

Admissions Forum – Meeting held on Tuesday, 18th May, 2010.

Admission Forum Members Present

Councillor Natasa Pantelic (Chair)	Local Authority Representative
Councillor Balvinder Bains Italo Cafolla	Local Authority Representative Castleview Primary School (Foundation)
John McAteer	St Bernard's Grammar School (Voluntary Aided)
Theresa Haggart	St Ethelbert's RC Primary School (Voluntary Aided)
Mohammed Din	Ryvers Primary School (Parent)

Officers Present

Tony Browne	Head of School Services
Clair Pyper	Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services, SBC
Lynda Bussley	

Apologies for Absence:- Maureen Ball and Gill Bodman

PART 1

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2010 were approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Italo Cafolla in the list of apologies.

2. Slough Grammar Admissions Policy

The Forum was advised that changes to Slough Grammar School's admissions policy were subject to a late consultation and the policy for admissions in the 2011/12 academic year had now been agreed. The new policy stipulated that, following the admittance of any looked after children and those with special educational needs (SEN) meeting the required pass mark, the next one hundred places would be filled in order of pupils' performance in the tests and the subsequent 45 places would be filled according to the proximity of applicants' home address to the school. The Head of School Services advised that this was the second of the borough's selective schools, following Herschel Grammar, to alter their admission arrangements to favour applicants living closer to the school.

A member raised an ongoing concern regarding point 6(ii) of Slough Grammar's admissions criteria. The Forum had previously requested that the wording of point 6(ii) be changed to require that written evidence of SEN was supplied by a local authority specialist. A Forum member asked if there was data available on the number of children not achieving the required pass mark

who subsequently gained a place in the school following a successful appeal. It was confirmed that data on the number of successful appeals was available but this was not broken down into those passing/failing the 11+.

The Head Teacher of St. Bernard's Catholic Grammar School confirmed that the school had given places to all Slough resident applicants achieving the required pass mark for the previous three years and it was reiterated that this was a system chosen by the parents in Slough. Concern was expressed that if further priority was given to Slough students at the grammar schools this would have serious implications for other secondary schools in Slough.

It was noted that Slough Grammar had removed the maths element of the tests to bring them in line with the other grammar schools in the consortium.

Resolved - That the revised admissions Policy for Slough Grammar School be noted.

3. Primary Admissions 2010

The Head of Schools Services presented a report to the Forum on Primary Admissions in 2010. The Forum noted that there had been a further increase in the number of applications on the previous year. All children had been allocated a place; however this was not necessarily in one of their three preferred schools. The Head of Castleview School advised that to date they had received 25 appeals from children living within the school's catchment area who had not been offered a place. It was thought that there were possibly 25-30 children who would reach statutory school age in September without a confirmed place in year one. The Council had been able to provide a place for those applications received to date but concerns had been raised that there may be many more applications received going into the summer, especially as the school year in Eastern Europe was due to end in June and further applications were usually received following this.

Preparations were taking place to increase the number of primary school places but there was serious concern for the impact that the increased pupil numbers would have on secondary school places in years to come. A Forum member asked whether there were any contingency plans in place in case of a rise in applications over the summer. It was confirmed that presently the only option for any form of contingency would be to place an additional class in the old Lea School. It was suggested that Montem Primary School currently had a double classroom which may possibly be used for an additional class in exceptional circumstances. Additional children joining schools at entry level further increased pressure on the infrastructure of schools as they progressed through each year. Officers confirmed that if there was an influx of children on the same scale as the previous year the authority would again be facing a very challenging situation. It was agreed by everyone that it was important for young children to be placed in a school as close to their home as possible. Furthermore children travelling across the borough to different schools placed further pressure on the transport infrastructure.

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The Forum was advised that the old Lea School was being refurbished and would be used for the initial intake of reception children in September. It was recognised that the Chalvey area was still in need of a primary school but there was difficulty in finding a suitable location. Forecasting for school places was shortly to be agreed and a copy would be distributed to Forum members. It was noted that by 2012 Slough was expected to need 29 more primary school classes or 10 new primary schools. A number of classes had already been identified but many more were still required.

Resolved – That the position of primary admissions for 2010 be noted and Forum Members receive an update on school places forecasting.

4. Local Authority Report

The Head of School Services advised the Forum that the Local Authority Report needed to be completed each year and submitted to the schools adjudicator. Answers would be drafted to the questions contained in the report and then circulated for comment to Admissions Forum members. Members requested that the back page of the report be enlarged onto two sheets to enable the figures to be seen more easily. Members raised some concerns about the data provided on free school meal entitlement. A number of the figures appeared to be fairly low and a number of eligible pupils were not taking up free school meals. There were no figures recorded for St. Bernard's and it was suggested that this may be down to the low numbers receiving free school meals to protect individual pupils identity.

Resolved – That a copy of the Local Authority Report be circulated to Admissions Forum Members for comment

5. Any Other Business

The Head of Schools Services advised that the in-year admissions policy had been agreed and a Head Teachers Group was to be established to discuss the issues involved. It was agreed that Teresa Haggart was to be a member of the group.

The Admissions Forum noted that all secondary school transfer children had now received a school place. Secondary school admissions had been considered at the previous meeting of the Forum. It was agreed that these figures would be provided to the Director of Education and Children's Services. A Member asked if there were currently any places available and was advised that the situation at present was fairly fluid but also fairly full.

Cllr Pantelic advised that although she was not due to be reappointed as an official member of the Admissions Forum she would still attend in her capacity as commissioner for Education and Children.

6. Date of the next meeting

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It was agreed that the next meeting should be provisionally scheduled for 16.30 pm Tuesday 21st September, 2010.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.25 pm)