

**LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM  
THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024**

Present:- Ms. K. Beresford, Mrs M. Gambles; Mrs.. I. Hartley, Ms. R. Hibbard: Mrs. J. Hudson and Mr. D. Shenton

Also present:- Ms. S. Gilbert Education Services Manager; Ms M. Jordan, Principal Officer – Appeals and Fair Access; Mr C. Stones, Principal Officer – Access to Education; Ms S. Whitby, Service Lead – Access to Education; and Ms. J. Unwin, Principal Officer - School Admissions.

**9. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM**

**Agreed:-** That Mrs I. Hartley be appointed as Chair of the Rotherham Local Admissions Forum for the 2024/25 academic year.

**10. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM**

**Agreed:-** That Mrs M. Gambles be appointed Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Local Admissions Forum for the 2024/25 academic year.

**11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ms K.Peart and Mrs A. Gyte

Councillors Cusworth and Allen.

**12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH JUNE, 2024**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 June 2024.

**Agreed:** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

**13. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

With regards to Minute No.2 (Matters arising from previous minutes), an update was provided on Bassingthorpe Farm at Greasborough and plans to expand Waverley school. It was noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the Greasborough development, with a report to be presented to Cabinet for decision in due course. In respect of Waverley, the expansion was proceeding as planned.

**14. MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM**

Formal discussion of this item was deferred until the next meeting. In the interim, Mr Stone would contact schools to seek representatives and the Governance Adviser would contact the existing membership to ascertain if they still wished to be included in the membership of this forum.

**15. LOCAL ADMISSION FORUM TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONDITIONS AND CONSTITUTION**

Discussion of this item was deferred until the next meeting.

**16. SCHOOL ADJUDICATOR REPORT FOR 2024**

Consideration was given to the Annual School Adjudicator Report for 2024, noting the submission date of 31st October, 2024.

It was noted that in total, over 3,400 school place offers were made to pupils in Rotherham – 3,161 (92%) of which were for their first preference school. In all, 97.4% of pupils in Rotherham had been offered a place at one of their three preferred schools this Year. Other reported areas included higher numbers of in-year transfer applications and referrals through the Fair Access Protocol, how well admission arrangements for looked after children and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities were working.

**Agreed:-** That the Annual School Adjudicator Report 2024 be received and the contents noted.

**17. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENTRY IN THE 2026/2027 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Consideration was given to the consultation document sent to all schools regarding the proposed admission arrangements (i.e., criteria and admission number) which would apply for school admission in the 2026/2027 academic year.

As per the prescriptive timetable the details would be subject to a period of wider consultation from 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 to 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2025.

The report referred the admission criteria and numbers for both community and controlled schools and for voluntary aided schools, academies and trust schools.

Also included within the report were details of each school and academies proposed admission number for 2026/2027. There were no changes proposed to the oversubscription criteria or catchment for any Community and Voluntary controlled schools.

Additional information 'Starting Reception' had been added to the proposed document to make clear the arrangements for children starting

school in Reception, in line with the provisions as set out in the School Admission Code.

Consultation would be distributed to the consultees specified in the Code, in addition to it being available on the Council's website and publicised through RMBC social media channels. Consultees will be invited to respond via an online survey, hosted on the RMBC webpages. Parallel consultation was also planned in respect of the 'Relevant Area'.

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

(2) That the finalised document submitted to the February 2025 meeting for approval.

## 18. SCHOOL ORGANISATION UPDATE

Consideration was given to an update on school organisation. It was noted that consultation was to commence on the proposal to change the age range at the Sitwell Infant School, extending the cohort to include children from 3 years to the current 4 to 7 age range. This adjustment was partly due to a reduction in the school Published Admission Number (PAN) from 75 to 60 last year, which resulted in an available classroom.

The consultation would be published on the Council's consultation webpage and in local print media shortly. Comments from the consultation would be reviewed by Senior Managers. The proposed change aligned with a growing demand for early years education.

Additionally, an update was provided on the upcoming consultation for the 2026/27 admission arrangements by the admission authority. A few primary schools are consulting on reducing their PAN for first admissions. It was clarified that this was due to the falling birth-rate rather than a rise in numbers of children home educated. The Service Lead for Access to Education noted that a report on home education would be presented to the Council's Improving Lives Select Commission in December 2024.

**Agreed:-** That the update be received and the content noted.

## 19. ADMISSIONS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the latest update on admissions. It was noted that all allocations for the last academic year had been completed, and the team was monitoring to ensure all students had taken up their places as expected. The application window for secondary admissions for 2025 opened as scheduled and closed on 31st October.

Information about admissions was widely published on social media and circulated via email to schools, resulting in a significant number of applications and enquiries. It was noted that some applications were

outstanding, with several families yet to apply or respond, despite multiple reminders. Primary schools had encouraged families to submit applications, but there were still 250 applications missing across the cohort.

The panel expressed its appreciation to the Access to Education Team for its excellent work, despite staffing challenges. It was noted that three new team members will join in January to provide additional support.

**Agreed:-** That the update be received and the content noted.

## 20. UPDATE ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL

Consideration was given to the latest position with regards to the Primary and Secondary Fair Access Protocol. It was noted that new arrangements had been implemented from September 2024.

Under these arrangements, the previous Pupil Management Group for secondary schools was replaced by Locality Partnership Panels, which now incorporate both the Pupil Management Group and the Secondary Inclusion Panel.

The Locality Partnership Panels met every three weeks, reducing the time children spent out of school. If a panel could not place a child, the case was automatically referred to the Strategic Fair Access Team, which met the following week to facilitate placement.

In primary schools, most placements were arranged efficiently by phone, due to strong support from school staff.

Overall, these changes reduced the time children spent out of school, with Fair Access Protocol operations functioning independently of the school appeals process. However, it was noted that the Appeal Panel would receive information about the number of pupils placed through the Fair Access Protocol when considering Admission Appeals.

**Agreed:-** That the update be received and the content noted.

## 21. SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the submitted report which set out the latest position for admission appeals received and the number of appeals taking place. Statistics included the full 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic year.

It was noted that training on the appeals process had been provided, with an invitation extended to forum members to attend.

**Agreed:-** That the update be received and the content noted.

**22. ACADEMIES UPDATE - OCTOBER, 2024**

The Forum noted the list of Rotherham schools that had already converted or were about to convert to academies. It was highlighted that only 19 schools remained under the authority, three of which were in the process of academisation.

**Agreed:-** That the information be received, and the contents noted.

**23. TERM DATES CONSULTATION FOR 2026/27**

It was noted that consultation on the school calendar for the 2026/27 academic year would take place with schools in January 2025 and be approved in February 2025.

**Agreed:-** The calendar update be received and the contents noted.