. If your representative or supporter is in fact your spouse or partner living at the same address you do not need to complete the address details in section 6 of the appeal form.

You may wish to be "represented" at the hearing, that is, for someone else to speak and ask questions for you at the IAP hearing. If you are represented, your representative can tell the IAP about your situation although you will still need to answer questions. You will, of course, have to pay the costs of any representation. In our experience, it is not usually necessary for parents to be represented but it is entirely your choice. If you wish your appeal to be handled in this way, please indicate this in section 6 of the appeal form and insert your representative's contact details in order that we can send copies of all letters to your representative.

WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

It helps the IAP if you can attend the hearing to put your case because the IAP may wish to ask you questions on what you have written. However, you do not have to attend. The IAP can, if you wish, decide your appeal on your written comments and the comments of the admission authority. The fact that you are not present when the IAP looks at your case will make no difference - the IAP will be advised that they must give equal attention to all appeals whether or not the appellant is there.

If you wish to have your appeal dealt with in this way, please indicate this in section 6 of the appeal form.

SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS ON APPEALS FOR INFANT CLASSES WITH 30 PUPILS

From September 2001 class sizes for 4- to 7-year-olds must not exceed 30 pupils per qualified teacher. The letter confirming the decision not to admit your child to a particular school should make it clear whether this has been for reasons relating to infant class size. Appeals where this is relevant are referred to as infant class size appeals and, in these cases, you should be aware that the power of the IAP to admit your child is extremely limited. It is very difficult for appellants to succeed in such an appeal. Whilst we do not wish to discourage appellants from appealing in such circumstances, we do believe that it is important that appellants are aware of the limited circumstances in which an IAP may allow an infant class size appeal.

The only instances where an IAP can allow an infant class size appeal are where it decides that:

- The admission of an additional child/additional children would not breach the infant class size limit; or
- The admission authority's admission arrangements did not comply with admissions law or were not correctly and impartially applied, and the child would have been offered a place if the arrangements had complied or had been correctly and impartially applied; or
- The decision to refuse admission was not one which a reasonable admission authority would have made in the circumstances of the case.

If the IAP is not satisfied that these criteria have been met, then it has no choice but to dismiss an appeal.

If your appeal is to be heard on the basis of infant class size, then you will usually be sent more information about the process in advance of the hearing.

FURTHER COURSES OF ACTION

The IAP is the last stage in the admissions process and any decision reached by the IAP will be binding on you, the local authority, the admission authority and a school/academy. However, there are some further courses of action that can be considered.

Where a school is a local authority maintained school (which includes community schools, voluntary controlled schools, voluntary aided schools and foundations but **not** academies) and you feel that there has been an error in the way your appeal has been handled then you can make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, further details of which can be found on the LGO website: www.lgo.org.uk. Alternatively, you can also make a complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

In the case of academies, you are able to make a complaint to the Education Funding Agency which handles such complaints on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. Further details and guidance regarding how to complain can be found on the GOV.UK website at the following address: www.gov.uk/academy-admissions

Please note that these courses of action are not simply where you are unhappy with any decision that an IAP reaches but where you feel that there has been maladministration (a failure to follow proper procedures) in the way your appeal has been dealt with.

In the case of maintained schools and academies, you are also able to apply to the court for a judicial review of the IAP's decision where you consider that there has been an error in law. This is a very complex process and therefore if you are considering taking this course of action, we would strongly recommend that you seek independent legal advice.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS FORM - AND BY WHEN

If you wish to appeal you should complete the appeal form online. For any additional queries only about the school appeal hearing process you can email school.appeals@leics.gov.uk.

The Appeals Code sets out certain time limits within which appeals should be received. Details of these can be obtained from the relevant admission authority form the school appeals timetable <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions/appeal-a-school-place-and-check-waiting-lists-online> or by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 0116 3056684.

Your appeal form **must** be received by the Legal Services Department no later than close of business on that day. Whilst appeals received after this deadline will still be accepted, it may mean that there is a longer delay until your appeal is heard and/or that your appeal will be heard after all of the other appeals for that school. We would suggest that wherever possible, you submit the form online but if posting it you use first class post to avoid any delay or alternatively deliver the form by hand to County Hall. If you have any access requirements in your attendance at the appeal hearing or if you require further copies of these notes, larger print, braille or audio tape formats please email school.appeals@leics.gov.uk