



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**Warrington 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

| | |
|--|----|
| Section 1 - Normal points of admission | 5 |
| A. Co-ordination..... | 5 |
| B. Looked after and previously looked after children | 5 |
| C. Special educational needs and/or disabilities | 6 |
| | |
| Section 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 | 9 |
| D. Fair access protocol | 9 |
| E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children..... | 11 |
| F. Other points on in-year admissions | 11 |
| | |
| Section 3 - Other matters..... | 13 |
| | |
| Section 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

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:

Co-ordination works well within Warrington.

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

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**:

We contact applicants who we are aware are LAC/former LAC, to request documents required to ensure they are placed within the priority category if this has not already been received.

We work closely with the virtual school regarding families in our area ensuring we receive an application for all of our children.

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:

For most pupils who have an education health and care plan that names a school at the normal point of entry there are no issues. They are generally served very well in line with preference.

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:

- PANs are only relevant to the normal point of entry and not for in-year admissions. So, this causes difficulties when schools decide to adjust their organisation in higher year groups. It is usual practice for the number of places in each year group to be the same as the PAN however we have some secondary schools that set their admission number significantly below their PAN for in-year admissions. This causes confusion as to whether they have places available and creates problems for future sufficiency planning. We have asked admission authorities to confirm their 'agreed admission number' for each year group in advance of the academic year and confirm that this will remain the same for the remainder of the academic year. It would better serve all children if schools were required in the code to have an admission number for each year group.
- The requirement under section 2.27 of the code can be difficult to meet when secondary schools lower their admission number lower than their PAN. The number of places offered sometimes changes mid-year without any notice.
- Warrington has seen a sustained increase in migration and the volume of in-year admissions received over the past few years, resulting in significant levels of oversubscription in many areas.
- There is considerable pressure to meet the demand for KS2 and KS3 places. Availability is very limited in some areas, following the high migration into the area over the past couple of years.
- The code stipulates response times for in-year admissions, however it is difficult to get timely responses on some occasions, particularly for 'complex' admission cases.
- We have experienced difficulties placing year 11 students in-year.

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:

The experience of the Admissions team is that all of our schools are supportive of the admission of looked after and formerly looked after children. Admission is promptly agreed through the normal admission route.

The Virtual School reports that in the 2023/24 academic year we saw increased difficulties in the following in-year admissions:

- Children in our care, with EHCPs or on-going EHCNAs, placed out of authority.
 - Whilst this is always a challenging situation, this last year has seen an increased number of children who have not been provided with a suitable school by the residing LA. Some LAs are very proactive but there is no capacity in the special school system. Other LAs' SEND teams appear to be at or beyond their capacity to cope with circulating EHC Plans to schools and carrying out searches. They can be almost impossible to contact. For those children with EHCNAs that are part way through assessment when they move, the transfer of the assessment process to the new residing authority can often mean the assessment is re-started, causing delay in the child's needs being met. This does not serve our children well.
- Children in the care of other local authorities placed in Warrington and previously looked after children
 - It is frequently the case that schools that are judged to be RI by Ofsted are not 'full'. When some of these schools are provided with an application for an in-year school place by an out of area child in care or a previously looked after child the school can occasionally require support in offering places. A strong and clear message from the DfE on the legal duty to prioritise admission of these children may be helpful.

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 process of admitting an EHC child in-year can be protracted, which we are working through with schools.

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 2023 and 31 July 2024?

| Type of school | Number of Primary aged children admitted | Number of Secondary aged children admitted |
|---|--|--|
| Community and voluntary controlled | 4 | 1 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 37 | 37 |
| Total | 41 | 38 |

- 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?

There has been no real change.

We anticipate that there will be more pupils referred to the FAP in the coming academic year due to the high levels of oversubscription in certain areas of the borough.

- 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:

Generally, schools agree to admit promptly when requested to do so through our fair access protocol. All schools in our area support the FAP.

There are two stages to our FAP. The first stage is administered by the admissions team. For the vast majority of FAP requests, admission is agreed promptly at the first stage.

There have been some requests which have progressed to the second stage of our FAP, which is a Headteacher panel. The panel is successful in placing children if the first stage fails.

There was one occasion within the academic year where the LA requested a direction to the Secretary of State for an Academy school to admit. The Secretary sought advice from the school's adjudicator, who was minded to direct. The Academy agreed to admit before they were directed to do so.

We provide termly data to schools regarding FAP admissions.

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 |

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

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

- 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%

- 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:

In-year coordination in our area works well. We co-ordinate in-year admissions for all schools in our area except one secondary school.

In-year admissions would better serve all children if it was made statutory for all.

- 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):

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 2025.

Thank you for completing this template.

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