



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

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

**City of Bristol 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?**

Table 1 How to describe your level of challenge

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:

For primary admissions applications fell by 4% compared to 2024. Overall outcomes were broadly the same compared to 2024, with 92% of families being offered a school place at their first preference school and 99% of families offered a school place at one of their preference schools.

For secondary admissions applications fell by 8% compared to 2024. This year 82% of families were offered a school place at their first preference school compared to 78% in 2024. The number of families being offered a school place at one of their preference schools increased from 94% in 2024 to 96% in 2025.

There were 4,647 on time first preferences for YR in 24/25 compared to 4,524 in 25/26. This is a difference of 123. The PAN in 25/26 for YR was 5,450 resulting in a surplus of 926.

There were 4,633 on time first preferences for Y7 in 24/25 compared to 4,369 in 25/26. This is a difference of 264. The PAN in 25/26 for Y7 was 4,612 (before breaches/reductions through variation) resulting in a surplus of 243.

The challenge going forward is managing this surplus. The LA are publishing the School Organisation Strategy in December which details the strategic approach to pupil place planning.

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**:

The Virtual School has a strong working relationship with the admissions team to ensure oversight of applications and offers for children in care and the provision of any necessary guidance and support. The experience in other local authority areas generally positive due to the support received to help social workers and carers in the application process.

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 mainstream admissions process does not apply to children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP); these children are admitted through the statutory EHCP process. Where a school is named in Section I of the EHCP and is one of those described in Section 38(3) of the Children & Families Act 2014, the school is legally required to admit the child, regardless of whether it is oversubscribed. Oversubscription criteria do not apply in these cases. The only lawful grounds for a school to refuse to be named are those set out in the SEND Code of Practice and relevant legislation, such as where admission would be incompatible with the efficient education of others and no reasonable steps could overcome that incompatibility.

Bristol City Council's Placement Planning Forum reviews current and projected demand for EHCP places, allocating school places that meet each child's needs and considering the views of children and their families. The Forum also ensures resources are allocated to deliver the provision specified in Section F of the EHCP.

The SEND Assessment, Planning & Review Team and mainstream admissions have an agreed process for sharing information during key stage transfers, including a dedicated link role within the statutory SEND team, to ensure all children named in Section I are included in place allocations.

The local authority continues to face increasing pressure on both mainstream and specialist SEND placements due to rising EHCP demand. To address this, Bristol has expanded specialist provision, invested in new resource bases, and supported mainstream schools to develop inclusive practice. The new Inclusive Learning Service provides targeted outreach, training, and specialist advice to help schools meet the needs of children with SEND and prevent escalation to more specialist settings. These efforts are part of our ongoing strategy to ensure sufficiency of suitable, high-quality placements for all children with SEND across the city.

However, national funding pressures present a significant challenge for schools in delivering the provision specified in EHCPs. While schools are committed to meeting the needs of children with SEND, the increasing complexity of needs and rising numbers of EHCPs are not always matched by corresponding increases in funding. This can impact the ability of schools to fully deliver the support and interventions detailed in Section F of the EHCP, and places additional strain on school budgets and resources. The local authority continues to work with schools and partners to advocate for adequate funding and to explore creative solutions, but this remains a key area of concern.

Academies feature heavily in the secondary sector, and the local authority has experienced challenges with mutual resource agreements, which can sometimes delay the 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?

Table 2 Overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions

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:

A reduction in application by 5% this year compared to 2024. In 2024 2,431 applications were made compared to 2,304 in 2025. The number of in-year school appeals also reduced from 106 in 2024 to 93 in 2025. It is important to note all secondary schools are own admission authority schools, with Bristol City Council coordinating in-year admissions of 3 of the 24 schools. Sufficiency of secondary school places is challenging accounting for most school appeals and placements via the Fair Access Protocol.

The picture is mixed for primary provision. Bristol City Council is the admission authority for 27 of the 104 schools. We coordinate in-year admissions for 40 schools in total. The remaining 64 primary settings administer their own in-year school applications. Currently there is more flexibility in primary provision to meet parental preference.

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:

The in-year admissions process generally works well for children in our care as admissions authorities recognise the need to prioritise and respond to the need for a school place when a child in care has moved home and requires a new setting. There have been some challenges, particularly for children living beyond the local authority, in ensuring timely responses and offers from schools. In these situations the virtual school has worked with other local authority partners and acted swiftly to ensure a provision is secured. For children with an EHCP that move home there can be additional barriers to securing timely provision due to the availability of suitable provision and need to secure a positive response to consultation. However, for children with no EHCP who require a mainstream school place there are positive examples of good joint working across authorities and with local schools and trusts to secure a school place as soon as possible. For previously looked-after children there have been situations where the school of preference has not been immediately secured due to the school being over PAN and support and advice has been provided to parents and carers in next steps to secure a provision.

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

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:

In-year admissions for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are managed through both statutory and mainstream processes, depending on whether the child has an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

For children with an EHCP, admissions are handled via the statutory process. The Placement Planning Panel meets regularly to review individual cases and allocate places, taking into account both sufficiency and the specific needs of each child. For example, in 2025, the panel considered a Year 5 pupil with moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs. After consulting with both the preferred and nearest suitable schools and reviewing the proportion of EHCP pupils against the school's PAN, a place was allocated in line with statutory requirements. Where local maintained provision was unavailable, the panel authorised a referral to independent provision, ensuring the child's needs were met without delay.

There are also instances where a change of placement is required mid-year due to a breakdown in provision. In such cases, the SEND team follows established protocols to consult with multiple schools and secure a suitable place. Interim arrangements, such as Education Other Than at School (EOTAS), are sometimes put in place to ensure continuity of education while a long-term solution is identified.

Multi-agency collaboration is a key feature of good practice. For example, a Year 6 pupil with severe attendance issues and undiagnosed needs was supported by the Education Welfare Service, the parent, the school, and the SEND team. This resulted in a successful in-year application to three schools, a dual registration arrangement, and ongoing support while an EHCP assessment was under appeal. This approach reduced the risk of the child 'missing education' and ensured continued support.

For children with SEND who do not have an EHCP, the mainstream admissions process applies. The local authority works closely with schools and families to ensure reasonable adjustments and support are in place from the outset. For instance, a recent case involved a Year 7 pupil with dyslexia and anxiety who had not attended school regularly. The Education Welfare Service supported the family with a late in-year application, and the receiving school implemented a tailored support plan, including literacy interventions and pastoral support, to facilitate a successful transition.

The local authority also monitors the proportion of children with SEND admitted in-year and provides guidance to schools on the graduated response and ordinarily available provision, helping to ensure consistency and equity across all settings.

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:

We have not reviewed the Primary FAP protocol since 2023. Under new leadership we are about to review the service and are currently commissioning ISOS Partnership to assist with consulting with the workforce on renewing the protocol. New protocol due for February 2026.

- i. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025?

Table 3 How many children were admitted to school under fair access protocol

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	3	25
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	3	299
Total	6	324

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?

- Bristol have seen a steady increase of FAPs over the last few years, most cases are children new to the city but because the secondary schools are full, they have to come through FAP to be allocated.
- Bristol have had an increase in PEXs over the years that also leads to increases of PEXs coming to FAP too.
- There is also a significant number of children 'returning from EHE' which has increased a lot in the last few years.

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:

Bristol children are served well with most children referred to the Fair Access Protocol. Schools and academies are supported by the IncludED service with FAP support meetings with parents to support reintegration. Support with Alternative Learning Provision can be part of this package or access to a multi-disciplinary team around the family.

102 children referred to FAP - who weren't placed – this due to either a direct offer being made or the child was not eligible under the FAP protocol where an alternative source of support was considered.

E. Directions to maintained

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)?

Table 4 How many directions did the local authority make

Total number of children	Of which, looked after	Of which, not looked after
1	1	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%

- 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) Sufficiency of secondary school places remains a challenge with high number of children and young people sourcing school places via the Fair Access Protocol or the school appeals 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?

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 2024