

SCHOOLS ORGANISATION, CAPITAL AND ADMISSIONS GROUP
Notes of meeting
on 3 December 2019 at Great Moor House

Items for DEF on 22 January 2020

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| FOR DEF ENDORSEMENT | Designated Area Protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOCA recommended that DEF approve the revised Designated Area Protocol, as considered by SOCA on 24 September 2019. |
| Item 2 | Admissions and Inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOCA requested that DEF and LA formally write to new Secretary of State, following 9 December 2019, clearly outlining the conflicts present in the Admissions Code. SOCA wished to share their recognition of the high quality work of the Admissions Team and CiC lead. The high quality documentation, support and advice offered by the team are greatly valued by schools. |

| | | Attendance | | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | 2/12/19 | 24/9/19 | 11/6/19 |
| DCC | | | | |
| Neil Pateman (Chair) | Built Environments Capital Programme Manager | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Andrew Brent | Policy Officer | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Fran Butler | EY Childcare Sufficiency Lead | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Christine McNeil | School Organisation Policy Manager | ✓ | Apologies | Apologies |
| Heidi Watson-Jones | Service Support Officer (Education) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| DAPH | | | | |
| Hilary Priest | The Grove Primary | Apologies | ✓ | ✓ |
| Colin Butler | Otter Valley Federation | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Penny Hammett | Fort Federation | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mel Smallwood | Bishops Tawton Primary | | | ✓ |
| DASH | | | | |
| Daryll Chapman | Dartmoor MAT | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Rob Haring | Ivybridge Community College | ✓ | Apologies | ✓ |
| SENTient Heads | | | | |
| Sam Barham | Lampard Community School | Apologies | Apologies | ✓ |
| Cherie White | Pathfield School | Apologies | | ✓ |
| DAG | | | | |
| Ian Rogers | DAG | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Diocesan Representatives | | | | |
| tbc | Plymouth CAST | | - | - |
| Christina Mabin | Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Richard Power | Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital) | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Union Representatives | | | | |
| Nigel Williams | Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| In Attendance | | | | |
| Simon Niles | Education Strategy Manager | ✓ | | |
| Neil Keen | Admissions officer | ✓ | | |
| Nigel Coleman | NPS | ✓ | | |

1. Item/Focus: Minutes and Matters Arising from meeting on 24 September 2019

Discussion:

- Noted LA has engaged with one MAT to look at small schools and demographics and is happy to discuss data with other schools and MATs. The group discussed funding implications and noted that the lump sum allocation can sometimes ensure ongoing financial viability in very small schools. Concerns around curriculum and compliance issues going forward for some of these schools, who may find themselves more vulnerable than schools otherwise supported within a MAT or federation.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:

- Minutes of previous meeting agreed as an accurate record.

Action:

- **AB / CM** still to discuss with DfE the implications on non-educational issues to be included in guidance to parents – all DfE business currently on hold due to Purdah.

2. Item/Focus: Admissions and Inclusion

Discussion:

- Noted Admissions team becoming more involved in complex casework during the admissions process and implementation of the Fair Access Protocol.
- Complex in-year admissions are increasing significantly for vulnerable groups (e.g. Children in Care, Elective Home Education, excluded pupils and Children in Need); working with schools to ensure children are getting back into school as soon as possible.
- Noted current timeframes for schools to confirm an offer of a school place to the LA. Mindful that after an offer is confirmed schools, particularly for in-year secondary admissions, will try to learn as much as possible about the individual to determine the impact of their admission on the student, and the other students in their teaching groups.
- Heads requested clarity around their ability to refuse to admit, given the provisions in the Admissions Code. Ongoing frustration that schools are not permitted to seek comprehensive information on the child prior to making an offer. The LA expects a school to admit unless there are significant reasons why admitting would be detrimental to the wider class, or physical capacity is exceeded.
- Noted that concerns are being raised by Ofsted about students' mobility where there have been no house moves (currently nearly 40%); data is being requested during inspections.
- Understand that a revised School Admissions Code may include a proposal that statutory school responses are made within a set number of days for in-year admissions.
- Noted that re-admission requests for EHE are often back into the same school the child has left.
- Currently 1.7% of children have been EHE at some stage. The group considered reasons for a family choosing EHE, which can include, in addition to a family's cultural choices, avoidance of an attendance order, SEN needs not being met, and bullying. Concerns were raised about schools' actions to encourage attendance being viewed negatively by Ofsted. Heads felt that schools are, as a matter of course, maintaining records of reasons for parents choosing EHE, and tracking numbers.
- Good practice in schools appears to be increasing. Suggested that recently revised EHE guidance is re-issued to phase associations.
- Considered the reintegration of permanently excluded students. Noted that the LA prioritises successful reintegration in every case. Excluded Year 11 students are retaining their places within Alternative Provision to give the individual stability and the best opportunity of success. Mindful that parental preference is still in place for Year 11 students.
- Suggested that DEF and LA clearly outline the conflicts present in the Admissions Code, and formally write to new Secretary of State following general election 12/12/19.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:

DEF and LA to formally write to new Secretary of State following 12/12, clearly outlining the conflicts present in the Admissions Code.

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| Action: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NK / Phase Associations to remind schools of guidance around processes where families choose to electively home educate. • SN/NK to provide data on permanent exclusions and appeal outcomes, • HWJ to circulate annual exclusion report. • SOCA to request DEF and LA formally write to new Secretary of State to clearly outline the conflicts present in the Admissions Code. |
| 3. Item/Focus: Fair Access Allocations | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LA recognises that schools are on the whole engaging well with the LA to admit pupils under Fair Access protocols to keep children in their local community school where possible. • Working Party representatives to discuss with Phase Associations and meet in spring term. | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NK to provide additional data on Fair Access Allocation in catchment schools. |
| 4. Item/Focus: Fair Access Protocol | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Fair Access Protocol to incorporate recent learning and to consider children missing education, with challenging behaviour and re-integrating following EHE and Alternative Provision. • Agreed to convene Working Party to discuss with Phases and consider review in spring term. To include: Colin (DAPH), Christina (DAG/Diocese) DASH and AP representation required. | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | AB to convene Working Party to consider review of FAP to include DAPH, DASH, DAG and Wave. SN to secure AP rep. DASH rep required. |
| 5. Item/Focus: Admissions Guidance for Phase Associations | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance drafted for circulation to schools through Phase Associations to provide clarity around statutory requirements for admissions for both LA and schools. • Discussed secondary concerns around Fair Access Protocol admission of up to 3% over PAN which can be difficult particularly in larger schools. • Noted that complex discussions take place with the LA to consider flexibility around PAN to ensure that logistics, funding and effective teaching arrangements are balanced in each school environment. • Fair Access Protocol recognises that children are placed in a school that is otherwise already full. | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | report noted |
| Action: | |
| 6. Item/Focus: Admission of Children in Care | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools were thanked for their cooperation and support in admitting children in care. • Schools were reminded that any direct approaches from Social Workers and Foster carers for admission of a child in care should be forwarded to Admissions Team and Virtual School. • Heads recognised that Devon's Admission Team practice is very good, and the high quality support and documentation available to schools is valued. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that families with Special Guardianship arrangements do not have such straightforward access to guidance around school admission. AB and FB to consider. |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | AB and FB to discuss guidance for possible processes specific to families with special guardianship arrangements. |
| 7. Item/Focus: Proposed Admission Arrangements | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Admission Arrangements online consultation due to close on 3 Jan 2020. (at www.devon.gov.uk/admissionarrangements) Minimal changes to proposed admission arrangements – awaiting publication of updated School Admissions Code. Any changes that schools would like to propose should be raised through Andrew Brent as soon as possible. Own admissions authorities must determine a policy by the end of February and publish by 15 March – to liaise with Andrew Brent | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | |
| 8. Item/Focus: School Admissions websites | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admission arrangements for 19/20 and 20/21 for all schools, including own admission authority schools, should be published on website along with draft 21/22 policy. This should be the school's policy and not a link to the LA policy. Noted that Diocese is currently auditing school websites. Ofsted will check compliance. This information should be highlighted as key information on the school website to be as clear as possible. Advice on good practice is available from Andrew Brent. DAPH was encouraged to highlight nursery admissions information on primary school website to encourage applications, highlighting requirement for separate admission application for Reception entry. Proposed admission arrangements can be sent to admissions team following agreement to be checked and revised as determined arrangements. | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DAPH to encourage Primary Schools to highlight nursery admissions information on their websites to encourage applications. This should also reiterate the requirement for a separate admission application for Reception entry. AB to audit school and trust websites by next meeting |
| 9. Item/Focus: Early Years Update | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax-free childcare registration information to be circulated through Phase Associations (includes breakfast clubs and after school provision). Noted fall in the take up of places for eligible 2-year olds; LA looking into reasons for this including accessibility to citizens' portal and availability of vacant places. Considered parents not accessing extended childcare entitlement. Noted that some providers are not registering for the funding to enable parents to claim the free provision. Early Years Pupil Premium take up is increasing, but there is still some reluctance in providers to claim for administrative reasons. Information leaflet being drafted on Early Years Pupil Premium. | |

- Noted LA concerns that some academy schools are extending age ranges retrospectively and outside of the agreed formal process which has led to neither the Diocese nor LA being notified in a timely way.
- Discussed survey for parents and heads on staggered entry, and agreed this would be circulated in the New Year.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: Report noted

Action: **DAPH** and **DASH** newsletters to share information on registration of tax-free childcare. **AB** to circulate staggered entry survey to heads and parents in New Year.

10. Item/Focus: NPS Update Report

Discussion:

- Devon Maintenance Partnership performance above 95%
- Some slippage due to access implications during school holidays.
- Improved reporting through Devon Academies Maintenance Agreements.
- Water Quality contract currently being re-tendered through Procurement. Some issues around drinking water supplies fed by tanks – where these have been installed, these will be included in the water quality tests (legionella). New contract will include a single annual visit during summer months due to size of schools and corporate estate. Noted that water quality is not included in VA Promise and it was suggested that H&S team outline changes to all schools.
- Noted letters of assurance have been circulated to schools regarding allowing access onto school sites for contractors carrying out essential maintenance work.
- Concerns were raised around H&S training materials for asbestos management (dated 2016) which may not be most up to date. Heads encouraged to raise any concerns directly with Simon Bates, H&S lead.
- Discussed practice of NPS sub-contracting maintenance contracts.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: Report noted

Action:

11. Item/Focus: Capital Programme Update

Discussion:

- Draft capital programme has been agreed which includes £4m of work. Work schedule tabled confidentially.
- Concerns were raised about LA appraisal of design work commissioned through NPS for new schools which in practice do not operate as functionally as they should. Concerns were raised around the priority for zero carbon designs rather than useable spaces which operate effectively, reliably and flexibly for teaching and learning. Ongoing issues around handover process for a new building, including lack of technical understanding to operate complex electronic/internet based systems and the general reliability of infrastructure. Suggested that the post-handover review would be the appropriate opportunity to feedback such concerns.
- Discussed raising particular issues with Regional Schools Commissioner regarding the quality of new schools constructed through Priority Schools Building Programme.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: Report noted

Action:

12. Item/Focus: Health Pupils Capital Fund Update

Discussion:

- Report provided by Rachel Humphries on Phase 1 school projects.
- Proposed phase 2 schools have been contacted and invited to apply for funding.

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| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | |
| 13. Item/Focus: School Organisation Update | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted increased RSC involvement in School Place Planning, particularly in LAs which are not engaging in local neighbourhood planning. • Wave 14 Free Schools – no feedback from ESFA about any bids in Devon LA. • Noted RSC has reorganised to improve joined up support for academies, free schools, basic need and targeted improvement programmes. • Data provided on falling pupil rolls. • ACE Tiverton now opened. Glendinning to open Sept 2020. Monkerton and Roundswell due to open Sept 2020. Tipton pre-planning consultation ongoing. • Noted difficulties around schools lowering age ranges outside of formal processes. | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | |
| 13. Item/Focus: Next meetings | |
| Discussion: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed January 2021 meeting to be rescheduled to early December 2020. | |
| Key Decision/ Issues for DEF: | Report noted |
| Action: | |
| NEXT MEETINGS | |
| <p>Tuesday 3 March 2020 9.30am at Larkbeare (Exe Room) Tuesday 9 June 2020 9.30 am at Larkbeare (Exe Room) Tuesday 22 September 2020 9.30am – venue tbc Tuesday 1 December 2020 9.30am – venue tbc Tuesday 2 March 2021 9.30am at Larkbeare (Exe Room)</p> | |