

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 2 March 2021

Key Issues for DEF to Note:

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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 Aided School
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SENTient Heads

Sam Barham	Lampard Community School
Stuart Allman	Pathfield School

DAG

Ian Rogers

Diocesan / Faith School Representatives

Neil Maslen	Plymouth CAST
Christina Mabin	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)
Richard Power - <i>apologies</i>	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

Union Representative

Nigel Williams	Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT
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In Attendance

Nigel Coleman (part)	NPS
Simon Niles (part)	DCC

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1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 1 December 2020

- Minutes agreed as an accurate version.
- Fair Access Protocol task & finish group delayed due to new Admissions Code still awaiting publication. Understand amendments will be published in Spring for implementation from September.
- Noted that a number of primary schools now have admissions priority for their nursery children.
- All other actions completed.

ACTION:

- **AB** to convene when more clarity is available
- **AB & FB** to discuss nursery admissions priority for nursery children

2. Annual Admissions report

- Annual report to be submitted by end June.
- Members invited to propose any matters for inclusion to Andrew Brent before the submission date.

3. Determined Admission Arrangements 2022-23

- Coordinated schemes and policies for Community & VC schools now determined by Cabinet. All own admission authority schools should by now have also determined their arrangements and provided a copy of their admissions policy.
- Likely that new admissions code will include provision for children who have been adopted out of state care abroad. Amendments will be made by policy officer to policies as required for 2021 and 2022.
- The Admissions Relevant Area has been determined for the next two years – sets the geographical area for admission arrangements consultations.
- Schools are reminded that the annual determination process is final and should not be amended following the Governing Board meeting. In exceptional circumstances a revision may be made but there is a formal process to follow for this.

- **DSLS** requested to share the message with schools regarding the determination of admission arrangements being the final step in reviewing arrangements, and should not be further amended following determination.

4. Admission Arrangements 2023-24

- Noted in-year coordinated scheme implemented for 2 years to fall in line with the coordinated policy for clarity.
- AB to draft policy documents on behalf of schools for their approval as part of traded admissions service.
- Schools to confirm changes and agree the final document with Admissions.
- Determination of admission arrangements required by 28 February 2022. Schools/Trusts must schedule a meeting in advance to ensure this deadline is met.
- Noted particular focus for sixth form applications (external students) which are not coordinated by the LA requiring clarity around an appropriate application form, application closing dates and offer dates and an appeal process must be in place.

ACTION:

- All admission authorities must schedule a meeting to determine policies during late January/February 2022

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5. Flexi Schooling

- Schools continue to request advice regarding flexi-schooling arrangements.
- Specific advice now included in policy for schools on children with EHCPs or known to Inclusion team.
- Draft policy to be shared. SOCA Members to forward any proposed amendments to Andrew Brent by Monday 15 March

ACTION:

- **HWJ/AB** to circulate draft policy (done). **SOCA** to forward any amendments to AB
- **Special Schools & DSLS** to share updated Flexi Schooling policy with schools

6. Requests for Education out of the normal year group

- Advice continues to be that children should continue to be taught in their academic year groups.
- Draft guidance to be circulated to SOCA members – any amendments to be returned to Andrew Brent.

ACTION:

- **HWJ/AB** to circulate draft policy. **SOCA** to forward any amendments to AB
- **Special Schools & DSLS** to share updated Flexi Schooling policy with schools

7. Early Years update

- Termly survey of providers established to determine number of early years and childcare places that are available (formerly annual).
- Termly survey of parents now introduced to establish demand for childcare. Anticipating a reduced demand due to parents making alternative arrangements while working from home during Pandemic. Social media being used to target parents. Survey closed 28.2.21
- Keen to focus on geographical areas where additional feedback and information on demand is required.
- **Attendance:** New weekly attendance survey in place now, replacing daily attendance register which gathers data to be fed back to DfE each week. 690 out of 822 providers have made a return since January – disappointing that not all settings have submitted a response. At 25.2.21 64 providers were closed. 439 vulnerable children attending which was an increase from 354 on 18.2.21. Unmet demand is being monitored. RD&E childcare setting under particular pressure due to demand and seeking to expand.
- **Early Years Census:** returns made on behalf of PVI providers. Changes have been made to provider portal which will enable settings to provide information to enable the LA to complete the DFE return. Some providers still to update portal. All funded providers are required to complete the survey.
- **Nursery Admissions Arrangements for VC and Community Schools** – concerns that a number schools are still not following the agreed LA arrangements.
- **2-year-old funding** - anticipating increase in number of parents eligible for funded 2-year-old places due to pandemic. As a result, fewer 3- and 4-year old 30-hour places likely to be needed, which may impact on settings with only 3 and 4 year old children.
- Considering capacity in the sector to meet this anticipated increase in demand.

ACTION:

- **DSL**s requested to reiterate need for VC and community schools to follow agreed nursery admissions arrangements.

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8. NPS Update

- Considered difficulties in schools providing site access to contractors. Mindful of concerns in the current climate, however statutory compliance testing should be continuing during the pandemic and should be facilitated wherever possible within the school risk assessments.
- Noted new performance tracking across all maintenance schemes.
- DSLS to remind schools of the importance of statutory compliance/servicing and where possible that schools should facilitate contractor access.
- Report noted

ACTION:

- **DSLS** to remind schools of the importance of statutory compliance/servicing and where possible that schools should facilitate contractor access.

9. Capital Programme Update

- Capital maintenance programme 2021-22 now approved by Cabinet. Team will make contact with schools individually regarding specific work plans. Work expected to be targeted during summer holiday where possible.
- DfE has begun next round of condition data collection of all schools. Anticipated will take 4-5 years to complete whole round – a number of Devon schools were included in the pilot; awaiting reports to monitor benchmarks of condition assessments.
- Net capacity methodology is expected to be revised which will involve a further round of DfE survey assessment. Team to undertake internal review of a number of schools using the draft Net Capacity Tool to assess the impact.
- Anticipating impact on primary schools to be minimal. NP to liaise with FB re. impact on Early Years sector.
- Devon successfully bid for Public Sector Decarbonisation funding submitted corporately which included 3 schools prioritised due to construction of the building and energy efficiency. Direct contact will be made regarding the proposed investment.
- [Link to budget book](#) (pages 31 and 34 pertain to schools' capital maintenance) s

ACTION:

- **NP** to liaise with Fran Butler re. impact of net capacity methodology on Early Years sector.

10. School Organisation Update

- LA has met with a number of local learning communities regarding Covid 19 support. Offer still open for further contact.
- Noted 4 proposers have submitted bids for new special school in Okehampton.
- Noted consultations planned for increase in special school and specialist resource base places in a number of schools.
- **Term dates 2022-23** – drafted to align with neighbouring LAs. SOCA members to forward any comments to Christine McNeil.

ACTION:

- **SOCA members** to review proposed term dates for 2022-23 and respond to CM if any comments.

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Future meeting dates:

- **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)