

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

King Charles Centre, Surbiton

Wednesday 6 July 2011

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present:

Sinead Noble (Chair)

Dr Carol Jerwood

Anna-Marie Boyd

Councillor Andrea Craig

Councillor David Ryder-Mills

Rhammel Afflick

Marianne Cohen

Officers:

Tina Herring (Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness)

Hatija Bhatia (Principal Admissions & Governance Officer)

Julie Ely (Strategic Manager SEN Assessment & Support for Learning)

1. APOLOGIES

Sunil Chotai, Michael Hall, Tom Cahill, Pam Dryden, Tracey Coton,
Rev Fr Martin Hislop, Amtul Lally Malik

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, 16 February 2011 were approved.

4. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE EXPANSION OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES

The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness gave a verbal update on progress with the plans for the two phased permanent expansion programme agreed by Executive on 30 June

She explained that all Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (RBK) families will shortly be receiving a letter from Councillors encouraging them to make their views known about the lack of money for school expansion.

Plans are progressing for the new primary school in Surbiton which is expected to open in September 2012. Provider competition is well underway, with bids from Lilac schools and Surbiton Education Health Trust and both bids are on the basis of community schools' admissions criteria.

Admissions processes for primary entry in September 2011 had gone well. It was noted that bulge classes have been added and there is a low level of surplus places, concentrated in a few schools. For secondary admissions in September 2011, the process had been similarly smooth, there are few vacancies and the position in terms of places for girls was described as being very 'tight.'

The Service Director outlined plans for a soft federation between St John's C of E Primary School and King Athelstan Primary School for a period of 2 years with effect from March 2012. Both Headteachers will remain in post with the Head of St John's becoming the Executive Head. Consultation will consider the future status of King Athelstan as a voluntary controlled school with a religious character, with staff and land remaining the responsibility of the Local Authority. Voluntary controlled schools adopt a community schools admissions policy. The federation will hopefully result in there being a greater choice of schools judge good and better by Ofsted.

The Service Director advised the Forum that slower progress is being made with plans for the new Secondary School. Whilst the Council has identified £5m funding for basic needs, it is concerned that this will be insufficient to address the current peak of primary pupils in Year 3 who will transfer to secondary school in September 2015; equivalent to 8 additional forms of entry. The Council is mindful that building will need to begin in September 2012 if we are to have sufficient places available. **Members of the forum agreed to write expressing concern.**

It was noted that all Kingston Borough secondary schools have now expressed an interest in becoming academies. They have all given a commitment to continue working together and with the Local Authority (LA).

5. SECONDARY SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2011 (Appendix A)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer presented the report informing Members that to date there are 5 pupils without a known destination for September and that appeals have taken place for all schools. There are vacancies in the boys' schools but at the time of the meeting, there were no vacancies for girls.

On 1 March 2011, out of 1473 RBK applicants, 63% of parents received an offer of a place at their first preferred secondary school. 97% of parents have received an offer of one of their preferred schools. For September 2010, the figures were 60% and 95% respectively. 55 Kingston Borough pupils did not receive an offer for any of the secondary schools which they named as their

preference (the figure was 80 in 2010). 26 out of the 55 were initially allocated a place at their nearest Kingston Borough school with a vacancy.

As at 24 June 2011, there were 6 children (2 girls and 3 boys) Kingston Borough children without a known destination of a school in September 2011 and all of these children have been offered alternative places at schools with vacancies. In comparison, on 24 June 2010 there were 4 children without a known destination for September 2010.

6. PRIMARY SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2011 (Appendix B)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer explained that this was the first year for cross borough primary coordination where each applicant applied via their Home LA for a school place whether this was for a school inside or outside their Home LA.

By the Pan London allocation date of 4 April 2011, a total of 1871 applications were received from RBK residents. Of these, 82% were offered their highest preference and 95% (1773) were offered one of their preferences. There were 5% (98) RBK residents without a preference offer of which 75 received an allocated offer. In total, 1848 residents received an offer and 23 residents were without an initial offer which represents 1.2% of total applicants.

Last year, there was no cross borough co-ordination, so it is difficult to make a meaningful comparison. In 2010, a total of 1632 RBK children made an application for a Kingston Borough school and 94 were not offered a Kingston Borough school place on allocation day. 83% of RBK residents were offered their highest preference and 94% were offered a preference. 6% (94) were not offered a preference.

Following this year's initial allocation, out of 29 infant and primary schools offering Reception places, waiting lists have been maintained for 26 oversubscribed schools, and further offers of places at these schools have been made as parents refused initial offers for a more preferred school.

As a part of the primary expansion strategy, a total of 330 extra Reception places have been added across 12 schools in response to the increased demand for places. 7 schools are being permanently expanded to add 195 places and a further 5 schools are being temporarily expanded to create 135 extra places. This increased the capacity of Reception places in 12 Kingston schools from 1575 to 1905.

The schools being permanently expanded to add capacity for Reception places are Alexandra Infant, Burlington Infant and Nursery, Ellingham Primary, Fern Hill Primary, Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery, Latchmere and St Matthew's C of E Primary schools.

The schools which are being temporarily expanded to create 135 extra places are Coombe Hill Infant, Castle Hill Primary, Maple Infant, St Joseph's Catholic Primary and Tolworth Infant and Nursery schools.

As at time of the meeting, there are 21 children without a known destination although only 3 of these were from the original allocation and 18 are new or late applicants. With 35 potential places available, at the present time, the current capacity is able to meet the known demand to date.

7. CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS & APPEALS CODE (Appendix C, C1 7C2)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer led a discussion on the Government's proposals addressing questions 1-10 of the response form. It was noted that questions 11-14 required a technical response.

It was agreed that any further comments from members of the Forum received before 23 July 2011 could be incorporated.

8. REVIEW OF CHOICE ADVICE (Appendix D)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer provided an update on those families who accessed the service to assist them in making an application for September 2011.

The Forum noted that funding for this service has ceased and the current draft School Admissions Code does not contain any requirement for Local Authorities to continue to provide a Choice Advice service.

Kingston's Choice Advice Service is provided by the Family Support team who work across the Borough and have pre-existing links with schools in the four clusters. The team was provided with information, training and support from the School Admissions service before they contacted primary schools in their cluster to identify the link contact at the school, explain the process for referral and ask schools to identify families who may need this additional support.

For secondary admissions in September 2011, a total 78 referrals were received initially (compared with 132 for September 2010) and out of these, 39 families (compared to 45 in 2010) have been supported to make an application for secondary school.

From the initial numbers identified, many decided they did not require support. The majority of those, who received support, had telephone and one to one contact. Other forms of support included help with completing an application and a couple of visits to secondary school open events with parents.

Out of the 39 families who were supported, 4 of the children were assessed and placed under the statutory process of Special Educational Needs.

Of the remaining 35, 100% received a preference offer and this compares favourably with 97% of all Kingston Borough resident applicants receiving a preference offer.

Members will be aware from the previous report in February that the Government announced cuts in grant funding which include the funding it has provided to LAs for the Choice Advice Service.

The draft School Admissions Code, which is currently under consultation, has removed the statutory requirement to have an independent Choice Advice Service. However, the requirement on LAs to provide advice and assistance to parents when choosing a school remains. This was highlighted in the Government's 'Schools White Paper – The Importance of Teaching' which specifies that the duty on LAs in relation to admissions is to ensure fair access to all schools for every child.

The LA and primary schools will continue to work collaboratively to support parents who require extra support when applying for their child's secondary school. This support has been in place before and during the presence of a Choice Advice Service in Kingston Borough.

The Council will continue to provide transfer to secondary school meetings held each year during the Autumn term, that all parents can access at different times and across 4 locations in the Borough. In addition, primary schools continue to support their parents directly and families will continue to receive support from the School Admissions team either on the telephone or by a face to face meeting in Council offices

9. INFORMATION ITEMS (Appendix E)

Following the report presented to the Forum in February 2011, the Principal Admissions & Governance Officer gave an update on the consultation undertaken by Foundation Admission Authorities. A total of 10 primary schools consulted out of a total of 14 Admission authority schools and a total of 5 out of 6 secondary admission authority schools consulted for September 2012.

The schools that consulted were:

Primary Schools:

- Christ Church C of E New Malden Primary School
- Christ Church C of E Primary School (Surbiton)
- Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School
- St Agatha's Catholic Primary School
- St John's C of E Primary School

St Luke's C of E Primary School
St Mary's C of E Primary School
St Matthew's C of E Primary School
St Paul's C of E Junior School
St Paul's C of E Primary School

Secondary Schools:

The Holy Cross School
The Hollyfield School
Richard Challoner School
The Tiffin Girls' School
Tiffin School

In relation to Fair Access, the Forum noted the information contained within the report; Fair Access forms a part of the current consultation on the School Admissions Code. A review of existing protocols is deferred until the new Code is published. This is likely to be early 2012.

Since September 2010 to date, a total of 3 placements have been made at 3 schools. Last year there were a total of 5 placements made across 4 schools.

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer set out the number of in year applications which had been processed to date; a total of 961 applications of which 610 related to primary schools (58% from Kingston Borough residents) and 351 to secondary schools (73% from Kingston Borough residents).

The Forum noted the retirement of Michael Reading, a longstanding Governor at Lovelace Primary School and recorded its appreciation to him for his contribution to the work of the SAF over many years.

DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

11 October 2011
22 February 2012

All meetings will be held at King Charles Centre at 6:30 pm