

## DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

23 February 2005

Devon County Council

Councillors Hart (Chairman), Mrs Morrish, Mrs Spence and Mrs Squires

Devon Schools Group

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Mr Kirk (substitute for Mr Birch) and Mrs Nield

Foundation Schools

Mr Sindall

Voluntary Aided Schools

Mr Walker

Church of England Diocesan Board of Education

Mrs Iffla

Community Representatives

Early Years Childcare Development Partnership

Ms Tout

Devon Association of Governors

Mr Adcock

Devon Federation of PTAs

Mr Duttson

Neighbouring LEAs

Plymouth Council

Mr Trevan

*Apologies*

*Councillor Berman (Devon County Council), Mr Birch (Devon Schools Group), Cornwall County Council*

### **41** Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 23 November 2004 were signed as a correct record.

## 42 **Urgent Business (Raised with the Chairman's Consent)**

### **(a) Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes 2005/06**

Lisa Boon (Admissions Manager, Devon LEA) reported on progress on the implementation of the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Devon secondary schools. Although problems were being experienced with new IT software being used in the allocations process, the LEA would be ready to send out letters on 1 March 2005 allocating a school place to all children in Devon transferring to secondary education in September 2005. Primary (including infant and junior) school allocations in Exeter were still under discussion with individual schools. The primary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme had to be agreed between the LEA and the schools involved by 15 April 2005.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Spence, Mrs Boon commented on: the numbers of parents who had failed to express their preferences regarding school places; the efforts made to raise parents' awareness of admissions procedures and to encourage those who had not expressed their preferences to do so; and further initiatives which could be looked at for next year's round of admissions. Mrs Boon confirmed that children for whom no preferences had been expressed would be offered a place at the next nearest school to their home address with a place available.

### **(b) Questionnaire**

Mr Duttson drew attention to a politically motivated questionnaire on schooling issues which he had recently received and might also be sent to other Forum members.

## 43 **Admissions Protocols – Collective Responsibility for Managing Support and Provision for Pupils Described as “Hard to Place”**

Further to discussions at the last meeting, the Committee considered a report by the Secretary (EO/05/005) which was introduced by Ms Rollason, School Organisation and Access Group Manager, Devon LEA. The report referred to:

- DfES guidance highlighting the need for LEAs to formulate a protocol on “Hard to Place” pupils if one was not already in operation;
- the existence of the Devon “In Year” protocol which did not distinguish “Hard to Place” pupils from others, and met most of the requirements of the guidance;
- other developments since the last meeting, notably the receipt of a letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on Improving Behaviour in Schools which included a statement that protocols on “Hard to Place” pupils need not apply to previously excluded pupils until September 2007.

There was consensus amongst Forum members that (a) the term “Hard to Place” was unhelpful when considering these children and tended to prejudge the pupil; (b) the present arrangements for supporting “Hard to Place” pupils under the existing “In Year” protocol introduced in January 2004 - involving a closely co-ordinated approach to identifying a school place and providing support for re-integration - were working well. This was borne out by statistics presented at the

meeting by Mrs Booth, Inclusion Group Manager, Devon LEA who explained that 15 secondary schools had taken one excluded pupil, and 2 secondary schools had taken 2 excluded pupils. In terms of a percentage (as suggested by the DfES guidance) this was negligible. The statistics showed that the majority of excluded secondary pupils were being admitted to a fresh mainstream school quickly (and were being successfully re-integrated ie. remaining at the school) in the majority of cases, with alternative provision being made for others as appropriate. The comment was made that Devon LEA was “ahead of the game” in this area of work, both in having a protocol in place, and discussions about support for schools already underway.

Forum members welcomed the more inclusive, localised approach being developed to alternative provision including a wider role for special schools (outlined by Mr Aston, SEN Group Manager, Devon LEA) and the greater collaboration which was taking place between schools.

During discussion, Ms Rollason emphasised the importance of information exchange to facilitate the process of “tracking” managed moves; and confirmed that the Managed Transfer Request forms used in Devon differed from the examples included in the appendices to the Secretary’s report. Ms Rollason explained that having sought clarity from the DfES on protocols not having to relate to excluded pupils until 2007, it had been confirmed that schools could not now opt out of admitting excluded pupils where a protocol already included them (as in Devon). Instead it was intended that in authorities yet to develop a protocol, the admission of excluded pupils should not preclude progress.

It was agreed that the current “In Year” protocol met the requirements of the DfES guidance relating to “Hard to Place” pupils; that it would not be appropriate to set percentage limits of excluded pupils to be re-integrated to individual schools; and that work to help schools in supporting these often vulnerable pupils should continue.

## **RESOLVED**

(a) to continue to support the Devon “In Year” admissions policy;

(b) to retain the current protocol, subject to it being amended to define the additional support provided for excluded and other pupils.

## **44 Dates of Future Meetings**

Noted as Tuesday 12 July 2005 (10.30 am) and Tuesday 13 December 2005 (10.30 am).

## **45 Last Meeting before the County Council Elections**

The Chairman thanked Forum members for their hard work over the past four years and expressed his appreciation and best wishes to any County Council representatives who were not seeking re-election.

(The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 11.40 am)