

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 referrals, and look at the adjudicator's decisions. If you want to you can download any of the decisions to your computer. And you can use the website to give us feedback.

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 a 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 you MP to request the independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) to review your complaint and how its been handled.

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

All leaflets are available in Braille and other languages upon request.



Office of the Schools Adjudicator

Our commitment to parents, schools, school organisation committees and local authorities in dealing with statutory proposals

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

- be open and accessible
- 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
- 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.

Schools adjudicators are independent of the Department for Education and Skills, Local 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.

We're committed to providing a quality service and achieving the highest standards of conduct.

Information and advice

Information and advice are at the heart of the service that we provide. In this respect our priority is to deal impartially and knowledgeably with every case. At the same time we aim to respond to your requests promptly and professionally – for example if you ask for more time to gather information. Additionally we'll do our best to recognise your needs and concerns and deal with them helpfully as well as professionally. That includes making sure you have every opportunity to make your case and that you're one of the first to know about the decision.

Clarity and communication

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 is not just factually correct but also as clear and concise as we can make it.

Efficiency and consideration

We'll confirm that we've got your referral within 2 working days of receiving it and ensure all other interested groups are informed. We'll respond to further information about the case within 2 working days of receipt. We'll tell you up front how long its 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.

How you can help

At the outset we'll ask you to provide us with proof that the referral has been authorised by the secretary to the school organisation committee. 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 the referral we send a letter of acknowledgement and ask for the core information needed by the adjudicator to determine the case.

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 (If you wish to question the choice of adjudicator we will listen to your views) ➤ giving you a contact person ➤ we may organise a public meeting
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>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 inform the Secretary to the School Organisation Committee, the Director of Education, the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors of the schools concerned and the statutory objectors and supporters and place a copy on our website</p>