

Leeds Admissions Forum

12th May, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Gruen in the Chair

Councillor R Harker
Mrs L Bryan – Parent Representative (High School)
Mr I Faulkingham – Parent Representative (Primary School)
Ms P Hill – NHS Leeds Primary Health Care
Mrs S Knights – Community Representative (Educational Special Needs)
Mrs B Sice – RC Diocese
Mr J Daulby – Community School
Mrs H Lewis – Jewish (Aided)
Mr P Forbes – David Young Community Academy
Mr J Fryett – Fair Access Project Director
Ms A Williamson – Choice Advice, Parent Partnership

In Attendance

Mrs V Buckland – Education Leeds
Mrs D Leonard – Legal Services
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

48 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and extended a special welcome to Helen Lewis and Amy Williamson who were attending for the first time.

49 REVISED MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADMISSION FORUM IN THE NEW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CODE

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report which set out the revised Membership of the Leeds Admission Forum required by the School Admissions (Local Authority Reports and Admission Forums) (England) Regulations 2008 (“the Regulations”) following consideration by Leeds City Council’s Executive Board at its meeting on 1st April 2009.

The revised Membership is as follows:

Local Authority Representatives

Councillor P Gruen
Councillor R Harker

Parent Representatives

Mrs L Bryan – High School Representative

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday 1st October 2009

Mr I Faulkingham – Primary School Representative

Local Community Representatives

Ms P Hill – NHS Leeds Primary Health Care
Mr N Pyke – Black Governors Information Network
Mrs S Knights –
Ms S Taylor – Prospect (To be confirmed)

Diocesan Authorities

Mrs B Sice – Roman Catholic Diocese
Mrs F Beevers/ Mrs S Ulyett – Church of England Diocese

Schools Representatives

Mr J Daulby – Community School (High)
Vacancy – Community School (Primary)
Mrs H Lewis – Jewish Aided
Mr M Wood – Aided School
Vacancy – Controlled School
Vacancy – Foundation School

Academy Representative

Mr P Forbes – David Young Community Academy

College Representative

Mr H Warring – Joseph Priestly College

Other Representatives

Mr J Fryett – Fair Access Project Director
Ms A Williamson – Choice Advice Parent Partnership Service

The Chair sought clarification as to how the outstanding vacancies in respect of the School Representatives would be filled.

In providing a response Mrs Buckland, Head of Service, Admissions and Transport, Education Leeds said that the issues would be referred to the Headteachers/ Governors Forum

It was further reported that changes to the Admission Forum Membership would also impact on the Membership of the two Sub Committees of the Forum which would now require revision

RESOLVED

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To note the Membership of the Forum as set out above
- (iii) To determine revised Membership of the Forum's Sub Committee's

50 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Secretary to the Forum submitted a report explaining the process for electing the Chair and Vice Chair to the Leeds Admission Forum.

The Clerk to the Forum reported the receipt of 3 nominations, all for Councillor Gruen for the position of Chair.

Mr Forbes seconded the proposal

RESOLVED – That Councillor Peter Gruen be elected Chair of Leeds Admissions Forum for a one year period

(Councillor Gruen assumed the Chair)

The Clerk to the Forum reported the receipt of a single nomination for Sue Knights for the position of Vice Chair.

Mr Faulkingham seconded the proposal

RESOLVED – That Sue Knights be elected Vice Chair of Leeds Admissions Forum for a one year period

51 APPOINTMENTS TO THE FORUM'S SUB COMMITTEES

The Secretary to the Forum submitted a report explaining the process for electing the Chair and Vice to the Forums Sub Committees.

Voluntary Aided Schools Admissions Policies Sub Committee

In relation to the Voluntary Aided Schools Admissions Policies Sub Committee Mrs Buckland reported that the Sub Committee was established 3 years ago. Its role was to collect and analyse Voluntary Aided schools admission policies to ensure they were compliant with the DCSF Admissions Code of Practice by 1st March in each year. Mrs Buckland said the Sub Committee had done an excellent job under the Chairship of Councillor Coulson. All interested parties were now fully aware of the necessary timescales and appropriate procedures were in place to produce the required information.

The Chair questioned if the Sub Committee should continue to meet under its existing remit given the fact that a procedure for the collection and analysis of VA admission policies was now well established.

In the discussion that ensued it was generally accepted that the Voluntary Aided Admission Policies Sub Committee should cease to operate.

Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee

The Chair reported that following revisions to the Membership of the Forum, vacancies were now available on the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committees. In seeking expressions of interest the Chair said a key role of the Forum was to monitor the Fair Access Scheme and this was a major undertaking of the Sub Committee.

Sue Knights, Ian Faulkingham, Paul Forbes and John Fryett all expressed an interest to continue to serve on the Sub Committee. John Daulby and Pam Hill also agreed to become Members of the Sub Committee

The Clerk to the Forum reported the receipt of one nomination for Sue Knights for the position of Chair.

Ian Faulkingham seconded the proposal

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Voluntary Aided Schools Admission Policies Sub Committee be discontinued
- (ii) That Membership of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee be agreed as follows:

Sue Knights, Ian Faulkingham, Paul Forbes and John Fryett, John Daulby and Pam Hill (Councillor Gruen as Chair of the Forum)
- (iii) That Sue Knights be elected Chair of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee for a one year period
- (iv) That the position of Vice Chair be determined at the next meeting of the Sub Committee

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Pyke and Mr A Warring

53 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th January 2009 be accepted as a true and correct record

54 MATTERS ARISING

Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee (Minute 41 refers) – Commenting on the Fair Access Protocols Mr J Daulby queried the statistical information gathered by Education Leeds. Referring to John Smeaton Community College, Mr Daulby said he was aware that the college had accepted 14 pupils under the Fair Access Protocols but this was disputed by Officers within Education Leeds who claimed the figure was only 5.

Mr Daulby suggested that the Fair Access Protocols was flawed and highlighted the following areas of concern:

- Statistical information was not always accurate
- The context of how the child was allocated was not taken into account
- Head teachers were not able to question the information provided by other schools
- The process was not being followed by all parties
- Officers had been involved in the decision making process

Responding to the issue about officers making decisions Mr Fryett said that he was aware of one instance in the North West Area where the Panel were unable to arrive at a decision and had requested officers from Education Leeds to address the situation.

Mr Daulby said that he was aware that the David Young Community Academy had refused to accept pupils on the grounds that the Academy had a unique curriculum. This was not in the spirit of the protocol said Mr Daulby and suggested that schools should not have exclusivity, deciding through other policies and practices that the school could not meet the child's needs.

(At this point, in light of the comments made, Councillor Gruen declared a personal interest as a Governor at both John Smeaton Community College and the David Young Community Academy)

In offering clarification Mrs Knights said that the whole ethos of the Fair Access Protocol was to share the challenging children around but reminded Members that parents did have the right to express a preference for a particular school.

Mr Forbes suggested that in view of the accusations that the protocol was not being adhered to, a review of the protocol should take place which could address the issue of effective monitoring.

Councillor Harker expressed concern about the difficulties Mr Daulby had raised commenting that they required addressing.

Mr Fryett suggested that many issues referred to by Mr Daulby should be addressed by the schools themselves and not in this Forum

In bringing the discussion to a conclusion the Chair said a number of issues required further investigation and this could be best done through a review of the protocol

RESOLVED – That a meeting be convened at the earliest opportunity involving Mrs Knights, Mr Fryett, Mr Forbes and Councillor Gruen to determine how a review of the Fair Access Protocol would be best achieved

55 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee held on 21st April 2009 were circulated for Members consideration and approval.

The Chair announced that Bob Stott had recently resigned as Chair to the Sub Committee following his recent appointment to a post in Lancashire.

In the absence of a Sub Committee Chair the Chair called upon John Fryett to comment on the accuracy of the minutes

In responding Mr Fryett identified a number of minor corrections and suggested that they were an accurate record of the discussion.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That subject to the inclusion of a number of minor amendments the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2009 be accepted as a true and correct record
- (ii) That a letter be sent to Bob Stott on behalf of the Forum thanking him for his contribution to the work of the Leeds Admission Forum and wishing him every success in his future endeavours

56 VOLUNTARY AIDED, FOUNDATION AND ACADEMY SCHOOLS ADMISSION POLICIES

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report informing Members of the outcome of the Voluntary Aided Schools Admissions Policies Sub Committee held on 17th March 2009

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note that all Voluntary Aided schools in Leeds are fully compliant in accordance with the New Admissions Code of Practice
- (ii) To note the excellent response from the Voluntary Aided Governors and Headteachers in meeting the requirements of the code

57 VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICIES SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Voluntary Aided Schools Admissions Policies Sub Committee held on 17th March 2009 be accepted as a true and correct record

58 ADMISSION POLICY 2010/11

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report indicating that the Admission Arrangements for 2010/11 had now been determined.

In providing background information Mrs Buckland said that the outcome of the consultation was presented to the Executive Board on 1st April 2009 where it was subsequently determined

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Admission Forum note the positive way in which the local authority, diocese, Foundation, Academy and schools had worked together to ensure full compliance with the School Appeals Code
- (ii) That following the submission of the information to the Schools Adjudicator, it may be necessary to convene a further Meeting of the Forum if the Forum wish to submit further objections to the Schools Adjudicator

59 ADMISSION APPEALS 2007/08

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report informing Members of the pattern of parental appeals for the academic year 2007/08, both for admission in September 2007 and also those relating to in year transfers

Addressing the report Mrs Buckland said that there was a demographic decline in young people entering secondary school and as a result the demand at a number of schools has fallen.

There had been an increase, both locally and nationally, in the birth rate over recent years and this has already begun to affect entry into Leeds primary schools and this would filter through to secondary. There was an increasing number of primary schools who were unable to accommodate their nearest children. The number of primary schools oversubscribed on first preference was 51. Education Leeds continues to actively work with partners to resolve the situation.

There were 1669 appealed lodged during the academic year. Of these 669 were in year transfer appeals, 639 annual cycle appeals for secondary schools and 361 annual cycle appeals for primary schools. It was reported that there were relatively few successful appeals for Reception because most of the appeals for primary schools are covered by the infant class size legislation and unless a mistake had been made it was very unlikely that an appeal could succeed.

Primary – annual cycle

Of the 361 primary appeals, 80 were withdrawn or settled prior to the appeal hearing. This occurs when a parent has been offered one of their higher preferences through the waiting lists and is happy to accept that offer. Of the remaining 281 appeals that were heard only 19 were granted, in the main at schools where the class size legislation does not apply. Whilst most primary schools in Leeds had admission numbers to match the legislation there were still a small number with irregular numbers where parents may be successful.

Talbot Primary school had the largest number of appeals heard at 21 and 19% of these were Kashmir Pakistani, 14.9% Indian and 14.9% Pakistani. No appeals were granted for the school.

There were appeals for 68 different primary schools and 53% of these appellants were white/British, however only 5.7% were successful. The other successful appellants were 1 Bangladeshi and 2 Pakistanis. Indian and Pakistani were the two groups with the highest number of appeals after the white/British.

Secondary – annual cycle

There had been a significant reduction in the number of secondary appeals heard since 2006/07. There had also been a reduction in the number of successful appeals. This was a reflection of the amount of work that had been involved working with schools to develop more comprehensive statements of case outlining the issues faced by schools when they had to admit additional pupils. It also indicated that the admissions policy was being applied correctly when places were allocated. The declining birth rate was currently affecting intakes into secondary school.

The majority of secondary schools were reflective of their local community in respect of ethnicity. Allerton Grange and Parklands Girls High both attract a higher proportion of Pakistani and Kashmiri Pakistani pupils than live in their immediate area.

Of the 639 appeals lodged for secondary schools 170 were settled or withdrawn before being heard. 469 appeals were heard with 32% of parents successful. 61% of the appeals heard were from white/British parents and they were successful in 41% of cases. The majority of these appeals were for Roundhay.

Mrs Buckland said it should be borne in mind that the groups are small in statistical terms and the conclusions that can be drawn from one year of data is limited. Appeals are based around the personal circumstances of the families concerned and therefore vary greatly.

There were twice as many appeals heard for Roundhay as for any other secondary school. 25% of appellants were white/British with a very wide spread of ethnicities appealing for the school. The white/British families represented 61% of all appeals heard. This was a much higher percentage at schools such as Garforth, Temple Moor, Woodkirk, Pudsey Grangefield and Cockburn, and much lower at school such as Allerton High, Roundhay and Primrose.

In year appeals

Of the 669 appeals lodged 229 were withdrawn or settled prior to being heard. Of the 440 appeals heard 56% were successful. White/British families accounted for 57% of in year appeals and were successful 37% of the time. Families from black/African, mixed black/African and Pakistani backgrounds were relatively much more successful, as were Gypsy Roma families.

Primary

Bankside continued to have the most appeals heard for in year transfers. There were 11 appeals, 82% from Bangladeshi families, seven were successful. It is not unusual for families to lose their place in the school when taking extended holidays abroad. Of the 108 primary appeals heard they were spread across 38 different schools, once again suggesting that there were relatively few difficulties for parents in obtaining a place in a school they were happy with.

Secondary

There were 332 secondary appeals heard 64% of which were by white/British families. The most appealed for school with in year requests was Primrose, (30) with a wide spread of ethnicities appealing for the school. Similarly Roundhay had the second highest number, again with a broad mix of appellants, only 37% of which were white/British.

In year appeals had the highest success rate for parents and this was often due to moving into an area outside of the normal admission round and finding that the local school was already full. In these circumstances, if the Authority was unable to offer an alternative school within a reasonable distance then it presents no surprise that appeal panels will offer places where appropriate. The relatively high success rate of parents at this type of appeal was a reflection of the appropriate use of the appeal process now picked up in the Fair Access Protocol which should reduce the number of appeals.

In conclusion Mrs Buckland said that the data indicated that all ethnic groups were accessing the appeals process and there was no significant evidence of any bias for or against any particular ethnic group. Primary appeals were relatively unsuccessful due to infant class size legislation. Secondary appeals for annual cycle places were successful in around 32% of cases. This appropriately reflects the need for an appeal process to hear the exceptional cases that are unable to be considered adequately within any admissions policy.

The higher success rate of parents submitting in year appeals, around 59%, is reflective of the lack of places that can be available in many of our secondary schools when families move into an area outside of the normal admission round.

There was no evidence to suggest that a family's ethnicity or social background affects their ability to gain admission to any particular school.

RESOLVED – To note the information on the breakdown of appeals by ethnicity and school.

60 ADMISSION FORUM WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2009/10

Members received and considered the Forum's Work Programme for the period 2009/10

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the Scheduled Work Programme for 2009/10
- (ii) To update the Work Programme to reflect decisions made at today's meeting

61 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Admission Numbers for 2010 – Mrs Buckland informed Forum Members that due to a high demand for places at a number of Leeds Schools there was a necessity to increase the number of forms of entry. The proposal was currently being drafted and would be put the schools Adjudicator in due course.

The Chair requested that Forum Members be kept informed

62 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – To note that future meetings be arranged as follows:

Thursday 1st October 2009

Tuesday 2nd February 2010

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