

KENT SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Schools Admissions Forum held in the Seminar Lecture Theatre, Sessions House, County Hall Maidstone on Monday, 24 November 2008.

PRESENT: Ms V Bentley, Mrs K Box (substitute for Mr F Green), Ms S Carey (substitute for Mr J Simmonds), Mr D Knights (substitute for Mrs F Cottam), Ms R Matthews, Mrs J Morgan, Ms A Nee, Mr S Parr, Mr J Speller, Mrs P Stockell, Mr P Tolputt, Mrs L Willis and Mr M Vye (Chairman).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr S Bagshaw, Head of Admissions and Transport; Mr A Duncan, Policy Officer; Mr C McKenzie, Medway Council and Mr G Rudd, Clerk to the Forum.

APOLOGIES: Mrs C Angell, Mr I Bauckham, Mrs F Cottam, Mrs V Fitch, Mrs P Gibson, Mr F Green, Mr J Gunnell, Mr J Simmonds, Mr J Smith, Mr J Watt and Mr G Wetherell.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

35. Substitutes *(Item 1)*

Ms Nee commented that according to the 2002 Statutory Instrument nominated substitutes must be from the same school group. Mr Rudd advised that the Forum had originally agreed that the core Member would nominate a substitute. He noted Ms Nee's comments for future reference.

36. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2008 *(Item 2)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2008 are correctly recorded, subject to the insertion of Mr M Vye under those present, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

37. Matters Arising *(Item 3)*

(1) Mr Vye referred to paragraph 25(1)(a) and advised the Forum that legally the reply from Mrs Curle had been given to him as a County Councillor ran from the Legal Services Solicitor and that he could not divulge what was said. He informed the Forum Members that it was their prerogative to write to Mrs Curle if they wished.

(2) Mr Vye also referred to paragraph 26(4)(c) regarding schools being put under pressure with additional pupils. He had noted that the Draft Admissions Code addressed this issue. Mr Bagshaw confirmed that he would capture this information for the next meeting.

38. Membership of Forum
(Item 4)

- (1) Mr Vye welcomed Mr J Speller as the Community Grammar School representative.
- (2) Mr Rudd confirmed that he would continue to liaise with Ella Hughes regarding replacement Members for Mrs S Dennis and Mr M Carroll.
- (3) The Forum wished to record its gratitude to both Mrs Dennis and Mr Carroll for their contributions to the work of the Forum and requested that Mr Rudd write to them both accordingly. Mr Rudd confirmed that he would do this.
- (4) Mr Rudd agreed to circulate a revised membership list to all Members of the Forum.

39. Terms of Reference
(Item 5)

The Forum agreed that it did not have anything to discuss under this item.

40. Update on Admission Forum Annual Report Process
(Item 6)

- (1) Mr Vye introduced this item and invited Mr Bagshaw to update the Members.
- (2) Mr Bagshaw circulated a revised copy of the Report and advised Members that the latest date for comments was December as the report needed to be published by January 2009. He reported that his priority was to deal with the co-ordinated schemes admissions arrangements but for the purposes of the Report he would need the information. Mr Vye invited Members to send comments direct to him by two weeks at the latest. He reminded Members that the Forum endeavoured to reflect the differences of opinion in any report it made.
- (3) Mr Vye invited comments and suggested working through the sections.
 - (a) Ms Carey felt that it would be useful to have more information about the Forum, its role and contacts.
 - (b) Ms Matthews sought clarification as to whether the Primary graphs contained raw data. Mr Bagshaw was able to confirm this.
 - (c) Mrs Stockell referred to the Gender Variations in the Kent Test and suggested that the reference should refer to grammar school education. Mr Vye felt that it would be helpful to include information as percentages. Mr Tolputt has concerns about the use of percentages as it could be misleading with the variance in areas of Tunbridge Wells higher than Thanet. Mr Vye asked whether this could be shown. Mr Bagshaw noted these points and agreed to try to commission further analysis.
 - (d) Ms Nee commented that the pass mark was dependent on the numbers taking the test and referred to the standardisation process. Mr Bagshaw clarified that the pass marks were set in relation to the number of pupils in the cohort and not the number taking the test. He reminded Members that the passing of the test accounted for approximately 22% going up to 25% following the Headteacher assessment stage. Ms Nee asked that the

numbers of First, Second and Third preferences be shown. Mr Bagshaw confirmed that this was identified in the charts in the first section of the report.

- (e) Ms Matthews asked for the March and September figures to be shown on the type of school basis. Mr Bagshaw agreed to discuss whether such a report could be put together in the time available. Mr Speller commented that some pupils assessed as Grammar actually go on to the Independent Sector.
- (f) Mr Knight referred to the places available chart and suggested that percentages would be helpful and that there appeared to be a discrepancy with Dane Court. Mr Bagshaw agreed to check the figures in the chart.
- (g) Ms Matthews referred to the Gender Variation issues and would like to see this compared with other criteria eg free meals. Mr Vye agreed that the percentage of pupils in each category of school from Looked After Children, Additional Educational Needs and Free School Meals should be capturable. Mr Bagshaw agreed that once the child was in school the information could be caught. He referred to the tables at the back of the report which could be converted into graphical information but advised that he would need Management Information to supply such charts for inclusion.
- (h) Mr Parr felt that the report process was about looking at how admissions work in the area. Mr Vye agreed that it should be relevant as far as data is capturable and workload allows.
- (i) Ms Carey referred to the under subscribed school data and felt that this might be misleading in respect of the Churchill School, Hawkinge as it was a new school just starting to fill up. Ms Carey also referred to academies taking a biggest proportion of pupils especially where they have been able to turn the least subscribed schools into over subscribed academies eg Channel School to Folkestone Academy and the Ramsgate School to Marlowe Academy. Mr Vye agreed that this change in take up of places should be reflected. Mr Bagshaw agreed to try to look back and compare over the years but was not sure how this could be done. He confirmed that the academies were still keen to co-operate and had offered to help to provide data. He advised the Forum that he would need to check with Management Information as to whether data was being received in a timely fashion to meet the requests but that his officers did not have the resources available to individually collate the data from academies. Mr Vye noted the concerns about the impact of academies especially on take up of places in neighbouring schools. He suggested that this should be an item for a future report to the Forum.
- (j) Ms Matthews referred to the Admissions Appeals data and requested that it be shown broken down by type of school, Mr Bagshaw confirmed that this could be done and Mr Rudd agreed to assist in providing the data. Ms Matthews also referred to the Online Admissions Application Data and asked whether the data was raw and whether it could be put into percentage of applications. Mr Bagshaw agreed that this would be possible. Mrs Stockell noted that there seemed to be quite a high percentage of applications achieved by this method, Mr Bagshaw confirmed that a lot of work had gone

into overcoming the previous year's problems and improving the process resulting in positive feedback from parents and a far greater take up.

- (k) Ms Nee asked whether the Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) data included gifted and talented pupils. Ms Nee also referred to the Looked After Children (LAC) data and asked whether the numbers by cluster related to number of children. Mr Bagshaw confirmed that it was the case as far as he was aware but committed to confirm this and provide clearer description on the charts. Mr Knight agreed that these did need clarification as to what the numbers represent. Mr Bagshaw agreed to check these points. He also confirmed that he would be separating the LAC and SEN data into different charts as they were not related.
- (l) Mr Vye referred to the information concerning the ten secondary schools with the highest scores on the index of Multiple Deprivation. He noted that in nearly all cases the places offered at those schools were at or close to the Published Admissions Number. Mr Bagshaw advised the Forum that for some schools this would be the result of the LA allocating pupils who had not received one of their preferences to a school with places available.
- (m) Mrs Stockell asked where the report would go after being submitted to the Forum. Mr Vye suggested that the Education Policy Overview Committee might find it useful to see the information although it could not influence it. Mrs Stockell agreed. Ms Nee requested that a glossary showing jargon be added to any information going on line. Mr Vye advised that whilst the Report was for the Government's benefit, it could also be used by the Forum to identify priority issues to seek further information..
- (n) Ms Matthews referred to the data relating to Free School Meals and asked why Tunbridge Wells has all four colourbands. Mr Speller took it to be the number of schools not pupils. Mr Bagshaw agreed with Mr Speller and committed to looking again at the way this data was presented.
- (o) Mr Vye advised Members that this was an ongoing development and that in the future the LA would produce the Report and the Forum would be invited to scrutinise it. Mr Bagshaw re-iterated that the Members submitted their request to Mr Vye he would do his best to put together the amendments requested. Mr Vye concluded this item by thanking Mr Bagshaw on the Forum's behalf for the work carried out so far.

41. Admissions Code Consultation Update/The Proposed Primary and Secondary Schemes for Consultation/Consultation on Admission Arrangements for Community and VC Schools
(Items 7, 8 and 9)

- (1) Mr Bagshaw requested that these items be considered together and circulated additional documents relating to consultation on the 2010 admissions arrangements.
- (2) Mr Vye referred to his papers submitted with the agenda and advised the Members that he had looked at the Admissions Code Consultation document and had made his own comments as the Forum had not had time to comment. He had wished to see the Admissions Forum continue especially in Kent with its differences and the need at times for a consensus view to be reached. He also referred to its scrutiny role.

(3) Mr Bagshaw reported that the DCSF were hoping to have the new Code out in January 2009 with the anticipated implementation in early February 2009 in line with the proposed schemes although there was some resistance to this by the London Authorities. He reported that a version of the new Code was likely to be available for viewing on line in December. He also reported that if Kent was to deliver its testing before preference, the date could not be moved back to the third week in October 2009. He anticipated that early November 2009 would be the closing date or at least be allowed data for Local Authorities where testing takes place.

(4) Mr Bagshaw referred to scheme consultation document circulated and advised that Kent LA ordinarily had undertaken its consultation in November, but that the new regulations stated that this should be for eight weeks and not before 1 December but must be completed by 1 March. Mr Bagshaw commented on the pressure of administration analysis and getting through Cabinet to publish the admission arrangements in time. The DCSF had been lobbied on this point and Kent's views has been expressed.

(5) Mr Parr confirmed that the Roman Catholic Diocese schools had been asked to come back with the information by the end of November and to get this out by January. Mr Bagshaw acknowledged this and advised that he would be happy to liaise and communicate as effectively as possible to deal with the new arrangements. He advised that he would be happy to visit schools and governors if necessary.

(6) Mr Vye invited comments on Mr Bagshaw's presentation.

(a) In reponse to Mrs Matthews, Mr Bagshaw confirmed that he would be placing an advertisement in the free papers drawing parents attention to the process involved.

(b) Mr Vye referred to the Admissions Code and Published Admissions Number issue where the Code says this can be increased if it does not harm other schools but it is in contradiction with its views on the impact on schools. Mr Bagshaw agreed that this was one of the difficulties where different people are writing different parts of the Code. He confirmed that this concern had been made to the DCSF as part of the LA's response particularly with regard to the impact this could have on a community if its locally based schools were closed.

(7) Mr Bagshaw requested comments on the consultation arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools by Thursday, 27 November 2008. He advised that there were no changes proposed to the Primary Scheme but that there may be changes when the new Code comes out.

42. Members Expenses *(Item 10)*

Mr Rudd confirmed that Members travelling expenses would be paid with effect from April 2008 at a rate of 40 pence per mile. He distributed expense forms and requested that Members submitting claims should return the form to him, together with bank account details and petrol/VAT receipts.

43. Any Other Business *(Item 11)*

Admissions Appeals

(1) Mr Bagshaw referred to a conference that he recently attended where it was stated that more parents were bringing legal representation with them. Mr Rudd commented that this was not apparent but that he felt that more parents were using the services of educational appeal consultants to help them in their appeal process.

Mr Bagshaw raised concerns that the code had imposed unrealistic timescales for an authority the size of Kent and he hoped that the concerns he had raised would be accommodated in the new code to avoid the difficulties caused this year.

(2) Mr Rudd advised the Forum that Independent Appeals Panel Members would continue to receive training especially in the light of any changes to the Appeals Code.

44. Dates of future meetings *(Item 12)*

(1) The Members expressed a preference for 2.00 pm Thursday, 5 February 2009 in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall. Mr Rudd agreed to try to arrange the next meeting accordingly. An alternative date suggested by the Members was 2.00 pm Tuesday, 10 February 2009.

(2) Mr Rudd and Mr Bagshaw agreed to set out proposed meeting dates throughout 2009 during key times of the year following the February meeting.