



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Template for
Local Authority Report
to
The Schools Adjudicator
from
Islington Local Authority
to be provided by 31 October 2023

Report Cleared by: Jon Abbey

Director, Children and Young People

Telephone number 020 7527 5855

Email: jon.abbey@islington.gov.uk

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By: Gabriella Di-Sciullo

Head of Admissions and Children Out of School

T. 020 7527 5779

E. gabriella.di-sciullo@islington.gov.uk

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

Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2023 and earlier if possible

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Introduction

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.

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.

Please note that, in response to feedback on the draft template, changes have been made to section 2C of this template.

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

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.

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.

Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:

“in-year admissions”: This means admissions (that is children admitted to a school and not applications for places):

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

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

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

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).

Not applicable means at questions:

Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

Section 2: Ai - iv that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

Section 2: B.i. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

Section 2: C.v. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

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.

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:

Pan-London co-ordination arrangements went smoothly, and all eligible applicants were allocated school places on Primary and Secondary National Offer Days. It is worth noting that Primary and Secondary preference satisfaction for Islington residents both saw increases this year.

New schools and coordination schemes

Although Islington was not impacted significantly, we would like to raise the issue of whether new academies and free schools should be included in local authority coordination schemes during their first year of opening.

A number of new London academies were due to open (or expand) in time for admission in September 2023. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons (e.g., issues in securing premises or withdrawal of funding agreements) these schools are not opening as originally planned, and yet they were included in the pan-London coordination scheme.

While this issue has been addressed by the London Inter Admission Authority Group (LIAAG) through agreement with all pan-London authorities, we felt it important to raise our concern about the potential risks to the integrity of other local authority coordination schemes if new schools are included during their first year of opening.

We would urge there to be a directive from the ESFA as part of the new school's Funding Agreement requiring them to manage their own applications outside the local authority's coordination scheme during their first year of opening. This would avert the complications of reallocating multiple school places, potentially across several local authorities, should the new school fail to materialise.

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**:

Our annual audit of Islington own admission authority policies once again found 100% compliance across all Islington admission authorities in relation to the requirement for 'children adopted from state care outside England' to be included in the criterion definition of 'previously looked after children'.

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

One issue we would like to highlight relates to children who qualified for admission under the PLAC criterion at one of the normal points of entry, and then returned to live with their birth parent for the next normal admission point.

There has been much discussion among local authorities as to whether children who were 'ever-PLAC' should continue to be awarded priority under the PLAC criterion once they return to live with their birth family. While this is not a common occurrence, practice varies across local authorities. We would therefore welcome guidance on this issue to ensure a more consistent and fairer approach.

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:

As previously reported, most schools in Islington make sure that children and young people with SEND are made to feel welcome. However, a small proportion of schools remain resistant to the admission of children with SEND at the normal points of entry, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health needs or challenging behaviour.

Reasons provided by schools include financial pressures that prevent them from putting in place suitable support measures; the inexperience of staff in meeting these needs; and the impact of additional children with SEND on the school's ability to provide efficient education for all children, particularly in view of falling rolls across the LA.

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:

As for other vulnerable groups of children post-Covid, this year we experienced greater resistance than previously with the in-year admission of looked after children. Reasons given for this resistance include 'challenging' year groups and financial pressures or insufficient resources to meet the additional needs of looked after and previously looked after children.

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:

Ceased EHCPs

We would like to raise the issue of children returning from abroad who previously had an EHCP that was ceased at the point when they left the local authority area. The placement of such children through the in-year admissions process has proved a particular challenge this year, especially at secondary. Mainstream schools have been reluctant to admit in-year due to concerns about the impact of the admission on school resources and other pupils' learning.

It would be helpful if a 'fast-track' process could be introduced for pupils with ceased plans.

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	1	4
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	0	5
Total	1	9

- 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?

While primary admissions made under the Protocol are consistent with last year's figures, there has been an increase in the number of pupils admitted under the Protocol at secondary.

This year, we experienced an increase in the number of applications referred back to the local authority for consideration under Islington's Fair Access Protocol. For the most part, these applications were for children with social, emotional and mental health needs where schools felt their admission would prejudice the provision of efficient education and use of resources due to financial pressures, particularly for schools with falling rolls.

In total, 12 such applications were referred back to the LA for consideration under Islington's Fair Access Protocol. Of these, 7 were deemed ready to return to mainstream and allocated an Islington school, while 5 were not deemed suitable for admission to mainstream schooling and were directed to our secondary alternative provision. The remaining secondary admissions made under the Protocol were for 2 pupils being reintegrated to mainstream schooling from our secondary pupil referral unit.

- 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:

There has been an increase in the number of in-year appeals lodged by parents where admission to the preferred school has been refused on the grounds that their application has been referred back to the local authority for consideration under the Fair Access Protocol, or where parental preference was not met in allocating a school under the Protocol.

While we have introduced local timescales within which schools and admission authorities are expected to notify us of applications they wish to refer back for consideration under Islington's Fair Access Protocol, the support of mandatory timescales would be helpful in expediting such notifications.

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
0	n/a	n/a

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:

Children Missing Education

While Islington local authority does not coordinate in-year admissions, our online application process enables us to track applications and outcomes. In-year applications are automatically sent to the preferred school with a copy sent to the School Admissions team. This enables the LA to screen applications for eligibility for admission under the Fair Access Protocol, and to discharge our safeguarding duty to identify children missing education. This process has enabled us to secure a school place within 20 school days for 95% of children identified as missing education.

School to School transfers

For the academic year 2022/23, in-year applications were up 15% on the previous year. We believe that some of this is due to falling rolls and the high number of vacancies across the local area, enabling parents to move their children from one school to another through 'school-hopping'. Generally, 'school-hopping' takes place when a parent is trying to avoid being challenged by a school, e.g., where enforcement action is taken in relation to poor school attendance.

In assessing how well in-year admissions work for children who are not looked after or have SEND, in the scenario described above where a change of school is not because of a house move, a change of school may not be in a child's best interests. However, this is difficult to prevent given that: '*A parent can apply for a place for their child at any school, at any time.*' *School Admissions Code*, para 2.23.

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):

Strengthening safeguarding processes

While we have reliable information on our residents' school destinations through the coordination process at normal admission points, there is no standardised process for keeping this information updated with in-year admissions data. This is particularly important for children who have been admitted to a school in another local area and who have had a subsequent move in-year to another school outside the home local authority.

A standardised process requiring schools to inform *the local authority of where the child lives* that the pupil has changed school would be extremely helpful in ensuring children do not 'slip through the net', particularly for local authorities with high 'exports' of children to other local areas.

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?

- **Summer-born children**

We would welcome legislative changes to ensure that all admission authorities adopt the same approach to requests for delaying admission to reception class. We would be in favour of a process that makes it easier for parents to navigate – for example, a decision made by the home local authority that would be binding on all other admission authorities. This would remove the need for parents to make multiple applications to individual admission authorities, thereby streamlining the process and making it more transparent and fairer for them.

- **Children out of normal age group**

Similarly, once a decision has been made for a child to be taught out of normal age group, we believe the decision should be binding on all admission authorities for as long as the child remains with their adopted cohort, including at secondary transfer. It seems unfair and inequitable for some admission authorities to be able to refuse admission to Year 7 at secondary transfer because the child is out of normal age group.

Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2024.

The revised format and timescale for submitting the report is much appreciated, allowing full-year data to be included.

Thank you for completing this template.

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