Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Template for

Local Authority Report

to

The Schools Adjudicator

from

London Borough of Hillingdon 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 Release[1] and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002[2].

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**?

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:

Reception Co-ordination
Hillingdon received 3,463 primary school applications this year, marking a 3.2% increase compared to 2024. Across PAN London, there was a 2.1% decline in applications.

On National Offer Day, Hillingdon ensured that every applicant received a school place. The borough ranked highest in West London for first preference offers, 91.51% of children in Hillingdon were offered their first-choice school, exceeding the London average of 87.92%. Also, Hillingdon were ranked first in West London for offering applicants one of their top three preferences, 98.18%.

In total, 98.61% of Hillingdon residents were offered one of their preferences.

This allocation round presented challenges at certain schools where, due to a significant increase in applications and the impact of oversubscription criteria, several siblings were unfortunately not offered places on National Offer Day. This led to considerable parental upset and a rise in appeals. A number of these children did receive offers in subsequent late offer rounds, however for those that appealed, they were not successful. We heard 14 appeals for our community schools.

We have seen a growing number of out-of-cohort applications over the past few years, including some submitted up to a year in advance to help inform schools and parents of pending placements; however, many parents continue to apply during the year their child would naturally enter Reception, which presents challenges when their applications are not ranked highly enough within the oversubscription criteria and therefore cannot be allocated. This means the team has to secure a place for these children at non-preference schools.

Junior co-ordination

We have seen a decrease in the number of junior applications, and this is due to infant and junior schools amalgamating. We oversaw junior co-ordination for 10 infant and junior schools. Going forward this number is due to decrease further as a number of our infant and junior schools have agreed amalgamation.

Year 7 co-ordination

This year the council received 3,626 secondary school applications; reflecting a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Of those, 67.15% of Hillingdon pupils received their first-choice school.

Additionally, 94.12% were offered a place at one of their preferred schools, matching last year's figure. On National Offer Day, Hillingdon successfully offered 100% of applicants a school place. Despite a continued increase in the number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) applying to mainstream secondary schools in Hillingdon, there were no significant pressures this year. Hillingdon experienced a 32% rise in the number of SEND children being placed in mainstream schools compared to the previous year.

Year 10 co-ordination

Hillingdon has four schools within the borough who have Year 10 co-ordination. Two of those schools have opted out of the Local Authority Co-ordination Scheme, meaning applicants must apply to them directly. The remaining two schools, which belong to the same Academy Trust, continue to participate in the coordination process. This year we saw an increase in Year 10 applications for these two schools. In total the team processed 41 applications, 26 of which were submitted after National Offer Day and were therefore treated as late applications.

In recent years we have faced challenges with the two schools that participate in coordination, particularly regarding delays in receiving application outcomes. This issue has been raised with the Academy Trust and Hillingdon Council continues to discuss the future of coordination for their studio schools. The Trust has the option to opt out of the coordination process entirely, taking full responsibility for their admissions.

Hillingdon remains committed to its statutory obligation to inform parents and carers of all Year 9 pupils about schools in or near the Local Authority that accept pupils at the start of Year 10.

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**

For looked after and previously looked after children, we have good communication and promptly confirm status through our information sharing processes between relevant teams. In Hillingdon, our looked after children usually get a place promptly at their preference school. Admissions and Virtual School teams work closely together to ensure that LAC/PLAC status is prioritised in line with the admissions code.

However, around 50% of children that are looked after by Hillingdon reside outside of the borough. As the home authority we notify the authorities where our children are placed. The admissions to school/s for these children can depend on how many other looked after children are placed there. In some local authorities there appears to be greater delay due to there not being enough school places.

Where a child is previously looked after, notification of this status depends on the parent or carer who holds parental responsibility. When this status has been confirmed, Hillingdon prioritises this status in admissions criteria in the same way it does for looked after children. The Hillingdon Admissions team will check with relevant teams if further information is needed.

We may experience some delays when trying to confirm the status of looked after or previously looked after children when they are placed in Hillingdon by another authority. This task is always completed in as timely a way as possible, but it requires a greater resource than gaining confirmation for an applicant open or previously open to Hillingdon Children's Services.

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:

For the last few years, we have seen a significant rise in Year 6 pupils with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) who we are consulting with mainstream schools for placements in Secondary schools.
This process is under continuous review to manage the increase in pupils with an EHCP moving through the phased transfer stage as it is projected there will be a further increase in the number of children moving into a mainstream school in Year 7 with an EHCP. For children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), admission into schools is managed by the SEND EHCP Team. The admission process requires consultation with all settings (including mainstream) and a consultation can only be rejected on the grounds that: the setting is unsuitable for age, ability or aptitude or special educational needs of the child or young person; or it is incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others and the LA shows that there are no reasonable steps that it could take to prevent the incompatibility. The Hillingdon EHCP Team regularly share the SEND census data with our schools to encourage them to be inclusive and support placements at their schools.

Similar to national trends, there continues to be challenges around mainstream schools' confidence in their ability to meet a wide range of special educational needs.

This is being addressed by the SEND & Inclusion service through a co-produced 'Ordinarily Available Provision' framework as well as ongoing support for school leads and SENCOs through Inclusion Network Meetings and Educational Psychology consultations. With an increasing uptake of school leads and SENCOs participating in weekly SEND panels, key stakeholders are understanding of the decision-making process and expectations of settings to meet the needs of

children and young people with SEND. The SEND Team have continued discussions with schools around admissions of children and young people with EHCPs and work hard to secure the parents' preferred setting wherever possible. An Inclusion Consistency Framework is currently being co-produced and there is work on Adaptive Curriculums happening with secondary mainstream schools as we as work on an EBSNA strategy.

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?

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:

We are continuing to experience delays in receiving application outcomes, particularly from secondary schools, who are not always meeting the 15-school-day response requirement. As a result, we are having to follow up with schools for updates, while also managing parental expectations as they seek information on their children's application status.

We have reiterated schools' statutory responsibilities in our weekly bulletin, including the requirement to inform both the local authority and parents of application outcomes within the expected timeframe. We will continue to monitor this closely and take appropriate action where necessary.

Additionally, we are seeing a rise in the number of parents contacting us after pre-admissions meetings, where schools have indicated they cannot meet their child's needs. These cases typically involve children with identified SEND but without a formal diagnosis or an Education, Health and Care Plan. In response, the School Placements and Admissions Team are coordinating meetings with the schools and our SEND Advisory Service to review these cases and explore the support available from the local authority. We are reminding schools of the 'Ordinarily Available Provision' framework and the ongoing support available to school leaders and SENCOs, as there appears to be growing concern around mainstream schools' confidence in meeting a broad range of special educational needs.

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 process works well regarding the Virtual School submitting applications and the timeliness of distribution to schools by the School Placement and Admissions Team. In the main, we obtain offers in a timely manner. Admissions and the Virtual School ensure looked after children apply to schools that are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

The London Inter Authority Admissions Group have an agreed London Protocol for the in-year admission of looked after children. The Protocol has been written in conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance 'Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children'.

However, the speed of the process and the responsiveness of schools can occasionally be slow and delay offers of admission, increasing the length of time that looked after children are without a school place. This appears to be more of an issue the older the child is. When a looked after children is in Year 10 or 11, in-year admissions can be made more complicated by fewer school places or changes of exam boards. In respect of other LAs, it is an inconsistent picture with some LAs placing children quicker than others. It is very dependent on the year

group and availability of suitable provision. This is most often the case where a child is an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child or child/ren with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

SEND processes out of borough are inconsistent and in the main looked after children with an EHCP are out of education for periods of time longer than expected. We ensure that tuition is always provided for those with SEND without a school place; this is commissioned either by the Virtual School or the EHCP team depending on the specific child and situation.

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:

For the last few years, we have seen a significant rise in pupils with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) who were consulting with mainstream schools for placements. For children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), admission into schools is managed by the Hillingdon EHCP Team.

The admission process requires consultation with all settings (including mainstream) and a consultation can only be rejected on the grounds that: a - the setting is unsuitable for age, ability or aptitude or special educational needs of the child or young person; or -it is incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others and the LA shows that there are no reasonable steps that it could take to prevent the incompatibility. Similar to national trends, there continues to be challenges around mainstream schools' confidence in their ability to meet a wide range of special educational needs.

This is being addressed by the SEND & Inclusion service through a co-produced 'Ordinarily Available Provision' framework as well as ongoing support for school leads and SENCOs through Inclusion Network Meetings and Educational Psychology consultations. With an increasing uptake of school leads and SENCOs participating in weekly SEND panels, key stakeholders are understanding of the

decision-making process and expectations of settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The SEND Team have continued discussions with schools around admissions of children and young people with EHCPs and work hard to secure the parents' preferred setting wherever possible. An Inclusion Consistency Framework is currently being co-produced and there is work on Adaptive Curriculums happening with secondary mainstream schools as we work on an EBSNA strategy.

The SEND Team have continued discussions with schools around admissions of children and young people with EHCPs and work hard to secure the parents' preferred setting wherever possible.

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 2024 and 31 July 2025?

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted	Number of Secondary aged children admitted
Community and voluntary controlled	0	0
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	1	75
Total	1	75

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?

We have observed a significant 42% reduction in referral numbers this year. This decline is primarily attributed to a decrease in the number of asylum-seeking families being placed in hotels by the Home Office within Hillingdon. Additionally, schools appear to be processing applications more promptly, which has resulted in fewer children meeting the criteria for consideration by the Fair Access Panel.

Of the referrals to Fair Access, 61% of the placements were for children in Year 11, which is a 19% increase compared to 2023-24.

As part of our annual review process, we assess the Fair Access Protocol considering the challenges encountered throughout the year. A comprehensive review was conducted between September and November 2024, during which we identified and strengthened areas requiring improvement. One key change involved sharing referral information with all schools ahead of panel meetings - previously, referrals were only sent to those attending. This proactive approach, combined with increased participation from headteachers and senior leaders at panel meetings, has led to fewer placement challenges and reduced delays in children starting at their named schools. We will continue to monitor and refine the protocol annually.
This year, we aim to enhance the process for presenting cases where a school has refused admission under paragraph 3.10 of the School Admissions Code. Additionally, we plan to introduce a referral form for children transitioning from alternative provision back into mainstream education, to support a smooth and positive reintegration.

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:

E. Directions to maintained schools to admit children[3]

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)?

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 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% ☐

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

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:

Many of our schools regularly provide updates on their vacancies, new starters, and any children who have declined an offer. This ongoing communication helps ensure children are admitted to schools promptly. When offers are declined, we are able to follow up with families and, where necessary, refer cases to our Children Missing Education (CME) team to support children who remain out of education following a refusal of a reasonable school offer.

For the 29 community primary schools where Hillingdon coordinates in-year admissions, we consistently issue offers within 15 days of receiving an application, thereby fulfilling our statutory duty under the School Admissions Code.

This year we have also introduced a new education platform which has been rolled out to all schools. The platform is designed to enhance collaboration with schools and enable more efficient and accurate data sharing, supporting a more streamlined and responsive admissions process.

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):

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?

Several primary schools have approached the School Placement & Admissions Team to discuss the pressures they are currently facing, including funding constraints and staffing challenges. In response we have held open and supportive discussions with these schools, involving colleagues from Admissions, Place Planning, and the schools allocated education advisors. These conversations have, in many cases, led to informal caps in specific year groups where schools have demonstrated they are operating below their published PAN.

Importantly, these collaborative discussions help ensure that both school and community needs are met in the most effective way. As a result of these informal conversations and anticipated further reductions in the number of children requiring school places, a number of schools are now planning to formally reduce their PAN for the 2027–28 intake.

These discussions are ongoing and will continue regularly to review pressures and, where appropriate, support schools in returning to their formal PAN if demand increases. We also welcome and will engage in similar conversations with other schools that reach out to us in the coming academic year.

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 2025