



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**Islington 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

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 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:

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 increased this year, while the proportion of applicants not offered any of their preferred schools decreased. This positive outcome is in part due to smaller cohorts for both groups of applicants resulting from the falling birth rate across London.

For the second consecutive year, there were fewer admission appeals lodged for both primary and secondary transfer pupils. This aligns with the rise in preference satisfaction for both cohorts.

Reception was more challenging this year due to the timing of council decisions on two school closure proposals (one just before National Offer Day and one just after). This meant that alternative school places needed to be identified for applicants who were originally offered places at these schools, requiring careful and sensitive handling of parents' disappointment and follow-up questions.

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**:

As noted in our report last year, 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

- 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:

Schools report that the cumulative impact of year-on-year financial pressures, coupled with a significant rise in the number of children with complex SEND, have proven to be a real challenge in enabling them to provide efficient and inclusive education for all children. This has resulted in greater resistance during the statutory consultation process when seeking school's views on the admission of children with an EHCP.

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:

The needs of children applying for a school place in-year have also become more complex. Schools report that a larger proportion of primary children admitted in-year are developmentally delayed compared to pre-Covid cohorts.

Across both primary and secondary phases, schools report that the prevalence of disruptive behaviour is on the rise among pupils admitted in-year. This becomes even more challenging for schools to manage within the context of falling rolls and associated pupil funding.

The rising number of children who are electively home educated (EHE) has Presented additional challenges. In our experience many of these children become home educated because of difficulties at school (e.g. poor attendance) or a breakdown in the parent/school relationship. They tend to be home educated for a relatively brief period before wanting to return to the school system and applying for an in-year place at a new school. Along with our schools, we are concerned that this provides a route to 'school-hopping'. This not only leads to gaps in a child's education but is likely to impact on their ability to work through challenging situations and build personal resilience.

From a school's perspective, there is a reluctance to admit children who have been electively home educated for short periods as this is seen as an indicator of unresolved issues, usually associated with challenging behaviour, particularly at secondary level (e.g. parents choosing to home educate before their child is permanently excluded).

This year, primary in-year admissions were also affected by the two school closures mentioned above in Section A, resulting in a significant rise in the number of in-year applications for the children affected. Providing detailed advice and support for displaced families required considerable additional input from the local authority.

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:

Over the course of the year, we have become aware of schools being more resistant to the in-year admission of looked after children who may also have challenging behaviour. This is particularly pertinent for schools that are located close to new residential care provision for looked after children. The challenge to the maintaining local authority is that, in such cases, because looked after children are not eligible for admission under FAP, schools situated close to the residential provision may be required to take a disproportionate number of children with challenging behaviour, albeit that they are looked after.

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 in-year admission of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities has become increasingly challenging due to schools' reluctance to admit children who will require additional support because of concerns about resourcing such provision while an EHC assessment is in progress. For example, children who have significant additional needs and those who are non-verbal and/or require support with personal care.

Similarly, for children with EHCPs, we have noted increasing resistance from mainstream schools about the admission of children with complex needs. We have noted that it is becoming more difficult to secure the timely admission of children who move into the borough with an EHCP. This is a particularly acute challenge for families placed in temporary accommodation or fleeing domestic violence as they may move between different local authorities several times, experiencing repeated delays to accessing appropriate provision for their child.

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:

Not applicable.

- 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	7	2
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	0	6
Total	7	8

- ii. 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?

While secondary admissions made under Islington's Fair Access Protocol (FAP) are consistent with last year's figures, there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils admitted under our FAP at primary (7 admissions this year compared to 1 last year). Five of these admissions (70%) were made retrospectively following requests from schools for additional funding and recognition of a 'hard to place' admission as permitted under Islington's FAP.

Schools tell us that falling rolls mean that even small amounts of additional funding can make a difference to the support they are able to put in place for children with additional needs when they are admitted in-year (and therefore not planned for), particularly when the admission falls outside the October school census (i.e. funding period).

- 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:

N/A

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	N/A	N/A

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 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%
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 2023/2024 academic year

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

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

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:

For this group of children, schools are willing to admit quickly, and parents often end up with multiple offers if they have listed more than one preference.

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):

Strengthening safeguarding processes

As noted in our report last year, we would welcome the strengthening of safeguarding processes in relation to children educated outside the local authority where they live.

It would be helpful to clarify which local authority should be informed about new in-year admissions (e.g. both the *home* local authority and the *maintaining* local authority). This would prevent children from 'slipping through the net' at this key transition point and support the *home* local authority in discharging its duty to identify children resident in their area who are not receiving suitable education (436A of the Education Act 1996) so they can be swiftly found a new school or other education provision.

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?

We would like to highlight the same issues noted in our report last year.

Summer-born children

We would welcome a review of current guidance 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 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.

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 2025.

The updated template was provided in August while many officers were on annual leave. It would be helpful to have this by the start of July at the latest.

It would be useful to have regional responses published on the OSA website for LA benchmarking purposes.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2024