

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

8 February 2013

Present: Councillor D. Kershaw (Local Authority) (Chair)
P. Burns (Independent School Appeals Panel)
Reverend T. Colling (SACRE)
K. Edwards (Catholic Diocese)
C. Firth (Choice Adviser)
D. Morrison (Schools – Academies)
H. Quinn (Schools – Voluntary Aided)
R. Williamson (Schools - Trusts)

In Attendance: J. Applegarth (Children, Learning and Young
People Directorate)
S. Heawood (Children, Learning and Young
Peoples Directorate)
G. Paddan (Customer and Workforce Services
Directorate)
J. Warren (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)

Apologies: Councillor A. Williams (Local Authority)
M. Simpson (Special Educational Needs)

227. Introduction

Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

228. Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2012 were agreed as a true record.

229. Matters arising

- a) Appointment of Vice Chair – it was agreed not to appoint a Vice Chair as this was the last meeting for this municipal year.
- b) Primary in-year admissions – the level of movement was discussed together with the reasons in percentage terms. Concern was expressed about the need to reduce levels of movement between schools. There was a discussion about the importance of effective sharing of detailed information between schools and the format of forms used in secondary and primary settings. It was suggested it may be useful for primary forms to be reviewed.

RESOLVED that school heads take this item to appropriate Steering Groups.

230. Expanding primary schools places update

Judith Applegarth advised that following on from the presentation to the last Forum 20 schools had been consulted within the expanding schools programme. It was noted that the consultations were successful with three meetings held at every school. People appreciated the opportunity to put forward their views.

A paper was circulated at the meeting listing the 12 schools for which statutory notices for proposed school expansions have been served.

Judith was thanked for her report and the manner in which the consultation had been carried out was appreciated.

231. Primary co-ordinated admissions scheme 2014/15

The Forum received a report (Document 2) on the primary co-ordinated scheme for 2014/15. The scheme details the following:

- Part 1 – The co-ordination arrangements and process for dealing with applications for 2014 for Coventry parents.
- Part 2 – The oversubscription criteria and policy arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools.

At point 22 in the co-ordinated scheme it was highlighted that amendments would be required in the wording to reflect those schools who were no longer participating in the in-year co-ordination arrangements.

Generally document wording had been updated to include references to academies. There were no changes to the oversubscription criteria and policy arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and therefore no consultation required this year.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted.

232. Secondary co-ordinated admissions scheme 2014/15

The Coventry Secondary School Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2014/15 (Document 3) was received by Members. The layout of the scheme was similar to the primary scheme, and has retained the same information as the scheme for 2013/14.

At point 26 amendments were required to reflect that Whitley Academy would not participate in the in-year co-ordination scheme from 2014.

It was also noted that Caludon Castle school details had been removed from the community school section, as the school is due to become an academy from 1 February 2013.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted.

233. Consultation on admissions arrangements for Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies

Members received a detailed summary of the schools that were consulted on their admissions policies for 2014 (Document 4). It was noted that the proposed policies were available on the City Council's website. Only four secondary schools and academies had consulted on changes to their admission arrangements this year. The report included details of the local authority responses to the consultation.

Where admission arrangements are outside the School Admissions Code and are not amended following consultation then the Forum supported the need for the local authority to lodge an objection.

The Forum discussed the issues that were being faced when implementing faith school admission arrangements on defining or "measuring" faith. This is currently dealt with very differently by Catholic and Church of England schools in the City. Applications are being made to open Sikh and Muslim free schools so these issues may expand. It was suggested that in the future the Forum could consider holding a special single issue meeting with faith schools and religious representatives to talk in more detail.

RESOLVED that the Forum awaits decisions on new faith schools before arranging a broader discussion on faith school admissions issues.

234. Choice Adviser's Annual Report

Chris Firth explained his role in supporting families to apply for secondary school places and in working on complex in transfer cases.

The Annual Report showed the statistics for non-returned Secondary School applications for 2012/13. The maps illustrated the areas where forms from 65 pupils had not been returned for admission to secondary school in 2013. The graphs showed the number of non-returns broken down by primary schools ethnicity and postcode.

The in-year transfer requests between City schools showed a slight increase on the previous year with similar reasons and completion levels. There was an increasing demand for support and advice on appeals.

Chris Firth was thanked for his report.

235. Information for parents on applying for school places

The Forum received a report on the information that is supplied to parents on applying for school place. The booklets and leaflets had been circulated with the paperwork to members. Sue advised that the School Admissions Code required local authorities to publish composite prospectuses that contain information on all school admission arrangements for each application year. Admissions staff work with schools to ensure all parents apply on time as outlined in the report.

The Forum discussed the admissions booklet/leaflets and what else could be done to encourage people to make a decision on time and how best to get admissions specific information out through information channels that parents predominantly use. Social media was discussed as a useful tool for getting application deadline information to parents.

RESOLVED that Heads would share this information with steering meetings and pass on any other suggestions to Sue Heawood for inclusion in future work.

236. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

237. Date of next meetings

The next two meetings were agreed as 11 October 2013 and 7 February 2014.

(Note: the meeting closed at 3.20pm)