



Office of  
the Schools  
Adjudicator

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

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

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**Date submitted: 13<sup>th</sup> November 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 Release<sup>1</sup> and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002<sup>2</sup>.
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

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

<sup>2</sup> [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					

Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

#### 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**:

- Grace period of one month for normal point of entry application deadlines allows the Virtual School Team (VS) to ensure applications are submitted for all our Children Looked After (CLA) – this acts as a supportive safety net for any new CLA / changes of home placement etc.
- School Organisation Team are proactive in understanding who is in the CLA cohort and give the VS regular feedback on applications lodged.
- School Organisation colleagues are always responsive and provide practical advice and guidance – strong working relationship between VS and Team Manager.
- School Organisation colleagues are supportive of VS policies regarding admissions for CLA – clear protocols are in place to alert VS to any anomalies on application forms.
- When children require changes of preference really late in the allocation process, School Organisation colleagues support the VS well in considering options.

### 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 children with EHC Plans, their Plan is reviewed as part of the Council's Phased Transfer Process. EHC Plan Coordinators endeavour to attend all annual reviews for children subject to a Phased Transfer to ascertain a parents' preference of school(s), discuss transition plans and explain the process of applying for a school(s). Settings are asked to liaise with SENCo's from receiving primary and high schools and invite them to attend the Annual Review to discuss their support offer.

Once the EHC Plan has been amended, parents/carers are asked to name the school(s) they would like to be named in Section I of their child's EHC Plan in line with Regulation 2 of the Special Educational needs and Disability Regulations and the timescales outlined in Regulation 18.

All education establishments are consulted with as set out in Section 39(2) and a copy of amended EHC Plan issued to them for the basis of their decision making. All establishments are given 15 days to respond. All establishments are expected to provide a view around the suitability and compatibility of the school for the child and whether they can secure the specialist educational provision outlined in the child's EHC Plan.

The final decision on the most suitable placement is considered by the Council's multi-agency decision-making panel which is made up of representatives from education, health and care. The panel considers the responses to the consultation and views of the parents/young person into account, and decisions are made as to the allocation of mainstream and special school places are based on this in line with Section 39 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

A final amended EHC plan, with notice of appeal rights, is issued by the statutory deadlines in regulation 18 of The SEND Regulations 2014:

- a. **31 March** if the transfer is from secondary school to a post-16 institution
- b. **15 February** in any other case, or
- c. If a young person is moving from one post-16 institution to another post-16 institution at any other time, **at least five months before that transfer takes place.**

The SEND Team liaises with the admissions team, to provide details of children who have been allocated placements as part of the Phased Transfer Process.

Wigan Council has seen an increase in requests for special school places throughout the school year following on from the Annual Review of children and young people's EHC Plans. In these cases, the three legal tests are applied as follows:

### **1. Suitability Test**

**Is the school suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and special educational needs (SEN)?**

- The school must be appropriate for the child's developmental stage and learning profile.
- It must be able to meet the child's specific SEN, including any required specialist provision.
- For example, a school may be deemed unsuitable if the school lacks the appropriate specialism or resources for the child's specific SEND (e.g., a school for severe learning difficulties may not be suitable for a child with high-functioning autism).

### **2. Incompatibility with the Efficient Education of Others**

**Would the child's attendance at the school negatively impact the education of other pupils?**

- This test is particularly relevant in mainstream settings.

- If admitting the child would significantly disrupt the education of other pupils, the school may be considered unsuitable. This is when a child's needs are complex and may require intensive support that affects the wider classroom environment, and there is no action that the Council can take to mitigate this. However, this must be evidenced and cannot be based on assumptions, general capacity concerns, or the number of SEND children a school currently supports.

### **3. Incompatibility with the Efficient Use of Resources**

#### **Would placing the child at the requested school be an inefficient use of public resources?**

- This considers the cost of the placement relative to alternatives that could meet the child's needs.
- For example, if a requested independent school is significantly more expensive than a suitable maintained school, the Council may refuse the placement on this basis.
- However, cost alone is not sufficient—there must be a suitable alternative available.



## **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?**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Much less challenging</b>	<b>Less challenging</b>	<b>No change</b>	<b>More challenging</b>	<b>Much more challenging</b>
Primary			X		
Secondary			X		

If you wish, please explain the factors that have changed the level of challenge for your in-year admissions:

## **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 School Organisation Team within Wigan Council support the Virtual School with mid-year admissions and to work with schools to accept CLA when at PAN, without moving to direction.
- The School Organisation Team are responsive to any enquiries around current class numbers / schools in the area of new homes for CLA / alerting VS to any mid year admission requests to ensure scrutiny has taken place of any school moves, as per VS processes.

### 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:

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in Wigan who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are generally well served when seeking in-year school admissions, particularly due to the borough's relatively high proportion of special school places.

#### 1. EHCP-Driven Admissions Process

Children with an EHCP do not follow the standard school admissions route. Instead, parents or carers are asked to name their preferred school to be named in the EHCP. Wigan Council then consults with that school to ensure it can meet the child's needs. This legal process ensures that the school named in the EHCP is suitable and equipped to deliver the required special educational provision.

#### 2. Availability of Special School Places

While most children with SEND attend mainstream schools, Wigan has a higher-than-average proportion of special school places. This means that when a child's needs are best met in a specialist setting, there is a greater likelihood of finding a suitable placement within the borough. Parents can request a maintained special school, academy, non-maintained special school, or Section 41 school to be named in the EHCP.

### 3. In-Year Admissions

For in-year admissions, the EHCP must be amended to reflect the new school placement. Wigan Council follows statutory guidance to ensure that transitions are managed appropriately. Consultations with the proposed school ensures that the placement is not incompatible with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources.

### 4. Support and Guidance

Parents are encouraged to visit schools, review their SEN Information Reports, and consider factors such as facilities, ethos, and accessibility. Wigan SENDIASS and other services provide support throughout the process.

## 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 2024 and 31 July 2025?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	18	4
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	64	25
Total	82	29

- 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?

The number of children admitted through the Fair Access Protocol has reduced from the previous year. This is in part due to an increase in applicants securing a place through the normal in-year process by working closely with schools. This eliminates the need to rely on the protocol for children who would have otherwise qualified.

Another factor contributing to the decrease in admissions through the protocol is an amendment to our definition of reasonable travelling distance from home to school. Our definition is taken from the statutory guidance 'Travel to school for children of compulsory school age'.

- 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:

In collaboration with Headteachers from a variety of schools representing different sectors we have agreed a protocol to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

We continue to work with Headteachers to ensure that places are identified quickly and that those pupils / schools receive the appropriate reintegration support when admitting children who have been permanently excluded via the Protocol.

## E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children<sup>3</sup>

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% ☒

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<sup>3</sup> 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:

In-year coordination would better serve all children if it was made a statutory function of the Local Authority.

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?

As raised previously, local authorities (LA) have a duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient schools are available for their area to provide primary and secondary education.

Due to falling birth rates and subsequently falling school rolls, Wigan LA has been working in partnership with its primary schools to remove surplus capacity through the reduction of PANs at the point of entry. For the most part, schools have understood the need for this action and have worked collaboratively with the LA.

Surplus places across some planning areas are having a negative impact on some schools. As pupil funding is directly linked to the number of children on roll, this puts schools under financial pressure if they have unfilled places.

In order to fulfil its sufficiency obligation, the LA requires that schools engage with the strategy for their planning area. Our strategy for sufficiency across Wigan was devised to reduce surplus places so that all schools in a planning area can achieve a financially viable intake, not just those which are most popular.

Were schools do not engage with the LA's sufficiency strategy, more powers are needed to object to or challenge a school's PAN when the admission authority refuses to reduce their PAN or increases it.

A recent example of this was Wigan LA's objection to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) regarding the determined admission number of St Philip's CE Primary, Atherton and Ince CE Primary. The LA had raised its concerns regarding surplus places in the planning areas for both schools and asked the admission authorities to reduce their PANs. Neither admission authority would support the LA's request, and their PANs remained the same. OSA responded to state it cannot consider an objection regarding an admission number that has not been changed or has been increased. Consequently, these schools or less popular schools in the planning areas may not achieve viable rolls.

This leaves LA's with a statutory responsibility to ensure sufficiency in their area, but no right to challenge admission authorities that will not support a reduction in PAN.

## **Section 4 - Feedback**

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2026.

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Thank you for completing this template.

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