

Template for Local Authority Report

to

The Schools Adjudicator

from

Slough Borough 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

Contents

Introduction

Guidance on completing the template

Se	ction 1 - Normal points of admission	5
A.	Co-ordination	5
В.	Looked after and previously looked after children	5
C.	Special educational needs and/or disabilities	6
Se	ction 2 - In-year admissions	7
A.	Overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions	7
B.	Looked after children and previously looked after children	7
C.	Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities	8
D.	Fair access protocol	9
E.	Directions to maintained schools to admit children	10
F.	Other points on in-year admissions	11
Se	ction 3 - Other matters	13
Sec	ection 4 - Feedback	13

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

- 4. 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.
- 5. 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 Release¹ and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002².
- 6. 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."
- 7. 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

¹ <u>Department for Education Statistical First Release</u>

² The Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002

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.

- 8. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
 - a. "in-year admissions": This means admissions (that is children admitted to a school and not applications for places):
 - i. 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
 - ii. 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).
 - b. Not applicable means that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
- 9. 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.
- 10. 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.
- 11. 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

A. 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			х		
Year 7			X		
Other relevant years of entry		X			

Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:
Our co-ordination procedures are well embedded and operate very well across the local authority. We continue to have good relationships with all schools and academies. There was excellent communication with our schools regarding the co-ordination round with all the required information exchanged within time scales.
Relationships and transfer of information was generally effective with other local authorities, thus ensuring that appropriate offers were made to all applicants in Slough.

B. Looked after and previously looked after children

i.	How well does the admissions system in your local authority area serve the interests of looked after children at normal points of admission ?
	\square Not at all \square Not well \square Well \boxtimes Very well \square Not applicable
ii.	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 ?
	\square Not at all \square Not well \square Well \boxtimes Very well \square Not applicable
iii.	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?
	\square Not at all \square Not well \square Well \boxtimes Very well \square Not applicable

iv. How well does the admissions system in your local authority area serve the interests of previously looked after children at normal points of admission?				
\square Not at all \square Not well \square Well \boxtimes Very well \square 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 :				
Children looked after and previously looked after children are given the highest priority within admission arrangements. There were no challenges in processing the applications from looked after and previously looked after children. No CLA or previously looked after children were refused a place at their preferred school in the normal round of admissions.				
C. Special educational needs and/or disabilities				
i. 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 ?				
\square Not at all \square Not well \boxtimes Well \square Very well \square 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:				
There is a specialist SEND team who have responsibility for the educational provision for pupils who have an EHCP and their admission into mainstream schools. Children with an EHCP are normally considered alongside other pupils in accordance with the school's admissions criteria until the PAN is reached. However, we experienced some challenges in getting a list of children with an EHCP for both the primary and secondary round of admissions from our SEND Team. This created undue pressure and a delay in the process. As a result, we were unable to include children with an EHCP in our Reception and Infant to Junior				

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			х		
Secondary			х		

If you wish, please explain the factors that have changed the level of challenge for your in-year admissions:
In the primary sector, the challenge is the right number of places in the right place at the right time. Whilst there are sufficient primary school places, where they are located poses allocation problems in certain year groups.

B. Looked after children and previously looked after children

I.	looked after by your local authority and who are being educated in your area?
	\square Not at all \square Not well \boxtimes Well \square Very well \square Not applicable
ii.	How well does the in-year admission systems in other local authority areas serve the interests of your looked after children?
	\square Not at all \square Not well \square Well \square Very well \boxtimes Not applicable
ii.	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?
	\square Not at all \square Not well \boxtimes Well \square Very well \square Not applicable
V.	How well does your in-year admission system serve the interests of previously looked after children?
	□ Not at all □ Not well ⊠ Well □ Verv well □ Not applicable

v. If you wish, please give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which support or exemplify your answers about in-year admissions for looked after and previously looked after children:				
C. Childr	en with special educational needs and/or disabilities			
i.	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 ?			
	\square Not at all well \square Not well \boxtimes Well \square Very well \square Not applicable			
ii.	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 ?			
	\square Not at all well \square Not well \boxtimes Well \square Very well \square Do not know			
support or	se give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which exemplify your answers about in-year admissions for children with ucational needs and/or disabilities:			
	Team liaises directly with the named school and the parent. The School s Team is not involved in the process for in-year allocations.			
with SEND often feel the disproportion Some school person with diagnosis be arriving from	nave had many successes with regards to children and young people moving into schools throughout the year it is apparent that schools nat the numbers of SEN pupils in their school is too high or onate in some areas, or that their schools are at or beyond capacity. Hols have stated that they cannot reasonably offer a place for a young in SEND as they cannot meet needs. Children arriving with no formal out evident additional needs (for example awaiting assessment or moverseas) present additional challenges. Parental expectation and respecialist places far exceeds those available or feasible.			
in Slough p through the	been undertaken through the Transforming Special Needs and Inclusion programme and is continuing in order to mitigate the ongoing demands a system. Schools across the borough have been engaging well with and support for children with SEN.			

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%	
	Secondary	
	Between 0% and 49%	
	Between 50% and 74%	
	Between 75% and 89%	
	Between 90% and 99%	
	100%	\boxtimes
If you have	below 75% for either ph	ase, please explain why:
•	· ·	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·

i. 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	0	2
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	0	13
Total	0	15

ii. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fai 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 FAP has decreased in comparison to the previous year this simply due the application of the admissions code.			
However, the LA continues to receive numbers of referrals to Fair Access Panel from schools following in Year admissions where it has come to light that students have challenging behaviours and are moving schools to avoid suspensions and exclusions. The move of such young people adds extra pressure and brings challenges to the schools .			
iii. How well do you consider children referred to the Fair Access Protoco are served in in your area?	l		
\square Not at all well $\ \square$ Not well $\ \square$ Well $\ \boxtimes$ Very well $\ \square$ Not applicable			
iv. Please provide any comments you wish on the protocol not covered above:			

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children³

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

³ It is important that only Directions to maintained schools are included here. Numbers of Directions to academies are already held by the Department.

F. Other points on in-year admissions

safeguarding purposes.

i.	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 ⋈ slightly more than last year □ significantly more than last year
ii.	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% \square Between 25% and 49% \square Between 50% and 74% \boxtimes Between 75% and 100% \square
iii.	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% \square Between 25% and 49% \square Between 50% and 74% \boxtimes Between 75% and 100% \square
admission	u wish, please provide any comments about how well in-year s works for children who are not looked after or previously looked after ot have SEND:
schools. It is a participate in	hority co-ordinates in-year admissions for 16 primary schools and 8 secondary also the point of contact for parents that wish to apply for places at schools that the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme. All participants in the scheme are nt to ensure that children are admitted within 10 school days of notification of the
send us week know whether that accepted	works very well. Most schools participating in the LAs in-year co-ordination scheme ly vacancy returns and updates on each child that is allocated to their school to let us the child accepted or declined the offer as well as any agreed start date for children the offer of a place at the school. We allocate places weekly. However, we had to mind and chase up a handful of schools to submit their weekly returns, particularly

the update returns to enable us to monitor children until the point they start school - for

v. 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):

Slough has had a successful year for in-year admissions.

Finding places for year 11 children is challenging as there is little appropriate provision for children arriving on roll late and not taking GCSE or level 2 qualifications.

Popular schools continue to attract more in-year applications as well as experiencing an increase in appeals. We have struggled for school places in Years 4, and 5 from late Spring onwards. In both instances it is because of the inward migration in these year groups. However, some schools are still taking more than 15 school days to a make decision due to a number of reasons. In some cases, this may be because the school's admissions decision-makers have teaching or other commitments that can take priority over admission decisions and understandably, many academies are keen to know detailed circumstances of pupils ahead of agreeing places.

We are also experiencing an increase in the number of schools citing that they 'cannot meet needs' and electing to refuse applicant(s). In many cases these places have ultimately been agreed following more detailed discussions with schools.

As Academies are able to cap their numbers in year groups outside the relevant year for organisational reasons, this has had an impact on the supply and demand for school places. With influx of new families moving into the area with children it becomes challenging to find school places at the local schools for children particularly for the primary phase.

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?

Admissions outside normal age group

It would be helpful if the decision of one admissions authority to admit and teach a child outside normal age group is binding on all admission authorities. It disadvantages children in the secondary transfer when they are refused admission into year 7 by another admissions authority, simply because it would mean admitting and teaching the child outside normal age group.

Co-ordination of all in-year admissions

Many own admission authorities that manage their own in-year allocations do not send their returns to us regarding every application received and its outcome as required by paragraph 2.30 of the School Admissions Code. This has sometimes resulted in some children missing education because they have been refused a place by a school managing its own admissions. without the LA having any knowledge of the children as the application was made directly to schools.

If, however, the co-ordination of all in-year admissions were to be centralised to the LA (with appropriate powers): there would potentially be a better understanding of who has applied and what offers have been made; children would be put on roll faster; the LA would be in a stronger position to advocate for children. This would also have a positive impact on reducing the number of children missing education and ensuring that children do not fall through the cracks.

Section 4 - Feedback

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

The report continues to be a worthwhile exercise, as it provides LAs an opportunity to draw the adjudicator's eye to successes and challenges faced by LAs when trying to secure school places for local children

Thank you for completing this template.

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