

**Template for**

**Local Authority Report**

to

**The Schools Adjudicator**

from

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets Local Authority**

to be provided by

**31 October 2022**

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**Please email your completed report to:** [**Office of the Schools Adjudicator**](mailto:osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk) **by 31 October 2022 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 for 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. Local authorities do not have to include this introduction and guidance in their locally published report.
2. In 2020 and 2021, we asked far fewer questions than in previous years, asking only for the minimum information required by the Code. This was in response to the pressures on local authorities and others in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, we have again sought to keep the information requested to the minimum. We have, at the request of the Department for Education, asked a small number of additional questions relating to the impact of the new Code which came into force on 1 September 2021.
3. The new Code also changes the period to be covered by reports to the adjudicator and the deadline for submitting reports to the adjudicator. **This year’s report must cover the 2021/2022 academic year and be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 31 October 2022.**

**Guidance on completing the template**

1. In a departure from previous practice, we have included all the guidance on completing specific parts of the template in this section. We hope that this will be helpful. This is in response to feedback that including guidance and definitions in the body of the template could make the report harder for readers to follow and less accessible. 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-1) and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002[[2]](#footnote-2).
3. Guidance on specific questions and/or meaning of specific terms in this report:
   1. “in-year admissions”: This means admission 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** admission during the course of any school year after the end of the statutory waiting list period (31 December) in normal years of admission.
   2. Not applicable means at questions:

Section 1: B.i. - B.iv. that there were no children falling within the relevant definition.

Section 1: B.v. that there were no schools for which the local authority was the admission authority at 1 September 2021.

Section 1: B.vi. that there were no schools in the local authority’s area for which the local authority was not the admission authority at 1 September 2021.

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

Section 2: C.i. that there were no children falling within the definition.

Section 2: D.iv. that there were no hard to place children referred to the protocol.

1. 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.
2. 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 point of admission](#Text69)

## Co-ordination

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. 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 3172 applications this year, a slight decrease of 0.4 per cent, when compared to 2021. 91.4 per cent of families in Tower Hamlets, were offered a place at one of their preferred schools. 69.5% secured a place at their first preference school, a percentage point increase on last year, and 88.2% secured a place at one of their top three preferences. Tower Hamlets fared well when compared to the average across London.

**Reception** – Falling birth rates; socio-economic factors; out-migration, exacerbated by the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic, have resulted in a continued reduction in the primary pupil population. Tower Hamlets received 3048 applications this year, a decrease of 6 per cent when compared to last year. 89.27% secured a place at their 1st preference (almost a percentage point increase on last year) school and 96.7% secured a place at one of their top three preferences. Again, Tower Hamlets fared well when compared to the average across 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

* + 1. Please confirm that your local authority has included children adopted from state care outside England in its definition of previously looked after children in admission arrangements for schools for which it is the admission authority

Yes No Not applicable

* + 1. How confident are you that all other admission authorities in your area have included children adopted from state care outside England in their definitions of previously looked after children in admission arrangements for schools for which they are the admission authority?

Confident all have  Confident some have Not aware of whether all or some have Not applicable

|  |
| --- |
| vii 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 increasing challenge of children and young people coming through at nursery and reception age, who have additional needs (whether SEND or not), as a result of Covid 19 delays and absences from settings and services. These needs are not always known to professionals and therefore cannot be shared 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

## **Effect of Code changes on in-year admissions**

Please provide any comments you wish to make on the effect of the changes to the Code’s provisions for in-year admissions. It would be particularly helpful to have comments on whether you think the changes have made it easier or not for parents to secure places for children in-year?

Tower Hamlets has a robust system for in-year admissions to deal with a high number of applications. The LA’s coordinated system ensures that children are able to access school places quickly and that those that are considered hard to place are identified and distributed evenly across schools in the area.

The LA has continued to experience particular pressures with in-year admissions, due to its fairly mobile population. However, a local commitment to process and make in-year admissions offers to children out of school within 10 school days is achieved in the overwhelming majority of cases. In-year transfers between Tower Hamlets schools continue to be dealt with on a termly basis, with offers made within statutory timescales.

Tower Hamlets has seen a significant increase with in-year applications, from 2180 first preferences (2019-20), to 3101 (2020-21) and 3101 first preferences (2021-22). This has a significant impact on resources being able to meet our statutory duties, which can impact on timescales in a very small number of cases.

## **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 do 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 your **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 have seen 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 joint approach to 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 pupil and school. Ensuring that these children can access the most suitable placement at the earliest opportunity. Reducing the need for these children to first be accommodated in mainstream provision or 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 any admission form. Where there is SEN, or reported SEN, the Admissions Service raise this with the SEN Service for their view, and whether or not they are known and have 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). |

|  |
| --- |
| * + 1. If you wish, please provide any comments about **in-year admissions** in respect of other children:   Not applicable. |

## 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 2021 and 31 July 2022?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of school | Number of Primary aged children admitted | Number of Secondary aged children admitted |
| Community and voluntary controlled | 6 | 66 |
| Foundation, voluntary aided and academies | 1 | 36 |
| Total | 7 | 102 |

1. How well do you consider hard to place children are served by the fair access protocol 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. It would be particularly helpful to have any comments on the impact of the Code changes on the operation of the FAP in your area and the ability to secure places for vulnerable children:   The Tower Hamlet’s fair access protocol already incorporates the changes to the Admissions Code and further revisions form part of a bi-annual review which is currently underway. 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 good assessment process in place to ensure that families receive the support they need and admission to an education placement is prioritised.  Tower Hamlets has seen a significant increase in the number of in-year and 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 child can be school ready as soon as possible. Schools have worked very well with the LA and with each other to support the increase in in-year admissions within the existing FAP arrangements.  However, this has put a strain on resources in both schools and the LA and any additional funding attached to these places often follows at a considerable lag from the point of admission. 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 they are being requested to take children over number in a particular year group. |

1. **Directions**

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022 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 |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. If you wish, please provide any other comments on the admission of children **in-year** not previously raised:   There is currently no requirement for LAs to co-ordinate in-year applications. It is regrettable that this change was not made to the revised School Admissions Code 2021 as there are many advantages for having co-ordinated in-year admissions. It was encouraging to see the co-ordination of in-year mentioned as the Government White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’ earlier this year. Tower Hamlets remains optimistic that this change will come about to strengthen the in-year admissions system 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 been reviewing its 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 country. |

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# Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2023.

|  |
| --- |
| The format of the report is straightforward with plenty of opportunity given to providing 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 31October 2022

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