

Leeds Admissions Forum

25th November, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor Gruen in the Chair

Councillor B Gettings
Councillor R Harker
Mr N Pyke – Black Governors Information Network
Mrs B Sice – RC Diocese
Mr B Stott – Schools Group
Mr J Fryett – Other Member
Mrs S Knights – Special School Parent/Governor

Officers

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

22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and extended a special welcome to Councillor Bob Gettings who was attending his first meeting of the Forum. The Chair also welcomed Beverley Sice from the RC Diocesan Authority who was the successor to Robert Finnigan.

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Coulson and Shelbrook, Mrs L Bryan, Mrs F Beevers, Mr H Browes, Mrs P Hill, Mrs S Ulyett, Mr J Young and Mr I Faulkingham.

24 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the appointment onto the Forum of Councillor Bob Gettings (Local Authority) and Mrs Beverley Sice (Roman Catholic Diocese)
- (ii) To note the resignation of John Steel from the Schools Member category and to be aware that a vacancy now exists within that category

25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th October 2008 be accepted as a true and correct record

26 MATTERS ARISING

Admission Policy Adopted by St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School Garforth (Minute 15 refers) – Beverley Sice from RC Diocesan Authority provided an update on the change to the admission policy adopted by St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School Garforth. Mrs Sice reported that she had since met with representatives of the school who had provided a plan of the Parish Boundary. It was reported that the Parish Boundary would in the near future be reviewed taking in the areas of Kippax and Swillington but until such changes were confirmed the existing parish boundary remains as is. Mrs Sice, referring to future changes to the admissions policy said improved notification procedures for parents had been established. Mrs Sice suggested that whenever a school changes its admission policy, it assists some parents but others could be disadvantaged.

The Chair thanked Mrs Sice for providing the update.

27 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

Addressing the minutes Bob Stott said that a further meeting of the Sub Committee had since taken place on 4th November 2008.

In providing an update Mr Stott spoke on the following issues:

Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy – John Fryett was now the officer leading the strategy. Formal consultation on phase 3 of the project would take place early in the new year, earlier discussions had resulted in parents becoming more effective.

Fair Access Review – A report highlighting the impact of the Area Management Board (AMB) Fair Access Panels in their first year of operation was considered by the Sub Committee.

Paul Forbes representing the David Young Community Academy asked if there was a desire to see a Project Director in post at the East Area Management Board?

In providing a response Mr Stott said it was considered that adequate Project Management arrangements were in place.

In passing comment Viv Buckland, Head of Service – Admissions and Transport, Education Leeds said the absence of a Project Director offered less creativity when schools encountered difficult situations.

John Daulby, Headteacher, John Smeaton Community College was of the opinion that a Project Director for the East AMB was unnecessary. The East AMB had a Multi Agency Support Team, it had adopted a case by case approach (not a one size fits all) which was working well for that area. Mr Daulby said he understood the position

of the David Young Community Academy but it was very important to have a family of schools which would work together, to jointly solve problems and make progress.

Mrs Buckland said that a single point of contact had proved beneficial in other AMB.

In responding Mr Daulby said the East ABM had had a lot of success but had also had a lot of arguments, but the burden was shared. The East AMB was successful, focused and “upfront”, having a Project Director led to less open discussion which was not democratic.

In passing comment the Chair said that reassurances as to the accountability of the Area Management Board were required. He suggested that a new mechanism was required in terms of managing the Forum’s risks, i.e. we need to be aware if the Area Management Boards are working effectively? In order to know this we need to know about the commissioning arrangements.

It was agreed that a Presentation on Commissioning Arrangements be delivered to the next meeting of the Forum.

Commenting on the Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee Mr Forbes suggested that the membership appeared to consist mostly of officers. Mr Forbes said that some direct questions need to be asked about challenging behaviour. Funding was available, but was not getting to the right areas.

The Chair said that subject to the Sub Committees Terms of Reference additional Members could be added.

In response Mr Forbes indicated that he would be willing to serve on the Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee

The Chair referred to Draft In Year Fair Access Protocols for the David Young Community Academy and requested they be obtained and submitted to the next meeting for consideration

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the minutes of the 25th September 2008 be accepted as a true and correct record
- (ii) That a Presentation on Commissioning Arrangements be delivered to the next meeting of the Forum.
- (iii) That the Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee consider appropriate reporting arrangements for the Area Management Boards to the Forum
- (iv) That arrangements be made to include Paul Forbes as a Member of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee

28 PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION - FUTURE PROJECTIONS

With reference to Minute No. 18 of the previous meeting when it was agreed that in view of the predicted birth rise in pupil numbers following an increase in the birth rate, to provide Primary School projections and options as to how they may be adequately managed. The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report:

- Providing an analysis of birth rates in different parts of the City
- Identifying those areas where the increase in births could have a negative impact on admission to primary school
- An explanation of the strategies and interventions used to address issues identified.

Councillor Harker made reference to the expansion of Bankside and Harehills Primary Schools commenting that problems which arose were as a consequence of earlier decisions.

Sue Knights, Parent Governor asked how the issue of hotspots would be addressed? Solutions were required not portacabins.

The Chair said that with more monitoring and prediction planning, more solutions could be found

RESOLVED – To note the ongoing work to monitor the birth rate in different parts of the City and its impact on primary admissions, and to plan provision accordingly

29 PROPOSED ITEMS FOR CONSULTATION RELATING TO THE 2010 ADMISSION ROUND

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report setting out the proposed items for consultation in relation to the 2010 Admission Round.

Addressing the report Mrs Buckland said that Education Leeds was required to consult each year on the Council's admission arrangements and prepare a report for the Executive Board meeting in April. The consultation process was prescribed for all admission authorities, including the David Young Community Academy, voluntary-aided and foundation schools.

The items proposed by Education Leeds for consultation in the next admission round are:

- (i) Changes in admission numbers.

Brownhill Primary school had requested an increase in its admission number from 45 to 60.

Following discussions with a number of schools it was anticipated that further changes may be proposed.

- (ii) Statemented children and children with SEN but without a statement.

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator had requested the removal of children with a statement of SEN from the oversubscription criteria. In future the priority for children with a statement of SEN would appear ahead of the policy.

There may be a very occasional need to give a higher priority to a child with a high level of need, but for whom a statement has not been sought. It was under consideration that priority 1 (b) of the policy become:

*Pupils with Special Educational Needs, or with exceptional medical or mobility needs, that can only be met at a specific school.**

*Applications in these categories must be supported by a statement in writing from a doctor or other relevant professional. This is necessary because you will be asking the Authority to assess your child as having a stronger case than other children. Each case will be considered on its merits in consultation with the school concerned.

- (iii) Looked After Children

It was proposed that the priority 1 (a) Looked After Children have a note added extending the priority to those who have been adopted within the previous twelve months, thus recognising some of the complexities that arise with children recently leaving care.

- (iv) Accepting offers

When offers were made on 1 March 2008 parents were asked to accept the offer and respond to the school. For entry in September 2010 it is intended to formalise and extend this process. It is proposed that parents will be sent their offer of a school place and be given a minimum of 21 days in which to respond and accept the offer.

Parents who refuse the offer made to them will have their place withdrawn to be offered to another child who does wish to attend the school.

Parents who have declined all offers made to them by 6 July (when all on time appeals should have been held) will be referred to the Attendance Strategy Team.

- (v) Waiting lists

It is proposed that the waiting lists for reception and year 7 be held only until the end of September rather than the current arrangement where they are held until October half term. Movement that takes place after the first few weeks of term is often unwelcome to both parents and schools.

(vi) Late applications

Since the School Admissions Code was changed in February 2007, parents are not allowed to change their preferences after the deadline for applications.

Coordination with other local authorities was becoming increasingly difficult where late applications were received and information had been shared with other authorities. It is proposed to consider late applications after those received on time, unless there is an exceptional reason for the delay, for example moving into the area.

(vii) Fair Access Protocol

A proposal to strengthen the local authority fair access protocol by the inclusion of timelines for admission, offering greater clarity for parents and schools.

Commenting on section (iv) Accepting Offers, the Chair said it was important that no place should be withdrawn without first contacting the parent/guardian.

In reply Mrs Buckland emphasised that no places would be withdrawn without the knowledge of the parents.

RESOLVED - That the proposals for consultation in the 2010 admission round be noted.

30 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM - ACADEMIC YEAR 2007/08

Members considered the draft Annual Report of the Leeds Admission Forum for the Academic Year 2007/08.

The report made reference to the admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools, it explained the system in Leeds was based on sibling priority and nearest school. An equal preference system was in operation so that parents could be as aspirational as they wish with their higher preferences, but were encouraged to include their nearest school as a safety net. The system had worked well for a number of years. It was reported that the Aided and foundation schools, and academies in Leeds had admission policies which complied with the School Admission Code. The report further explained that the Fair Access Protocol was operating well, with all schools admitting pupils where required, and working in partnership with each other.

The report suggested that there were no significant barriers to prevent access to the schools.

Issues addressed in the report included:

- The number and percentage of 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferences met and factors affecting preferences.

- The number of appeals made within the area.
- Information on the ethnic and social mix of pupils attending schools and factors that might affect this.
- How well admission arrangements serve the interests of looked after children
- How well admission arrangements serve the interests of children with SEN
- How well the local fair access protocol has worked and how many children have been admitted to each school under the protocol
- The degree to which schools and the local authority are meeting their infant class size duties
- Other information relevant to whether admission arrangements are fair and promote parental choice and fair access

The report concluded that schools were generally reflective of their local area, and that fair access was being achieved. All of the necessary information that parents need to apply for school places was available through the local authority website. The website was easy to use and the information had the Plain English Campaign kitemark. The local authority works with the schools to provide better access for disabled children, and all schools appropriately admit children who had a statement of SEN naming their school.

Looked After Children were the highest priority in all admission policies, and any movement during the school year was facilitated by the Fair Access Protocol. There was no evidence to suggest that ethnicity or social factors were providing a barrier to access. The majority of schools had a greater proportion of children on roll with free school meals than lived in their local areas.

A discussion ensued on the cost of school uniform/ PE kit. John Daulby, Schools Member questioned the figure quoted for his school suggesting the figure was lower in price than indicated in the report.

In responding Mrs Buckland said that not all schools had supplied the requested information and an estimated figure had been used. In respect of the figure quoted for John Smeaton Community College, the figure quoted in the submitted report was the figure supplied by the schools administration staff.

The Chair suggested that the report be circulated to all Head teachers to ensure that the data it contained was accurate and up to date.

In summing up the Chair said the document was very useful and informative but further enhancements were required:

- Ensure the schools data was accurate and up to date

- To emphasise the work undertaken by the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee and the Area Management Boards
- To aspire to achieve greater parental preference

RESOLVED

- (i) To note that the draft report was a useful and informative document but further enhancements were required
- (ii) That all schools be contacted to ensure the schools data was accurate and up to date
- (iii) To emphasise the work undertaken by the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee, the Voluntary Aided School Admission Policies Sub Committee and the Area Management Boards
- (iv) To include within the report the LEA's aspirations to achieve greater parental preference
- (v) That Governing Bodies of schools with uniform or music fee charges more than 10% above the City average be contacted to secure a reduction in costs or ensure a suitable scheme is available for less well off parents.

31 WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

Members received and considered the Forum's Work Programme for the period 2008/2009

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the scheduled Work Programme for 2008/09
- (ii) To update the Work Programme to reflect decisions made at today's meeting

32 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no issues raised under any other business

33 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – To note that future meetings had been scheduled as follows:

Tuesday 20th January 2009

Tuesday 12th May 2009

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