

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Minutes: 10 February 2012

- Present: Councillor L. Kelly (Local Authority) (Chair)
Reverend T. Colling (SACRE)
Councillor S. Dixon (Local Authority)
K. Edwards (Catholic Diocese)
C. Firth (Choice Adviser)
H. Quinn (Schools – Voluntary Aided)
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)
- Apologies: P. Burns (Independent School Appeals Panel)
G. Robinson (Church of England Diocese)

208. Introductions

Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

209. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2011 were agreed as a true record.

210. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

211. Primary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2013/14

Members considered the report (Document 2) which provided an update on the amendments that had been made in relation to the oversubscription criteria and looked after children. One of the main changes was the addition of a specific policy for the Eastern Green Junior School which was linked with St Andrew's Church of England Infant School.

The Forum had raised some questions regarding the time scales of the consultation and how schools with their own admissions policies would be able to amend them if they did not wish to participate in in-year co-ordination. It was suggested by Helen Quinn that it would be helpful if Sue Heawood could attend a meeting in March to meet with the

Catholic School Heads to provide a better understanding of the admissions requirements and respond to any outstanding queries.

RESOLVED that Sue Heawood attend the Catholic School Heads meeting on 22 March 2012 and that the Co-ordinated Scheme be accepted.

212. Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2013/14

The Forum considered the report (Document 3) on the Coventry Secondary School Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2013/14. A copy of this report had been circulated at the previous meeting and members considered the amendments that had been made in relation to oversubscription criteria and the reduction in the admissions number for Ernesford Grange Secondary & Community College. .

With regards to 6th form education it was confirmed that each school would set their own criteria in respect of admissions.

RESOLVED that the Co-ordinated Scheme be accepted

213. Consultation on Admissions Arrangements for Voluntary Aided Schools, Trust Schools and Academies

The Forum received a report (Document 4) on the details of the schools that were consulting on their admissions policies for 2013. The proposed policies were available in detail on the Council's website.

It was noted that Christ the King, Holy Family, St Anne's, St Elizabeth's and St John Fisher had adopted changes to broaden the definition of siblings to include step brothers and sisters where the parents were not married. Also they had clarified the wording on baptism to specify catholic baptism and reception.

Christ the King Catholic Primary School had made an additional amendment to their oversubscription criteria to create greater differentiation between non catholic children, moving from two items which identified those with and without siblings at the school, to four criteria, which identified children as those living inside and outside the catchment area with siblings and those inside and outside the catchment areas without siblings.

Leigh Church of England Primary School had changes in the following areas – wording on full time and part time education for reception year children, admission of twins and children of multiple birth in line with the new Admissions Code; raising the admission number in Key Stage 2 from 30 to 32 in exceptional circumstances and using the date of application to separate applications for the final place where distances were equal. The local authority was making representations on these

areas as some changes would not meet the requirements of the School Admissions Code.

Two secondary schools had made changes – Cardinal Newman Catholic School had added an oversubscription criterion for children of staff and Barr’s Hill School and Community College had reduced their PAN from 154 to 131. The report highlighted specific recommendations being made by the local authority to Cardinal Newman School on providing a definition of staff.

Sue Heawood advised that following the new Admissions Code, the Team would be contacting all own admission authority schools whether they were consulting on their policies or not to request that they amend their policies to widen the definition of looked after children to include previously looked after children. The Catholic diocese was also recommending specific changes in wording on such issues to all Catholic schools.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

213. Choice Adviser’s Annual Report

The Forum received a presentation from Chris Firth, Choice Adviser outlining the role and achievements to date. It was noted that the Choice Adviser provided impartial advice to parents and assisted them in applying to secondary school places.

The presentation highlighted the statistics for non-returned Secondary School admission forms; overall a decrease of non-returns by 112 (56%). Further data was provided on catchment areas, as depicted on the maps. Information was also presented on the breakdown of non-returned forms by ethnicity and postcodes for 2011/12. In general it was agreed that the move to greater online applications had not led to an increase in late applications.

Members noted that the role of the Choice Adviser was no longer a requirement in the new Admissions Code but the work and services that were provided were both necessary and of great value to parents and schools. .

Further discussion ensued on the appeals advice provided – 86% for secondary schools and 14% for primary schools; in a supportive role, mainly talking through the process.

The Chair commended Chris Firth on his work. It was brought to the Chair’s attention that the press had used information in this report to highlight bullying statistics but disregarded the context of this information and the excellent results and work undertaken by the Choice Adviser and the Council.

RESOLVED that the presentation and report be noted.

214. Any Other Business

Members discussed levels of appeals for school places and the pressures created for admission authorities in this labour intensive work. It was noted that increasing demand for school places combined with lack of availability was increasing the numbers of primary appeals and frustration for parents at the stress and lack of success in this process.

The Forum noted that the membership of the Forum needed to be reviewed following the departure and absence of some members and the legislative changes. It was agreed that the membership be considered at a future meeting and that secondary school representation is pursued again.

207. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as 12 October 2012.