



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

**Template for
Local Authority Report
to
The Schools Adjudicator
from
Suffolk 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			X		
Year 7			X		
Other relevant years of entry					

Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

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**:

Admission at the normal point of entry continues to be a strength in Suffolk with looked after and previously looked after children prioritised for places in accordance with the code of practice.

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:

The majority of children and young people with an EHCP naming a school at expected points of entry are well served, transitioning to the named setting within their EHCP. Suffolk's number of phase transfers completed within expected timescales continued to improve in 2024/25.

The SEND Capital programme and SEND Sufficiency planning has resulted in more local specialist placements being available for 2024/25, including unit places attached to mainstream settings.

We continue to work with mainstream settings to ensure they understand the statutory duties in respect of the consultation and admissions process.

The Specialist Education Services support mainstream settings with transition planning and focussed visits for Section F provision. The LA challenges mainstream settings where appropriate to do so, however, some cases where discussions have taken place between the school and a family, the family has lost confidence in the school's ability to meet their child's needs. The family will then request an alternative, or specialist placement and in some cases, they pursue this through the SEND Tribunal process.

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:

Due to falling rolls and budgetary pressures, some primary schools have had to reconsider how they organise their year groups, with some having to go from single year group teaching to mixed year group classes, which has led to some pressure on the availability of places for in-year applications.

There are some areas of the county where there are no in-year school places in some year groups. This may lead to more applications being considered under the Fair Access Protocol and added pressure to the School Travel budget because the local authority has to fund travel for a child to attend a school that can be some distance from their home.

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:

Suffolk County Council only co-ordinates in-year admissions for community and voluntary controlled schools.

Problems arise when some own admission authority schools do not respond in a timely way to applications. By neither refusing or accepting the request, the Local Authority has no way of knowing that the application has been made and are unable to support. We now have several examples of where this has led to carers and adopters simply giving up on the application and making an application to another setting. This can arise for any applicant, not only for looked after and previously looked after children but the rejection and issues this activity causes our children can be life-changing with some children losing their homes as a result.

When a previously looked after child or looked after child is refused admission to an academy within our county borders, the Virtual School Head firstly makes checks that those making the application are doing so from an informed position and that the reasons for selecting the school are sound. Possible alternatives are explored. However, if this process ascertains the setting applied for is appropriate and alternatives are not viable the LA then writes to the academy giving notice of our intention to seek a direction as per the statutory guidance. In all cases where this action has been taken the academy in question has very swiftly accepted the pupil on to their roll without the need to progress the direction further.

When a previously looked after child or looked after child is refused admission to an academy in another LA following moving there, the Virtual School Head firstly makes checks that those making the application are doing so from an informed position and that the reasons for selecting the school are sound. Possible alternatives are explored. However, if this process ascertains the setting applied for is appropriate and alternatives are not viable, the Virtual School Head writes to the Chief Executive Officer of the academy giving notice of our intention to seek a direction as per statutory guidance. In most cases where this action has been taken the academy in question has very swiftly accepted the pupil on to their roll without the need to progress the direction further.

These processes build in delay to in-year admissions for vulnerable children. We do not enter protracted discussions and resolutions are as swift as possible. However, refusals of in-year admissions for looked after and previously looked after children are increasing and are impacting on placement stability. Carers expect the process of securing a school place to be easier than it is, and the additional challenge can add to what is already a highly challenging set of circumstances.

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:

The LA has continued to strengthen the advice and guidance to mainstream schools and ease of access to specialist education services offered by the LA through open referrals to services, SEND multi-agency consultation meetings, regular SEN Co-ordinator (SENCo) Forums and a daily SENCo Helpline. The LA also provides additional SEND funding for children and young people at SEN Support or with an EHCP through the High Needs Block Funding. Children are served well where schools use the range of services and support available to them and access additional funding to further enhance provision.

Children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as their primary need continue to concern settings and some admissions have been delayed while further discussions with the LA and families are sought. The Education Access Team, a team dedicated to the LA's statutory duties in relation to permanent exclusions, continues to support the most appropriate next steps in the interim and the identification of suitable provision. Securing a mainstream placement for those who have SEND and have been permanently excluded remains a significant challenge. Suffolk is consistent in its application of the Fair Access Protocol where this applies and will use the local Inclusion Pathway that will gather information on specific cases and challenge schools directly.

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:

The 100% figures shown above for state-funded mainstream schools in our area includes schools that did not respond to the last consultation. The consultation and accompanying letter advised schools that a nil return would be considered as their agreement. The last changes made to the protocol were made to meet statutory requirements of the current School Admissions Code.

- 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	0	2*
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	0	16*
Total	0	18*

* School admission cases only.

- 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?

The number of children referred to the Fair Access Protocol has gone down overall (all secondary) from 30 to 18. This is mainly because they haven't been admitted to the identified school due to a parent not accepting a place. This can lead to a child being referred back to the elective home education team, they become a child missing education, or a school attendance order is pursued. Some of the children

were offered in-year places at another school, a couple of whom had EHNCA's resulting in EHCPs.

- 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:

Parents/carers sometimes withdraw their child from school to be electively home educated. When the parent/carers has subsequently reapplied for their child to return to the school, the application may be refused under paragraph 3.10 of the School Admissions Code. This can lead to the child continuing to be electively home educated.

Whilst the Fair Access Protocol works effectively across most of the county, there are some areas where schools are reluctant to accept pupils through the protocol and this can result in children being out of school for long periods of time.

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

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

- ☐ 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% ☐

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:

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.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#) by 31 October 2025