Local Authority Report
to
The Schools Adjudicator
from
City of Bristol Local Authority
to be provided by
30 June 2021

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www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator

Please email your completed report to: 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\(^1\) and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002\(^2\).

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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1 Department for Education Statistical First Release
2 The Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002
Information requested

Section 1 - Normal point of admission

A. Co-ordination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i. How well did co-ordination of the main admissions round work?</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>A large number of small problems or a major problem</th>
<th>Well with few small problems</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relevant years of entry</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ii. 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?

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3 ‘Not applicable’ will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.
1. 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:

We welcome this change and await non-statutory guidance from the DfE to support the practical implementation of the policy.

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:

There is a designated Admission Officer as the point of contact for children in care, working closely with colleagues in The Hope Virtual School. This relationship fosters good communication between services to ensure that Social Workers and Foster Carers are aware of deadlines to maximise the number of applications made by the closing date. Queries are answered quickly and appropriate action taken following a change of circumstances.

In other local authorities this approach varies with colleagues supporting children in care commenting that sometimes they are unable to speak to one contact in School Admissions Teams, resulting in multiple conversations with professionals. Other local authorities have adopted a similar model to that used in Bristol, which helps to build relationships with colleagues supporting young people.

Usually, children in care are offered a school place at the preferred school. For secondary admissions for September 2021, two appeals have been lodged on behalf of children who did not qualify for a place under the admission authority’s published admissions arrangements.

C. Special educational needs and/or disabilities
Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Co-ordination of in-year admissions

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

Co-ordination works well for schools where the local authority is the admissions authority and where own admission authority schools have commissioned the local authority to process in-year admissions on their behalf. The Bristol standard for in-year admissions mirrors many of the key features around in-year admissions proposed in the draft School Admissions Code due to come into force in September this year.

More widely, we would advocate for the statutory reintroduction of co-ordinated in-year admissions within the local authority area to make the process as straightforward as possible for parents and avoid the need to make multiple applications to schools.

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

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4 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.

5 ‘Not applicable’ will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.
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

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

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:

In-year admissions that have been processed by School Admissions are dealt with swiftly and well-co-ordinated. Admissions dealt with by individual schools have sometimes resulted in drift and delay in terms of notifying the outcome of the application requiring follow up. This was especially the case during the pandemic when many admin staff in school were not readily available to liaise with.

Sufficiency of secondary school places in some year groups across the city has led to pressure being placed on some schools to go over their planned admission number or numbers on roll to admit children in care and children previously in care.

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

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:

Due to pressures on places, in-year admissions to schools for children with EHCPs has been difficult, some children are waiting until the next academic year to start a school and have ALP in the meantime.

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

The local authority welcomes the proposed changes to the School Admissions Code relating to in-year school admissions, making the process more transparent for parents, giving clear timescales and information about the admissions process. However, we would welcome the statutory re-introduction of co-ordination of in-year school admissions to make the process clearer for parents and negate the need for some families to complete multiple applications for a school place.

D. Fair access protocol-

i. Has your fair access protocol been agreed\(^6\) 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Number of Primary aged children admitted</th>
<th>Number of Secondary aged children admitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community and voluntary controlled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation, voluntary aided and academies</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^6\) 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

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

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

A Citywide lack of secondary school places in Bristol has increased the number of children seeking school places via Fair Access.

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 2022.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk by 30 June 2021

7 ‘Not applicable’ would mean that there were no hard to place children for which the protocol was required.