

DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Tuesday 15 July 2008

Present

Devon County Council

Councillors Bray, Pennington, Way and Yabsley

Devon Schools Group

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Mr Haigh

Voluntary Aided

Mr Walker

Foundation Schools

Mr Sindall

Church of England Diocesan Board of Education

Mrs C Mabin (Ms Sheldrake - observer)

Community Representatives

Mr Duttson

Devon Association of Governors

Mr Rogers

Service Families

Ms Denson

Somerset County Council

Mr Pollock

Apologies

Miss Booth (Devon CYPS), Ms Burnside (Voluntary Aided Schools), Ms J Inett (Torbay Council), Mrs Nield (Devon Schools), Mrs Spence (Devon County Council) Mrs M Strudwick (Early Year's), Mrs Turner (Cornwall County Council) and Mrs Wallace (Plymouth Council).

66 **Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman**

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor Way be elected Chairman for the ensuing year;
- (b) that the election of the Vice Chairman be deferred to the next meeting.

67 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 27 March 2008 be signed as a correct record.

68 **Membership and Draft Constitution**

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/08/46) and Draft Constitution. The Schools Access Services Manager reported that with the support of the Head teacher Associations and following consultation with all maintained schools proposing that they be represented by the Core Members there had been no objections and one response in favour of the proposal had been received.

It was noted that any representative of the newly formed Trust schools could not be a core member but could sit as non core member in line with Regulations.

The Forum noted the current vacancies and resignation of Mrs Strudwick as an Early Years representative and Mr Walker as the VA Schools representative due to his impending retirement. The Chairman welcomed Ms Denson to her first meeting replacing Mr Watt.

Mr Sindall would also be resigning as he was retiring at the end of term.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the current vacancies and the action being taken to fill the vacant positions be noted and that Mrs Strudwick, Mr Sindall and Mr Walker be thanked for their services and valued contribution to the work of the Forum over many years;
- (b) that the Schools be represented by the Core members following the recent agreement of the head teacher associations and consultation with all maintained Schools;
- (c) that the tenure and quorum as recommended in paragraph 3 of the report be approved and that the Constitution be agreed accordingly.

69 **Determined Admission Arrangement 2009/10**

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/08/47) on the determined admission arrangements for 2009/10 for Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools as approved by the LA's Executive on 11 April 2008; and for VA, Foundation and Trust Schools. There had been three formal objections lodged in

respect of the proposed 2009/10 admission arrangements. The LA's objections in respect one of these had been upheld by the Adjudicator (Woodroffe) and her ruling on the others was awaited.

Members stated their support for the Local Authority and Diocese of Exeter in their lodging of the objections.

70 LAF Annual Admissions Report: Update of Working Group

The Forum received the report of the Secretary (CY/08/48) on the Annual Admission report Working Group and the appointment of an external consultant to advise on and draft the annual report on behalf of the Forum. The draft report, which would be compiled over the summer, would be presented to the next full forum meeting in November 2008.

71 National Updates: Strengthening the Admissions System

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/08/49) on investigation by the Schools Adjudicator of compliance by all admission authorities nationally. Based on feed back to date of other authorities it was likely that some issues would be identified within Devon's arrangements, but it was hoped given the close working between the LA and Dioceses these would be relatively minor.

The report (CY/08/49) also referred to a four month DCSF consultation on new draft Codes for Schools Admission and Admission Appeals and outlined the main and associated proposals. Mr Pollock reported on the work of the Somerset LAF in developing a regional LAF response to this consultation.

Members were invited to submit their views on the proposals for Admission Forums as detailed in paragraph 2.3 of the Consultation document to Lisa Boon lisa.boon@devon.gov.uk as part of any proposed response by the LAF to this consultation.

In response to the proposals outlined Forum members' points included:

- in terms of the proposed relaxing of the rules to make it easier for successful and popular schools to expand to meet parental demand, by allowing them to admit pupils over and above their 'published admission number' members views covered:
 - concerns about the transport implications and costs for the LA or families involved and impact on the environment in terms of additional vehicular movements and traffic congestion;
 - the capital cost implications for the LA or Diocese and therefore for other schools;
 - the current process for proposals to expand schools is considered by the Forum to be satisfactory - it allows for effective annual consultation on PANs and feedback and is a transparent process facilitating clearly the implications for neighbouring or other Schools. It assists strategic planning by the LA with other Admitting Authorities for the benefit of all schools and not just popular or

- expanding ones, however defined. This would not be the case with this proposal;
- the implications for smaller / and or rural schools in Devon could be very detrimental for local communities particularly in the rural areas;
 - the lack of information in the consultation relating to net capacities;
 - the proposal could undermine existing protocols for secondary schools to share fairly their intake of 'hard to place' children;
 - if the proposal is approved it could undermine the role of the local Independent Schools Admissions Committee;
- in respect of the proposal that Local Authorities would be required to report annually to the Schools Adjudicator on admissions in their area, the Forum felt that care would need to be taken that this work does not duplicate the work of the LAF in formulating its annual report for the Schools Commissioner and the DCSF.

RESOLVED

(a) that a draft response be formulated on the basis of the comments above, to include any further comments by members on Admission Forums, for circulation and approval by the Forum prior to submission to the DCSF;

(b) that a copy of the LA's response be circulated to the Forum;

(c) that the work by Somerset on the development of a regional response by LAFs be noted and that this Forum approves its support for such a response (subject to it being broadly in line with its individual submission).

72

Inclusion

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/08/50) on data and operation of the 'In Year' Admission Protocol and the work of the Exclusion and Reintegration Panels to support pupils at risk of or who have been permanently excluded. Permanent exclusions had fallen in five of the six Regional Panels by about 20%. Fixed period exclusions also fell across the County by 50% as a consequence of the agreed Panel protocol, reintegration had increased in four of the six panels and the number of Managed Moves had also increased. However, an unforeseen consequence was that placing pupils under the In Year Admissions Protocol for 'Hard to Place' pupils was proving more difficult with increased reintegration and Managed Moves. As a consequence the LA had met with Schools where there had been difficulties.

The Forum noted that whilst the In Year admissions related to 3% above PAN the number of excluded children a school could be expected to take was 4, irrespective of its size.

A Task Group of the Council's Children and Young People's Overview/Scrutiny Committee was examining issues surrounding exclusions and would report in due course.

RESOLVED

(a) that the LA and Schools be congratulated on their successful partnership work within the local Exclusion and Reintegration Panels to support vulnerable children;

(b) that the DASH Executive be recommended to reconsider the existing protocol relating to admission of 'excluded children' to reflect the actual size of schools; in advance of the formal consultation on admission arrangements for 2010/11;

(c) that a copy of the final report of the Exclusions Task Group be circulated to the LAF.

73 Single Point of Entry: Proposed Way Forward

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/08/51) on the impending consultation by the LA with interested parties on a single or dual point of entry to primary and infant schools for 2010/11. An officer working group would undertake an informal consultation in Autumn of 2008. This informal process would inform the formal consultation and proposals for the 2010/11 admission arrangements. It was felt by many schools that they could plan more effectively and retain full time staff for the whole year with a single point of entry.

RESOLVED that the LA actions to consult with interested parties on a single or dual point of entry to primary or infant schools from 2010/11 be supported.

74 Appeals Update: National Statistics

The Forum received the report (CY/08/52) on national statistics relating to appeals including Devon's. When compared with its geographical neighbours the number of appeals allowed in parents favour in Devon was low both for primary and secondary schools and infant class size appeals were comparable.

The Clerk to the Devon Independent Schools Admissions Appeal Committee would attend the next meeting to report on trends and any issues arising from the 2008/09 round of appeals.

75 Extending the Role of Choice Advisers

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/08/53) on a proposal by the LA to extend the role of the Choice Advisers to include the primary stage and 'In Year' admissions from September 2008 when the normal round of applications would be made for places in primary and secondary schools for September 2009.

RESOLVED that the proposal to extend the role of Devon Choice Advisers be supported.

Dates of Meetings

Thursday, 20 November 2008 and
Friday, 27 March 2009 at 10.30 am at County Hall.

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.40 pm

The Minutes of the Forum are published on the County Council's Website at:-
http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools/admissions/admissions_forum.htm