

Admissions Forum – Meeting held on Tuesday, 21st September, 2010.

Present:-

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools - Gwendy Morrison

Voluntary Aided Schools - John McAteer and Theresa Haggart

Foundation Schools - Italo Cafolla and Maureen Ball

Muslim Faith Representative - Zafar Ali

Sikh Faith Representative - Harshinder Buttar

Parent Governor Representatives - Mohammed Din

NUT Observer - Lynda Bussley

Officers Present - Tony Browne and Clair Pyper

PART 1

7. Election of Chair

As there were no nominations received for Chair for the academic year it was agreed to elect a Chair for the duration of the meeting.

Resolved: - That Italo Cafolla be appointed as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

8. Election of Vice-Chair

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

10. Minutes of the last meeting held on 18th May 2010

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th May were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Bulge Classes – The Forum was advised that due to the exceptionally high demand for places Castlevew would be operating a bulge class in the reception year.

The Willow School – The opening of the new school on the former Lea School site had been delayed due to problems completing the building works. The children were currently being accommodated in Wexham and Beechwood Schools until the school was able to open on 27th September. The LA appreciated the support from both schools.

LA Report – The Head of Schools Services had sent the report to the Schools Adjudicator following circulation to members of the forum.

11. Primary Reception Admissions September 2010 Update

The Forum was advised that following the Primary Admissions report provided at the last meeting, additional places had been made available at Castlevew, Priory and Willow primary schools. There were now sufficient places available within the borough for primary aged pupils but some pupils were not yet in school due to lack of places at their parent's preferred schools. Head teachers advised that they had a number of parents on their waiting lists that did not have school places. The Local Authority requested that the parents in question be asked to contact the admissions team. The overall position was that primary schools were able to satisfy the current demand for places.

Resolved – That the current situation regarding Primary Admissions be noted.

12. Primary In-Year Admissions Update

The Forum noted that the local authority was assuming responsibility for in-year applications for the primary phase following the Admissions Code of Practice requirement that all parents apply directly to the Local Authority for places in all year groups. Data on the availability of places at all schools would be obtained on a weekly basis. Some funding had been made available via the Schools Forum so that the Admissions Team could manage the additional work. It was noted that the process for admission applications had been sent to all schools via the gatekeeper. The Forum was advised that the LA would aim to turn around in-year applications within two weeks of receipt. Schools were due to receive application forms and leaflets in the next few days. The Admissions Forum raised a number of queries including:-

- A Head teacher representative asked how queries were handled by the Local Authority. In the past the department had been open every day. However it was found that this restricted the amount of work that the team was able to process; therefore the department was now open for 'in person' enquiries one afternoon per week and telephone enquiries for two afternoons per week. The Admissions Department was aiming to

increase the number of online applications which would ease the burden of work to some extent. Following this, issues were raised about the level of access to the internet amongst parents. Schools were encouraged to look at the possibility of parents accessing the internet in schools. A number of schools were already doing this although it was acknowledged that some parents may not be confident to do this even when schools provided access.

- A concern was raised about schools providing letters for parents confirming their child was on the school's waiting list for the purposes of child benefit. It was agreed that this was something that could be looked into by the school and the LA.
- A member asked for clarification regarding filling any vacancies from existing waiting lists. The Head of School Services advised that this was not possible and that the parents of pupils currently on waiting lists would need to reapply via the LA
- In response to concerns raised by primary representatives especially with regards to admissions for voluntary aided and foundation schools, a secondary representative advised that the co-ordinated admissions process for the secondary phase worked very well and that this involved dealing with selective schools and faith schools. .
- Further concerns were raised about parents or guardians applying for places for children who were not in the country. It was agreed that the legal situation and practicalities of this would be clarified.

The Forum was advised that the co-ordinated admission process for primary schools was still being looked at by the implementation group and it was agreed that primary head teachers would feed any concerns to their representative.

Resolved:-

- (a) Issues surrounding the in-year admissions arrangements to be worked through with the implementation group including the particular entry requirements for VA and foundation schools.
- (b) That the Admissions Forum be provided with a further update on the in-year admissions process at the next meeting.

13. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting would be scheduled for March, 2011 to be confirmed by the Clerk to the Admissions Forum.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.10 pm)