

DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

13 July 2006

Present

Devon County Council

Councillors Bray, Pennington and Mrs Foggin (for Mrs Spence)

Devon Schools Group

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Mr R Shilvock

Foundation Schools

Mr Sindall

Voluntary Aided Schools

Mr Walker

Church of England Diocesan Board of Education

Ms Doswell (for Mrs Arnold)

Early Years Childcare Development Partnership

Mrs Strudwick

Devon Association of Governors

Mr Rogers

Neighbouring LEAs

Plymouth Council

Mr Leigh

Cornwall County Council

Mrs J Turner

Apologies: Mr Birch, Mr Dutton, Mrs Neild, Councillors Mrs Spence and Yabsley

22 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Councillor Way and Mrs Strudwick were elected respectively Chairman and Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

Mrs Strudwick in the Chair.

23 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 21 March 2006 were signed as a correct record.

24 **Admissions Update: 2006/7 Admissions Round**

The Forum received the report of the Secretary (CY/06/031) on an update on the primary admissions process for September 2006 and January 2007.

As of March 2006 92.1% of children were aware that a place had been offered in a Devon primary school. The remainder were offered places within the arrangements for late applications specified within the co-ordinated admissions scheme. Approximately 98% of children had received a place at their highest preference. .

As had been requested by the Forum at the last meeting a questionnaire had been circulated to parents applying late, the results of which indicated the reasons for the late applications, despite the extensive publicity campaign by the County about the new arrangements. This would assist in developing new strategies to inform parents about the arrangements. The Forum also suggested that in addition to the publicity the LEA could consider in future an approach to Sure Start and other agencies about pre school children numbers/contacts, subject to data protection issues.

25 **Determined Admission Arrangements for 2007/8**

The Committee considered the report of the Secretary (CY/06/032) on the admission arrangements proposed by the County Council for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2007/8 ended on 1 March 2006 approved by the Council's Executive; objections lodged with the Schools Adjudicator; and information for parents for 2007/8.

Members asked that in the information for parents the Authority should highlight key points such as transport cost implications if the child does not attend the preferred school; attendance at feeder schools and oversubscription criteria (attendance does not guarantee a place); implications for 'out of normal round' applications from people recently moved into the area; and that information should be made readily available for foster parents and care managers.

Members referred to the implications of proposed new legislation giving financial assistance for transport costs (means tested) in respect of children attending non-designated schools.

RESOLVED

(a) that the admission arrangements which are determined by Devon County Council for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for 2007/8 be noted;

(b) that the objections which the Council has lodged with the schools adjudicator regarding the determined admission arrangements of two Devon Voluntary Aided schools be noted;

(c) that the Council give consideration to the above suggestions in respect of improved information provision to parents for the 2007/8 admissions round.

Inclusion

The Forum received the Report of the Secretary (CY/06/033) on how well the 'In Year' Admissions Protocol was working; exclusions from Devon Schools 2005/6; and local arrangements for the admission of pupils described as 'Hard to Place'.

The Group Manager for Inclusion explained the reasons behind the recent increases in permanent exclusions and provision made for excluded children including alternative schools, PRUs, linked education and ongoing discussions with heads about sustainable systems and early intervention models. The Members noted the importance of early intervention and the support of the LEA (through the Behaviour Support teams and Advisory services) for schools in helping prevent exclusions both at primary and secondary levels.

In respect of an example of a proposed local arrangement for the admission of 'hard to place' pupils in North Devon, the Forum supported in principle local initiatives subject to equity (avoidance of delay), legal requirements and effective monitoring. Within this framework best practice could then be identified and disseminated through the County. It was also suggested that the proposed scheme in North Devon should also apply to primary schools.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the monitoring information of the admissions Protocol and data be noted;
- (b) that the data relating to Exclusions in the current academic year be noted
- (c) that the initiatives to introduce 'local' arrangements to admit pupils who are 'hard to place' be supported in principle subject to a proper legal and policy framework, and proposals being reported to this Forum for consideration.

School Admission Appeals

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/06/034) on data relating to appeals lodged against non admission to maintained schools for all admitting authorities in Devon and comparisons against statistical neighbours and nationally. At primary and secondary levels the data indicated that Devon had a relatively low proportion of appeals decided in parents' favour and that the number of appeals was also increasing. This increase could be attributed to the introduction of the Secondary co-ordinated scheme.

The Forum noted that Devon was relatively successful in granting highest ranked preferences and had a lower number of appeals than many other authorities, indicative of a generally satisfactory situation.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

National Updates

The Forum received the report of the Secretary (CY/06/035) on updates of the The Education and Inspections Bill, including a skeleton Code of Practice (previously

circulated) on admission arrangements and introduction on Choice Advisers for parents.

Members' comments on the proposals included:

- The County Council already has a designated person to identify children of compulsory school age missing education
- The proposed financial allocation for authorities to support the employment of Choice Advisers appears unrealistically low although details of the funding element related to deprivation were yet to be confirmed
- Proposed improved collaboration between secondary schools and FE colleges should be supported to help deliver effective vocational training
- Support for proposals to improve registration requirements for children not educated at school.

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Next Meetings

Thursday, 30 November at 10.30 am

Tuesday, 13 March 2007 at 10.30

The meeting started at 10.30 am and ended at 12.20 pm