

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 21 September 2021

Key Issues for DEF to Note:

Admissions:

- **Item 2.** Over 97% Primary and over 91% Secondary Parents have been offered places at their first preference school.
- **Item 4.** Admissions team has updated school template policies to take into account updates in the Admissions Code
- **Item 4.** Proposed changes to catchment boundaries in Ivybridge / South Hams area from 2023.
- **Item 4.** Anglican Diocesan Board of Education has reviewed use of faith-based admission criteria.
- **Item 6.** In-Year Fair Access Protocol now revised.
- **Item 8.** Arrangements in place for schools to identify additional 'Platinum Jubilee' bank holiday in 2022-23 academic year.
- **Item 9.** Nursery Admissions Policy now updated.

Capital Programme:

- **Item 11.** Noted challenges to deliver capital projects during summer due to shortages of materials and logistical difficulties.

School Organisation:

- **Item 12.** Ongoing support available to schools with positive Covid cases; key messages moving to 'living with Covid'
- **Item 12.** Planning moving ahead for new special school in Okehampton – opening at new permanent site expected Easter 2023.

Attendance

DCC

Neil Pateman (chair)
Simon Niles
Andrew Brent
Fran Butler
Heidi Watson-Jones (notes)

Built Environments Capital Programme Manager
Children's Services Strategic Planning
Policy Officer
Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Lead
Service Support Officer (E&L)

Devon Schools Leadership Services

Primary

Colin Butler
Penny Hammett

Otter Valley Federation
FORT Federation

Secondary

Phil Randall
Graham Hill

St Peters C of E VA School
Pilton Community College

Special School Heads

Sam Barham **Apologies**
Stuart Allman **Apologies**
Keith Bennett

Lampard Community School
Pathfield School
Marland School

DAG

Ian Rogers

Diocesan Representatives

Sarah Baretto
Christina Mabin
Richard Power

Diocese of Plymouth
Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)
Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

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Union Representative

Nigel Williams

Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT

In Attendance

Nick Cook - *part*

Rafe Elliott

NPS

DCC - School Organisation

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1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 25 May 2021

Outstanding actions:

- Nursery children Admissions priority – **AB & FB** still to discuss
- Early Years sector net capacity methodology – no longer seems to be an immediate DfE priority; agreed to pick up in the future if required.
- All other actions complete.
- Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. Admissions: Admissions Round 2021

- SOCA noted data for 2021 normal admissions round.
- *Secondary* - 91.22% offered highest ranked preference, with 97.64% offered a place at one of their preferred schools. 175 children were not offered a place in any preferred school, largely due to parents selecting only one preference and being offered an alternative.
- *Primary* – 97.95% offered highest ranked preference, with 99.56% offered a place in any preferred school. 31 children not offered a place in any preferred school.
- SOCA considered issues in schools setting PAN, admitting above PAN, and implications for Appeals Panels.

3. Admissions: LA Annual Report 2021

- LA is required to report to the schools' adjudicator annually on school admissions.
- Any additional issues that SOCA feel should be included in next year's annual report to be highlighted to Andrew Brent.
- This year's report was welcomed and is very positive.
- Positive relationship between the LA and schools / Devon SLS which helps smooth running of coordinated policy.
- Specific challenges and issues on a school level which can conflict with the legal framework the LA is required to work within.
- Report noted

4. Admissions: Proposed Admission Arrangements 2023-24

- Admissions traded service has undertaken required updates to the 2021 and 2022 admissions policies which have been uploaded to individual school folders. Contact being made on a school-by-school basis to clarify the changes made.
- 2023 changes have included adjustment to catchment boundaries (South Hams and Teignbridge). Boundary for Ivybridge is now better marked and will provide more clarity for parents; and has not resulted in a significant number of changes to specific properties.
- Faith-based criteria have been reviewed and the Anglican Diocesan Education Board has agreed that faith-based criteria may be used where this does not disadvantage local children.
- Noted that schools may still propose additional admissions or oversubscription criteria.
- The group thanked Andrew for the significant piece of work in reviewing the policies.
- Proposed policies should be posted on school websites and consultations published in the school community.
- Noted that schools' adjudicator has upheld complaints regarding lack of consultation by own admission authorities – any and all changes must be subject to consultation.

ACTION:

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- **DSLS** to remind schools to check and consult on their admissions policies. Proposed policies should be posted on school websites and consultations published in the school community.
- **AB/CM/SB** to draft advice, for circulation to schools, on requirements for own Admission Authority schools to consult on any proposed admissions changes. AB draft shared with Diocese

5. Admissions: Amended policies for 2021-22 and 2022-23

- Schools have been notified of specific changes to amended policies which include:
- Children that have been in state care overseas but then adopted,
- Timeframes for in year applications to have decisions from schools (5 school days),
- Revised Fair access protocol linking to 'hard to place' children,
- Changed approach to Overseas children regarding Schools suspecting a child on roll does not have right of abode and is therefore not entitled to education in the UK.

6. Admissions: Revised in-year Fair Access Protocol

- Thanks were extended to the working group who had contributed to the draft FAP policy.
- Draft was circulated to schools for comment, but with very low feedback.
- Hard to place children new to the area are placed as close to home as possible in tier 1. More challenging difficult to place children as identified through Inclusion service (e.g. following exclusion)
- DSLS involvement sought in FAP meetings in future

ACTION:

- FAP information to be re-circulated to schools for their feedback via DSLS and Dawn Stabb's Headteacher Update **AB (HWJ)**

7. Admissions: Composite Prospectus

- Online Information resource needs to be kept updated by schools which includes 'step by step' document, the in-year admissions guidance and the schools' information database with school-level information.
- Any queries or suggestions for change to be shared with Andrew Brent.

ACTION:

- **DSLS** to encourage schools to check their entry on the schools' database and to double check their admissions policy.

8. Admissions: Term dates and Jubilee bank holiday arrangements

- Previously issued information now updated on Platinum Jubilee bank holiday arrangements on 2 and 3 June 2022 falling within half term.
- Additional bank holiday may be set as a non-teaching day during the 2021-22 academic year as 189 teaching days now required for the 2022-23 academic year. Individual schools as admissions authorities must make a local decision, update their term dates online and notify parents.

9. Early Years Update

Nursery Admission Policy

- Policy updated
- Note of Interest form created –
- Previously Golden Tickets sent to parents on the DWP list who were assumed eligible for funded two-year-old places, however parents are now being directed to the [citizens' portal to check their eligibility](#) for a funded two-

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| <p>year-old place. Pupil Premium and Free School Meals eligibility can also be checked here which will hopefully increase take up in future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DfE Early Years Attendance register – DfE requiring ongoing submissions from schools and providers. Mindful that some primary schools with EY nurseries or governor run provision have not been submitting the Early Years returns in addition to the school attendance returns.• Childcare sufficiency report to be considered at November Cabinet. Particular challenges for provision in Ilfracombe and Sidmouth are being investigated.• 29 settings have been opened or extended; 19 settings have closed or reduced their provision.• Noted under-5s population appears to be increasing compared to 2020-21. Action: FB to bring further information to the next meeting.• Noted some schools are finding admissions and funding for rising 3-year-olds confusing. 3-year-old funding cannot be claimed until after the child's 3rd birthday. Where the school age range starts at 3 the school must not admit a child before their third birthday. Schools are encouraged to check the admission arrangements.• SOCA agreed that the updated nursery admissions policy be published. |
| <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FB to report further at next meeting on increases in under-5 population. |

10. NPS Update

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noted that Nigel Cole will be taking early retirement. Andrew Shaw to take on duties in the short term while recruitment takes place.• Static subscription levels to Devon Maintenance Partnership, Devon Academy Maintenance Agreement and VA Promise.• Maintenance contractor compliance seems to be stable with schools generally above 95% compliant.• Some follow up needed with specific schools to ensure overdue plant maintenance is undertaken. Noted some academies are using contractors outside of the agreement which causes issues with monitoring compliance.• Access issues for contractors related to Covid now seem to be alleviated. Noted thanks to schools who have managed to continue to allow access for work to be undertaken during this time.• September Scrutiny to consider renewal of contractual arrangements with NPS and Norse.• Report noted. |
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11. Capital Programme Update

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summer 2021 has proved to be particularly challenging with materials shortages, logistical difficulties and energy crisis leading to a number of projects being deferred or postponed due to lack of materials, labour or unsustainable cost increases.• The majority of projects have been successfully completed.• DfE currently consulting on national rebuilding programme. Individual schools or MATs and responsible bodies can respond (closes 8 October) via link at Department for Education - Citizen Space• LA is being notified of a number of grant opportunities for carbon reduction projects. Schools are encouraged to be mindful of potential revenue implications for some projects; fossil fuel plant being reduced and replaced by electricity-powered plant may prove more expensive to run in the longer term.• NW shared that Unions would be interested in the implications of schools funding increased electricity bills. |
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- Noted that schools find it difficult to pro-actively seek grant funding to change their plant. Long term future of the school embracing greener technology will need to be considered in a balanced way.
- Anglican Diocese looking at a feasibility assessment to identify schools which will benefit most from the grants available. Considered an LA commitment to invest in preparation to pinpoint schools which are most likely to be successful in bidding and most likely to benefit from conversion.

12. School Organisation Update

- Congratulations to Shona Meek who has been appointed as Christine McNeil's replacement. Shona to review information being shared with SOCA.
- Covid-19 cases continue across the county. Support system in place for schools and learning communities with positive cases, but key messages are around 'living with Covid'
- New special school at Okehampton – some financial and timescale issues being considered with Dartmoor MAT to address delays and concerns. Permanent school aims to operational by Easter 2023, with temporary interim arrangements.
- Ongoing LA offer to work with small schools on operational concerns. Demographics and fluctuations in demand likely to become more of a focus.
- SEN Resource base consultations to be considered at Advisory Group (formerly Head Teacher Board) for DfE approval.
- Ongoing dialogue with DfE regarding proposed expansion of Exmouth CC in light of current Requires Improvement Ofsted judgement. Issues around sufficiency of secondary school places for local children.
- Noted increase in schools seeking to lower age range, some as a result of volatility in private and commercially run EY provision.
- Some issues where academies have not appropriately followed significant change procedures. LA will be seeking to provide more support to MATs and schools in navigating complex DfE guidance and data requirements around changes.
- Local District planning expecting to see significant increase in activity in short term; large housing developments which LA will need to engage with in terms of school, special school and FE capacity.
- Considered the increasingly strategic LA approach in response to District planning assumptions. In some areas there is strain in the capacity of the school to admit all local children.
- Catchment areas will be reviewed where children are unable to secure a place in their local school. Ongoing work with SEN on parental preference for admission into schools outside their area.

Future meeting dates:

- **Tuesday 7 December 2021** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 1 March 2022** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 7 June 2022** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 27 September 2022** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Thursday 5 January 2023** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 7 March 2023** (9.30 – 11.30)