Local Authority Report

To

The Schools Adjudicator

From

Blackpool Council

30th June 2018

Report Cleared by: Paul Turner – Head of School Standards and Effectiveness

Date submitted: 26th June 2018

By: Paul Bainbridge – School Organisation and Admissions Manager

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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 by 30 June 2018 and earlier if possible
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 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 issues. The report must be returned to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 30 June 2018.

The report to the Secretary of State for 2017 highlighted that at the normal points of admission the main admissions rounds for entry to schools work well. The Chief Adjudicator expressed less confidence that the needs of children who need a place outside the normal admissions rounds were so well met. In order to test this concern, local authorities are therefore asked to differentiate their answers in this year’s report between the main admissions round and in year admissions. The order of this template for the annual report by local authorities reflects this.

Information requested

1. Normal point of admission

   A. Determined arrangements

      i. Please specify the date your local authority determined its arrangements for admissions in 2019 for its voluntary controlled and community schools. Please state if this question is not applicable as there are no voluntary controlled or community schools in the local authority area.

         11/03/2018

      ii. Please specify the date the determined arrangements for voluntary controlled and community schools were published on the local authority’s website. Say if not applicable.

         17/04/2018

      iii. What proportion of arrangements for own admission schools was provided to the local authority by 15 March?

         ☐ Not applicable ☐ None ☐ Minority ☒ Majority ☐ All

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1 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.
iv. 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary including middle deemed primary</th>
<th>Secondary including middle deemed secondary</th>
<th>All through</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

v. If, when you considered arrangements for own admission authority schools for 2019, you had any concerns about Code compliance, please indicate which paragraphs of the Code you thought were mainly being breached.

vi. Further comment: please provide any comments on the determination of admission arrangements not covered above. *There was however liaison and advice with schools and academies about proposals which the Council felt needed to be reviewed and amended. These included defining worship requirements rather than referring to regular attendance; the application of sibling criteria across an academy chain and prioritising children at a nursery for reception admission.*

**B. Co-ordination**

i. Provision of rankings: what proportion of own admission authority schools provided their rankings correctly undertaken by the agreed date?

- ☐ Not applicable  ☐ None  ☐ Minority  ☒ Majority  ☐ All

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well did co-ordination of the main admissions round work?</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>A large number of small problems or a major problem</th>
<th>Well with few small problems</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii. Reception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Year 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Other relevant years of entry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

v. Please give examples to illustrate your answer:

*An electronic data file exchange was initated between Blackpool and other LA’s to support the admissions process for September 2018. There were anomalies*
C. Looked after and previously looked after children

i. How well do admission arrangements 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 admission arrangements in other local authority areas serve the interests of your looked after children at normal points of admission?

☐ Not at all  ☐ Not well  ☒ Well  ☐ Very well  ☐ Not applicable

iii. How well do admission arrangements 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

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

For annual intakes the admission arrangements serve LAC very well as they have priority within all school and academy policies. This could be strengthened by requiring all establishments to give top priority for all LAC rather than allowing some to divide priority between denominational and non-denominational applications.

The receipt of annual intake applications for LAC is closely monitored. There is regular liaison with social workers and LAC officers, as well as with other LA’s to ensure that all LAC are identified and allocated a suitable school. Reports are embedded in Blackpool’s admissions database to assist.

For in-year applications the Code is ambiguous and lends itself to allowing individual admission authorities to decide whether or not they will exceed PAN to accommodate in-year LAC requests. This can lead to tensions and delays for this vulnerable group. In-year admission issues for LAC would be greatly eased if national guidance / legislation discouraged or prevented their relocation (especially in KS4). Also if the Code firmly required exceeding PAN (as for EHCP cases) for new to area in-year requests – perhaps with caveats to prevent concentrating new to area LAC in a small group of schools – a sharing process similar to the IYFA arrangements? This arrangement would be fairer for schools and academies in relation to the additional workload / meeting commitments for LAC admissions.
D. Special educational needs and disabilities

i. How well served are children with 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 at normal points of admission?

☐ Not at all  ☐ Not well  ☑ Well  ☑ Very well  ☐ Not applicable

ii. How well served are children with disabilities and/or special educational needs who do not have an education health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs at normal points of admission?

☐ Not at all  ☐ Not well  ☑ Well  ☑ Very well  ☐ Not applicable

iii. Please give examples of good or poor practice or difficulties which support your answer, and provide any suggestions for improvement. Children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan are allocated places in accordance with the SEN Code. In Blackpool children are allocated the parent’s preferred school for annual intakes (even where this is within a neighbouring authority).

There is regular liaison with SEND officers to identify children who have a current EHCP and children who are under statutory assessment. Reports are embedded in Blackpool’s admissions database to assist.

There is also regular liaison with the Early Years Co-ordinator to identify pre-school children who have SEND to ensure applications are received and preferred schools are allocated.

2. In year admissions

A. The number of in year admissions. We are asking for two years’ data for comparative purposes. If you do not have the data for the year 1/9/16 to 31/8/17 available, please still provide the data for 1/9/17 to 31/3/18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.</th>
<th>Primary aged children</th>
<th>Secondary aged children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of in year admissions between 1/9/17 and 31/3/18</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of in year admissions between 1/9/16 and 31/8/17</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reasons for children seeking in year admission will vary across the country. What do you</td>
<td>House moves and unwillingness to access the existing school even if within statutory walking distance</td>
<td>Alleged bullying, avoiding behaviour and attendance issues. Opting for EHE and then re-applying for places.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ii. The Code requires the setting of a published admission number (PAN) for each normal year of entry. In the annual reports for 2017 several local authorities referred to problems in relation to in year admissions when schools which are their own admission authority refuse to admit applicants even if the year group concerned contains fewer children than the relevant PAN suggested could be accommodated. This was referred to sometimes as ‘capping’ in-year admissions and local authorities observed that it reduced the number of places available below that anticipated by the local authority. The only formally agreed PAN reduction in Blackpool is for KS4 in a secondary academy. This is a short term temporary measure which has been mutually agreed and reported to the RSC. It is very unlikely to affect parental admission requests (preference) and caveats still allow IYFA, EHCP and LAC admissions regardless of the agreed arrangement. There is no issue with capping within Blackpool. Refusals where places are available tend to be for individual admission requests and relate generally to the high levels migration and internal transfers within the secondary sector.

B. Co-ordination of in year admissions

i. To what proportion of community and voluntary controlled schools does the local authority delegate responsibility for in year admissions?

   a) Primary: ☐ Not applicable ☒ None ☐ Minority ☐ Majority ☐ All
   b) Secondary: ☒ Not applicable ☐ None ☐ Minority ☐ Majority ☐ All
   c) All-through: ☒ Not applicable ☐ None ☐ Minority ☐ Majority ☐ All

   d) What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of delegating responsibility for in year admissions (where applicable)?

   Blackpool Council has an agreed in-year admission process with all primary and secondary schools and academies. This supports and strengthens the arrangements for tracking children. This is essential in an area which has high migration levels and internal transience involving many children and families who require additional support. This also assists in relation to safeguarding children arriving into and departing from the area. Information on a standard in-year application form is exchanged as new to area families arrive or relocate within the area.

   ii. For what proportion of own admission authority schools does the local authority co-ordinate in year admissions?

   a) Primary: ☐ Not applicable ☒ None ☐ Minority ☐ Majority ☐ All
C. Looked after children and previously looked after children

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

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☒ Well ☐ Very well ☐ Not applicable

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

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☒ Well ☐ Very well ☐ Not applicable

vii. Please give examples of good or poor practice or difficulties which support your answer, and provide any suggestions for improvement: In February 2018 there were 136 LAC from other local authorities placed within Blackpool. Of these 20 were under statutory school age and 95 were of primary / secondary school age. Whilst all of these LAC were allocated provision there can be tensions as each placement brings a heavy workload commitment for the school / academy involved.

D. Children with disabilities and children with special educational needs

i. How well served are children with 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 when they need to be admitted in year?
ii. How well served are children with disabilities and/or special educational needs who do not have an education health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs when they need to be admitted in year?

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☒ Well ☐ Very well ☐ Not applicable

iii. Please give examples of good or poor practice or difficulties which support your answer, and provide any suggestions for improvement:

E. Other children

i. How well served are other children when they need to be admitted in year?

☐ Not at all ☐ Not well ☒ Well ☐ Very well ☐ Not applicable

ii. Paragraph 3.12 of the Code - several local authorities referred to paragraph 3.12 in their annual report for 2017 stating that this was being used “inappropriately” by some admission authorities. Please could you comment on your experience as a local authority:

In relation to paragraph 3.12 there are occasions where a secondary academy may refer an in-year admission for a child with a record of challenging behaviour back for consideration by the In Year Fair Access Panel (IYFA). This is their right - even where there are available places. The factor in each case is often the perceived threshold for an in-year request to be considered via the IYFA process. Blackpool hold a pre-meeting each month (the week before the formal IYFA Panel). At the pre-meeting any cases which it is felt do not meet the IYFA threshold are referred back to academies as standard in-year admission requests. Predominantly outcomes are accepted. On occasion, where cases are borderline, these can be discussed with head teachers at the IYFA Panel.

3. Fair Access Protocol

A. Has your Fair Access Protocol been agreed with the majority of state-funded mainstream schools in your area?

☒ Yes for primary
☒ Yes for secondary

B. If you have not been able to tick both boxes above, please explain why:
C. How many children have been admitted or refused admission under the Fair Access Protocol to schools in your area between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number of children admitted</th>
<th>Number of children refused admission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary aged child</td>
<td>Secondary aged child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and voluntary controlled</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own admission authority schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. If a number of children have not secured school places following the use of the protocol, please indicate what provision is made for these children. Blackpool’s In Year Fair Access Panel meets monthly (there are usually no meetings in July or August). At a pre-meeting around a week prior to each main panel meeting all IYFA referrals are reviewed by the local authority and PRU managers. Those which do not meet the agreed criteria are referred via the in-year admissions process. Some – often previously known - may be identified as requiring alternative provision (subject to IYFA agreement). There have been no refusals of IYFA placements by secondary academies – only the occasional deferral pending the availability of additional information.

E. 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 applicable

F. Please explain your answer giving examples of good and poor practice, successes and difficulties as appropriate.

The panel arrangement works well and the cases presented always result in agreed placements for the children referred via the IYFA process. There have been concerns that on occasion a placement has been deemed to have failed fairly quickly. There have therefore been conversations with head teachers about treating IYFA placements in the same way as all other pupils already on roll in relation to behaviour and disciplinary policies (and the thresholds expected prior to any child being permanently excluded).
4. Directions

A. How many directions did the local authority make between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018 for children in the local authority area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary aged children (not looked after)</th>
<th>Primary aged looked after children</th>
<th>Secondary aged children (not looked after)</th>
<th>Secondary aged looked after children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary aided or foundation</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Please add any comments on the authority’s experiences of making directions.

C. How many directions did the local authority make between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018 for a maintained school in another local authority area to admit a looked after child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For primary aged children</th>
<th>For secondary aged children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Please add any comments on the authority’s experiences of making directions.

E. How many requests to the ESFA to direct an academy to admit a child did the local authority make between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018? How many children were admitted to school as a result of the request for a direction by the local authority to the ESFA between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018? How many requests were outstanding as at 31 March 2018?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How many requests to the ESFA to direct an academy to admit a child did the local authority make between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018?</th>
<th>How many children were admitted to school as a result of the request for a direction by the local authority to the ESFA between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018?</th>
<th>How many requests were outstanding as at 31 March 2018?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For primary aged children (not looked after)</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For primary aged looked after children</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5. Pupil, service and early years pupil premiums (the premiums)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. How many community or voluntary controlled schools in the local authority area will use a premium as an oversubscription criterion for admissions in 2019?</th>
<th>Primary including middle deemed primary</th>
<th>Secondary including middle deemed secondary</th>
<th>All through</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil premium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service premium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early years pupil premium</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total number of schools using at least one premium in their oversubscription criteria | | | |
|---|---|---|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. How many own admission authority schools in your area will use one of the premiums as an oversubscription criterion for 2019?</th>
<th>Total number of own admission authority schools using at least one of the premiums in their oversubscription criteria for 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary including middle deemed primary</td>
<td>Early years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Pupil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
including middle deemed secondary | Service | 
---|---|---
All through | Early years | nil |
Pupil | Service |

C. Do you have any further comments on the use of premiums? In Blackpool primary and secondary schools in excess of 40% of all children are entitled to pupil premium. There are therefore a high proportion of children in schools / academies across the area who receive pupil premium.

6. **Electively home educated children**

A. How many children were recorded as being electively home educated in the local authority area on 29 March 2018?

207

B. Any comments to make relating to admissions and children electively home educated?

*There has been an increase in EHE numbers but attempts are made at all times to assist and support any parents wishing to put their children back into education. To date this school year 55 children who were on EHE have returned to mainstream schools and academies in Blackpool.*

7. **Other matters**

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

*The main strategic concern about in-year admissions is the frequency and ease with which parents and carers can simply request a change of school. Many requested moves are for convenience rather than necessity (often avoiding other issues about attendance and behaviour rather than being essential). There is often no regard to the potential detrimental effects upon the eventual outcomes for the child. In particular transfers for KS4 (especially Year 11) and the placement of LAC in KS4 can bring challenges for all concerned.*

*From an operational viewpoint delays between requests for in-year moves (new to area and transfers) and places being offered by own admission authorities are often a concern. The increase in the number of own admission authorities combined with less definitive information within the slimmed down School Admissions Code have weakened the influence of the Local Authority when acting on behalf of parents and children. These issues are of concern within the secondary sector.*
8. Feedback on the Local Authority Report template

In previous years we have asked for feedback on the process of completing the template in the following November to inform what is asked in the following year. We are aware that it may be easier to provide feedback on providing information for the annual report at the time rather than later. We would therefore be grateful if you could provide any feedback on completing this report to inform our practice for 2019.

Thank you for completing this template.

Please return to Lisa Short at OSA.Team@osa.gsi.gov.uk by 30 June 2018