

## Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 1 December 2020

### Key Issues for DEF to Note:

#### Item 2 – Proposed Admission Arrangements

- Schools to be reminded of the expected requirements and timeframes to determine their admission arrangements and publish on school websites

#### Item 3 – Admissions Appeal Hearings

- DEF to note the successful running of remote admissions appeal hearings during Covid and the positive response by families.

#### Item 4 – Flexi-Schooling guidance

- Draft guidance to be amended to include procedures for children with EHCPs
- Schools to be encouraged to flag any flexi-schooling arrangements with the LA to ensure any safeguarding issues have been appropriately considered.

#### Item 5 - Early Years Update:

- DEF members to be aware that the Nursery Admissions documentation has been updated and that schools with early years provision are encouraged to use the refreshed documents – Community and VC schools must follow the DCC policy.
- Schools with concerns about ongoing viability of governor run provision are encouraged to discuss their situation with the DCC Early Years team.

### Attendance

#### DCC

Neil Pateman (chair)	Built Environments Capital Programme Manager
Andrew Brent	Policy Officer
Fran Butler	Early Years & Childcare Sufficiency Lead
Christine McNeil	School Organisation Policy Manager
Heidi Watson-Jones (notes)	Service Support Officer (E&L)

#### Devon Schools Leadership Services

##### Primary

Colin Butler	Otter Valley Federation
Penny Hammett	FORT Federation

##### Secondary

Phil Randall	St Peters C of E VA School
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#### SENTient Heads

Sam Barham	Lampard Community School
Stuart Allman	Pathfield School

#### DAG

Ian Rogers

#### Diocesan Representatives

Tbc	Plymouth CAST
Christina Mabin (part)	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)
Richard Power (part)	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

#### Union Representative

Nigel Williams	Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT
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#### In Attendance

Nigel Coleman (part)	NPS
Simon Niles	DCC – Education Strategic Manager

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### 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 22 September 2020

- Minutes agreed as an accurate version.

#### **ACTION:**

- Fair Access Protocol working group to be convened by **Andrew Brent**.

### 2. Proposed Admission Arrangements 2022-23

- Consultation now live – until 8 January 2021. Additional complexity around Admissions Code revision which will require changes to admissions policies in the summer term.
- Changes have been drafted to include children who appear to have been adopted from state care abroad to be included in the first priority group. Revised model admissions policies will not include this change until the revised Admissions Code is in force, but anticipate that amendments will be required in the spring/summer term. Further guidance has been requested from DfE around provision of evidence of care status.
- Devon Admission Service to update the policies.
- Oversees applications following end of Brexit transition: DfE have provided clarity – noted proposed amendment to all admissions policies from 2020 to 2023 – all schools will need to ensure that websites reference the correct documentation. Admissions Service will amend policies for schools
- Considered change regarding Children new to the area with no school place requiring to be placed after 4 weeks – Devon is suggesting either an amendment to Devon's in-year coordinated admissions scheme or an addition to the Fair Access Protocol to ensure that a child does not need to be out of school for 4 weeks before being allocated under Fair Access.
- Noted that Own Admission Authority Schools must have determined their admissions policy by the statutory deadline of the end of February. Reminders and summary of key changes to be circulated to schools by **AB**.
- Policies to be published on school websites by 15 March.
- Report noted

#### **ACTION:**

- **AB** to circulate reminder to schools of requirements and timeframes for determining admissions arrangements.

### 3. Admissions Appeals under emergency regulations

- Noted recent changes during Covid allowing remote admissions appeals hearings. This has been a positive arrangement for many families, particularly for those living in rural areas who may be less able to take the time and expense to travel to Exeter. Parents have reported that they feel more comfortable having such a meeting from home.
- DCC is expecting the temporary arrangement to be extended until 30 September 2021.
- SOCA supported the continued use of remote appeals beyond that timeframe if possible.
- It was noted that schools are working hard to support families to ensure internet access is available to facilitate blended learning opportunities, and that the increasing virtual interaction with parents is working successfully.
- Discussed how schools and libraries may be able to facilitate internet access should that be a barrier to taking part in a remote appeal hearing.
- The group considered the data.

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### ACTION:

- **AB** to provide admissions appeal data for 2019-2020. Done.

### 4. Flexi-schooling - guidance

- Guidance covers arrangements where a full time school place is offered off the school site for part of the week at parental preference.
- DfE guidance is clear that flexi-schooling should be a transitional arrangement to full time school education.
- Devon County Council does not encourage schools to offer such an arrangement but notes that this is lawful in particular circumstances, where the school considers it to be in the best interests of the child.
- Noted that parents of a child with an EHCP may also request a flexi-school arrangement. Such requests for children in special schools would need to be made in conjunction with the 0-25 team and Inclusion teams.
- SOCA noted the distinction between Annex R part time schooling arrangements and flexi-schooling.
- Agreed that it is good practice for the LA to be informed of any agreed flexi-schooling arrangement (via Elective Home Education and Education Welfare teams).
- SOCA requested information on the number of schools currently engaged in flexi-schooling arrangements. Concerned that there may be safeguarding issues where children's attendance is being recorded as 'education off site'.
- Report noted.

### ACTION:

- **AB** to amend policy to include appropriate procedure through 0-25 SEN team and Inclusion team for flexi-schooling arrangements of children with EHCPs. Policy to also include explicit description of flexi schooling and part time timetables. Has been shared with 0-25 and Inclusion for a further view
- **DSLS** to request schools to notify LA if they are currently running any flexi-schooling arrangements.

### 5. Early Years Update

- Noted updated nursery admissions documentation drafted – any comments to be sent to Fran Butler prior to sign off.
- Concerns around increasing number of schools who do not appear to be following the current policy guidance or using the correct application form. Early Years team following up directly with schools when known.
- Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report has been published – no particular concerns have been highlighted. Noted move to academic year reporting from 2020, and that providers will now be surveyed on a termly basis to enable earlier identification of any changes. Parents will also be surveyed.
- Early Years attendance is being tracked by the DfE during Covid. Noted that many schools are not completing attendance returns for their early years children.
- Noted that the number of eligible 2-year olds has dropped slightly, and the take up of places for eligible 2 year olds has also reduced. Ongoing eligibility will be monitored as the impact of the Pandemic becomes clearer.
- Early Years Pupil Premium – providers are being encouraged to apply for the additional funding, although it was acknowledged that the application process is complex and the additional funding level is relatively low.

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- Noted that there is little national evidence of the impact of EYPP – Ofsted will request information on how the funding has been used and what outcomes have been achieved.
- Noted lack of coherent criteria for eligibility across EYPP, Free School Meals, Disability Access Funding and 2-year old funding.
- Noted increase in the number of under-5s coming into care in Devon over the last 2 months.
- SOCA discussed concerns, raised through DAG, around the sustainability of extended services run by Governors – (Governor-Run pre-schools, breakfast and after school clubs, and holiday clubs). Devon currently has 50 Governor-run pre-schools.
- Concerns were raised around financial viability, and it was noted that Governors may consider different models of running and staffing early years provision, particularly in smaller schools.
- The increase in home working due to Covid has reduced parental demand for wrap-around care.
- Many schools have benefitted greatly from bringing preschool provision in to establish an Early Years Foundation Stage Unit – both financially, and in terms of better monitoring of standards, and increased confidence in the children being integrated into the wider school.
- The group was reminded that decisions to change school provision must be made on a sound financial basis, mindful of the overall reducing primary demographic.
- Schools with any concerns around the viability of their governor-run pre-school provision should make contact with the Early Years team for advice in the first instance.

### **ACTIONS:**

- **ALL** to provide feedback directly to Fran Butler re. Nursery Admissions documentation.
- **DSLS** requested to highlight that schools are required to complete DfE attendance returns for early years children where applicable.
- **DSLS** requested to highlight that primary schools with concerns around viability of governor-run preschool provision should make contact with the EY team for support and guidance.

## **6. NPS Update**

- Noted improved outcomes in Devon Maintenance Partnership inspections
- VA schools – noted reporting lag re. maintenance of heating plant
- Devon Academies Maintenance Agreement scheme – noted there have been some amendments to the report in areas which reflect opt-outs for specific maintenance being sourced elsewhere by academy schools. Mindful of NPS restrictions around access to academy data and therefore reduced control around call-off reporting.
- Upward trend in contractor performance, particularly during the Pandemic conditions was noted and has been appreciated.
- Noted that Covid restrictions impacting on access to school sites had caused some initial concerns for allowing contractor access which has affected performance reporting.

### **ACTION:**

- **NC** to review trend data, particularly for DAMA performance.

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### **7. Capital Programme Update**

- Thanks were extended to schools in facilitating access to contractors for the maintenance programme, which has been challenging during Covid.
- SOCA noted that the Capital Maintenance programme has been delivered this year largely according to plan.
- Draft Capital Programme for 2021-22 was shared with the group confidentially. To be ratified by Cabinet.
- 2021 Basic Need capital programme will be on a smaller scale than usual. Noted DCC investment in SEN capital projects, which will overall lead to the creation of around 300 new special school places.
- New sites being sought in preparation for new free school programme announcements.
- DfE expected to roll out the round 2 condition data collection exercise during 2021.
- Public Sector de-carbonisation grant – corporate bid has been submitted which includes 3 schools with significant energy inefficiency.
- VA school bid has also submitted by Diocese, with wider assessment of all VA schools for de-carbonisation planned to prepare for potential future grant funding rounds.
- Understand that individual schools, academies and MATs have also been able to bid for de-carbonisation grant funding.

### **8. School Organisation Update**

- Links with Local Learning Communities have been re-established during the Pandemic which has been of benefit to schools and the LA. Mindful that this is an effective emergency support arrangement, but that established routes remain in place for ongoing communication.
- Noted current advert for proposer for new SEN school in Okehampton.
- Analysis of primary surplus capacity was shared with the group. This information is gathered annually.
- Considered the SW Exeter development, noting that Free Schools are not allocated catchment areas.
- Report noted.

#### **Future meeting dates:**

- **Tuesday 2 March 2021** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 25 May 2021** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 21 September 2021** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 7 December 2021** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 1 March 2022** (9.30 – 11.30)