



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**Lincolnshire 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 | | X | | | |
| Year 7 | | | X | | |
| Other relevant years of entry | | | X | | |

Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

Year 7 intake cohort sizes remain high, with several schools agreeing to admit pupils above their Published Admission Number to accommodate demand.

In contrast, Reception and Junior intake cohorts are low and continue to decline gradually overall, which has enabled us to offer first preference placements to the vast majority of applicants in these year groups with little need for revised applications.

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**:

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:

While the EHCP phase transfer process generally works well, it is important to acknowledge that the process is dynamic. Schools can sometimes find themselves being asked to admit pupils with EHCPs outside of the usual admissions windows or after phase transfer deadlines have passed. This can understandably create challenges, particularly where schools have already finalised their planning and resourcing for the year.

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 | | | X | | |
| Secondary | | | X | | |

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

The situation continues whereby an increasing number of secondary schools are declining applications for in-year admissions at levels below their Published Admission Number (PAN), often citing prejudice as the reason. While this practice is lawful, it falls outside the Local Authority's jurisdiction to challenge. Consequently, a growing number of children are being referred through the Fair Access Protocol, which can delay their access to education while the process is completed.

We have observed that some schools are more receptive to admitting pupils via the protocol than others. In certain cases, extended discussions are occurring before an offer is made, despite the statutory duty on schools to admit pupils when requested under the protocol. These challenges and delays are becoming more frequent.

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:

Our area admissions team effectively communicate with the Virtual School to ensure applications for children in care are processed efficiently to avoid any potential drift and delay in securing a school place. Appropriate challenge is provided to schools when needed.

There is a significant lack of consistency amongst other local authorities. Some provide a high level of support whilst others are often delayed in responding to queries or signposting to relevant colleagues which creates an unacceptable delay for children looked after by Lincolnshire but placed in other areas.

A major difficulty faced in placing children outside of the county where they reside is the subsequent duty to find a suitable placement for the child should a school refuse or it is deemed that mainstream provision is not suitable for a child without an EHC plan or history of Permanent Exclusion. From our experience, there remains a lack of consistency of understanding across other Local Authorities that the fair access protocol should not be used for children in care.

For other LA's seeking educational placement in Lincolnshire, we can see varying levels of adherence to the statutory guidance, and this can cause tensions with schools and delay accessing places. Where social workers have not discussed the child's situation with the school, we can often see schools refuse the application lawfully on the grounds of being full, however when this contact is made, the schools are much more amenable to discussions regarding offering over PAN. Some LA's have stated that they will be seeking a direction before complying the requirements of the statutory guidance, which can cause tensions.

The recent change in the Ofsted inspection framework regarding the removal of single judgement gradings and the outdated statutory guidance for Local Authorities that states children in care should go to a good or outstanding school can provide challenges in identifying and securing the most appropriate school to meet children's needs.

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:

Most schools are well equipped to meet the needs of children without an EHCP through the ordinarily available provision and existing support arrangements. However, we do occasionally see a small number of children relocating to Lincolnshire with significant additional needs. This can include children who are new to the country, often with very limited information about their previous education. In some cases, these children may require a specialist placement, which can be difficult to arrange if they do not yet have an EHC Plan in place.

We also receive children who arrive with an existing EHCP, but where the plan lacks clarity or specificity. In these situations, further assessment and involvement from support services may be needed but this is not always possible before the child starts at their new school.

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:

N/A

- 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 | 18 | 0 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 29 | 422 |
| Total | 47 | 422 |

- 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?

Minimal change from last year's totals of 37 for primary and 427 for secondary.

- 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:

The process followed when a child is referred under the protocol is understood by schools. Children are placed without delay in the majority of cases.

A more detailed description of where schools can refer on the grounds of challenging behaviour would be welcomed as this would likely provide consistency between LA's.

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 |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

- Between 0% and 24% ☐
- Between 25% and 49% ☐
- Between 50% and 74% ☐
- Between 75% and 100% ☒

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

- 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:

Co-ordinated in-year admissions continues to work well for Lincolnshire schools and families. The co-ordinated approach means that when a Lincolnshire child is refused a place at a school, an alternative is sought by the LCC. This ensures that unplaced children are tracked accordingly and reduces delays. While all schools in Lincolnshire (aside from the UTC) agree to participate in this co-ordinated process, we would welcome an amendment to legislation to make in-year co-ordination mandatory.

- 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):

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 2026.

The report was received on the 9th September this year, which is later than previous years where this template was shared much earlier. Whilst this did not make the form more challenging to complete, it did mean that gathering information coincides with the peak in year period. It would be beneficial to receive the form earlier in 2026.

Thank you for completing this template.

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