

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Minutes: 13th May 2011

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

178. Introductions

Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

179. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2011 were agreed as a true record.

180. Matters Arising

- a) With reference to Minute 174 it was confirmed that St John Vianney Catholic School was not listed on the circulated documents because there had been no movement in or out of the school in the autumn term.
- b) With reference to Minute 176(a) it was confirmed that the proposed amalgamation of the Christ the King Voluntary Aided Catholic Infant School and Christ the King Voluntary Aided Catholic Junior School, in Coundon, Coventry will be proceeding. The Secretary of State had agreed to the arrangements.

181. Secondary School places for September 2011

Members discussed the Secondary School allocation report (Document 2). The table showed the allocation for March 2011 and the updated figures to 18th April

2011 when late applications were then considered. It was highlighted that figures may alter as a result of successful appeals.

A discussion took place on Whitley Abbey Business and Enterprise College's application to increase the school admission number for 2012 by 10 places. It was noted that this month there had been a number of successful appeals for places from September in Whitley Abbey, where the Independent Appeals Panel (IAP) had found no prejudice based on representation from the school. There was some degree of concern that information given by the school relating to the Local Authority view of its requests to increase the admission number from 2011 and 2012 may have been misleading to the Appeals Panel. There was general concern about the manner in which the school had reorganised its teaching classes in anticipation of an increase in its admission number for 2012 and the impact that increase might have on neighbouring schools.

RESOLVED that a letter expressing the Forum's concerns in respect of the information presented to the IAP and proposed increase to the admission number be sent to Whitley Abbey Business and Enterprise College.

182. Primary School places for September 2011

The Forum received three reports (Documents 3a, 3b and 3c) on the allocation of spaces within the City. The coloured areas showed the areas that were full and the white areas on the map indicated vacancies. It was noted that St John's CE and Stretton CE did not have actual catchment areas.

Members were advised that the forward planning of additional 210 class spaces last year for the next intake of pupils had met the demand; without these places the City would have encountered serious problems.

The table within the report 3c highlighted the spaces remaining in mainstream primaries and Catholic primaries. This year Longford Park Primary school was the only community school unable to offer places to all catchment area children, and Corpus Christi and Sacred Heart Catholic Primary Schools were unable to admit all the Catholic children requesting a place.

A question was raised on the number of vacancies at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, it was confirmed that last year there were 17 spaces and this year 18 so it was similar.

It was noted that overall the success rate for first preference was 89.7%.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

183. Online Applications for 2011

The Forum received the online admissions report (Document 4), which showed that 2131 secondary school applications were received online and this equated to 66.9% of all applications. This was an increase of 43.3%.

It was noted that the national target for online applications was 50% with the national average figure now 55%. The table within the report showed the four local authority areas in the West Midlands that achieved this and Coventry was the second most successful area for level of online applications.

The report noted that 2356 online applications for primary schools were received which equated to 59.4% of all applications, and this was an increase in applications of 34.6%. Unfortunately there was no comparable national data available for bench marking at primary level.

The increase in online applications had resulted in savings on printing, paper, postage and storage costs. The report further highlighted that the focus on encouraging online rather than paper applications had no significant impact on the numbers of on time applications. The Admissions Team would be working with schools, parents and other colleagues in the summer term to improve the leaflets and website information to encourage and provide support for parents; in making applications for primary and secondary places.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

184. Update on Transport Consultation

Sue Heawood presented the Secondary Home to School Transport Consultation Analysis report. The consultation was held from 8th December 2011 until 13th February 2011 and was reopened from 17 March to 8 April. The report highlighted the following:

- a) Proposal to withdraw discretionary free transport to new applicants from 2012 – this included transport for faith schools, single sex schools and co-educational schools for children who resided in the catchment area for a single sex school where the closest co-educational school is over three miles away.
- b) Received responses and the types of respondents
- c) Issues raised in the consultation – legal, financial, environmental and alternative suggestions e.g. introduction of some form of means testing.

It was noted that the final decision would be made in July 2011, as a full report would be presented to the Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

185. In-Year Transfers and Admissions

The Forum received two reports (Documents 5a and 5b) on the in-year transfers and admissions analysis for spring term 2010/11. The data showed the number of children from abroad, out of the City and those admitted compared to the number allocated. It was noted that where there had been no

movement the school had been omitted from the list.

In the primary report the number of transfers had fallen compared to last year. This was partly due to the increase in full year groups and pupils being required to stay where they were, rather than being able to move to alternative schools

The report on secondary in-year admissions and transfers for the two year spring term analysis was considered and it was noted that this presented a similar picture year on year.

RESOLVED that the reports be noted.

186. Fair Access Monitoring

Members received a report on Fair Access Protocol monitoring (Document 6), which showed details of children whose cases had been considered by the Social Inclusion Placement Panel and who had been identified as hard to place, and referred for admission to schools in line with the protocol in the current academic year up to 7th April 2011. The table within the report illustrated the service level agreement (SLA); columns showed the number of children each school would be expected to take during 2010/11. The Forum was advised that the number was reached via a formula taking into account the differing sizes of schools, the degree of transience faced by the school and the relative deprivation of the school's population. The waiting times were given in school days and revealed the length of time before pupils were admitted to the school.

It was noted that appeals added days to the waiting times and further explanation was provided on the Barr's Hill School and Community College waiting time, which was an example of an appeal case.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

187. Meeting Dates for 2011/12

It was noted that the White Paper and Education Bill proposed that Local Authorities would no longer be required to have an Admissions Forum. There would be nothing to prevent Local Authorities from choosing to have a Forum but in considering this they might wish to consider its future role and value in Admissions. At present Admission Forums were still statutory and therefore the next meeting date was agreed as 23rd September 2011. Future meeting dates would be confirmed once information on the future of Forums was available.

Apologies were received from Carol Buchanan in advance for the next meeting.

Chair

Date