

Can you judge appeals for schools?

IT'S an issue that keeps hitting the headlines – parents who want to get their children places at church schools.

And when there is a dispute about admissions, it's important that there's an independent body which can decide whether a child should have a place or not.

That's where the Independent Admission Appeals' Service (IAAS) comes in. It organises appeals hearings in which three volunteers hear

both sides of the story and make a final decision.

The IAAS was first created in 2004 to serve the Winchester diocese, but widened its brief to cover our diocese when the two education departments merged in 2006.

It's been recognised by parents, schools and education authorities as highly effective, fair and impartial.

Now it is looking for new panel members who can serve the diocese by hearing such appeals. If you are a fair-minded individual who has an interest in your community and can ask

probing questions at hearings, you could apply.

Among the 55 existing volunteers are former teachers and governors – although those who currently manage schools or are connected to local councils can't be involved, to preserve the panel's impartiality.

Full initial training is offered, including the chance to observe several appeal hearings. Regular refresher courses are also necessary to keep up with changes in legislation, codes of practice and case law. Later this year, there will be specialist training for those who aspire to chair appeals panels.

Panel member Daphne Plaskow, who worships at our cathedral, said: "I volunteered hoping to make a contribution to ensuring an effective and fair system for parents and children."

And colleague Peter Parham, from St Jude's Church, Southsea, said: "The knowledge gained as a school governor over many years enabled me to use my experience in a different area."



The IAAS is managed by Hugh Waller, a former church school headteacher from Bournemouth. He draws on a team of 55 trained volunteers to staff the appeals panels.

"Our service is continually looking to recruit new personnel," he said. "It prides itself on having volunteers who inspire confidence in both the parent appellants and the school involved."

"Therefore independence, fairness, impartiality and giving both parties a chance to be heard are crucial to this process."

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Hugh Waller at 41 Branksome Hill Road, Talbot Woods, Bournemouth, BH4 9LF, on 07986 774188 or on hughmwaller@hotmail.com



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Too much church chatter?

A FRIEND of mine once went to his local church for the early service.

Instead of silence, and the space for a time of preparation, everyone was talking, and there was an atmosphere of hustle and bustle.

We are very good – perhaps too good – at talking in church. Our worship is often full of chatter, so that the person presiding almost appears to be a compere of a television show, where the 'audience' have to be kept stimulated whatever happens.

Have we lost something? I know that on big occasions, it's almost impossible to have quiet, especially at cathedral ordinations, when people come from all over the place, and there is a mood of excitement in the air. That's why the dean blows the whistle on all this, welcomes everyone, and calls them to quiet – before we get going.



the last word

by Bishop Kenneth

I know, too, that there are many experiences of 'all-age worship' where silence beforehand would be very difficult.

But that still raises the question in my mind – have we become too chatty a Church? There are two steps that we could take to deal with this problem.

The first is that for those quieter, more reflective services, we do ensure that people are quiet for some time before the service begins. This is what many of us were used to – and

we understandably feel deprived as a result.

Secondly, there is no reason why some kind of silence could not be introduced near the start of some of our larger celebrations.

We need to learn again how to listen to God. And some of the people who come leave behind noisy, busy and bossy lives. They don't really want a Church that does no more than echo that restless, unreflective culture of which we are all a part.