

DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

14 July 2004

Devon County Council
Councillors Hart, Mrs. Spence and Mrs. Squires

Devon Schools Group

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools
Mr. Birch, Mrs. Nield and Mr. Shilvock

Foundation Schools
Mr. Sindall

Voluntary Aided Schools
Mr. Walker

Church of England Diocesan Board of Education
Mrs. Iffla

Community Representatives

Devon Association of Governors
Mr. Adcock

Devon Federation of PTAs
Mr. Duttson

Neighbouring LEAs

Plymouth Council
Mr. Leigh

Torbay Council
Ms. Bailey (vice Mr. Jordan)

Cornwall County Council
Mrs. Turner

Somerset County Council
Mr. Pollock

Apologies

Ms. Tout (Early Years Childcare Development Partnership), Councillor Beman (Devon County Council)

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Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillors Hart and Mrs. Squires be elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively for the ensuing year.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 19 February 2004 were signed as a correct record.

Co-ordinated Admission Schemes

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (EO/04/54) on a draft co-ordinated admission scheme for primary schools for implementation from September 2005 for admissions in September 2006. The scheme would need to be agreed by all admitting authorities; the Devon Local Education Authority and the governing bodies of all 56 voluntary aided primary schools. If agreement could not be reached, the Secretary of State would determine the scheme.

Relating to a co-ordinated admissions scheme for secondary admissions in 2005, the Forum noted that, following the last meeting, agreement had been reached with all admitting authorities, Voluntary Aided and Foundation Secondary Schools. The scheme had been lodged with the Department for Education and Skills on 24 March 2004 and would commence in Devon on 1 September 2004.

Members and officers discussions included:-

- parents applying for primary school places to make two preferences and the need for discussion with the Church of England Diocesan Board of Education regarding admission to voluntary aided primary schools and trying to simplify the admission process;
- supplementary application forms which would not replace common application forms and must always be accompanied by a common application form;
- possible meeting of representatives of voluntary aided schools in order to have a common strategy for admissions criteria for September 2005;
- Diocesan meetings scheduled for November 2004 and the Church of England Diocesan Board of Education representative to liaise with the Dioceses on ways of simplifying primary school admissions;
- voluntary aided schools devising own supplementary forms;
- parents to be asked to return supplementary forms to the school rather than the County Council; parents to return all documents via first preference primary school and supplementary forms to go direct to voluntary aided schools;
- culture change in primary admissions and the need to work towards a less devolved system;
- level of information needed for voluntary aided schools to make admission decisions;
- earlier indication of allocations for individual schools and final allocations to be as per timetable; potential for an increase in cross border issues ;
- publicising information on primary admissions and the wide range of literacy among parents and the need to make the process accessible.

RESOLVED

(a) that the draft co-ordinated admission scheme for primary schools, including the proposed timetable which would form Schedule 2 of the final scheme, be approved;

(b) that the Church of England Diocesan Board of Education liaise with voluntary aided schools to consider ways of simplifying primary school admissions;

(c) that the outcome of consultations on the secondary co-ordinated admissions scheme be noted.

30 Admission Arrangements for 2005

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (EO/04/55) on consultation on admission arrangements for 2005; voluntary aided primary school admission arrangements, and exceptional medical or social justification for admission.

The Secretary tabled at the meeting a draft booklet entitled "*The Next Step - Transfer to Secondary Education in Devon in September 2005*" which would be made available to parents when published. The Forum were requested to forward any comments on the draft booklet to the Secretary by Wednesday, 21 July 2004.

The Forum discussed the suggested protocol regarding "*exceptional medical or social justification*" in response to the decision made by the County Council's Executive on 20 April 2004 (Minute *725 refers).

Members and officers discussions included:-

- the outcome of the consultation on a single point of entry;
- VA primary school admission arrangements and LEAs challenging criteria where they do not meet the Admissions Code of Practice;
- active membership of a particular faith to be made clear and definition of other terminology used in over subscription criteria;
- parents would have to demonstrate that only the preferred school can meet the exceptional medical or social needs of the child;
- parental responsibility to be tested regarding foster children and the personal circumstances of a family being an exceptional case;
- flexibility over and the use of planned admission numbers;
- casual admissions.

RESOLVED

(a) that the outcome of the consultation on admission arrangements for 2005 be noted;

(b) that the ongoing work being undertaken with voluntary aided primary schools regarding their admission arrangements for 2005 be noted;

(c) that the suggested protocol regarding "*exceptional medical or social justification*" be approved;

(d) that the work being undertaken by officers to better manage admissions be noted.

Inclusion

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (EO/04/56) on admissions using the in-year 'casual' protocol, which had been agreed by the Forum in November 2003 and adopted in January 2004. The protocol related to how admission applications received after the normal admission round, or for years other than the normal year of entry, were handled. Since adoption of the protocol, 133 children had been placed in their designated school. The Forum noted that the protocol had proved unpopular with some schools. This unpopularity had continued with many schools questioning admissions that had been made using the protocol, and feeling they were receiving an unfair proportion of in-year pupils. The Forum were requested to give consideration to amendments to section 3.1 of the policy ("*Parental move to, or within Devon*") being proposed.

Members and officers discussions included:-

- suggested wording of section 3.1 of the policy to be given more flexibility and the addition of the words "*next next nearest school*" to be included;
- the meaning of the words "*within reasonable travelling distance*";
- the effect of "*out of normal round*" policy on Kingsbridge and Ivybridge Community Colleges with "*next next nearest*" amendment;
- concerns relating to casual admissions policy;
- appeals process and travelling distances basis for defence at appeal hearings and definition of one hour and a quarter travelling;
- health and safety issues regarding class size;
- the use of resources effectively and funding schools where places are empty;
- 44 looked after children had been placed using the In-Year protocol and two were awaiting allocation;
- the reintegration of permanently excluded pupils for the period January 2004 to July 2004;
- the up-to-date position concerning the percentage of excluded pupils who had still not been allocated a place on a school roll by the end of June;
- protocols with other authorities on placing a looked after child in a Devon school;
- monitoring the placement of pupils with special educational needs.

RESOLVED

(a) that section 3.1 of the policy ("*Parental move to, or within Devon*") as set out in the report be approved, together with a caveat of the words "*within reasonable travelling distance*";

(b) that the Forum continue to monitor how well the "In Year" or "Casual" Admissions Protocol is working (Admissions Code of Practice, Section 5.10).

Admission Appeals

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (EO/04/57) on the background and current situation concerning admission appeals. The Forum noted that Members of the Independent Appeals Panel had attended a training event on 25 March 2004 which had covered the Law and procedures relating to school

admissions. The Secretary reported on the action taken following this training event as set out in the last paragraph of report E0/04/57.

RESOLVED

- (a) that report EO/04/57 be noted;
- (b) that the statistics on the numbers of admission appeals heard in Devon be presented to the next meeting of the Forum on 23 November 2004.

33 **Dates of Future Meetings**

RESOLVED that future meetings be held as follows:-

Tuesday, 23 November 2004 at 10.30 a.m.
Wednesday, 23 February 2005 at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting started at 10.30 a.m. and finished at 12.25 p.m.