



Education Advice for Independent Schools

Veale Wasbrough Vizards has the largest team of specialist education lawyers in the UK. The size of our pastoral team is indicative of the increasing complexity of the law surrounding schools' relationships with pupils, parents, regulators and statutory agencies.

Drawing on our extensive experience of working in and for the sector over the last 25 years, we provide market-leading advice and assistance to more than 800 independent schools.

The Education pastoral team

The Education pastoral team provides comprehensive advice to independent schools arising from every aspect of schools' relationships with pupils, parents, local authorities and regulators. In practice this means that we advise on the implementation of schools' terms and conditions, finance and fee recovery, welfare of pupils, safeguarding, inspections, pupil discipline, governance and much more. With experience of acting for hundreds of independent schools on the full spectrum of issues affecting them, we believe we can assist with every scenario you are likely to encounter.

How can we help you?

Parent Contract

The Veale Wasbrough Vizards Parent Contract is the leading product used by a considerable number of independent schools. Our Parent Contract is updated regularly to take into account court decisions and the experience of our School Fees Recovery Scheme. Our template includes a full suite of documents taking the parties from initial enquiry through to a legally binding contract. Our terms and conditions have withstood scrutiny by the

courts and regular feedback has been provided by the Office of Fair Trading, the regulator of consumer contracts.

Consumer credit agreements

In addition to the Parent Contract, we also provide template agreements arising from the relationship between schools and parents. These include agreements for payment of school fees by a third party and consumer credit agreements for the deferment of fees.

Inspections, policies and procedures

We can advise schools on the whole inspection process, whether education or welfare focused, including:

- pre inspection audits, including checks of all safeguarding requirements
- policy reviews, including advice and reports on existing policies, providing and tailoring template policies, advising schools when policies are missing
- assisting the school to implement policies, by providing INSET training, and advising on incident led policy review
- advising schools when additional policies are necessary
- advising on how to deal with the problem areas that arise in the course of an inspection



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SEN and disability

We can advise schools on compliance within the law, the statutory SEN process, responses to parents and local authorities, policies and procedures.

We have also advised many schools on potential claims in the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). Our experience includes preparing responses to claims, mediating settlements, drafting settlement agreements (Consent Orders), interviewing witnesses and preparing witness statements. We have advised many schools on strategies to avoid disability discrimination claims.

Serious incident management

In the event that a serious incident occurs, perhaps involving child protection issues or serious disciplinary breaches, schools may need immediate assistance. We offer an out of hours telephone advice service to enable schools to deal confidently with referrals to the police and social services, internal investigations, preserving evidence and record keeping, dealing with parents, contact with the press and serious incident reporting to the Charity Commission.

Complaints

We deal regularly with the management of complaints from informal day-to-day concerns through to convening formal panel hearings, involving governors and independent members. We can advise on strategies for resolving and de-escalating complaints. From the start, we can help schools to understand their legal rights and responsibilities, as well as advising on how best to implement a school's own procedures in accordance with regulatory standards.

Pupil discipline and exclusion

Decisions involving pupil discipline require careful observance of schools' terms and conditions, as well as policies and procedures. We frequently advise on discipline and sanctions, including exclusion of pupils in the form of expulsion, required removal or exclusion for non-payment of fees. We can provide practical and tested advice on undertaking investigations; preparing decision letters to parents; and convening review hearings and appeals.

Information/communication with parents

Schools often contact our Team if they are unsure of how to appropriately respond to parents on a host of issues including safeguarding, confidentiality, parental responsibility, familial disputes and data protection.

Discrimination and equal opportunities

We advise schools on all aspects of equality and inclusion. This complex area of law can give rise to complaints and claims by parents relating to race, religion, sex and disability discrimination.

Other

We can also help with:

- breach of contract claims
- data protection, information and communication matters, including record keeping
- immigration/UKVI advice, applications and appeals
- enquiries regarding safeguarding/child protection
- guardianship advice, policies and contracts

Our commitment to quality services

We are committed to:

- providing specialist advice with the benefit of our considerable knowledge of the independent schools sector
- a swift, accessible and user-friendly service
- demystifying complex areas of law and regulation
- providing prompt advice, including out of hours support



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