

Leeds Admissions Forum

Tuesday, 16th November, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor P Gruen in the Chair

Mr R Hamilton – Black Governors Information Network
Mrs B Sice – RC Diocese
Mrs A Nicholl – CE Diocese
Mr J Daulby – Community School (High)
Ms F Woolaston – Community School (Primary)
Mrs H Lewis – Jewish Aided School
Mr R Madeley – Controlled School
Mr F Forbes – David Young Community Academy
Mrs A Moorehouse – West Leeds Area Management Board
Ms A Williamson – Choice Advice Service

In Attendance:

Mrs V Buckland – Education Leeds
Ms C Tribble – Education Leeds
Ms L Savage – Education Leeds
Mrs D Leonard – Legal Services
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

17 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced Ms Frances Woolaston, representing the Community Schools (Primary Group) and Mrs Alison Moorehouse (Other Member category) who were attending their first meeting of the Forum

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor J Dowson, Mrs L Bryan, Mrs S Norfolk, Mr R Raj, Mrs F Beevers, Mr M Woods, Mr I Garforth and Mrs S Knights

19 UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP - LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

The Secretary to the Forum reported that following the appointment of Ms Woolaston in the Schools category and Mrs Moorehouse in the Other Members category, two outstanding vacancies remained.

It was reported that the Youth Council had been contacted to ascertain whether they would be willing to nominate a representative to the Local Community category and their response was still awaited. The Secretary to the Forum said that following the recent change in status of Garforth Community College to an Academy, a vacancy had arisen in the Schools category (Foundation School). An alternative representative was now being sought

RESOLVED – To note that both outstanding vacancies were both being actively pursued

20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 1st March, 2011

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd June 2010 were accepted as a true and correct record

21 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Free Schools (Minute No. 14 refers) – Referring to expressions of interest to establish Free Schools in Leeds, Mr Hamilton asked for an update on this issue.

Mrs Buckland said a report was currently been prepared and would be submitted to the first meeting of the newly established Fairness of Admission Policies Sub Committee

22 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

The minutes of the last meeting of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee were submitted for information and comment

RESOLVED – That the contents of the minutes be noted

23 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF THE CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN SUB COMMITTEE

Members considered a report by the Secretary to the Forum explaining the process for nominating the Vice Chair to the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee

The Chair sought nominations for the position of Vice Chair.

Mr R Hamilton nominated Mr J Daulby, Councillor Gruen seconded the nomination

Upon being put to the vote it was agreed that Mr J Daulby be appointed as Vice Chair to the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee for a one year period

RESOLVED –

- (i) That contents of the report be noted
- (ii) That that Mr J Daulby be appointed as Vice Chair to the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee for a one year period

24 FAIRNESS OF ADMISSIONS POLICIES SUB COMMITTEE

Members considered a report by the Secretary to the Forum which set out the draft Terms of Reference and Procedure for the newly established Fairness of Admission Policies Sub Committee

It was reported that nomination were being sought for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of the Sub Committee

The Chair sought nominations for the position of Chair.

Councillor Gruen nominated Mr P Forbes, Mr R Madeley seconded the nomination

Upon being put to the vote it was agreed that Mr P Forbes be appointed as Chair to the Fairness of Admission Policies Sub Committee for a one year period

Ms A Williamson volunteered to serve as the Vice Chair, this was seconded by Mr J Daulby

Upon being put to the vote it was agreed that Ms A Williamson be appointed as Vice Chair to the Fairness of Admissions Policies Sub Committee for a one year period

RESOLVED –

- (ii) To recommend that the draft Terms of Reference and Procedure for the Fairness of Admission Policies Sub Committee be approved, final approval being delegated to the Director of Children's Services
- (iii) That that Mr P Forbes be appointed as Chair to the Fairness of Admission Policies Sub Committee for a one year period
- (iv) That that Ms A Williamson be appointed as Vice Chair to the Fairness of Admission Policies Sub Committee for a one year period
- (v) To note that the first meeting of the Sub Committee will take place on Thursday 16th December 2010 at 11.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds

25 REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER 2010 ADMISSION ROUND

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which provided an update on the September 2010 Admission Round

In providing some background information on the report Mrs Buckland, Head of Service, Admissions and Transport, Education Leeds said that Education Leeds was responsible for allocating children to primary, infant, junior and secondary schools and defending admission appeals for community and voluntary controlled schools. The company was also responsible for co-ordinating admissions between the voluntary-aided and foundation schools, the neighbouring Local Authorities and the Academies.

Mrs Buckland suggested that over recent years there had been an increase in the birth rate, both nationally, and locally although the number of children entering secondary school was still falling. Previously Education Leeds allocated all children that were believed to live in the City a school place even if they had not applied, after all applications had been dealt with. It was reported that this was no longer possible and there were 140 fewer secondary places allocated, and 60 additional primary places allocated. However as September term approached many parents who had not previously applied had now done so, and a further 480 primary places had been allocated since 1 March. Mrs Buckland suggested that it was becoming increasingly difficult to place these children within a reasonable distance.

Mr Buckland said that as the numbers of children entering secondary school continued to fall in line with the demographics of the City, the authority had been able to offer all children a place in their nearest school, if they had requested one. It

was anticipated a further two years of low numbers entering secondary school was expected before the increases in births begin to pass into the secondary sector.

Mrs Buckland reported that 44% of applications were now received using the on-line service. This was almost double the number who used the service in 2009

It was reported that there have been over 100 more secondary appeals this year although primary appeals had remained steady. The number of in year appeals has fallen by 60 and was likely to be due to the number of cases now handled through Fair Access, who are more successfully offered places. The percentage that were successful fell last year by 30% and had fallen by a further 8%.

In conclusion Mrs Buckland said there had been an increase in the number of applications for admission that have been received in the last year for primary and a small reduction in secondary. The birth rate was rising both locally and nationally and around 250 more primary allocations were made this year. Despite this increase the percentage of successful first preferences had also increased indicating that the programme of expansions that took place was of the appropriate size and location. The number of secondary block appeals had sharply increased this year predominantly concentrated in three schools.

The number of in year appeals had fallen slightly accompanied by a further fall in the success rate. This indicates that the independent panels do not consider the cases being put forward by parents were strong enough to warrant offering places in schools that are already full. A change in the Appeals Code had meant that fewer schools send representatives to assist Education Leeds presenting officers in defending the appeals, however, the preparatory work undertaken on the written statements had proved effective.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

26 REVIEW OF THE PUBLISHED ADVICE TO PARENTS AND CHOICE ADVISORS

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which highlighted the requirement of the Forum to consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the admissions literature and information produced for parents by each admission authority through published composite prospectus and the delivery of Choice Advice.

Copies of the booklets: Starting Primary School in Leeds and Starting Secondary School in Leeds were circulated at the meeting

Mr Daulby sought clarification about pupils with Special Education Needs

In responding Mrs Buckland confirmed that pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) were covered under separate legislation. Pupils with SEN but without a statement do receive a higher priority in the admission policy in certain circumstances

Commenting on the use of symbols within the booklets, Mr Madeley raised a potential area of confusing for parents; B = Breakfast Club and O = Out of School Care (Before School Club). Mr Madeley suggested that a Before School Club did not necessarily provide breakfast and could this be made clear in the booklet

Mrs Buckland said that the issues raised by Mr Madeley would be raised with the Early Years team, who provide such information, with a view as to how it might be made clearer

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be welcomed
- (ii) To note the efforts being made to improve the quality and scope of information supplied to parents on admissions
- (iii) That the issue of clarity, in terms of the use of symbols be reviewed by the relevant teams

27 OVERSUBSCRIBED SCHOOLS - IDENTIFYING THE REASONS WHY THEY ARE CHOSEN

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which provided the outcome of research into school preferences.

Addressing the report Ms C Tribble from the Parent Partnership Service, Education Leeds said that two high schools within the same area were identified as being popular schools. Primary schools in the same cluster were also approached to take part in the research. In total there were 7 schools who took part in the exercise, 270 questionnaires were distributed, 48 parents completed and returned the questionnaire.

Highlighting the salient points Ms Tribble suggested that parents reported more influences for preferencing popular schools than non-popular schools. The most frequently reported reason for preferencing a popular school was it's reputation. Parents were also more than twice as likely to identify; working near the school, the feel of the school and the schools facilities as influences for preferencing a popular schools.

The Chair thanked Ms Tribble for her informative and interesting presentation

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

28 DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS OF PUPIL NUMBERS

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which Provided the annual update of the demographic picture in Leeds

Introducing the report Ms L Savage said that the birth rate had been rapidly increasing in Leeds for some years. From a low point of 7,600 births in 2000, the latest birth data showed 10,200 children born in the year to September 2010.

It was reported that in order to meet the rising demand for school places, 560 additional reception places had been created since 2009, and to continue to ensure one place for every child born city wide, the local admission authority would need to create on average 300 to 400 new reception places every year, equivalent to 10 -13 new one form entry primary schools.

Ms Savage said that whilst the smallest year 7 cohorts would be entering secondary school in September 2011 and 2012, the numbers would then begin to rise rapidly. There was very little flexibility in the secondary sector, particularly in the south and east of the City. As the 10,200 children reach reception age in 2014, the local admission authority would also be facing a shortage of secondary places in some areas of the City. Planning for these larger numbers was underway, however the magnitude of birth rate increase was the equivalent to two new secondary schools each year. Clearly there would be a number of expansion plans required in certain areas, prior to reaching the point of new schools. However the statutory requirement to hold competitions for any new school proposal, sets out a timetable which means that potential sites would need to be identified sooner rather than later.

It was reported that as the extent of provision required increases and options for expansion of the existing estate are minimal, there was a need to become more creative and extend the range of potential solutions. New sites would be essential to the delivery of the ongoing need, and the potential for use of other council owned land and assets was being assessed. Community Centres, Libraries and office spaces were being evaluated, though this work was in its infancy. There were significant cost and legal implications to model. The option of renting accommodation was also being considered.

Options which could be realised for 2012 include:

- Expansions
- Split site primary schools – requires sites to be relatively closely located as legally one school can only have one admissions point for each phase
- Creation of 4-19 schools – this could be by changing the upper age limit of a primary or the lower age limit of a secondary. Consideration of how to build on existing expertise in the new phase would be key.

Ms Savage said that if seeking to open a new school, the authority must hold a competition, and cannot simply open a community school. The statutory process involved consulting on a specification, inviting and evaluating bids, and making a final decision on who should run the school. Therefore to establish places for 2013 the process would need to start by spring 2011.

It was suggested that increased consideration of small inner city schools and larger three form entry schools would need to be given. Free Schools, which are outside of local authority control, would need to be factored into strategic planning. Some schools may offer limited permanent expansion opportunities, but be able to accommodate a bulge year, possibly until a longer term solution could be implemented. Whilst this could mean preference patterns in later years may be

distorted by higher numbers of siblings gaining priority, it could offer some flexibility in areas where the birth rate fluctuates more.

Commenting on the potential use of other council owned sites as extensions to existing school sites i.e. Community Centres and Libraries, Mr Madeley expressed concern suggesting that such buildings were not an appropriate environment for school activities.

Mr Forbes said the lack of school places was a serious problem and was a consequence of a legacy of failure to plan. Many areas of the city where demand was high were in the inner city, deprived areas where levels of unemployment were high. There was a possibility that free schools could become established in these areas utilising office blocks and former Mill sites. Appropriate legislation required putting in place to ensure the suitability of buildings for school use.

In drawing the debate to a conclusion the Chair that it was his opinion that quality of provision should be sacrificed due to the urgency of the capacity issues. It was also important that a two tier system should not be created, high capacity within the inner city while the outer areas remained relatively untouched

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted including:
 - The significant ongoing need for additional reception place
 - Significantly increasing year seven cohorts entering secondary school from 2013
- (ii) To receive a Consultation Paper on future proposals at the appropriate time

29 ADMISSION FORUM WORK PROGRAMME

Members received and considered the Forum's Work Programme for 2010/11

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the scheduled Work Programme 2010/11
- (ii) To update the Work Programme to reflect the decisions made at today's meeting

30 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no issues raised under any other business

31 DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – To note that future meetings of the Leeds Admissions Forum will be arranged as follows:

Tuesday 1st March 2011

Tuesday 14th June 2011

All meetings to take place in the Civic Hall, Leeds commencing at 4.00pm
32 PROPOSED CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2012 ROUND

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which Provided details of the proposed consultation on arrangements for the September 2012 round. (The report included a confidential appendices which was dealt with under the Access to Information procedure Rule 10.4 (4))

In providing background information Mrs Buckland reported that the local authority was required to consult each year on the Council's admission arrangements and prepare a report for submission to the Executive Board in March / April. The consultation process was prescribed for all admission authorities, including academies, foundation and voluntary-aided schools.

Mrs Buckland said the consultation covers the coordinated scheme, relevant areas as well as the admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools. All other admission authorities would consult on their admission policies. Education Leeds would publish a public notice advising parents of the consultation and where they could find information, and how they could make their views known.

Legislation was introduced in December 2008 to accompany the School Admissions Code which came into force in February 2009. There were two significant changes relating to the coordinated scheme which required local authorities to fully coordinate all applications for school places. The full coordination came into effect in September 2010.

Mrs Buckland said it was the role of the Admission Forum to consider how well existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of children and parents within the area of the local authority. The Forum must also consider the effectiveness of the authority's proposed coordinated arrangements and the means by which admissions processes might be improved as well as how actual admissions related to the admission numbers published.

The following issues contained within the submitted report were highlighted:

- Coordinated Schemes – In year
- Coordinated Schemes – Annual Cycle
- Analysis of Socio-economic Factors
- Analysis of the Sibling Priority
- Changes to the Admission Numbers

In summing up Mrs Buckland said the coordinated admission schemes had been updated to reflect the latest legislation and the requirement for full coordination. It was proposed that Education Leeds consult on whether or not to hold in year waiting lists from September 2011. Changes would be required to primary school numbers as outlined in the submitted report. Any further changes would be brought to the attention of the Fairness of Admissions Policies Sub Committee for discussion, as well as being forwarded to all Members of Forum.

The Admission Forum's views are sought on possible changes to the sibling criteria prior to proceeding to consultation.

In the discussion that ensued Members were supportive of retaining an in year waiting list for the whole of the academic year, for all age groups, the issue of pupils using Fair Access Protocols and their position on the waiting list to be clarified.

On the issue of possible changes to the sibling criteria, it was the view of the Forum that the Local Authority proceed to consult on the proposed changes in a neutral manner inviting feedback

With regard to the proposed admission number changes, Members were supportive to proceed to consult on the proposed changes

RESOLVED – It was the view of the Forum that:

- (i) The establishment of an in year waiting list for the whole of the academic year for all age groups be supported. The issue of pupils using Fair Access Protocols and their position on the waiting list to be clarified.
- (ii) The Local Authority proceeds to consult on the proposed changes to the sibling criteria in a neutral manner that encouraged feedback
- (iii) The Local Authority proceeds to consult on the proposed changes to the admission arrangements