



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**Knowsley Local Authority
to be provided by
31 October 2025**

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**Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by
31 October 2025 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 2024/2025 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2025.**
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 24/25 compared to 23/24?**

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:

- The Local Authority, own admission authority schools within the local authority area and neighbouring Local Authorities maintain good relationships which helps to ensure effective co-ordination during the bulk allocation process for normal point of entry.
- The locally agreed co-ordinated scheme was adhered to by all schools within the local authority area and timeframes were followed to achieve national deadlines in both the primary and secondary sector.

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**:

- Without exception, the Local Authority and all own admission authorities within the authority area, gave first priority in their 2024/25 admission arrangements to children looked after and previously looked after children, including those previously in state care outside of England. Faith schools within the Local Authority area did not differentiate between looked after and previously looked after children who are and are not considered to be of the faith affiliation of the school - this maximises opportunity for looked after children to secure placements that are of preference and considered most appropriate.
- Where applications for looked after and previously looked after children for the normal point of admission are received late, individual admission authorities are requested to consider accommodating as an exception, and typically do so, unless it is evidenced that admission would result in significant prejudice to education delivery and resources.
- On occasion it can be difficult to obtain evidence of PLAC status (or the prescribed requirement to meet this priority status can be misunderstood by some applicants). To ensure the correct and efficient processing of such applications, within the relevant timeframes, and to avoid incorrect allocation outcomes, it is imperative that the home local authority verifies the looked after and previous looked after children status of any applicant before application data is shared inter-authority.

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:

- Where known about at the point of initial allocation, the Local Authority and all own admission authorities of mainstream schools within the Local Authority area prioritise the placement of a child with an EHCP that names the school as provision within the published admission number (PAN) in advance of any other applicant expressing a preference. The timeframes of the year 6 review process lends itself to supporting this.
- If an EHCP is confirmed after national offer day and names a mainstream school as the provision, schools seek to accommodate and will exceed PAN as a permitted exception if necessary, and if 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 – schools make reasonable adjustments, offer appropriate interventions, and have access to additional support mechanisms for individual pupils if necessary.
- For a child without an EHCP, whose parent/carer believes that, for reasons of SEND, a particular mainstream school is most appropriate for their child, but they do not obtain a place under the normal allocation process, they can exert their right to independent appeal and outline what they consider the exceptional circumstances to be.
- A robust communication process between Local Authority SEND and School Admissions Services is essential to meet the best interests of both the child and the school in a situation where oversubscription may arise.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 24/25 compared to 23/24?

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:

N/A

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:

- There is an expectation that, where a vacancy exists, all Knowsley schools would admit a looked after or previously looked after child in-year as expediently as possible.
- Where the admission of a P/LAC would result in the typical admission limit being exceeded, admission authorities would be requested to consider an application and make exception where permissible.
- Only on rare occasion, where it is considered by the admission authority that to offer a place to a P/LAC beyond the usual admission capacity would create prejudice that equates to a health and safety or safeguarding risk, would a place be refused.
- Open conversations between schools, the family, social care and virtual school help to ensure expedient and appropriate placement. A good network of 'virtual headteachers' supports the process across authority boundaries to reduce the need for direction by the local authority in these circumstances.

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:

- Schools are required to adhere to SEND legislation which ensures that, following appropriate consultation, children are admitted to the school named in the EHCP as expediently as possible. Such admissions can be beyond the typical admission limit as a permitted exception.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not have an EHCP are treated with equity in the in-year admission process. There is a presumption that the needs of the individual child can be met in any mainstream school by making reasonable adjustments, offering appropriate interventions, and through access to additional support mechanisms for those children if necessary.
- The same consideration process and outcomes apply to all children, irrespective of which Local Authority they reside in.
- Where in-year admission has been requested, but a place has not been secured, for an unplaced child for whom it is identified that an EHCP should have previously been sought, or where there is disability or medical condition, the Fair Access Protocol can be initiated to identify a placement that reflects equitable distribution. In the event of this action, the view of a SEND professional is sought to assist any decision making.

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:

N/A

- How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	2	5
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	0	25
Total	2	30

ii. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

- There has been an overall increase of 5 in the number of placements via the protocol in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24, which equates to a rise of 18.5%.
- The increase was more significant in the secondary sector (11 placements equating to 57.9%). It is noted that this figure largely correlated with the increase in the number of children returning from home education who were referred to the protocol for placement – 13 in 2024/25 compared to 3 in 2023/24.
- In the primary sector the decrease of 6 placements (75%) reflects that pressure on subscription levels in an isolated year group in a particular locality during 2023/24 eased somewhat during 2024/25.

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:

- Knowsley is a small borough council with distinct locality areas. There are only six secondary mainstream providers across the borough therefore, achieving equitable distribution of children placed via the protocol, whilst also seeking to ensure a reasonable placement in the considered interests of the individual can, on occasion, create some difficult decisions. Representation from each secondary provider at panel creates a beneficial collaboration that is effective in achieving transparent outcomes.
- Placements made in the primary sector are minimal and most child are accommodated via the normal in-year process. However, there is also consistent primary school representation at fair access panel meetings which provides assurance that any placements that are made are with adherence to the protocol.

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children³

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025 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 2024 and 31 July 2025 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 2024/2025 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 2024/2025 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:

The Local Authority maintains effective working relationships with all schools, including those for which it does not co-ordinate in-year admissions to ensure the requirements of the admission code are met and provide support to parents so they can make informed decisions when making an in-year application.

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):

The Local Authority recognises that in-year applications are requested for many reasons and can often include complex circumstances that present different challenge but every effort is taken to ensure reasonable placement for every child.

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 2026.

The template is clear and user friendly and the information requested is consistent.

Thank you for completing this template.

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