

# LEWISHAM PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

## HOW TO APPEAL FOR A PLACE AT A SCHOOL OF YOUR CHOICE

### Introduction

Choosing a school for your child can be a very a difficult thing for you to do. You have a legal right to state which school you prefer and to give reasons why you want your child to attend that school. Most children do attend their parents' first choice of school.

In some cases unfortunately this does not happen. When this does not happen you may feel angry and let down and it may be a worrying time for you. Your child may also feel worried and sometimes frightened as to what will happen.

If you are not offered a place at your preferred school you have a right to appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel to say why you want your child to go to that school.

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs you do not use this procedure. If you are unhappy with the school placement you will need to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). Ask Parent Partnership for the relevant information.

### What is the Independent Appeal Panel?

The independent Appeal Panel is the decision making body of 3-5 members, who will decide whether your child can go to the school you want them to go to. It is completely independent from the school and the Local Authority.

There will also be a person there from the Local Authority (or the school if it is a voluntary aided or foundation school) to explain why your child was turned down.

### How do I appeal?

You will receive a letter telling you that your child has been turned down for a place at the school. It will say that you can ask an appeal panel to review the decision not to give your child a place at the school. The letter may also include a form for you to say that you want to appeal.

Send the form or your letter in as quickly as possible. State you want to appeal and give as many reasons as you can.

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Website: [www.lewishamparentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.lewishamparentpartnership.org.uk)

## **Putting your case together**

Every school has its own admission rules to decide how places at the school are given to pupils. These can change from year-to-year and must be in a booklet available to parents – often the school brochure or the school prospectus.

- Most schools have rules to decide which pupils to take if they have too many applications for the places they have. For example if they have 90 applications for 70 places to decide which 70 pupils get a place.
- Voluntary aided schools such as church schools might turn down pupils who do not fit their rules about religious belief, even if the school is not full.
- Selective schools might turn down pupils who do not fit the rules about ability even if the school is not full.
- You need to read the admission rules carefully and decide if they have been followed properly.

## **Write about your child**

- Write about your child carefully as if you were describing them to someone who has never met them. Add points in that fit in with why you need this school. Explain everything fully – do not expect the Panel to know anything or be able to guess anything.
- Say why this school would be good for your child and also why not going to the school would be difficult for your child.
- List the positive points about the school that you know from the school booklet and visiting the school. For example: your child really liked it , close location to your home, your child's friends or family go there, it has good policies and support on bullying, special needs, it has good sports facilities, it is a mixed or single sex school, most of your community goes there etc.
- Explain in detail what would happen if your child did not go there. Show how it would affect them in school and at home. Do not expect the Panel to know or be able to guess anything – tell them clearly.
- Visit other schools that do have places. If you think that going to them would cause problems for your child explain what those problems would be. Do not just give general negative views – make them specific to your child and their needs.

### **Get proof**

Look through everything that you have written down and see if you can prove your points.

- Do you have any reports that can help prove your points?
- Can anyone independent send a letter that agrees with you – for example a doctor, priest? You could go through your case with them and ask them what points they could support.
- Would anyone be able to come as a witness to support certain points?
- Does the school prospectus, governors annual report, any report on the school or any school policy help with your points?
- Once you have written your case out send it to the Panel along with any proof you have to support it and/or take copies of it all to the hearing with you.

### **If I win the appeal...**

- If you win your child must be offered a place at the school. The decision of the Panel is final and binding upon the Authority, the school and you.

### **If I lose the appeal...**

- Appeals can be difficult to win so try not to be too negative about other schools when you talk to your child.
- You can ask that your child is put on the school's waiting list – but remember that children can be moved down waiting lists if others apply to the school with a higher priority. Some schools close their waiting lists after a certain time.
- A second appeal is not allowed for the same school unless there has been a significant change in your circumstances, for example, a change of address or an admission of a brother or sister into the school.
- You will not be allowed a second appeal because you forgot to give relevant information or because you wanted to stress a different part of your case or because you feel the Appeal Panel did not understand your case.
- You must try to make sure you get everything explained that you need to in your first hearing.
- You can appeal for more than one school during the same academic year. It might be useful to appeal for more than one school at the same time.

## **Further advice and information**

**Primary and Secondary School Admissions and Appeals: A Guide for Parents**, can be obtained from Parent Partnership Service or directly from the DfE. Tel: 0845 602 2260

**School Admissions Code 2010** and **School Admissions Appeals Code** are available to download free at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/sacode](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/sacode)

**Advisory Centre for Education (ACE):** [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)  
Advice line: 0808 800 5793.

**Parent Partnership Service:** Independent information, advice and support for parents of children with Special Educational Needs. Contact details below.