



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Local Authority Report

To

The Schools Adjudicator

From

Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority

30 June 2017

Report Cleared by (Name & Title): Carolyn Davis – Senior Manager, Education Infrastructure

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Introduction

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 Schools Adjudicator (CA) 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 issues. The report **must** be returned to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by **30 June 2017**.

The questions have been revised for 2017 with the purpose of:

- a) making the information gathered statistically robust and as useful as possible to the local authorities which provide the information; that is: the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) which receives the information; the Department for Education (DfE) to which the CA provides her annual report; and the children and families for whom the Code is designed to make sure that places are allocated and offered in an open and fair way;
- b) minimising the work required by local authorities in providing information; and
- c) avoiding duplication of effort.

This revised format therefore, in addition to statutory requirements as described in the Code, explores: points raised by local authorities in previous reports and matters which have arisen in the CA's Annual Report and areas of interest to the DfE. If information is already collected elsewhere, such as the number and type of schools and data relating to appeals, then it is not asked for again here but will be available for inclusion in the CA's Annual Report.

Information requested

1. Looked after children and previously looked after children

It is a requirement of the Code that there is information in the local authority's annual report about how admission arrangements in the area of the local authority serve the interests of looked after children and previously looked after children.

- a. How well do admission arrangements in your local authority area serve the interests of looked after children?

Not at all Not well Well Very well

- b. How well do the admission arrangements in other local authority areas serve the interests of your looked after children?

Not at all Not well Well Very well

- c. How well do admission arrangements in your local authority area serve the interests of previously looked after children?

Not at all Not well Well Very well

All admission authority's admission arrangements within the Cheshire West and Chester area prioritise looked after children in their oversubscription criteria. For schools designated with a religious character the majority of admission authorities have given priority to all looked after children as the highest oversubscription criteria. Six schools designated with a religious character have prioritised looked after children of the faith ahead of looked after children not of the faith, however they have given the highest priority to looked after children not of the faith above other children not of the faith. This has resulted in all looked after children obtaining a place at the preferred school within the normal admission round.

2. Children with disabilities and children with special educational needs

It is a requirement of the Code that there is information in the local authority's annual report about how admission arrangements in the area of the local authority serve the interests of children with children with disabilities and children with special educational needs.

- a. How well served are children who have disabilities and/or special educational needs who have an education health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs that names a school?

Not at all Not well Well Very well

- b. How well served are children who have disabilities and/or special educational needs who do not have an education health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs?

Not at all Not well Well Very well

In accordance with legal requirements, all schools in Cheshire West and Chester admit children where the school is named on the statement / education, health and care plan. The School Admissions Team and the Special Education Needs Team work closely together to ensure that parents of children with Special Educational Needs are fully informed about the process for securing school places. For the normal admission rounds, the Special Education Needs Team and The School Admissions Team liaise to ensure all applications from parents and carers of statemented children are identified and where mainstream provision is to be named in the statement/plan, the school place is allocated as part of the process.

The admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools include a medical criterion after the 'looked after' criterion. Medical criterion is assigned to an application by a panel of officers for children who do not have an education health and care plan where, in their view, it justifies admission to the particular school on the basis that a place at the preferred school is essential for the medical well-being of the child. The Council requires that evidence provided by the parent should be from an individual who is suitably qualified to give a professional opinion on the medical needs of the child and who has been involved in the child's care, which state reasons why the school in question is the most suitable school and the difficulties that would be caused if the child

had to attend another school.

3. Consultation

Paragraph 1.44 of the Code states who needs to be consulted if consultation on admission arrangements is required. The CA has noted that these requirements are not always fulfilled in the arrangements which come to the attention of the OSA and, in particular, consultation with parents is not always as full as it should be. The OSA therefore wishes to get a better understanding of the wider situation and provide examples of good practice.

- a. When did the local authority last consult on its arrangements?

Please provide the year.

The local authority last consulted on its admission arrangements between 16 December 2016 and 31 January 2017 for the September 2018 admissions round

- b. Please describe the means by which the local authority consulted with parents. Highlight all those means used:

- Committee paper on the local authority's proposals on admissions on the council's website.
- Consultation paper designed for parents on the local authority's proposals on admissions on council's website.
- Request to all schools to provide information on the local authority's consultation on its admission arrangements to parents and providing support to make this possible such as posters, leaflets and links to the relevant information on council's website for the schools' newsletters.
- Request to all early years settings to make information on the local authority's consultation available to parents by providing support to make this possible such as posters, leaflets and links to the relevant information on the council's website for the settings' newsletters.

- Social media (please provide some detail).

Posts were made on the local authority's twitter and facebook accounts including links to the proposals on the website

- Adverts in local press.
- Articles in local press.
- Posters in supermarkets, doctors' surgeries, early years health centres and similar

- Other (please specify)

How confident are you that other admission authorities in your area are consulting parents properly as required	Not at all confident	Many concerns	Few concerns	Completely confident
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by paragraph 1.44a of the Code?				
c. Voluntary aided			Y	
d. Foundation			Y	
e. Academy			Y	
f. Free			Y	
g. UTC			n/a	
h. Studio			n/a	
Please give examples of good practice by schools that are their own admission authority. Examples of good practice in consulting with parents whose children are under compulsory school age will be particularly welcome.				

4. Pupil, service and early years pupil premiums

Has your local authority consulted for admissions in 2018 on using any of the pupil premiums as an oversubscription criterion in community or voluntary controlled schools?	For entry to reception year	For entry to year 7
a. Pupil premium	No	No
b. Service premium	No	No
c. Early years premium	No	N/A

d. If the local authority consulted on any of the pupil premiums please provide a summary of the responses received:

e. If you did not consult on introducing the **pupil premium** please indicate up to three main reasons for not doing so:

- Unsure how it will help social mobility;
- Unsure how it will reduce educational inequality;
- Could displace children living locally to a school;
- Potential transport cost to local authority for local children displaced;
- Some very disadvantaged families do not apply for free school meals and so would be further disadvantaged;
- Feel community needs already well met;
- Would introduce unnecessary complication;
- Lack of capacity; or

i. Other (please explain):

f. If you did not consult on introducing the **service premium** please indicate up to three main reason for not doing so:

- Unsure how it will help social mobility;
- Unsure how it will reduce educational inequality;

- Could displace children living locally to a school;
- Potential transport cost to local authority for local children who might be prevented from being offered a place at their local school;
- Would introduce unnecessary complication;
- Lack of capacity; or
- Other (please

The local authority ensures that service children are not at a disadvantage by accepting the Unit postal address or quartering area address when considering an application against the oversubscription criteria

explain):

g. If you did not consult on introducing **early years premium** please indicate up to three main reasons for not doing so:

- Application of early years' pupil premium priority for those attending a nursery at the school could unfairly disadvantage those who did not choose to use the nursery at the school;
- Application of early years' pupil premium priority for those attending a nursery at the school could affect the sustainability of other early years' provision;
- Unsure how it will help social mobility;
- Unsure how it will reduce educational inequality;
- Could displace children living locally to a school;
- Potential transport cost to local authority for local children who might be prevented from being offered a place at their local school;
- Some very disadvantaged families do not apply for free school meals and so would be further disadvantaged;
- Feel community needs already well met;
- Would introduce unnecessary complication;
- Lack of capacity; or
- Other (please

explain):

How many community or voluntary controlled schools in the local authority area will use pupil premium as an oversubscription criterion for admissions in 2018?	Primary including middle deemed primary	Secondary including middle deemed secondary
h. Pupil premium	0	0
i. Service premium	0	0
j. Early years pupil premium	0	N/A

How many own admission authority schools consulted you on the use of a pupil premium oversubscription criterion for admissions in 2018?	Primary including middle deemed primary			Secondary including middle deemed secondary	
	Early years	Pupil	Service	Pupil	Service
k. Voluntary aided	0	0	0	0	0
l. Foundation	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0

m. Academy	0	0	0	0	0
n. Free	0	0	0	n/a	n/a
o. UTC	N/A	N/A	N/A	n/a	n/a
p. Studio	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0

How many own admission authority schools in your area will use one of the premiums as an oversubscription criterion for 2018?	Primary including middle deemed primary			Secondary including middle deemed secondary	
	Early years	Pupil	Service	Pupil	Service
q. Voluntary aided	1	0	1	0	1
r. Foundation	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
s. Academy	0	0	0	0	1
t. Free	0	0	0	n/a	n/a
u. UTC	N/A	N/A	N/A	n/a	n/a
v. Studio	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1

w. Do you have any further comments with regards to the pupil premiums in addition to the above?

5. Determined arrangements

The OSA has noted that some admission authorities have not determined their arrangements as required by the Code and so seeks further information on this. Paragraph 3.2 of the Code requires local authorities to refer admission arrangements determined by other admission authorities to the Schools Adjudicator if they are of the view that they are unlawful.

- a. On which date did your local authority determine its arrangements for admissions in 2018?

27 February 2017

- b. When were the determined arrangements published on the local authority's website?

27 February 2017

How many sets of admission arrangements of schools that are their own admission authority were queried directly by your local authority because they were considered not to comply with the Code?	Primary including middle deemed primary	Secondary including middle deemed secondary
c. Voluntary aided	0	0
d. Foundation	n/a	0
e. Academy	0	0
f. Free	0	n/a
g. UTC	N/A	n/a

h. Studio	N/A	0
i. Overall, in your consideration of the admission arrangements for 2018 determined by other admission authorities, which paragraphs of the Code gave you greatest concern because of possible non-compliance with requirements?		

j. Further comment: please provide any examples or views regarding the determination of admission arrangements that have not been covered above

The local authority liaises closely with schools/academies that are their own admission authority with regards to their admission arrangements. Many discuss the proposed changes prior to consultation to ensure compliancy with the Code.

6. Co-ordination

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
a. Reception				Y
b. Year 7				Y
c. Other relevant years of entry (please specify)			Y – New Studio School opening in September 2017	
d. Please give examples to illustrate your answer:				
<p>Co-ordination for Reception and Year 7 went well, adhering to timescales outlined in the co-ordinated admission scheme, ensuring applications and outcomes where sent to and received from other LAs on the dates specified. Planned in advance to ensure schools had sufficient places to accommodate the number of applications received.</p> <p>A new studio school is due to open in September 2017 and it was agreed that the local authority would co-ordinate the application process for admission. A little confusion was caused by the school having their own expression of interest list, however it was ensured that all applicants were referred to the local authority's application system, therefore the authority could make the offer.</p>				

e. There has been an increase in the number of schools for which the governing body or academy trust is the admission authority. Please describe the effect of this on the admissions system in your area.

This has increased the need for monitoring to ensure the schools/academies are compliant with the Code. Many schools are unaware of their responsibilities with regards to consulting/determining their admission arrangements therefore the local authority are

having to prompt them / make them aware of the statutory processes and their responsibilities.

To how many schools of each type does the local authority delegate responsibility for in-year admissions?	Primary including middle deemed primary	Secondary including middle deemed secondary
f. Community	70	1
g. Voluntary controlled	22	n/a
h. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of this?		
<p>The advantages of delegating the responsibility for in-year admissions to schools are, they can process the application quickly and admit the children without delay.</p> <p>The disadvantages are, even though there is a robust monitoring process in place and all schools are aware that they must notify the local authority of all applications, outcomes and current numbers on roll, we are reliant upon them to do so and in a timely manner. There have been occasions where the local authority have not been made aware, which has made it difficult to ensure that every child that applies for a school place is allocated a school place.</p>		

For how many schools of each type does the local authority co-ordinate in-year admissions?	Primary including middle deemed primary	Secondary including middle deemed secondary
i. Voluntary aided	0	0
j. Foundation	n/a	0
k. Academy	0	0
l. Free	0	n/a
m. UTC	N/A	n/a
n. Studio	N/A	0
o. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of this?		
<p>Same as above, even though there is a robust monitoring process in place and all schools are aware that they must notify the local authority of all applications, outcomes and current numbers on roll, we are reliant upon them to do so and in a timely manner. There have been occasions where the local authority have not been made aware, which has made it difficult to ensure that every child that applies for a school place is allocated a school place.</p>		

7. Appeals

Information on the number of appeals lodged and the proportion upheld is collected separately so this information is not requested again. The information requested below is to add to that information.

	a. How many schools of each	b. How many schools of each
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	type engage the local authority to provide all aspects of the appeals process?		type engage the local authority to provide some aspects of the appeals process?	
	Primary including middle deemed primary	Secondary including middle deemed secondary	Primary including middle deemed primary	Secondary including middle deemed secondary
Voluntary aided	26	3		
Foundation	n/a	5		
Academy	3	4		
Free	1	n/a		
Studio	N/A		N/A	
UTC	N/A		N/A	
c. Any comments related to this: We provide all aspects of the appeals process to all schools that use our services				

d. How confident are you that admission appeals for schools which are their own admission authorities meet the requirements of the School Admission Appeals Code?

Not at all confident many doubts a few doubts Very confident

e. Please describe your areas of concern, if any: I don't have any information on the schools that do not use our services as to how they administer their appeals so am unable to answer point d.
f. Please provide examples of good practice which have come to your attention:

8. Fair Access Protocol

a. Do you have a Fair Access Protocol agreed with the majority of state-funded mainstream schools in your area?

Yes No

b. If no, please explain why:

c. How many children have been admitted or refused admission under the Fair Access Protocol to each type of school in your area?		
Type of School	Number of children admitted	Number of children refused admission

	Primary aged child	Secondary aged child	Primary aged children	Secondary aged children
Community	1	4		
Voluntary controlled				
Voluntary aided	1	2		
Foundation		15		
Academy		8		
Free				
UTC	N/A		N/A	
Studio	N/A		N/A	

d. 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

e. Please explain your answer giving examples of good and bad practice; successes and difficulties as appropriate.

The Fair Access process has developed and is still developing. There are now two Fair Access panels who meet regularly. There are a greater number of referrals for one of these panels. This has encouraged the development of more robust procedures and has a greater 'buy in' from the schools. There is still some way to go to ensure decisions are made quickly without additional support. However, all children referred to the panel have had a decision and the offer of an educational place. A task and finish group has just reviewed the protocol and they are happy with the developments and felt they needed minimal change.

9. Directions

How many directions did the local authority make between 31 March 2016 and 31 March 2017 for children in the local authority area?

	Primary aged children (not looked after)	Primary aged looked after children	Secondary aged children (not looked after)	Secondary aged looked after children
a. Voluntary aided	0	0	0	0
b. Foundation	n/a	n/a	0	0

c. Please add any comment with regard to strengths or difficulties relating to this.

How many directions did the local authority make between 31 March 2016 and 31 March 2017 for looked after children in another local authority area?

	For primary aged child	For secondary aged child
d. Community	0	0
e. Voluntary controlled	0	n/a
f. Voluntary aided	0	0
g. Foundation	n/a	0

h. Please add any comment with regard to strengths or difficulties relating to this.

How many requests for directions did the local authority make to the EFA between 31 March 2016 and 31 March 2017?

	For primary aged children (not looked after)	For primary aged looked after children	For secondary aged children (not looked after)	For secondary aged looked after children
i. Academy	.0	0	0	0
j. Free	0	0	n/a	n/a
k. Studio	N/A	N/A	n/a	n/a
l. UTC	N/A	N/A	n/a	n/a

m. Please add any comment with regard to strengths or difficulties relating to this.

10. Other matters

Are there any other matters that the local authority would like to raise that have not been covered by the questions above?

We have seen an increase in requests for summer born children to delay entry and start school a year below their chronological age group. There is a process in place so that the local authority can record the number of children delaying entry to ensure they are included in the following year's admissions round. However, we have an increase of parents submitting their application a year later without having notified the authority. Making it difficult for the authority to fully inform the parents of their options before making the decision to delay.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to Lisa Short at OSA.Team@osa.gsi.gov.uk by 30 June 2017