



Alice de Coverley

Year of Call: 2014

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Overview

Alice de Coverley is a specialist education, equality, and public law barrister.

Alice has a busy practice across these fields. She regularly acts on behalf of children and young people, vulnerable adults, parents and carers, schools, local authorities, charities and NGOs, government departments, students, and universities.

Alice has significant experience in working with children and young people with disabilities, mental health conditions, special educational needs and those who have experienced sexual violence. Alice appears almost daily before the First-Tier Tribunal in disability discrimination claims and appeals relating to the contents of Education, Health and Care Plans (Sections B, F and I and National Trial cases in England) and Statements (in the SENTW in Wales). Alice has had notable success in “waking day” and “education otherwise than at school” appeals.

Through her public inquiry work, Alice has developed specialist knowledge in the field of safeguarding, sexual bullying, and sexual violence. She works alongside schools, ISVAs, government bodies, charities, and women’s rights organisations to develop policies and practices that aim to better protect victims of sexual violence. Alice currently acts as Junior Counsel for Ofsted across multiple strands of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse (IICSA), led by [Mathew Gullick KC](#) and Sarah Hannett KC. IICSA looks at how various institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse – this includes schools, religious institutions, and care homes.

Alice also works on inquests involving vulnerable school children who have died. She is also currently instructed in a claim involving the sexual assault of a female prisoner and is on the legal referral panel for the Centre for Women’s Justice. Her prior personal injury practice continues to aid in her in being able to advise on private law matters of liability and quantum.

Alice is currently instructed in various high-profile judicial review challenges, including claims arising from the coronavirus pandemic affecting young people in education. This included one of the [prominent A Level exam judicial reviews in 2020](#). Alice acts on behalf of both families and local authorities.

Alice is a leading light in the area of school exclusions. Alice has written [a book on the law of school exclusions](#) alongside her colleague, Charlotte Hadfield, available on [Amazon](#). This extensive knowledge of school exclusions is used to train local authorities, schools, charities, government bodies, private practice solicitors’ firms and parents directly. Other colleagues in the high profile 3PB Education team often use her extensive knowledge in this area to assist with difficult and complex cases.

Alice is also a contributing author to “[Patterson & Karim on Judicial Review](#)” (Lexis, 2019), heading up the Education Law chapter.

Alongside school exclusions, Alice has further specialism in discrimination claims brought under the Equality Act 2010. This includes claims for disability, sex, race, religious, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment discrimination, as well as sexual harassment and victimisation.

For several years post-pupillage, Alice worked very closely with Ofsted providing specialist advisory and advocacy services in all areas that Ofsted regulates and inspects. Her work for Ofsted covered everything from mainstream to independent schools, child protection and safeguarding matters, local authority inspections, and the combating of off rolling and illegal and unregistered schools. Alice worked on a range of complex Equality Act 2010 matters, advising HMCI directly on high-profile matters, such as segregation and sex education. She has also been involved in drafting guidance for inspectors and the public, including the Education Inspection Framework, and assisted in the delivery of various public consultations.

She also acts in breach of contract and negligence claims, and freedom of speech cases, against education providers and local authorities, recently successfully defending a £1 million claim against a top University.

Alice was The Times' Lawyer of the Week in July 2023. She is the winner of the Legal 500 ESG 2024 "Disability/Neurodiversity: Bar Champion of the Year" award.

Alice de Coverley is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy. Please contact Alice for a copy of her privacy policy which sets out the basis upon which any personal data she may collect about you, or that is provided to her, will be processed by her. She will provide a copy of this policy to you within 2 working days of its request.

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.

Expertise

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 his 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.

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.

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Public and Regulatory

Alice currently acts as Junior Counsel for Ofsted across multiple strands of IICSA led by Mathew Gullick QC and Sarah Hannett QC. IICSA looks at how various institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse – this includes schools, religious institutions, and care homes.

Alice is actively involved with the Inquiry’s investigations into:

- Residential Schools
- The Roman Catholic Church
- The Anglican Church
- Nottinghamshire Councils
- Child protection in religious organisations and settings
- Effective leadership of child protection

Through her public inquiry work, Alice has developed specialist knowledge in the field of safeguarding, sexual bullying, and sexual violence. She works alongside schools, ISVAs, government bodies, charities, and women’s rights organisations to develop policies and practices that aim to better protect victims of sexual violence.

Alice is regularly instructed by local authorities and families in judicial reviews concerning disabled children.

Alice has worked very closely with Ofsted providing specialist advisory and advocacy services in all areas it inspects and regulates, from social care to independent schools to unregistered schools. Alice’s experience has been used at Ofsted to focus on Equality Act matters and drafting guidance for their inspectors. Alice worked on a range of complex Equality Act 2010 matters, advising HMCI directly on high-profile matters, such as segregation and sex education. She has also been involved in drafting guidance for inspectors and the public, including the Education Inspection Framework, and assisted in the delivery of various public consultations.

Alice also has experience in inquest work involving school children who have died, including cases involving drug-misuse.

Whilst working for the Government Legal Department, Alice assisted with many matters ranging from Immigration, employment and discrimination cases and the Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation.

Sports

Alice de Coverley has notable expertise in the safeguarding and child-protection dimension of Sports Law. She acts for sport regulators, clubs and teams, and private clients in a wide range of Sports Law matters.

Alice has considerable experience in child safeguarding in sports. This includes child protection in national and international

sports and after-school clubs, arising from her instruction on behalf of Ofsted as Junior Counsel in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. Alice is also involved in complex litigation arising from the sexual abuse of young people by sports coaches, PE teachers and after-school club leaders. Alice prosecutes cases before the Football Association and other regulators.

Alice is also a Season Ticket holder at Chelsea Ladies FC and former British Fencer.

Recent cases include:

For the Football Association, she successfully prosecuted a referee in a case concerning serious child protection issues. The referee was permanently banned from football.

For young athletes and school children, she has successfully acted in cases concerning sports coaches and PE teachers, who have failed to protect those in their care from physical and/or sexual abuse.

Articles

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.

[View Article](#)

[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.

[View Article](#)

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.

[View Article](#)

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](#)