



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

**Template for
Local Authority Report
to
The Schools Adjudicator
from**

**Slough Local Authority
to be provided by
31 October 2025**

Report Cleared by: Name: Neil Hoskinson

Job Title: Director of Education,

Email: neil.hoskinson@slough.gov.uk

Date submitted: 29th October 2025

By: Name: Sabi Hothi

**Job Title: Head of Service, Education Services, Education
and Inclusion**

Email: sabi.hothi@slough.gov.uk

Website: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#)

**Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by
31 October 2025 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 2024/2025 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2025.**
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

¹ [Department for Education Statistical First Release](#)

² [The Education Middle School \(England\) Regulations 2002](#)

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.

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 24/25 compared to 23/24?**

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:

Our co-ordination procedures are well embedded and operate very well across the local authority. We continue to maintain good working relationships with all schools and academies. There continues to be excellent communication with our schools regarding the co-ordination round with all the required information exchanged within agreed 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.

In Year 8, there was less capacity due to an academy capping their PAN and also an increase in demand due to a high birth rate year in this year group.

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?**

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☐ Well ☒ Very well ☐ 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?**

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☐ Well ☒ Very well ☐ 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?**

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☐ Well ☒ Very well ☐ 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**?

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☐ Well ☒ 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**:

Children who are looked after and those who were previously looked after are given the highest priority within admission arrangements. There were no issues in processing applications for these children. No looked after or previously looked after child was refused a place at their preferred school during the normal admissions round.

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**?

☐ Not at all ☒ Not well ☐ Well ☐ 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:

There is a specialist SEND team responsible for overseeing the educational provision for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and for managing their admissions to mainstream schools. Children with an EHCP are usually considered alongside other pupils in accordance with the school's admissions criteria until the Published Admission Number (PAN) is reached.

However, we continued to experience some challenges in obtaining a complete list of children with an EHCP for both the primary and secondary admission rounds from the SEND Team. This caused additional pressure and delays in the process. As a result, not all children with an EHCP could be included in our Reception and Infant-to-Junior allocations on National Offer Day. These children were subsequently offered their named schools by the SEND Team after National Offer Day. It should be noted that the Phase Transfer process for September 2026 is already well underway so this should not be an issue again.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 24/25 compared to 23/24?

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:

In the primary sector, the main challenge was ensuring the availability of the right number of school places in the right locations at the right time. Although there are sufficient primary school places overall, their geographical distribution presents allocation difficulties in certain year groups.

In the secondary sector, challenges arose from a high birth rate cohort in Year 8 and an increase in the number of Year 11 pupils arriving from abroad, resulting in limited availability of suitable places.

B. Looked after children and previously looked after children

- i. 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 ☒ Very well ☐ Not applicable

- ii. 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 ☐ Very well ☒ Not applicable

- iii. 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 ☒ Very well ☐ Not applicable

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

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☐ Well ☒ Very 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. Children 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**?

☐ Not at all well ☐ Not well ☒ Well ☐ Very well ☐ 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**?

☐ Not at all well ☐ Not well ☒ Well ☐ Very well ☐ Do not know

iii. 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:

The SEND Team liaises directly with the named school and the parent, and the School Admissions Team is not involved in the process for in-year allocations.

While there have been many successful placements of children and young people with SEND throughout the year, it is evident that some schools feel the number of pupils with SEND in their setting is disproportionately high or that they are operating at or beyond capacity. Some schools have indicated that they are unable to offer a place for a young person with SEND, as they cannot reasonably meet the child's needs. Additional challenges arise when children arrive without a formal diagnosis but with evident additional needs, for example, those awaiting assessment or newly arrived from overseas. Parental expectations and demand for specialist placements continue to exceed the number of places available or feasible.

Work undertaken through the Transforming Special Needs and Inclusion in Slough programme is ongoing to help mitigate these pressures. Schools across the borough have engaged positively with this initiative, demonstrating strong support for children with SEND.

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% ☒

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

- i. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025?

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	15
Total	0	17

- ii. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

There has been an increase in the number of referrals for pupils with SEND who do not have an EHCP, as schools report that they are unable to meet these pupils' complex needs. Additionally, the number of pupils being referred under Section 3.10 for Challenging Behaviour has also risen.

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

☐ Not at all well ☐ Not well ☐ Well ☒ Very well ☐ Not applicable

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

All schools fully support the Fair Access Protocol. This is reviewed annually and sent to schools for comment by the Headteachers.

Fair Access Panels meet fortnightly to ensure

All children are allocated equitably and fairly across the borough and headteachers are committed to admitting them as quickly as possible.

One school referred a pupil back to Fair Access following allocation due to a safeguarding concern and this pupil was reallocated another school

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children³

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025 to maintained schools for which the local authority is not the admission

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

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

- i. For the schools for which the local authority co-ordinates in-year applications, in the year between 1 Aug 2024 and 31 July 2025 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 2024/2025 academic year

- Between 0% and 24% ☐
 Between 25% and 49% ☐
 Between 50% and 74% ☒
 Between 75% and 100% ☐

- iii. For what proportion of **secondary** schools in your area did the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions during the 2024/2025 academic year

- Between 0% and 24% ☐
 Between 25% and 49% ☐
 Between 50% and 74% ☒
 Between 75% and 100% ☐

iv. 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 coordinates in-year admissions for 16 primary schools and 8 secondary schools. It also serves as the point of contact for parents applying to schools that participate in the local authority's in-year coordination scheme. All participants in the scheme are held accountable to ensure that children are admitted within 10 school days of notification of the offer.

The process generally operates very effectively. Most schools participating in the scheme provide weekly vacancy returns and updates on each allocated child, indicating whether the child has accepted or declined the offer, as well as the agreed start date for those who have accepted. Places are allocated on a weekly basis. However, a small number of schools require repeated reminders to submit their weekly returns, particularly the update returns, which are essential for monitoring children until they start school for safeguarding purposes.

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 continued to operate a successful in-year admissions process; however, challenges remain in meeting demand across certain year groups.

Finding places for Year 11 children is particularly difficult, as there is limited appropriate provision for pupils arriving late and not pursuing GCSE or Level 2 qualifications. Popular schools continue to attract more in-year applications and are experiencing an increase in appeals.

We have struggled to secure school places in Years 2, 5, 8, and 11, primarily due to inward migration within these cohorts. In some cases, schools have taken longer than 15 school days to make admissions decisions. This delay can be attributed to a variety of factors, including teaching or other professional commitments of admissions decision-makers, and the need for academies to understand pupils' detailed circumstances before offering places.

An increasing number of schools have cited that they "cannot meet needs" and have initially refused applicants. In many cases, these placements were ultimately agreed following detailed discussions between the local authority and schools.

Academies' ability to cap numbers in certain year groups for organisational reasons has impacted the supply and demand for school places. The influx of new families into the area further compounds the challenge of placing children locally.

Capping: A key barrier to placing in-year arrivals locally is the capping of year groups by schools, particularly academies. The SCAP return requires schools to report their 'capacity,' which often exceeds the actual number of places available for pupils. For example, one free school must report almost twice as much capacity as places available. While the LA recognises that this capacity has been built, in practice alternative places must be found and funded, increasing local authority transport costs.

Growth Funding: New places are required across two-thirds of the borough, prompting exploration of options such as bulge classes, additional Key Stage 2 forms of entry, and class sizes above 30. Extra places can only be implemented if Growth Funding is provided to support the funding lag experienced by schools or academies; this lag is a genuine issue, as additional teaching staff are often required. We are now at a point where Growth Funding may be needed to open a bulge class at an academy that has capped its intake. This issue is expected to increase in the coming years, potentially requiring a larger Growth Funding top-slice, which would consequently reduce funding available for all schools.

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 beneficial if the decision of one admissions authority to admit and teach a child outside their normal age group were binding on all admissions authorities. Currently, children can be disadvantaged at secondary transfer if they are refused admission to Year 7 by another admissions authority solely because this would require admitting the child outside the normal age group.

Co-ordination of all in-year admissions

Many own-admission-authority schools that manage their own in-year allocations do not consistently provide the local authority with returns for every application received and its outcome, as required by paragraph 2.30 of the School Admissions Code. This lack of reporting has, at times, resulted in children missing education, as they have been refused a place by a school managing its own admissions

without the local authority being aware, particularly when applications are made directly to schools.

If the co-ordination of all in-year admissions were centralised to the local authority, with appropriate powers, it could offer several benefits. There would likely be a better understanding of who has applied and what offers have been made, allowing children to be placed on roll more quickly. The local authority would also be in a stronger position to advocate for children. This approach could potentially reduce the number of children missing education and help ensure that no child falls 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 2026.

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 2025