

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 1 March 2022

Key Issues for DEF to Note:

Admissions:

- **Item 2:** Schools governing bodies to be reminded of key information and statutory timeframes for determination of admission arrangements.
- **Item 4:** Template text - shared with schools in the report - outlining mandatory admissions information including an appeals timetable required to be published on school websites.
- DfE is anticipated to extend the current temporary offer of a remote appeals process for parents and carers within a revised Admissions Appeals Code. Current virtual hearings noted to have a positive response, supporting parental access to this right.
- **Item 5:** LA and Diocese teams continue to work closely with schools to ensure required timeframes are met for in-year admissions, avoiding unacceptable delays to children accessing education.

Early Years:

- **Item 8:** Schools encouraged to notify LA of wrap-around childcare provision offered in schools to ensure accuracy of childcare sufficiency information.

School Organisation:

- **Item 9:** LA teams were thanked for ongoing support and information to schools during the Covid Pandemic and recent guidance re. response to Storm Eunice.
- Consultation underway re. proposed closure of Chittlehampton primary school due to very low numbers on roll.
- Proposed term dates for 2023/24 to be consulted on. Proposed term dates for 2024/25 drafted.

Capital Programme:

- **Item 11:** Devon to submit nominations to National Schools Rebuilding Programme.

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Attendance

DCC

Neil Pateman (chair) (part)	Built Environments Capital Programme Manager
Shona Meek	Senior School Organisation Officer
Andrew Brent	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 (apologies)	Lampard Community School
Stuart Allman	Pathfield School

DAG

Ian Rogers

Diocesan Representatives

Vacancy	Diocese of Plymouth
Christina Mabin	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)
Richard Power (apologies)	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

Union Representative

Nigel Williams	Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT
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In Attendance

Nick Cook - part	NPS
Simon Niles	Strategy, Schools Planning and Admissions

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 7 December 2021

- All actions complete.
- Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. Admissions: Admission Arrangements for 2024-25

- Survey to be sent to all schools and MATs to request key information and clarify timeframe for determination of admission arrangements, required each academic year, to ensure arrangements are in place in good time for local governing bodies to meet statutory timeframes.
- South Hams and Teignbridge catchment area review has recommended improved recognition of boundaries. Changes will be notified to affected schools.
- Schools encouraged to contact andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk as soon as possible to discuss any proposed changes to admission criteria well in advance of the 28 February statutory deadline. It would be helpful if this was considered in summer / autumn term and

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- Concerns were shared that schools are unfamiliar with the requirements of the statutory determination process.
- Andrew Brent offered training / briefing sessions on admission policy and determination process and timeframe.

ACTION:

- **DSLS** to assist in highlighting statutory timeframes to schools and MATs
- **DSLS** to canvas schools for interest in training / briefing session on admission and determination process and timeframes.

3. Admissions: Determined Admission Arrangements for 2023-24

- Thanks were expressed to Andrew Brent for work involved in amending the determined arrangements to comply with revised admissions code.
- 2021-22 policies have been amended to ensure compliance. Schools encouraged to check their policies.

4. Admissions: School Admissions Webpages

- Noted mandatory elements to have available to view on school websites for prospective parents regarding admissions and application process.
- Suggested text to be shared with schools covering mandatory elements.
- Appeals process should be included in the policy but would be helpful to also highlight separately on websites.
- Understand that DfE is expected to review the Code to extend the current temporary offer of a remote / virtual appeals process, which can be more attractive for parents, particularly more vulnerable families, and reducing need for travel. Devon hoping to adopt a hybrid arrangement.

ACTION:

- **DSLS** to share suggested text covering mandatory elements for inclusion on websites.

5. Admissions: In-Year Timescales

- Mandatory requirement now in place that all in-year admissions are considered by committee within 5 school days, and communicated to parents within 15 days. This was already within Devon coordinated admission. This is aimed to reduce the amount of time that children are out of education.
- The Code expects that children will be on roll without delay as soon as a place has been offered. Mindful of need for additional staffing to be secured prior to admission in some circumstances.
- Thanks were expressed to the Admissions team for managing the considerable volume of in-year admissions and support provided to schools.
- 7,000 in-year admissions is a similar volume to a normal admissions round.
- Current team restructures and in-housing of Babcock LDP staff will aim to improve timely inclusion of the most complex and vulnerable learners in education where the mandatory timeframes can be difficult to meet.
- LA and Diocese teams will work more closely with schools to ensure that required timeframes are met and avoid unacceptable delays to children accessing education.

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6. Admissions: LA Annual report

- LA provides annual report on admissions to the Schools' Adjudicator by 30 June. Schools, DSLs, and officers wishing to comment or contribute should contact Andrew Brent directly.
- Heads raised concerns around lack of support around SEND admission of students, particularly with increasingly complex needs which cannot be met in mainstream school environments. Noted need for improved partnership working between the LA, Diocese and schools. Acknowledgement of this concern in the annual report was requested.
- Noted recent appointment of interim Director of SEND and noted invitation has been extended for her to meet with DSLs.
- Noted particular challenges around need to establish additional resource bases in Devon, and current significant investment in plus packages for children with EHCPs in mainstream schools.
- Improved bespoke provision in mainstream schools needs to be strategically commissioned within parameters of available capital; current data analysis exercise will inform future proposals for strategic development.

7. Admissions: Term dates 2021-22

- Noted ongoing queries around the facility for schools taking an additional day to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- Schools need to ensure the LA is notified of arrangements to ensure that EWS and transport teams are aware of proposals.
- Survey to be shared with DSLs to circulate to gather information on decision to take an additional Jubilee day, dates, and assurance that families and LA have been notified of arrangement.

ACTION:

- **AB** to share draft survey to Phil Randall to raise at DSLs Schools Executive Committee.

8. Early Years Update

- Early Years census being processed for PVI Early Years providers and schools with governor-run provision.
- Pleased with response rate for the Spring term early years childcare sufficiency survey, covering provision for 0-18 years. Noted challenges for parents of teenagers with additional needs identifying appropriate childcare provision.
- Noted increased uptake on take up of entitlement for two-year olds during the autumn term.
- Noted decrease in take up of both universal and extended entitlement for three- and four-year olds, although consistently good compared to national levels. This downward trajectory will be monitored.
- Noted overlap between children entitled to Early Years Pupil Premium and those with extended childcare entitlement.
- Noted recent survey of schools providing a childcare offer (e.g. breakfast, after school or holiday clubs) which may not be covered by Ofsted inspection, and therefore not included in the LA childcare sufficiency audit. The team is now aware of an additional 66 childcare provisions that were not previously known. Summer term provider survey to capture additional information about further childcare provision.
- Finance team to follow up on new notifications to clarify funding arrangements for extended childcare provision.

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- Gemma Rolstone appointed as Early Years representative on Devon Education Forum.

ACTION:

- **DSLS** to remind schools with governor run provision to return EY census if not already completed.

9. School Organisation Update

Covid Update :

- Cases now falling, although Devon still currently above national average.
- Particular challenges for schools prior to half term with a number moving to remote learning.
- Mindful of ongoing concerns around staffing levels; DLSLS asked to canvass schools experiencing difficulties with staff not returning from half term, persistent absence etc.
- Some ongoing concerns around possible impact of Covid no longer becoming a reportable disease.
- Heads thanked the LA teams for ongoing Covid support and fortnightly Schools Reference Group meetings.
- Heads were grateful for swift communication relating to schools' emergency management linked to Storm Eunice.

Schools Organisation:

- Consultation launched proposing closure of Chittlehampton primary from August, with currently only 15 children on roll, low numbers of pre-school cohorts, and little planned development locally. Public meeting to be held on 3 March. Final decision to be made by Cabinet.
- RSC has agreed to increase capacity at Exmouth Community College from September 2023.
- Medium Term Capital Programme was ratified by full council on 17.2.22, including funding for expansion at Axminster, Orchard Manor and Marland schools.
- Noted changes to statutory guidance around academy schools making significant changes, now taking incremental changes in consecutive academic years into account when considering expansion.
- Noted updates to the Section 106 (Education infrastructure policy) for developer contributions, with an increase for SEN provision and considering capacity across all schools within urban areas, rather than just the designated school.
- Noted data around numbers on roll at small schools, including preferences for September 2022. Forecasts take into account Yr6 leavers and incoming YR from NHS data. The in-area uptake compares the number on roll with the number of children living within catchment. LA continues to offer supportive conversations with schools, trusts and federations about partnership approaches to working.
- Noted proposed academy conversions. Understand single academy applications are unlikely to be approved by RSC moving forward, with smaller MATs being encouraged to consider larger, more sustainable structures.
- New all-through school at SW Exeter to be called Matford Brook Academy.
- Noted current restructure at DCC following change in senior leadership following retirement. Place Planning team to move to Education and Learning. Different ways of working expected following in-housing of Babcock LDP team.
- New White Paper expected to drive school organisation and education infrastructure developments.

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Term Dates

- Planning to consult shortly on proposed dates for 23/24, in line with Torbay, Somerset and Cornwall LAs.
- 2024/25 dates drafted, to be shared with neighbouring LAs for comment. Noted Easter holiday expected to fall before bank holiday weekend.
- DSLS to share with schools for discussion at Executive and feedback to Shona.
- SOCA requested team to be mindful of alignment of 2024 May half term with Exam board expectations.
- Report noted.

ACTION:

- **DSLS** Executive to consider proposed 23/24 and 24/25 term dates and provide feedback to Shona Meek.

10. NPS Update

- DMP and DAMA membership remaining static.
- 97% compliance for DMP schools, 95% compliance for VA schools, and 59% compliance for DAMA schools, largely linked to timeliness affected by access issues.

11. Capital Programme Update

- Medium Term Capital Programme investment plans now approved and will go ahead pending confirmation of funding from DfE.
- Expecting Capital Maintenance Grant to be reduced by £600k to around £3.8m for 2022/23.
- Devon will be submitting nominations to National Schools Rebuilding Programme.

Future meeting dates:

- **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)