



Principal: Emma Smith

ADMISSION APPEAL GUIDANCE

Your right to appeal

If your child has been refused a place at a secondary school of your preference or if you are unhappy with the alternative you have been offered, you have the right to appeal against the decision. The Leigh Academies Trust is the Admissions Authority for Leigh Academy Blackheath. The right to appeal is given under section 94 of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998.

What is an appeal panel?

The panel that will hear your appeal is independent of the school. It consists of three people who are familiar with education in the area. None of them will have any present or past connection with the school, except they may have heard previous appeals for the school. The hearings have to be conducted in accordance within the law, following a procedure set out in a code of practice used by every education admission authority in the country. We make every effort to ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that you have the opportunity to explain the reasons for your appeal in your own way and to ask questions.

When will my appeal be heard?

Ten school days before the hearing, you will be told where and when your appeal will be heard. About a week before the hearing, you will be sent a statement setting out the reasons why the Academy could not offer your child a place and a copy of your appeal form. This paperwork may be sent at the same time as the invitation letter. Please bring these papers with you as they will help you at the hearing to understand what the Admission Authority Representative is saying.

All schools have published admission policies. The statement from the Admission Authority sets out how your application was considered in accordance with the admissions policy for the school.

At the beginning of the appeal hearing, you will hear the reasons why your child could not be offered a place at your preferred school. This may be heard with other parents present. However, the part of the hearing where the panel invite you to tell them your reasons why you would like a place at your preferred school, will be held in private. We would like to encourage you to attend the hearing in person and you may be accompanied by a friend or a representative.

Am I wasting my time appealing?

No, appeals for places in secondary schools can be successful, but only if you can demonstrate that you have a strong case that proves that this school is the only school that can meet the needs of your child; or the Academy/Trust Representative is not able to convince the panel that the admission of an additional child would prejudice the provision of efficient education at the school. You may for instance, have strong medical or social reasons why your preferred school is the only school which can accommodate your needs. The panel will certainly be eager to listen to your reasons for wanting a place.

The panel make their decision in two stages. Firstly, they examine the decision to refuse a place. Did the Academy/Trust consider your application using the school's published admissions policy? At this first stage they will search for any errors that may have occurred. It could be that you know of a error? For example, your child lives nearer to the school than the last child to be offered a place under the distance priority. The panel will also check that the school meets the mandatory provisions of the School Admission Code.

Finally, at this stage the panel will consider whether it is satisfied that the admission of an additional child would prejudice efficient education at the school. If the panel accept that there were no mistakes when your application was processed, the school acted lawfully and that the admission of another child would prejudice efficient education, they then move onto the balancing stage. This is a difficult task. The panel has to use its discretion to



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weigh up the advantages which would be achieved by complying with your preference as against the problems it would cause the school by admitting an additional pupil.

We would encourage you to prepare in advance the hearing, e.g. write an outline of what you wish to tell the panel. We also suggest that you carefully read the Admission Authority's written statement which explains why they could not offer a place at the school and how the admission arrangements were applied.

What will happen at the hearing?

When you arrive at the hearing, the Clerk of the panel will meet you in the waiting area and take you to the room being used for the hearing. The Chair will invite everyone present to introduce themselves. The panel will be three local people who are volunteers and totally independent of the school (and Admissions Authority) you wish your child to attend. Some have direct experience in education, others are known as lay members. All panel members have been trained before they can sit on appeal panels. The Clerk is more than just a notetaker, he or she can offer the panel legal advice.

The Chair will then:

At Stage 1, ask the Admission Authority representative to explain how the published admission criteria were applied and why they consider they are unable to comply with your preference.

Then the panel and you may ask questions about what was said by the Admission Authority representative or in the written statement.

At Stage 2, you or your representative will be invited to give your reasons for the appeal. The panel and the Admission Authority representative may ask you questions to clarify any points you make.

Following that, both the Admission Authority representative and yourself will be given an opportunity to sum up. The Clerk may need to advise the Chair to clarify any points of procedure and/or the law. The Chair will then close the hearing and advise you that the panel will consider your case once all the appeals for the school have been heard. The Clerk remains with the panel solely to record their decision and to offer any procedural or legal advice.

Sometimes, usually at Secondary Transfer time, the Stage 1 and Stage 2 parts of your hearing are held at different times and possibly on a different day. If this is the case, the Stage 1 hearing will be heard with other parents present.

How will the panel make their decision?

The panel make their decision in two stages without the Admission Authority or anyone from the school present. The first stage the panel reviews the decision to refuse a place. The panel look for any errors, unlawfulness and decide whether admitting an additional child would prejudice the provision of efficient education at the school. If they agree that your application was not subject to errors or there were no unlawful practices and the panel accept the "prejudice" case as proven, the panel then move onto the second stage. However, if the panel do find errors or it was an unlawful decision or the Trust did not prove its "prejudice" case, then you will win your appeal without going onto the second stage. At the second or balancing stage, the panel decides whether your reasons for wanting a place outweigh the problems that could arise if an additional pupil is added to the school's roll.

When will I hear the result?

The decision, together with the reasons for the decision, will be sent to you and the school in writing by the Clerk within five school days after all the appeals for your preferred school have been heard. The panel's decision is binding on the you and the school.



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What happens if I decide not to attend the hearing?

If you decide not to attend the hearing, the panel will consider the appeal on the basis of the written information available. However, we strongly urge you to attend in order to ensure that the panel has all the information you wish to give. It also gives you the opportunity to answer any questions which may arise.

Can I appeal against this decision?

If you think that the appeal has not been conducted according to the code of conduct you can complain to the Education Funding Agency. They cannot overturn the panel's decision. However, if it is believed that you have been disadvantaged by the appeal process, you may be offered a fresh hearing with a different panel and Clerk. For more details available from the internet: www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/executiveagencies

I have never done this before. Where can I get further information and advice?

The code of conduct allows for the Clerk to the panel to give you independent advice regarding the appeal process. If you have a question about the statement from the Admission Authority, he/she can put you in touch with the Governors' representative who can clarify or explain any part of the statement. In the first instance, please contact us by email. The details are shown on the front of this leaflet.

The government publishes a booklet called "Primary and Secondary School Admissions and Appeals: A Guide for Parents" to help parents with their appeals". This can be downloaded from the Internet at:

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8152/1/Primary%20and%20Secondary%20School%20Admissions.pdf>

Additionally, CORAM a children's charity receives Government funding to provide advice on all education matters. Their free advice line is open Monday to Friday from 8 am to 8 pm. Telephone 0808 802 0008. 4 5 © EAL 2014 edition