



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 2024**

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31 October 2024 and earlier if possible**

Contents

Introduction

Guidance on completing the template

Section 1 - Normal points of admission	3
A. Co-ordination.....	3
B. Looked after and previously looked after children.....	4
C. Special educational needs and/or disabilities	4
Section 2 - In-year admissions.....	6
A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 23/24 compared to 22/23?.....	6
B. Looked after children and previously looked after children	6
C. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities	7
D. Fair access protocol.....	8
E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children.....	10
F. Other points on in-year admissions	10
Section 3 - Other matters.....	13
Section 4 - Feedback.....	13

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 23/24 compared to 22/23?**

Year Group	Much less challenging	Less challenging	No change	More challenging	Much more challenging
Reception			✓		
Year 7			✓		
Other relevant years of entry			✓		

Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

In the primary school cohort, all residents who applied on time for a reception place received an offer or allocation on Primary National Offer Day (NOD). Approximately 90% of applicants were offered their first preference, and 99% received an offer for one of their preferred schools. This is broadly in line with the past three years.

In the secondary school cohort, due to the higher number of applications than available places in the borough, 98% of residents who applied on time for a Year 7 place received an offer or allocation on Secondary NOD. Of these, 65% were offered their first preference, maintaining the same rate as in 2022/23. The remaining 2% (equivalent to 74 residents) received an offer or allocation by 28 March 2024. Several factors contributed to this, including increased demand for Greenwich schools from local and neighbouring residents, 11 more places being reserved in mainstream secondary schools for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) with an Education and Health Care (EHC) Plan, and the continued delay of a new free school that had been scheduled to open in the borough in September 2023. To address these challenges, temporary capacity was created, allowing the local authority to secure places for all residents, including late applicants, before the academic year started in September 2024.

As in previous years, more boys than girls were affected by unplaced allocations, with 85% of the unplaced students on NOD being boys. This highlights the ongoing imbalance between the availability of school places for boys and girls in the borough.

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**:

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 our 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 2024. The School Admissions Service has a strong working relationship with colleagues in our Virtual School Service and who in turn work collaboratively with 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

- 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:

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are very well supported in Royal Borough of Greenwich. The SEND Code of Practice provides clear guidance on how transitions for children with Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plans should be managed. The Royal Greenwich SEND Assessment and Review Service works collaboratively with parents and schools to ensure that provisions are consulted on and named in EHC Plans within the required timeframes (Secondary transfer deadline). This information is also shared promptly with the School Admissions Service, allowing for places to be reserved in named mainstream settings outside of the planned admissions co-ordination process. As a result, every child with a mainstream school named on their EHC Plan secured a place at a preferred school in the 2024 admissions rounds.

In 2024, a total of 155 secondary school places and 10 primary school places were reserved and offered outside the planned admissions co-ordination process to children with SEND who had mainstream schools named in their EHC Plans. This represents an increase of 11 reserved places in secondary schools and a decrease of 15 in primary schools compared to 2023.

Section 2 - In-year admissions

A. Which of the following best describes the overall level of challenge for your in-year admissions in 23/24 compared to 22/23?

Phase	Much less challenging	Less challenging	No change	More challenging	Much more challenging
Primary				✓	
Secondary					✓

If you wish, please explain the factors that have changed the level of challenge for your in-year admissions:

There was a significant increase in the number of primary in-year applications in 2023/24 compared to previous years, partly driven by the closure of Holy Family RC Primary School in August 2024. Due to falling rolls many primary schools had spare capacity, ensuring that there were enough places to accommodate pupil movement throughout the year. However, the closure of Holy Family School created localised pressure on places, particularly in KS2 year groups in the west of the borough.

In the secondary sector, the lack of spare capacity at the start of the year made it challenging to accommodate the increased number of in-year applications. This led to difficulties in placing children at risk of being without a school place. In many cases, students were placed through the Fair Access Protocol, requiring schools to go over their usual capacity to admit them. There was particularly high demand for places in Years 8, 10, and 11 in 2023/24, primarily due to new arrivals in the borough.

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:

In accordance with the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code, the Royal Borough of Greenwich's published admissions arrangements prioritise looked-after and previously looked-after children in its oversubscription criteria.

To support this, our School Admissions Service works very closely with the Virtual School Service and other teams within the division to ensure that all looked-after and previously looked-after children seeking a school place mid-year are placed in one of their preferred schools. When no spaces are available in the relevant year group at a preferred school, our teams collaborate with school heads, social workers, and other professionals to find the school that best meets the needs of the child or young person.

However, some challenges arise, particularly when securing a school place in another local authority area or when a preferred school may already have a high number of disadvantaged students requiring additional behavioural support while operating at full capacity. In such cases, exercising the right to appeal has proven useful in securing placements for looked-after or previously looked-after children. Additionally, discussions with schools about the priority given to these children under the School Admissions Code have helped resolve some of these challenges.

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

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 been instrumental in supporting children moving into the borough who have apparent complex needs but without a formal diagnosis or evidence of previous needs assessments. This involves close collaboration between School Admissions, SEND Assessment and Review, Educational Psychology, and Inclusion Services to determine the most appropriate educational settings for these children.

Once a school place is secured, the pathway system provides a framework for implementing the necessary support to help children and young people secure an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHC Plan) as soon as possible. This has been crucial in avoiding delays and ensuring that children with SEND are placed in a suitable school in a timely manner.

Additionally, children with other needs, such as social, emotional and mental health needs, are considered under our Fair Access Protocol to identify suitable placements with tailored support packages. This might involve providing an Outreach Learning Mentor to help the child adjust to a mainstream school, making referrals to partner agencies, or commissioning alternative education placements to better understand the child's needs and develop long-term provision. Our Fair Access Panel meetings, which bring together various services and agencies including the SEND team, foster a "team around the child" approach.

However, challenges arise when trying to secure a school place in another local authority area for children with an EHC Plan. Schools operating at capacity or those already with a disproportionate number of children with additional needs sometimes struggle to accommodate new students. In some cases, consultation timelines are not met, leading to unacceptable delays in placing children with EHC Plans in school.

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:

- i. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	4	16
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	1	115
Total	5	131

- ii. If you have seen a change in the number of children referred to your Fair Access Protocol between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 compared to the previous academic year please indicate what you consider the key reasons for this change to be?

Following a review of the eligibility criteria in our Fair Access Protocol (FAP) in 2022/23, referrals to our Primary FAP in 2023/24 have dropped significantly with most cases now involving schools seeking support in managing eligible children exhibiting social, emotional and mental health needs rather than for the purpose of securing school places. The surplus capacity in our primary schools has contributed to this significant decrease.

In contrast, there has been a significant increase in referrals to our Secondary Fair Access Protocol in 2023/24 compared to the previous year. This rise is largely due to a higher proportion of children new to the country or borough who were unable to secure a school place through the in-year admissions process due to the limited capacity in our secondary schools. Of the 204 cases referred to the FAP in 2023/24, 64% (131 children) were new arrivals in this situation. Consequently, many schools have had to admit students beyond their usual numbers in various year groups. While schools have supported the local authority in this effort, the growing strain on their capacity has made it increasingly difficult to accommodate more students.

- 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:

Children referred to our Fair Access Protocol are very well served as all schools in the borough buy-in to our protocol and ably represented on both the primary and secondary panels. 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 when deciding on matters.

While we continue to ensure that as a local authority, our statutory oversight function on movement of pupils through the in-year process is fulfilled, the existing legal framework which is without a mandatory LA co-ordinated in-year admissions process makes the process of ensuring greater equity between schools challenging. However, through our regular fair access review process, we have continued to emphasise collective responsibility on decisions being made about vulnerable children, which has yielded a significant improvement.

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children¹

How many directions did the local authority make between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 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

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 2023 and 31 July 2024 did you receive
- Significantly fewer applications than last year
 slightly fewer applications than last year
 about the same

¹ It is important that only Directions to maintained schools are included here. Numbers of Directions to academies are already held by the Department.

- 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 2023/2024 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 2023/2024 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:

The Greenwich Admissions Service co-ordinates the in-year admissions process for all community schools in the borough and, through a local agreement, also co-ordinates in-year admissions for academy primary schools. This streamlined approach has made it easier for the local authority to track pupil movements between primary schools and simplified the primary in-year application process for families. However, this is now at risk as some newly converted academy schools have indicated their wish to manage their own in-year admissions making the process for parents more fragmented.

In contrast, secondary in-year admissions have been more challenging due to the varied approaches and multiple admission arrangements that residents must navigate. The significant increase in in-year applications in 2024, combined with limited available spaces in secondary schools, made it difficult for the local authority to track students applying to schools that manage their own in-year admissions. As a result, new arrivals in the borough are at risk of being out of education longer than necessary. These often require having to go through the Fair Access Protocol in order to secure a school place.

To improve the situation, the local authority sends out fortnightly vacancy return requests to all schools to help inform its knowledge of available spaces across all

year groups. This information aids Fair Access Protocol decisions and helps in supporting parents looking to secure school places for their children.

Additionally, the establishment of a local School Admissions Officers' Forum has fostered closer collaboration with schools that manage their own in-year admissions, with the aim of making the in-year admissions process as straight forward as possible for residents.

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):

None.

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?

No.

Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2025.

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 2024