

Leeds Admissions Forum

Thursday, 1st October, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Gruen in the Chair

Councillor R Harker
Mrs S Knights – Parent
Ms P Hill – NHS Leeds Primary Health Care
Ms S Taylor – Prospect
Mrs A Nichol – York, Bradford, Ripon & Leeds CE Diocese (Substitute for Mrs Beevers)
Mr J Daulby – High School
Mrs H Lewis – Jewish Aided
Mr I Garforth – Foundation School
Mr P Forbes – Academy
Mr J Fryett – Fair Access Project Director
Ms A Williamson – Choice Advice Service

In Attendance

Mrs L Armstrong – Colton Delegation
Mrs H Johnson – Colton Delegation
Mr R Whale – Colton Delegation
Mrs J Cotton - Colton Delegation

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

2 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and extended a special welcome to Governors, Parents and the Head teacher of Colton Primary School who were in attendance to raise concerns about the migration of children from the Colton area to Garforth Primary schools.

The Chair also introduced and welcomed Shelia Taylor (Prospect) Ian Garforth (Foundation Schools) and Anne Nichol (Diocesan Authorities) who were attending for the first time

The Chair announced that Forum Member Norris Pyke had recently passed away. In paying tribute the Chair said that Norris had been a Member of the Governors Forum and the Vice Chair of Hillcrest Primary School, his contributions to the work of the Forum would be sadly missed.

As a mark of respect the Forum stood in silent tribute

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Mrs L Bryan, Mrs F Beevers and Mr M Woods

4 MEMBERSHIP - LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

The Chair reported that a number of vacancies were still outstanding in the following categories:

Local Community Representatives (2 vacancies)

Schools (3 vacancies)

Mr Garforth volunteered to serve as the Foundation representative

Mrs Nichol and Mrs S Brooke indicated their interest to serve as the Primary School representative

Officers pointed out that both Mrs Nichol and Mrs Brooke represented schools on the eastern side of the City, an area which was adequately covered, ideally a representative from the Western or Southern areas of the City was more preferable.

The Chair thanked Mrs Nichol and Brooke for their expressions of interest but said it was important that all areas of the city be represented.

In respect of the vacancies for the local Community Representatives, it was reported that these were being actively pursued

RESOLVED –

- (i) That Mr Ian Garforth be appointed as the Foundation School Representative for a 4 year period
- (ii) Further efforts be made to obtain school representatives from areas of the city currently not represented, ideally South or West
- (iii) To continue to pursue all outstanding vacancies

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meetings held on 12th May 2009 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 6th July 2009 be accepted as a true and correct record

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee (Minute 54 refers)

The Chair reported that following the last meeting of the Leeds Admission Forum a small Working Group had been established to discuss the recording of decisions at

Fair Access meetings. The Working Group had met and it was understood that ongoing consultation with schools was now taking place.

Mr Daulby said that in the past there had been some uncertainty about the decision made due to the complexity of some of the issues. Lessons had been learnt and progress was being made.

Mr Forbes said that he was unaware that such a meeting had taken place

Chair confirmed that the Group had met and he assumed that Mr Forbes had been invited.

Mr Daulby said that he was still not satisfied that all requested information was been supplied, a further resource was still required to provide data from the east wedge and until such time an appointment was made, gaps in the supply of information would continue.

In a related matter Mr Forbes referred to a meeting he had with the Director of Children's Services at which he had provided a list of children's names and requested information on their school status. To date no response had been received and could this be followed up.

The Chair asked officers to make the Director of Children's Services aware of Mr Forbes comments to ensure a response would be supplied.

In terms of recording of decisions at Fair Access meetings the Chair said that he took comfort in that "operationally things were moving on"

7 MIGRATION OF CHILDREN FROM THE COLTON AREA TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITHIN THE GARFORTH TRUST

(Prior to the commencement of this item Mr Garforth declared a personal interest as a Member of the Garforth School Partnership Trust)

In offering comment, Mrs Buckland, Head of Service, Admissions and Transport said the issue before Members was not connected to the School Partnership Trust but the Foundation status of the Garforth Community College, as it was an admissions issue.

The Chair invited the Colton Delegation to address the Forum.

Mrs L Armstrong, Vice Chair of Governors, Colton Primary School said that following the introduction of the Garforth School Partnership Trust the admissions policy of the college was amended. Priority 3 of the policy gives priority to children who attend Primary Schools in the Garforth area. As a consequence some parents in the Colton area were moving their children to Garforth Primary schools in an attempt to obtain a place at the College. In the past 18 months Colton Primary schools have lost 36 children and seen a reduction in school budgets of £250,000. Many Colton parents were worried that although Garforth Community College was their nearest school,

they may not obtain a place because more places would be occupied by those children who attend Garforth Primary schools.

In responding Mrs Buckland said that the Admission Code seeks to promote choice and diversity. Garforth Community College in offering an alternative policy, which includes choice and diversity is compliant with the admissions code and therefore entirely legal.

The Chair asked if some schools were suffering because of the policy adopted by the College, funding for example?

In providing a response Mrs Buckland said that in the short term some funding may be lost, but overtime the demographics may change and draw in pupils from other areas. The Trust would evolve and as a consequence may change it's admission policy, annually if it so wished.

In passing comment Mr Garforth said that in forming the School Partnership Trust the intention was to provide better outcomes for pupils. Previously there were 32 Primary Schools feeding into the College which makes transition work difficult. Mr Garforth expressed his sympathy to the Colton Parents, the College had an admission number of 300 and it was not intended to increase. Mr Garforth apologised for any difficulties that had arisen but the policy had been consulted upon and was compliant with the admissions code.

In drawing the debate to a conclusion the Chair suggested that the situation be monitored and a report be brought in 6 months time

RESOLVED –

- (i) To thank the Colton delegation for their attendance and drawing this issue to the attention of the Forum
- (ii) That officers from Education Leeds be requested to monitor the situation and provide a report back to the Forum in 6 months time

8 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE FRO THE LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

The Secretary to the Forum submitted a report drawing Members attention to the final Terms of Reference and Procedure for the Leeds Admission Forum.

In highlighting the changes the Secretary to the Forum said that paragraphs 3 (Membership of the Forum) and 5 (Alternate Members) were the main areas of change

RESOLVED – To note the Forum's revised Terms of Reference and Procedure

9 AMENDED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN SUB COMMITTEE

The Secretary to the Forum submitted a report seeking Members views on the amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee in response to Statutory changes to the Leeds Admission Forum Terms of Reference and Procedure

In addressing the report the Secretary to the Forum said that the amendments were consequential and followed recent changes to the Admissions Forum Terms of Reference

In passing comment the Chair said that section 2 of the report provided a checklist for the work of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee

RESOLVED – To approve the required amendments to the Sub Committee's Terms of Reference

10 REPORT FROM THE CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE ON FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOLS

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report setting out proposals for a review of the In Year Fair Access protocols

The Chair reported that there had been an issue around the circulation of information to Members of the Challenging and Children's Sub Committee.

Mrs Buckland apologised for the late circulation of the report to Members of the Sub Committee.

In commenting on the report Mrs Knights said that the east wedge was still operating without a Project Director but a recruitment process was ongoing.

Mrs Buckland said that following a review of processes there was significantly better data available now, with a secure reporting mechanism in place.

Mr Daulby referred to a School Admission Appeal Hearing that he had recently attended for a pupil to be admitted to John Smeaton High School. The pupil demonstrated challenging behaviour and as a consequence had been transferred to a number of different schools, home tuition had also been tried. All attempts had been made to avoid permanent exclusion. In bringing the case before the Independent Appeals Panel, Panel Members were concerned to learn about high volume of transfers that take place.

Mr Daulby suggested that a Briefing Paper on In year Fair Access Protocols transfers may be of use to the Independent Appeal Panel Members

It was reported that John Fryett had delivered a similar Briefing Session to School Appeal Panel Members in February 2009 which had been well received

RESOLVED –

- (i) That Officers continue the consultation on changes to the current Fair Access Protocols
- (ii) That the statistics contained within the submitted report be forwarded to the next Fair Access Panels for schools to review and provide comment to the next Sub-Committee
- (iii) That Officers continue to work with the Fair Access Panels who do not have a Project Director to find solutions to issues raised.
- (iv) That Officers continue to work with schools to realign resources in order to facilitate multi agency assessment of needs and individualised learning programmes.
- (v) That Officers continue to work with schools to resolve any issues that exist around not putting a young person on roll which is a health and safety and safeguarding issue.

11 REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER 2009 ADMISSION ROUND

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report which provided an update on the September 2009 Admission Round.

Addressing the report Mrs Buckland said that over recent years there had been an increase in the birth rate, both nationally, and locally. There were around 600 more allocations to primary school this year than at the same time last year. Whilst some surplus places still exist, in a small number of primary schools, these are in a limited number of areas of the City. It had been possible to allocate all parents who applied on time a place, however each year there were a significant number of parents who apply late and it was increasingly difficult to place these children within a reasonable distance. These factors are adversely affecting the number of parents being offered their preferred school.

The number of secondary school allocations on 1 March was approximately the same as last year. There remain a small number of schools where children are unable to gain a place in their nearest school. However all nearest children were offered a place in Roundhay school this year, following the changes to the admission policy reflecting the David Young Community Academy as a nearest school.

The on-line service had once again proved popular with parents, with 26% of on time applications using this method to apply for a school place.

Admission Round

Percentage of first preferences achieved

	2009	2008	2007	2006
Secondary	83.7	86.7	86.6	86.9

Primary	83.2	88.6	94.5	93.3
Junior	96.9	95.3	94.6	97.4
Total	83.7	87.8	90.5	90.1

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 enables 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. Given this is the agreed policy a further measure is the percentage of parents who received one of their three preferences.

Percentage of parents who achieved one of their three preferences

	2009	2008	2007	2006
Secondary	95.5	97.0	97.5	96.9
Primary	91.3	95.1	98.8	97.3
Junior	97.3	96.1	98.8	99.3
Total	93.5	96.1	98.2	97.2

School Appeals

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 Governance Services 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 08/09.

	Granted	Not Granted	Total	% Granted
Secondary	53	236	289	18.3%
Primary	13	298	311	4.2%
In year	177	185	362	48.9%
Total	243	719	962	

There have been fewer block appeals this year despite a fall in the percentage of parents gaining their first preference. The number of in year appeals has significantly increased although the percentage that were successful has reduced by 30%.

The number of primary appeals had fallen slightly from last year although the number of successful appeals had not changed. Most primary appeals are governed by the infant class size legislation where there are only very limited grounds on which a parent can succeed.

In year appeals throughout the year now comprise more than either primary or secondary block appeals. This is a combination of a reduction in both primary and secondary block appeals, but also a marked increase in the number of in year appeals, with almost 100 more than last year. Despite this increase the number of in year appeals granted by the panels had fallen by almost 50, reducing the percentage of successful appeals by parents from 78.2% to 48.9%.

The increasingly effective operation of the Fair Access Protocol does mean that many parents are offered a more appropriate school place, sometimes above the admission number of the school, removing the need for an appeal. Changes introduced by new legislation in February 2009 will see families who move into an area where there are no appropriate places available within a reasonable distance also placed through the Fair Access Protocol, further reducing the need for appeals.

In conclusion Mrs Buckland said there had been a general increase in the number of applications for admission that had been received in the last year. The birth rate was rising both locally and nationally and around 600 more primary allocations were made on 1 March than at the same time the previous year. Despite this increase the number of primary and secondary block appeals had fallen this year suggesting that whilst the percentage of parents being offered their first preference school had fallen, parents are relatively content with the school they have been offered.

The number of in year appeals had significantly increased although there had been a fall of 30% in the success rate. This indicates that the independent panels do not consider the cases being put forward by parents are strong enough to warrant offering places in schools that are already full. A change in the Appeals Code has meant that fewer schools now send representatives to assist Education Leeds in defending the appeals, however the preparatory work undertaken on the written statements has proved effective.

There continues to be some pockets of the City where demand for a child's nearest school cannot be met, and although this has improved in the secondary sector the number of primary schools where the issue exists has risen from 7 to 15.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

12 DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS OF PUPIL NUMBERS

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report which provided information on demographic trends, including births and new arrivals. The report also provides future projections of primary and secondary populations and changes in school provision

In providing background information Mr G Turnbull, Head of Service, School Organisation, Education Leeds reported that over recent years there has been an increase in the birth rate, both nationally and locally. This had been reflected in an increase in the number of pupils entering Reception, which had risen by about 800 in two years. Whilst some surplus places still exist in primary and it was possible to

continue to offer places to all children, the population increase was affecting the number of parents who were offered one of their preferences.

The increase in numbers had been more pronounced in areas inside the boundary of the ring road, but population growth was becoming a widespread phenomenon in Leeds as a whole. Rather than a small number of 'hotspots', most parts of the city were affected to a greater or lesser degree. It should be viewed as a city-wide issue

The secondary sector had seen a slight fall in Year 7 numbers since 2004. Projections for 2009/10 had forecast a fall, but the admissions process was indicating a slight increase on last year. Generally Year 7 numbers are expected to be steady or slightly fall until 2015, after which time the current increase in births will feed through to the secondary sector, leading to a sharp rise from 2016 onwards.

Mr Turnbull said that reports had been submitted to the Executive Board over the past six months outlining recommended actions to increase primary provision. These include proposing an increase in the published admission numbers of various schools for 2010/11, resulting in a potential increase of more than 300 primary places. Fuller proposals to permanently expand a number of schools from 2010 would follow. There will be a need to increase primary places for 2011 and again for 2012.

Expansion schemes would be managed through the Education capital programme, although a bid had been submitted to the DCSF for additional funding to support these in 2010 and 2011.

In passing comment Mrs Knights said that in the past some Primary Schools had been closed, now a few years later Primary places are required, Education Leeds need to take a longer term view.

In responding Mr Turnbull said that schools had been closed in the past because of the significant number of surplus places also the schools which did close were in a poor condition. Any new schools which had been built were a result of population change, schools need to be provided where the communities are.

Mr Forbes referred to a large school building programme currently being piloted in Birmingham "Total Place Initiative". Mr Forbes suggested it may be worthwhile contacting the City's involved to find out further information.

Mr Turnbull said that more creative use of schools is required, Education Leeds need to work with schools to identify local issues

RESOLVED – To note the content of the report including:

- continuing increases in birth rate;
- plans for expanded provision for 2009 and 2010;
- a large and sustained rise in primary projections for the foreseeable future, with a consequent need for continued expansion of provision; and
- steady or slightly decreasing secondary Year 7 enrolment for the next 2 or 3 years.

13 PROPOSED CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2011 ROUND

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report which set out the proposed consultation admission arrangements for the September 2011 Round

By way of background Mrs Buckland reported that Education Leeds were 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 academies, foundation and voluntary-aided schools.

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 can find information, and how they can make their views known.

New legislation was introduced in December 2008 to accompany a new School Admissions Code which came into force in February 2009. There were two significant changes relating to the coordinated scheme which will require local authorities to fully coordinate all applications for school places.

Leeds had been experiencing a rapidly increasing birth rate and there is a need to expand a number of primary schools. The School Organisation Team would ensure that all statutory processes were followed in connection with these changes and any possible new schools in the future. The consultation on admission arrangements is to consider the admission numbers proposed for entry in September 2011, whereas a full statutory consultation will be carried out with respect to any permanent expansion

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the coordinated arrangements for both In year and Annual cycle admissions
- (ii) That a further meeting of the Leeds Admission Forum be scheduled for November 2009 when details of any variation to school admission numbers would be available

14 REVIEW OF THE PUBLISHED ADVICE TO PARENTS AND CHOICE ADVICE

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.

Mrs Buckland reported that a number of key changes had been made including:

- In Year Fair Access Protocols
- Sustainable Travel

Site maps had been removed from the primary booklet but they were still available on the Education Leeds website. Site maps for Secondary School continued to be published within the Secondary School booklet

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.

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

15 ADMISSION FORUM WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2009/10

Members received and considered the Forum’s Work Programme for the 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

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee – Referring to the Membership of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee, the Chair reported that following the resignation of Mr Ian Faulkingham a vacancy had arisen.

The Chair sought expressions of interest to fill the vacancy

Ms Taylor, the representative from Prospect expressed an interest to serve on the Sub Committee

RESOLVED – That Ms S Taylor be appointed to the Challenging and Vulnerable Children’s Sub Committee

17 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

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

- (i) Thursday 26th November 2009
- (ii) Tuesday 2nd February 2010

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

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on 26th November 2009