

# Hayley O'Sullivan

Principal Associate

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Hayley is a principal associate in our education team and specialises in advising a number of institutions on a broad range of education law issues with particular expertise in exclusions and equality issues including disability discrimination tribunals. Noted as a 'rising star' in the West Midlands, Hayley has been credited as a key member of the education team in legal directory Chambers and Partners and is well known amongst our client base.

Hayley frequently advises on pastoral issues including admissions, SEND, policies, complex parental complaints, safeguarding and the challenges social media poses for schools, as well as governance and projects work. Clients value her proactive approach, speed of support and her pragmatic and sensible advice. Her strategic outlook and ability to advise on degrees of risk in different scenarios has attracted a growing number of clients who view her as their go-to trusted advisor.

In addition to her advisory work, Hayley is an accomplished and engaging speaker having presented at a number of conferences on a wide variety of topics including transgender issues in schools and best practice in exclusions. She is also experienced at providing training to senior leaders and governing boards on an array of topics, and has developed a comprehensive equality, diversity and inclusion programme. Her approachable, straight-talking style and the way in which she brings topics to life through case studies and her own experiences has led to numerous testimonials from clients who value her insights into various topics.

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## Expertise

Education

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## Featured experience

### Challenging local authority decisions

Challenging various local authority decisions to name particular schools in pupils' Education, Health and Care Plans and lodging complaints with the Secretary of State for Education about the local authorities' unreasonable actions in failing to apply the correct legislation or take into account the detailed consultation responses put forward by the schools.

## Disability discrimination claim

Successfully defending a disability discrimination claim against the school who were alleged to have indirectly discriminated against a pupil and failed to make reasonable adjustments by issuing a fixed term exclusion. The Tribunal agreed that although the exclusion amounted to unfavourable treatment linked to a disability, it was a proportionate sanction and justified to ensure the health and safety of staff at the school. The claim was therefore dismissed in its entirety.

## Disability discrimination claims

Successfully advising three separate schools faced with disability discrimination claims and bringing these to a conclusion without needing to expend time and costs in going to Tribunal.

## Exclusions support

Developing a comprehensive exclusions support pack of template letters, scripts, checklists, reports and FAQs for schools and trusts to use to ensure that any suspensions or exclusions are lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair. The pack is designed to ensure consistency, instill confidence and save costs.

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## Testimonials

*"Hayley was a key presenter at our Headteacher Conference. The conference focus was on Equalities to which Hayley provided an informed legal perspective over two sessions in the morning. Hayley's contribution was excellent. Hayley is unmistakably very knowledgeable, highly articulate and an excellent communicator."*

**Robert Simpson, Director of Education & Diocesan School Commissioner, Diocese of Brentwood**

*"Hayley has helped us deal with some very tricky complaints in the past and has provided my Trust superb & very worthwhile training and resources as well."*

*"I cannot recommend her enough honestly."*

**Belen (Bee) Lopez Bloor, Trust Governance Officer & Clerk to the Trust's Boards, The Marches Academy Trust**