

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2013 FROM 7.00PM TO 8.40 PM**

*Present:-*

**Local Education Authority Representatives:**

Beth Rowland

**Diocesan Representatives**

David Babb (Chairman)

**Parent Representatives:**

Phiala Mehring

**Schools Representatives**

Elaine Stewart – *Aldryngton Primary School*

Hilary Winter – *The Piggott CE Aided Secondary School* (Vice Chairman)

*Also present:-*

*David Armstrong, School Place Planning & Support Team Manager*

*Piers Brunning, Service Manager Children's Services Infrastructure Development*

*Sue Riddick, School Admissions Lead Officer*

*Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer*

**29. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 13 March 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**30. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Jean Bateman, School Representative, Patricia Cuss, Early Years Forum, Councillor Ian Pittock and Major Rob Gisby.

**31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**32. LOCAL AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT TO THE OFFICE OF THE SCHOOL ADJUDICATOR**

The Forum received a copy of the Local Authority's Annual Report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA), as set out on Agenda pages 6 to 22. The Report used the template provided by the OSA.

In presenting the report, Sue Riddick informed the Forum that the Local Authority's Annual Report had been submitted on the 28 June 2013. Areas of the report particularly highlighted included:

- Looked after Children and the issue of previously Looked after Children;
- Children with disabilities;
- Children who have special education needs;
- the adopted Fair Access Protocol;
- Co-ordination of admissions;

- The status of the approval of three new school providers by the Department of Education;
- It was expected that there would continue to be movement from waiting lists in relation to admissions to school for primary places starting in September 2013, in part because of the establishment of the three one form entry primary schools;
- That two Academy Schools had decided to remove reference within their oversubscription criteria to a criterion relating to ‘children, who have serious medical, physical or psychological condition which makes it essential to that they attend the preferred school rather than any other.’

In discussing the report, Members of the Forum particularly discussed the extracts of report dealing with the co-ordination of the arrangements for the normal admissions round and the number of lodged and successful appeals. It was felt that it was important for the Admission Authority to continue to look for any trends or patterns in admissions and demand for school places in order react to demand appropriately. It was noted that although a draft of the annual report had been brought to the School Admission Forum in 2012, it had not been possible or practical to do so this year.

The increasing number of in year applications and subsequent appeals was noted with some concern as was the removal of the requirement from September 2013 for local authorities to co-ordinate in respect of in-year admissions. It was reported that there were currently 275 applications for primary places in the 2013/2014 academic year up from the 97 as reported within the report and the position for secondary school places had increased from the 42 reported to 92.

Sue Riddick commented that parents were asked to give feedback on their reasons for making in year applications to move children from one school to another and it might be possible to provide some of this feedback to the Forum.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Local Authority’s Annual Report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator be noted;
- 2) That if possible feedback on parental reasons for in year admission applications be reported to the next meeting of the Forum.

**33. REVIEW OF FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL**

The Forum received and considered a report setting out the proposed changes to the Fair Access protocol which has been issued to schools for their feedback. The Protocol has been reviewed and changes suggested in light of the changes to the School Admissions Code. It was explained that there was requirement on all local authorities to have a Fair Access Protocol and that the protocol had to be agreed by the majority its schools. All schools, (including Academies) had to participate in the protocol.

In presenting the report, Sue Riddick commented that although consultation with schools had been initiated, only four responses had been received to date. It was suggested that given the level of commitment to the protocol required of schools it was necessary to obtain a higher level of commitment and buy in from schools, including those Academies which were not part of the Secondary Heads Federation. In addition to Heads, plans were in place to inform Governors on the revised protocol.

In answer to questions from members of the Forum, it was confirmed that the number of pupils admitted in year via the Fair Access Protocol was relatively low around 45-50, but that this number also included the admission of service family pupils, traveller children and Looked After Children. It was confirmed that there was no specific budget available to assist schools with any costs arising from the acceptance of a hard to place child under the Protocol. It was felt that although it might be possible to ask the School's Forum to consider a report to assist with funding via the Dedicated Schools Grant based on feedback received to date it was not felt likely it would be supported.

It was suggested that a Secondary Heads Federation meeting might be one way of obtaining feedback from that sector and appropriate provision could be made for heads not part of the Federation to take part in that item. The Wokingham Primary Heads Association could be used to seek feedback from the primary sector. This was supported by members of the Forum.

After discussion it was felt appropriate that Fair Access Panels convened under the Protocol should not contain Governors given the professional expertise required, Heads or their appointed representatives were in a better position to do so.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Wokingham Secondary Heads Federation, (to include heads of schools not within the Federation) and the Wokingham Primary Heads Association should be consulted on the draft Fair Access Protocol and asked to give comments;
- 2) That an update on the consultation process should be given to the next meeting.

**34 SCHOOL ALLOCATIONS – UPDATE ON THE 2013/14 TRANSFER GROUPS**

The Forum received and considered a report giving an update on the entry to primary school, primary to secondary transfer and the transfer to year 3 in junior schools, as set out on Agenda pages 95 to 113.

In presenting the report, Sue Riddick commented that the number of secondary school places available had not changed with a total of 194 places available across all schools. The Chairman commented that he felt it was a matter of concern that The Bulmershe School had 119 places available, but it was acknowledged that this situation was likely to improve as rising primary numbers came through the system. The transfer process of children to year 3 in a junior school had also gone smoothly and there was a total of 50 places overall within junior schools.

The situation with regards to the primary allocation and places available had changed significantly in recent weeks, but overall the Borough there was a total of 63 spare places. The coming on stream of the new Primary School in Charvil had increased capacity in that part of the Borough. Areas of pressure on primary places included those serving the town of Wokingham and Lower Earley. The introduction of a revised sibling criterion had help reduce the number of split siblings, but the number of split siblings still numbered 34.

It was explained that negotiations were continuing with Glyn Learning Foundation to agree dates for application round for two new primary schools in Woosehill and Winnersh. Once this process had taken place there would inevitably be some impact, as the schools to which pupils had been originally allocated to would allow for some movement from school waiting lists. Concern was expressed by the Chairman and a number of members of the

Forum that this that would make it hard for schools to plan and might have a negative financial impact upon them.

Piers Brunning updated the Forum on the School Place Strategy. This covered:

### **Primary**

- 3 new schools to open in September 2013 to provide an additional 90 places;
- An update on feasibility work to provide an additional 30 places in total at Shinfield schools;
- Update on feasibility work at Grazeley Parochial School to provide an additional 15 places;
- An update on the establishment of a Free School in Evendons to provide an additional 50 reception places and 25 Year 1 places from 2014;
- Proposals for a new two or three form entry school to open arising from the Buckhurst Park development, estimated to be open 2015;
- Initial plans for the establishment of new schools through the Strategic Development Location planning, (SDL) process;

### **Secondary Schools**

- The adoption of the Secondary School Strategy;
- The creation of a new secondary school in Arborfield with an earliest opening date of 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the update be noted

### **35. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND FORWARD PROGRAMME.**

The dates for planned meetings of the Forum for the 2013/14 municipal year were noted as follows:

2 December 2013

10 February, 11 March 2014.

It was noted that items for 2 December meeting would include:

- Issues for consultation on the 2015/2016 Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Schemes;
- Update on Local Authority Report to the Schools Adjudicator;
- Update on Review of the Fair Access Protocol.

*These are the Minutes of a meeting of the School Admissions Forum*

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