



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Local Authority Report
to
The Schools Adjudicator
from

Worcestershire 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 (OSA) by 31 October 2023.**
3. Please note that, in response to feedback on the draft template, changes have been made to section 2C of this template.
4. Please also note that the OSA and Department for Education are planning a small project to ensure that the report is as useful as possible to local authorities, the OSA, DfE and others. As a result of this, there are likely to be changes made to the template for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Guidance on completing the template

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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. 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

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

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

- 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.
- iii. Section 2: B.i. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
- iv. Section 2: C.v. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

8. 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.

9. 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				X
Year 7			X	
Other relevant years of entry			X	

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

In relation to Year 7 normal point of entry, with no final data exchange date set nationally, this year we were impacted by 3 LA's returning their final data files to us as late as 27th February. This caused difficulties and impacted not only our residents, with changes to offers, but also impacted the offers we could make to other LA's residents. If there was a national set deadline, then all LA's could work to that date, in the same way we do for primary schools, which works well, with all LA's adhering to the national set dates.

Worcestershire also has normal points of entry for Year 5, Year 6, Year 8 and Year 9, whilst a number of neighbouring LA's do not. We continue to work closely to improve the co-ordination of those year groups with our neighbouring colleagues. There were issues caused by another local authority area in relation to this and we have since co-ordinated on a joined up approach to understanding the impacts on each other. We expect that this will lead to a much smoother exchange in future years.

Feedback from parents and our neighbouring colleagues, suggests this has improved the process for parents, with a reduction in the number of customer queries in relation to co-ordination.

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**:

No Children in Care/Previously in Care of or in the Care of an authority outside of England have been refused a place at their preferred school for the normal point of entry.

In preparation for the annual consultation round we work very closely with schools to provide support and guidance in relation to the admission arrangements. Collaborative working ensures the best possible outcomes for children.

100% of schools in Worcestershire give highest priority to Children in Care/Previously in Care of/ or in the Care of an authority outside of England in their admission arrangements unless they are faith schools. In relation to faith schools we have not seen any impact where applications are made on time. However due to the movement of children in the care system, late applications can sometimes mean that Children in Care not of the faith, have not been offered a place. Exception cannot be not made, as they are not being ranked sufficiently high enough against over-subscription criterion. In those cases alternative school places have been secured.

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:

When starting school and transferring between first/middle/high or primary and secondary schools parents have access to an online system in which they can submit their preferences. When transferring to Further education SENCOs are asked to provide SEND services with a young person's preferences in the Autumn Term of Year 11. Parents and young people can also submit their preferences as part of the phase transfer process and via EHCP annual review. These preferences are processed by the WCF SEND team who undertake consultations with relevant schools to ensure a suitable placement is secured. The SEND team will formally consult with the school on the EHC Plan and in addition the Admissions team will provide the information to the schools Admissions Officer. This enables pupils with a plan to be included on the ranking list for the intake cohort. Governing Bodies/Academy Trusts thus consider those with an EHCP prior to consideration of others in their ranking lists to avoid the need for schools to admit over the PAN, wherever possible.

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 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 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:

We have developed a robust system of close working between Virtual School, Social Care and School Admissions to ensure that the needs of the individual children are matched to the right education setting, prior to making applications to move school. Admission protocols for Worcestershire CLA are shared with schools and in training with Designated Teachers. This approach works well and the children in our care, being educated in our area are served well.

The Virtual School (VS) works very closely with other local authority areas to ensure that the interests of our children are well served in other areas. Where initial concerns exist about the suitability of provision, further information is provided and communications between Worcestershire VS, social care, foster carer and the receiving school take place.

There have been a few concerns raised by education settings about children who are looked after by other local authorities but educated in our area, where those local authority areas do not have a robust process for ensuring that the needs of individual children are matched to the right education setting prior to applying. We

have worked closely through our LA regional meetings to share good practice to ensure those instances are minimised and resolutions are sought quickly.

It would provide greater clarity and strength for Local Authorities if the School Admissions Code regarding the in-year admission of looked after and previously looked after children were more robust. Whilst Local Authorities have the power to direct maintained schools and, via the Secretary of State, academies, this is often a very lengthy process which can leave vulnerable children and young people without provision for long periods and may not ultimately result in admission to the school in question.

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:

Pupils with an EHCP are considered alongside all other pupils in line with the published Admissions Criteria, as is required by law. Schools use the Worcestershire graduated response and their ordinarily available offer to ascertain the level of support required by any child with SEN. If appropriate they can apply for higher level needs funding.

Where a school place cannot be found immediately for a child or young person the relevant team within WCF SEND services will work closely with families to provide interim arrangements whilst a suitable placement is secured. Some schools report significant financial pressures and a few are reluctant to admit a child with SEN that will have to have their needs met from the existing school budget and ordinarily available part way through the year. The Director for All Age Disability now chairs all placement decisions and directs schools when necessary to admit children. We are using our data, decision making, sharing of good practice and provision of SEND improvement projects for schools to develop more well informed, evidence-based decisions, in areas such as delayed entry decision making. Worcestershire are also part of the Delivering Better Value Programme of which transition is a key theme and the SEND and AP Change Programme Partnership.

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	6	2
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	15	57
Total	21	59

iv. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

With the introduction of in-year co-ordination 3 years ago, and the opportunity to develop the Fair Access Protocol with settings, that ensured a more robust and accountable Fair Access Protocol. Early identification of children that qualify for Fair Access has greatly reduced the length of time a referral takes and the number of days lost to education is reduced. Close working partnership with schools in developing the protocol created an objective process that is fair for all and ensures that children are placed much quicker. The use of a weighting system has been embedded to ensure that all schools take a fair share of eligible pupils and that it is no longer the case that only schools with vacancies admit those transferring in-year. The weighting system has removed to a great extent, subjective decision making, ensuring objective placements. There has been a more cohesive,

collaborative approach which has benefitted the children and young people of Worcestershire. By working collaboratively with stakeholders through Fair Access, and Chairs of Fair Access, we are able to further develop the process for the benefit of Worcestershire children, continually improving the system for all. We did expect to continue to increase the number of children being placed promptly through Fair Access, and have seen a significant increase in children being placed through the process. We are asking FAP's to share good practice and use a broader set of data to have oversight of access to education in their area.

In addition we have seen a much higher number of children arriving new to the UK, this has greatly increased the number of children being referred through Fair Access with schools capacity to accommodate higher numbers of children in-year, being impacted. Our Sufficiency and Place Planning Team work effectively with the Admissions Team and all stakeholders, to ensure we are able to meet demand, but this does mean however, expectations on children being admitted through Fair Access over and above PAN to schools that are already full, has been challenging.

v. 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

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

Great transparency through data sharing and a collective approach to challenges is improving the relationships between all stakeholders and joint co-produced solutions are now made. We continue to build on those joint challenges and relationships in Worcestershire to develop consistent culture and practice.

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-year admissions saw a significant increase of c35% from last year. Pupil movement continues to grow. We continue to work together with stakeholders to ensure children can be placed and use Fair Access, where we are not able to provide a school place in the first instance.

- 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):

We would welcome making in-year co-ordination a statutory requirement for all schools in any new Code developments. In this way we can continue to work for the benefit of children and young people in Worcestershire. We would not wish to see schools decide to opt out of co-ordination in future years, to the detriment of any child or young person.

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?

We have not made use of the direction process in Worcestershire, but have a number of examples whereby we have brokered senior level meetings between admission authorities as well as other local authorities, this allows all parties to understand issues with placing. We have worked collaboratively to ensure that children are admitted.

Our proactive approach to partnership working produces good results and relationships that benefit young people, rather than going through the direction process, which is sometime lengthy and does not foster good working relationships.

Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2024.

A well organised survey with the right balance of questions and details required.

Thank you for completing this template.

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