

# Alice de Coverley

**Year of Call:** 2014

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## Commercial

Alice acts in a wide range of contractual matters. She has particular experience and interest in contractual matters arising in the education and social care sector. In particular, she specialises in breach of contract claims involving independent/private schools, local authorities, and universities. She also acts in claims involving the supply of paid services for disabled people.

She regularly advises education providers, parents, and students on contracts regarding the sale of goods, supply of services, school fees, debt recovery action, enforcement action, agency relationships, misrepresentation, and duress.

She can also advise on the interplay between breach of contract claims and public law matters, such as the relevance of the Equality Act 2010 to independent school disputes. She regularly assists in the drafting of settlement agreements with appropriate confidentiality and indemnity clauses, if so required.

### **Recent examples of cases Alice has been involved in include:**

- Successfully representing parents in claim for breach of contract against their child's independent school
- Successfully obtaining damages for a young person who was mistreated by his independent school and return of school fees for his parents
- Successfully defending universities in applications to strike out claims for disability discrimination and/or breach of contract
- Successfully defending a top university in a £1m breach of contract and negligence claim
- Advising care providers on the recovery of unpaid fees from public authorities.

## 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.

Alice is instructed to act and advise in relation to a broad range of Education Law matters, including:

- Breach of contract and negligence claims involving education providers
- School Exclusions
- School Admissions
- 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](#).

Whilst Alice was Chief Director of The School Exclusion Project, it featured in the press several times addressing unlawful exclusions – [for instance](#).

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 stereotypes.

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 organize.