



Office of  
the Schools  
Adjudicator

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

**Nottinghamshire 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 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 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:

Continue to experience difficulties with delays in the naming of EHCP which impacts on number of places available, particularly challenging at year 7  
Increasing pressure on places across Nottinghamshire and in neighbouring LAs  
Some difficulties experienced with neighbouring LAs that impacts on coordination and meeting required deadlines.

#### 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**:

Nottinghamshire County Council's school admissions service works collaboratively with Virtual School and Fair Access to raise the profile of looked after children and works positively to offer places in a timely manner.

At normal points of admission, the local authority processes are clear and information is easily accessible online. The school admissions team maintains a close working relationship with the Virtual School to ensure that all looked after children submit an application on time. Occasional difficulties when change to social worker.

### 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:

NCC identifies all those children with an EHC plan and works with colleagues in SEN teams to monitor those children being placed in mainstream school. These families are not sent application information for the coordinated intake round but are contacted and supported directly by the EHC assessment team.



## 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:

An increase in pressure on places in-year has been noticed across the county and this can result in families travelling a significant distance to school where it has not been possible to meet a preference. This also increases the number of referrals to FAP, particularly at secondary phase.

OAs that do not participate in the in-year scheme are not always notifying the LA of applications and outcomes within the required timeframe, this results in delays in children accessing education provision or referral to FAP.

## **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:

Own admission authority schools managing their own in-year admissions can result in NCC not being made aware of applications quickly which can result in a delay with places being offered. In areas with high over-subscription and multiple school admission authorities, the process of securing an in-year admission can become timely and complicated. The additional pressure on places across some areas of the county has seen an increase in looked after children/previously looked after children not being offered their first preference school. Delays also occur when admission authorities are not willing to admit over PAN for looked after and previously looked after children.

NCC's school admissions service is responsive to supporting the Virtual School when trying to identify schools with spaces when children in care are moving to or within the area.

Navigating admissions processes in other local authorities for our looked after children continues to be challenging. Although the option to direct schools is helpful, it is a long and slow process which is not always successful, and it causes more drift and delay for children in the most vulnerable situations.

### 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:

Demand for special school places is high which results in delays in placing children with an EHCP in appropriate provision.

For community and voluntary controlled schools, NCC gives higher priority to an application where it is established that it is the only school that can meet a child's particular needs. This supports families where professionals have already been working with a child and adaptations have already taken place at a school. Parents are reminded of the need to provide this information at the application stage and professionals working with the family are encouraged to provide supporting information to enable full consideration to be given to the application.

#### **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	4	0
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	15	359
Total	19	359

- 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 a significant increase in children being referred to and admitted through the Fair Access due to there being a pressure on school places – particularly the secondary phase. There has also been an increase in inward migration into the County that has impacted the number of referrals where preference cannot be met.

- 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 children<sup>3</sup>

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

<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.

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	N/A	N/A

## 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%

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:

Continue to see increased demand for school places due to inward migration (Hong Kong arrivals/refugees).

Pressure on KS2 year groups has seen a greater increase in referrals at primary phase to FAP.

Local authority secures additional places as part of normal admissions round, but these places are generally “unavailable” at the end of coordination, thereby impacting on the availability of places in-year for year 7.

In-year coordination works well for schools that participate in NCC’s scheme. For those families applying to schools that manage their own in-year admissions, there are often delays in outcomes being received, lack of notification to the LA or parents discouraged to apply as the school is “full”.

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?

**Admission outside the normal age requests** – schools continue to be unclear about the Code in relation to these requests and often apply a blanket policy without considering the individual request in the best interests of the child. It is increasingly difficult to obtain a decision when schools state they do not have enough information from the parents to consider whether admission to reception or year 1 would be appropriate.

**In-year application process (not coordinating)** - increasingly we are made aware by families that own admission authority schools managing their in-year admissions are asking for detailed information at the point of application which is prohibited by the Code (i.e. attendance, behaviour, results). In addition, some families are not being given the right to appeal against any refusal of a preference.

The LA remains concerned that whilst admission authorities are managing their own in-year processes there is a risk that children move into the local authority area and the LA is not aware. This exacerbates the situation of children missing education and is a safeguarding concern. The LA considers that it would be more beneficial for applications in-year to be coordinated by the LA to better support the tracking of children and help the LA in its sufficiency duty relating to school places.

**Consultation and determination** – admission authorities are not always clear about their statutory obligation in respect of consultation and determination of the arrangements, particularly around the requirement to consult after 7 years. NCC regularly reminds admission authorities of their duties but increasingly there are delays in the LA receiving determined admission arrangements by the statutory date. This can create a delay in the LA being able to consider whether the arrangements comply with the Code and raise a referral to the OSA and also impacts on the provision of information for the composite prospectus.

**EHC Assessment Team** continues to see an increasing number of complex early years children with EHC Plans whose parents are preferencing special school. Work is ongoing with both families and settings to increase confidence in this cohort's needs being able to be met in mainstream primary schools. Due to the increase in this cohort. we have more children accessing 'childcare settings' with EHCP's, this is challenging as these settings do not have the same access to funding or education support services. We continue to work with our early years colleagues as to how we can better improve the offer for this cohort. We have an established early years' working group to better understand the concerns and have updated guidance and information sheets to reflect this cohort.

We have recruited to 5 SEND Education Pathway Officer posts who contact families and settings at the point an EHC Needs assessment request is made, the purpose of these contacts is to discuss the requests and better understand why requests are being made at such an early stage. These workers also offer a multi-agency meeting with family and education setting following a 'No To Assess' decision to offer support, advice and signposting to families and settings and improve the confidence of both in relation to meeting individual child, young person's needs.

Over the last year the number of children and young people with EHCP's has continued to increase in number. Some due to an increase in permanent exclusion, schools stating they cannot meet need, refusing themselves to utilise alternative provision and a general lack of confidence. We also continue to see a significant increase in families requesting their children be supported via an EOTAS package and some requesting personal budgets.

## **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