

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 5 March 2024

Key Issues for DEF to Note:

Item 4. Early Years:

- New Early Years entitlements are due to roll out from April 24.
- Take up of Level 2 Early Years Practitioner qualification has exceeded expected demand; further training planned for summer term.
- Team investigating where additional 2-year old places will be required.
- Government Wraparound programme progressing, providing term time childcare from 8am-6pm to be in place by 2026.

Item 5. School Organisation:

- Updated DfE guidance to be introduced from April 24 on Making Significant Changes to an Open Academy.
- SOCA considered current position and issues facing small rural schools in Devon. Currently 36 primary schools with under 50 on roll, 15 of which are LA maintained schools. 116 primary schools with under 100 on roll.
- SOCA considered the Education South West and DfE in-principal agreement to close Kingswear Primary Academy School. An informal consultation is currently live until 22 March to provide DCC Cabinet with further information as the LA has been asked to support the closure.

Item 6. Capital Programme:

- All Devon maintained schools are confirmed RAAC-free. Colyton Grammar, Exmouth CC and Petroc (FE) have been identified with RAAC and are being supported by DfE.
- LA capital funding allocation still to be announced by DfE. Exeter CofE Diocese has identified a reduction in capital funding of 51% over last 3 years.

Attendance:

DCC

Katherine Crompton (Chair)

Capital Programme Manager, Built Environments

Shona Meek

Senior School Organisation Officer

Andrew Brent (part)

Senior Policy Officer

Fran Butler (**apologies**)

Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Lead

Nikki Phillips (part)

Early Years and Childcare Team Manager

Heidi Watson-Jones (notes)

Service Support Officer (E&L)

Devon Schools Leadership Services

Primary

Penny Hammett

FORT Federation

David Perkins

Littletown Academy

Secondary

Graham Hill

Pilton Community College

Special School Heads

Stuart Allman (**apologies**)

Pathfield School

DAG

Ian Rogers (part)

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Diocesan Representatives

Kirsty Wright	Diocese of Plymouth
Christina Mabin	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)
Richard Power	Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

Union Representative

Nigel Williams (part)	Corporate Forum (Education) NASUWT
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In Attendance

Nick Cook – (apologies)	South West Norse
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1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 5 December 2023

- Online presentation of school term timetable has been updated to improve clarity and encourage parents to refer to school websites.
- It was previously noted that TUPE meetings had not taken place prior to academisation of Trinity Primary. SM and CM confirmed that TUPE meetings had taken place at the time, with HR and Union present.
- Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Admissions: Determined Admission Arrangements 2025-26

- Co-ordinated admissions schemes and other admission arrangements have been published at <http://devon.cc/lapolicies>.
- Own admission authority schools have until 15 March 2024 to confirm to the LA and Diocese, and publish on their school websites.
- Draft policies for 2026/27 will be available by the end of the summer break and schools should schedule governance meetings in September to consider this, noting the draft documents are not compulsory for own admission authority schools.
- Documents to be shared with Dioceses should be available by 1 October 2024.
- All admission authorities must schedule a determination meeting before the statutory deadline of 28 February 2025.
- SOCA noted the amendments to the Coordinated Admissions Scheme, particularly relating to staff priorities, these have previously been raised.

3. Admissions: Flexi-Schooling

- A survey was circulated to secondary schools only. **ACTION: DSLS to recirculate to obtain primary views.**
- Secondary responses have indicated that some schools are aware of flexi schooling as an option for parents to request, and would be grateful for the LA to provide a template and guidance.
- Further discussion at the next meeting.
- **ACTION: DSLS to recirculate Flexi-Schooling survey to obtain primary views.**

4. Early Years Update

- New entitlements due to roll out from April 2024.
- Promotion of careers in Early Years and Childcare being developed with Reddoor Film and Media.
- Level 2 Early Years Practitioner qualification course has started with excellent take up. Hoping for a second course during the summer term to manage the demand.

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- Provider Self Update and Early Years census now live. Some issues with parents accessing information about local childcare provision now that PinPoint has ceased.
- Childcare Sufficiency Report was considered at December Cabinet and is now available to view on DCC website. There should be sufficient 2-year-old places for April 2024 but more places for under two-year-olds will be needed from September 2024.
- Capital funding is available, and the team are considering areas of highest need, and requirements to manage the new Wraparound programme.
- Information on this has been circulated by DfE to ensure access for children from 0800 – 1800 by 2026. A secondment opportunity for a Wraparound Provision programme lead is currently being advertised.
- School survey to be shared shortly to gather comprehensive information on the available offer. Primary Schools do not have to provide this themselves, however all children must be able to have access (e.g. via childminders or other local providers)
- HAF Easter holiday provision now live for parents to access. Extended criteria have been slimmed down to cover only children with benefit-related income.

5. School Organisation Update

Small Schools:

- 36 primary schools with under 50 on roll, 15 of which are LA maintained schools. 116 primary schools with under 100 on roll.
- Currently facing a falling demographic in the primary sector, volatility in pupil numbers, along with other factors, are having a significant impact for rural schools.
- Ongoing drive from DfE for all schools to be part of a Multi Academy Trust, and Devon continues to see conversions. LA continues to support local families of schools, whether MATs, or Federations.
- School Place Planning team identify and can support schools with place planning concerns which are highlighted through a wide range of demographic, pupil and performance data and information on emerging Local Plans on a Local Learning Community basis.
- School Organisation team can provide support for schools to manage statutory processes to consider possible amalgamations or mergers, Early Years provision, Resource Base provision and formal partnership arrangements.
- SOCA noted schedule of small Devon schools including the forecast Number on Roll for future years. Figures suggest a generally static position.
- It was concerning that a number of the small schools identified had not received any admissions preferences, which could impact on future numbers, particularly where there is a significant Year 6 cohort leaving in summer 24.
- SOCA welcomed the information – additional illustration of the overall impact on the school NoR would be helpful. **ACTION: SM**

Changes to DfE Guidance:

- DfE have brought in new guidance from April 24 on 'Making Significant Changes to an Academy'. A summary of the changes was considered.
- New thresholds will be in place for: removal of physical capacity in mainstream, decreasing / increasing number of pupils in Resourced Provision, decreasing places in special or AP, change of age range (incl. adding nursery provision)
- Three tier system for significant change applications will be introduced, which should simplify the current system for the most common school organisational changes.

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- All proposals will continue to require an Impact Assessment.
- LAs will be expected to set out a Sufficiency Framework setting out medium term forecasts on demand.
- LAs will be required to set out a high level school place strategic plan, which will be part of a continuous process of strategic assessment and planning.
- Expecting that strategic place planning conversations between the LA and DfE will be established more formally.

- All schools are encouraged to contact the School Organisation Team if there are any queries with regards to the changing thresholds and/or require support with any school organisational changes that may require a statutory process for maintained schools or a significant change process for academy schools.

- **School Closure:** SOCA noted the DfE in-principal agreement to close Kingswear Primary Academy School. An informal consultation is currently live until 22 March to provide Cabinet with further information as DCC is being asked to agree to the closure.
- Noted Kingswear had not featured on the small schools data spreadsheet
- **Resource Bases:** approved at Holsworthy CC and Brixington Primary. Currently consultations live for provision at Torrington Bluecoat Primary, Newport Academy Primary and West Croft Primary.
- **Pathfield:** Noted proposed phased reduction in registered places from Sept 2025 at Pathfield Special School, linked to closure of Pathways provision. A number of concerns and objections had been received as part of the consultation, and the Governing Body is pausing the proposal to consider this.
- **Langtree:** proposal to extend age range from 3-11 to 2-11 from 15 April 2024 has been approved.
- **Cranbrook new Special School :** no update available at this time regarding sponsor.
- **Glendinning** – removal of post 16 offer has been approved by the Region's Group.
- Awaiting Regional Director decision on: Lady Seawards (age range), Clyst Vale (Hearing Support Centre closure), Axminster Primary (expansion)
- SOCA noted proposed Multi Academy Trust changes and academisation proposals.

ACTION:

SM (Bill Aplin) to provide data on the overall impact on the small schools' NoR as identified in forecasting for when the annual small schools data is next submitted to SOCA.

8. Capital Programme Update

- **RAAC:** confirmation that all Devon maintained schools are RAAC-free. Colyton grammar, Exmouth CC and Petroc FE have been identified with RAAC and are being supported by DfE
- **Net Capacity Tool** update issued by DfE. This changes designation of certain room types. Initial findings using the new tool suggest it does not significantly change the overall net capacity of maintained schools.
- **Special Schools Net Capacity methodology** still awaited.
- **Condition Data Collection (CDC) Reports** ongoing, led by DfE.
- **Team experiencing** increasing pressure on LA team to provide condition surveys and capital maintenance in advance of academy conversion affecting capital maintenance scheme budget.

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- **Adaptation capital work requests** being received for capital work to enable children with a primary need of a physical disability to be educated in mainstream settings. Noted that there is no specific budget allocated in Devon to address this, which is adding additional pressure to the capital maintenance programme.
- **Capital Maintenance Scheme** planning continues. KC planning to survey schools to establish what work schools are undertaking between quinquennial surveys which can feed into programme planning.
- Mindful that challenges at school-level with rising costs and school funding has not supported smaller scale capital work to be undertaken between quinquennial surveys in schools.
- **Basic Need programmes** at Cranbrook include Cranbrook Education Campus, a 70 place special school, and a feasibility for a new primary site.
- Information at a future meeting detailing capital maintenance projects being planned at specific school sites would be helpful. **ACTION: KC to consider**
- Noted that LA capital funding allocation is yet to be announced
- RP advised the Diocese has identified a significant reduction of 51% to Diocese capital funding available over last 3 years. Figures impacted as more schools move to Academy Trusts.
- Noted that BET has several emergency works have had to be managed in addition to the agreed programme this financial year which have also impacted the overall SCA budget significantly.

ACTION:

- **KC** to consider presentation of planned capital maintenance works at next meeting
- **KC** to present information around capital funding allocations at next meeting.

9. SW Norse Update

- No update at this meeting.

Future meeting dates:

- **Tuesday 14 May 2024** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 24 September 2024** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 3 December 2024** (9.30 – 11.30)
- **Tuesday 4 March 2025** (9.30 – 11.30)