



Office of
the Schools
Adjudicator

Local Authority Report

To

The Schools Adjudicator

From

Central Bedfordshire Council Local Authority

30 June 2017

Report Cleared by (Name & Title): Victor Wan, Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning

Date submitted: 28 June 2017

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www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator

Please email your completed report to: osa.team@osa.gsi.gov.uk

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

Please give examples of good or bad practice or difficulties which support your answer and provide any suggestions for improvement:

As required by the School Admissions Code all schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire prioritise looked after and previously looked after as the highest criterion. Applications for these children are prioritised in both the in year admission process and normal round of admissions. The vast majority of schools and academies within the area will admit a looked after or previously looked after child if oversubscribed. In the few instances where a school has refused the applicant has appealed and in all cases their appeal has been upheld regardless of the strength of the school's case.

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

Please give examples of good or bad practice or difficulties which support your answer and provide any suggestions for improvement.

The School Admissions Team liaises with the SEND Team during the annual starting school/transfer allocation process so that children with statements/EHCPs are allocated places ahead of those without. Where the information is not available for the on time allocation places are allocated at the named school/academy once the plan is finalised regardless of whether the school is oversubscribed or not.

Although very rare there have been occasions where a school is named on a child's statement/EHCP by another Local Authority but this is not communicated to the School Admissions Team at the appropriate time.

Children with disabilities who do not have a statement or education, health and care plan apply for school places through normal admissions procedures. Schools are well placed to make reasonable adjustments and consult with outside agencies as necessary to support the child. The SEND Parent and Young Person Partnership Service can provide parents/carers with free confidential and impartial advice where a child's needs are supported at SEND Support Stage 1 or 2.

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.

October 2016 to December 2016 for
2018 admission arrangements

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

Through the Council's
Facebook and Twitter
accounts

- ☐ Other (please specify)

How confident are you that other admission authorities in your area are consulting parents properly as required by paragraph 1.44a of the Code?	Not at all confident	Many concerns	Few concerns	Completely confident
c. Voluntary aided			Yes	
d. Foundation			Yes	
e. Academy			Yes	
f. Free			N/A	
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.

We advise all schools to consult with parents through their newsletters and websites and this seems to be the most effective form of consultation. Schools which have a nursery or preschool on site can easily share their proposed arrangements with children under compulsory school age attending these provisions however those that do not such provision have a more difficult task.

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:

N/A

- 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

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	None	None
i. Service premium	None	None
j. Early years pupil premium	None	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	0	0	0	0	0
m. Academy	0	0	0	0	0
n. Free	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
o. UTC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
p. Studio	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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	0	2	2	0	0
r. Foundation	0	0	0	0	0
s. Academy	1	1	1	0	0
t. Free	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
u. UTC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
v. Studio	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

The consensus among academies and schools is that children from all backgrounds are well catered for through the existing admission policies in place. The majority prioritise pupils by a defined catchment area which is made up of a variety of dwellings from different socio-economic backgrounds.

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?

7 February 2017

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

9 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	0	0
e. Academy	1	0
f. Free	N/A	N/A
g. UTC	N/A	N/A
h. Studio	N/A	N/A
<p>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?</p> <p>We have no major concerns around non-compliance; our only concern was the lack of consultation by one school which were seeking to add additional oversubscription criteria.</p>		

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

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				Yes
b. Year 7				Yes
c. Other relevant years of entry (please specify)			Yes	
<p>d. Please give examples to illustrate your answer:</p> <p>The majority of Central Bedfordshire operates a three tier system and therefore the middle transfer (Yr5) round is a major round in the area but not in neighbouring Local Authorities. Most of our neighbouring LAs enable their parents who wish to apply for a Central Bedfordshire middle school without issue however in one area parents have issues obtaining the correct application form and having their application accepted by their home LA. This therefore causes unnecessary stress and confusion as they receive conflicting information from the two Local Authorities.</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.

The number of schools converting to academy status in Central Bedfordshire has slowed in the last academic year. Where this has taken place the Admissions Manager has shared with the school the changes in terms of admissions matters.

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	0	0
g. Voluntary controlled	0	0
h. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of this?		
As the Council is the admission authority for these schools by processing in year applications for all these schools the Council can be sure that all are processed consistently and correctly.		

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	9	N/A
j. Foundation	6	2
k. Academy	22	18
l. Free	N/A	N/A
m. UTC	N/A	N/A
n. Studio	N/A	N/A
o. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of this?		
<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centralised system - Able to track pupils not offered a school place and ensure next nearest placement can be offered - Central point of contact for parents - Consistency of information given to parents <p>We do not feel there are any disadvantages to Local Authority coordination of in year admissions.</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 type engage the local authority to provide all aspects of the appeals process?		b. How many schools of each 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	1	0	4	N/A
Foundation	1	0	0	1
Academy	3	5	15	18
Free	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Studio	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UTC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
c. Any comments related to this:				
Not all own admission schools and academies have service level agreements with the LA as are undersubscribed however when they become oversubscribed they sign up to use the LA 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

<p>e. Please describe your areas of concern, if any:</p> <p>Some of the appeal cases submitted by schools presenting their own appeal do not include all the required information within the written report for the panel and appellants.</p>
<p>f. Please provide examples of good practice which have come to your attention:</p> <p>Where own admission authority schools buy back the preparation and presentation service from the Council the presenting officer from the Council will visit the school and meet with the Headteacher/senior member of the school to collect the required information for the case. Before the written case is submitted to the appeal clerk it is sent to the school for their approval to ensure the information presented is accurate.</p> <p>Following the national offer day the School Admissions Team shares with those oversubscribed schools who present their case at appeal a breakdown of how places were allocated and vacancies at other schools in the area for use in their appeal case. They also share with the school copies of the applications, waiting lists and information regarding the application where requested. The team also liaises with the school throughout the late allocations so that the schools have the information required for their appeal.</p>

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:

N/A

- 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	0	1	0	0
Voluntary controlled	0	0	0	0
Voluntary aided	0	0	0	0
Foundation	0	0	0	0
Academy	3	30	0	0
Free	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UTC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Studio	N/A	N/A	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.

No cases have needed to go to School Admissions/EFA/DfE for schools/academies to be directed and all have been resolved within the LA, although this has been challenging in some cases as academies were reluctant to admit some of the pupils in the first instance.

In one case the LA listened to the reasons why an academy felt that it couldn't admit a pupil and these reasons were accepted with the LA going to the next school on the list.

The panel allocating FAP from June 2017 will be expanded to take on Headteachers and other relevant professionals as part of the panel to help wider ownership of the process.

There has been a small amount of funding made available for schools/academies to apply

for support with the integration of FAP pupils.

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	0	0	0	0

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

N/A

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	0
f. Voluntary aided	0	0
g. Foundation	0	0

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

N/A

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	0	0
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.

N/A

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?

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Thank you for completing this template.

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