



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**Royal Borough of Greenwich
to be provided by
31 October 2023**

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31 October 2023 and earlier if possible**

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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				✓
Year 7				✓
Other relevant years of entry				✓

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

Every resident child who applied for a school place in the co-ordinated rounds has been provided with a school place by the start of the academic year in September 2023.

In the primary cohort, every resident who applied on time for a reception place received an offer or allocation on Primary National Offer Day, with 99% of residents receiving a preference offer, of which 91.1% receiving their first preference offer. This is broadly in line with the previous two years.

In the secondary cohort, due to more applications than places available in the borough, 96% of residents who applied on time for a Year 7 place received an offer or allocation on the Secondary NOD with the remaining 4% (139 in total) receiving an offer or allocation by 31 March 2023. This was due to a combination of factors, including Greenwich schools being more popular with local and neighbouring residents; a higher number of places being reserved in mainstream secondary schools (i.e., 73 more places reserved than previous year) for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have a mainstream school named in their Education and Health Care (EHC) Plan; a planned reduction of numbers in two schools to support their improvement journeys and financial resilience; and a free school that was planned to come on stream in September 2023 has been delayed. Given this, measures had to be taken to create additional temporary capacity, which enabled the local authority to secure the places required to place all residents who required a school place, including all late applicants before the start of the academic year in September 2023.

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**:

In line with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code, Royal Borough of Greenwich's published admissions arrangements give priority to looked after and previously looked after children in its oversubscription criteria. Acting as the home local authority and maintaining authority, all looked after and previously looked after children who required a school place have secured a place at their first preference school for September 2023. We have developed strong working relationships with colleagues in our Virtual School and they have provided training to practitioners in our Safeguarding and Social Care Service to ensure that applications for looked after and previously looked after children are made on time.

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:

Children with SEND are served very well by Royal Greenwich. The SEND Code of Practice clearly sets out how the transitions for children with EHC Plans should be managed. Royal Greenwich's SEND Assessment and Review Service works with parents and schools, ensuring timely consultation and naming of provision on their EHC Plans within the stipulated timescales, and communicates this to the Admissions Service.

In the 2023 admissions round, a total of 144 secondary places and 25 primary places were reserved and offered outside of the co-ordinated round respectively, to children with SEND who have a mainstream school named in their EHC Plan. The number of places reserved this year were 73 and 10 more secondary and primary places respectively, compared to 2022).

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:

In line with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code, Royal Borough of Greenwich's published admissions arrangements give priority to looked after and previously looked after children in its oversubscription criteria.

In addition to keeping accurate records of offers made to all looked after and previously looked after children, our in-year admissions and Virtual School work in close collaboration within a wider division, to ensure that all looked after and previously looked after children seeking a school place in-year, are placed in their preference schools. Where there are no places available in the relevant year group in a preference school, our teams work collaboratively to engage with school heads, social workers and other relevant professionals to identify the school that best meets the children's or young people's needs.

There are however challenging situations such as when trying to secure a school place in another local authority area, or where a preference school may seem to have a disproportionate number of disadvantaged children and young people requiring additional behavioural support on their roll while operating at capacity. In such situations, being able to exercise the right to appeal has been helpful to

secure a school place for a looked after or previously looked after child. In other instances, having conversations with schools and advising about right to appeal and guidance on LAC being given admission priority have helped.

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:

Our pathway system has helped us in being able to support children that move into the borough with obvious complex needs, but no formal diagnosis or evidence of any needs' assessments having previously taken place. This entails Admissions, SEND, Education Psychology and Inclusive Services working closely together to consider appropriate education settings for these children.

Once a school place is secured for such children and young people, our pathway system also provides the framework for the support measures required by the children and young people's in securing an Education and Health Care (EHC) Plan as soon as practicable. This has helped to prevent any unnecessary delays in providing appropriate education provision for children and young people with SEND in a timely fashion.

In addition, where applicable, children with additional needs and/or disabilities are considered under the Fair Access Protocol to identify a placement and agree a bespoke/child-focused package of support. This may include providing an Outreach Learning Mentor to support the child or young person in settling into a new mainstream school; referrals being made to partner agencies and/or commissioning an alternative education placement so that the child's needs can be better understood in determining provision for the longer term. Various services and agencies attend our Fair Access Panel meetings to promote a team around the child approach.

It is at times challenging when trying to secure a place at a school in another local authority area for children with an EHCP, especially if the school is operating at capacity or states that it has taken a disproportionate number of children and young people with additional needs. Consultation timescales are on occasions not

met, resulting in young people with an EHCP being out of school for an unacceptably long period.

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 <i>children</i> admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	70	21
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	34	94
Total	104	115

- 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?

While the number of secondary aged children admitted through FAP has increased slightly in the 2022/23 academic year, in general, the total number of referrals to our fair access protocol has reduced significantly, when compared to 2021/22. This is due to the changes made to the eligibility criteria in our protocol, to ensure that it better serves eligible children and young people unable to secure a school place through the normal in-year admissions process. This has meant that our fair access protocol is now only being used as the last resort after all efforts to secure

a school place through the normal in-year admissions process has not been successful. These changes have also ensured that all schools within our local area are now taking a fair share of children admitted through FAP with community schools now not being disadvantaged by taking a disproportionately high number of children placed via FAP when compared to last year's data. For example, in 2022/23, 18% of secondary aged children admitted through FAP were placed in community schools, compared to 55% in the previous year (please note: there are three community secondary schools and thirteen own admission authority schools in the borough).

- 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:

Our fair access protocol now requires greater accountability from referring schools on actions already taken to manage or resolve behavioural challenges prior to bringing to FAP. This has ensured that schools are more conscious about the need to have explored a wide range of interventions to support children and young people prior to using the fair access protocol as the last resort. In addition, our fair access protocol also provides behaviour and integration support to help those children and young people finding it difficult to manage in mainstream education.

In addition, all schools in the borough buy-in to our fair access protocol, with all secondary schools represented on our secondary panel while our primary panel is attended on a rota basis in accordance with our primary planning areas. The multi-professional/agency nature of our panels also ensures that children and young people are very well served through the wealth of professional knowledge and support available on our panels.

While we continue to work on ensuring local authority's oversight on movement of pupils through the in-year process, the existing legal framework which is without a mandatory LA co-ordinated in-year admissions process is making the process of ensuring greater equity between community schools and other own admission authority schools challenging. However, through our regular fair access review process, we have been able to emphasise collective responsibility on decisions being made about vulnerable children, which has evidently yielded a significant improvement.

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:

Greenwich Admissions Service co-ordinates the in-year admissions process for all community schools in our area and through a local agreement, also manages the in-year admissions process for all academy primary schools in the borough. This has meant that, for the primary sector, the in-year process is simpler for residents to navigate.

Although voluntary aided primary and secondary schools, and secondary academies manage their own in-year admissions process, the establishment of the School Admissions Officers' Forum locally this year aims to make the in-year admissions process better for local children.

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 have recently established a School Admissions Officers Forum, creating a platform for the local authority and all own admission authorities in the local area to collaborate, network and develop ways to make the local school admissions processes simpler and fairer in supporting families through the school admissions process. The inaugural meeting was held in September 2023, which provides an avenue where admissions stakeholders from the Council, own admission authorities (OAAs) and schools are able to share good practice, exchange views, knowledge, and experience to aid compliance with the School Admissions Code 2021, School Admission Appeals Code 2022 and all other relevant legislation while putting children and young people and their families in the centre of the local school admissions (including the in-year) process.

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?

There is a growing number of in-year admission applications received for children and young people who have newly arrived in the borough or the country, some of whom have additional needs that are severe or complex in nature and requiring a significant level of support.

In addition, a significant number of children now being admitted through FAP present with some complex needs but with no EHC Plan. This includes children where the severity of need is known or whose needs are becoming more complex by the day. This has meant that schools are now becoming more concerned about the cumulative effect of managing the several often complex cases on availability of resources.

Lastly, the lack of statutory requirement for local authorities to coordinate the in-year admissions process within their local areas has meant that the in-year admissions process remains fragmented, making it more complex and difficult for parents to navigate. We recognise that the defunct Schools White Paper published by the DfE was intended to address this anomaly, by establishing a new statutory framework on pupil movement between schools and across local authority areas. The continued lack of local authority oversight on in-year admissions co-ordination continues to present a significant safeguarding risk for vulnerable children, which we hope that the government will urgently address.

Section 4 - Feedback

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

Report template is simple and easy to complete.

Thank you for completing this template.

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