

DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

18 March 2010

Present

Local Authority

Councillor Channon (Chairman)

Devon Schools Group

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Mr Juby

Mr Jones

Early Years Child Care Development Partnership

Ms Butler

Devon Association of Governors

Mr Rogers

Advisor on Children in Care

Ms Booth

Neighbouring Authorities (Advisors)

Mrs Turner (Cornwall County Council)

Apologies

Ms Burnside (VA Schools), Ms Denson (Service Families), Mr Duttson (Community Representatives), Mr Evans (Foundation Schools), Ms Inett (Torbay Council), Mrs Mabin (Church of England Dioceses), Mr Pollock (Somerset County Council) and Mrs Wallace (Plymouth Council)

30 Minutes

The notes of the meeting held on 20 November 2009 were signed as a correct record.

31 Choice Advisers Annual Report

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/14) on the 2009/10 annual report of the independent Choice Adviser Service in Devon. The report outlined the work of the Service in 2009-10 and developments since its inception in 2007. The current Service was contracted until March 2011 following which a decision would be required on the future provision of Choice Advice in Devon.

The Choice Advisers led by Melanie Henrywood outlined the service activity including helping parents with on-line applications, referral arrangements, its service development plan and feedback and quality assurance processes. The Advisers and report included examples of real case studies. The Forum also received an account from a parent of her positive experience and assistance she received from her adviser

working with various agencies on her daughter's behalf. An appropriate school place had been found for her daughter who was now thriving in the new setting.

The Advisers indicated that whilst still maintaining their independence they commended the assistance and support of the County Council's Admissions Team.

Fran Butler referred to the potential value of the Service in assisting parents to understand the new Single Offer Point policy and in supporting parents with applications to maintained nurseries.

The Chairman thanked the advisers and the parent for their interesting presentations and referred to the value and cost effectiveness of the Service and that the County Council would consider additional support if funding was not forthcoming from the DCSF after March 2011. She also indicated that she would pass the information to the County Council's press office about the good work of the Service.

RESOLVED

(a) that the proposals that the Devon Choice Adviser Service be extended to include the 'Stepping Out' nursery application process be supported; and

(b) that the requirement for a decision on the continuing provision of the Choice Advice Service in Devon beyond March 2011 be noted.

32 Role and Remit of the Forum

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/10/15) on the role and remit of the Forum and how it related to the Devon Education Forum. The report outlined the statutory role of the LAF as an independent body monitoring admission arrangements (to help ensure effective and fair arrangements) and advising the County Council and other admission authorities. Mr Jones and Mr Juby as members of the DEF indicated that they were in a position to report on any relevant issues affecting the two independent bodies.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

33 LAF: Constitution/Membership

The Committee considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/16) on a proposed quorum and on recent developments relating to membership.

RESOLVED

(a) that the Constitution be amended to include a quorum of 4 and that the revised Constitution be forwarded to Members alongside these minutes;

(b) that the proposed actions and changes relating to membership detailed in section 2 of the report be approved.

Proposed Admission Arrangements for 2011/12 Including In-Year Admissions for 2010-11

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/17) on the responsibilities of the LA as Admissions Authority and administrator of the Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes; the setting of proposed arrangements for 2011 -12 and the responses to the consultation and issues of note for consideration by the LAF, proposed Planned Admission Numbers, yr 12 admissions, including arrangements for voluntary aided, foundation and trust schools; and policies and schemes for admission arrangements.

The Forum considered all consultation responses received and discussed the LA recommendations relating to each.

Specific discussion by the Forum relating to the consultation included:

- Tavistock College and Lifton Primary School Designated Area: the Forum considered the responses received regarding the designated area served by Tavistock College and resulting transport eligibility. Mrs Turner thanked the LA for pointing out the anomalies in the designated area for Launceston College which would be corrected. She also indicated that any changes to proposals relating to Tavistock College and Lifton Primary School designated area would impact on Launceston and current well embedded admissions arrangements and expressed some concern if these were to be pursued.
- Newton Abbot College and its Designated Area: the Forum discussed the proposal consulted upon by the College to extend their designated area to cover all of the Newton Abbot LLC area (including that currently served by Coombeshead College). Some concern was expressed about the implications if this proposal was determined regarding dual admissions priority for some families which would be created, as well as the potential for additional transport costs for the LA.
- St James' School, Contributory Primary Schools and Designated Area: the School had responded to express concern regarding numbers of children attending contributory primary schools that feed to St James and requesting that designated areas in Exeter are reviewed. Given the scale of this exercise it was recommended that this would be more appropriately considered as part of the Area Review process.
- Broadclyst Primary School Increase in PAN: a number of responses were received which opposed the proposed increase in PAN from 45 to 60. Given the physical capacity available at the school, together with the level of preference being exercised by parents in favour of the school the LA feels that it must acknowledge this position when setting admission arrangements for 2011.

The School Access Services Manager also reported on the new funding arrangements for students of Year 11 age wishing to access FE provision (having completed KS4 studies).

RESOLVED

(a) that the admission arrangements proposed and consulted on by the LA as admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools at www.devon.gov.uk/admissionarrangements be noted;

(b) that the LA recommendations to be made to the Cabinet following responses to the Consultation be supported subject to further consultation in respect of the proposed PAN for Ilsington CoE Primary School relating to capacity and curriculum issues prior to report to the Cabinet;

(c) that the Forum supports the LA in any formal objection it considers necessary to make following determination of VA, Foundation and Trust school admission arrangements by 15 April;

(d) that the LA proposals regarding consultees at sections 3.5-6 for the consultation 2012-13 be supported;

(e) that where possible a report be made to the next meeting on reasons why some schools have gone beyond their Planned Admission Numbers.

35 Devon's In year Fair Access Protocol: Update

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/10/18) on the Protocol covering the management of admission for vulnerable children. Since the last meeting, following expression of concerns and the need for clarity relating to the proposed retention of a 3% threshold above PAN, the protocol had been subject to further discussion at the Devon Education Forum and DASH area group meetings.

Mr Juby confirmed that following these meetings there was no longer any proposal from DASH to oppose the Protocol in any formal response to the Admissions Consultation 2011.

The Forum noted that it would continue to monitor the effectiveness of the FAP in accordance with the Admissions Code.

36 Update on Points of Entry to Devon Primary Schools

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/19) on local authority proposals to offer guidance for schools, early years settings and parents on the requirement for all admission authorities to offer admission to Rising 5 children at the beginning of the September term following their fourth birthday. The LA had confirmed that there would be no change for the 2010/11 intake but all schools would be required to make the change for 2011-12. The report detailed the options for parents under the new arrangements from 2011, the key funding and other practical issues that would be addressed. A communication strategy would also be developed to inform all stake holders about the implications.

RESOLVED

(a) that the County Council's proposals to offer guidance and workshops for schools and early years settings in the autumn term 2010 be supported; and

(b) that progress reports be submitted to this Forum including a report at the next meeting on the proposed communication strategy.

37 Proposed Admission Arrangements for 2011/12: Voluntary Aided Schools

The Forum noted the joint report of the Secretary and the Church of England Diocese (CY/10/20) on a proposed model policy and supplementary information form for Church of England VA schools proposed by the Diocesan Board of Education. The policy was used by 33 out of the 49 VA primary schools. Many schools had seen the benefits of using the policy in achieving consistency; it was clear and an improvement on previous policies. All VA schools not using the policy would be contacted by the Diocese and it was hoped that that more schools would use it for the 2012 admission arrangements.

RESOLVED that the Diocese and LA proposal to review the consultation process be supported.

38 The Education Transport Policy 2010/11

The Committee noted the report of the Secretary (CY/10/21) on the proposed Education Transport policy for 2010/11 and its relevance to the admissions process and future transport challenges.

39 In Year Variations: Update

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/22) on an application by the LA to the Schools Adjudicator for In-Year variations on the approved admission arrangements. These as detailed in the report had been approved by the Schools Adjudicator but with an amendment relating to multiple birth siblings with the limitation to children living in a designated area being removed. The Adjudicator had also advised on the need to seek formal responses from all schools including those which had made a 'nil' response to consultation on admission arrangements. Cornwall County Council confirmed that its practice had been similar to Devon in taking silence from a school to constitute a 'nil' response.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

40 Local Authority Annual Report: Working Group

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/23) on arrangements for the preparation of an annual report by the Forum about its work in conjunction with the annual LA Report on admission arrangements. The LA report would be required by the Adjudicator by 30 June of each year.

RESOLVED that Mrs Mabin, Mr Juby, Mr Rogers and Ms Booth comprise the Working Party to approve a draft of an Annual Local Admissions Forum Report for consideration at the next meeting.

41 Admissions for 2010/11: Progress

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/24) on secondary allocations for September 2010. Devon County Council had offered 91% of parents a place in their highest ranked school with 97.4% of parents being offered a place in a preferred school. The Forum also received a schedule of secondary applications and offers across England. On-line applications in Devon comprising 92.2% of all secondary applications compared favourably against other LAs in the South West. 91% of all primary applications in Devon had been received on-line.

The report also outlined the process for primary applications for all maintained schools. Parents would be notified on 17 April 2010.

The Forum congratulated the County Council's Admissions Team for their work during the admissions round, in particular the high number of first preferences which had been met and the high number of on-line applications was also commended.

42 Admission to Grammar Schools: Testing Before Preference

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/10/25) on guidance within with the admissions code that schools which were permitted to use selection by ability/aptitude **should** ensure that parents were informed of the outcome of entry tests before they made their ranked preferences on the Common Application Form. The Forum noted that Torbay Council had confirmed that testing before preference would form part of the consultation on admission arrangements for 2012-13 and similarly Colyton Grammar School was likely also to consult on testing before preference for 2012. The report outlined the perceived differing advantages and disadvantages for parents, children and schools both in Devon and Torbay.

43 Introduction of In Year Coordination

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/26) on the requirement for all LAs to formulate a scheme for the co-ordination of admissions in-year and out of the normal round. All in-year admissions would be managed by the home LA not the maintaining LA. The report outlined the timescale for consultation and determination, the difficulties and the need to ensure all schools were aware of the requirements and the aims and objectives of the arrangements. These arrangements represented further duties on the Admissions Team and would result in additional staffing which was subject to approval.

RESOLVED that a paper be submitted to the Devon Education Forum in order that the practical implications of In Year Co-ordination can be further disseminated to all Schools.

44 Dates of Future Meetings

Thursday, 15 July 2010

Friday, 19 November 2010 at 10.30 am at County Hall.

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.50 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