

**LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM
THURSDAY 24 JUNE 2021**

Present:- Mrs. I. Hartley (in the Chair), Mrs. M. Gambles Mrs. A. Gyte, Mr. G. Lancashire (Community Representatives), Mrs. K. Peart (Community Schools), Mrs. R. Scutt (Academies).

Officers:- Mr. D. Fenton, Mr. C. Stones and Mrs. J. Unwin (Access to Education).

Apologies for absence were received from:- Mrs. C. Cockayne and Mr. D. Shenton (Community Representatives) and Ms. M. Jordan (Access to Education).

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH FEBRUARY 2021

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th February, 2021.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th February, 2021, be approved as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

3. THE LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT TO THE SCHOOL ADJUDICATOR

Consideration was given to the progress in submitting the annual report to the School's Adjudicator setting out the admission arrangements for Rotherham, which must be done so by the 30th June, 2021 deadline.

The annual report had been approved by the Departmental Leadership Team last week.

Agreed:- That the progress and submitting of the annual report to the School's Adjudicator be noted.

4. ACADEMIES UPDATE

The Forum noted there had been no academy conversions since the last report had been received.

5. ADMISSIONS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the latest position in terms of Admissions and the service were preparing for the opening of the 2022 secondary admissions round on 1st July.

It was also noted that the Department for Education had been out to consultation on the contents of a new updated Admissions Code. This was to be laid in Parliament and subject to approval. It was expected this new Admissions Code would come into operation from the 1st September, 2021.

The main changes to the Code where the shortened time for the processing of applications from receipt, definitions of challenging behaviour, inclusion of “internationally adopted previously looked after children” being included in the qualification criteria and referrals to the Fair Access Panel.

Once the Code had been approved this would be re-circulated to all schools. Head Teachers had had sight of the Code in draft format.

It was proposed that an update on the Code details be provided for the next Forum Meeting and a copy circulated to all stakeholders include Admission Appeal Panel Members.

Agreed:- (1) That the revised Admissions Code be included as an agenda item for the next meeting.

(2) That once approved the revised Admissions Code be circulated to all stakeholders, schools and Admission Appeal Panel Members.

6. SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the update on the status of admission appeals.

The D.f.E. had extended the Regulations which enabled changes to school admission appeals, due to Coronavirus (Covid 19), until 30th September, 2021. Appeals have, therefore, being done remotely with parents choosing the method via video conference, telephone conference or based on their written submission.

The majority of parents have chosen to have their appeal via the video conference option. When asked parents have found the virtual process via Microsoft Teams useful.

Further updates from the D.f.E. were awaited to see whether virtual appeals could be extended past the end of September, 2021 timeline.

In terms of current appeals, dates have been set right up to the end of Summer Term and, as usual, this continued to be a very busy time of year for parents making applications and appeals for school places.

It was also noted in terms of the national offer days 90% of applications received their first choice and a place from the three choices combined

was above the national average.

Agreed:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

7. FAIR ACCESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Fair Access Update and Forum Members were advised that young people of secondary age would continue to be referred in terms of fair access onto the South, Central and Wickersley Pupil Management Groups for consideration. Where they could not be placed they would then be referred onto the Strategic Fair Access Panel for placement.

These groups have worked well this academic year with placing students, despite the many challenges the various lockdowns have presented for students and staff. There was one more meeting of these groups prior to the end of term to try to ensure pupils were placed in schools/educational provision in a timely manner.

There had been no requirement for Fair Access Panels for primary age children this academic year, as all students have been placed via the admissions/appeals processes.

Forum Members were advised about the D.f.E. publishing a new Admissions Code of Practice in May, 2021 coming into effect from September, 2021, subject to Parliamentary approval.

This revised Code built on the requirements of the previous Code with a few changes including slight alterations to the specific groups of pupils which may be considered under the Fair Access Protocol. There were also specified timelines for allocation of places for when children considered under the Fair Access Protocol.

A consultation document would be provided to primary and secondary schools to advise them of these changes shortly.

Agreed:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION UPDATE

An update was provided on the current position with regards to the progress on the Free School application for the SEMH provision at the former Dinnington College.

Wellspring Academy Trust based in Barnsley had been the successful applicant following the submitting of bids, shortlisting and coming before the Selection Panel. An update report on progress would be included on the agenda for September, 2021.

The Forum welcomed this exciting new school which would be excellent

educational provision, more so for those students who have struggled and had their needs compounded by the pandemic.

All schools had robust plans in place for those children who needed extra support and whilst there was a wide spectrum of need as a result of the last eighteen months, the challenges being faced by some schools the position was improving.

Agreed:- (1) That the update be received and the contents noted.

(2) That a further update on progress of the new SEMH Free School be provided for the next meeting.

9. UPDATE ON TERM DATES FOR 2021/22 AND 2022/23

An update was provided on the current position with regards to term dates for 2021/22 which included the additional bank holiday, and with regards to 2022/23 this had been distributed to all schools.

Whilst Doncaster had deviated from the traditional one week to two weeks at October half term in 2021/22, they had reverted back to one week for 2022/23.

A further update on term dates would be provided for the next meeting.

Agreed:- (1) That the update be received and the contents noted.

(2) That a further update on term dates be provided at the next meeting.

10. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Local Admissions Forum take place on Thursday, 18th November, 2021 at 10.00 a.m.