

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM** held in Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Present:

Pauline Cotton	Cllr Anita Lewis
Dawn Day	Ian Robinson
Shawn Fell	Nick Sharpe
Squadron Leader Vic Hodgson	Jacqueline Woodthorpe
John Kemp	

Officers in attendance: Rosa Bonwick, Lydia Braisher, Alison Bray, John Goldsmith, Sandra Hobbs and Carol Wooding

L/04/23 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Anne Phillips, David Brandon-Bravo, Chris Spurgeon and Ray Slade.

L/04/24 **Minutes and Matters Arising**

RESOLVED:

to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum held on 21 October 2009 as a correct record and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

Minute CBAF/09/17 – Members were advised that the ACORN database containing the autumn 2009 data had been electronically circulated to all schools.

Members were advised that the vacancy for a School Transfer Advisor for Central Bedfordshire had been advertised and the closing date for applications was 5 April 2010, with the interviews being held during May 2010.

A decision had been received from the Schools Adjudicator regarding the admission arrangements for 2010 for John Donne Voluntary Aided School. John Donne VA School's criteria gave siblings a higher priority than catchment children. It was felt that this was inconsistent with the Local Authority's catchment area policy and could unfairly disadvantage local children by limiting their access to their local school. The decision from the Schools Adjudicator was that the Local Authority's referral would not be upheld. The Schools Adjudicator concluded that whilst the change had the potential to disadvantage some in catchment families, it would enable children in the same family to attend the same school.

Minute CBAF/09/20 – Members were advised that an update on the Membership of the Admissions Forum would be provided to their next meeting on 23 June 2010.

L/04/25

Home to School Transport Policy

Members received a report setting out the Home to School Transport policy, as approved by the Executive on 9 March 2009. The Council had carried out a review on the Home to School Transport policy, in particular looking at the following areas:-

- Road Safety Transport
- Denominational Transport
- Permanently Excluded Pupils
- Medical Needs
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11
- Looked After Children, Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Special Educational Needs Transport
- Concessionary Places on School Contract Vehicles.

Free home to school transport would be provided to all statutory aged children who lived in Central Bedfordshire and attended their catchment area or nearest school, where the distance from home to school was over the statutory walking distance (over 2 miles for a child under the age of 8 and over 3 miles for a child over the age of 8).

Children who lived in a family with a low income (entitled to having free school meals or entitled to the maximum working tax credit) would also be entitled to free home to school transport in the following circumstance:-

- to a choice of one of three nearest qualifying schools where the shortest walking distance would be over 2 miles, but not more than 6 miles by car from the family home; and
- to the nearest suitable school preferred by reason of religion or belief where the shortest walking distance would be over 2 miles, but not more than 15 miles by car from the family home.

It was noted that there was no statutory requirement to offer free home to school transport on denominational grounds other than to families with a low income (as above) and that pupils currently attending a faith school, through parental choice, would no longer receive free transport from 1 September 2010.

It was also noted that children with Statements of Special Educational Need would have their transport needs assessed as part of the statutory assessment process. For those children living more than the statutory distance between home and the nearest school that can meet their needs, transport would be provided free of charge. For those children who live within the statutory walking distance the assessment would include whether, with parental support, a child could reasonably be expected to walk to school. Where this is not possible the need for transport would be included in a child's statement.

A query was raised with regard to the re-assessment of routes on road safety grounds that would commence from 1 April 2010. The re-assessments might result in changes to the current entitlement to free transport on road safety grounds. Members were advised that schools and parents would be made aware of the process for re-assessments and any changes that would remove entitlement to free transport would take place from the end of the Academic Year in which the re-assessment took place.

NOTED

the Home to School Transport Policy.

L/04/26

Consultation on Admission Arrangements

(a) CONSULTATION PROCESS AND RESPONSES

Members considered a report that informed the Forum of the outcome of the consultation process. The Forum noted that consultation on the proposed admission arrangements for September 2011 had been carried out between 4 January and 1 March 2010. The consultation included the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools and those own admission authority schools that had asked the local authority to consult on the proposed changes on their behalf.

Only two responses to the consultation had been received and these supported the proposed admission arrangements for September 2011.

NOTED

the outcome of the consultation and the responses received.

(b) STANDARD ADMISSIONS POLICY - COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

The Forum considered a report on the proposed changes to the standard admissions policy. The proposed policy (which had been consulted upon) would give pupils living in the catchment area with a sibling at the school higher priority for admission than other pupils living in the catchment area.

RESOLVED

that the Standard Admission Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2011, be agreed.

(c) ADDITIONS TO STANDARD ADMISSIONS POLICY - COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

The Forum considered the requests received from some community and voluntary controlled schools for additions to their admissions policies. The revised standard admissions policies (giving siblings living in the catchment area higher priority for admission than other children in the catchment area) would be applied to all community and voluntary controlled schools along with their additional criteria, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

A number of schools had pre-existing additions to the standard admissions policy which were not changing. Members noted that the following additions had been requested and consulted upon:-

- Greenleas Lower School – Children attending Greenleas nursery unit as the sixth criteria;
- Greenleas Lower School – Children attending Willows pre-school on the Greenleas site as the seventh criteria;
- Hockcliffe Lower School – Nursery aged children attending Hockcliffe Lower School as the sixth criteria;
- Hockcliffe Lower School – Children attending Little Bluebells Playgroup at Hockcliffe Lower School; and
- Henlow Middle School - Children, one or more of whose parents /carers have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian Church by attending a service at least once a month for the year prior to an application being made as the sixth criteria.

In addition it was proposed that the following additional criteria be removed:-

- Roecroft Lower School: Pupils whose parents express a preference for non-denominational education; and

- Southcott Lower School: removal of Southcott playgroup from the sixth criteria.

In terms of Roecroft Lower School, it was noted that parents who expressed a preference for non-denominational education fell into the 'any other child' category and that in terms of Southcott Lower School, Southcott playgroup no longer existed.

RESOLVED

that the additions to and removal from the Standard Admissions Policy for those schools listed in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

(d) ADMISSION NUMBERS - COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

Members considered a report which sought approval to the admission numbers for community and voluntary controlled schools. The local authority had consulted on changes in respect of the following schools:

- Roecroft Lower School which currently had a published admission number of 30, but was to be replaced with a new school with a published admission number of 60;
- Gravenhurst Lower School which had requested to increase its published admission number from 9 to 10; and
- Mary Bassett Lower School which had requested to increase its published admission number from 30 to 60 as the school had sufficient accommodation to support two forms of entry and there was a long term need to increase school places in the Leighton Buzzard area.

A query was raised about the need for a new Lower School in the Leighton Buzzard area and whether the increase to the admission number for the Mary Bassett Lower School would negate the need for a new school. Officers did not have this information available, but would liaise with the School Planning Team for a response.

A late request had been received from Hadrian Lower School to increase their published admission number from 52 to 60 as the school now had sufficient accommodation to support two forms of entry.

It was noted that St Christopher's Lower School had reservations about increasing the admission number of Hadrian Lower School given that an announcement on the future structure of schools in Central Bedfordshire was expected in April 2010. The increase reflected the school's revised capacity and the local authority believed that it would not influence any future decisions on school structures.

RESOLVED

that the proposed admission numbers for those schools listed in Appendix A to the report, be approved, including the increase to the admission number for Hadrian Lower School.

(e) CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES

The Forum considered a report on the co-ordinated admission schemes.

Members were advised that no changes to the scheme for upper schools and the academy were proposed, other than to the timescales which had been updated for 2011/12

Changes had been made to the co-ordinated admission scheme for Middle, Primary and Lower Schools to reflect the new requirement on local authorities to co-ordinate all applications from residents living in the administrative area, regardless of where their preferred school was.

It was noted that no comments had been received on either of the schemes.

RESOLVED:

- 1. that the co-ordinated admissions scheme for 2011-12 for upper schools and the academy be agreed; and**
- 2. that the co-ordinated admissions scheme for 2011-12 for middle, primary and lower schools be agreed.**

(f) FOUNDATION, TRUST, VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMY

The Forum considered a report that advised Members on the proposed changes to the admission arrangements for Foundation, Trust, Voluntary Aided Schools and the Academy. The majority for those school that served a local catchment area had asked the local authority to consult on their behalf on the change to give catchment siblings a higher priority for admission than other children living in the catchment area.

Members were advised that the Governing Body for Holywell VA Middle School and the Governing Body of Samuel Whitbread Community College were also proposing to include the catchment sibling criterion within the determined admission arrangements after consideration of their arrangements.

Members noted that the Governing Body of St Mary's Catholic Lower School had consulted on an increase to their admission number from 28 to 30 and that the Local Authority had no objection to the proposed change.

NOTED

1. **the proposed changes to the admissions criteria for the following schools:-**

Lower Schools	Lower Schools	Upper Schools
All Saints VA	Sundon	Harlington
Derwent	Sutton VA	Manshead VA
Gothic Mede	Westoning	Queensbury
Langford		
Meppershall VA	Middle Schools	Academy
Moggerhanger	Arnold	All Saints *
Northill VA	Etonbury	*The change to the admissions policy of All Saints Academy is subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.
St Leonards VA	Parkfields	
St Mary's VA, Clophill	Robert Bloomfield	

2. **the proposed changes to the admissions criteria for Holywell Voluntary Aided Middle School and Samuel Whitbread Community College; and**
3. **the proposed change to the admission number for St. Mary's Catholic Lower School.**

L/04/27

Determination of Admission Arrangements - September 2011

The Forum considered a report that informed Members of the arrangements for the determination of admission arrangements. Admission authorities must, within 14 days of determining their admission arrangements give notice of that determination to their local authority, other bodies consulted and any parents that responded to the consultation. Copies must be placed on their website (where they have one) for a whole offer year.

Local Authorities must, by 1 May, publish on their websites and in a newspaper information on the extent to which admission arrangements for schools and academies in the local authority area have been determined.

NOTED

the requirements for determining the admission arrangements.

L/04/28

Admissions to Lower Schools - September 2011

The Forum considered a report that advised members of the changes required to lower school admission arrangements.

The Rose Primary Curriculum Review in England had found evidence to show that summer born children were at greater risk of poorer outcomes than children born earlier in the school year. The Secretary of State had accepted a recommendation from this review that:-

“the preferred pattern of entry to reception classes should be the September immediately following a child’s fourth birthday. However, this would be subject to well informed discussions with parents, taking into account their views of a child’s maturity and readiness to enter reception class. Arrangements would be such as to make entry to reception class an exciting and enjoyable experience for all children, with opportunities for flexible arrangements such as a period of part-time attendance if judged appropriate.”

The Forum discussed the impact this would have on schools and other early years settings, including the impact on financial resources. To enable the local authority to assess this impact, data was being collected from schools about their existing arrangements. This data would then be shared with Officers from the Early Years Team and the School Improvement Team to enable them to assess the impact. Members were advised that discussions would take place with those schools that do not currently operate a single point of entry and advice would be given on implementing the new requirements of the School Admissions Code.

Members noted that a further report clarifying the changes required would be made to a future meeting of the Admissions Forum.

NOTED

the changes required to lower school admission arrangements for September 2011 and subsequent years.

L/04/29

Date and Time of the next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held at 8.30 a.m. on 23 June 2010 at Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 8.30 a.m. and concluded at 9.45 a.m.)