

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SCHOOLS ADMISSION FORUM

19th October 2007 (10.00 am)

CORE MEMBERSHIP

Persons absent are marked with "A"

LOCAL AUTHORITY

A Councillor Joyce Bosnjak (Chair)
Andrew Wingard Education Department
A John Thorn - Early Years officer
Tricia Clayton - SEN Officer
John Martin - Education Transport Officer

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

Ms T Head
Mr D Maddison

VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS

A Mr P Patterson (primary)
Mr A Glover (secondary)

FOUNDATION SCHOOLS

Ms S Jowett

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE

Revd Dr H Worsley (Vice Chair)

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE

A Mr E Hayes

PARENT GOVERNORS

A Ms P Burbidge
A Ms L Wooding

LOCAL COMMUNITY

A Mr A Sadiq – Race Equality Council
Ms J Maw – Nottingham City LEA
Ms C Greaves – Parent Partnership Project
(1)

OTHER MEMBERS

Maj E Crew – Army Welfare Service
A Mr J Wilson – Learning and Skills Council

SCHOOL MEMBERS

Mr I Anderson – Magnus C of E School
Mr J Loughton – Joseph Whitaker School
Mr R McDonough – West Bridgford School
Mr H A Naisbitt – Carlton le Willows School
Mr D Wilson – Christ the King RC School

Also present:

Mr D Owen – Secretary

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor J Bosnjak, Mr J Thorn, and Mr E Hayes.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2007 having been circulated were agreed as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Andrew Wingard reported that the local authority had resolved the issue with George Spencer School, and the objection had been withdrawn.

Andrew had written to the DCFS about edited lists of preferences and is awaiting a reply.

A briefing on admission issues for governing body clerks employed by the LA is scheduled for 31 October. If any other clerks not employed by the LA wanted a briefing Andrew should be advised and he will attempt to meet such requests.

It was pointed out that the next meeting of the Forum is on 7th March 2008. The website will be updated.

MEMBERSHIP

- a) The appointment of all members whose period of office had expired or was due to expire had been renewed with the exception of a VA primary representative. Andrew will pursue this.
- b) Foundation schools have asked for their representation on the Forum to be increased from 1 to the permitted maximum of 3. The Secretary said that this was a matter for the LA to determine. He could not comment on what formula was used by the LA in determining the current representation of one. Andrew said that presently there are 40 VA and 7 Foundation schools within the Forum's area. Rob McDonough asked that the request be presented to the LA for formal consideration.

CONSTITUTION

As requested at the last meeting a copy of the constitution, as amended to reflect the recent legislative changes, was circulated. The Secretary drew attention to the proposed amendments (highlighted in red). These also included some housekeeping amendments to reflect the creation of a page on the LA's website.

There was some confusion about what parts of the constitution cover legal requirements, and what parts are solely under the Forum's control. It was proposed that this should be clarified on the website which includes a copy of the constitution.

SCHOOL TRAVEL – CONSULTATION

John Martin reported that the LA had published its strategy document on time. The LA has been consulting on a possible pathfinder scheme. John said that there had been no interest from other LAs, as any scheme will involve the introduction of charging for some transport. Part of the proposal is the introduction of half price travel passes for 11 – 18 year olds on a 24/7 basis. To date there had been 1800 responses. Support for half price travel is quite strong in the conurbation where there is ample opportunity to

take advantage of it. The closing date is 19th October 2007, but the LA will be taking late responses because of the postal workers' industrial action.

If the LA bid proceeds and is accepted the scheme would start in September 2009.

During discussion members asked about the relationship between the scheme and parental choice. John said that he did not envisage the situation worsening, but reminded members that the law had not changed in this respect. Pupils will not get free transport to and from a choice school **unless** that school is outside the walking distance **and** closer to the pupil's home than the catchment school. Concern was also expressed about the possible impact on admissions to schools located close to the LA boundary. John said that he would report back on the Forum's comments.

FAIR BANDING

This item had been placed on the agenda at the request of Howard Worsley. As sponsor of the Mansfield Academy the Diocese wished to look at all admissions options. Howard said that the Academy would not be operating fair banding. The concern had been to ensure that the Academy's admission arrangements do not destabilise other school's admissions when the Academy opens in 2008. A range of options had been considered, and the Academy's arrangements have now been approved by the Secretary of State and published. Howard emphasised that whilst the Academy will be a faith school it will also operate an inclusive admissions policy.

By way of background Andrew circulated a summary of the sections in the Admissions Code dealing with fair banding. Members recognised the complexities and practical difficulties in introducing such a system, particularly putting mechanisms in place from scratch. Rob McDonough spoke of his experience in his previous school that had operated fair banding. Whilst this had worked well for the school it had not particularly benefited other schools in the area.

SEPTEMBER 2007 ADMISSIONS

Andrew spoke to his paper on the outcomes of the admission process for September 2007. The comparative data for the 2 previous years was included. Andrew also produced a list of schools that had been oversubscribed at some point during the period September 2005 to September 2007. The paper also detailed the number of online applications made during this period the number rising from 341 for 2005/6 to 2903 for 2007/8. It was agreed that there was scope for developing the statistical reporting to the forum.

PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2009/10

Andrew presented the LA's proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2009/2010. He had offered informal discussions on the proposed timescale, and anybody wanting discussions should let him know. The LA is not proposing any significant changes, but is considering the point raised at the last meeting whether the co-ordinated arrangements should cease to operate in relation to a particular school year following the formal offer of a place by the LA. There were mixed feelings about this. Rob McDonough was also concerned that procedures should be in place to check that applications are genuine.

Members had no other comments on either the proposed arrangements or admission numbers.

JOSEPH WHITAKER SCHOOL UPDATE

Andrew said that the LA and the school had not been able to agree a note for the Forum. Andrew gave his understanding of the current position.

There were 2 issues that had been the subject of adjudication. The first was about whether the school was bound, once it achieved foundation status and became its own admission authority, by the LA policy on admissions outside the normal round. The second concerned a direction given by the LA to admit a particular pupil on the basis of the LA's policy outlined above. Whilst the adjudication on the former could be put on the Forum's web page the latter could not as it referred to a specific pupil. It was agreed that the

best course would be to put a link to the Adjudicator's website on the Forum's web page.

On the first point the LA had objected to the school's admission arrangements for 2008/9 on the following grounds:

1. The school had not committed itself to a fair access protocol
2. The omission of the LA's policy on mid-term admissions
3. The school had changed its admission arrangements without consultation

The Adjudicator's response was:

1. On point 1 he had no jurisdiction
2. On point 2 he decided in favour of the school
3. On point 3 he had no jurisdiction

With regard to the direction to admit a pupil the Adjudicator had ruled in favour of the LA. The school moved for judicial review on 3 grounds. David Wilson said that the advice given to the school and the Adjudicator was that the application was likely to be granted and the decision quashed. The governors had no desire to use the pupil as a political football, and he had been admitted to the school despite the legal advice.

In the meantime the position on the issue of mid-term admissions remains unresolved, and the governors have asked the LA to join them in an attempt to sort out their differences. Andrew said that the LA's policy on this would remain in the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. He could not comment further on the particular case as he had yet to see the Adjudicator's decision. He did not accept that the LA had acted oppressively. The view of the Secretary of State was that the LA had not acted unreasonably. There was agreement that the situation needed to be brought to a resolution.

DATES FOR MEETINGS 2007/8

The following dates are already agreed.

Friday 7th March 2008 10.00 a.m. Meadow House, Mansfield

Friday 20th June 2008 10.00 a.m. venue to be confirmed

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No items were identified other than those matters referred to in these minutes.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.