

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND APPEALS

Report By: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Wards Affected

Countywide.

Purpose

1. To consider the summary of comments, complaints and appeals relating to the Education Directorate, for the period 1st July 2003 to 31st October 2003.

Report

2. The major part of parental and public contact with the Education Service is with schools, which have their own procedures for responding to enquiries and complaints. Such direct contacts between parents/public and the schools are outside the scope of this report, except in the case of secondary complaints to headquarters' services from parents not satisfied with the responses they have received from schools.
3. Much of the work of the Education Directorate itself is concerned with providing resources and support services to schools. Such activities are also outside the scope of this report, which focuses on those parts of the Directorate which provide direct service to parents – in particular, home to school transport, pupil admissions, special education and other children's services matters, including the complaints about schools that require LEA involvement.
4. For the period July 2003 to the end of October 2003, complaints and formal appeal requests have been as follows –

Service Area	Complaints	Appeal requests
Transport	5	
Pupil Admissions	-	13
Early Years Provision	2	
Pupil Exclusions (permanent)	-	0
Special Education	3	1
Other Children's Services issues	1	
Personnel	1	
Capital Programme	-	
Student awards and post-16 education	-	
Miscellaneous	1	

For further information on the subject of this report is available from
Dr Eddie Oram, Director of Education on (01432) 260801

5. It should be emphasised that the figures above relate only to matters that have involved appeals or complaints about the way in which the service has been provided. The figures obviously do not include the huge volumes of daily contact that occur dealing with applications and enquiries. The formal complaints and appeal requests received need to be seen in the context of the overall service levels, which include, for example –

5,000 applications annually for pupil admissions and transfers

daily transport for 6,500 pupils/students

3,000 pupils/students at the various stages of the SEN Code of Practice

more than 900 pupils/students with statements of Special Educational Need

Outcomes

Complaints

6. Thirteen complaints were received during the period. No complaints have been referred by parents to the Local Ombudsman. When investigating complaints, the Directorate always considers seriously improvements that might need to be made to its procedures or information, although most of the complaints received arise from individual situations.
7. **Transport** There were 5 complaints about transport during the period to end of October – 2 related to eligibility for transport, 2 to the operation of a particular service and the other to the arrangements for a particular child. Four of the complaints have been resolved and the fifth is still under discussion.
8. **Pupil Admissions** There were no complaints during the period about pupil admissions, though there were 13 appeals (see paragraph 17 below).
9. **Early Years** The 2 complaints concerned eligibility of Herefordshire children at early years settings in neighbouring LEAs. Both have been resolved by explanation.
10. **Exclusions** There were no complaints about exclusions.
11. **Special Education** 2 of the 3 complaints on Special Education related to problems concerning placement in a particular school and have now been resolved. The third concerns an administrative and procedural matter which the complainant has now referred to the Chief Executive.
12. **Other Children's Services Issues** 1 complaint related to pupil behaviour at a particular school.

Personnel

13. The 1 complaint concerned criteria for early retirement, and was resolved by explanation.

Miscellaneous

14. The remaining complaint, which has been resolved, related to a delayed invoice payment by an individual school.

Compliments

15. One compliment was received, via a Councillor, for a successful placement of a child in early years education.

Formal Appeals

16. Pupil admissions and SEN appeal requests are dealt with according to formal statutory procedures involving independent appeals arrangements.
17. The 13 appeals for pupil admissions relate to in-year admission to primary and secondary schools. The 5 requests for primary school places have been heard and 4 of the appeals were successful. The 8 appeals for high schools have also been heard, with 2 upheld. In each of the 6 cases upheld, the Panel accepted the Council's assessment that the relevant school was full, but allowed the appeal in response to individual family circumstances.
18. There has been 1 appeal for statutory SEN assessment which has yet to be heard.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee consider the report, with a view to identifying any points of concern about how complaints have been dealt with or about particular areas of complaint.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.