

Poole Grammar School
Guidance notes for parents/carers on the admission appeals process

Introduction

Democratic Services at BCP Council appoint the Independent Panel to hear admissions appeals. The appeal will be heard by a panel of three people, all of whom are independent from Poole Grammar School and independent from the Governing Body of Poole Grammar School. At least one member of the panel will have some experience in education. The panel is supported by a Clerk, who advises on procedures.

The Procedure

- BCP Schools Admissions team will notify parents/carers on Monday 1st March 2021 whether their child has been given a place in Year 7 at Poole Grammar School for September 2021.

If the application has been unsuccessful the letter will provide the following information:

- that they can give notice to appeal;
 - advised the name and address of the person to whom the appeal must be sent or delivered to;
 - the date by which it should be received;
 - the fact that the appeal must be in writing and that it must set out the grounds on which the appeal is made.
- It is important that parents/carers accept the school place they have been offered by their local authority, thus securing a secondary school place for their child. The acceptance of this place does not affect the right to appeal or prejudice the appeal hearing in any way.
 - Parents/carers need to lodge their appeal in writing stating the grounds on which it is made using the appropriate form which is available on Poole Grammar School website.
 - Annex A for Year 7 September entry appeals. This form needs to be received by the date specified on the form
 - Annex B for in-year appeals for students wishing to join Year 7, 8, 9, 10 or 11 during the current academic year.
 - Appeals need to be submitted directly to Poole Grammar School using the contact information detailed on the form (Annex A or Annex B).
 - Poole Grammar School will confirm to parents/carers, in writing, receipt of the appeal and will inform Democratic Services at BCP Council that an appeal has been received.
 - Poole Grammar School will advise the parents/carers of the appellant the reason why a place was not granted to their child and that they have the right to appeal. This will include details of the appellants test scores and the date on which the appellant sat the entrance test. The parents/carers of the appellant will also in due course receive a copy of Poole Grammar School's case as to why a place should not be awarded to the appellant.
 - Democratic Services at BCP are responsible for convening the date and time of the hearings and appointing a clerk and panel members for the hearing.
 - For applications made within the normal admissions round (Year 7 September entry), appeals must be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for lodging appeals.

- Appellants will be given 10 school days' notice of their appeal hearing.
- Democratic Services at BCP Council will communicate the schedule to Poole Grammar School, the Appeals Panel members and the appellant.
- During the Stage 2 of the appeal, the Appeals Panel:
 - shall allow the appellant the opportunity of appearing and making oral representation;
 - may allow the appellant to be accompanied by a friend or be represented by a nominated family member or friend.

Format of the Appeal Hearing

- The atmosphere at a hearing should be informal where the parties can put their case simply.
- The appeal panel will be assisted by an independent Clerk whose key tasks are to:
 - Explain the basic procedure;
 - Ensure relevant facts are presented;
 - Advise both the Appeals Panel members and the parents/carers on procedure;
 - Record the proceedings;
 - Notify parents of the Appeals Panel's decision.

The order of the hearing will be in two stages:

Stage 1: establishing the facts - the Appeals Panel considers whether the Poole Grammar School's published admission arrangements:

- comply with the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code and Part 3 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
- were correctly applied in the individual's case, and decides whether "prejudice" would arise were the child to be admitted.

If these are proved, the panel moves on to the second stage.

Stage 2: balancing the arguments, - the Appeals Panel exercises its discretion, balancing the degree of prejudice to the school against the appellant's case for the child being admitted to the school, before arriving at a decision.

The format for the two stages is normally as follows:

STAGE 1:

- Specific case for the School, given by the Headteacher or the Headteacher's representative;
- Questioning by parent(s)/carer(s);
- Questioning by the Appeals Panel.

At the conclusion of the case for the school the Appeals Panel will ask the appellants and the Headteacher to leave whilst they discuss whether Poole Grammar School's published admission arrangements were correctly applied and make a provisional decision on whether "prejudice" would arise were the boys to be admitted. Should the Panel provisionally accept the case for Poole Grammar School then Stage 2 will commence.

STAGE 2: All Stage 2 Appeals will be heard in private.

- The Headteacher, or their representative, is asked for any information pertaining to the individual appeal – they put forward the school's case.
- The case for the student is put forward, usually by the child's parent(s)/carer(s);
- Questioning by the Headteacher, or their representative;
- Questioning by the Appeals Panel members;
- Any member of the Appeals Panel may ask questions at any time if they require clarification about what is being said or if they need more information in order to reach a decision, but such questions must be put before the summing-up process commences;
- Summing-up by the Headteacher, or their representative;
- Summing-up by the child's parent(s)/carer(s).

Parents have occasionally asked if their child could present their own case or if their child could be present at the Appeals Panel hearing. The Appeals Panel believes that this puts undue stress upon the child and is therefore not advisable.

Multiple appeals

- There may be occasions when the Appeals Panel must hear more than one admissions appeal for Poole Grammar School. This often the case when appeals pertain to normal September Year 7 entry.
- In these circumstances, Stage 1 of the Appeal will be held with all appellant parent(s) / carer(s) present. The Chairperson of the Appeals Panel will start by explaining the Stage 1 process to the appellant parent(s) / carer(s) present. The Headteacher, or their representative, will then present Poole Grammar School's general case. All the parent(s)/carer(s) in turn, and in each other's presence, are invited to question the Headteacher, or their representative, on what has been said. If the Appeals Panel provisionally believes that Poole Grammar School has successfully made its case, the process moves on to Stage 2.
- If multiple appeals arise because of over-application for the number of places available, they will be dealt with fairly. Therefore the Panel will adjourn its decisions until all hearings have taken place, then consider their decisions and issue them.
- The Appeals Panel, through its Clerk, encourages parent(s) / carer(s) to attend the Appeals Hearing to present their case. Parent(s) / carer(s):
 - Are encouraged to attend the Stage 1 Hearing where the Headteacher, or their representative, puts forward Poole Grammar School's general case;
 - May elect not to attend Stage 2, in which case the Appeals Panel would rely on their written statement only;
 - Indicated that they would be attending the Appeal Hearing, do not then attend and it is not reasonably practical to offer an alternative date for their child's Stage 2 Appeal Hearing to take place, the appeal will be held and decided upon in the absence of the parent(s) / carer(s) using the information previous provided.
- Unless the appellant has consented in writing to a lesser period, the appellant will be given at least ten school days' notice of the date of the meeting of the Appeals Panel at which their appeal is to be heard.
- Substantial new issues raised for the first time at any Appeals Panel hearing may mean the hearing has to be adjourned to allow any party taken by surprise to consider the issues.
- The Clerk will advise the parents/carers of the outcome of a Appeals Panel Hearing within 5 school days of the hearing being heard.

Guidance Notes for the Appeal case

- Prepare some written notes to assist you in presenting your case, and be clear about the grounds upon which you want the Appeals Panel to consider your appeal. As a selective grammar school, Poole Grammar School has an approved admissions policy based on selection, but you have a statutory right to raise any issue that you wish at the appeal.
- Prepare any necessary documents that you wish to refer to at the appeal hearing and ensure that they have been sent in advance of the Appeal Panel hearing to Ms Jeni Notley at Poole Grammar School by the stated deadline (published on the Appeals Form Annex A for Year 7 Entry). If your child has not met the required academic standard, the Admission Appeals Panel tends to look for evidence that suggests that your child would cope with the pace and pressure of a grammar school education e.g. latest school reports and/or reasons why your child did not achieve the required standard at the entrance exam. The Appeals Panel is always interested in hearing about your child's extra-curricular or out-of-school activities or hobbies, but does not need to see certificates, awards etc. Please put your child's name on all papers you submit in support of your appeal and insert page numbers into documents if possible.
- If supporting information was not submitted at the same time as the appeal form being submitted it must be provided to Poole Grammar School by the deadline specified on the appeal form. This is so that copies may be made for all members of the Appeal Panel in time for them to read the documents through before the hearing takes place. Any documents delivered after the stated deadline may not be considered. The Appeals Panel will make any decision about the acceptance of evidence received after the stated deadline.
- It is not necessary, but if you wish to do so, you may call witnesses to support your case. These witnesses may make written observations that can be submitted with the documents in support of the appeal, or may come to the appeal to give evidence in person.
- If you wish, you may ask a friend or family member to present your appeal for you. The school does however encourage at least one parent / carer of the child to attend as well.
- If either you, or anyone coming with you, require special facilities or an interpreter, please contact Poole Grammar School as soon as possible.
- Please be advised that, in order to be fair and remain impartial, Poole Grammar School is unable to discuss details of individual cases or provide specific recommendations as to the evidence to supply to support an appeal case.
- If you require any information or clarification regarding the appeals process itself please contact Ms Jeni Notley (PA to the Headteacher) by email notleyj@poolegrammar.com or by telephone 01202 692132.
- There is also additional information regarding the admission appeals process on the BCP Council website. Please visit www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/schoolappeals

DECISIONS OF THE PANEL

- In the case of multiple appeals being heard, the panel will consider all appeals before making and announcing any decisions on each individual appeal.

- The decision of the Panel, and the grounds on which it was made, shall be communicated within 5 school days following the completion date of the appeal hearings by the Clerk in writing to:
 - the appellant;
 - the Governing Body of Poole Grammar School via the Headteacher, as their representative.
- With respect to an unsuccessful appeal, the Appeals Panel's decision will state the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal that were accepted by the Appeals Panel. Typical examples might be:
 - that the admission would prejudice the provision of efficient use of resources;
 - as admission is based wholly or partly on selection by reference to ability or aptitude, the child does not meet the entry criteria.
- It may be that the Appeals Panel allows some, but not all, appeals. In such instances the Appeals Panel may need to compare the circumstances of one case with another to establish which appeal should succeed.
- All decisions will be fully and clearly expressed and be capable of being understood by a lay person.
- The Clerk will notify the outcome of each appeal to the child's parent(s) / carer(s) initially by telephone, and then in writing, within 5 working days after the conclusion of the last appeal where there are multiple appeals taking place (unless there are mitigating circumstances).
- The written notification will be a brief confirmation. However, if a parent / carer requires a more detailed explanation, this will be provided on written request to the Clerk.
- The decision of the Appeal Panel is binding on Poole Grammar School and the appellant(s). No further appeal by either party is possible within the approved policy and procedure, unless there are further extenuating circumstances that become known following the appeal.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC UPDATE

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic all appeals lodged up to and including 30th September 2021 will be considered by the Appeals Panel via written submission only.

Poole Grammar School and the appellant will provide written statements to the Appeals Panel and will not be able to present their case in person or via a representative.

Each party will be provided with the opportunity to see the other party's written case prior to the appeal hearing and put forward questions in writing (i.e. having read the written cases the appellant can ask questions to Poole Grammar School and Poole Grammar School can ask questions to the appellant). Each party will then be given an opportunity to answer the questions in writing. The sets of written questions and answers will be circulated to each party and to the members of the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel will then use Poole Grammar School's written case, the appellant's written case and the two sets of written questions and answers to come to its decision.

Dr Amanda Smith
Headteacher
 (On behalf of Poole Grammar School Governing Body 2020/21)

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