

**Local Authority Report**

to

**The Schools Adjudicator**

from

**Medway Council**

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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**

1. 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.
2. 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 Release[[1]](#footnote-2) and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002[[2]](#footnote-3).
3. 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."
4. 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 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.
5. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
   1. “in-year admissions”: This means admissions (that is children admitted to a school and not applications for places):
6. 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
7. 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).
   1. Not applicable means 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.
10. 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](#Text69)

## 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:  Birth rates and capacity were relatively similar to 2022/23. We began to run out of places for Year 7 2022/23 by the time we approached the summer of 2023 due to a greater level of inward migration than expected. This had less of an impact on the main admissions round than it later had on in-year admissions. |

## Looked after and previously looked after children

1. 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 applicableHow 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

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

* + 1. 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 in care are given high priority for school places, second only to those with an EHCP, meaning they are almost always able to be offered a place at the preferred school. The exception is when a grammar school is named as first preference but the child was not assessed as suitable for grammar school through the Medway Test. |

## Special educational needs and/or disabilities

1. 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:  Many schools give priority in their admissions policy to children with a health/medical need for attending the school. Not all schools include health/medical/special access reasons within their admissions arrangements as it is not mandatory and is an admission authority decision.  Where there is a strong link between the needs of the child and a specific school named on the application and evidence is provided, the school will ascribe the health/medical criterion which gives the child a better chance of being offered a place at the school.  SEND is not a legitimate reason to refuse admission to children so we ensure children with SEND are treated fairly. However we have noticed an increase in concerns from primary schools, for Year R admission, around the severity and rate of SEND of incoming pupils. We have been disappointed to hear from a small number of parents this year that schools have potentially attempted to turn their children away or encourage the family to delay entry to Year R due to SEND. This has been addressed with the relevant schools. |

# 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:  Inward migration has continued to increase at a concerning rate. We were unable to predict this as most of the movement has arisen from unexpected circumstances (Operation Warm Welcome, the conflict in Ukraine and a significant recruitment campaign by for Medway Hospital).  Two years ago we had a healthy level of vacancies in the area but we now have very few. Despite introducing in-year bulge classes at the few schools that had capacity to do so, we no longer have enough places for those moving into the area.  Schools have regularly gone over their published admission number through fair access panels to accommodate new residents but we believe we are very close to saturation point.  We have received several queries from parents whose children currently attend an independent school but are considering a transfer to a state school due to the expected increase in fees from January 2025. We do not know how many families will need to do the same but are concerned about how that will impact capacity in state schools. |

## **B. Looked after children and previously looked after children**

1. 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

1. 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

1. 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

1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you wish, please give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which support or exemplify your answers about **in-year admissions** forlooked after and previously looked after children:   Many schools are clear on the guidance around children in care/previously in care and ensure there are no gaps in education. Those schools will make a prompt decision to accept pupils over PAN where necessary.  However some schools will try to refer to the fair access panel or refuse to offer a place. This is disappointing and resolving issues can be time consuming and cause the child to be out of education for a period of time. |

## **C. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

* + 1. 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

* + 1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| * + 1. 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:   There is a wider challenge with capacity for in-year admissions. That is not specific to children with SEND but any delay in being able to secure a school place will have more of an impact on those with SEND than most others. |

## 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: |

1. 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 | 64 | 0 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 393 | 223 |
| Total | 458 | 223 |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. 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 a significant increase in primary FAP referrals due to a lack of places in the area. |

1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Please provide any comments you wish on the protocol not covered above:   Panel meetings are organised so they are no more than 20 school days apart. Therefore those referred to the panel can be offered a school place in good time.  The panel are methodical in their decision making, trying to ensure that the needs of pupils are considered thoughtfully whilst being fair to each school in terms of the proportion of pupils allocated to them each year. |

## E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children[[3]](#footnote-4)

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

1. 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

1. 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%

1. 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%

|  |
| --- |
| 1. 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:   As with previous comments, the main difficulty we have is capacity. If we had enough places for those who move to the area in-year, the system works very well.  We are doing well to provide places over PAN where needed but that is not sustainable. |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. 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?

|  |
| --- |
| No other comments. |

# Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2025.

|  |
| --- |
| The template covers the main areas of admissions and should give the OSA a good overview of the situation in each LA. |

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](mailto:OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk) by 31 October 2024

1. [Department for Education Statistical First Release](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [The Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/1983/contents/made) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. It is important that only Directions to maintained schools are included here. Numbers of Directions to academies are already held by the Department. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)