

Joanna Goddard

Legal Director

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Joanna is an experienced Education Solicitor who has been providing specialist advice to schools, academies and MATs for over 12 years on the whole range of pastoral legal issues schools face, with a special interest in complex admission and equality law matters. Joanna also has 11 years prior experience in criminal law, and 7 years in family law, to draw on.

Joanna regularly advises Headteachers, school leaders and staff, Governors and Trustees on parental complaints and disputes (including where Family Court Orders are in force), pupil behaviour/discipline, suspensions/exclusions, off-site directions and managed moves, special educational needs (including EHCP consultation responses and/or challenging Section I decisions), school attendance, charging and remission (including for school trips and activities) and requests for information from parents and third parties such as the police (in collaboration with data protection specialist colleagues).

Joanna has a special interest in and extensive experience of drafting full sets of complex 'admission arrangements' for a high number of schools and MATs (including very large MATs), and supporting schools with objections to the Schools Adjudicator, admission applications and appeals, and other litigation arising out of admissions (e.g. Judicial Review).

Joanna also has a special interest in and extensive experience of representing schools and academies in respect of equality claims, in particular disability discrimination claims in the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) which are becoming increasingly common.

Expertise

Complaints management

Education law

Pupil behaviour and school exclusions

School admission services

School attendance and absence

Featured experience

Supporting a Headteacher with the permanent exclusion of a disabled pupil

Supporting a Headteacher with the permanent exclusion of a pupil with a behavioural disability in compliance with both exclusion and complex equality law principles, including drafting the exclusion notification letter and advising on the Headteacher's approach to the statutory Governors' Discipline Meeting.

Helping an academy to add 'musical aptitude' places to its 'admission arrangements'

Helping an academy to add a new 'musical aptitude' category of places to its 'admission arrangements' in compliance with the statutory code and admission law, including liaising with the Department for Education, providing advice, drafting the necessary documentation (admission and consultation), and successfully supporting the academy on an objection to the Schools Adjudicator by its Local Authority.

Drafting complex 'admission arrangements' for all academies in a very large MAT

Drafting a full set of complex and differing 'admission arrangements' (i.e. policies, application forms, SIFs and other documents) for a large, very well known MAT with over 50 academies, and supporting each academy during consultation, determination and any issues arising out of the adoption of new arrangements.

Supporting a MAT with multiple complaints and claims issued by a parent

Supporting a MAT with multiple complaints, Subject Access and FOI requests and claims for disability discrimination against (unusually) the parent, not the pupil, in the County Court. The parent was represented by another very difficult parent acting as a self-appointed 'advocate'. All complaints and claims were eventually concluded or dismissed.

Testimonial

"Very good; ... Jo Goddard particularly impressive. Jo's attention to detail is first rate."

Legal 500,