

**Minutes of the School Admissions Forum meeting  
20 February 2012, Building 3, Saltisford Office Park, Warwick**

**Present:**

Kate Edwards, Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission  
Emma Ford, Legal Services, WCC  
Mark Gore, Learning and Achievement, WCC  
Richard Maybey, Democratic Services, WCC  
Collette Naven-Jones, Learning and Achievement, WCC  
Craig Pratt, Learning and Achievement, WCC  
Graham Robinson, Church of England Diocese of Coventry  
Cllr Carolyn Robbins, WCC  
Chris Smart, Warwickshire Governors Association  
Peter Thompson, Learning and Achievement, WCC  
Cllr Heather Timms, WCC

**1. General**

**(1) Apologies for absence**

Jonathan Baker, Cllr Peter Balaam, Andrew Clay, Peter French, Alison Livesey, Robert Morrissey

**(2) Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Cllr Timms agreed to Chair the meeting. Elections will be carried over to the next meeting, subject to discussions about the future of the Forum (item 10).

**(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2011**

Chris Smart's representation was corrected to Warwickshire Governors Association. The minutes were then agreed and signed by the Chair.

**2. New Admissions Code and Appeals Code**

There was discussion over a change in the Code that allows schools to admit above their published admission number (PAN) in-year. Members questioned if the local authority could monitor this to ensure it is not misused by schools. Craig Pratt confirmed there would be no requirement for schools to share information with the local authority, so there would be this risk of misuse.

**3. 2013 admissions consultation / Future of in-year admissions**

Craig Pratt stated that there had been two responses to Warwickshire's proposed admission arrangements for 2013. These had been incorporated within the revised document (circulated at the meeting). Members of the Forum were invited to submit their views in order to further shape the document, prior to it being considered by Cabinet in March.

- 3.1 There is no longer a requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in-year admissions. However, Warwickshire County Council is proposing that it retains this function for all schools, apart from the nine schools listed in the document that have chosen to manage their own in-year admissions.

The local authority believes that a centralised in-year admissions service offers parents the benefits of a single point of access and advice. If individual schools responsibility themselves, it may create extra paperwork for parents (e.g., if they apply to more than one school) and difficulties in tracking children through their education. Officers will be communicating the benefits of a central service to schools, and encourage those that have opted out to return.

#### **4. In-Year Fair Access Protocol (IYFAP) and the Vulnerable Children Team**

Peter Thompson explained that Warwickshire's IYFAP had recently been redrafted to address the following shortcomings of the original:

- The written process did not represent what was happening in practice
- The IYFAP criteria were loose, poorly defined and open to interpretation
- The IYFAP did not include, or address the needs of, primary schools

The new IYFAP is contained at section 11 of the 2013 consultation document.

4.1 Discussions with head teachers via the Area Behaviour Partnerships (ABPs) have helped to shape the revised protocol, which now recognises the needs of primary pupils and certain schools. It also references the ABPs as being responsible for the education of excluded children or those at risk of exclusion.

4.2 Peter also confirmed that the local authority has various mechanisms in place to assist children in accessing appropriate education, including a team that focuses on vulnerable children (such as those missing from education or from a failed home education setting) and an Access to Education group, which anticipates where potential barriers exist and acts as a champion for children.

4.3 Chris Smart asked for clarification on why paragraph 11.12 includes the phrase "where the IYFAP criteria are met", stating that paragraph 11.19 makes this redundant. It was agreed that clarification be sought from Fay Ford, Legal Services.

#### **5. Draft response to proposed admissions arrangements for Warwickshire's selective schools**

The local authority's proposed responses to Ashlawn School Academy Trust, Alcester Grammar School and Stratford Grammar School for Girls were circulated. Members of the Forum were invited to express their views and reminded that they could write to the schools directly if they so wished.

5.1 Craig Pratt explained that the admissions team had sought legal advice regarding the inequality of places being offered to boys and girls at the Grammar Schools in Stratford-upon-Avon. This advice was not definitive, and a decision now has to be made over whether to pursue the challenge further.

5.2 Mark Gore stated that the local authority's objections to Ashlawn School's proposed increase in the number of selective places were being considered by the school's governing body. Cllr Timms added that the Department for Education has also been involved in challenging these proposals.

#### **6. Other proposed admission arrangements for 2013**

Craig Pratt informed members that Myton School and Polesworth School are consulting on giving priority to children of staff members.

## **7. Primary and secondary applications for 2012 entry**

Collette Naven-Jones provided a verbal update on the latest admissions status for 2012.

### **7.1 Secondary schools**

- Offers will be made on 1 March 2012
- Shipston High School and The Avon Valley School are offering places above their PAN
- There are still over 600 places available, covering all areas of the county
- Trinity Catholic School has the biggest vacancy list, partly due to the popularity of North Leamington School, but also a drop in local demand for places (Myton School also has vacancies)
- Polesworth School has a waiting list for places
- The largest waiting list is at Southam College
- Officers know of 35 children who have not applied for a school place, including 8 from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community. The majority are from Atherstone and Nuneaton, and English is not their first language. Officers encouraged these families to submit an application, but with no success, so they have offered a place at the nearest available school anyway. Chris Smart praised the local authority for this approach

### **7.2 Primary schools**

- Offers will be made on 16 April 2012
- Stratford Primary School will be refusing 14 in-area applicants. But overall, the availability of places in Stratford is better compared to previous years
- In areas where availability is an issue, officers are in discussions with head teachers to see how this can best be resolved
- It is difficult to know how many children have not applied for places at primary level, as not all will be known to the local authority (i.e., those that have never been registered at a nursery, children's centre or pre-school)
- Officers in the admissions service are working with the GRT teams to support applications from this community

## **8. Primary Expansion Programme**

Peter Thompson explained that a sustained increase in birth rates and inward migration has led to long-term pressure on primary school places. To address this, the local authority's Primary Expansion Programme is:

- Holding discussions with schools about increasing their PAN
- Helping schools to increase physical capacity via capital investment
- Negotiating short-term PAN increases to cope with spikes in demand
- Considering changes to priority areas

### **8.1** Peter reported that there has been positive engagement with schools so far in finding practicable solutions to the shortage of places. He also recognised that

this pressure will inevitably feed through to secondary schools as children move through the age groups.

- 8.2 In response to a question from Chris Smart, Peter stated that no announcement had been made from central government about re-prioritising capital funding from primary schools to Academies.

**9. Schools moving to Academy status / School federations**

Members were told that the number of Academy schools in Warwickshire is currently 20, all of which are secondary schools. Officers added that:

- It is not possible to speculate if and when the remainder of the secondary schools would convert. For some schools, the financial incentive may no longer be great enough, but for others, it may be a means of recouping funding that will be lost through the revised funding formula
- The Secretary of State is seeking to increase the number of forced Academy conversions via the floor standard system
- Only one primary sector school is currently in the process of converting
- In addition to those listed in the document, Etone College and Higham Lane School have also bought the Local Authority's appeals service

- 9.1 Peter Thompson stated that while there are no new school federations to announce, discussions are taking place with some schools about their options.

- 9.2 In response to a question from Chris Smart, Peter stated that the local authority has a policy "to promote the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate", but no specific policy on federations, other than "to offer full support to those schools who wish to federate".

**10. Future of Warwickshire's School Admissions Forum**

A discussion took place over the future of the Forum, which is no longer a statutory body.

- 10.1 Emma Ford reminded the Forum that, under the current constitution, its membership should include an Academy school representative.

- 10.2 It was agreed that officers would:

- Seek the views of the Schools Forum, the Governors Steering Group and the primary and secondary head teachers forums as to future representation
- Report back to the next meeting with options for a possible future constitution

**11. Dates of future meetings**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 2 May 2012 at 4.30pm

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Chair

The meeting rose at 6.20pm

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