



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

Leicestershire County Council Local Authority
to be provided by
31 October 2025

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Please email your completed report to: [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) **by**
31 October 2025 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 2024/2025 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) by 31 October 2025.**
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 Release¹ and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002².
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

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

² [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 24/25 compared to 23/24?**

Year Group	Much less challenging	Less challenging	No change	More challenging	Much more challenging
Reception	✓				
Year 7	✓				
Other relevant years of entry	✓				

Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

Leicestershire has continued to build on the successes of the previous year's transfer rounds. This year the number of preferences available was increased from three to five, contributing to an increase in the number of parents and carers securing a school they applied for. Admissions outcomes have remained steady for year seven transfers and improved for first time admissions and infant to junior transfers.

It is worth noting that Leicestershire experienced an increase in the number of secondary applications compared to last year.

In the few cases where none of the preferences were available all children were again automatically allocated a place at the next nearest school with space to their home address. As a result, there were very few concerns around the administration of phase transfer.

Software issues did not disrupt the processes this year and communication between adjoining local authorities worked well.

Secondary transfers:

90.9% secured first preference, 98.3% secured a preferred school

Primary First Time Admissions:

95.07% secured first preference, 99.4% securing a preferred school

Infant to Junior:

100% secured first preference

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**:

Leicestershire has continued to champion both Looked After Children and Previously looked After, securing these children their first school preference school.

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:

Leicestershire School Admissions and Special Education Needs services continue to work closely together in the best interests of securing children with an EHCP a mainstream school place when named in the EHCP or where a mainstream school is preferred by the family.

Schools in Leicestershire understand their obligation to admit a child when the school is named on the EHCP and work with both the above services to meet the needs of the child.

The number of children with an EHCP continues to grow rapidly.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 24/25 compared to 23/24?

Phase	Much less challenging	Less challenging	No change	More challenging	Much more challenging
Primary				✓	
Secondary				✓	

If you wish, please explain the factors that have changed the level of challenge for your in-year admissions:

Leicestershire has seen a rise in the number of own-admission authority schools opting out of the Local Authority's (LA) in-year coordinated admissions scheme, electing to manage their own admissions processes.

This shift has led to increased confusion for families, particularly around understanding which schools they need to apply directly to, even though this is available on the admissions website. As a result, some families have missed out on potential school places.

In some cases, multiple offers have been made for the same child, as both the LA and the own-admission authority school have issued offers independently. Additionally, we are seeing a rise in schools refusing applications, often citing an inability to meet the child's needs.

Concerningly, some parents report own-admission authority schools issuing verbal refusals at the school reception desk, without providing application details and information about the formal appeals process.

On a more positive note, for schools where the LA manages admissions, 68.5% of applications are processed within 15 school days, with this proportion continuing to increase. Delays beyond this timeframe are typically due to factors such as waiting for proof of address (such as rental agreements or house purchase documents) or the application being referred to the Fair Access team.

We continue to face challenges with limited availability of places in Years 4, 5, 9, and 10. Vacancies are restricted to small pockets across Leicestershire in these year groups, resulting in an increase in appeals for these year groups. This has also led to higher transport costs, as alternative schools offered are often beyond statutory walking distances.

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:

Leicestershire Admissions Service periodically sends out a briefing note to schools reminding heads of their duty to give Looked After Children and Previously looked After Children the highest priority.

Leicestershire Virtual School and Leicestershire Admissions have built a good relationship and work closely together to ensure in year admissions for Looked After Children are smooth and timely.

In-year admissions at other LAs have improved. The main cause of delays experienced are when EHCP consults have been sent to schools whilst the mainstream admissions process is still ongoing.

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:

Leicestershire School Admissions and Special Educational Needs (SEN) services continue to work collaboratively to secure mainstream school placements for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), where a mainstream setting is named in the plan or when a parent applies directly for a mainstream setting.

Schools in Leicestershire are fully aware of their obligations to admit a child when the school is named on an EHCP and are expected to work with both services to ensure the child's needs are met. To support this Leicestershire has offered SENIF funding in some cases, enabling schools to access resources that facilitate a swift and smooth enrolment process and reduce delays to an education.

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 2024 and 31 July 2025?

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	5	72
Total	9	72

- ii. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

Leicestershire has seen a minor decrease in Fair Access Protocol (FAP) referrals as more children have been placed prior to being heard at panel. However, many children considered under the Fair Access Protocol present with complex needs which schools sometimes state they cannot meet. In some cases children are undergoing Education and Health Care Needs Assessments. This can lead to difficult conversations with schools, who must admit children unless they can evidence a disproportionate number of children with higher needs.

Additionally, Year 11 pupils new to Leicestershire and without a school place have been challenging to place as schools have been unwilling to admit at this point. This group are now fast-tracked through the FAP process to minimise the time they are out of education.

Over the past 12 months the LA has also faced challenges placing some previously excluded children with complex needs. Some of these children have been in alternative provision whilst seeking a suitable long-term placement.

Over the past 18 months Leicestershire has placed a number of new arrivals with refugee status. In many instances the FAP has been applied where necessary to secure school places and to keep siblings together.

Finally, Leicestershire has taken the decision that from the 2025–26 academic year, the FAP process will be brought in-house. This change is aimed at expediting decision-making and enabling swifter placements for vulnerable pupils.

- 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:

Fair Access Panels continue to meet regularly to consider cases and to ensure speedy outcomes. We continue to raise awareness of the requirement of a child being on roll within 20 school days of the decision.

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children³

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025 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
1	0	1

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 2024 and 31 July 2025 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 2024/2025 academic year

³ It is important that only Directions to maintained schools are included here. Numbers of Directions to academies are already held by the Department.

- 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 2024/2025 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:

For community and voluntary controlled schools and academies that engage the Local Authority (LA) to manage their admissions, parents generally have a positive experience that is fair and transparent when applying for a school place.

Where a preferred school place cannot be secured, families are always informed of the next nearest school with available places for an immediate start. Decision letters include a full explanation of the refusal and clearly outline the parent's right to appeal.

If a child remains out of education, the case is referred to the LA's Children Missing Education (CME) team, who will investigate and, where necessary, escalate the matter, including the potential of a prosecution for education neglect.

During the 2024–25 academic year, two Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and one standalone academy trust has withdrawn from LA-managed admissions in favour of overseeing their own processes, typically citing financial pressures.

Leicestershire's experience with academies and MATs managing their own admissions have not always been positive. School staff, including headteachers and office teams, have expressed frustration and confusion around interpreting the Admissions Code and applying their own admissions policy and criteria, often expressing that they would prefer to continue with the LA. We have received anecdotal reports that parents are not always informed of their right to appeal, and many are unclear whether to apply via the LA or directly to the school. The complexity and variation in admissions criteria across schools further adds to parental confusion about how decisions are made.

The LA has received reports that some own-admission authority schools disapprovingly continue to state they "cannot meet need" for children with SEND (but without an EHCP). Such experiences often then discourage parents from

pursuing the application any further. This can then result in children being placed outside their local community, often at those where the LA manages admissions and challenge schools on the parents' behalf.

Where an academy that manages its own admissions refuses on this basis, the parent may not be supported in the next steps as the academy is unlikely to refer the child/family to the Children Missing Education team or be able to advise the family of a suitable alternative school with space.

There have also been instances of simultaneous offers being made, from the LA and from the own-admission authority academy, despite the Admissions Code clearly stating that parents should receive only a single offer. In this situation the knowledge is not shared between the different admissions authorities and there is no way of identifying which the higher preference would be.

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):

For the school the LA manages the admissions process, 57% of all families secured school places successfully at a preferred school or will be satisfied with the alternative school that has space if processed by the LA.

However, as explained above, own admitting academies do not consistently share details of LA every application enquiry received (verbal, face-to-face, or email) with the LA. Our view is that this raises a significant safeguarding concern as children could remain at home and not in education.

In specific oversubscribed year groups in some pockets of Leicestershire it has been challenging to accommodate local children in secondary schools where cohort sizes remain high. Schools were already heavily oversubscribed and the nearest places were sometimes not local. This was particularly challenging in the autumn and may continue to present challenges for the next two years as the large cohorts progress.

We have no mechanism to capture what proportion of applications to own admitting academies are processed within 15 days or to understand any delay.

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?

1) Falling Birth Rates and PAN Reductions:

Leicestershire would like to take this opportunity to share with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator that the continued low number of children starting EYFS remains a significant concern. Many schools have already reduced or are seeking to reduce their Published Admission Numbers (PANs) as a result. It is encouraging to note that the Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill aims to strengthen collaboration between Own Admitting Authority academies and the Local Authority around school place sufficiency. However, the financial impact of falling rolls is already being felt with serious implications around school sustainability.

2) Infant Class Size Rules

Some academies and Multi Academy Trusts have breached statutory rules governing infant class size, with single year or vertically grouped classes of over 30. This appears to stem from a combination of limited awareness of the rules and significant budgetary constraints, which may prevent academies or MATs from employing additional qualified teachers.

3) Refusal on Grounds of 'Cannot Meet Need'

Reports from parents suggest a growing number of Own Admitting Authority academies refusing admission on the basis of being unable to meet a child's needs, despite places being available. Refusals at maintained schools and academies that engage the local authority (LA) to manage admissions are subject to LA oversight and challenged under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure families' rights are upheld and appropriate placements are made.

4) Failure to Provide Right of Appeal

Several parents have approached LA admissions staff after being refused places by Own Admitting Authority academies and not informed of their right to appeal (as should be included on the refusal letter). This omission is a serious concern for the LA, as it undermines transparency and parental rights in the admissions process.

5) Safeguarding Concerns and In-Year Admissions:

In response to boxes iv and v above, Leicestershire remains deeply concerned about the safeguarding of children whose applications are not processed through the local authority. Information about families applying directly to Own Admitting Authority academies is not always shared with the local Authority. If a place is not offered this could lead to some children being out of school that the Local Authority is not aware of.

Leicestershire strongly recommends that the School Admissions Code be revised to require all in-year applications to be coordinated through the LA. This change would:

- Address significant safeguarding concerns;

- Ensure parents' rights are upheld, including access to appeals;
- Help identify children missing education and direct them to available school places;
- Enable timely referrals to appropriate support agencies;

Importantly, this approach would still allow Own Admission Authority academies to manage their own decisions or to buy into the Local Authority's service.

6) Championing LAC/PLAC in the In-Year Process:

The current in-year admissions system has also weakened advocacy for Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). When social workers approach Own Admission Authority academies directly for places there is not always feedback to the LA, meaning the LA is not able to determine whether the rights of LAC/PLAC have been appropriately upheld.

For schools where the local authority manages admissions, robust challenge is provided when a school seeks to refuse a LAC/PLAC, including considering a referral to the Secretary of State. This level of oversight should be applied consistently across all schools and academies.

Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2026.

It would be helpful if the template for this return is shared in the preceding summer term.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2024