

## **Leeds Admissions Forum**

**7th October, 2008**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Gruen in the Chair

Councillor M Coulson  
Councillor R Harker  
Mr G Young – IGEN  
Mrs F Beevers – Ripon & Leeds CE Diocese  
Mrs S Ulyett – York CE Diocese  
Mr B Stott – Community School  
Mr J Fryett – Other Member

### **In Attendance**

Mrs K Collins – Parent  
Mrs K Hartsell – Parent

### **Officers**

Mr V Buckland – Education Leeds  
Mr R Sayers – Education Leeds  
Mrs C Jordan – Education Leeds  
Mrs D Leonard – Legal Services  
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

## **9 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed everyone in attendance, and extended a special welcome to Mrs Suzanne Ulyett representing the York C of E Diocese who was attending her first meeting of the Forum.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Mrs Karen Collins and Mrs Katie Hartsell, parents of pupils at St Benedict's RC Primary School Garforth who were attending to express concern about the change to the admission policy adopted by the school.

It was reported that Mr Robert Finnigan, RC Diocesan Representative on the Forum was not seeking reappointment to the Forum following the expire of his term of office.

In paying tribute the Chair said that Robert had served on the Forum for several years and was a regular contributor to the work of the Forum, his knowledge and assistance would be missed.

It was the wish of Members that a letter of appreciation be sent to Mr Finnigan thanking him for his contribution to the Forum over many years

## **10 APPOINTMENT TO THE FORUM**

**RESOLVED** – To confirm the appointment onto the Forum of Mrs Gill Ladden, representing Joseph Priestley College (Other Member category)

## **11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from: Mr M Woods, Mrs G Ladden, Mrs P Hill, Mr N Pyke, Mrs B Sice, Mrs L Bryan, Mrs S Knights, Mr J Daulby, Mr D Shipley and Mr I Faulkingham

## **12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 be accepted as a true and correct record

## **13 MATTERS ARISING**

There were no issues raised under matters arising

## **14 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN SUB COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee dated 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008 were submitted for consideration and comment.

Bob Stott, Chair of the Sub Committee provided a resume of the latest developments:

- (a) In Year Fair Access – It was reported that a report had been produced following the first year of operation of the Area Management Boards. The report commented that overall the Boards had been very effective, Headteacher's were now actively addressing the issues that had caused concern in the past. There were a number of areas where things could have been done better but overall the report was very favourable.
- (b) Having been fully operational for two years the David Young Community Academy would now be included within the In Year Fair Access Protocols.
- (c) Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy – It was reported that there was a slight delay in terms of phasing. Informal discussions were now taking place around strands 2 & 3 with a view to implementation around January 2009.

## **RESOLVED –**

- (i) That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008 be accepted as a true and correct record

- (ii) To note and welcome the comments made in respect of the In Year Fair Access Protocols and Leeds Learning Inclusive Partnership

## **15 ADMISSION POLICY ADOPTED BY ST BENEDICT'S ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL GARFORTH**

Members considered an item of correspondence from Mrs Karen Collins, a parent of a pupil at St Benedict's RC Primary School, Garforth who was concerned about the admission policy adopted by the school.

A letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 from the RC Education Administrator responding to Mrs Collins concerns was circulated at the meeting.

Mrs Collins along with another parent Mrs Hartsell, attended and addressed the Forum explaining their concerns about the change to the St Benedict's Admission Policy and the implications for siblings who lived outside the Parish, and what they considered was a lack of communication to parents.

Mrs Collins stated that eight siblings did not get a place at the school resulting in a great deal of stress for parents, a number of children were removed from the school in order that families could be kept together at the same school. It was also reported that the Parish Boundary had recently changed and that the revised boundary was not clearly defined. Mrs Collins suggested that the Parish Boundaries need to be up to date and accurate in order that parents can establish whether they reside in the parish.

Mrs V Buckland – Head of Service - Admissions and Transport, Education Leeds said that when admission policies are changed parents are not part of the consultation process. All admission policies for Leeds Schools are submitted to Education Leeds who publish them on the Education Leeds Website. Parish boundaries should be clearly defined by the submission date. Mrs Buckland confirmed that St Benedict's had carried out properly all the consultation procedures required under Dcsf guidance.

### **RESOLVED -**

- (i) That a formal letter be sent on behalf of the Forum to the RC Diocese of Leeds pointing out the it was regretful that a representative from the Diocese could not be present at the meeting given the attendance of Mrs Collins and the matter under discussion
- (ii) To request the school to re-examine whether it could have consulted more widely with parents and to check the school's policy and their procedures to see if more could be done to alleviate the concerns raised by parents

## **16 SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS - REPORT BY THE OFFICE OF THE SCHOOLS ADJUDICATOR**

The Chief Democratic Services Officer submitted a report informing Forum Members of the outcome of an exercise undertaken by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA). It is the aim to quality assure, at national level, the work undertaken by the local school admission appeals panels.

The report provides a general overview on compliance with the School Appeals Code and makes observations on efficiency, resources and effectiveness.

It was reported that at National level the OSA suggests there is evidence of the need for a number of improvements to the appeals system but no suggestion that the system was failing as a whole.

At a local level the OSA concludes that the School Appeal Process in Leeds is administered very well with good procedures in place and no breaches of the Appeals Code of Practice.

The report suggested that Local Authorities and Dioceses do have good procedures in place for administering school admission appeals but there was evidence that schools who organised their own appeals were failing properly to understand and observe the code of practice. Officers reported that in Leeds all appeals were administered by the local authority (Governance Services Section), this includes all LEA schools, aided schools and trust schools, the only exception was the David Young Community Academy.

The OSA had raised a number of issues which required further development in Leeds: appraisals for panel members, recruitment from more ethnic minority groups, greater acknowledgment of the work undertaken by panel members, online appeals system and a review of the information Education Leeds supply at the appeal hearing. Officers will now prepare an action plan to address these issues.

It is understood that the OSA will undertake a similar larger exercise in 2009.

### **RESOLVED –**

- (i) To note that at National level there was evidence of the need for a number of significant developments to the appeals system but that the system was not failing as a whole.
- (ii) Note the OSA conclusion that the School Appeal Process in Leeds was administered very well with good procedures in place and no breaches of the Appeals Code of Practice.
- (iii) To note the actions summarised by the OSA in section 6.4 of the submitted report

- (iv) To acknowledge and express appreciation to the Independent School Appeal Panel Members for the time and effort they devote to performing this very important role
- (v) That the Chair, on behalf of the Forum write to all Independent School Appeal Panel Members acknowledging the important role they play in the school appeal process and enclosing a copy of the report from the Office of the School's Adjudicator

## **17 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2008 - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

**RESOLVED** – To note the response sent on behalf of this Forum to the Department of Children and Schools and Families (DCSF) which provided comment to the School Admissions 2008 Consultation Exercise – Closing date for responses was 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008

## **18 UPDATE ON THE ADMISSION ROUND FOR 2008/09**

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report providing an update on the Admission Round for 2008/09

In providing background Mrs Buckland, Head of Service - Admission and Transport, Education Leeds 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.

Mrs Buckland reported that the figures for this year were broadly in line with expectations with almost nine out of ten parents receiving the school of their first preference. There had been a significant drop in successful primary school first preferences due to the increasing birth rate. Parents had been able in recent years to apply to schools further away from their home and gain a place.

### **Percentage of first preferences achieved**

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	86.7	86.6	86.9	89.3
<b>Primary</b>	88.6	94.5	93.3	96.4
<b>Junior</b>	95.3	94.6	97.4	99.3
<b>Total</b>	87.8	90.5	90.1	92.5

It was reported that the admission policy within Leeds allows parents to try for a school out of their local area because they have the safety net of their local school if they are unsuccessful. As an equal preference policy it allows parents to be as aspirational as possible. It allows parents to ask for 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.

## School appeals

Mrs Buckland said that whenever a parent is refused entry to a school they have a right to appeal against the decision. The appeal is heard by an independent panel which is organised by the Governance Services Section as the process needs to be fully independent.

The figures below are based on the period from National Offer day on March 1st to the end of July for secondary and primary appeals. The in year appeals cover those appeals that have taken place within the academic year 07/08.

	<b>Granted</b>	<b>Not Granted</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Granted</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	77	270	347	22.2%
<b>Primary</b>	13	338	351	3.7%
<b>In year</b>	212	59	271	78.2%
<b>Total</b>	302	667	698	

Last year saw a fall in the number of successful appeals at secondary and this year there had been a significant fall in the overall number of secondary appeals for year 7 places. There were 200 fewer secondary appeals heard this year, a fall of around 40%.

The number of primary appeals had more than doubled although the number of successful appeals had not significantly changed. There were 10 successful appeals last year and 13 this year. Most primary appeals were governed by the infant class size legislation where there are only very limited grounds on which a parent could succeed.

Commenting on the Primary School sector and the rising birth rate, the Chair said that this had already led to an overall reduction of around 3% in successful first preferences (400 pupils). Could officers look at where future difficulties would be and work with those schools to plan for the increased numbers.

In responding Mrs Jordan, Director – Integrated Children’s Services, Education Leeds, said that Education Leeds do strategically look at other choices which maintain preference

## RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) In view of the predicted rise in pupil numbers following an increase in the birth rate, to request that a further report be prepared and submitted to the next meeting of the Forum providing Primary School projections and options as to how they may be adequately managed

## 19 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report setting out demographic information and future projections for the Leeds schools population.

It was reported that primary enrolment had fallen each year since 1995 levelling off in 2007 before starting to rise again. In January 2008 there were 7,743 pupils in reception classes and a primary sector total of 53,829. By projecting forward the current pre-school population was expected that by 2011/12 there would be around 8,600 children in reception classes, and the primary sector total would be around 54,800.

Secondary schools are now feeling the impact of the falling birth rate of the 1990s on their intakes. Year 7 numbers are expected to continue to decline year on year until 2013. The actual numbers will depend on a number of factors, including the level of immigration, movement between neighbouring Authorities, the success of various regeneration plans and the intended expansion of the Leeds economy.

#### Areas currently under review

##### Primary

Armley/ Wortley, Sharp Lane, Holbeck, Roundhay, Wetherby  
Reviews had now started but no formal recommendations had been made. The situations were being monitored and includes some possible expansion, some surplus place removal, and new housing

##### Secondary

Formal public consultations are running for proposals for academies to replace South Leeds High School and Intake High School (8 September – 17 October)

There was an obligation on the local authority to consider structural change for schools as part of the National Challenge. Demographic issues would be considered as any such proposals emerge.

The Chair acknowledged the good work of officers in providing all the necessary information in order that accurate forecasts for the future Leeds Schools population may be achieved

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted

## **20 ADMISSION BOOKLETS FOR PARENTS**

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report providing details of the efforts being made to improve the quality of information supplied to parents on Admissions.

Forum Members received copies of the Booklets “Starting Primary School in Leeds” and “Starting Secondary School in Leeds” for information and comment.

Overall Members were very complementary with the submitted documentation commenting that they were comprehensive, easy to understand and up to date.

Councillor Harker suggested an “help and advice section” be included at the beginning of the booklet to assist parents who may struggle to understand English.

**RESOLVED** – To note the efforts being made to improve the quality of information supplied to parents on Admissions

## **21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** – That future meetings be scheduled as follows:

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Meetings to be held in the Civic Hall, Leeds commencing at 4.00pm