

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group:

Notes of meeting on Tuesday 7 March 2023

Key Issues for DEF to Note:

Admissions:

2. Delayed Entry to secondary school

Secondary Heads have supported requests for delayed admission into Year 7 and have made sure that parents are aware of potential issues of their child being out of normal chronological year group for FE. LA will write to all primary schools with lists of known children taught offset by one year. Schools to discuss progression with parents and secondary schools.

4. Secondary School Admissions round – PANs – 2023

- LA seeking to work collaboratively with schools to ensure that local children are able to access a local school place where PAN has previously been reduced and the school is now oversubscribed but with unused physical capacity in the school and the lack of statutory guidance/powers to direct own admissions authorities.

SOCA recommended that DEF:

- Support the LA in their discussions with the Regional Director's Office over the challenges they are having accessing state funded education capacity.
- **At 22 March meeting:** Scrutinise and discuss the 2023/4 Year 6-7 transition round for learners with EHCPs given the level of concerns about the strategy and equity of decisions being made, and implications for those schools seeing large numbers of students being allocated a place

5. Non-pupil dates 2022-23 academic year

- Legislation to be in place from 15 March to allow extra Bank Holiday relating to coronation of King Charles III, reducing the number of days maintained schools need to open during the academic year.

6. Early Years Update

- Significant concerns around funding and the impact on ongoing viability of childcare providers, recruitment and provision.

7. School Organisation:

- First Round approval confirmed by DfE for development of a new 70 place special school in Cranbrook, moving towards a continuum of learning not currently in place for SEMH students within the state funded sector. This is hoped to enable decommissioning from placements in the costly independent sector.

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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

Penny Hammett (Apologies)	FORT Federation
David Perkins	Littletown Primary

Secondary

Phil Randall	St Peter's C of E VA School
Graham Hill	Pilton Community College

Special School Heads

Stuart Allman	Pathfield School
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DAG

Ian Rogers

Diocesan Representatives

Vacancy	Diocese of Plymouth
Christina Mabin (apologies)	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	South West Norse
Simon Niles	Strategy, Schools Planning and Admissions

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 6 December 2022

Outstanding actions:

- AB to provide data on families not receiving a place on any of their 3 preferences.
- Communications being drafted to primary schools re. children of year 5 age who are offset from their year group.
- FB and AB to liaise re. inclusion of nursery policy document on DCAF form.
- NP to discuss with finance colleagues details around split sites.
- All other actions complete.
- Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. Admissions: Delayed Entry to secondary school

- All requests re. delayed admission from last transfer round have been accepted by secondary schools.
- Heads have supported requests moving forwards and have made sure that parents are aware of potential issues at FE. Discussions have taken place with Petroc in N Devon.

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 7 March 2023

- LA will write to all primary schools with lists of known children taught offset by one year. Schools to discuss progression with parents and secondary schools.
- Early Years to consider further messaging for parents wishing to take up option to delay entry for summer-born children.

3. Admissions: Determined Admission Arrangements 2024 - 25

- Cabinet have considered coordinated scheme and those of individual admission authority schools.
- Now considering future proposed policy for schools.

4. Admissions: Secondary Admissions round - PANs – 2023

- Noted issues recently experienced during the latest secondary schools admissions round.
- LA seeking to work collaboratively with schools to ensure that children are able to access a local school place where PAN has previously been reduced and the school is now oversubscribed but with unused physical capacity in the school.
- SOCA noted the lack of statutory guidance or powers to direct own admissions authorities.
- SOCA members were informed of the challenges the Admissions Service were facing for normal round and in-year admissions with schools concerned about the financial implications and potential impact on in-year admissions challenges when opening up additional capacity.
- Schools have previously been supported to lower PAN, but with no reduction in physical capacity. During the 23/24 admissions round, some Trusts which have previously lowered PAN have not been inclined to then raise the PAN to respond to increased popularity.
- Impact is that local children, children applying late (often most vulnerable), and siblings of existing pupils are unable to access a local school place, with a possible impact also on future Section 106 funding.
- Policy concerns have been raised to the Regional Director's Office as PANs no longer match the physical capacity that is available and required across the county. Mindful that schools are acting legally, but the situation remains unhelpful
- Understand there are concerns from schools around volume of in-year admissions – which may need further consideration of growth funding to address.
- SOCA noted current secondary school waiting lists – noting that not all schools with a waiting list have physical capacity to admit further pupils. Discussions are ongoing with individual schools around establishing additional classes, particularly where there are no other schools in the locality.

Impact of SEND

- SOCA members raised concerns and ongoing frustration regarding the allocation of learners with EHCPs, in particular where a number of schools have seen high numbers of out of catchment places at the expense of in-area learners and siblings; Year 6-7 cohorts are no longer reflecting local communities.
- Heads highlighted that there is little strategic oversight of the distribution and provision of EHCPs. Noted Ofsted does not scrutinise the nature of SEN cohorts within schools.
- SOCA agreed to recommend that DEF scrutinise and discuss the 2023/4 Year 6-7 transition round, and support the LA's request that the RD office formally reconsider policy and practice around fair admission of children with EHCPs to their local school.

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- SEN 'magnet schools' require additional funding, staffing and expertise to properly provide a valuable educational experience where there is a high percentage of SEN children within each year group.
- Mindful of similar issues being experienced in Early Years settings and Primary schools.
- Considered impact of increase in EHE pupils and the challenges for schools and the LA in meeting expectations for an inclusive education provision. Mindful that it can be challenging for schools and admissions team to engage with parents of EHE learners to consider admission into secondary. Suggested that wider sharing of data and narrative around transition into EHE and admission of children from EHE arrangements would be helpful.
- **SOCA recommended that DEF:**
 - Support the LA in their discussions with the Regional Director's Office over the challenges they are having accessing state funded education capacity.
 - Scrutinise and discuss the 2023/4 Year 6-7 transition round for learners with EHCPs given the level of concerns about the strategy and equity of decisions being made, and implications for those schools seeing large numbers of students being allocated a place.

ACTION:

- **AB / SN** to draft report for DEF

5. Admissions: Non-pupil dates 2022-23

- Legislation in place from 15 March to confirm additional non pupil day relating to King Charles III's Coronation, reducing the number of days maintained schools need to open during the academic year.

6. Early Years Update

- Significant concerns around funding and impact on ongoing viability of childcare providers, recruitment and provision.
- Provider and parent surveys have been launched – both with a focus on cost of living and affordability of childcare provision.
- Feel that more parents may increase reliance on family and friends to provide childcare rather than settings – results to be shared when available.
- All Private, Voluntary and Independent sector providers encouraged to complete the Early Years census as responses impacts on level of funding coming into the LA.
- SOCA considered data around the take up of places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.
- Early Years Pupil Premium – noted many families in receipt of EYPP are eligible for 30 hour funding for 3 and 4 year olds.

7. School Organisation Update

- Stoke Canon CofE consulting to extend age range from Easter to include nursery class.
- Mill Water – consulting on closure of post 16 provision and change to 3-16 age range, increasing number of places.
- Noted schools proposing expansion: awaiting decisions from RD office.
- Particular thanks to Braunton Academy for close working with the LA to expand and increase admissions of local pupils.
- Hearing Support Centre at Clyst Vale consulting to close (RD office decision).
- Currently formally consulting on future term dates.
- SOCA noted academy proposals and decisions at: Horwood and Newton Tracy, Pilton Infants, Newtown, Sidmouth College, Gulworthy & Lamerton

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- Noted consultation for merger of Uffculme Academy Trust and Castle Partnership Trust in Somerset.
- Noted summary of updates to DfE statutory guidance. Policy does not currently equitably match particular needs across academy and maintained schools with different processes and triggers for depending on sector.
- Noted updates on Local Plans. LA officers planning to engage with Local Learning Communities / local groups of schools to consider impact of local planning arrangements on schools.
- Funding Agreement now in place with Ted Wragg MAT re. Matford Brook Academy
- The Promise Special School planning to move to new site in Okehampton from Easter
- First Round approval confirmed by DfE for new special school application in Cranbrook, 70 place school – year 5-11 hopefully open from 2026. This will help to move towards a continuum of learning not currently in place for SEMH students within the state funded sector. This is hoped to enable decommissioning from placements in the costly independent sector.
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8. SW Norse Update

- Noted impact on Devon Maintenance Partnership with ongoing transfer to academy status. Not all of these schools are moving to Devon Academies Maintenance Agreement.
- SOCA noted contractor compliance levels.
- SW Norse and LA monitoring contractors to ensure improvement in performance.
- Service Term Contracts to end 31 March 2023, work ongoing to reset new arrangements.
- Updated graph to be circulated to group.

9. Capital Programme Update

- Medium Term Capital Programme approved at February Cabinet.
- FOI from ITV news received by several schools regarding reinforced concrete – response drafted by LA for affected schools.

ACTION:

NP to circulate draft FOI response issued for schools

Future meeting dates:

- **Tuesday 23 May 2023** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 26 Sept 2023** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 5 December 2023** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 5 March 2024** (9.30 – 11.30)