

Parents / guardians are entitled to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend. If their child is unsuccessful in getting a place in their preferred school, parents / guardians can submit an appeal for consideration by an Independent Appeal Panel. Parents can appeal for many reasons and the decision of the Panel can have a direct impact on the child, the family and the school.

The role of the Independent Appeal Panel is to make a decision on whether a child should be admitted to the preferred school when admission has been refused by an admission authority. In order to make that decision, the Panel must ensure that children, families and schools get a fair hearing. The Panel will receive information from the school explaining the reasons why they are not able to admit a child under normal admission arrangements. They will then hear the parent's reasons for wanting a place at the preferred school, including why these outweigh the reasons provided by the school for refusing admission.

The Panel must examine the decision to refuse admission to ensure that procedures have been followed and, if necessary, go on to balance the school's case against the case of the parent / guardian. The Panel are supported by a Clerk who will provide procedural and legal advice during the hearing and whilst the decision is being made.

The Panel must consist of a minimum of three people, one being the Chair. Every Panel must include lay and non-lay members. A lay person is someone without personal experience in the management of any school or the provision of education at a school (except as a school governor or in another voluntary capacity). A non-lay person is someone with educational experience (such as former teachers, head teachers or someone with knowledge of education in the local area, or a parent of a registered pupil that goes to a school in Coventry). Panel Members are not able to consider appeals for schools where they have a link due to any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Appeals are heard either face to face or via a video conference. If attending appeals in person, they are held at the Council House and Panel Members are provided with local parking. A lunch is also provided. In addition, you can claim for expenses, such as travel.

School appeal hearings are only held during school term times, due to the requirement for the school to be represented at the hearings. Although appeals are heard through the year, the vast majority of appeals are heard between May and July each year, as this is the period where appeals are considered for children entering education in Reception and those children entering secondary education in Year 7.