



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**City of Bristol Local Authority
to be provided by
31 October 2024**

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**Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by
31 October 2024 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 2023/2024 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2024.**
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 23/24 compared to 22/23?**

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:

Bristol is experiencing reduced demand for primary school places in most areas of the city. PAN was reduced at 3 settings; Filton Avenue (120 to 90), Henleaze Infants (90 to 60) and Cotham Gardens (90 to 60) removing 90 places from the citywide total but overall, 1st preference offers are higher than previous years.

Demand for year 7 admissions was forecast to peak for 2024 admissions. Two new secondary schools (Oasis Academy Temple Quarter and Oasis Academy Daventry Road) opened in 2023 but were in co-ordination for 2024. Although both schools have opened on temporary sites, they have been popular with families. The LA were also able to breach PAN at various other secondaries in areas of high demand.

Infant junior transfers are largely unchanged. These school are paired, meaning offers can be made to all children attending the paired infant school within the admission number.

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**:

Generally, normal points of admission work well for children in care and previously looked-after children both within and beyond the local authority and their priority in the admissions code is recognised and assists them in securing the most appropriate school place. However, for the first time a child in care did not secure the first choice school of carer and social worker as corporate parent due to the faith related admissions criteria of the setting for KS2/KS3 that placed children in care at a lower priority than those not in care but of a specific faith. An appeal was unsuccessful and the child was unable to attend the most appropriate school for them. This has been raised with the local authority and Diocese as a situation of vulnerability and concern.

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:

The mainstream admissions process does not apply for Children with an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP). Children with an EHC plan are admitted through the EHCP process. Where a school is named in Section I, of the EHC plan, and is of one of that described in Section 38(3) Children & Families Act 2014 the school is under legal duty to admit.

The local authority has an established Placement Planning Forum dedicated to reviewing current and forecasting future demand of school places, for children with an EHC plan. At Key Stage Transfer, and throughout the year, the Place Planning Forum will identify and allocate individual school places appropriate to a child's needs whilst taking into account the views, wishes and feelings of both the child and parent/carer. The Placement Planning Forum will ensure allocation of resource to deliver the special educational provision as set out in Section F of the EHC plan.

The SEND Assessment, Planning & Review Team and mainstream admissions have an agreed way in which to share information, between teams, during the key stage transfer window. This includes a dedicated link role within the statutory SEND team. This ensures children who have had a school named in Section I, of their EHC plan, are taken into account within allocation of places. However, oversubscription is not a criterion that can be applied, for children with an EHC plan, as schools must admit regardless of whether places are available.

Whilst every school has a duty to make a place available to a child where that school is named in the EHC plan, the local authority can experience difficulties when a child's EHC Needs Assessment completes after the close of the Key Stage Transfer window and a mainstream admissions application has not been made prior, to the EHC Needs Assessment starting. Academies feature heavily in the secondary sector and the local authority has experienced difficulties with mutual resource agreements which can delay process.

The demand for EHC Needs Assessment through to an EHC Plan continues to increase. Therefore, demand for both mainstream and specialist placements in Bristol is pressured. This is monitored on an ongoing basis and the local authority has established and planned targeted work streams to both support schools to meet children and young people's needs and to ensure sufficiency of places, within the city.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 23/24 compared to 22/23?

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:

Sufficiency of school places at secondary is a challenge resulting in a high number of fair access referrals to secure a school place and increased numbers of in-year school appeals.

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:

- (i) Due to secondary schools in the local authority being at PAN in particular year groups it has resulted in drift and delay when attempting to secure in-year admissions for children in care. In some cases schools are refusing applications. In many cases, schools work alongside the LA Virtual School to secure a place for a child in care but in some cases this has not been possible and the first direction to an LA school has been issued to ensure a child's place at the most appropriate school is secured.
- (ii) The situation in other local authorities is acutely challenging in being able to obtain places for children in care and there have been many situations where several weeks or months of delay have occurred or children remain with no secured provision. As many academies act as their own admissions authority it has been difficult to obtain clear responses as to whether places in the year group are available and there is significant delay in obtaining responses from schools or being able to discuss securing a place and the school going over PAN. Due to the number of children living in homes outside of the local authority this has been a particular challenge and is having a detrimental impact on children in care's access to education and support.
- (iii) This question has been marked as not applicable as in the previous academic year no issues were raised to the Virtual School from other local authorities regarding problems securing places for children in care to other LA's being educated in the area.
- (iv) Similar issues to point 1 for children in care have also at times impacted on previously looked-after children's ability to secure the most appropriate school places through the in-year admissions process. In particular situations there have been specific reasons why a school is most suitable but due to the school being at or over PAN the child has been unable to secure a place. The Virtual School are aware of specific examples of this but do not have the same level of direct oversight and involvement as with children 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 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 an Education Health & Care Plan

See also Section Ci

The mainstream admissions process does not apply for Children with an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP). Children with an EHC plan are admitted through the EHCP process. Where a school is named in Section I, of the EHC plan, and is of one of that described in Section 38(3) Children & Families Act 2014 the school is under legal duty to admit.

The local authority has an established Placement Planning Forum dedicated to reviewing current and forecasting future demand of school places, for children with an EHC plan. The place planning undertaken is with both a strategic lens and individual child level. This takes place throughout the year.

Resource allocation

A high proportion of school consultation sent, as part of the EHC plan admissions process, return with a costed provision map and a request for a higher level of funding to provide for Section F.

There have been specific instances whereby the local authority has not agreed a funding request as we were of the opinion that school have either costed for provision already available within a mainstream school setting or costs were disproportionately high. The local authority has named the school in Section I. Subsequently, the school has refused to enact their duty by offering a start date and placing the child onto school role.

Academy admission arrangements

During last year's Key Stage Transfer Window, a child entered the EHC Needs Assessment process. The assessment process was due to complete after the child was due to start in Year 7, September 2024. Parents applied for a secondary school, through the mainstream admissions process, and advised school an EHC Needs Assessment was underway. The school advised parents to revoke their child's mainstream admission application. The local authority requested school provide a place for the child. As an academy the school managed their own admissions, they did not allocate a place, citing oversubscription. As the EHC Needs Assessment was still in process and the local authority did not have an EHC plan in place we did not have the option to follow the EHC plan admission

process leaving the child out of education until an interim arrangement was made by the local authority.

A five-year-old child was brought to the local authority's attention through the EHC Needs Assessment process. The child has complex health needs, had not been accessing education and a mainstream admissions application had not been made. The statutory SEND team supported by Health's Designated Childrens Officer (DCO) approached schools to provide a place whilst the EHC Needs Assessment completed. A local school agreed to provide an education until an EHC plan was issued and the EHC admissions process could be followed in full.

Children without an Education Health & Care Plan

There are no restrictions on admission is placed on children with special educational needs or disabilities who do not have an EHC plan. Children will follow the mainstream admission 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 2023 and 31 July 2024?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	2	0
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	2	418
Total	4	418

- ii. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

There has been an increase in the number of children allocated through the Fair Access Protocol. The reasons for this are very similar to previous years in that we do not have sufficient places in particular year groups in secondary schools in the city. A large number of children and families continue to move into the city from inside and outside of the UK and therefore require school places in schools that are already full. The opening of new provision in the city will mean in future years that the children who move into the city will have a choice of schools with places to apply to and subsequently a reduction in FAP referrals

There has been an increase in the number of permanent exclusions which has also increased the number of referrals to Fair Access.

- 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:

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children³

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 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 2023 and 31 July 2024 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 2023/2024 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 2023/2024 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:

Sufficiency of secondary school places remains a challenge with high number of children and young people sourcing school places via the Fair Access Protocol or the school appeals process.

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):

Within the authority, the demand for and availability of specialist education places has been pressured in recent years. This demand and subsequent pressure continues in 2024.

Some children and young people will experience prolonged waits, at times until the start of the next academic year, to take up a place at a school suitable for their special educational needs. In these circumstances, children and young people will access education either within a mainstream setting or through Alternative Learning Provision and for some, Education Other than in School (EOTIS) will be an appropriate alternative.

The local authority continues to strengthen the specialist education offer, within the city. The local authority's offer for children with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs will be developed to offer low sensory demanding school and SEND unit placements.

The local authority, in partnership with key stakeholders, are working to identify and launch individual workstreams to address attendance for priority groups, in line with the priorities set out in the Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028.

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?

The number of children in Bristol affected by Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is growing. Many children have not accessed education for prolonged periods, sometimes for a number of years.

An area of improvement would be a nationally agreed way of tracking, monitoring, & recording the number of children not attending school due to EBSA.

Section 4 – Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2025.

Thank you for completing this template.

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