

## DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

27 March 2008

### Present

#### Devon County Council

Councillors Way (Chairman) and Mrs Spence

#### Devon Schools Group

#### Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Mrs Nield

#### Foundation Schools

Mr Sindall

#### Voluntary Aided Schools

Mr Walker

#### Church of England Diocesan Board of Education

Mrs Mabin

#### Community Representatives

Mr Duttson

#### Early Years Childcare Development Partnership

Mrs Strudwick

#### Devon Association of Governors

Mr Rogers

#### Service Families

Mr Watt

#### CYPS

Miss Booth

#### Torbay Council

Ms Inett

#### Somerset County Council

Mr Pollock

#### Apologies

Councillors Bray, Pennington and Yabsley

Mr Haigh, Mrs Turner (Cornwall County Council) and Mrs Wallace (Plymouth Council)

**Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 19 December 2007 were signed as a correct record.

**Choice Adviser Service Update – Working with Families in Devon**

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary [\(CY/08/21\)](#) on the work of the Choice Advisers in Devon in their first year of supporting families through the process of expressing preferences for a secondary School. The report also outlined a strategy for the remainder of the academic year and for the Next Step process in autumn 2008. It detailed the names of the Advisers in Devon, aims and objectives and provided a recent case study, which highlighted some of the practical issues they face.

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Members' discussions with Choice Advisers Melanie Henrywood and Graham Seddon included:

- there were 6 Advisers in total whose contracted hours equated to less than one Full Time Equivalent
- their remit this year was to assist families brought to their attention in respect of the transition from primary to secondary (years 6 – 7);
- as detailed in the report of activities the Service had helped 245 families and had established good working relations and links including with the County Council's CYPS Admissions Team, the traveller community and families where English was an additional language. It was intended that an Adviser would be appointed as the named contact for various agencies acting as a link
- the potential for Choice Advisers to support families of children with Special Educational Needs through the primary/secondary transfer which had been highlighted by the Council's Children and Young People Services Overview/Scrutiny Committee's SEN Task Group. There was discussion around existing support mechanisms for families – e.g. SENCO's in schools and the Parent Partnership for children with Statements of SEN. The schools Access Services Manager would raise this with the Lead Officer remodelling and Extended Schools
- the County Council's Corporate Parenting role was acknowledged in the report but the relatively low number of Foster Carers using the Choice Advisory service was surprising. This would be investigated further by the Council's Strategic Project Manager (Achievement of Children In Care)
- the range of publicity material produced by the service to inform parents, Learning Communities, Schools, Members and Officers about the Service. Material about the Service was sent to every family receiving an Admissions Letter
- the role of CEAS in assisting service families with the admission and appeals process to complement the work of the Choice Advisers
- there would be on going local training and additionally a national accredited qualification equivalent to NVQ Level 2 for the Advisers. There were proposals for further NVQ Level 3 accreditation.

The Chairman thanked the Choice Advisers for their report and it was

**AGREED** that an annual report on the service be presented to the Forum.

60 **Membership and Draft Constitution**

The Secretary reported on a draft letter to Schools proposing that they be represented by the Schools' Core members as agreed by the Headteacher Associations. In the light of the response received from all Schools the Draft Constitution and arrangements for future meetings would be considered at the next meeting of the LAF. Advice about Special Schools' representative attendance as observers was awaited from the DCSF.

It was noted that the LAF was not the appropriate forum for any particular school to make representation about its individual proposed admission arrangements.

**AGREED** that the draft letters be agreed subject to the inclusion of the website addresses of the Headteacher Associations which gives information about representation on the LAF and other bodies, and that the schools be asked to respond within 3-4 weeks.

61 **The Admissions Forum Annual Report**

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary ([CY/08/20](#)) on new guidance on the statutory duty for the Admissions Forum to produce an annual report. The first for 2008/09 would need to be finalised by the end of December 2008 ready for the Schools Commissioner and intended for local authorities, schools, parents, and other stake holders, giving an independent overview of the work of the Forum on all aspects and details of admission arrangements and local issues in Devon, as prescribed in the guidance.

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Members agreed that a Working group should be appointed to identify the main issues and to give a steer and on how an independent view could be provided.

**AGREED** that the Chairman, Councillor Spence, Sue Nield and Christina Mabin be appointed as a working group to report to the next meeting on 15 July on the production of the Annual Report.

62 **Admission Arrangements for 2009/10**

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary ([CY/08/18](#)) on the results of the consultation with all admitting authorities upon their admission arrangements for 2009/10 undertaken by the Local Authority as the administrator of the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme and as the admitting authority for Community and Voluntary Aided Schools. The Arrangement would need to be approved by the County Council by 15 April 2008.

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The Local Authority had received 33 responses all from schools, 26 Primary and 7 Secondary. These were detailed in the report along with the Local Authority's responses and recommendations.

In discussing a proposed single point of entry for primary schools in East Devon or the County as a whole, the Forum agreed on the need for wide ranging and detailed consultation before any proposal for change was recommended. The earliest that this could be done as recommended by the LA was for the 2010/11 round, even as a pilot for a defined area within the County.

#### **AGREED**

(a) that the Admission Arrangements proposed and consulted upon by the County Council as Admitting Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools be noted;

(b) that the Local Authority's recommendations in response to the consultation be supported and referred to the Executive of the County Council for determination;

(c) that a future report be submitted to the Forum on considerations around the introduction of a single point of entry for primary schools in Devon, prior to any consultations.

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#### **Admission Update 2008/9**

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary [\(CY/08/22\)](#) on the admissions round for the current year. The data return to the DCFSF showed that Devon had offered 90.5% of parents a place in their highest ranked secondary school with 97.4% of parents being offered a place in a preferred school. Devon also received the second highest number of online applications on the South West. The letters for parents notifying them of primary school allocations place would be issued the following day.

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The Schools Access Services Manager reported on the measures to inform primary school and pre school parents of the admission arrangements and how they are able to express their preferences, and highlighting the need to include more than one school in their ranking. The measures included Admission Officers attending open evenings at schools likely to be oversubscribed to advise parents, published information on the web, in children's centres and public libraries and Heads informing parents directly. It was also noted that the remit of the Choice Advisers would be extended to Primary School admissions for 2009/10.

The Strategic Project Manager (Achievement of Children In Care) reported that the LA had performed very well in terms of admission arrangements for the 109 children in public care, and such information should be incorporated in future reports.

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#### **VA School Admission Arrangements 2009/10**

The Forum received the report of the Secretary [\(CY/08/19\)](#) and Christina Mabin reported further on the joint measures by the Local Authority and the Church of England Diocesan Board of Education to help ensure that VA Schools' admission arrangements conformed fully to the DCFS Code and thus facilitating equality of access.

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**Dates of Meetings**

The Forum noted dates as follows:

Tuesday, 15 July 2008 ,  
Thursday, 20 November 2008

At 10.30 am at County Hall.

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.15 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](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools/admissions/admissions_forum.htm)