

**LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM
THURSDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2021**

Present:- Carol Cockayne (Community Representative), Mrs. M. Gambles (Community Representative), Mrs. I. Hartley (Community Representative), Mr. G. Lancashire (Community Representative), Mrs. K. Peart (Community Schools), Mrs. R. Scutt (Academies) and Councillor Watson.

Officers:- Ms. M. Jordan, Mr. C. Stones, Mrs. J. Unwin, Access to Education.

Apologies for absence were submitted by Mr. D. Fenton, Access to Education, Mrs. A. Gyte (Community Representative) and Mr. D. Shenton (Community Representative).

53. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

Due to technological difficulties, the Vice-Chair, Carol Cockayne, assumed the Chair.

(Carole Cockayne in the Chair)

54. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER, 2020

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th November, 2020.

Arising from Minute No. 48 (School Admissions Consultation for Entry in the 2022/23 Academic Year) Page 4, fourth paragraph should read "The DfE issued updated Summer Born Guidance in September and, when the opportunity arises, is committed to making a legislative change to enable children to remain with the cohort with which they were admitted throughout their education."

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th November, 2020, subject to the above clerical correction, be approved as a correct record.

55. SCHOOLS ADMISSION CONSULTATION - OUTCOME FOR THE 2022/23 ACADEMIC YEAR

Further to Minute No. 486 of the previous meeting of the Local Admissions Forum consideration was given to the report which detailed the admission arrangements (criteria and admission number) following the consultation outcome, which would apply for admission in 2022/23.

The timetable for the year was:-

Autumn Term 2020	Governing Bodies consider the arrangements which will apply
By 20th November, 2020	All relevant details to be forwarded to the Local Authority
7 th December 2020-24 th January, 2021	Period of consultation via the Local Authority's website
By mid-February	Local Authority and the Local Admissions Forum consider any changes and forward any comments to appropriate Admission Authority(ies)
By 19th February, 2021	All admission authorities to determine their arrangements and notify those consulted

The report included information relating to:-

- Admission numbers and criteria for Community and Controlled Schools, Voluntary Aided Schools/Academies/Trust Schools
- admission of children outside their normal age group and summer born children
- Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements
- Waiting List
- Local Authority 'Admission to School' Booklets
- Consideration of the 'relevant area'
- In Year Admissions Policy

It was also noted that the DfE was currently consulting on changes to the School Admissions Code. Proposed changes included the introduction of timescales for processing In Year applications, and definitions regarding what was considered to be challenging behaviour, revisions to categories and timescales for Fair Access protocol cases, consideration of applications for previously Looked After Children from overseas and those from Service families.

The DfE had indicated the intention was to introduce the new Code during the Spring Term 2021 subject to consultation

The admission arrangements for all Rotherham schools would be published on the Council's website.

Agreed:- That the information be supported.

56. UPDATE ON ADMISSIONS AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ALLOCATIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2021

It was reported that the final checks were being undertaken before notification was sent to parents as to which secondary school their child had been allocated. The expectation is that the usual schools will be oversubscribed, however, there will be availability in other schools.

There had been a slight increase in the number of online applications with the vast majority of parents having applied via that method. They would receive an email informing them of the place allocated unless they had opted not to do so. The remainder would receive a letter through the post. The online decisions would be received early on 1st March with the postal decisions due to arrive the same day subject to postal delivery.

Despite 4 reminder letters and emails from schools, there were still 41 parents who had not submitted applications.

Agreed:- That the update be noted.

57. SCHOOL APPEALS - STATISTICS REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which provided a snapshot of the numbers of school admission appeals received and the appeal hearings taking place and provided statistics for the full academic years 2019/20 and to date 2020/21 school year.

It was noted that not as many virtual appeals a day were scheduled as physical appeals had been to allow for any technological problems that may arise. There was always a spare slot at the end of the day in case the technology had failed to enable a second opportunity to hear a case. Not all panellists were taking part in virtual appeals due to them not feeling comfortable with the technology.

Marina Jordan, Access to Education, also reported that the temporary regulations (The School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020) issued by the DfE in April, 2020, had now been extended until 30th September, 2021. This gave the flexibility to hear appeals either by telephone, video or on the basis of the written submission.

This also meant that the deadlines for the submission of appeals, hearing of appeals and the deadline for the Clerk's decision letters to be issued, had been extended. The Council's website was being updated to reflect the new Regulations.

Both Carol Cockayne and Marilyn Gambles felt that the virtual appeals worked very well with no negative comments made by parents.

Agreed:- That the information be noted.

(Irene Hartley joined the meeting and assumed the role as Chair.)

58. SCHOOL ORGANISATION - UPDATE

The following updates was provided:-

- Aston Academy – a 2 year expansion programme in progress
- Rawmarsh Academy – expansion programme currently at the tendering stage
- Consultation underway on a new Social, Emotional and Mental Health school on the former Dinnington College Campus including the seeking of a sponsor

Agreed:- That the update be noted.

59. SCHOOL TERM DATES CONSULTATION FOR 2022/23 - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 51 of the previous meeting held on 19th November, 2020, feedback was provided on the proposed term dates for 2022/23.

The Rotherham consultation would shortly come to an end as would Sheffield City Council's. Barnsley's consultation had now ended. It was anticipated that Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield's term calendar would match but Doncaster was still consulting on a 2 week October half term.

Agreed:- That the information be noted and a further update submitted to the next meeting

60. FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL - UPDATE

The Fair Access process had continued as applications/appeals had been progressing in the usual way, despite lockdown. Schools/parents/children and LA staff did their best as well to try and make sure everything that could be done had been done.

The Strategic Fair Access Panel met remotely the last secondary meeting having taken place on 28th January with a further planned for 11th March. There had been 12 secondary cases between 1st December-31st December, 2020, which was an increase of one for the same period last year.

There had been no Primary Fair Access cases within the Autumn term a similar position as to that of last year.

Agreed:- That the update be noted.

61. ACADEMY CONVERSIONS AND MULTI ACADEMY TRUST UPDATES

The Forum noted the updated list of Rotherham schools which had converted/about to convert to academies as at February 2021.

62. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That a further meeting be held on Thursday, 17th June, 2021, commencing at 10.00 a.m.