

CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADMISSION FORUM: MINUTES

Date: 3rd July 2014

Time: 2.00pm – 3.45pm

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Local Authority Representatives
Councillors: D Harty (Chairman), J Whitehead

Academy School Representative (South Cambs & City)
M Sanders MBE

Community School Representative
M Smart

Voluntary Aided School Representative
P Stanton

Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative
Revd Dr G Cook

Local Employers' Representative
G Prangnell

Minority Groups Representative
K Tolley

Parents' School Preference Advisor
M Lesniak

Special Educational Needs Representative
S Platt

In Attendance

Judith Davies (Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services)

Michelle Docking (Manager Statutory Assessment and Resources Team)

S Surtees (Manager: Admissions, Transport and Education Welfare Benefits)

R Yule (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: J Barnes, S Hains, S Hall, R Miller, J Scally

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN/WOMAN

Councillor Harty was elected Chairman for the municipal year 2014/15.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN/WOMAN

Councillor Whitehead was elected Vice-Chairwoman for the municipal year 2014/15.

3. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and all present introduced themselves.

4. APOLOGIES & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies - as listed above. There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES: 13th February 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

None

7. PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSION FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

The Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services explained that her work was focussed on children with the most complex needs. In accordance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were not a barrier to admission to a school. She said that

- it was important to have good arrangements in place for any transition from one setting to another, for example when children were moving from Early Years provision to a primary school
- there was a longstanding issue with ensuring that all parents had access to Early Years provision and that information was passed on from there to primary schools
- not all parents wished to take up the offer of an Early Years place for their child. The primary school then had to act quickly to ensure appropriate support for such children with SEND was available, calling on the help of Health and Educational Psychology experts as appropriate.

In the course of discussion, Forum members

- observed that there was often a gap between what Health services knew about a family and what was known to schools, which made it harder for schools to set up support for a child from the start. The Vice-Chairman pointed out that such issues came within the remit of the Children's Trust Board, and offered to raise the question there, and to arrange for the Head of Commissioning to be invited to any relevant workshops
- commented that arranging support for children at a lower level of need, without a Statement of SEN, was often more difficult for schools than arranging support for a statemented child; factors included that support had to be funded by the school for the first year, and difficulties in getting information about the child from e.g. Health.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services and the Manager Statutory Assessment and Resources Team for their contributions to the meeting.

8. LA REPORT TO OFFICE OF SCHOOLS ADJUDICATOR

The Forum received the Local Authority Annual Report for information and comment; the report had been submitted on 30th June 2014. Examining the report, members

- noted that the comment at 2(c) was intended to highlight that Cambridgeshire had no admission arrangements giving priority to children with a disability but without a statement of SEN
- in relation to comment 3.A(a), suggested that it might be helpful if an alternative national offer day for primary places could be introduced for years where 16 April fell during the Easter holidays
- noted (comment 3.A(c)) that there was no requirement for the LA to co-ordinate admission to the UTC (University Technical College) in its first year of admission, but the UTC was aware that the LA would be co-ordinating admissions from September 2015
- enquired what the impact of the UTC might be on other schools. The Forum was advised that the UTC had a catchment area for admission purposes, covering Cambridgeshire and beyond; there had been about 40 Year 10 applications to date, with roughly equal numbers from inside and outside the County [for further admission policy detail see <http://utccambridge.co.uk/faqs/>]. The UTC was part of the Cambridgeshire Area Partnership, so working closely with other county schools
- received an update on the latest in-year admissions figures (reply 3.B(a)), noting that as at 30th June 2014, there had been 4,211 primary and 1,406. The Chairman asked that these figures also be supplied as a percentage of the total number of pupils. **Action: S Surtees**
- noted that there were currently four schools (one infant, one junior and two secondary) for which the LA did not co-ordinate in -year admissions
- noted that the reason for answering (4.b(ii)), that the working of the Fair Access Protocol was less effective than in the previous year, was the rise in the number of permanent exclusions and managed moves at primary level. There seemed to be various circumstances and factors leading to the rise, including parents moving children frequently or before interventions and educational support to the child had had time to take effect, and some serious one-off incidents. The County Inclusion Manager managed these cases, and could usefully be invited to attend the Forum to talk about the issues and what could be done to improve information-sharing with schools. **Action: R Yule**
- asked whether a pupil moving in during Year 11 who had already completed their education elsewhere could be admitted to Year 12. It was explained that there were funding issues which would make this difficult; from September 2013 this had theoretically improved in that post-16 settings were enabled to offer places across the age range 14 – 19, but no settings in the county had yet done so
- noted that the number of admission appeals lodged for September 2014 (question 5.A) was now 280 secondary and 108 primary, a slight increase on the previous year's figures. The Parents' School Preference Advisor said that some Year 6 to Year 7 transition events had been held in the autumn term in the past two years, and had been welcomed by parents
- explored the question of delayed admission of children to reception (comment 6.D(b)), noting that it was not possible to hold a place at a specific school for a child whose admission was deferred by a full year; that requests to defer

admission beyond the usual age were considered both on educational grounds and on the individual circumstances of the child; and that it would be a matter for the Education Welfare Service if a parent accepted a place for a child legally of school age but did not then send the child to school

- considered the question posed by the Authority (comment 6.G(a)) as to how it was possible to determine a child had challenging behaviour if an admission authority was not permitted to take reports from previous schools into account, and agreed that it posed a dilemma for schools
- noted that under the current School Admissions Code, information on breaches of Infant Class Size was requested less frequently; the Admissions Manager undertook to supply information on reasons for local breaches **Action: S Surtees**

The Forum agreed that it was content with the report as submitted, and content that it be published on the Council's website.

9. FAIR ACCESS ADMISSION DATA

Covered in the course of discussing the previous agenda item.

10. UPDATE ON PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Noted the number of primary reception class applications to date:

- 6,828 in the initial round
- 398 in the second round
- 143 in the third round
- 165 received during June and currently being processed.

Noted the number of secondary Year 7 applications to date:

- 5,522 in the initial round
- 228 in the second round
- 108 received before 30th June.

11. UPDATE ON IN YEAR ADMISSIONS NUMBERS

Noted that 911 applications for places for September 2014, spread across all year groups, had been received since 1st June 2014. All were being considered together; offers would be made by 14th July, allowing parents time to make arrangements for September with the school. Efforts would be made to process any applications received during July quickly, but it would not be possible to make a decision on applications received after the end of the summer term until 8th September, when the true position on availability of places at individual schools would be known.

12. REPORTS' STATUS

The status of the Forum reports was agreed as follows:

Agenda Item	Report Title	Status
Item 3	Minutes: 13th February 2014	Open
Item 6	LA Report to Office of Schools Adjudicator	Open

Item 7	Fair Access Admission Data	Open
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Arrangements for publishing the minutes of previous meetings were clarified. Rather than waiting to publish until they were approved by the next meeting, a procedure to allow earlier publication was agreed.

- As already happened, the Chairman would approve the draft minutes, which would then be circulated to the Forum.
- Members would be asked to contact the Democratic Services Officer if they had any concerns about the minutes being published in the form circulated.
- If no such concerns had been raised within about a week, the Democratic Services Officer would arrange for the minutes to be published on the Council's website.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members raised the question of travel to school and school transport, asking whether the journey was a factor in admission decisions. The Manager explained that there was nothing in the School Admissions Code to allow distance to be a factor in admission decisions, other than as a tie-breaker between applications.

Members noted that all schools were encouraged to have a school travel plan to encourage families to reduce car use on the school journey and adopt a more sustainable approach to getting to school by walking and cycling. The Home to School Transport Policy now had a provision whereby, instead of using taxis, bus passes were provided for parent and child where a suitable bus route was available [http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20059/schools_and_learning/496/school_transport includes information about Home to School Transport, and the Policy].

14. ITEMS FOR FORWARD AGENDA PLAN

Members suggested the rise in the number of exclusions from primary school and changes to catchment areas in Cambridge as possible topics. They were invited to send any further suggestions to the Democratic Services Officer.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS:

Noted that the next two meetings would be held on Thursdays at 2pm:

- 13th November 2014
- 5th February 2015.