



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

Staffordshire Local Authority

to be provided by

31 October 2023

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Improvement

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Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2023 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 her 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 2022/2023 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2023.**
3. Please note that, in response to feedback on the draft template, changes have been made to section 2C of this template.
4. Please also note that the OSA and Department for Education are planning a small project to ensure that the report is as useful as possible to local authorities, the OSA, DfE and others. As a result of this, there are likely to be changes made to the template for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Guidance on completing the template

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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. at the start of any school year to a year group which is not a normal point of entry for the school concerned (for example at the beginning of Year 2 for a five to eleven primary school); and

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

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

- 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 at questions:

- i. Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
- ii. Section 2: Ai - iv that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
- iii. Section 2: B.i. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
- iv. Section 2: C.v. 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.

Information requested

Section 1 - Normal points of admission

A. Co-ordination

i. How well did co-ordination of the main admissions round work?	Not well	A large number of small problems or a major problem	Well, with few small problems	Very well
Reception				X
Year 7				X
Other relevant years of entry				X

ii. Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

The coordinated admissions process in Staffordshire continues to run very smoothly with a higher than average national and regional percentage of parental preferences being met.

Well established working relationships with our neighbouring LAs and with other admitting authorities operating within our area aid the smooth operation of this process. Systems have been developed to ensure that the vast majority of the process is automated to ensure that the burden on schools who operate as their own admission authority, is as minimal as possible given their responsibilities in regard to this area.

B. Looked after and previously looked after children

i. How 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 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 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 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**:

Systems are in place to ensure that children in this category are tracked and their applications validated and cross referenced with our virtual school to ensure that in the main, good and outstanding schools are chosen on behalf of children who are currently looked after and that applications are made on time.

C. Special educational needs and/or disabilities

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:

Completion of phase transfer of children with an Educational Health and Care Plan were successfully completed by September 2023 for pre-16 children (100 %) and post 16 pupils (82%). The SEND Teams are working on solutions for the remaining post 16 pupils and liaising with parents, families and settings.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Looked after children and previously looked after children

- i. How 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 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 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 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:

Whilst our Virtual Headteacher acknowledges that improved information sharing between social care, schools and Virtual School has led to more informed decision making in relation this most vulnerable group, there are still schools within the authority that continue to delay in-year admissions for children in care. For these Looked After children that this affects, the impact is extremely damaging.

It remains a particular challenge to secure admission for Y11 and increasingly Y10 Looked After Children. In addition, for children who have complex needs but no EHCP due to multiple school and care placement breakdowns the different approaches between authorities requiring mainstream school to accept a pupil on roll can cause delay as schools will refuse admission on the basis that they are unable to meet need.

Variation between local authority systems can be a challenge for social workers to navigate when they do not know the area and there can be particular difficulty in securing provision in good and outstanding schools.

Whilst we can successfully challenge most schools this delays admission and increases time out of education for children that can have already had significant gaps in education.

The National Association of Virtual Head Teachers are continuing to advocate for strengthening of admission arrangements in relation to looked after children. This needs to be considered alongside cross border funding arrangements for children in care that may need alternative provision as part of their offer which can cause additional barriers and delay to admission.

This year we have had challenges in securing education in Y11 for newly arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking children late in the year, it would be useful to have guidance to schools around the importance of offering newly arrived children in Y11 the opportunity to be part of a school community and the opportunity to develop language skills. schools are focusing on GCSEs we have found schools that have taken Y11 have found creative ways to engage them in the life of the school.

B. 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:

Annual Reviews enable consideration of change of placements for children with SEND. The Review process has increased in quality with the increase in SEND Key Workers (+33% capacity) and increase in Educational Psychologists (+33%). The impact of these increases will continue to be felt over the Autumn term 2023.

We are experiencing continued challenges with some mainstream settings who are reporting that they struggle to meet the needs of children with SEND. Our response to this challenge is clearly set out in our Accelerated Progress Plan (APP). We are due to launch a significant investment in pre-statutory SEND support across all districts. This will involve an enhanced

Asses-Plan-Do-Review Pathway that will increase the robustness of interventions at this phase of the graduated approach. The enhancement will see the consistent presence of Educational Psychologists at this phase and additional financial support to schools (pre-statutory) to enable evidence based intervention and support. This is a significant investment that will enhance the ability of schools to ensure the inclusion of children with SEND throughout the academic year.

c. Fair access protocol

i. Do you have a fair access protocol agreed with the majority of state-funded mainstream schools in your area?

- Yes for primary
- Yes for secondary

ii. If you have not been able to tick both boxes above, please explain why:
n/a

iii. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	6	1
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	10	36
Total	16	37

- iv. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

There has been a large increase in the number of cases referred in respect of secondary aged children, in part due to pressure on available places in some areas of the County but also due to the number of children returning to education following prolonged periods out of school where they have been registered as Home Educated or children who are new to the County, are deemed hard to place due to previous school history and length of time out of school.

- v. 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

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

The majority of in-year admissions are managed through the normal in-year admissions process without reference to the fair access protocol. For the few where school place offers are not forthcoming our fair access protocol ensures that delay is minimised.

D. Directions

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 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
1	1	0

E. 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 2022 and 31 July 2023 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 schools in your area did the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions during the 2022/2023 academic year

- None
 All
 Some but less than or equal to half
 More than half but less than all

iii. 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:
n/a

iv. 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):
n/a

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 2024.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2023