

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SCHOOLS ADMISSION FORUM

20th June 2008 (10.00 am)

CORE MEMBERSHIP

Persons absent are marked with "A"

LOCAL AUTHORITY

- A Councillor Joyce Bosnjak (Chair)
Scott Hollingsworth Children & Young People's Services
- A John Thorn - Early Years Officer
Tricia Clayton - SEN Officer
- Vacancy

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

- A Ms T Head
- A Mr D Maddison

VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS

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

FOUNDATION SCHOOLS

- A Ms S Jowett

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE

- Revd Dr H Worsley (Vice Chair)

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE

- Mr E Hayes

PARENT GOVERNORS

- A Ms L Wooding
- Vacancy

LOCAL COMMUNITY

- A Mr A Sadiq – Race Equality Council
Ms J Maw – Nottingham City LA

- A Ms C Greaves – Parent Partnership Project
Mr W Connor - PPS

OTHER MEMBERS

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

SCHOOL MEMBERS

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

Also present:

Mr D Owen – Secretary

In the absence of Councillor J Bosnjak the chair was taken by Revd Dr H Worsley

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor J Bosnjak, Ms T Head, Mr D Maddison, Ms S Jowett, and Mr I Anderson.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2008 having been circulated were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the special meeting held on 2nd April 2008 having been circulated were agreed as a correct record

The vice chair asked for comments on the special meeting as he had been unable to attend. Rob McDonough said he had found the meeting frustrating.

The compromise had been accepted in order to move forward, but Rob hoped that this will now be addressed in order to avoid a repeat of the unsatisfactory position, and he will be watching developments with interest. Scott said the report to Council had been amended to reflect the compromise, and as far as he knew the amended report had been accepted. He will check this with members' services. Scott circulated a copy of the report, and said that he would update members under agenda item 4.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no other matters arising, but a number of members commented that they had not received all the papers for the meeting, and at least one member had received none. Scott said that he would tighten up circulation arrangements. It was agreed that those present would put their email addresses on the attendance sheet so that they could be sent electronic copies. A list of these addresses will be sent to Scott with the draft minutes.

CO-ORDINATED SCHEME UPDATE

Scott reported that at a recent briefing session in London he had spoken to a number of colleagues from other local authorities about how they operated waiting lists for voluntary aided and foundation schools. Some LAs operate waiting lists until 31st August whilst others delegate this to schools from various dates. He has arranged to visit Birmingham LA which delegates to foundation schools from 1st April each year. He is also hoping to at least talk to Lincolnshire and the London Borough of Sutton.

In response to a question June Maw said that the City LA operates waiting lists until 31st August. This seems to work quite well and no objections have been received from schools.

The new code requires the maintenance of waiting lists for a reasonable period. There was a difference of view between the school members as to the date of delegation. Whilst delegation from the national offer date was preferred by some there appeared to be agreement that delegation from 1st April each year would be acceptable.

Scott said that he would report to next meeting, but the need for a significant exercise to respond to the recent DCSF consultation document might reduce the number of LAs' he will be able to visit, and some of his enquiries may have to be done by phone. He pointed out that this issue would also be picked up by the admissions action group that has been formed – see below.

David Wilson suggested that schools should be canvassed about what they feel will be a suitable date for delegation. He also made the point that schools that are their own admission authorities are at a disadvantage in managing admissions because they are not provided with information about preferences. Whilst 1st preference 1st is not permitted, an indication of preferences will give schools some earlier idea of how many pupils they might expect. Both Rob McDonough and Tony Glover had recently experienced difficulties as presenting officers before their appeals panels as they lacked information to either corroborate or refute what the parent told the panel about their declared preference. Scott said that following the last meeting he had spoken to the appropriate DCSF officer who, whilst accepting that the code was silent on the point, said the clear department view is that admission authorities should not be given preference information as part of the admissions process. The DCSF officer is quite prepared to receive letters on this from individual admission authorities. David Wilson reiterated that this confirmed his view that the disclosure of preference information by the LA to admission authorities would breach neither the law nor the code of practice, and the LA ought to provide this information to facilitate the more efficient management of admissions.

The vice chair asked that these views be kept in mind, and moved the meeting on to the next item.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

Scott drew attention to a consultation document published by DCSF, details of which are available on the DCSF website. He had circulated a summary of this to members and had spare copies for anyone who had not received it. He also circulated a copy of a DCSF press release on the proposals for clearer admissions systems Both Schools Forums and Admission Forums are included in the list of consultees, and Scott asked how the members wished to handle this given that there is a section on admission forums and the consultation period ends on 2nd October.

It was agreed that members take time to digest the documents, and an item is placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

TOWARDS AN ANNUAL REPORT FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM

- a) Secondary Admissions Update – Scott referred to the document that had been circulated giving the latest information on secondary applications and offers. Attached to this was a summary of the national data. This was presented as background information.
- b) Nottingham City Admissions Forum Draft Annual Report – Scott apologised that this had been circulated in error, being confidential and work still in progress, and those who had received a copy confirmed that they had received his letter asking members to withdraw it from their papers and destroy. His intention had been to seek the adoption of the general format as a basis for the Nottinghamshire Admissions Forum annual report. His intention is to present a draft annual report to the next meeting.
- c) Supporting data; admissions and appeals; other data – Scott reported that this data is being collected and will be included in the annual report. Rob McDonough asked about pupil drift and the impact on funding. At present there is a drift from city to county over all secondary year groups of approximately 3000 pupils with a drift the other way of approximately 180 to 190 primarily to voluntary aided schools. It was confirmed that the AWPU funding follows the pupil, but it was acknowledged that the formula was somewhat different as between urban and non-urban areas. The place to pursue this is in the Schools Forum.

ADMISSIONS SYSTEM REVIEW: ADMISSIONS ACTION GROUP

Scott drew attention to the establishment of this group which he had tried to make as representative as possible of the interested parties. The group will address those concerns about the current system for admissions identified by the Forum and others, and the first meeting has been convened for 26th June. This clashes with a foundation schools conference, and Rob McDonough will be unable to attend.

It was agreed that the meeting should proceed on this date as the take up by other members of the Action Group is understood to be good, and Rob's deputy will be able to attend. Whilst not seeking SEN representation on the Group Tricia Clayton asked that the Group bear in mind that issues of SEN are not uncommon within the normal admissions process as not all pupils with SEN have statements.

Scott confirmed that progress at the Action Group would report back to the Forum.

PRIMARY AND FIRST SCHOOL ISSUES

Three issues had been identified for discussion by David Maddison. These are:

- a) School holidays and primary admissions
- b) Infant class size guidance
- c) Reception intake and transfer from reception to full-time

As David had sent his apologies it was agreed that these items be noted and discussion deferred to a later meeting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Response to DCSF consultation*
- Draft Annual Report*
- Operation of waiting lists*
- Provision of additional information to VA/Foundation Schools*
- Over-subscription criteria for Mansfield Academy*
- Protocol for mid-term admissions
- Role of Schools Adjudicator
- Children and Young Peoples Plan Refresh*
- Demographic impact on provision of school places
- Appointment of Forum Secretary*
- Membership*
- David Maddison's items*
- Admissions Action Group feed back*

Asterisk indicates next meeting. Volume may make this impossible, and items requiring a decision at the next meeting will take priority.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates have been agreed for future meetings:

Monday 22nd September 2008 10.00 am at Chilwell School
Monday 9th February 2009 10.00 am venue to be arranged
Monday 22nd June 2009 10.00 am venue to be arranged

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am.