

## **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM**

**Minutes: 9 December 2011**

- Present: Councillor L. Kelly (Local Authority) (Chair)  
P. Burns (Independent School Appeals Panel)  
K. Edwards (Catholic Diocese)  
H. Quinn (Schools – Voluntary Aided)  
G. Robinson (Church of England Diocese)  
I. Rose (Schools – Community)  
M. Simpson (Special Educational Needs)
- In Attendance: S. Heawood (Children, Learning and Young Peoples Directorate)  
G. Paddan (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
C. Shearsby (Children, Learning and Young People Directorate)  
J. Warren (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
- Apologies: C. Firth (Choice Adviser)

### **199. Introductions**

Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

### **200. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2011 were agreed as a true record.

### **201. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **202. School Admissions Forum Membership and Future Meetings**

Members were advised that as agreed at the meeting held on 23 September, an email was circulated to all Forum representatives to seek their views on the future of the Forum. Unfortunately no responses were received.

At present the Forum meets four times a year and it was suggested that perhaps two meetings would be sufficient to transact its business. Discussion followed on the Forum's usefulness, dissemination of information and consideration was given to the loss of its statutory basis. Members felt that the Forum should continue, at least in the

medium term because it was viewed as providing a useful mechanism by its membership.

The meeting felt that the opportunity existed to provide more information to a wider body.

**RESOLVED that that Forum meets twice a year and that this matter be reviewed after 12 months.**

### **203. Annual Report on Children from Abroad (presentation)**

The Forum received a presentation by Chris Shearsby on children from abroad for the period September 2010 – August 2011. The statistics highlighted that over 90 different languages were being spoken in schools in comparison to the 78 reported previously. The immigration status data presented the trends and future requirements together with monthly admissions figures for the past two years.

It was reported that numbers were continuing to decline after peak years in 2007/8 and 2008/9 with Black African and White Other remaining the largest groups of newly arrived pupils.

Chris Shearsby spoke about recognition from his team of the stress placed on schools to support newly arrived children and the fact that MGSS will do all they can to support them. Members found the presentation extremely useful and expressed their appreciation.

**RESOLVED that a copy of the presentation be circulated to Members.**

### **204. Briefing on New Draft Admissions and Appeals Codes**

The Forum received information on the changes to the School Admissions and Appeals Code. The revised Codes were laid before Parliament on 1 December 2011 and expected to come into force on 1 February 2012. This would apply to admission arrangements determined in 2012 for admissions in school year 2013/14. The Forum discussed the possible implications of the ability of schools to increase their Pupil Admission Numbers without the approval of the Local Authority and the removal of the duty on local authorities to establish an Admissions Forum, which would in future be a matter for the Local Authority to determine should they consider it beneficial.

Members expressed concern regarding infant class size rules, which imposed greater levels of exemptions, whilst positive for multiple births and service children, this raised apprehension about schools operating with possibly several children over the 30 standard class sizes. A question was raised on what would the Local Authority (LA) do if not all schools wished to participate in in-year co-ordination? Several of the Catholic schools at their recent meeting raised a series of concerns

about delays and problems with the in-year process and may not consider participating. It was agreed that the LA would highlight the fact that they were planning to continue this as part of the consultation process. This would in turn enable them to make a decision on what the LA would do and how this would work from as early as possible after the consultation closing in February. This would enable schools to determine their own policies taking into account the proposals. It was appreciated that this area would be problematic and that several West Midlands authorities were waiting to discuss how this could be put to work at a meeting with DfE on 19 December.

Further query was raised regarding how the Appeals Code and the Admissions Code linked together regarding people wanting to make multiple applications for a school during the course of a year. At what point was an application considered to be accepted; if the authority was taking in the application through co-ordination then was it at this point rather than when details would be provided to the governing body? In response to the query it was stated that this again would be checked and addressed via the DfE meeting and information shared with the Diocese to enable them to advise their schools accordingly.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

## **205. Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements for 2013**

Members received two reports (Documents 2a and 2b) showing the main changes from the 2012 policy as follows:

### Primary scheme doc 2a

- Date changes within general scheme to ensure that these did not fall on weekends.
- Changes had been made to fit in with new Admissions Code requirements. i.e. in the community school oversubscription criteria wording about looked after children and the removal of arrangements for twins where parents had to choose which twin would have the last place.
- LA policy included details for Eastern Green now only junior school in City which is linked to St Andrews C of E voluntary controlled school. This created a feeder school relationship in the policy which existed in reality and would give priority to this relationship.

### Secondary policy doc 2b

- Same principles as with the primary policy changes on dates, looked after children and multiple births. In addition an extra three days had been added to the period in December that own admission authority (OAA) schools would have to complete the ranking of all applications.
- Ernesford Grange School had a new net capacity assessment for the school which required a reduction in the PAN from 210 to 180.

- Information on decisions of other OAA schools in the City (i.e. voluntary aided and trust schools and Academies).

The Forum noted that from 21 Voluntary Aided (VA) primary schools confirmation had been received that six so far were planning to go out to consultation but this appeared to be on the basis of the model policy from the Diocese for Catholic schools. Five schools were not consulting and details were awaited from the other 10. It was agreed that specific information would be circulated at the next meeting in February on policies to provide an opportunity for members to raise any concerns about changes.

With regards to secondary schools; from 15 own admission authority schools (8 academies, 3 VA, 4 Trusts) only one school had started a consultation to date - Barrs Hill. It was noted that they would not be changing their main policy but would be applying to decrease their PAN (as indicated in the tabled consultation letter for information within the report). Details were received from five schools that indicated that they would not be consulting and information was awaited from the other nine schools.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

#### **206. Any Other Business**

A request was made for guidance from Catholic schools on what period may be considered "reasonable" as detailed in the Admissions Code, to hold a place open once it has been allocated before withdrawing the offer. Guidance from Legal Services was that in general 14 days would be considered a reasonable period to wait for a response from the offer. This would then need to be followed by a further letter giving notice that a place would be withdrawn within seven days.

#### **207. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was confirmed as 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012.