# Romesh Ranganathan criticises West Sussex council over son’s distant school placement



Romesh Ranganathan, the comedian and host of The Weakest Link, has publicly criticised West Sussex County Council after his youngest child was offered a secondary school place far from their family home, contrary to their preferred school choices. The comedian, aged 47, expressed his frustration after none of the schools he listed as preferences were offered to his son, including the option to attend the same secondary school as his two elder brothers.

Ranganathan reported that despite his efforts to resolve the issue directly with the council, including sending what he described as a "beggy" email, he only received a response after his local Member of Parliament intervened. The council responded that they had conducted an investigation of their school placement procedure and found no fault with it, stating they "can't do anything" to alter his son's placement. Ranganathan described their position as "more than disappointing," emphasising that the situation involved his son's education, which he considers a significant concern.

He told the BBC that due to the distance between his son’s designated school and the schools of his older brothers, he might be forced to arrange taxi transport to ensure punctuality when the term starts in September. In an Instagram post, he labelled the situation a “shambles” and accused the local authority of no longer prioritising applications where children have siblings already attending a school, a factor traditionally given considerable weight in such decisions.

"Not only you're not having that, you're not having any of the schools you put down as a preference," Ranganathan said. "In fact, we placed you at a school the other side of town." He highlighted the importance of schooling, stating: "Isn't your kids' education... aren't you allowed to be worried about it? Anyway, f\*\*\*ing annoying."

West Sussex County Council told the BBC that they do not comment on individual cases but acknowledged the disappointment when students cannot be placed at their first-choice schools.

This local issue comes amid wider concerns over secondary school placements across England. Data released on National Offer Day revealed that in some parts of London, up to 36% of pupils missed out on their first-choice secondary school, with the figure reaching 26% in other regions. The competition for places at the most sought-after schools remains strong, often influenced by schools’ Ofsted ratings and location.

Pepe Di’Iasio, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, commented in March that demand for secondary school places has been rising for several years and is expected to increase further. He noted that "highly sought-after schools—often in more affluent areas with strong Ofsted ratings—face intense demand," while other schools struggle with lower pupil numbers, creating financial challenges.

Families affected by secondary school placements have the right to appeal if their children are not offered a place at their preferred schools. It is understood that Ranganathan’s son is now on a waiting list while the family hopes for a change in his school placement before the new academic year begins.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/education/west-sussex-academy-allocation-expanded-for-one-year-amid-secondary-school-placement-chaos-4412925> - This article discusses the expansion of Sir Robert Woodard Academy's intake in West Sussex to alleviate secondary school placement issues, highlighting the challenges faced by families in the area.
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/mar/01/thousands-of-pupils-in-england-lose-out-on-first-choice-secondary-school-place> - This report details how thousands of pupils in England were unable to secure their first-choice secondary school placements, reflecting broader issues in the school admissions process.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-35688548> - This article highlights the increasing pressure on secondary school places in England, with more than half a million families finding out about their children's placements, indicating systemic challenges in the education system.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/feb/12/quarter-of-a-million-children-enter-secondary-school-without-basic-maths-and-english> - This piece discusses the significant number of children entering secondary school without basic skills in maths and English, underscoring concerns about educational standards and preparedness.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/01/almost-one-in-five-miss-first-choice-secondary-school/> - This analysis reveals that nearly one in five families missed out on their first-choice secondary school in England, highlighting the competitive nature of school admissions.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/31460ce0-c0ba-4c1d-8006-43cb698234e2> - This article examines the capacity of state schools in England to accommodate an influx of private school pupils, providing context to the challenges in the education system.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14658369/Comedian-Romesh-Ranganathan-hits-local-council-school-shambles-son-offered-place-town.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data