

Leeds Admissions Forum

26th September, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor Gruen in the Chair

Councillors M Coulson, P Gruen and
R Harker

Councillor M Coulson
Councillor R Harker
Mrs S Knights – Parent Governor (Special)
Mr I Faulkingham – Parent Governor (High)
Mr J Young – Igen
Ms P Hill – Leeds primary Care Trust
Mr J Daulby – School Member
Mr H Browes – Leeds Thomas Danby
Mr B Stott – Community School
Mr S Camby – Jewish Aided School
Mrs L Bryan – Other member
Mrs G Ladden – Joseph Priestly College
Mr M Woods – Aided Schools

In Attendance

Mr K Burton – Deputy Director Children's Services
Mrs V Buckland – Education Leeds
Mr C Wrench – Education Leeds
Ms L Savage – Education Leeds
Mrs D Leonard – Legal Services
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed John Daulby, Howard Browes, Simon Camby and Gill Ladden to their first meeting of the Leeds Admission Forum. The Chair said it was good to see that so many different organisations were represented, the work of the Forum was interesting and challenging and contributions from new Members was encouraged.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Forbes, Mr J Fryett, Mr N Pyke, Mr D Shipley, Mr J Steel and Mrs V West

It was reported that Mrs West was retiring in December 2007 and would therefore not be attending future meetings of the Forum.

It was the wish of Members that a letter of appreciation be sent to Mrs West thanking her for her contribution to the work of the Forum and it's Sub Committees over several years and best wishes in her future retirement

3 MEMBERSHIP OF LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

Members considered a report by the Secretary to the Forum setting out the current position regarding Membership of the Admission Forum and to invite nominations from Core Members for the appointment of further Members

The Secretary to the Forum reported that Mr Simon Camby the new Head Teacher at Brodetsky Voluntary Aided Primary School will now serve on the Forum in place of Mrs Elizabeth McAllister

In terms of new appointments, the Secretary to the Forum reported that the following has been approached on behalf of the Forum and had expressed an interest in being appointed to the Forum as "Other Members":

Mr John Fryett – Project Director for No Child Left Behind North West Area Management Board

Mr Howard Browes – Director of Learning and Enrichment Services, Thomas Dandy College

It was further reported by the Secretary to the Forum that Mr Ian Faulkingham had recently been appointed as the Parent / Governor representative on Scrutiny Board (Children's Services). As a result Mr Faulkingham was one of very few eligible to be a Parent/ Governor representative on the Forum, Mr Faulkingham was agreeable to transferring from the category "Other Member" to Parent /Governor on the Leeds Admission Forum to fill one of the two longstanding Parent/Governor vacancies

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the appointment of Mr Simon Camby as the Jewish Aided School Representative
- (ii) That Mr John Fryett and Mr Howard Browes be appointed to the Forum in the "Other Member" category
- (iii) To recommend to the Authority that Mr Ian Faulkingham transfers categories and assumes the vacant Parent / Governor Representative position

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURES OF THE LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

Members considered a report by the Secretary to the Forum which set out the necessary changes to the Forum's Terms of Reference and Procedures in order that they comply with the amendments made by the Education and Inspection 2006

("EIA") and the Education (Admission Forums) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 ("the Regulations")

Addressing the report, the Secretary to the Forum referred to the following sections;

- The role of the Forum
- The option to produce an Annual Report
- The new category of School Members
- Voting arrangements

In passing comment Mr Young sought clarification on his assigned category

The Secretary to the Forum in referring to Members Appointments stated that Mr Young was categorised as "Local Community Representative" provided under the Regulations but would refer back to the appointment document and clarification would be confirmed.

RESOLVED – That the revised Terms of Reference and Procedure be approved

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th April 2007 be accepted as a true and correct record

6 MATTERS ARISING

- (i) Online Applications for School Admission - Inclusion of Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (Silc's) - Minutes 60 refers
Mrs Knights asked about the inclusion of Silcs as part of the online application process for school admission.

In providing a response Mr Wrench said that the review of the criteria for admission into the Silc's had not been completed, no procedure had been approved, therefore it was not yet possible to apply online for a place at a Silc

Mrs Knights expressed concern that parents of children with special education needs were not always made aware of the different types of education provision on offer (mainstream and specialist). Mrs Knights suggested that information and advice on mainstream schooling was easily accessible, while advice on specialist provision was not so readily available.

Speaking in support of Mrs Knights, Mr Faulkingham suggested that parents often had to know what questions to ask to get information on accessing special school non-mainstream provision.

In passing comment Mr Stott said that it was a very widely held view amongst Headteachers that children should as far as possible and using specialist support have their educational needs met through a mainstream setting

Councillor Harker said parents in Leeds would have a full spectrum of specialist education to choose from.

In bringing the debate to a conclusion the Chair stated that issues around Silc's provision were a matter for the Director of Children's Services, and that the issues raised should be referred to her.

RESOLVED – That the concerns around the admission to Silc's be referred to the Director of Children's Services with a view to considering whether parents are provided with all the necessary advice and information in order for them to make an approach to Education Leeds about the most suitable type of education provision for their child

(ii) The breaking of the of the link between siblings going to sixth form and those transferring into year 7 (Minute 60 refers)

The Chair in referring to the decision taken at Executive Board to reject the proposal said that the Admission Forum had sought an explanation as to why the proposal had been rejected but no response had been forthcoming.

In offering an explanation Councillor Harker said that the report was amended by the Executive Board because there was concern that if the link was removed some children would not get the school of their choice.

RESOLVED – To note the explanation offered by Councillor Harker

7 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN SUB COMMITTEE

The minutes of the last meeting of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee held on 11th September 2007 were submitted for Members information.

The Sub Committee Chair, Bob Stott gave a brief resume of the In Year Fair Access Protocols and the response received a part of the consultation exercise. An update on Permanent Exclusion Figures 2006/07 was also provided

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the minutes of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee held on 11th September 2007 be noted
- (ii) To note that the Attendance and Exclusion Annual Report will be presented to this Forum at it's meeting in February 2008

8 SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS - SUMMER 2007 – UPDATE

The Chief Democratic Services Officer submitted a report providing an update on School Admission Appeals for the period summer 2007

In Addressing the report John Grieve provided details of the number of the appeals heard:

	Total	Not Granted	Granted	% Granted
Secondary	539	436	103	19.0
Primary	148	138	10	6.8
Total	687	574	113	16.4

In comparison to the previous year the number of appeals was approximately the same although the number of successful appeals had fallen significantly.

It was reported that there were fewer complaints referred by the Local Government Ombudsman, 10 this year compared to 18 received for the same period last year. Of the 10 complaints received : 7 were recorded as No or insufficient evidence of maladministration, 1 was terminated by the Ombudsman on insufficient grounds, 2 local settlements (second appeal offered)

Mr Grieve made reference to the Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2006/07 recently received by the City Council. The letter provides a summary of the complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman about Leeds City Council over the past year and comments on the authority's performance and complaint handling arrangements. School Admission Appeals received some very favourable feedback, with comments such as: "I am encouraged by the way that the Council has responded generally to complaints about school admissions". On the issue of training and the use of an action plan to identify training needs for appeals panels, the Ombudsman said "This was a commendable and positive response which ought to reduce still further any maladministration. (These comments refer to the past 12 months and do not take into account the appeals recently undertaken (summer 2007) so it is anticipated that the feedback will be even better next year)

Mr Grieve said overall the appeals went very well, there were no major problems, fewer complaints than last year and positive feedback received from the office of the Local Government Ombudsman.

In passing comment the Chair said that it was a very positive report

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

9 UPDATE ON THE ADMISSION ROUND FOR 2007/08

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report providing an update on the Admission Round for 2007/08

In addressing the report Mrs Buckland said that the Admission and Transport Team manage transfers into Reception and Year 7 for approximately 16,000 families each year and offer each parent the highest preferenced school available within the admission policy.

It was reported that this years figures were broadly in line with expectations with nine out of ten parents receiving the school of their first preference. Although over 90% of first preferences was achieved, due to the large numbers in the round meant that 1947 children were not offered their first preference school.

Percentage of first preferences achieved

	2007	2006	2005	2004
Secondary	86.6	86.9	89.3	91.5
Primary	94.5	93.3	96.4	94.7
Junior	94.6	97.4	99.3	98.3
Total	90.5	90.1	92.5	93.1

Mrs Buckland said that the admission policy within Leeds allows parents to request their favourite school, despite knowing their chances may not be high, without prejudicing their chance at obtaining a place in their nearest school, so long as they put it on the preference form.

On the issue of School Admission Appeals the introduction of the on-line service has proved popular with parents and is a very positive addition to the customer service provided by the team. A great deal of preparatory work was put into providing a good quality product and the target for parents using the service in the first year was exceeded. The Choice Adviser service in Leeds was established in September 07 and had quickly become a model of good practice ensuring that around 300 parents who would not otherwise have expressed any preferences, were able to engage in the process in time to have their views considered.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted and welcomed

10 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted the School Population Tables for Leeds 2007. The report incorporated information on the schools and school-age population, past and predicted trends, school and area forecasts and information and commentary on related information. Using this information Education Leeds are able to plan school places across the maintained sector.

In addressing the report Ms Savage, School Organisation Team within Education Leeds said that predictions show that Secondary School provision will be on the decline up to 2014-2015, the creation of Trust Schools and Academies all add to the impact on maintained school places.

In passing comments on the report Members suggested that it was a very useful document and it would be of benefit to property developers and the Primary Care Trust

Bob Stott suggested that the document be also made available to the Head teachers Forum and the Governors Forum

Mike Woods asked if historic data on net migration trends could be incorporated within the document.

Providing a response Ms Savage explained that no such data exists, however, a report on work to date attempting to measure migration trends was available on the School Organisation Webpage within the Education Leeds Website

In summing up the Chair said the document was very informative and useful and should be circulated as widely as possible

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted and welcomed
- (ii) That the document be made available to the Head Teachers Forum and also the Governors Forum

11 PROPOSED ITEMS FOR CONSULTATION RELATING TO THE 2009 ADMISSION ROUND

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report identifying the proposed items for consultation relating to the 2009 Admission Round which included:

- Changes in the admission numbers at: Barwick in Elmet C of E School, Swillington Primary School, Allerton Grange Secondary School and Intake High School
- Catholic Voluntary – Aided Schools, issues around waiting lists and appeal arrangements
- The breaking of the sixth form link between siblings going into the sixth form and those transferring into year 7

RESOLVED – That the proposals for consultation in the 2009 admission round be noted

12 REVIEW OF PUBLISHED ADVICE TO PARENTS AND CHOICE ADVICE

The Forum considered guidance material prepared for parents on how to apply for a place in Leeds Schools (2008 to 2009)

Mrs Buckland explained the contents of the published materials which included:

- The admission policy for Leeds Community and Voluntary Controlled schools
- Top tips for parents
- Appeals and the waiting list
- Special Education Needs
- Information and useful contacts
- School Transport
- Map of Leeds showing the position of all secondary schools
- Maps for oversubscribed primary schools

It was also reported that Education Leeds had used the services of a graphic designer during the production of the materials and also Plain English approved

Commenting on the maps for secondary schools Mrs Bryan asked if the scale of the maps could be increased so that street names may be displayed

In providing a response Mrs Buckland said that the matter of street names had been considered in the past. Without an officer present to explain the meaning of the maps in detail, it was considered that including street names could raise expectations unrealistically and give false hope to parents about admission to a particular school

RESOLVED – That the guidance to parents on how to apply for a place in Leeds Schools (2008 to 2009) be noted and welcomed

13 UPDATE ON ADMISSIONS POLICY REVIEW

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which provided an update on the Admission Policy Review

Addressing the report Mrs Buckland said that the current local admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds had been based on distance and proximity to the school (nearest school). However, as more schools choose to become Foundation Schools or Academies, then the nearest school criteria is in danger of becoming meaningless.

Mrs Buckland reported that initial exploratory discussions with David Young Community Academy and Garforth Community College on retaining the “nearest” criteria within their school admission policy been received positively. If adopted it would ensure that children were not unduly disadvantaged as diversity of provision was established within their area.

RESOLVED – To note how the Local Authority are seeking to request that all foundation schools and academies will incorporate the “nearest” criteria within their own admission policy

14 FINAL REPORT OF THE VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Members considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds providing the final report on the Voluntary – Aided School Admissions Policies

In addressing the report Mr Wrench said that there were no serious concerns to be reported back to the Admissions Forum. However the following points should be noted:

- Education Leeds make available all the Voluntary Aided Admission Policies online via the Education Leeds Admission web page

- The Voluntary Aided Admissions Policies Sub Committee should examine the supplementary information form used by voluntary aided schools to ensure it complies with the Admissions Code
- To note that further discussions are required with schools on the use of plain English

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note that there are no major concerns over the Voluntary – Aided Admissions Policies
- (ii) That the Voluntary Aided Admissions Policies Sub Committee examine supplementary information forms alongside the admission policies for the next admission round
- (iii) That the Voluntary Aided Admissions Policies Sub Committee discuss the comments from the plain English campaign with the secondary aided schools

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no issues raised under any other business

16 ADMISSION FORUM WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007 AND 2008

Members received and considered the Forum's Work Programme for the period 2007/2008

The Chair requested that the draft Admission Forum Annual Report be included on the agenda for the next meeting

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the scheduled Work Programme for 2007/08
- (ii) To update the Work Programme to reflect the inclusion of the draft Admission Forum Annual Report

17 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – To note that future meetings of the Leeds Admission Forum had been scheduled as follows:

Tuesday 26th February 2008

Wednesday 23rd April 2008

All meetings to commence at 4.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds