

Admissions Forum – Meeting held on Monday, 23rd March, 2009.

Present:-

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Kate Makinson

John McAteer

Foundation Schools

Maureen Ball

Italo Cafolla

Hilda Clarke

Parent Governor Representatives

Mohammed Din

Local Education Authority

Councillor Dale-Gough

Officers Present

Tony Browne, Head of Schools Services

Clair Pyper, Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services

Bill Alexander, Assistant Director Raising Achievement

Apologies for Absence

Gill Bodman

Councillor Dodds

PART 1

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 22nd January, 2009 were approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the Strategic Director, Education and Children's Services in the list of those present and the inclusion of Italo Cafolla in the list of those who gave apologies for their absence.

Referring to minute 17, a query was raised regarding whether a response had been received to the letter sent to Slough Grammar School. The Head of School Services informed the meeting that the school had received the letter and had until the 15th April to make the recommended changes to their admission arrangements. It was agreed that if no response was received by 20th April, the start of the school term, that the case be referred back to the Schools Adjudicator.

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The Officers further clarified that two letters had been sent, one addressing the admission arrangements and the other requesting the information on the admission numbers for 2008/9.

Resolved - That if no response was received from Slough Grammar School by 20th April, the case be referred back to the Schools Adjudicator.

20. New Admissions Code Briefing

The Head of School Services noted that the new Code of Practice had previously been circulated to the Members of the Forum. A summary identifying several of the changes to the Code of Practice was considered by the Forum.

The extension of the consultation period conducted by admission authorities for the 2011 admission arrangements was highlighted. The Strategic Director, enquired as to how far the consultation could affect the final decisions made regarding admission arrangements. The meeting was informed that if the admission authority failed to demonstrate that it had considered the comments/feedback received it would be open to challenge during the latter stages of the process.

Clarification was sought regarding the process of withdrawing offers of school places and in particular, the wording "reasonable time" was queried. The meeting was advised that usually parents were allowed a week to inform the school of whether they would accept the school place for their child. The date by which parents have to inform the school was also included within the offer letter.

Referring to the new requirements for the co-ordination of primary admissions from 2010/11 onwards, the Strategic Director advised that discussions would have to be held with schools first and that Education & Children's Services resources would be stretched due to the increase in work as a result of the co-ordination of primary admissions.

Clarification was sought regarding the new right of children above compulsory school age to appeal against decisions for admission from the 2010/11 academic year, as it could be interpreted to mean that a child could apply for a school place in a different year to that determined by their age. The Head of School Services advised that he would further explore the matter.

Resolved - That the changes to the New Code of Practice be noted.

21. Admissions Forum Revised Terms of Reference

The Members of the Forum discussed the suggested terms of reference for the Forum and, in particular, considered the proposed changes to the membership required by a change in the Regulations. The Head of School Services advised that a maximum of 20 people could be allocated to the Forum but that he had proposed a maximum of 15 in the report. Several issues were raised regarding the distribution of membership across the

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various representatives, including the balance between representatives from primary and senior schools and the possibility of reducing the number of representatives from Voluntary Aided schools as these schools would be represented by the Voluntary Aided faith schools. The Forum agreed to discuss the issue of membership at its next meeting to allow the Members to consult with the relevant parties; however, the Forum provisionally considered the following changes:-

- Two Councillors (statutory change)
- Two Community Schools (one primary, one secondary).
- One Voluntary Controlled School.
- Two Foundation Schools (one primary, one secondary).
- Two Parent Representatives (one primary, one secondary).

The Strategic Director noted that it would be important to consider how Members of the Forum fulfilled their role, with particular reference to how the information discussed at the meeting was reported back to the groups represented.

Resolved – That the revised terms of reference be noted and considered further at the next meeting.

22. Admissions Proposals 2010

The Head of School Services informed the meeting that the document detailing the 2010 admission proposals had been circulated to all Slough schools and neighbouring authorities and that comments were currently being gathered in response to the document. Any decision on the proposals would have to be taken by 15th April and a document confirming the changes would be circulated towards the end of April. Significant changes had been made to Baylis Court School and Herschel Grammar Schools' oversubscription criteria. Herschel Grammar would be operating a system which offered some preference to Slough residents who have reached the required level in the selection tests. Baylis Court School would be applying a system of partial selection, in that 10% of those admitted would be chosen by aptitude in dance and drama. This would be administered by a qualified external party and full records would be kept. In addition to this, a process of random electronic selection over a seven mile radius from the School would be applied because the Slough borough boundary could not be fairly used as the catchment area. The Strategic Director, queried whether the new criteria would be clear and easy to understand and was informed that the school had had no feedback to the contrary thus far and would do their best to make the process as transparent as possible.

23. Secondary Transfer 2009 - Update

The Head of School Services presented a report to the meeting detailing the number of preferences expressed for each school by both Slough residents and people from outside of Slough. The number of applications being made had remained stable. However, the number of preferences for Slough

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schools had increased and the number of preferences for schools outside Slough had decreased. In terms of place offers for Year 7, the process had progressed smoothly with no duplication of offers, partly as a result of working closely with the grammar schools. The Strategic Director, stated that she would write to the Department for Children, Schools and Families to highlight the discrepancy between the way that the system operated as an equal preference system and the way in which results were reported by DCSF as first preference.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

24. Any Other Business

A Member of the Forum enquired as to whether any arrangements had been made to accommodate the residents who lived within the vicinity of the Iqra School who wished for their child to attend a Community as opposed to a Voluntary Aided School. The Strategic Director advised that the nearest Community School would either be Wexham Court or James Elliman School. Potential capital had been allocated to refurbish the Lea School building in the near future to provide a suitable alternative. In addition to this, Wexham Court School had increased its planned admission number by 30.

25. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Monday, 11th May, 2009.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.00 pm and closed at 5.25 pm)