

How do you give us feedback?

After you have received the adjudicator's decision we will ask for your views on how well we performed. But you can give us feedback at any time, - in writing, by fax, by email or by telephone. When you contact us please make sure you give us your name and address, if you'd like a response.

Contact

The Secretary

Our address

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington DL3 9BG

Our phone number

0870 001 2468

Our fax number

01325 391313

Our email address

offschl.adj@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Our website

www.schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk
You can visit our website to get information on how to make an objection, and to look at the adjudicator's decisions. If you want to you can download any of the decisions to your own computer. And you can use the website to give us feedback.

Schools adjudicators are independent of the Department for Education and Skills, Local Education Authorities and any other body. They are under the supervision of the Council on Tribunals. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator provides administrative support to the adjudicators and is responsible for putting in place an effective framework for the decision making process. The Office will act as an interface between you and the adjudicators. This charter represents our commitment to you.

What happens if you complain?

We'll acknowledge any complaint immediately and send a response within 15 working days of receiving it. If we cannot reply in full within this time - for instance, because a detailed investigation is required - we'll give you an interim response, telling you what's being done to deal with your complaint, and when you can expect the full reply.

All complaints about our performance will be dealt with by the Secretary to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The reply will include details of who to contact next if you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with properly.

If, following that second response, you're still not satisfied, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to the DfES's Permanent Secretary.

You can, of course, ask your MP to request the independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) to review your complaint and how it's been handled.

Any complaint about the way in which an adjudicator has dealt with a case will be handled by the chief adjudicator.



Office of the Schools Adjudicator

Our commitment to parents in dealing with objections to selection and the determination of an admission number which is lower than the one indicated by the net capacity formula

The charter has eight main commitments. Broadly speaking these say that the office of the schools adjudicator will:

- be open, accessible and supportive
- be impartial and act fairly and reasonably with you at all times
- give you information in plain language, and offer help if there is anything you do not understand
- help you understand how the adjudication process works and the time-scales involved
- act promptly
- respect your right to be heard, and your right to confidentiality
- make sure that the procedures staff follow reflect the commitments set out in this charter, and
- correct errors and handle complaints speedily

This leaflet goes into more detail on these commitments.

We know that making an objection about a school's admission arrangements can sometimes be a stressful business – there's a lot at stake and the process may be unfamiliar to you. Our aim is to make it as straightforward as possible. We also recognise that many parents are concerned that the school will find out who's making an objection. There's no need to worry – we won't disclose details of either the parents or the children.

We'll give you information and advice

Our priority is to deal impartially, knowledgeably and confidentially with every case. At the same time we'll do our best to recognise your needs and concerns and deal with them in a way that's friendly as well as helpful. As well as respecting your family's right to privacy and making sure you're one of the first to know about the adjudicator's decision, we'll send you copies of all correspondence from the other parties if that's what you want. Equally important, we'll give you whatever advice and help you need to make your objection and we'll consider all your requests and respond to them promptly - for example if you ask for more time to make your case.

We'll ensure you understand what's going on

We believe it's essential that you understand from the outset the processes and procedures involved in your case. So we will explain up front how the system works, who will be dealing with your case, what you need to do, when you need to do it and how long its likely to take to reach a decision. From then on we'll keep you up to date with how things are going and make sure you have a named contact in case at any stage you have any questions. And we'll ensure that all our communication with you, including our leaflet, is not just factually correct but also as clear and concise as we can make it.

We'll deal with your case efficiently and considerately

We'll confirm that we've got your objection within two days of receiving it. We'll respond to further information about the case within 2 working days of receipt. We'll tell you at the outset how long it's likely to take to decide your case and we'll let you know in advance if there are going

to be any delays. If you have a complaint about our service, we'll take it seriously and deal with it promptly, politely and, where appropriate, informally. We treat as a complaint any clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response; and we publish information about complaints in our annual report.

How you can help

At the outset we'll ask you to provide us with proof of your eligibility to object - this helps avoid frustration and disappointment further down the line. Beyond that we would like your co-operation and, where necessary, your patience and understanding. And to help us improve our service we also need feedback about how we're doing. So, good or bad, praise or criticism, we want to hear from you.

Typical case timetable

We know you'll want a quick decision so we will do our best to deliver it to you within six weeks of receiving the core information needed by the adjudicator. Given the complexities of most cases, this is an ambitious target. To help us achieve it we need you to give us quick, concise and relevant responses when we ask you for information. Here's how we'd expect to progress a typical case.

After receiving your objection we decide whether we have the authority to deal with your objection and send a letter of acknowledgement to you and the admission authority. We ask the admission authority to send us the core information needed by the adjudicator to determine the case. If we don't have the authority, we will let you know why not and we explain your options.

Week	Stage	Action
1	Receipt of core information	<p>We will write to you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ telling you who the adjudicator will be ➤ giving you a contact person ➤ confirming the target date for your case (If you wish to question the choice of adjudicator we will listen to your views)
2-4	Assembling the evidence	<p>We may need to ask for additional information</p> <p>You send us this information – and any other information you think relevant</p> <p>We copy all correspondence to all the parties involved inviting comment, but without showing your name or other details which could identify you</p> <p>They send us their responses</p> <p>We copy these to you</p> <p>Final comments are received</p>
5	Making the decision	<p>The adjudicator evaluates the evidence</p> <p>He or she makes the decision</p>
6	Announcing the decision	<p>We send you the decision and the reasons for it</p> <p>If you need an explanation, we will answer your questions</p> <p>We place a copy of the decision in local libraries and on our website; and we put a notice in the local press</p>