

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SCHOOLS ADMISSION FORUM**  
**Special Meeting held on 2nd April 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  
A Tricia Clayton - SEN Officer  
John Martin - Transport Officer Children & Young People's Services

**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**

A Revd Dr H Worsley (Vice Chair)

**ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE**

A Mr E Hayes  
Mr J Boland-Lee - Alternate

**PARENT GOVERNORS**

A Ms L Wooding  
Vacancy

**LOCAL COMMUNITY**

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

**OTHER MEMBERS**

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

**SCHOOL MEMBERS**

Mr J Loughton – Joseph Whitaker School  
Mr R McDonough – West Bridgford School  
Mr P Townsend - Garibaldi School  
Mr D Wilson – Christ the King RC School

Also present:

Mr A Wingard – Children & Young People's Services  
Mr D Owen – Secretary

In the absence of Councillor J Bosnjak and Revd Dr H Worsley the chair was taken by Scott Hollingsworth, who reminded members that this was a special meeting of the Forum with a single item agenda to discuss the local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements for 2009/10.

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor J Bosnjak, Revd Dr H Worsley, Mr E Hayes, and Ms C Greaves.

## **CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2009/10**

Copies of the primary and secondary arrangements for 2009/10 were circulated.

### Primary Arrangements

It was decided to consider the primary arrangements first. Unfortunately it transpired that David Maddison the only primary school representative to attend the meeting was unavoidably delayed in joining the meeting by a telephone call and having to wait to be admitted. The brief discussion therefore took place in his absence.

It was confirmed that the final offer date for primary was a matter for the authority, and a request was made that every effort be taken to bring forward the date when schools first receive information about admission applications.

### Secondary Arrangements

Reference to the co-ordinated arrangements had been included with the consultation paper presented to the Forum in October 2007. No comment was made at that time. The consultation paper was primarily about the LA's proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2009/10, and as such also intended for consideration by governing bodies of all maintained schools during the autumn term. Andrew Wingard outlined the consultation process used for the last few years by the local authority. This was to consult in outline on proposed arrangements drawing attention to where full copies of all documentation could be accessed. School members and representatives of school groups felt that this process was not sufficiently transparent. Not all schools purchased the governors' services from the local authority, and where these were not purchased there was no guarantee that the consultation document would find its way to a governing body meeting.

As far as the Forum itself is concerned it was pointed out that the membership had changed since the co-ordinated arrangements were originally agreed, and there are also now significantly more admission authorities with the increase in the number of foundation schools. Given this background the school members and representatives on the various school groups felt that the consultation process should be reviewed to ensure transparency and effectiveness.

The Secretary reminded members of the statutory regulations governing the co-ordination of admission arrangements. These are now to be found in The School Admissions (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2007. These regulations consolidate the previous regulations. Each year the LA must formulate a qualifying scheme for primary and secondary schools (each having to satisfy the requirements of the regulations). However the duty to formulate a scheme each year does not apply if the LA and admission authorities have agreed a scheme and after review the LA consider that it should again be adopted by themselves and each of those governing bodies in relation to the academic year immediately following. **NB post-meeting note by Secretary. The regulations do not specifically address the process when new admission authorities come on stream since the qualifying scheme was agreed. Query whether the LA needs to secure the specific agreement of those new admission authorities only, or whether the whole process starts again. Whichever applies it is arguable that the LA must formulate a new scheme whenever it proposes changes.** Subject to these comments the process is that a proposed scheme must first be referred to the Admissions Forum, and the LA must have regard to any advice or recommendation of the Forum. Then the LA must consult all admission authorities in its area, and any other LEA as it may determine. The consultation must be undertaken with a view to the compatibility of arrangements. Following consultation the LA must determine a qualifying scheme either as originally proposed or modified as it thinks fit, and must take all reasonable steps to secure its adoption by themselves and each governing body they consulted (i.e. governing bodies that are their own admission authority). If by 15<sup>th</sup> April in any year the LA has been unable to notify the Secretary of State that schemes for primary and/or secondary schools have been adopted the S of S will impose a scheme(s).

This meeting was convened because of a number of concerns raised at the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008 about the adequacy of the process both in relation to the referral to the Forum and the consultation with admission authorities. It was emphasised that the LA would have to notify the S of S of the position before 15<sup>th</sup> April.

The details of the secondary scheme were then discussed and it was soon apparent that the concerns of the representatives of voluntary aided and foundation schools together with the head teacher school members present focused on the operation of waiting lists and the timeliness of information about appeals. The community schools representative also shared these concerns.

As far as appeals are concerned the Code of Practice now imposes a very tight deadline to which admission authorities have to work.

The operation of waiting lists was the subject of a lengthy discussion and was an issue on which head teachers and admission authorities have strong feelings. The scheme as previously agreed provides for the LA to maintain and operate a waiting list for each school until the beginning of September in the admission year. This has been the preferred view of the LA since the original scheme was agreed. The contrary view was that no useful purpose was served by the LA operating a waiting list beyond the statutory offer date, and to do so merely frustrated the management process within the school. Rob McDonough said that in Lincolnshire, where he had been a head teacher for 4 years and where there are many more admission authorities, the LA left the operation of waiting lists to the admission authorities. This had worked smoothly, and had made the admission process very efficient enabling schools to plan more effectively for admissions at the beginning of the autumn term. The point was made that if the LA and the admission authority had the same list it would enable the admission authority to react quickly to fill spare capacity, and

as long as the LA is kept informed of decisions it will have the information it needs to maintain an overview, and ensure that the whole process is transparent.

In responding Andrew Wingard made it clear that he did not accept that the process was flawed, and asserted that there is benefit in the LA managing the admission process through waiting lists until the start of the academic year. Whilst this had not previously been raised as a formal issue Rob McDonough pointed out that the minutes of the June 2007 meeting did record that it had been raised as something that made head teachers' jobs more difficult.

Scott Hollingsworth said that as the new lead officer on this he was happy to look at any suggestion that would improve the process. The question was how to take this forward given the timescale. Various suggestions were made.

The Secretary, having listened to the discussion, suggested a compromise to enable the 2009/10 scheme to be presented to the S of S as an adopted scheme. Whilst it would not guarantee head teachers what they wanted for 2009/10 it would leave the door open and give the LA time to reflect, and undertake further inquiry and consultation. If the concerns cannot be resolved then they can be raised again as part of the 2010/11 process recognising that individual admission authorities if dissatisfied could object. The suggested compromise was that the words "without prejudice to the right of the local authority to delegate the management of waiting lists to individual admission authorities" be inserted at the end of paragraph F4 of the secondary scheme. After a brief discussion the consensus was to recommend this amendment to the LA for insertion in the scheme. There was no further discussion of the secondary scheme.

At this point David Maddison expressed his disappointment that he had not had the opportunity to discuss with members the primary scheme. Whilst he had no specific recommendations to propose he emphasised that primary head teachers also have concerns about the operation of waiting lists and the timeliness of information provided by the LA.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Whilst the date of the next scheduled meeting is 20<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at 10.00 a.m. at Chilwell School, it was pointed out that at the last meeting it was also agreed that there would be a special meeting to consider not just the responses of the LA to the proposed admission arrangements of the various admission authorities, but also the full responses of admission authorities to the proposed arrangements of the LA and each other. It was agreed that this be left to Scott Hollingsworth to arrange having regard to the deadline for referring objections to the Adjudicator.

The meeting concluded at 12.05 p.m.