



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

Sefton 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			n/a	

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

This year generally, the own admission authority schools returned their rankings to the Local Authority within the agreed deadlines allowing the Local Authority to complete coordination successfully.

There were some issues with coordination with a neighbouring LA which came to light after NOD. We are working with that LA to prevent the same issues happening again in 2023.

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**:

Sefton Admissions Team work very closely and engage support from the Virtual School where issues are identified, and the child may require additional support.

Part of the role of a Principal Admission Officer is specifically around the Admission of Looked After Children who are resident in Sefton and those who come from out of borough. This role has proved to align the care planning and the education processes.

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:

All children supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan that names a Sefton school are automatically admitted to the school named within the plan, even if this is above the agreed admission number.

The sharing of information between Sefton's SEN & Inclusion Team and the School Admissions Team regarding the finalising of EHC Plans continues to work well. This has allowed the Admissions Team to have up to date information in order to complete coordination successfully.

Sefton has a minority of Secondary schools that have identified specialised adaptations and resources for children with disabilities or additional physical needs. These schools still have this aspect included within their admission arrangements (as shown below) for those schools to admit children who require specialised resources e.g. mobility difficulties/wheelchair users.

"Children identified as needing specialist facilities that go beyond expected reasonable adjustments will be given priority for this school if it is the nearest school with suitable resources".

It has been agreed that all Sefton primary schools should be able to make reasonable adaptations to ensure a child with disabilities should be able to access all provision within any primary school.

In addition, Sefton have a Complex Needs Team which is part of the Inclusion Team who can support children with their enhanced transition to school which has been shown to minimise the number of requests to move school in the Autumn Term.

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?

Sefton co-ordinates In Year Admission requests for all schools within the borough including VA Schools & Academies (who are signed up to a Service Level Agreement) and has done so for many years. Overall this works very well. The number of In Year Admission requests (a mixture of families moving into or near to the area and school transfer requests) continues to increase year on year.

The changes to the code made some aspects of In Year easier for parents to understand such as the maximum 15-day time frame. Sefton has been able to comply with this requirement. Some schools continue to insist on having full information from the previous school before arranging admission, despite this being prohibited by the code. These schools are challenged & reminded of the code on a regular basis.

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:

Sefton Admission Team work very closely and engage support from the Virtual School (for Sefton Looked After children) where issues are identified, and the child may require additional support.

Sefton experience some difficulties with placing Looked After children at schools within other LAs in our region.

Having an officer with specific responsibility for looked after children has been instrumental in avoiding drift and delay in getting children into school. It has also improved the quality of information being share in a timely manner.

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:

All children supported with an Education, health and care plan that names a Sefton school are automatically admitted to the school that is named in the plan, even if this is above the agreed admission number.

The number of children seeking a new school place in year, who have complex SEN difficulties, but are without an EHCP is increasing. We now have senior early help worker who will identify when children and their families may require additional family support.

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

In Year applications from those moving into the borough or seeking school transfers are increasing year on year. There are many new properties being built across the whole borough. Pupil place planning is very important in ensuring we have sufficient school places to accommodate the increased number of children resident in the area.

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	48	1
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	30	44
Total	78	45

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:

The changes to Fair Access Protocol for 'unplaced children' only made it easier for children moving into the area to be placed more quickly. The onus is now on schools to provide compelling reasons to refuse admission, whereas previously the LA carried out an assessment as to whether an application met a Fair Access category. This has enabled unplaced children who have arrived at Sefton to access a school place in a timely manner.

Sefton LA created a separate Transfer Protocol for school transfer requests which was agreed with all schools and includes many of the same aspects of Fair Access Protocol. Sefton LA has increased the frequency of Fair Access Panel meetings.

Sefton's Fair Access Panel has representation from Health, Educational Psychology and Inclusion Service & an Early Help professional to address any additional needs. This also enables support to schools for children who are hard to place.

As Elective home education guidance has changed "an EHE child whose education is deemed unsuitable should no longer be classified as an EHE child and should be classified as CME" In serving school attendance orders identifying schools will be discussed at the fair access panel

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
Zero	n/a	n/a

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

Sefton is hoping to launch an online In Year admissions process to replace the current paper-based system. Further IT enhancements for communication with schools are also being explored.

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?

Studio Schools with atypical points of admission

The requirement for the Local Authority to contact all children in Year 9 to advise of their options in possibly choosing a Studio School from Year 10 onwards is a costly & time-consuming burden placed upon the LA. It is immensely frustrating that there is no reciprocal requirement for these schools to **automatically** inform LAs about children who have been admitted into the school for the purposes of pupil tracking.

Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2023.

The form was straight forward and easy to complete and is much preferred to earlier versions from other years prior to 2020.

Thank you for completing this template.

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