



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

Plymouth City Council Local Authority

to be provided by

31 October 2022

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Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by **31 October 2022 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 for 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. Local authorities do not have to include this introduction and guidance in their locally published report.
2. In 2020 and 2021, we asked far fewer questions than in previous years, asking only for the minimum information required by the Code. This was in response to the pressures on local authorities and others in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, we have again sought to keep the information requested to the minimum. We have, at the request of the Department for Education, asked a small number of additional questions relating to the impact of the new Code which came into force on 1 September 2021.
3. The new Code also changes the period to be covered by reports to the adjudicator and the deadline for submitting reports to the adjudicator. **This year's report must cover the 2021/2022 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 31 October 2022.**

Guidance on completing the template

4. In a departure from previous practice, we have included all the guidance on completing specific parts of the template in this section. We hope that this will be helpful. This is in response to feedback that including guidance and definitions in the body of the template could make the report harder for readers to follow and less accessible. 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. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
 - a. "in-year admissions": This means admission 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

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

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

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.

b. Not applicable means at questions:

Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

Section 1: B.v. that there were no schools for which the local authority was the admission authority at 1 September 2021.

Section 1: B.vi. that there were no schools in the local authority's area for which the local authority was not the admission authority at 1 September 2021.

Section 2: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

Section 2: C.i. that there were no children falling within the definition.

Section 2: D.iv. that there were no hard to place children referred to the protocol.

7. 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.
8. 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 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			✓	
Year 7			✓	
Other relevant years of entry			✓ (Junior) ✓ (KS4)	

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

Year 7 & Key Stage 4:

- Both Year 7 & KS4 statutory deadlines were met. Parents were informed on the national allocation date.
- Year 7: 88.45% of parents were allocated their 1st preference of school and 98.96% of parents were allocated one of their three preferences.
- There were a high number of appeals for one secondary school.
- All KS4 applications were offered places at the 1st preference school

Reception & Junior:

- Both Reception & Junior statutory deadlines were met.
- A few minor IT issues that increased the workload.
- Neighbouring LA's were slow to provide outcomes for their schools.
- Junior – application form that was sent to another LA in the Midlands was chased for a response on a number of occasions. The LA did not provide a response to us but to the parent direct. We found out the child had been allocated a place from the infant school.
- Reception: 95.31% of parents were allocated their 1st preference of school and 96.51% of parents were allocated one of their three preferences.
- Junior: All junior applications were offered places at their 1st preference school

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. Please confirm that your local authority has included children adopted from state care outside England in its definition of previously looked after children in admission arrangements for schools for which it is the admission authority

Yes No Not applicable

- vi. How confident are you that all other admission authorities in your area have included children adopted from state care outside England in their definitions of previously looked after children in admission arrangements for schools for which they are the admission authority?

Confident all have Confident some have Not aware of whether all or some have Not applicable

vii 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**:

Time and effort is taken by the admissions team to try to identify the eligibility of a child based on the admission code. The team will consult with the virtual school for advice and discussion if there is any doubt.

There is excellent co-ordination and co-operation between the admission team and virtual school regarding normal points of admission. This involves two-way communication to ensure that all appropriate children are included before applications are opened. Therefore, the admissions team are able to ensure that first choices are provided and share back if there is any delay in the application for any looked after child, so that the virtual school can follow up with social workers and carers. There is also positive communication with schools so that in each intake and allocation, there is not an unreasonable number of children within an annual cohort. If numbers are high for a school, the communication from the admissions team is vital, as it enables the virtual school to liaise with the school and if need be allocate pupil premium funding to support enhanced transitions.

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:

There is a good system of sharing information between the admissions team and 0-25 Statutory Assessment Team, for point of entry and KS2 transition, which continues to be reviewed and improved each year.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Effect of Code changes on in-year admissions

Please provide any comments you wish to make on the effect of the changes to the Code's provisions for in-year admissions. It would be particularly helpful to have comments on whether you think the changes have made it easier or not for parents to secure places for children in-year?

Fair Access: The wording in the School Admissions Code 2014 allowed us as a local authority to add in other vulnerable groups such as service families. The School Admissions Code 2021 no longer allow us to do that. This means that we can no longer ask schools to go over their planned admission numbers in these cases where children may be vulnerable that are not listed in the code.

Looking at the overall picture - The change to the code brought in the following requirement: Upon receipt of an in-year application, the admission authority, or the local authority if it is co-ordinating the admissions authority's in-year admissions, should aim to notify the parents of the outcome of their application in writing within 10 school days, but they **must** be notified in writing within 15 school days.

Below is a table of the applications we have received in the last few academic years:

	Primary	Secondary	Total of both
2018/2019	2255	1138	3393
2019/2020	1963	1048	3011
2020/2021*	1789*	1017*	2806*
2021/2022	2381	1375	3756

*Numbers slight down due to Covid.

All schools within Plymouth sign up to the In-Year co-ordinated scheme. Plymouth have three admission officers who deal with the application forms for In-Year admissions for 85 different schools for all year groups (YrR - Yr11). The required processing time has been cut down at the same time as we saw an increase in the number of application forms coming in. Some applications forms are more complex than others which has an impact on the length of time it takes to process the application form. This, along with delays from the schools responding to application requests sent to them by the LA, and some schools refusing to take pupil even though they have space and staffing issues within the team, the team have not always hit the 15 day response deadline.

B. 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 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 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 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 Plymouth, any application for an in-year admission, which states that the child is or was previously in the care of the local authority, is referred to the virtual school for feedback. This has resulted on a number of occasions, in challenges to social care or foster carers who are not following correct protocols of school selection, the ensuring that looked after children are not placed in 'inadequate' schools, or have a very good reason for applying to a 'requires improvement' school. The liaison between the two teams is outstanding. Applications are dealt with in a timely manner to ensure that Plymouth LAC are not left without a school.

There can be more difficulty when a child has an EHCP; especially when requiring a school place outside Plymouth. The consultation process can delay matters and to an extent disadvantage the most vulnerable. Plymouth schools work closely with the admissions team and virtual school, to support the process and reduce delay, and as long as the move is known about and planned, a school will already know that the application is coming and will be prepared to agree to the consult.

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:

One of the difficulties for in-year admissions for children with Education, Health and Care Plans, is when the LA hear that they have arrived in the City, this can be some time after they have moved into area. We have developed relationships with local LAs, but encourage communication with all LAs to support this.

Another difficulty is when a child arrives from another country and has significant SEND. The greatest challenge for in-year admissions for children with Education, Health and Care Plans, is the consult process, as schools have to agree to be named on a child's plan. There is a lot of work carried out by the 0-25 Statutory Assessment Team, with the admissions team to try to sort this within the statutory 15 days, however, dates can be missed.

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

D. 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 2021 and 31 July 2022?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	0	0
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	10	38
Total	10	38

iv. How well do you consider hard to place children are served by the fair access protocol in your area?

Not at all well Not well Well Very well Not applicable

v. Please provide any comments you wish on the protocol not covered above. It would be particularly helpful to have any comments on the impact of the Code changes on the operation of the FAP in your area and the ability to secure places for vulnerable children:

We have increasing numbers of schools who are refusing in-year admission requests without demonstrating how grounds for refusal are met. In addition increasing numbers of schools are refusing Fair Access allocations.

E. Directions

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022 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. If you wish, please provide any other comments on the admission of children **in-year** not previously raised:

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 2023.

Report is easy to use.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31October 2022