

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 7 December 2021

Key Issues for DEF to Note:

School Organisation: Item 2

DEF to note issues around increased costs associated with planned opening of new special school at Okehampton initially in temporary premises in September 2022, update on planned opening of SEN resource bases, and continuing challenges for schools in managing Covid.

Capital Programme: Item 3

DEF to note 2022/23 Capital maintenance programme now drafted, awaiting Cabinet approval. 2021/22 programme nearing completion.

EHCP Year 7 transfers: Item 5

DEF to note that SOCA have considered data illustrating pattern, driven by parental preference, for requesting placements for children with EHCPs in mainstream secondary schools across the county.

Admissions- Delayed Entry: Item 7

SOCA considered concerns around increase in parental requests to delay admission to primary school.

Early Years:

SOCA considered population data for 0-5 year olds and considered the longer term impact on school admissions in primary and secondary sector. Schools urged to strategically consider their PAN as the current plateau in numbers of under 5s shifts through the system.

Attendance

DCC

Neil Pateman (chair)	Built Environments Capital Programme Manager
Shona Meek	Senior School Organisation Officer
Andrew Brent	Senior Policy Officer
Fran Butler	Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Lead
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
Graham Hill	Pilton Community College

Special School Heads

Sam Barham	Lampard Community School
Stuart Allman	Pathfield School

DAG

Ian Rogers

Diocesan Representatives

Sarah Baretto	Diocese of Plymouth
Christina Mabin	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)
Richard Power	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

Union Representative

Nigel Williams	Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT
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In Attendance

Nick Cook - **part**

Simon Niles- **part**

Julia Foster- **part**

NPS

Strategy, Schools Planning and Admissions

Senior Manager SEND

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1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 21 September 2021

- No outstanding actions.
- Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. School Organisation Update

- Ermington, Manor and Ugborough Primaries seeking to join Westcountry MAT from Jan 2022. Lifton Primary also considering conversion.
- Increased project costs for new special school at Okehampton, sponsored by Dartmoor MAT, approved by Cabinet. LA officers working with DMAT to ensure school opens in September 2022, initially with temporary accommodation.
- Consultations have taken place for SEN resource bases in mainstream schools; Ilfracombe Junior resource base has been approved by Cabinet. Westcliff and Okehampton Primary Academies resource bases have been approved by RSC.
- Second Phase of resource bases development has been launched with expressions of interest having been received. LA seeking further information from RSC on proposals which have not been approved during phase one.
- SOCA noted proposals around changes to age ranges and increases in capacity in schools.
- Review of data on small schools with less than 50 on roll to be completed when autumn census data is available.
- Dartmoor has adopted the local plan: [LP Adopted.pdf \(dartmoor.gov.uk\)](#)
- East Devon District have published their draft local plan: [3 December 2021 - East Devon's new draft Local Plan revealed, with potential locations for hundreds of new homes - East Devon](#)
- School term dates – DSLS requested term dates to be released further in advance. **ACTION: Shona Meek** to look at releasing 2 academic years of term dates.

Covid update:

- High Covid rates continue in Devon; Schools struggling with staffing in lead up to Christmas.
- Supply agencies seeing resource issues as staff move out of teaching profession.
- A number of schools have been moving to remote learning arrangements largely due to safeguarding concerns around onsite staffing levels.
- Ongoing DfE expectation of an on-site offer for key worker and vulnerable children.
- Noted Union advice for schools to recruit supply teachers directly to schools rather than engage through agencies.
- Early Years and Childcare sector also struggling with staff recruitment and retention, leading to reduced capacity in nurseries and closures. Notable reduction in number of childminders as a result of Covid.

ACTION:

- **Shona Meek** to consider releasing 2 academic years' term dates.

3. NPS Update Report

- Stable school membership in maintenance schemes.
- DAMA arrangement due to expire 31.3.22. Discussions taking place with academies and MATs about fitness for purpose of current services and ongoing arrangements moving forward.
- Compliance maintained at good levels taking into account challenges around staffing, access and other issues due to Covid.
- Mindful of ongoing difficulties in monitoring academy engagement with the contractor supply chain.

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- November Cabinet considered NPS and Norse joint ventures; a revised, single joint venture will be in place from April 2022 for a further 5 years initially.

4. Capital Programme Update

- Maintenance Programme for 2022-23 has been drafted for Cabinet approval in February
- £3.8m settlement expected from DfE (£3.9m including MUMIS and DDA funding) based on last year's allocation, adjusted by DfE condition data currently being collected. 26 projects planned overall.
- 2021-22 programme: 3 or 4 projects expected to be completed during February half term; other projects expected to be completed by end of the financial year – mainly due to supply issues, and complexities around undertaking work during term time with Covid restrictions in place.
- Schools Capacity methodology being piloted by DfE – Uffculme and Ilfracombe College included in pilot.

5. Year 7 Transfers – EHCP learners

- SEN and Admissions team had considered impact of children with EHCPs moving to secondary schools who were not from within their designated area. Some schools had flagged that they seemed to be attracting a greater than expected number of EHCP learners.
- Demand for EHCPs in Devon is significantly higher than nationally, and the increase initially seen in primary EHCPs now shifting to secondary sector.
- Mindful that parental preference is key to placement of children with EHCPs. LA has legal duty to name preferred school; and the school has a legal duty to admit those children.
- Data showed several schools are receiving all children with an EHCP living within their designated area, as well as children with EHCPs from other areas.
- Conversely data also indicates some schools are not taking any children with EHCPs from within their designated area.
- SOCA considered the cyclical nature of popularity of schools influencing parental preference, and the behavioural aspects directly influencing parental preference decisions.
- Admissions and SEN teams are working more closely together to gauge expected EHCP parent preferences as part of the normal admissions round, rather than admissions and SEN placements working in isolation.
- Mindful that parental decisions on their preferred school can change at any time during the admission process.
- Considered additional support available for schools finding themselves taking an increasing number of children with EHCPs. Support for Transition is planned as part of SEND 100 project, reiterated the importance of secondary schools working closely with feeder primary schools to share relevant pupil information prior to transition, and support and advice is already available through Babcock Learner Services.

ACTION:

- Year 7 Admission data to be added to table and re-circulated **AB/JF**
- **Done AB**

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6. Admissions: Proposed Admission Arrangements 2023-24

- Changes have been kept to a minimum following amendments made under the revised School Admissions Code 1.9.2021.
- All schools and academy trusts must have published their admissions arrangements on their website.
- Schools and academies requested to publicise the annual admissions arrangements consultation, for the attention of their parents as well as surrounding schools, Diocese and the Local Authority.
- Catchment boundaries to be reviewed to ensure that the boundaries are clearly defined, and not crossing fields, housing developments etc. South Hams and Teignbridge boundaries have now been adjusted and proposed amendments are being consulted on. Proposed to follow this across the county for the next consultation in 2022.
- Noted requirement for sixth forms to use DCAF5 (or to submit own application forms limited to asking admissions questions only).
- Proposed Admissions Numbers to be reviewed.
- Own admission authority schools and trusts to confirm the date of the governing body or trust meeting at which their policies will be formally determined.
- Statutory deadlines for compliance with these actions must be met. Any queries or corrections may be raised with Andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk

7. Admissions: Delayed Admission and Transfers

- SOCA noted the increase in requests for delayed admission. These children are now beginning to be move into secondary school out of their normal year group.
- LA urging primary schools to liaise with secondary schools in advance where children will be seeking admission into year 7. Sixth form / post-16 funding issues should be considered.
- Concerns were shared around emerging trends for parents to request delayed admission to secure a place at a preferred primary school which is oversubscribed, hoping to secure a place the following year. Noted that places cannot be held for a delayed application, and ongoing oversubscribed reception classes could lead to admission elsewhere, possibly into the chronological year group.
- Decisions regarding delayed admission rests with the admission authority, with Headteacher advice, and must, according to the Admissions Code, be made on a case-by-case basis and in the best interests of the child, rather than a blanket school policy being applied

8. Admissions: Admission arrangements and school websites

- School Admissions Code requires admissions policies to be published on Trust and school websites, and should be easily accessible.
- Noted timeframes for formal determination and publishing of admissions policies.

9. Early Years Update

Early Years Update

- Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report now published online. Parents are encouraged to access this. Hot spot and highlight areas identified for further development of childcare provision.

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- Early Years attendance survey completed – awaiting DfE confirmation of ongoing data requirements.
- Communications being reviewed to ensure wider understanding of funding and emerging issues amongst settings.
- Noted reduction in take up of full entitlement for eligible 2-year olds. Take up of full entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds steady. Take up for extended entitlement for working families has increased slightly, but not to levels initially anticipated, however Devon's take up overall remains very good compared to other local authorities.
- Early Years Pupil Premium take up has increased.
- Several settings and childminders are still to return the autumn term provider survey. Recruitment and Retention to be focus of next term's survey.
- Keen to obtain data of all wrap-around childcare being provided by schools to ensure LA is aware of all provision on offer.
- Noted schools who have consulted to extend their age range to include 2-year olds.

0-5 Population Analysis

- Monthly data update received by Health Intelligence – enabling tracking of births (< 1mth olds living in Devon) and monitoring demographics of 0-18s.
- SOCA noted ongoing conversations between School Organisation and Place Planning teams to track number of children moving into Devon.
- Considered the impact of migration into the county.
- Data indicates that schools must continue to strategically consider their PAN going forward, particularly in urban areas. Plateau in under 5s will take some time to feed into secondary school admissions.
- SOCA noted that demographic drops will lead to ongoing vulnerability for very small rural schools.
- Need strategic consideration of secondary schools' rolls falling in the future, and potentially using the opportunity of vacant accommodation to improve condition of aging school buildings.

Future meeting dates:

- **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)