



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Local Authority Report

to

The Schools Adjudicator

from

Gloucestershire Local Authority

to be provided by

30 June 2021

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www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator

**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:

The LA continues to have good relationships with all schools and academies in the co-ordination of the main admissions round. We continue to provide an admissions service to academies through our Traded Services scheme which all parties sign up to a service level agreement to ensure key dates are adhered to - to ensure the success of the co-ordinated scheme.

We continue to experience delays on receiving data from other neighbouring LA's and this is becoming more frustrating. This has put additional pressure on staff working at home during a pandemic, which is even more stressful on the team's mental health and wellbeing. We gave feedback last year on the need to consider a national exchange data for all local authorities. This continues to be our opinion as this would underpin the success of the co-ordinated scheme whilst ensuring all admissions staff in other LAs can work more effectively whilst minimising delays and stress to staff.

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

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

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**?

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:

Gloucestershire LA does not currently offer this priority. We gave feedback last year that it would be helpful for the Code to specify what documentation is required to give priority to this group of children.

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**:

Belonging Regulations for children with a EHCP is complicated (sourcing a school out of county.) Some LA's are not very quick to respond despite children's files being sent to them by the SEND casework team. I think it would be prudent to look at the belonging regulations to ensure that the most vulnerable learners get access to specialist provisions in a timely manner.

Children in care and their families/carers continue to have a positive experience at normal points of admissions.

This year 29 children in care students were in the secondary transfer group and 28 of those received their first preference (the one case failed to qualify for a grammar school)

For primary we received 12 applications and all received their first preference school.

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:

Where a child does not have an EHCP, the family need to follow the normal admissions process and have access to our Coordinated Admissions Team to assist with any queries relating to admission arrangements and the appeals route if necessary.

As COVID delayed the EHCP process in some cases, the named school has been delayed at the normal point of entry. However, once the EHCP has been finalised, allocations to the named school continues within the Coordinated Process.

There are challenges when schools state that they are unable to meet need. This then requires Reasonable Adjustment meetings which causes time delays to the process.

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 In Year Admissions Process is not coordinated in Gloucestershire; however we have an In Year Team within GCC who are responsible for assisting parents who find it hard to navigate the differing processes within each school, as well as supporting and challenging schools with their admissions processes.

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?

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.

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:

We work in close partnership within-year admissions to ensure Children in care are well served. We provide partnership support and challenge to schools both in and out of county. We have never had to direct for a child in care due to this success.

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

- 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

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

with special educational needs and/or disabilities:

An additional challenge is when a child is already at a school and then receives an EHCP. We then re consult with the school and they say they cannot meet need.

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

There is still drift and delay by some academies when processing and responding to applications. Communication with parents can be slow, resulting in unnecessary time out of education for some children. Schools offering places in KS4 continues to be a challenge.

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:

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 | 2 | 0 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 2 | 25 |
| Total | 4 | 25 |

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

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

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:

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

Schools and Academies have been asked to share essential pupil data with the Local Authority in Gloucestershire throughout the academic year for safeguarding purposes.

Most schools are able to do this, although some schools do not share this data. We have worked with schools to address fears about sharing any information as this should not stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children; and in particular those children missing from education or known to social care.

Not knowing where spaces are available in all schools can be a challenge when we are assisting parents with making an In year admission.

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?

Gloucestershire Local Authority met the challenge of enabling our teams to work from home swiftly during Covid lockdown. This enabled the deadlines of allocations and admission appeals to be met throughout the last year.

Virtual appeals have proved very successful for both parents and volunteer panel members in Gloucestershire. We continued to provide appeal hearings within the deadlines during lockdown, and we would like the legislation to permit a hybrid option to offer the option of both virtual and face to face appeals in the future. This has ensured that both the In Year and Coordinated Round Appeals have been heard safely and effectively within the deadlines.

Fair Access Panels continued virtually within Gloucestershire during lockdown to ensure that vulnerable pupils have a transition pathway set up for them to access schools as soon as they were open. These virtual meetings enabled our Headteacher panel to attend and not take valuable time out of their day to travel to a central location. This has resulted in more Head Teachers volunteering their time to take part in this important role, and we will continue to use the virtual platform for our Fair Access Panels.

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