

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

[Leicestershire County Council](#) Local Authority
to be provided by
31 October 2023

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**Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by
31 October 2023 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 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 2022/2023 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 31 October 2023.**

Guidance on completing the template

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
 - a. "in-year admissions": This means admissions:
 - i. 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 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 at questions:
 - i. Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
 - ii. Section 2: Ai - iv that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

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

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

- iii. Section 2: B.i. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
 - iv. Section 2: C.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
6. 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.
7. 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 points 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			Well	
Year 7		Whilst Leicestershire achieved good outcomes for children in relation to securing their preferred school there were significant issues stemming from staff recruitment and retention and the introduction and embedding of a new ICT system. This led to late sharing of information with schools and challenges on offer day.		
Other relevant years of entry			Well (infant to junior)	

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

Year 7 transfers

90.6% of children secured their 1st preference school and 97.6% secured one of their top 3 preferences; 2.4% were automatically allocated their next nearest school with space, so 100% of on time applicants were offered a place.

There were difficulties in the process, particularly around timeliness and communication, following the introduction of a new IT system and some staffing capacity issues in the Admissions Service. This resulted in difficulties in validating and processing applications and exchanging data with other LAs, which, in turn, gave schools a short window to review applications. In addition, some schools had difficulty accessing information on the portal, which impacted particularly on those schools undertaking their own ranking.

Parents had been informed that outcomes would be available on the portal overnight but this did not occur; parents were instead notified by e-mail in the morning. This caused some anxiety and difficult communication on National Offer Day.

The high ratio of children successfully securing their first preference school was partly delivered through co-ordination with the school organisation service, who secured increased admission numbers at several secondary schools for this year. Secondary schools across the county were particularly supportive in this process that ensured there were adequate school places available.

First Time Admissions

94.9% of children secured their 1st preference school and 98.9% secured one of their top 3 preferences; only 1.1% were automatically allocated the next nearest school with space.

Process improvements and better planning following the learning from the issues on the secondary transfer round led to a much smoother process and National Offer Day.

The low birth rate has resulted in surplus primary capacity; several primary schools are considering reducing their admission number and/or vertically grouping classes.

Infant to Junior

100% secured their 1st preference school and the process took place without significant issues.

Stephenson Studio School

It is proposed to close the Stephenson Studio School at the end of the 2023/24 academic year due to a lack of viability. This has caused anxiety for some parents. The Admissions Service has worked closely with school to ensure places are available for all those allocated places at either their current school or an alternative.

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. 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**:

All Looked After Children and previously LAC secured their first preference school successfully in all phased transfers (first time admissions, infant to junior transfers and secondary transfers); no school challenged placements whether under the LAC or previously LAC criterion.

Although not a major issue some applicants did not tick the "LAC or previously LAC" box. However, once identified they are immediately prioritised to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

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 placement of SEND children in mainstream schools in the phased transfer rounds was successfully managed; SENA and the Admissions Service liaised well and developed a shared way of working. Parents of children awaiting SEND assessment were written to directly to ensure they applied on time and, as a result, even those applying late secured the schools they wanted.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. 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 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 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:

As a result of the issues referenced above, there were delays for in-year LAC admissions for children from other authorities. However, there have been very few challenges in placing Leicestershire LAC in Leicestershire schools and the majority of Leicestershire LAC secured the school that they requested.

Leicestershire have experienced an increase in schools outside of Leicestershire challenging placements this last year when seeking to place Leicestershire LAC. This is often where schools cite they already have high LAC numbers and to take anymore would be in detriment to existing children.

The question on the admissions form concerning previous involvement from social care isn't always understood by parents and often many applicants tick this when not needed/ don't tick it when they need to even though the application notes are clear regarding LAC and previously in care. This has now triggered a review of the admissions form's question about LAC and previously in care to improve the LAC journey.

B. 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:

Many young people with SEND transfer into schools at various points of the academic year. In the majority of instances these have been successful placements, but it has also been challenging especially when schools are already at or above capacity. Some schools have stated that they cannot reasonably offer a placement for a young person with SEND as they cannot meet needs. Children arriving with no formal diagnosis but evident additional needs (for example awaiting assessment or arriving from overseas) present additional challenge.

Parental expectation and demand for specialist places far exceeds those available or feasible and a key aim of the Transforming Special Needs and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme is to support children with SEND in mainstream schools, where it is appropriate for their needs. Schools across the County have been engaging well with this work and support for children with SEN.

c. 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 2022 and 31 July 2023?

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	20

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Total	4	20

iv. 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

v. Please provide any comments you wish on the protocol not covered above:

Leicestershire's secondary FAP has been managed through the five Secondary Education Inclusion Partnerships (SEIPs) for the last ten years. A full review of this will take place in 2023/24.

The secondary referral numbers above (20) refer to LA referrals to the 5 SEIPs to consider under the FAP process. They do not include inter-partnership referrals or children who may qualify for Fair Access but have successfully gained a school place without being referred.

The admissions service facilitates a Fair Access panel for primary aged pupils.

D. Directions

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 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

E. 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 2022 and 31 July 2023 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 schools in your area did the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions during the 2022/2023 academic year

☐ None

☐ All

☐ Some but less than or equal to half

☒ More than half but less than all

iii. 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:

In the autumn and spring terms of the 2022/23 academic year Leicestershire experienced significant delays in processing in-year school applications. This has been resolved during the summer term.

The issues were a combination of factors from:

- Staffing – reduced numbers and challenges in recruiting appropriately
- Training – inducting new staff whilst developing skills and processes around a new system
- Compounded demands – unresolved applications from 2022 phase transfer and new mid-year applications not processed because of the factors above led to repeat applications and significantly increased calls, emails and letters resulting in further resource demands and frustration in contacting the service

Despite working extremely hard the Admissions Service struggled to fulfil statutory decision timelines, which delayed school places for unplaced children and those new to Leicestershire. This resulted in difficulties and frustration for schools, particularly at a time when they were moving to utilising the new admissions portal.

Significant change management work has taken place to equip the Admissions Service to adapt processes, develop staffing and use the systems available effectively. All validated mid-year applications for 2022/23 were processed before the end of term meaning there is no backlog for 2023/24.

iv. 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):

Leicestershire continues to experience high demands for popular schools that are close to the border with Leicester, which means that some new residents are refused places at their local school (which may be taken up by Leicester residents). These often go to appeal, which are usually unsuccessful.

In addition, Leicestershire saw increased demands for refugee and asylum seeking children. Ukrainian children were placed quickly as they were part of a government programme with funding to support them. Most Ukrainian children settled in swiftly and have made good progress.

The sudden and rapid influx of asylum-seeking families, however, at two Leicestershire locations (hotels) created additional challenge, particularly as the children arrived after census day with no funding. The children have obvious significant needs, including language, trauma support and transport; one of the hotels is in a rural location with more children than the local village primary school can accommodate, therefore children are having to travel much further than we would like for a school place. Additionally, this is a significant cost to the LA.

Identifying suitable places and keeping siblings together without overloading schools with limited capacity has been difficult and FAP has been used in some cases.

In parts of rural Leicestershire new developments are placing pressure on secondary capacity for in-year school admissions. The situation is already strained across both primary and secondary school in Oadby – which has exceptionally popular schools. Many parents have bought new homes and then discover that all the local schools are full. We are prohibited from reserving school places for new local in-year admissions nor can we force schools to overfill for normal mainstream children when there is availability elsewhere, albeit outside the local area.

Finally, some Leicestershire parents accept a state-funded school place but do not take the place up as they also have an independent school place. This impacts some secondary schools who experience vacancies after the start of term when children on the waiting list have already started an alternative school and bought uniforms etc.

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 2024.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2023