

Admissions Forum – Meeting held on Wednesday, 3rd March, 2010.

Present:-

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Gill Bodman

Voluntary Aided

Theresa Haggart

John McAteer

Foundation Schools

Maureen Ball

Parent Governor Representatives

Mohammed Din

Local Education Authority

Councillor Pantelic (Chair)

Officers Present

Tony Brown, Head of Schools Services,

Lynda Bussley, JTUC

Ian Sandbrook, Interim Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services

PART 1

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September, 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September, 2009 were approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Lynda Bussley on the list of those present.

17. Admissions Forum Membership

The Forum was advised that nominations had been sought from faith groups and would be followed up accordingly. Further work was also required with regard to the Parent and Community Representative positions, as no nominations had been forthcoming thus far. The importance of filling the existing vacancies was emphasised and it was subsequently agreed that an update report be presented to the Forum at its next meeting.

18. Admissions Arrangements for 2011/12

The Head of Schools Services briefly outlined the admissions arrangements for 2011/12 and informed the meeting that, except for St Anthony's RC Primary and Cippenham Junior, there were no proposed changes to the

admission policies for 2011. The Forum was advised that 'Children in Care' was not the upper most category for the admissions criteria for St Anthony's RC primary school.

Resolved – That the Admissions Arrangements for 2011/12 be noted.

19. Fair Access Protocols

The Head of Schools Services outlined both the Primary and Secondary Fair Access and Manage Transfer Protocols, revised as of February, 2010, following the provision of new guidance in the 2009 School Admissions Code. Priority would continue to be given to hard to place pupils over others on waiting lists and hard to place pupils could still be admitted where the school was full. However, as far as possible, no schools should take a disproportionate number of challenging pupils. The new guidance identified a long list of pupils that would be considered as hard to place. However, due to the need to prioritise funding for pupils, it was proposed that the categories currently in operation as detailed below would still be used: -

- a) Pupils with a history of fixed term exclusions
- b) Pupils that have been permanently excluded
- c) Pupils attending alternative education requiring reintegration to mainstream provision
- d) Pupils at the SEN school action plus stage of social emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Pupils who did not fall into these categories would be admitted following normal admission procedures by Slough schools. A member of the Forum suggested that an additional category be added for those children who had never accessed formal education of any kind, as it could be expensive to meet the needs of such pupils. A query was raised regarding whether additional funding for refugees or asylum seekers was currently available. The Head of Schools Services advised that schools receive funding for all new pupils but that the hard to place funding was in addition to this. The interim Director of Education and Children Services advised that it could be beneficial to add a discretionary category to provoke debate and scrutiny of support needs.

Several amendments to the wording of the protocol were suggested by members of the Forum and it was agreed that the Primary and Secondary Protocols be made consistent with each other, except where differences in process dictated otherwise. In particular, it was noted that different procedures were in place for the co-ordination of admissions. A query was raised regarding the arrangements for the September Primary Admissions and the Head of Schools Services advised that a pack detailing these procedures had been sent previously to all primary headteachers. A Member queried whether there were any continuing concerns regarding the September arrangements and the forum was advised that several schools were not confident about the process for September. This was particularly so for voluntary aided schools which would struggle within the timeframes set out to

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gather the necessary evidence in line with their admissions criteria. Following this discussion it was agreed that further briefings for primary heads would be held to examine these issues further.

Resolved: -

1. That the following amendments be made:
 - That an additional category be added to the hard to place protocol to include pupils who had never accessed formal education.
 - That a criterion be included regarding the level of a pupils support needs to ensure that debate is provoked regarding the merits of each case (i.e. demonstrably extreme support needs)
 - That the word 'vary' be replaced with 'scaled' under the heading 'mechanism for placement of these pupils'
 - That the word 'transfer' be replaced with 'exclusion' under the heading '*managed transfers*'.
 - That the wording of the Fair Access Protocols and the Secondary Fair Access Protocols be made to be consistent with each other.
2. That further discussion and consultation be held with the Primary School headteachers regarding the changes to the co-ordination of admissions for September 2010.

20. Secondary Admissions September 2010 (Verbal Update)

A verbal update by the Head of Schools Services was made to the Forum regarding the allocation of secondary school places for September 2010. The meeting was advised that offers were sent to all parents on 1st March 2010. The number of applications from Slough residents was 1582 compared to 1599 for the previous year. The number of preferences for Slough schools had decreased compared to the last three years and preferences for out of borough schools had increased slightly. This had resulted in a slightly reduced pressure upon Slough schools. All 1582 parents who were resident in Slough and who had applied for a place had received an offer. The proportion receiving their first preference, 43%, was low by national standards, however, it was recognised that Slough was a fully selective area and that parents could use their first preference to apply to a grammar school. If the selective schools were removed, the success rate for first preferences was 82%. Overall, 92% received an offer at one of their preferred schools. A member of the Forum queried whether Slough schools were offered for Slough residents where requested. The meeting was advised that 131 parents were offered places at schools that were not one of their preferred schools. Some of these places would have been at schools outside the borough such as Churchmead, Desborough and Cox Green. The meeting was advised that primary school offers would be sent out at the end of March

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and it was agreed that a review of primary allocations would be presented to the Forum at its next meeting.

21. Any Other Business

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Tuesday 18th May, 2010 at 4.30pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.35 pm and closed at 5.20 pm)