

# PLYMOUTH ADMISSION FORUM – PART I

28 November 2011



## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLYMOUTH ADMISSION FORUM

Held at Windsor House on Monday 28 November 2011 at 10am

### Members present

Mark Ackers	Schools – Primary Academy
Tricia Blyth	RC Diocese of Plymouth
Liz Dunstan	Schools – Secondary Academy
Pete Grainger	Schools – Secondary Academy
Fiona Hutchings	Schools – RC VA Secondary (from item 2(e))
Shaun Nicholls	Schools – CE VA Primary
Kevin Norris	Schools – RC VA Primary
Cathy Slow	CE Diocese of Exeter
Andrea Smith	Schools – VC Primary
Jim Wallace	Schools – Community Primary
Kevin Willis	Parent
Barbara Young	Schools – Trust

### Apologies

Katrina Borowski	Schools – Foundation
Brendan Brookshaw	Plymouth Association of Governors
Bob Burton	Choice Adviser
Jayne Jago	Cornwall Council
Cllr John Mahony	Plymouth City Council
Cllr Chaz Singh	Plymouth City Council

### Observers

Andrew Brent	Devon County Council
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### Also present

Jayne Gorton	School Organisation and Pupil Access Manager, Plymouth City Council
Julie Poat	School Organisation and Pupil Access Officer, Plymouth City Council
Daryl Wallace	School Admissions Team Leader, Plymouth City Council
Sharon Young	School Admission Team, Plymouth City Council

Kevin Willis in the Chair

## **1 Minutes of meeting held on 11 July 2011**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2011, which were attached to the agenda, were approved.

## **2 Matters arising**

- a) Item 3(k) – Discussions are ongoing with Plympton schools about the rising pupil numbers.
- b) Item 3(l) – The UTC will open in September 2013 or 2014 initially taking 85 in the first year (Year 10). The draft admissions policy, which will go to the UTC Board on 12 December, is in line with current legislation and Plymouth's policy. There was a very strong debate at Scrutiny Panel about the impact of the UTC on other schools and the proposal is to moderate the number of pupils taken from individual secondary schools. The recruitment area will be wider than just Plymouth.
- c) Item 3(p) – The consultation period for the James Report closed in October but no information is available on the outcome.
- d) Item 5(f) – In-year applications are still going well. Responses on comparison figures are still awaited from most of our statistical neighbours. Figures from Southampton show a lower number of both primary and secondary applications, but they do not collect information on the time taken to allocate places.
- e) Item 5(l) – Amendment of the wording in the in-year booklet relating to the impact of transferring schools on children to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.
- f) Item 6 – A revised online primary admissions booklet will be available on the website shortly. The original document contained errors in the statistics for last year for Widewell and Oreston.
- g) Item 6 – In the statistical section of the booklets schools are grouped by oversubscription criteria rather than listed alphabetically.
- h) Item 7(g) – Comments from recent Admissions Conference not circulated to Forum members, but Jayne Gorton will do so in future.
- i) Item 9 – The Fair Access documents will be available on the website shortly.

## **3 Membership and Terms of Reference based on revised draft Admissions Code**

Add to next meeting agenda

The report which was circulated with the agenda was discussed in detail and the following comments arose:

- a) The primary and secondary parent representatives should be nominated by the Parent Forum of the Parent Partnership Service rather than by the Plymouth Association of Governors.
- b) The primary and secondary school representative descriptions should emphasise that nominees would represent the cross-section of types of schools.
- c) The amended Terms of Reference were approved. Daryl Wallace to circulate final version to Forum members once new Admissions Code agreed.

DW circulate to  
Forum members

#### **4 New Codes of Practice**

The report which was circulated with the agenda was discussed in detail and the following points arose:

- a) The revised codes and regulations will come into force in February 2012 for pupil admissions in September 2013.
- b) The definition of looked after children has been expanded and own admission authority schools are being advised to amend the definition in their admission arrangements for the forthcoming consultation.
- c) Multiple birth and service children have been included in the permitted exceptions to infant class size rules. There is no time limit by which schools have to work back to their PAN and won't have to comply with the one teacher per 30 pupils rule. The only restriction on infant class size will be room size and a case would have to be argued on safety grounds. This will be a particular issue for schools that take large numbers of service children.
- d) Clarification is awaited from the DfE on whether the requirement to inform parents of the outcomes of selection tests before the closing date for applications means tests will need to be carried out at the end of Year 5 or beginning of Year 6. This is likely to result in an increase in the number of children taking the 11+ selection tests, and some parents could see this as unfair since children taking the exams have more choice. There are no plans for Plymouth grammar schools to make more spaces available and we are currently in the position of falling secondary rolls. Devon is proposing to test in September with results to parents in early October. School open days are held in September and parents should be encouraged to attend these even if 11+ testing is held in September. Consideration could be given to holding the exams during the summer holidays or open evenings being delayed to October.

#### **5 School Admissions Summary Report 2011/12**

The summary report, which was circulated with the agenda, was reviewed and the following points arose:

- a) The team structure has been revised and Sharon Young has been appointed to the Deputy Team Leader role.
- b) A number of primary schools couldn't take all the pupils in their catchment area this year. Catchment areas have now been removed from community schools and those that use the LA admission policy, but Church of England schools have retained catchment areas.
- c) In-year admission transfers in Years 10 and 11 will always be difficult and take longer to reach agreement on the school to attend.
- d) In-year admission figures cannot be compared with last year because this is the first year of the co-ordinated scheme.
- e) Secondary transfer appeals are lower than last year because of falling school rolls which meant that more pupils gained a place at their first choice school.
- f) Primary transfer appeals are lower than last year because a better explanation of the infant class size restrictions meant more parents decided not to appeal, but this does not mean they are happier.
- g) Consideration is being given to using the Contact Centre to deal with initial calls to the admissions team so that they can concentrate on allocating pupils. This year the number of telephone lines coming into the team during peak periods was restricted.
- h) The in-year admissions by locality information does not show as much of a change in traditionally deprived areas as expected, but this may be due to access to transport enabling children to attend schools outside their own areas.
- i) In-year admission information is currently emailed to school general email addresses which can lead to delays. To be discussed at PAPH and PASH and schools to nominate an individual email address (eg headteacher) to ensure that applications are dealt with quickly.
- j) It was noted that the Admissions Team do more than they are required to do in order to allocate pupils as soon as possible and Forum members expressed their appreciation of the work the team undertakes.
- k) Allocations to schools are based on the number of pupils in the school and cannot take account of the impact on other parents. The local authority makes the allocation but does not specify the start date, which is the opportunity for schools to work with parents. Daryl Wallace to considering reissuing the School Guide.

Schools to advise Admissions Team of nominated email

DW consider reissuing the school guide

- l) Data will be made available for the next meeting of the Inclusion Group.

## **6 School Admissions Progress Report 2012/13**

The progress report, which was circulated with the agenda, was reviewed and the following points arose:

- a) Schools to encourage parents to submit primary and junior applications since numbers received to date are very low. Consideration to be given to publicising closing dates in the Herald to raise awareness.
- b) 98 secondary applications are still outstanding, which is lower than last year. Data has been forwarded to schools to chase parents and information on those remaining outstanding will be forwarded to the Choice Adviser to follow up.
- c) Uptake of in-year admissions is still very high. Some children move schools regularly which could mask other issues and it was welcomed that previous school movements are flagged in the process.

Consider publicising closing dates in Herald

## **7 School Admission Arrangements 2013/14 consultations**

The report, which was circulated with the agenda, was reviewed and the following points arose:

- a) Most academies and trust and foundation schools are proposing to follow the local authority's admission arrangements.
- b) The CE Diocese is recommending minimum changes but there are no plans for a composite policy for all CE schools. Next year consideration will be given to designated areas.
- c) Some primary school PANs will be included in the consultation as part of the Basic Need proposals.
- d) Under the Council's Strategy for Change secondary school breathe in/breathe out policy some schools have already 'breathed in' reducing their intakes. Jayne Gorton is holding discussions with other schools to follow this policy until the increased primary pupil numbers work through to the secondary sector.

## **8 School Admission Arrangements 2013/14 co-ordinated schemes**

The primary and secondary co-ordinated admissions schemes, together with an in-year admissions report, which were circulated with the agenda, were reviewed and the following points arose:

- a) There are no major changes to the primary scheme.

- b) Information about 11+ testing is awaited from the DfE to finalise the timetable in the secondary scheme.
- c) Under the new Code there is no requirement to have a co-ordinated in-year scheme but it would be very difficult for individual schools to operate an equal preference system without one. The local authority will need to have a scheme for community schools and if there is a two-tier system in the city own authority schools will need to consult on their own arrangements and ensure that they are Code compliant.
- d) It will be up to individual own admission authority governing bodies to decide whether they want to be part of a co-ordinated scheme for Plymouth. Proposals will be submitted to PAPH and PASH for consideration.
- e) City-wide data would not be available if we did not adopt a co-ordinated in-year scheme covering all schools.
- f) Fiona Hutchings confirmed that she would recommend that governors stay with the co-ordinated scheme because there is a risk of a free-for-all otherwise.
- g) The process of in-year admissions needs to be reviewed to avoid issues that have arisen in the past, for example parents turning up at school with an allocation letter and schools not having been notified in advance. Parents try to play the system now but before the co-ordinated scheme headteachers played the system.
- h) Kevin Norris advised that VA primaries would want to stay with the co-ordinated scheme.
- i) The in-year schemes in Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth are working quite well and just need fin-tuning. Devon has agreement to a streamlined version of the scheme with the aim of placing children as quickly as possible.
- j) Recommendations 1 and 2 in the In-Year Admissions Report were approved, subject to recommendation 2 including reference to discussions with the Diocese and own admission authorities. Recommendation 3 was agreed and a working party consisting of Andrea Smith, Kevin Norris, Shaun Nicholls, Fiona Hutchings, Liz Dunstan, Jim Wallace, Bob Burton and Pete Grainger was formed to formulate and approve a local scheme on behalf of the Forum for inclusion in the admission arrangements consultation.

Working party to meet and finalise in-year scheme prior to 9 December

## 9 School Organisation Update and Pupil Place Planning

The report which was circulated with the agenda, was reviewed and the following points arose:

- a) As part of the Basic Need strategy discussions are ongoing with schools that have spare accommodation about taking bulge classes that would work their way through the school. Not all schools can be expanded for sustainability reasons, when primary pupil numbers start falling again we would end up in the same position of over-supply as a few years ago.
- b) Primary pupil projections are available on the website. The secondary projections have been agreed with PASH subject to conversations with individual schools, and will hopefully be available on the website before Christmas.

## **10 Future meetings**

- Monday 19 March 2012, Douglass House, Efford at 10am (booked)
- Monday 9 July 2012, Douglass House, Efford at 10am (booked)
- Monday 12 November 2012, Douglass House, Efford at 10am (booked)

The meeting closed at 12 noon.