

**Template for**

**Local Authority Report**

to

**The Schools Adjudicator**

from

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets Local Authority**

to be provided by

**31 October 2023**

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**Please email your completed report to:** [**Office of the Schools Adjudicator**](mailto:osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk) **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**

1. 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.
2. 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 Release[[1]](#footnote-2) and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002[[2]](#footnote-3).
3. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
   1. “in-year admissions”: This means admissions (that is children admitted to a school and not applications for places):
4. 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
5. 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).
   1. Not applicable means at questions:
6. Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
7. Section 2: Ai - iv that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
8. Section 2: B.i. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
9. Section 2: C.v. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.
10. 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.
11. 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](#Text69)

## 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 |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:   **Year 7** –Tower Hamlets received 3289 resident applications this year, a slight increase when compared to 2022. 88.3% of families in Tower Hamlets were offered a place at one of their preferred schools. 65% secured a place at their first preference school, which was a decrease from last year, and 85% secured a place at one of their top three preferences, again this was a decrease. These preference outcome figures were adversely impacted by a significant increase in the number of children seeking places this year; a small number of heavily oversubscribed secondary schools; a reduction to the PAN in one school due to its paused building expansion works; the delayed opening of a new Free School (Mulberry Academy London Dock). All of which necessitated the opening of six additional bulge classes. Despite these challenges, Tower Hamlets fared well when its preference outcomes were compared with the average across London. The borough position further improved post National offer Day.  **Reception** – Continued falling birth rates and increases in outward-migration, resulted in a further reduction to the borough’s reception cohort. Tower Hamlets received 3039 applications this year, which was a slight decrease when compared to last year. 91.7% of families secured a place at their 1st preference (an increase of 2.4% from last year, ranking Tower Hamlets in the top five of London boroughs). 97.7% secured a place at one of their top three preferences. Again, Tower Hamlets compared well with the average for London. |

## Looked after and previously looked after children

1. 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

* + 1. 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

* + 1. 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

* + 1. 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**:  All schools in Tower Hamlets give the highest priority to looked after children, previously looked after children and adopted children previously in care abroad in their admissions policies. This ensures that all looked after children in the borough are offered a place at a preferred school under the Local Authority’s coordinated admission arrangements. |

## 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:  The SEND Code of Practice clearly sets out how the transitions for children with EHC Plans should be managed. Tower Hamlets SEN Service works with parents and schools, ensuring timely consultation and naming of provision on their EHCPs within the stipulated timescales.  Children with disabilities or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which names the school as part of the plan, are allocated a place before other applicants. The Local Authority makes every effort to meet parental preference, but the placement must be suitable for the child’s age, ability, aptitude and special educational need and be compatible with the efficient education of other children with whom the child would be educated and the efficient use of resources. The LA seeks to ensure that children with EHCP’s do not become unduly concentrated in a few schools.  There is an ongoing challenge of children and young people coming through at nursery and reception age, who have additional needs (whether SEND or not), as a result Covid 19 delays and absences from settings and services. These needs are not always known to professionals from the outset and therefore cannot be shared at an early stage with schools. This impacts on behaviour, social interaction and communication, inc. speech and language, which can be a challenge for schools to address in the current climate.  The Admissions and SEND Services share all the information they have available with settings. |

# Section 2 - In-year admissions

## **Looked after children and previously looked after children**

1. 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

1. 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

1. 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

1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you wish, please give examples of any good or poor practice or difficulties which support or exemplify your answers about **in-year admissions** forlooked after and previously looked after children:   The LA takes a multi-agency joint working approach to enable the early identification and placement of looked after children outside of the normal points of entry. All schools in Tower Hamlets give the highest priority to looked after children and previously looked after children in the in-year admission arrangements and schools are aware of their responsibilities in relation to admitting these children.  However, we continue to see some delays in the placement of Tower Hamlets looked after children in other LAs across England. This has been mainly due to place pressures and or delays in the local admission system. |

## **Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

* + 1. 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

* + 1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| * + 1. 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 a successful multi agency approach to supporting new arrivals to the area (mostly from abroad) with identified and very complex needs, but without prior UK assessment for an EHCP. Early Help Assessments and signposting to SEN Services facilitate a smoother transition into schools, which benefits both the child and school. This ensures that children can access the most suitable placement at the earliest opportunity, as well as ensuring that mainstream schools can quickly access inclusion support.  The admission of children with known SEN is undertaken in a timely manner, and instances where a child has an EHCP are immediately passed to the SEN Service, usually within 2-3 days of receipt of application. Where there is SEN, or reported SEN, the Admissions Service will raise this with the SEN Service for its view, and whether or not the child is known and the SEN Service has received information from another LA. The SEN Service is also invited to give a view on complex mainstream admissions, where there is no EHCP (e.g. complex medical need).  There is an acknowledged local and national challenge with meeting high levels of SEN in mainstream settings, as well as a shortage of specialist placements in the local and regional area. Providing placements for the most complex of needs can be difficult. Some pupils have to be placed in a mainstream school with a very high level of support, whilst arrangements for more specialist placements are made. |

## Fair access protocol

1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you have not been able to tick both boxes above, please explain why:   Not applicable |

1. 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 | 10 | 57 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 1 | 31 |
| Total | 11 | 88 |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. 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?   Whilst there were significantly fewer in-year admissions from the previous year (2634 from 3101), there is still a higher number of children being admitted due to a greater level of movement between LAs when compared to pre-pandemic levels. This are also higher numbers of children with complex needs, partially due to delayed assessment as a result of the pandemic. A greater number of children are therefore requiring a ‘Hard to Place’ admission plan under the local Fair Access Protocol. |

1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Please provide any comments you wish on the protocol not covered above:   The Tower Hamlet’s fair access protocol already incorporates the changes to the Admissions Code and has recently been aligned with the DFE guidance on Behaviour and Suspensions (2022) and the aims of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan (2023) These will further support the timely admission of vulnerable children and those who meet the criteria for ‘Hard to Place’.  As all schools in the borough are part of the FAP arrangements, there is a robust system in place for in-year, vulnerable admissions and the vast majority can be placed within the statutory timeframe. Where there are exceptional circumstances, there is a robust assessment process in place to ensure that children and families receive the support they need and admission to an appropriate education placement is prioritised.  Tower Hamlets has seen a significant increase in the number vulnerable admissions over the past 3 years, including many children entering the country as asylum seekers and refugees. There is a priority system for these families and assessment will include the meeting of basic need and the provision of school uniform and equipment to ensure that the child can be school ready as soon as possible. Schools have worked very well with the LA and with each other to support the local FAP processes.  There continues to be a strain on resources in both schools and the LA as a result of the increased complexity of many admissions with prior poor or non-attendance being a particular concern. This requires the LA to provide a reintegration plan which may include an interim placement in Alternative Provision. The LA has invested additional human and material resources in ensuring that there is the capacity to admit children in this category within the statutory timeframe and to provide support to schools to do so, principally where schools are being requested to take children over number in a particular year group. |

## 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 |

## Other points on in-year admissions

1. 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

1. 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

|  |
| --- |
| 1. 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:   Coordinated in-year admission is not a statutory requirement, however, it falls within the remit of Tower Hamlets Local Authority school admission arrangements. Tower Hamlets sees this an essential safeguarding provision that provides the LA with the most effective way of ensuring that children missing from education can be identified and supported back into school quickly, particularly vulnerable children and children who have experienced more complex problems and would therefore face tougher obstacles to them getting back into suitable education.  School Year In-Year applications processed with at least one preference:  2022/23 2634  2021/22 3101  2020/21 3168  2019/20 2180  We have seen demand grow from 2180 applications in (2019-20) to 2634 (2022-23), peaking at above 3000 in (2020/21) and (2021/22). This overall increase in numbers is not expected to fall back to pre-pandemic levels. Many of these children are new arrivals to the borough, including from abroad. Although, Tower Hamlets has not seen high numbers of asylum seekers and refugee children it still experiences very high migration when compared to its statistical neighbours. |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. 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):   There is currently no requirement for LAs to co-ordinate in-year applications. However, Tower Hamlets LA remains optimistic that the government will introduce this as a statutory requirement to further strengthen the in-year admissions system and children’s safeguarding nationally. |

# 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?

|  |
| --- |
| The LA has implemented a new school organisation, sufficiency, and pupil place planning strategy as result of significant demographic changes across London, leading to downturn in the primary pupil population. It would be helpful if the OSA’s annual reporting could include a survey of LAs so that we can contrast and compare the effect population change is having on school admissions and school capacity across the whole of the country. |

# Section 4 - Feedback

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

|  |
| --- |
| The format of the report is straightforward with plenty of opportunity given to provide any relevant additional information. |

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to [Office of the Schools Adjudicator](mailto:OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk) by 31 October 2023

1. [Department for Education Statistical First Release](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [The Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/1983/contents/made) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)