

# Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 25 May 2021

## Key Issues for DEF to Note:

### Item 2 – Revised Admissions Code 2021

- DEF to note that in the light of the new Admissions Code, a working group will be reviewing Devon's arrangements for specific groups which currently fall under Fair Access Protocol, but which will need to be included in the in-year admissions scheme from September 2021.

### Item 4 – Overseas Children Admissions Guidance

- Updated DfE guidance confirms that school admissions applications from children abroad must be considered in the same way as applications from within the UK.

### Item 10 – Capital Programme Update

- DEF to note updated DfE programme of schools' condition data collection which will feed into future formula for schools condition allocation funding. Every school should be surveyed within the next 5 years.

### Item 11 – School Organisation Update

- DEF to note progress around the planned expansion of existing special schools, the new special school development at Okehampton, and consultations for mainstream schools to accommodate SEN Resource Bases.
- Ongoing increase in applications for schools to extend their age range.

## Attendance

### DCC

Neil Pateman (chair)

Simon Niles - *apologies*

Andrew Brent - *part*

**Fran Butler**

Christine McNeil

Heidi Watson-Jones (notes)

Built Environments Capital Programme Manager

Children's Services Strategic Planning

Policy Officer

Early Years – Childcare Sufficiency Lead

School Organisation Policy Manager

Service Support Officer (E&L)

### Devon Schools Leadership Services

#### Primary

Colin Butler

Penny Hammett

#### Secondary

Phil Randall

Otter Valley Federation

FORT Federation

St Peters C of E VA School

### SENTient Heads

Sam Barham

Stuart Allman

Lampard Community School

Pathfield School

### DAG

Ian Rogers

### Diocesan Representatives

Tbc

Christina Mabin - *part*

Richard Power - *part*

Plymouth CAST / Diocese of Plymouth

Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)

Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

### Union Representative

Nigel Williams - *part*

Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT

### In Attendance

Nick Cook - *part*

NPS

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## 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 2 March 2021

### Outstanding actions:

- **FB and AB** to consider Nursery Admissions priority for nursery children
- **NP/FB** to consider net capacity methodology on Early Years sector
- Minutes agreed as an accurate version.

## 2. Admissions: Revised Admissions Code 2021

- Revised School Admissions Code now published – with effect from 1 Sept 2021. No changes to scheme for 2020-21.
- DCC had flagged some concerns around Fair Access Protocol to maintain focus on school places for vulnerable children.
- Categories of children eligible for FA now more limited; changes will need to be considered to DCC scheme. Task and finish group to convene to discuss.
- Addition of a category for 'children new to an area who have been refused admission' has been a successful approach in limiting the time that a child is potentially out of school. Devon is proposing that this is now transferred from the FAP to the in-year scheme to avoid falling foul of the new legislation.
- Adopted children into state care from overseas – expecting more detailed detail about these children being added to Priority Category 1 (children in care, or previously in care).
- Admissions policies for all mainstream schools (2021 and 2022) will be reviewed and posted online as part of the Traded School Admissions Offer, in readiness for 1 September 2021. AB clarified that the revised Admissions Code relates to mainstream schools and the coordinated admission policy for the local authority.
- Noted greater provision will be in place for in-year admissions, with decisions to be communicated to parents within no more than 15 days; Devon is keen to keep the local turn-around time to 10 days which is the recommended timescale in the Code.
- Report noted.

### ACTION:

- **AB** to convene task and finish group to reconsider the Fair Access Protocol with CB, CM and PR.

## 3. Admissions: Report of the Schools' Adjudicator

- Annual OSA Report now published.
- Under the new Code, the LA annual report will in future be submitted in October (rather than June as previously), enabling reporting of the full academic year.
- Report noted.

## 4. Admissions: Overseas Children Guidance

- Updated DfE guidance clarifies that school admissions applications from children abroad must be considered in the same way as applications from within the UK.
- Legal position had previously been set out to avoid any potential influence on immigration processes.
- New DCC document drawn up for information to schools and potential applicants and has been considered by DCC legal team.
- Entitlement to a school place in England is based on a number of criteria including: right of abode, right of entry to the UK and aspects relating to visas.

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- Any schools with reasonable doubt that a child on roll may not be eligible for a school place are advised to refer concerns directly to the Home Office.
- Schools are not encouraged to recruit children from overseas, and should be clear that any applicant is responsible for ensuring they have the right to access education in this country.
- Host companies engaging overseas students will no longer be entitled to secure state-school places in the same way as previously.

### **ACTION:**

- **DSLS** to invite AB to a future Executive meeting to discuss admissions issues further.

### **5. Admissions: Flexi-Schooling Guidance**

- Flexi-schooling is a legitimate request from parents, however DfE and Devon approach is that children should be in school full time, and do not encourage such arrangements except where this supports a child back towards full-time education.
- Schools will be requested to notify the local authority where a flexi-schooling arrangement has been agreed, and link in to the accompanying home education arrangements.
- Discussed concerns that schools are offering flexi schooling to accommodate a family's lifestyle choice, however, the local admission authority remains the decision-making and responsible body.
- Safeguarding concerns around the recording of absence for flexi-schooling arrangements. The child remains a pupil on roll of the school and sessions when not expected in school are authorised absences.
- Noted flexi-schooling is not a dual registration agreement.
- Noted flexi schooling is not part time schooling.

### **6. Admissions: Term Dates**

- LA recommended term dates now published. Schools to determine their own term dates, and share with the LA and parents, and publish online.
- Report noted

### **ACTION:**

- **DSLS** to remind schools to share their agreed term dates with the local authority via the schools information database when available.

### **7. Admissions: Composite Prospectus**

- School-specific admissions information should be shared with the LA by 8 August and published by the LA by 12 September each year.
- Schools are asked to check the Schools Information pages and make any required amendments as soon as possible. Schools are also asked to confirm whether they will be holding school face to face open events and what Covid arrangements will be in place.
- Report noted

### **ACTION:**

- **DSLS** to remind schools to check and amend their admissions information on the schools information pages at <https://new.devon.gov.uk/schools/school/> and <http://devon.cc/schoolpolicy>

### **8. Early Years Update**

- Fortnightly Early Years attendance return to DfE continues.

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- Have noted an increase in requests for childcare which are unable to be met. This reflects increased number of children going back into settings. Looking into reasons for this change which may be linked to childminders closing, and settings with staff still on furlough and therefore not operating at full capacity.
- 100% return rate from early years group providers to Spring Providers Survey, this information will inform the annual childcare sufficiency report, and highlight issues around provider vulnerability, continued furlough arrangements and placement capacity.
- Online '[unable to find childcare](#)' requests have been received – mainly for parents seeking out of school provision in the south of the County for older children. Noted that the out of school childcare sector has been particularly impacted by the Pandemic.
- There has been an increase in the number of schools enquiring and consulting on increasing their age range. This seems to have been a mix of schools with no existing early years provision, and some where current preschool or nursery provision is either needing to expand or struggling to remain open and seeking to move to a school-based provision.
- Noted the increase in the number of eligible 2-year olds. Take up of eligible places continues to rise. Take up of places for 3- and 4-year olds currently slightly down but remains high. Take up of full Universal provision has increased, with nearly half taking up the extended entitlement for working parents.
- DCC is reviewing the process for parents to access places (through citizen's portal, Golden Tickets etc.) to ensure this is still easy to navigate. Also, cross checking the DWP lists of eligible parents with known vulnerable families and families on estart that are registered with childrens centres to support take up.
- 11.8% of all early years funding claims relates to Early Years Pupil Premium. This is a significant increase, over 15% of whom are taking up the extended offer, reflecting low levels of working family incomes in Devon. Noted that the Citizen's Portal now enables parents to check eligibility for 2-year old funding, EYPP and free school meals at the same time which has contributed to increased take up.
- Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) being led by EYCS. Expressions of interest for providers to take part and apply for grant funding to be submitted by 30 May. Hoping to have a wide spread of activities, age groups and geographical coverage for the summer holidays. Contact [Jackie.colby@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.colby@devon.gov.uk) or [Melissa.filby@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Melissa.filby@devon.gov.uk)

### 9. NPS Update

- Noted slight decrease in VA and DMP numbers as schools move towards academisation.
- Compliance rates remain high. There have been some issues with contractor access to sites; this now seems to be improving, but continues to be of concern in some areas.
- Mindful that Academies have access to a range of contractors and may not be updating the database with reports of works undertaken which can give a misleading overview of compliance.
- Some ongoing concerns around compliance of some specific works including gas safety and heating. Noted a range of circumstances relating to site access difficulties, complexity of plant involved.
- Considered the future viability of the VA and DMP schemes with ongoing academisation and reduction in number of maintained schools included. Contracts to be reviewed again in 2024. Mindful that contracts will be

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influenced more by the amount of plant to be maintained, rather than the number of school sites.

### 10. Capital Programme Update

#### Condition Data Collection 2 & Schools' Condition Allocation

- DfE National condition data collection programme 2 commenced Jan 2021. Noted that this is the first time that the DfE will have used property condition data as part of the weighted formula to calculate LA funding allocations. Every school should be reviewed in next 5 years. Anticipate a reducing role for the local authority in the allocation of the schools' condition allocation grant moving forward.
- Transitional funding for Local authorities and the VA programme is likely to reduce, due partly to the improving building condition. Accuracy of the data will be important and schools will be encouraged to challenge any concerns of accuracy in their condition assessment.
- SOCA noted the schools condition allocation formula which includes a banding based on condition data. Devon schools slightly above average condition according to information currently held.
- 2021-22 maintenance funding allocation remains unchanged from last financial year. Expecting the delivery of this year's works programme to be challenging due to increase in demand for contractors, and issues with supply of materials.

### 4. School Organisation Update

- New special school in Okehampton – Head Teacher Board due to meet in June to consider the sponsor applications.
- Noted consultations for Lampard and Marland special schools have been approved, and moving forward on consultations for mainstream schools to accommodate SEN Resource Bases.
- Noted lengthy process for formal consideration and consultation to lower the age range.
- Noted updates on District Council plans.
- Thanks were extended to Christine McNeil on her last SOCA meeting, for her contributions to the group over many years.

#### Future meeting dates:

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