



# Alice de Coverley

**Year of Call:** 2014

**Email Address:** [alice.decoverley@3pb.co.uk](mailto:alice.decoverley@3pb.co.uk)

**Telephone:** 020 7583 8055

## Education

Alice has an exceptional education practice. She is passionate about Education Law and children's rights. Prior to commencing pupillage, Alice was the Chief Director of The School Exclusion Project for four years. This is an award-winning pro-bono unit dedicated to representing parents of permanently excluded school children.

Alice also acts for Ofsted in the Care Standards Tribunal, and is currently acting for Ofsted as Junior Counsel on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse (IICSA). For full details of the work that Alice is currently dealing with please see her [Public Law profile](#).

She has specialisms within the Education arena and has dealt with a number of matters including claims brought under the Equality Act 2010 for disability, sex, race, pregnancy, sexual orientation and gender reassignment discrimination, harassment and victimization. Alice also regularly appears in appeals in the context of EHC Plans (Sections B F and I) and National Trial cases.

Alice acts for parents, children, young people, schools, Universities, Local Authorities, charities and governmental organisations. She is instructed to act and advise in relation to a broad range of education law matters, including:

- Appeals to the SEND Tribunal on the content of EHC Plans
- Discrimination (particularly disability discrimination) claims in the FTT and County Court
- Compliance with the Equality Act 2010
- School Exclusions
- Judicial Review
- Breach of contract and negligence claims involving education providers
- School Admissions
- Home Education
- Internal academic appeals
- Fitness to Practice appeals
- Appeals to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator
- Public consultations
- Public inquiries
- Data protection and subject access requests.

### Reported cases:

- SS v Proprietor of an Independent School [2024] UKUT 00029 (AAC)
- London Borough of Camden v KT [2023] UKUT 225 (AAC)
- Mermaids v (1) The Charity Commission for England and Wales (2) LGB Alliance [2023] UKFTT 563 (GRC)
- London Borough of Croydon v K-A (SEN): [2022] UKUT 106 (AAC), [2022] AACR 6

**Recent education law matters which Alice has been involved in include:**

- Successfully representing a child with epilepsy in a disability discrimination claim against his school, with the decision being sent by the Tribunal to the EHRC, the DfE and to Ofsted as a result.
- Successfully representing a child with complex and mental health difficulties in a disability discrimination claim against an Academy which had unlawfully place him in isolation for 3 months.
- Successfully representing a child with ADHD ODD and sensory processing disorder in a claim against his school for failure to allow him to attend a skiing trip and punishing him for behaviors arising from hi disability.
- Successfully representing a number of children in their Section I appeals, enabling their progress at the right school which meets their needs.
- Successfully representing children in appeals against "refusal to assess" or "refusal to issue" EHC plans.
- Successfully overturning a permanent exclusion decision regarding a 6 year old child that brought a cheese knife to school.
- Drafting Ofsted policies and consultation responses on schools, social care settings, unregistered schools, and equality law matters.
- Policy drafting in relation to counter-terrorism measures taken by schools.
- Advising medical and nursing students in claims under the Equality Act 2010 where the University's competency assessment standards conflicted with the duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- Advising and representing in relation to negligence claims for failure to spot learning difficulties.
- Advising and representing in relation to breach of contract claims involving Independent Schools.
- Advising parents of school pupils with disabilities who have been unlawfully permanently excluded.
- Drafting funding applications to the European Human Rights Commission, to support client's cases concerning discrimination in education.
- Drafting submissions to the Health and Conduct Committee/Fitness to Practise Committee.
- Drafting submissions to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Alice has also helped to create a number of BBC Radio 4 programmes about school exclusions. Whilst Alice was Chief Director of The School Exclusion Project, it featured in the press several times addressing unlawful exclusions – for instance this Guardian article.

She is also a volunteer for the charity Inspiring the Future, which connects young people in state schools and colleges with those from the world of work. She has recently been part of their Inspiring Women campaign, mentoring girls from various schools to raise their aspirations and break down gender stereotypes.

Whilst dealing with a busy practice, Alice also finds time to assist the Centre for Women's Justice by providing pro bono legal advice to Women that approach the charity in need of assistance in a range of matters.

Alice is happy to provide training in relation to education law. Of late she provided training on school admissions appeals to Local Authorities, a talk on disability discrimination to a children's charity and ran a seminar on school exclusions for solicitors. Please get in touch with her clerks should this be something you would wish to organise.

## Articles

Alice de Coverley reviews the case of *B v St Dominic's Grammar School*: [2025] UKUT 048 (AAC), in which Judge Stout provides clear guidance on how further parts of section 15 of the Equality Act 2010 are to be interpreted, clarifying how the shifting burden of proof applies to both the reason for unfavourable treatment and the 'something arising' from disability.

[View Article](#)

Alice de Coverley and Sunyana Sharma examine the decision of the Care Standards Tribunal in *Mrs El v Suffolk Childcare Agency* [2024] UKFTT 00429 (HESC) in the first known case regarding the appeal of a suspension decision by a childminder agency, other than Ofsted.

Alice de Coverley, instructed by DAC Beachcroft, represented the Respondent, and Sunyana Sharma, also from 3PB, represented the Appellant, instructed by Stephensons.

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Alice de Coverley and Alex Leonhardt analyse how the tricky, balancing questions around children's rights, school uniforms and school discipline have been dealt with by the Courts.

This article also appeared in the Education Law Monitor.

[View Article](#)

3PB Barristers are proud to announce the launch of the first book on the law on school exclusions since 2002, co-authored by Charlotte Hadfield and Alice de Coverley.

[View Article](#)

3PB's specialist education barristers Alice de Coverley and Matthew Wyard have co-authored a two-part report, for students and schools separately, about today's GCSE results day (20 August 2020).

The guidance offers tips for students and their parents about the GCSE grade that students will receive; the appeals process in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; Exam results Helplines available; Subject Access Requests for finding out information to support you in pushing for an appeal; grounds for appeals; Centres' duties to students/learners.

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In this article, Alice de Coverley and Matthew Wyard answer some of the most significant questions facing both students and schools on A-level results day 2020, providing practical advice on what to do next.

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Matthew Wyard and Alice de Coverley have produced a guide to remote hearings in SENDIST including practical top tips for both practitioners and witnesses. They cover topics from using technology to adapting your approach to this new style of hearing.

[View Article](#)

## Recommendations

Alice de Coverley is a well-regarded junior with experience across a wide range of education matters and particular expertise in exclusions and disability discrimination claims. She regularly receives instructions to represent government bodies, schools, universities, families and students in the First-tier and Upper Tribunals.

Strengths: "Alice is a really empathetic and skilled lawyer with incredible processing speed. She also has lovely client care and incredible legal brain."

"Alice de Coverley's knowledge and expertise are second to none."

"Alice commands the room in a very measured and powerful way. She is very good with technical knowledge and persuasive in her arguments."

**Chambers UK 2025**/Education/London Bar

"She is extremely well versed in the SEND Tribunal matters, and her expertise is clear in conference and when advising. Alice often goes above and beyond and has a very impressive approach when it comes to strategy, to ensure the best outcome for a client."

"Alice has excellent legal knowledge on complex residential SEND appeal work and has also been very impressive in her advocacy and pleadings. She is my go-to barrister and is very skilled at working with vulnerable clients."

"Alice is an excellent barrister who gets to the core of issues quickly and whose client care is phenomenal."

**Chambers UK 2024**/Education/London Bar

Strengths: "Alice is excellent at identifying the key issues and presenting the evidence in the most persuasive way."

"Alice is a highly astute and competent advocate with a razor-sharp legal mind."

**Chambers UK 2023**/Education/London Bar

Strengths: "A phenomenal, astute barrister who has a friendly demeanour and an in-depth knowledge of this specialist area of law." "An extremely capable legal mind."

Recent work: Acted for the claimant in *Bell v The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation*, a judicial review challenging the algorithm used by Ofqual to generate A-level results during the COVID-19 pandemic in the absence of examinations.

**Chambers UK 2022**/Education/London Bar

Strengths: *"Very knowledgeable and passionate. She really helps her clients to understand what the issues are and identifies the legal risks and next steps."* *"She is very approachable, very supportive to parents and very calm and collected in a stressful environment."*

Recent work: Represented Ofsted in several strands of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

**Chambers UK 2021**/Education/London Bar

Alice de Coverley successfully represented the respondent in the London Borough of Croydon v K-A (SEN) Upper Tribunal appeal, a widely reported case that sided with parents when weighing the healthcare benefits of a school placement against the public cost to the council.

'Alice's knowledge and passion for this area of law and particularly, around special educational needs matters, is unrivalled. Her encyclopaedic knowledge of potential reasonable adjustments, external experts and other factors educational establishments should consider is incredibly helpful and she speaks with real authority on the matter. She is just magic.'

**Legal 500 2025**/Education/Leading Juniors/London Bar

'Alice is an exceptional barrister who quickly establishes a relationship of trust and confidence with her clients. She can get to the root of complex issues with speed and ease.'

**Legal 500 2024**/Education/Leading Juniors/London Bar

Alice de Coverley acted for the claimant in *Raquel Rosario Sanchez v Bristol University*, a high-profile case concerning whether a university owed duty of care to a PhD student facing bullying from other students.

*'Alice is pragmatic, straightforward and constructive. She is as good as it gets in the field of education law.'*

**Legal 500 2023**/Education/Leading Juniors/London Bar

*"She is empathetic with clients, strong in her advocacy and formidable in terms of her drafting style."*

**Legal 500 2022**/Education/Rising Star/London Bar

*"Very knowledgeable in her field, has excellent communication skills and is an all round great advocate."*

**Legal 500 2021**/Education/Rising Star/London Bar

*"Alice is extraordinarily understated and approachable for someone quite so terrifyingly clever. She combines a forensic and encyclopaedic legal mind with a keen eye for strategy and an absolute commitment to her clients, and she has an understated*

*confidence that just allows you to relax. It was clear from the start that we were in Rolls Royce hands – whatever happened, in instructing Alice we'd given our child his absolute best chance. That confidence proved very well placed, as she managed to secure absolutely everything we sought. She achieved a complex EOTAS package for him, which are rarely granted. It's the only area with SEN Tribunals where the parent is unlikely to succeed – yet Alice did, with bells on. She didn't just secure our child a Personal Budget, she achieved a mid 5-figures one, including elements even the SEN Code says should be restricted to exceptional circumstances. We have two disabled children, both of whom are represented by Alice. We wouldn't consider instructing anyone else."*

*"Thank you so much for fighting our corner so hard. [My child] is over the moon. You gave me hope where before I honestly had none."*

*"I spoke with my client last night and wanted to relay to you how pleased she was with yesterday. She could not praise you enough and said that you went above and beyond what she expected."*

*"I thought I would pass on Mr C's comments as to how much he appreciated your time on Friday and he said what a fantastic Barrister that you are. I thought you should know how much he thought of you."*

## Academic qualifications

- City Law School GDL (Commendation)
- City Law School BPTC (Very Competent)
- Durham University BA Hons Theology (2:1)

## Professional qualifications & appointments

- Alice won the Legal 500 ESG 2024 "Disability/ Neurodiversity: Bar Champion of the Year" award.
- Alice was The Times' Lawyer of the Week in July 2023.
- Trustee of Neurodiversity in Law.
- Editorial Board Member of Counsel Magazine.

## Professional bodies

- Education Law Association (ELAS)
- Personal Injury Bar Association (PIBA)
- Centre for Women's Justice

## Direct Access

Alice accepts Direct Access instructions for Education Law cases.

Alice is particularly passionate about Education Law. Prior to commencing pupillage, Alice was the Chief Director of The School Exclusion Project for four years. This is an award-winning pro-bono unit dedicated to representing parents of permanently excluded school children.

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- Appeals to the SEND Tribunal on the content of EHC Plans
- Discrimination (particularly disability discrimination) claims in the FTT and County Court
- Internal academic appeals / Fitness to Practice appeals
- Appeals to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

**Recent matters which Alice has been involved in include:**

- Advising medical and nursing students in claims under the Equality Act where the University's competency assessment standards conflicted with the duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- Advising a Higher Education provider on their duties under the Equality Act when a student disclosed a previously unknown disability after examinations had taken place.
- Advising in relation to negligence claims for failure to diagnose learning difficulties.
- Advising in relation to breach of contract claims involving Independent Schools.
- Advising parents of school pupils with disabilities who have been unlawfully permanently excluded.
- Drafting funding applications to the European Human Rights Commission, to support client's cases concerning discrimination in education.
- Drafting submissions to the Health and Conduct Committee/Fitness to Practice Committee.
- Appeals against Termination of Registration.
- Drafting submissions to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Alice has also helped to create a number of [BBC Radio 4](#) programmes about [school exclusions](#).

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