



Office of  
the Schools  
Adjudicator

**Local Authority Report**

to

**The Schools Adjudicator**

from

**Knowsley Local Authority**

to be provided by

**30 June 2020**

**Report Cleared by: Name Aby Hardy**

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**Date submitted: 19 June 2020**

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**[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator)**

**Please email your completed report to: [osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk](mailto:osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk)  
by 30 June 2020 and earlier if possible**

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## Introduction and guidance on completing the report – Revised April 2020

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 for State for Education. The School Admissions Code (the Code) sets out the requirements for reports by local authorities in paragraph 6. Paragraph 3.23 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. This is a revised template issued in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. This template requests local authorities only for:
  - a) 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;
  - b) an assessment of the effectiveness of Fair Access Protocols and co-ordination in their area, including how many children were admitted to each school under them.
3. We would be grateful if local authorities would follow the approach used in statutory provisions and in the Department for Education Statistical First Release<sup>1</sup> and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002<sup>2</sup>.
4. Local authorities are, of course, free to comment on any other matters not specifically addressed in this template if they wish to do so under section 3. The views expressed by local authorities in previous years also remain a matter of public record.
5. The report **must** be returned to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by **30 June 2020**.

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<sup>1</sup> [Department for Education Statistical First Release](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Education Middle School \(England\) Regulations 2002](#)

## Information requested

### Section 1 - Normal point 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:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers were issued in accordance with national timeframes.</li> <li>• There are good working relationships between LA admission officers and own admission authority schools and any allocation queries/discrepancies are typically resolved expediently in accordance with national guidelines and local process.</li> <li>• There is only one junior school in the LA area that the authority co-ordinate the year 3 transition for which simplifies the process.</li> </ul>				

#### 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<sup>3</sup>

- 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<sup>3</sup>

- 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<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

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<sup>3</sup>

v. Priority in admission arrangements for 2021 for adopted children previously in care abroad. Please comment on the use of a priority in admission arrangements for a child adopted who was previously in care abroad if you wish.

- All schools in the borough who have included the addition of this priority within the admission arrangements have added it to the LAC priority category without exception (i.e. schools do not give any lower priority to children adopted from out of country than those adopted within the UK and faith schools have not differentiated between LAC pupils of the associated faith and those who are not.)
- Only one school in the borough (an Academy Church of England Primary school) has not elected to include 'a child adopted who was previously in care abroad' as priority within their admission arrangements.

vi. If you wish to please give any examples of good or poor practice or difficulties which exemplify your answers about the admission to schools of looked after and previously looked after children at the **normal points of admission**:

- Both the LA and all own admission authorities within the LA area prioritise looked after and previously looked after children within their policies and adhere to this.
- It is imperative that home LAs verify LAC and previous LAC status of home applicants before application data is shared inter-authority to ensure the correct processing of such applications. There have been occasional instances when status has not been verified by other LAs before preference requests are shared which delays processing and, on rare occasions, results in incorrect allocation.

### C. Special educational needs and disabilities

- i. Please provide any comments you wish to make on the admission of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the normal points of admission:
- Both the LA and all own admission authorities within the LA area prioritise placement of children with an EHCP within the published admission number of a named school above any other pupil expressing a preference, where they are known of at the point of allocation.
  - On rare occasions when an EHCP follows allocation, schools generally accommodate and will exceed PAN if necessary and manageable within health and safety risk assessment.
  - Children who have additional needs but do not have an EHCP are considered with all other applicants in a non-discriminatory process – the LA is confident that all schools can offer appropriate interventions and access to additional support mechanisms to individual pupils if necessary but, if parents/carers believe a particular school is more appropriate for their child and they do not obtain a place under the normal allocation process they can exert their right to appeal for a place and outline what they consider the exceptional circumstances to be.

## **Section 2 - In-year<sup>4</sup> admissions**

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<sup>4</sup> By in-year we mean admission at the start of any school year 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 admission during the course of any school year after the end of the statutory waiting list period (ie 31 December) in normal years of admission.

## A. Co-ordination of in-year admissions

Please provide any comments on the co-ordination of **in year admissions** if you wish.

- The LA co-ordinates the in-year transfer process for secondary schools. All applications are made via the LA who then liaises with schools to achieve an outcome response following an agreed procedures and timeframe. All secondary schools in the LA are own admission authority schools (either voluntary aided or academy). The provisions of the in-year process agreed between the LA and schools includes the monitoring of vacancy and on/off roll data and operating a waiting list.
- The LA does not fully co-ordinate in-year admission for primary schools in the area but receives weekly vacancy and on/off roll data from the majority of schools which enables some monitoring of admission practices. The LA inform and guide all schools in the borough regarding admissions legislation and provide an application processing framework including an appropriate application form. There is confidence that places are offered appropriately and the LA challenges schools and seeks appropriate resolution where there is a suggestion that appropriate admission processes are not being followed.
- Both primary and secondary schools can refer applications to FAP if they meet any of the prescribed categories or if school believe the child presents with challenging behaviour and they feel it would be inappropriate or unequitable to offer a place.

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

- i. How well does the **in-year admissions** 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<sup>5</sup>

- ii. How well do 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<sup>6</sup>

- iii. How well does your **in-year admissions** 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<sup>6</sup>

- iv. How well does your **in-year admissions** system serve the interests of previously looked after children?

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<sup>5</sup> 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

<sup>6</sup> 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

Not at all  Not well  Well  Very well  Not applicable<sup>6</sup>

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:

- Both looked after and previously looked after children are given priority admission to schools in-year and may be admitted above the admission number where a year group is full if deemed the most appropriate placement.
- Fully subscribed schools sometimes feel a pressure in accommodating LAC pupils over PAN for very genuine reasons of health and safety or concerns of the impact of overcrowding on pupils already on roll, but do not always feel comfortable in declining places to a vulnerable group of children. The LA encourages open conversations between the school requested and the family, social care and virtual school representatives to determine whether the placement is the most suitable in the circumstance.
- Communication is vital to ensuring expedient and appropriate placement. Applications are sometimes received with little additional information but a good network of 'virtual headteachers' helps to support the process across authority boundaries. There is an appreciation that expediency is required in the placement of LAC pupils but the LA has agreed with schools that this should not be to the detriment of ensuring the most appropriate placement through relevant conversations and information gathering prior to admission.

### 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  Not well  Well  Very well  Not applicable<sup>6</sup>

- 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  Not well  Well  Very well  Don't know

- iii. Please give examples of 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:

- SEND legislation assists with the placing of children who have an EHCP.
- At times, schools can be more reluctant to admit children who are not in ownership of an EHCP. This is typically due to a concern for added pressure on school resources and is more apparent if the admission is a transfer from another school in the locality (within or outside the LA area) as it can be considered transferring a neglected responsibility.
- In identified cases where in-year admission is requested for a child for whom it appears an EHCP should have been sought, the LA may make a referral to FAP

for consideration and request the view of a SEND professional in any decision making. Admission following such referral would be noted in placement records as that of a vulnerable pupil to enable equitable distribution if future cases occur. This prevents inappropriate pressure on any individual school of admitting a disproportionate number of pupils requiring additional resources.

iv. If you wish please provide any comments about **in-year admissions** in respect of other children:

- All in-year applications should be considered within the LA in-year framework to ensure consistency and equity. There is a typical process period of twenty school days to ensure full exploration of applications and ensure for planned admission. Where the LA does not fully co-ordinate in-year admissions, it publishes information via the Council website regarding the process parents/carers should expect thus allowing for parents/carers to raise query if they feel the relevant procedures are not being followed.
- The Fair Access Protocol operated allows for resolution for unplaced pupils and equitable distribution of vulnerable pupils as expediently as possible.

#### D. Fair access protocol

i. Has your fair access protocol been agreed<sup>7</sup> 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:

iii. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020?

Type of school	Number of children admitted	
	Primary aged children	Secondary aged children
Community and voluntary controlled	3	-
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	-	43
Total	3	43

<sup>7</sup> An existing protocol remains binding on all schools up until the point at which a new one is adopted.

iv. How well do you consider hard to place children are served by the fair access protocol in your area?

Not at all    Not well    Well    Very well    Not applicable<sup>8</sup>

v. Please make any relevant comment on the protocol not covered above if you wish.

- Knowsley is an authority with high deprivation levels and pupil mobility is also considerable. Schools, particularly in the secondary sector, admit a high proportion of children with challenging behaviour and/or complex social and emotional needs without restriction at the normal point of admission.
- As a small authority it can at times be difficult to ensure equal distribution of placements. Placement on a rotational basis employed by some local authorities would not be practical within this LA due to geographical restraints. However, a smaller number of schools means there is a close working relationship between fair access panel members with representation from all schools in the secondary sector, which allows for open discussion regarding the placement of children.
- On occasion, the Fair Access Panel conclude that mainstream placement may not be appropriate and may re-direct to alternative provision or short-term assessment at the pupil referral unit.

**E.** Any other comments on the admission of children **in-year** not previously raised if you wish.

- Whilst there has been no requirement to direct any school this year, there has been increased opposition from own authority schools if they are dissatisfied with a proposed placement. Such cases are minimal and typically resolved through mediation, but this can delay the placement process.

### **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?

N/A

### **Section 4 - Feedback**

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2021.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Not applicable' would mean that there were no hard to place children for which the protocol was required.

The report template is easy to follow, allows for consistent, easy to gather data across all LAs and enables the LA to provide supporting comment which may help to interpret data and inconsistencies or anomalies.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to Lisa Short at [OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk](mailto:OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk) by 30 June 2020