



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**Wigan Local Authority
to be provided by
31 October 2023**

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**Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by
31 October 2023 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 her 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 2022/2023 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2023.**
3. Please note that, in response to feedback on the draft template, changes have been made to section 2C of this template.
4. Please also note that the OSA and Department for Education are planning a small project to ensure that the report is as useful as possible to local authorities, the OSA, DfE and others. As a result of this, there are likely to be changes made to the template for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Guidance on completing the template

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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. at the start of any school year to a year group 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

¹ [Department for Education Statistical First Release](#)

² [The Education Middle School \(England\) Regulations 2002](#)

- 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 at questions:
 - i. Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
 - ii. Section 2: Ai - iv that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
 - iii. Section 2: B.i. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
 - iv. Section 2: C.v. 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.

Information requested

Section 1 - Normal points 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				

ii. Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

Coordination works well within Wigan. This is in part due to our close working relationships with schools and neighbouring local authorities.

B. Looked after and previously looked after children

i. How 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 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 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 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 on main intake application deadlines allows us to ensure applications placed for all our CLA – this is a really supportive safety net for any new CLA / changes of home placement etc.
- School Organisation colleagues always responsive and provide practical advice and guidance – strong working relationship between Virtual School and Team Manager.
- School Organisation colleagues supportive of our policies regarding admissions for CLA – clear protocols in place to alert VS to any anomalies on application forms.

C. Special educational needs and/or disabilities

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:

Nursery 2 (N2) – Reception Transitions

For any children with identified Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) who are currently in N2 and who are due to transition to primary school the following September, all parents are advised that they will need to complete a mainstream application outlining their preference of primary school(s), in line with the Local Authorities (LA) normal admissions protocols and procedures.

Children whose parents express a preference for specialist provision upon transition to primary school, are asked to directly notify the LA of this, so that arrangements can be made for this request to be discussed at the LA's Specialist Placement Panel, which takes place on an annual basis (for main intake allocations) and usually occurs during the Spring Term prior to transition.

The specialist placement panel is made up of representatives from across education, health and care, including specialist headteachers from the LA's maintained specialist provisions. Relevant paperwork and reports are sent to panel members in advance, and cases are presented by professionals to the wider group.

The specialist headteachers will provide a view around the suitability of their provision, and the group will contribute any further views based on direct experience of support the child or based on the information submitted as part of the paperwork considered prior to panel.

The LA takes all of the information and views shared into account, and decisions are made as to the allocation of special school places based on this. For those children who are not allocated special school placements as a result, the LA will then give further consideration as to the appropriateness of EHC Needs Assessment, and the allocation of any top up funding which may need to be

allocated to support the child's transition to mainstream primary school. All parents, nursery settings and receiving schools will receive notification of the LA's decision around the time of national school offers day.

Similarly, the LA hosts a number of Early Years Additional Resource (EYAR) panel meetings throughout the Spring and Summer Term prior to transition, to consider any requests for additional funding, whereby SEND has been identified and the parent's preference is for them to attend a mainstream school.

Following this, the LA's Early Learning Childcare Team (ELCC) will arrange transition meetings with respective schools where SEND Learners are to be placed, to discuss the needs of these learners and any support arrangements which will need to be in place as a result. This will involve discussion around any targeted support, strategies or interventions which will need to be implemented in line with the 'Graduated Approach' (assess, plan, do, review).

The School Admissions Team will also share information with the SEND and ELCC Team Post National School Offer Day (16th April) to confirm which mainstream settings any SEND learners have been offered. In return, the SEND Team liaises with the admissions team, to provide details of children who have been allocated special school placements.

Year 6 – Year 7 - Transitions

For any children with identified SEND (including those with EHC Plan's) who are currently in Year 6 and are due to transition into Year 7 in the following September, all parents are advised that they will need to complete a mainstream application outlining their preference of secondary school(s) in line with the Local Authorities (LA) normal admissions protocols and procedures.

EHC Plan Coordinators will endeavour to attend all annual reviews for children in Year 6 who are in receipt of EHC Plan's, in order to ascertain parents' preference of high school, and to discuss transition plans and explain the process of applying for high schools. Wherever possible, primary settings are asked to liaise with SENCO's from receiving high schools and invite them to attend the Annual Review to discuss their support offer.

Following completion of the Annual Review and upon receipt of documentation following this, EHC Plan Coordinators will make arrangements to amend existing EHC Plan's. Once an amended Draft EHC Plan is ready to issue, a copy will be sent to parents in order for them to make any representations before finalising. The preferred high school setting will also be consulted with at this point, and they are expected to provide a response outlining whether a place can be offered for September within 15 days. In the event that a setting do not believe that they can meet the child's needs, they are required to outline the reasons in writing, and the response must be compliant with the SEND Code of Practice. The LA will liaise with the setting and parents as necessary.

For any learners who are being supported at an SEN Support Level (pre-EHC Plan), settings are advised to liaise with the receiving high school to clarify and confirm transition arrangements once a place has been offered following national

school offer day. The schools may also complete a 'transition passport' which will outline the child's strengths, needs and support requirements to aid this.

Where a child's parent expresses a preference for specialist provision ahead of their transition to high school, they are informed that this must be submitted in writing to the SEND Team, prior to the general secondary admissions application deadline date. The LA will then make arrangements to consult with the parents preferred specialist setting to determine suitability ahead of further meetings and/or panels to make a formal decision around the offer of a placement. The parent and school will be made aware of the LA's decision within the same timescales as National School Offer day in most instances.

The School Admissions Team will also share information with the SEND Team Post National School Offer Day to confirm which mainstream settings any SEND learners have been offered. In return, the SEND Team liaises with the admissions team, to provide details of children who have been allocated special school placements.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Looked after children and previously looked after children

- i. How 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 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 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 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 Virtual School (VS) have found that some challenges out of authority have been around suitable SEND provision – this has increased as demand appears to exceed capacity in a number of boroughs.
- 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.

B. 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:

For children and young people who are in receipt of an EHC Plan, whose parents request a change of school which would be classed as in year, the LA would generally advise that when a change of provision is being considered, discussions take place in line with the Annual Review process. The current school in which they child attends, or parent, can request that the Annual Review is brought forward, whereby the request for a change in placement is linked to the child's special educational needs. It is possible that a request for an in-year admission could be made for non-SEN related reasons, which include moving between addresses within the borough, or moving into the borough from another LA area.

The process for considering/managing in year admissions for children with EHC Plan's is usually led by the SEND Team (i.e. the SEND Team would formally consult with the parents setting of preference to determine suitability and availability of placement). Any setting consulted with is expected to respond within 15 days, and should a place not be offered, they are required to outline these reasons in writing, and they must be compliant with the SEND Code of Practice.

Where a child with an EHC Plan moves into the LA area, and once the previous LA has made arrangements to transfer any information held RE: the child (including copies of their EHC Plan and any assessments and reports), the LA will liaise with the parent to ascertain their preference of setting, and follow the process as outlined above. Where additional funding has been allocated by the previous LA, the SEND Team will align this with our most fitting level of top-up funding and notify the receiving setting of the funds which will be released once arrangements have been made to place the child on roll. In addition, once on roll, the SEND Team will make arrangements to amend the child or young person's EHC Plan to name the new setting.

Where a direct application is made via the normal school admissions route, and a parent has indicated the child or young person has SEND or an EHC Plan, the school admissions team will liaise with the SEND Team to confirm whether this is the case. If a child has an EHC Plan, SENDS will lead on this process and the parent will be notified of who their key point of contact will be. If the child does not have an EHC Plan, the normal admissions process/route will apply.

Where a in-year admissions request is made for a special school placement, parents and current school will be advised that they will need to hold an annual

review (if not already taken place). A SEND representative will attend the review to discuss the request, and offer further support, advice and guidance. If it is felt that following the Annual Review that specialist provision may be appropriate, the EHC Plan Coordinator will discuss the request with SEND Managers, who will advise whether consultations with specialist settings should be initiated. Maintained specialist settings will be considered in the first instance, where appropriate, and arrangements will be made to consult with one or more special schools to determine suitability and availability of a placement. Once a place has been agreed and arrangements have been made to put a child or young person on roll, the EHC Plan will be amended to name the new setting.

Challenges experienced in some cases mid-year are -

- Mid-year admission requests for learners in receipt of EHC Plans can be met with mainstream schools stating that they are unable to meet need.
- In some instances, responses to consultations initiated by the LA via the EHC Plan process are not considered to be compliant with the SEND Code of Practice and would place the LA at risk of being in breach of its statutory duty as the admissions body.
- Schools / settings will report budgetary restraints and high proportions of existing SEN / EHCP learners as reasons for refusal to admit.
- The LA is more often having to challenge schools / settings in respect of responses provided, and in some instances, are having to name settings in EHCP's and direct schools to admit.
- As a result of the above challenges, some mid-year admission requests are taking too long to resolve and schools are not always compliant with providing a response to consultations in the 15-day time period set out in the Children & Families Act (2014).

c. Fair access protocol

- i. Do you have a fair access protocol agreed 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 August 2022 and 31 July 2023?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	39	6
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	80	58
Total	119	64

- iv. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

We have seen an increase in the use of the fair access protocol compared to the previous year. This mainly due to pockets of the borough that have seen high growth due to house building.

- v. 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

- vi. 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.

D. Directions

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 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

E. 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 2022 and 31 July 2023 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 schools in your area did the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions during the 2022/2023 academic year

- ☐ None
☐ All
☐ Some but less than or equal to half
☒ More than half but less than all

- iii. 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 statutory.

iv. 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 2024.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2023