



Office of  
the Schools  
Adjudicator

**Local Authority Report**

to

**The Schools Adjudicator**

from

**Wigan Local Authority**

to be provided by

**30 June 2021**

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**Date submitted: 30 June 2021**

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**Please email your completed report to: [osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk](mailto:osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk)  
by 30 June 2021 and earlier if possible**

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## Introduction and guidance on completing the report

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.

2. This template requests the same information as that set out in the revised template we sent on 15 April 2020:

- a) information about how admission arrangements in 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 should 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. In the template last year we did not ask about the determination of admission arrangements because of continued constraints on local authorities. Again, we have not asked for that information this year, but we intend to return to this area in future years given the importance of determination and checking compliance of all admission authorities. It is a key role for the local authority's leadership to encourage schools to determine arrangements in line with the provisions in the Code.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. The report **must** be returned to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by **30 June 2021**.

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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				

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.

The Covid-19 pandemic created some logistical challenges, but we were able to overcome these by working with our schools and partners to make offers on National Offer Day for both main admissions rounds.

#### 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**?

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

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 2022 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:

Wigan Council has given priority to children in this category in the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. These arrangements have been in place since the 2020-21 cohorts, however, no applicants have applied for priority under this category.

We have also encouraged schools which are their own admission authority to adopt this priority.

vi. If you wish, please give any 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**:

Admission arrangements for the majority of Wigan's schools allow for applications for looked after children to be received up to one month after the closing date. This allows us to ensure that applications are submitted for all of our looked after children.

The School Organisation Team work closely with the Virtual School to support our vulnerable children into appropriate provision.

**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 Schools Admissions Team will also share information with the SEND and ELCC Team Post National School Offer Day (16<sup>th</sup> 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 Schools 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<sup>4</sup> admissions**

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

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

Wigan Council offers a buy back service for in year admissions. Most of our schools commission this service. As there is no statutory basis for co-ordinating in-year transfers this means there is not a consistent approach to how parents apply or receive the outcome of their application. Therefore, the LA must deploy additional resources to ensure pupil tracking to identify pupils who are CME or potentially CME.

The revised School Admissions Code 2021 has helped to address this.

### **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<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>5</sup>

- iii. How well does your **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<sup>5</sup>

- 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<sup>5</sup>

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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 (31 December) in normal years of admission.

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

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:

Any request for an in-year move for a CLA is immediately reviewed. If this has not been discussed with the VST this will be picked up and we will review why a move is necessary with all parties including social worker and school. Where possible we will work to maintain the current school place. Where this is not possible and a move is agreed as part of a PEP the move should be planned and supported.

The issue here isn't always around CLA but often CLA who have displayed challenging behaviour or complex SEND. Our schools work well with our VST to ensure that the appropriate support is in place and that additional funding is provided alongside assessments where appropriate. Our Virtual School Head will support with the conversations with school leaders where appropriate.

### 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>5</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 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.

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

#### D. Fair access protocol

- i. Has your fair access protocol been agreed<sup>6</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 2020 and 31 March 2021?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	19	8
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	48	38
Total	67	46

- 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>7</sup>

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

We are reviewing and updating our Fair Access Protocol. We are working in collaboration with Headteachers from a variety of schools representing different sectors to ensure the equal share of vulnerable children. We continue to work with Headteachers to ensure that places are identified quickly and that those pupils / schools receive the appropriate support when admitting children via the Protocol.

E. If you wish, any other comments on the admission of children **in-year** not previously raised:

<sup>6</sup> An existing protocol remains binding on all schools up until the point at which a new one is adopted.

<sup>7</sup> 'Not applicable' would mean that there were no hard to place children for which the protocol was required.

### **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 2022.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk](mailto:OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk) by 30 June 2021