



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Local Authority Report

to

The Schools Adjudicator

from

London Borough of Hillingdon Local Authority

to be provided by

30 June 2020

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**Please email your completed report to: osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk
by 30 June 2020 and earlier if possible**

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Introduction and guidance on completing the report – Revised April 2020

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 3.23 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. This is a revised template issued in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. This template requests local authorities only for:
 - a) 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;
 - b) an assessment of the effectiveness of Fair Access Protocols and co-ordination in their area, including how many children were admitted to each school under them.
3. We would be grateful if local authorities would follow the approach used in statutory provisions and in the Department for Education Statistical First Release¹ and the Education Middle School (England) Regulations 2002².
4. Local authorities are, of course, free to comment on any other matters not specifically addressed in this template if they wish to do so under section 3. The views expressed by local authorities in previous years also remain a matter of public record.
5. The report **must** be returned to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by **30 June 2020**.

¹ [Department for Education Statistical First Release](#)

² [The Education Middle School \(England\) Regulations 2002](#)

Information requested

Section 1 - Normal point of admission

A. Co-ordination

i. How well did co-ordination of the main admissions round work?	Not well	A large number of small problems or a major problem	Well with few small problems	Very well
Reception				X
Year 7			X	
Other relevant years of entry			X	

ii. Please give examples to illustrate your answer if you wish:

Reception Co-ordination

There has been a 0.78 per cent increase in applications across London - Hillingdon experienced a 0.4 per cent decrease. 98.7 per cent of Hillingdon applicants received an offer at one of their preferred primary schools, which is above the London average (97 per cent) and the highest across West London. Hillingdon Council received 3,887 applications and has offered 97.89 per cent of pupils one of their top three schools, with 89.36 per cent of primary school children receiving their first choice. On National Offer Day Hillingdon offered 100 per cent of our applicants a school place.

Hillingdon has also achieved the 3rd highest position in the capital for meeting first preference offers, which was well above the London average of 85 per cent.

Year 7 co-ordination

There has been a 2 per cent decrease in secondary applications across London - Hillingdon experienced a 0.3 per cent increase. Despite the increase and a record high of 3,714 applications in total for secondary school places we remain as the top borough in West London for allocating school places at a school of choice. On National Offer Day Hillingdon offered 100 per cent of our applicants a school place. Hillingdon had a rise in the number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) applying to mainstream secondary schools. This saw a significant rise in Year 6 pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan consulting with mainstream schools.

We experienced a delay in receiving offer files from an out of London borough. The files were not received till after PAN London's iteration process, which meant that this had a knock on effect with offers that impacted some of our neighbouring boroughs. We were able to add these offers into the system, in time for NOD, however the delay in receiving these would have impacted our overall statistics. This is a recurring issue with this particular borough, as last year we received notification of offers they were able to make at 5pm on NOD. The borough

concerned has offered reassurance that processes will be significantly improved moving forward.

Year 10 co-ordination

Hillingdon has four schools that admit children into Year 10. Two of which have opted out of the Local Authority Co-ordination scheme. Applicants submit their applications to these schools directly. The other two are from the same Academy Trust who continue to take part in Co-ordination but only received 7 applications between them. The two schools who take part in Co-ordination mainly admit pupils from within their own Academy Trust later in the academic year. Hillingdon have continued to comply with our statutory requirement to write to parents and carers of all pupils of Year 9 age, to tell them about schools in or within travelling distance of the Local Authority area that admit pupils at the beginning of Year 10. This job requires the use of Census data and is outsourced to a Printing company. This task takes approximately a week to get the Census data and letters in order to be sent to the parent/carers

Previously the LA had been notified of the Section 31 grant agreement which is funding in recognition of a burden placed on local authorities to write to the parents of pupils aged 13 about schools in their local area which admit pupils at age 14. Local authorities were being funded on the basis of projected pupil numbers in each local authority for this age group, at a cost of 40p per pupil.

We have been querying this Grant with the DfE for over a year and received a response in February 2020. Jayne Deacon from the UTC Policy, Free Schools Policy and Programme Division at the DfE confirmed that the Section 31 grant is now paid automatically as part of the Central School Services Block grant.

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 applicable³

- 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 applicable³

³ 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

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 applicable³

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 applicable³

v. Priority in admission arrangements for 2021 for adopted children previously in care abroad. Please comment on the use of a priority in admission arrangements for a child adopted who was previously in care abroad if you wish.

For Hillingdon's own admissions schools applicants can apply under 'Social' grounds if their child has been adopted from abroad. Applications are expected to be submitted with a supporting letter to evidence why a place is necessitated at a particular school. Hillingdon have chosen not to apply priority to 'Children previously in state care outside of England' to our own admission authority schools as we comply with the legislation as it currently stands. Concerns have been raised previously with the Department for Education explaining that it is unclear exactly how evidence will be obtained to demonstrate that the child was immediately adopted from care – there will certainly be great concerns if there is not absolute parity with the conditions which apply to children adopted in the UK. State care systems around the world vary greatly, some having more formal arrangements than others, the evidence provided by parents may vary.

By allowing applicants to apply under 'Social' grounds the applicant can still have the opportunity to have additional information considered.

All own admissions authorities were notified of the right to consult on such changes yet none have.

vi. If you wish to please give any examples of good or poor practice or difficulties which exemplify your answers about the admission to schools of looked after and previously looked after children at the **normal points of admission**:

Children who are looked after or previously looked after by other Local Authorities often require more intensive resources to gain confirmation of the applicant's status. Although this task is always completed in a timely manner the level of resource is far greater than gaining confirmation from a Hillingdon looked after or previously looked after applicant. Confirmation must be received prior to co-ordination beginning.

In November 2019 the London Inter Authority Admissions Group agreed to a London Protocol for the In-Year Admission of Children Looked After. The Protocol has been written in conjunction with the DfE statutory guidance 'Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children'.

Hillingdon's School Placement and Admissions team promote good practice with our schools to ensure Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are placed in education without unreasonable delay.

Admission Authorities respond to Looked After and Previously Looked After Children applications quickly. Providing that a pre-application discussion has taken place, this should not take longer than 10 school days. Hillingdon Council provides full-time interim education for vulnerable pupils to avoid an unnecessary disruption in their education whilst awaiting school places.

C. Special educational needs and disabilities

- i. Please provide any comments you wish to make on the admission of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the normal points of admission:

For the last two years we have seen a significant rise in Year 6 pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) who were consulting with mainstream schools for placements in Secondary placements.

As secondary iteration started prior to the statutory deadline for SEN teams to name schools for pupils with an EHCP, the Admissions team had to start iteration holding unconfirmed places for children. Hillingdon's SEN team had to regularly update the School Placement and Admissions team so that places could be put back into the system. At the end of iteration (and after the SEN statutory deadline of 15 February) a small number of children with an EHCP had a school 'type' named on their EHCP i.e mainstream or special school. This meant that it was still necessary to finalise named schools for a small number of children with an EHCP after National Offer Day. This process continues to be under review for following years 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 Team. The admission process requires consultation with all settings (including mainstream) and a consultation can only be rejected on the grounds that:

- a - it is against the wishes of the child's parent or the young person; or
- b - 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.

Not too dissimilar with 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 the development and co-production of an 'ordinarily available provision' framework as well as on-going support for school leads and SENCOs through SENCO forums 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.

Section 2 - In-year⁴ admissions

A. Co-ordination of in-year admissions

Please provide any comments on the co-ordination of **in year admissions** if you wish.

Hillingdon's School Placement and Admissions team manage the co-ordination for our Community schools only. Hillingdon makes offers on a fortnightly basis for these schools, following regular updates from them on their vacancies. This works very well, and allows the team time to chase outstanding offers, check with schools regarding their new starters, and/or find out who hasn't started. Any non-starters or school refusers will be contacted and where necessary referred to Hillingdon's Child Missing Education officers.

B. Looked after children and previously looked after children

- i. How well does the **in-year admissions** 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 applicable⁵

- ii. How well 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 applicable⁶

- iii. How well does your **in-year admissions** 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 applicable⁶

- iv. How well does your **in-year admissions** system serve the interests of previously looked after children?

⁴ By in-year we mean admission at the start of any school year 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 (ie 31 December) in normal years of admission.

⁵ 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

⁶ 'Not applicable' will only be appropriate if there are no children falling within this definition.

Not at all Not well Well Very well Not applicable⁶

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 in regards to 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. However, the speed of the process and the responsiveness of schools can occasionally be slow and hence this delays offers and the length of time that Children Looked After are without a school. In respect of other LAs it is an inconsistent picture with some LA's placing children quickly and others not so. This is very much dependent on the year group of the child, the availability of suitable provision (in the case of UASC and SEMH) and the complexity of the child's need, again placing children with SEMH is challenging (this challenge exists in Hillingdon too). SEN processes out of borough are inconsistent and in the main we have Children Looked After out of education for periods of time longer than expected.

In December 2019 Hillingdon's Virtual School had to refer a direction request to the OSA for a looked after child who required admission to a school in Kent County Council. The OSA determined that the admission of the young person would not seriously prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources at the school. Therefore authorisation was granted for Hillingdon to direct the School concerned.

Part of the evidence provided by the school confirmed they had been directed by another Local Authority over several of their In-Year Fair Access admissions. This does question why the Local Authority didn't support the urgency of our requests for admission. This situation brought avoidable delays in education for the young person and added unnecessary strain on their foster placement.

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 Not well Well Very well Not applicable⁶

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 Not well Well Very well Don't know

iii. Please give examples of 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:

There are capacity issues within specialist local provision which have arisen, in part due to the increase in the number of children and young people with EHCPs.

This is being addressed through the local authority's Additional Needs Strategy and work is underway to expand local SEND provision via the Priority School Building Programme, SEND capital expansion grant and free school route.

For children and young people with additional needs but without an EHCP, access into school follows the mainstream admission process.

The Local Authority is committed to supporting all schools to respond swiftly and confidently to identify the needs of children and young people with SEND and the Borough-wide Inclusion Commitment empowers schools to integrate children with additional needs quickly into education. The SEND Advisory Service and the Educational Psychology Service work with many settings within the Borough and can provide additional support to schools who admit children with complex needs. Schools are also encouraged to apply for Early Support Funding, where appropriate, to access immediate support/ resource for pupils without an EHCP and thus enable early intervention for children with special needs.

iv. If you wish please provide any comments about **in-year admissions** in respect of other children:

D. Fair access protocol

i. Has your fair access protocol been agreed⁷ with the majority of state-funded mainstream schools in your area?

- Yes for primary
 Yes for secondary

ii. If you have not been able to tick both boxes above, please explain why:

⁷ An existing protocol remains binding on all schools up until the point at which a new one is adopted.

iii. How many children were admitted to schools in your area under the fair access protocol between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020?		
Type of school	Number of children admitted	
	Primary aged children	Secondary aged children
Community and voluntary controlled	0	0
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	2	121
Total	2	121

iv. How well do you consider hard to place children are served by the fair access protocol in your area?

Not at all Not well Well Very well Not applicable⁸

v. Please make any relevant comment on the protocol not covered above if you wish.

Due to sufficient place planning and improved communication between the LA and school admissions officers we have seen a considerable decrease in the number of Primary referrals to the In Year Fair Access Panel (IYFAP).

The highest numbers of referrals remains for Secondary placements which were made for year 11 pupils as they cannot be easily assimilated into appropriate courses. This academic year the Local Authority (LA), IYFAP and Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH) have been continuing to work together to integrate year 11s who have moved into the borough and are out of education, into a mainstream school instead of an alternative provision (such as colleges). Due to the success of these placements, the IYFAP will continue to place all mainstream appropriate Year 11 aged children at Panel.

Although the majority of the children lived in the South of our borough, placements for these children were spread evenly across all schools in the North and South of the borough, which has eliminated schools in the South taking a disproportionate number of Fair Access placements.

E. Any other comments on the admission of children **in-year** not previously raised if you wish.

Hillingdon annually compiles data on our Elective Home Educated (EHE) children,

⁸ 'Not applicable' would mean that there were no hard to place children for which the protocol was required.

we found that in 2018-19, 55.7% of cases closed were open for a year or less; this showed many opt to EHE as a short-term intervention, before returning back to mainstream education. In addition, 25.3% were removed from mainstream education to be EHE (in the same year) due to not being a parent or child's preferred school. This supports the previous statistic that over 55% returned to mainstream within a year, when potentially the child has been offered a place in their preferred school.

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?

Due to Covid-19, we undertook the following;

In-Year admissions: Hillingdon worked continuously on the placement of children who are new to the borough and not on a school roll. Including the placement of any key worker children who could no longer access education via their child's current school (in general this is where the child(ren) is attending an independent school out of borough which has closed). Hillingdon worked with schools and placed children where necessary either physically in a school or on their roll to receive remote learning opportunities. In addition, Hillingdon has been in contact with 750 in-year applicants to ensure they access education via their child's current school at this time. During this time of school closures it would be unreasonable to expect schools to manage in-year transfers for pupils who are already on roll at a school. Applicants have been reassured that this change of procedure won't have a detrimental impact on their application when schools extend their opening arrangements.

Elective Home Education (EHE): Hillingdon has sent approximately 240 families a resource pack to ensure children can still access a broad range of education despite the closure of community centres and tuition groups. This support has been very well received by the EHE community.

Hillingdon has concerns for when children are reintegrated into schools following Covid-19. Below are some of the potential concerns we have identified;

- Schools may be reluctant to admit pupils initially and despite being undersubscribed they may not be able to accommodate pupils due to staff shortages and Health and Safety etc.
- Parents may choose to delay their child's start date in September for Reception by deferring a term. This may result in schools missing out on funding in the October Census as schools must hold the places back for pupils.
- There may be a number of parents requesting for their children to be

placed in out of cohort to try and catch up on missed education due to Covid-19.

This in turn can impact on school place planning.

- We may see significant numbers of pupils leaving independent schools due to family's financial constraints. In addition, this may impact on a number of independent schools.
- We may see families moving out of Hillingdon and removing their children from schools due to high living costs.
- Hillingdon may see an increase in families now wishing to continue with home education.
- There may be an increase in school exclusions following pupils disengagement from school, which will impact on Hillingdon's resource and availability in our alternative provision.

Section 4 - Feedback

We would be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2021.

Following submission from the last three years the Local Authority has been contacted by the OSA to discuss further some of our responses. This was very encouraging to know that despite the high number of lengthy reports received at the OSA our feedback had been given good consideration. It was also noticeable that Hillingdon's feedback was referenced in the latest School Adjudicator's report.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to Lisa Short at OSA.Team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk by 30 June 2020