

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Minutes: 18th February 2011

- Present: Councillor L. Kelly (Local Authority) (Chair)
C. Buchanan (Schools – Voluntary Aided)
P. Burns (Independent School Appeals Panel)
Reverend T. Colling (SACRE)
Councillor Mrs H. Johnson (Local Authority)
C. Mulley (Church of England Diocese)
M. Simpson (Special Educational Needs)
K. Edwards (Catholic Diocese)
- In Attendance: C. Firth (Choice Adviser)
S. Heawood (Children, Learning and Young Peoples Directorate)
A. Masters (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
G. Paddan (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
- Apologies: S. Allen (Grace Academy)
E. Atkins (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)

168. Introductions

Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

169. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2010 were agreed as a true record.

170. Matters Arising

- a) With reference to Minute 165 (Transport Consultation) the Forum noted that 1100 responses to the consultation had been received and this would be an agenda item for the next meeting in May.
- b) With reference to Minute 160(a) it was noted that some members had not received their paperwork electronically, therefore it was agreed that email addresses be verified. It was agreed that Rachel Hickingbotham be contacted to ascertain whether she was a parent governor at another school, as this would meet the criteria for continuing to serve on the Forum.
- c) With reference to Minute 155 the Forum received a report on school uniforms, as requested at the September 2010 meeting. The report showed that 78 responses were received from primary schools out of 85

schools that were contacted. The following information was noted:

- 73% of the schools required pupils to wear uniform with 27% stating uniform was optional but encouraged.
- Majority of school logo specific items were identified as costing around £5-£10.
- 9 different specialist suppliers were named by schools with 42% of schools only identifying one supplier for uniform logo items. Most of the general uniform items were available from supermarkets/high street.
- 52% provided items for free through second hand schemes. 19% had contacts with children's charities. 8% had financial help via alternative funds/donations.

From the responses received from all 19 mainstream secondary schools in the City it was noted that 53% of schools required a blazer which was the most expensive uniform item. All but two schools had identified they operated support schemes that provide help with uniforms. Follow up contact would be made to ensure all schools had schemes in place.

RESOLVED that all schools are requested to put details into their prospectus or on their website so that parents know that they can talk to the school about extra support if they are concerned about costs.

171. Consultation on admission arrangements for 2012

The Forum received three reports (Documents 2, 3 & 4) on the consultation on admission arrangements for 2012. Documents 2 and 3 were approved as final versions of the co-ordinated admissions scheme arrangements and the admissions policies for community and voluntary controlled schools. Document 4 was a summary of proposals from six own admission authority schools who had consulted on changes to their policies.

A brief note was tabled at the meeting providing the Local Authority's (LA) response to the policies in Document 4; advising that the LA raised no objections to changes in policies that had been put forward by St Augustine's Catholic primary school, SS Peter and Paul's Catholic primary school and Blue Coat Church of England School and Music College. It was noted that Sacred Heart Catholic primary school were asked to remove the supplementary form which they had been asking parents to complete. Also it was requested of St John's Church of England primary school to make a small amendment to the wording of their policy so that it was clear that they would accept children into reception on a full time basis, as well as the new right for children to attend on a part time basis until they reached compulsory school age.

Members were advised that the LA had objected to Whitley Abbey Business and Enterprise College's plan to increase their admission numbers. It was felt that future changes in admission numbers should be looked at across the City

as part of a strategic plan rather than on a piecemeal basis. This view was supported by schools representatives at the meeting keen to continue the partnership working between all City schools and the LA.

RESOLVED that the reports be noted.

172. Choice Adviser Annual Review

Members received an introduction to the School Choice Advice Service which is a free and impartial service for families who are applying for a school place. The service supports parents and carers to make informed and realistic choices when applying for a school for their child. Part of this service includes advice and information on the admissions process and appeals process.

Chris Firth, Choice Adviser presented his Annual Report to the Forum. The presentation showed that there had been 201 non returns of applications for September 2011 (5.5% of cohort). Other geometric data included; the 66 schools that had one or more forms not returned (8 more than 2009/10). There were 11 schools that had five or more non-completed forms (three less than 2009/10) accounting for 44% of total. The postcodes and primary catchments graphs showed that 60 forms had not been returned from catchment areas where schools were over-subscribed.

The Choice Adviser's priorities were principally for those who:

- Had not completed an application form
- Had difficulty in engaging with their child's current primary school
- Experienced problems with their own reading and writing
- Experienced problems with English as an additional language
- Had recently arrived to this country
- Resided in areas of deprivation or moved frequently
- Were disabled or had other medical or health problems

The Forum received the breakdown of figures in respect of in year transfers; reasons given by parents for moves were similar to those of previous years. It was noted that the new database system was used for the first time, which had provided more accurate figures than previous years.

Chris Firth confirmed that he predominately worked on his own but had assistance from the Admissions Team, in order to deliver the workload that had been undertaken during the past year. In conclusion it was agreed that working closely with schools would drive down figures of non returned forms.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

173. Review of Primary and Secondary Booklets

The booklets had been circulated together with two leaflets that provided a

quick reference. The leaflets initiative was undertaken following the discussion on this subject last year. It was felt that most parents would glance at a leaflet then read the booklet.

Sue Heawood appraised members on the layout, wording and that information contained within the booklets was of a legal requirement. The online application usage had increased significantly – 67.5% for secondary schools and 59.4% for primary schools, compared to the 23-25% online applications last year.

Suggestions were made to remove some of the background design to make the middle section in the primary leaflet clearer to read; to include open evening details on the leaflet, although others suggested this could be done via another route; consider changing the wording on the front which could make parents feel they had to apply online.

In terms of readability and accessibility to information it was agreed that the leaflets were practical.

174. In Year Transfers – Autumn Term Monitoring Report

The Forum received reports on the In-Year transfers; the three reports, 10a, 10b and 11 were considered. The tables illustrated a comparison between the years and it was noted that the tables provided information on the number allocated, admitted and those that remained. St John Vianney school was not listed on the table and it was agreed to check whether this was an error or because there had been no movement in or out of the school in the autumn term.

A discussion took place on moves within the City and it was confirmed that moves at secondary level involved discussions with the school but this was not currently automatically required at primary level.

RESOLVED that the reports be noted.

175. Fair Access Protocol – Autumn Term Monitoring Report

The Forum received a report (Document 12) on the Fair Access Protocol for Autumn term 2010. The table illustrated details of those children whose cases had been considered by the Social Inclusion Placement Panel and had been identified as hard to place and referred for admission to schools in line with the protocol, as required by the School Admissions Code to ensure that access to education was secured for children with challenging behaviour. The report enabled the School Admissions Forum to monitor the arrangements for the admission of children identified through the protocol as hard to place.

Members of the Forum discussed the waiting time (school days) being taken to place a child into a school. It was explained that the numbers had been reached by a formula taking into account the size of schools, the degree of transience faced by the school and also school's population. The waiting time

column showed the time before a pupil was admitted to a school in school days.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

176. Any Other Business

- a) A report was circulated at the meeting on the proposed amalgamation of Christ the King Voluntary Aided Catholic Infant School and Christ the King Voluntary Aided Catholic Junior School, in Coundon, Coventry. The purpose of the document was to provide the Forum with details of the consultation. The report also included a copy of the consultation questionnaire.

A brief discussion ensued on the consultation period, proposals that have been made and that a discussion will be held at Cabinet Member (Education) meeting on 6th April 2011.

- b) Timings of Meetings – A brief discussion took place on the timings of meetings and it was agreed that the next meeting would take place at 1.30pm.

177. Date of the next meeting

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting would be 13th May 2011 at 1.30pm.

Chair

Date