

**Template for**

**Local Authority Report**

to

**The Schools Adjudicator**

from

**Knowsley Local Authority**

to be provided by

**31 October 2024**

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**Please email your completed report to:** **Office of the Schools Adjudicator** **by 31 October 2024 and earlier if possible**

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**Introduction**

1. Section 88P of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the Act) requires every local authority to make an annual report to the adjudicator. The Chief Adjudicator then includes a summary of these reports in the annual report to the Secretary of State for Education. The School Admissions Code (the Code) sets out the requirements for reports by local authorities in paragraph 6. Paragraph 3.30 specifies what must be included as a minimum in the report to the adjudicator and makes provision for the local authority to include any other matters. Paragraphs 6 and 3.30 of the Code require that each local authority publish its report locally.
2. **This year’s report must cover the 2023/2024 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2024.**
3. Please note that, in response to feedback on the previous template and in the light of consultation with a group of local authorities, changes have been made to various sections of this year’s template.

**Guidance on completing the template**

1. We have included all the guidance on completing specific parts of the template in this section. There is no requirement for local authorities to include the introduction and the guidance in their published reports, but they are free to do so if they wish.
2. We should be grateful if in completing questions which ask for information about primary and secondary schools and/or pupils, local authorities would follow the approach to classification of schools used in statutory provisions and in the Department for Education Statistical First Release[[1]](#footnote-2) and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002[[2]](#footnote-3).
3. The Code sets out some minimum requirements on the contents of each local authority report stating that each must cover as a minimum "information about how admission arrangements in the area of the local authority serve the interests of looked after children and previously looked after children, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, including any details of where problems have arisen."
4. The Department for Education’s aim through the annual reports from local authorities is to understand how well the admissions system is working nationally, rather than to hold individual local authorities to account. By understanding the effectiveness of the system, including outcomes, the Department hopes to identify areas where the admissions system is working well and areas where it could be improved. With that in mind, when the template asks, “how well does the admission system serve the needs of children,” the Department appreciates that it is asking local authorities to make a subjective judgement, in the understanding that everyone’s experience with the admission system will be different. The Department encourages local authorities in responding to the open questions and spaces for open comments to set out challenges that are proving difficult to overcome.
5. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
	1. “in-year admissions”: This means admissions (that is children admitted to a school and not applications for places):
6. to a year group which is not a normal point of entry for the school concerned (for example to Year 2 for a five to eleven primary school); and
7. after the end of the statutory waiting list period (31 December) to a year group which is a normal year of admission for the schools concerned (such as Year R and Year 7).
	1. Not applicable means that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
8. We welcome all comments that local authorities make in the comment boxes and we aim to reflect those comments in the Annual Report, but we ask for the comments to be entered under the right headings. Section 3 invites comment on any other matters not specifically addressed in this template if local authorities wish to do so. The views expressed in previous years also remain a matter of public record.
9. We ask that where possible, you return the template in Word instead of PDF formatting. A number of you have commented on the formatting of the template and we have tried to make it as accessible as possible, but we are aware that some local authorities use different versions of Word.
10. Where questions request a comparison with the previous year, any new local authorities formed as a result of reorganisation should note this on the form.

**Information requested**

# [Section 1 - Normal points of admission](#Text69)

## Co-ordination

Which of the following best describes the level of challenge for your **main admissions round in 23/24 compared to 22/23**?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year Group** | **Much less challenging** | **Less challenging** | **No change** | **More challenging** | **Much more challenging** |
| Reception |  |  | x |  |  |
| Year 7 |  |  | x |  |  |
| Other relevant years of entry |  |  | x |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:* There continues to be a good working relationship between the Local Authority and own admission authority schools, and with neighbouring Local Authorities, where inter-LA co-ordination is necessary to ensure that any queries/discrepancies/outcomes are resolved as expediently as possible.
* The locally agreed co-ordinated scheme was adhered to by all schools and any national deadlines and timeframes relating to the application period, allocation process and release of allocation offers was achieved for primary, junior and year 7 transfer.
 |

## Looked after and previously looked after children

1. How well does the admissions system in your local authority area serve the interests of looked after children at **normal points of admission**?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

* + 1. How well do the admissions systems in other local authority areas serve the interests of children looked after by your local authority at **normal points of admission**?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

* + 1. How well does your admissions system serve the interests of children who are looked after by other local authorities but educated in your area **at normal points of admission**?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

* + 1. How well does the admissions system in your local authority area serve the interests of previously looked after children at **normal points of admission**?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

|  |
| --- |
| v. If you wish, please give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which exemplify your answers about the admission to schools of looked after and previously looked after children at **normal points of admission**:* The Local Authority, and all own admission authorities within the authority area, give first priority to looked after and previously looked after children, including those previously in state care outside of England, in their admission arrangements. All admission authorities adhere to this rule without exception; faith schools in the Local Authority area do not differentiate between looked after and previously looked after children who are and are not considered to be of the faith affiliation of the school - this maximises opportunity for looked after children to secure placements that are of preference and considered most appropriate.
* Where applications for looked after and previously looked after children for the normal point of admission are received late, schools are requested to consider accommodating as an exception, and typically do so, unless it is evidenced that admission would result in significant prejudice to education delivery and resources.
* On occasion it can be difficult to obtain evidence of PLAC status (or the prescribed requirement to meet this priority status can be misunderstood by some applicants). To ensure the correct and efficient processing of such applications, within the relevant timeframes, and to avoid incorrect allocation outcomes, it is imperative that the home local authority verifies the looked after and previous looked after children status of any applicant before application data is shared inter-authority.
 |

## Special educational needs and/or disabilities

1. How well served are children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who **have** an education, health and care plan that names a school at **normal points of admission**?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

|  |
| --- |
| Please provide any comments you wish to make on the admission of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities at normal points of admission:* Both the LA and all own admission authorities of mainstream schools within the LA area prioritise placement of children with an EHCP that names the school as provision within the published admission number in advance of any other pupil expressing a preference, where they are known of at the point of allocation.
* When an EHCP is confirmed after national offer day, schools continue to accommodate and will exceed PAN if necessary and if manageable within health and safety risk assessment.
* Children who have additional needs but do not have an EHCP are considered with all other applicants in a non-discriminatory process – schools make reasonable adjustments, offer appropriate interventions, and have access to additional support mechanisms for individual pupils if necessary.
* In the event that, for a child without an EHCP, parents/carers believe that, for reasons of SEND, a particular mainstream school is most appropriate for their child, but they do not obtain a place under the normal allocation process, they can exert their right to independent appeal and outline what they consider the exceptional circumstances to be.
 |

#

# Section 2 - In-year admissions

# A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 23/24 compared to 22/23?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Phase** | **Much less challenging** | **Less challenging** | **No change** | **More challenging** | **Much more challenging** |
| Primary |  |  | x |  |  |
| Secondary |  |  | x |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| If you wish, please explain the factors that have changed the level of challenge for your in-year admissions: |

## **B. Looked after children and previously looked after children**

1. How well does the **in-year admission** system serve children who are looked after by your local authority and who are being educated in your area?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

1. How well does the **in-year admission** systems in other local authority areas serve the interests of your looked after children?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

1. How well does the **in-year admission** system serve the interests of children who are looked after by other local authorities but educated in your area?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

1. How well does your **in-year admission** system serve the interests of previously looked after children?

[ ]  Not at all [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you wish, please give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which support or exemplify your answers about **in-year admissions** forlooked after and previously looked after children:
* The expectation is that, where a vacancy exists, all Knowsley schools would admit a looked after or previously looked after child in-year as expediently as possible.
* Where the admission of a P/LAC would result in the typical admission limit being exceeded, schools would be requested to consider an application and make exception where permissible.
* Only on rare occasion, where it is considered by the admission authority that to offer a place to a P/LAC beyond the usual admission capacity would create prejudice that equates to a health and safety or safeguarding risk, would a place be refused.
* Open conversations between schools, the family, social care and virtual school help to ensure expedient and appropriate placement. A good network of ‘virtual headteachers’ supports the process across authority boundaries.
 |

## **C. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

* + 1. How well served are children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who **have** an education, health and care plan that names a school when they need to be **admitted in-year**?

[ ]  Not at all well [ ]  Not well [ ]  Well [x]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

* + 1. How well served are children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who **do not have** an education, health and care plan when they need to be **admitted in-year**?

[ ]  Not at all well [ ]  Not well [x]  Well [ ]  Very well [ ]  Do not know

|  |
| --- |
| * + 1. Please give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which support or exemplify your answers about **in-year admissions** for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities:
* Schools adhere to SEND legislation which ensures that, following appropriate consultation, children are admitted to the school named in the EHCP as expediently as possible. Such admissions can be beyond the typical admission limit as a permitted exception.
* Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not have an EHCP are treated with equity in the in-year admission process. There is a presumption that the needs of the individual child can be met in any mainstream school by making reasonable adjustments, offering appropriate interventions, and through access to additional support mechanisms for those children if necessary.
* The same consideration and outcomes apply to all children, irrespective of which Local Authority they reside in.
* Where in-year admission has been requested, but a place has not been secured, for an unplaced child for whom it is identified that an EHCP should have previously been sought, or where there is disability or medical condition, the Fair Access Protocol can be initiated to identify a placement that reflects equitable distribution. In the event of this action, the view of a SEND professional is sought to assist any decision making.
 |

## D. Fair access protocol

What proportion of the state-funded mainstream schools in your area have said that they agree to the local authority fair access protocol?

**Primary**

Between 0% and 49% [ ]

Between 50% and 74% [ ]

Between 75% and 89% [ ]

Between 90% and 99% [ ]

100% [x]

**Secondary**

Between 0% and 49% [ ]

Between 50% and 74% [ ]

Between 75% and 89% [ ]

Between 90% and 99% [ ]

100% [x]

|  |
| --- |
| If you have below 75% for either phase, please explain why: |

1. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024?

| Type of school | Number of Primary aged children admitted | Number of Secondary aged children admitted |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Community and voluntary controlled  | 7 | 3 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 1 | 16 |
| Total | 8 | 19 |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

The number of referrals to the protocol in 2022/23 and 2023/24 has been static, with only a small increase in the number of placements made via the protocol in both the primary and secondary sector. These figures correlate with the total number of in-year applications received across each year and the proportion of which are new to area children (unplaced). |

1. How well do you consider children referred to the Fair Access Protocol are served in in your area?

[ ]  Not at all well [ ]  Not well [x]  Well [ ]  Very well [ ]  Not applicable

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Please provide any comments you wish on the protocol not covered above:

Knowsley is a small borough council with distinct locality areas. With only six secondary mainstream providers across the borough achieving equitable distribution of children placed via the protocol, whilst also seeking to ensure a reasonable placement in that child’s best interests can at times be challenging. Representation from each secondary provider at panel creates a beneficial collaboration that is effective in achieving appropriate and transparent outcomes.  |

##  E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children[[3]](#footnote-4)

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 to maintained schools for which the local authority is not the admission authority to admit children (including children looked after by the local authority but resident in another area)?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total number of children | Of which, looked after | Of which, not looked after |
| 0 |  0 | 0 |

## F. Other points on in-year admissions

1. For the schools for which the local authority co-ordinates in-year applications, in the year between 1 Aug 2023 and 31 July 2024 did you receive

[ ]  Significantly fewer applications than last year

[ ]  slightly fewer applications than last year

[ ]  about the same

[x]  slightly more than last year

[ ]  significantly more than last year

1. For what proportion of **primary** schools in your area did the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions during the 2023/2024 academic year

Between 0% and 24% [x]

Between 25% and 49% [ ]

Between 50% and 74% [ ]

Between 75% and 100% [ ]

1. For what proportion of **secondary** schools in your area did the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions during the 2023/2024 academic year

Between 0% and 24% [ ]

Between 25% and 49% [ ]

Between 50% and 74% [ ]

Between 75% and 100% [x]

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you wish, please provide any comments about how **well in-year admissions** works for children who are **not** looked after or previously looked after and/or do **not** have SEND:

The Local Authority maintains effective working relationships with all schools, including those for which it does not co-ordinate in-year admissions to ensure the requirements of the admission code are met and provide support to parents so they can make informed decisions when making an in-year application.  |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you wish, please provide any other comments on the admission of children **in-year** not previously raised (you may wish to include here any comments about cases where it has not proved possible to find places for children):

The Local Authority recognises that in-year applications are requested for many reasons and can often include complex circumstances that present different challenge but every effort is taken to ensure reasonable placement for every child. |

# Section 3 - Other matters

Are there any other matters that the local authority would like to raise that have not been covered by the questions above?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2025.

|  |
| --- |
| The template is clear and user friendly and the information requested is consistent. |

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 31 October 2024

1. [Department for Education Statistical First Release](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [The Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/1983/contents/made) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. It is important that only Directions to maintained schools are included here. Numbers of Directions to academies are already held by the Department. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)