



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Local Authority Report

to

The Schools Adjudicator

from

St Helens Local Authority

to be provided by

30 June 2021

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**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 Release¹ and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002².

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**.

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

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				X

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

Although own admission authority schools categorise applications according to their published oversubscription criteria, the Local Authority Admissions Team, undertakes the ranking exercise on their behalf. This enables checks to be built into the allocation process which helps identify any issues at an early stage and enables the Team to take appropriate action. It also helps to ensure that the agreed timetables in the co-ordinated admissions schemes are adhered to.

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 applicable³

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 applicable³

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**?

³ 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

Not at all Not well Well Very well Not applicable³

- 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 applicable³

- 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:

The change in the new School Admissions Code regarding priority for children previously in care abroad is being implemented by schools/academies in St Helens for 2022.

- 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**:

The School Admissions Team works with colleagues within Social Care to ensure that looked after children applications are submitted by the relevant admissions deadlines.

The Local Authority, ensures that Good or Outstanding Ofsted rated schools are chosen for looked after children.

Looked after and previously looked after children are given top priority in the oversubscription criteria for all schools and academies in St Helens. In addition, for those children whose applications are received after the Primary and Secondary National Offer Dates, if the relevant schools/academies in St Helens are oversubscribed they are admitted above the published admission number.

No school or academy in St Helens has refused a place for a looked after or previously looked after child for admission either at the normal point of entry or in year transfer.

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:

The Local Authority's School Admissions and SEND Teams work together to ensure that children are allocated mainstream school places in accordance with the Education Health and Care Plan. All children with an Education Health and Care Plan were offered a school place at their parents' preferred mainstream school – this included those children who Education Health and Care Plan is maintained by another Local Authority.

In order to support the transition from nursery to primary and from primary to secondary, the School Admissions Team shares SEND data with the relevant schools/academies (after the allocation process is complete). This enables schools/academies to plan any necessary support for children who are recorded on the Special Educational Needs register.

Section 2 - In-year⁴ admissions

A. Co-ordination of in-year admissions

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

The Local Authority co-ordinates all in year applications for St Helens schools and academies to ensure that children are safeguarded. With full co-ordination the Authority is able to identify vulnerable children and ensure that any who are at risk of becoming a 'child missing education' are tracked. It also helps us determine whether any applicant needs be processed under the Authority's Fair Access Protocol.

In year co-ordination also means that a single school offer can be made to parents in a timely manner – it helps simplify the school transfer process for both parents and schools and means the system is transparent for all stakeholders.

In addition, it helps the Local Authority with the planning of school places by identifying areas where there may be pressures on school places.

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.

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 applicable⁵

- 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 applicable⁵

- 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 applicable⁵

- 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 applicable⁵

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:

All St Helens schools and academies admit looked after children and previously looked after children outside the normal round (in year), even if the relevant year group is full and irrespective of which Local Authority is the 'corporate' parent.

There have been instances, however, where other local authorities have refused (where the relevant year group is full) in year applications for St Helens looked after children and the Authority has had to lodge an appeal to the Independent Appeal Panel.

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 applicable⁵

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

- 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:

St Helens School Admissions and SEND Teams work closely to ensure that children are allocated places at the school named in their Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). All children with a St Helens mainstream school/academy named in their EHCP have been offered a place including those from neighbouring local authorities.

Children with special needs who do not have an EHCP are treated equally in the allocation process for in year places. In accordance with the Local Authority's Fair Access Protocol children with behavioural difficulties are supported via the managed transfer process and schools (even those which are oversubscribed) cannot refuse admission.

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

As the Local Authority co-ordinates all in year applications it can advise schools/academies of their statutory duties with regards to in year admission. In addition, the locally agreed In Year Co-ordinated Admissions scheme ensures that those children without a school place are found one quickly.

D. Fair access protocol

- i. Has your fair access protocol been agreed⁶ 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:

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

- 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	6
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	10	29
Total	29	35

- 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 applicable⁷

- v. Please make any relevant comment on the protocol not covered above if you wish:
The Local Authority will be reviewing its Fair Access Protocol in light of the new School Admissions Code which comes into force in September 2021.

E. If you wish, 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?

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

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