

MINUTES of the meeting of Local Admissions Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Tuesday, 6th July, 2004 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:	Local Education Authority	J.P. Thomas (Chairman)
	Church Representative	Revd. I. Terry (Church of England)
	Headteachers	H Hines (VA Primary School) and A Marson (Bishop of Hereford & St Mary's RC Schools)
	School Governors	Ms K. Fitch (Primary Schools) and Mr Ross (Primary Schools)
	Parent Governors	(none)
	Local Community Rep	Vanessa Pawsey (Consortium of Special Educational Needs)

In attendance: Councillors Vanessa Pawsey

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from N.P.J. Griffiths, Mrs. J.S. Powell, P. Shannon, Mrs. C. Shaw and Mrs. S. Wright.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. OUTCOMES OF PARENTAL APPLICATIONS FOR YEAR 6 PUPIL TRANSFERS TO HIGH SCHOOLS, SEPTEMBER 2004

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Officer reported to the Forum the outcomes of parental applications for Year 6 pupils into High Schools for September 2004, including details of appeals.

The Admissions and Transport Officer informed the Forum that, since the report to Education Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2004, formal appeals had now taken place for applications relating to five high schools. He reported that out of 28 appeals that took place, 12 had been upheld. Members were told that the Education Directorate was pleased with the low level of appeals. This low number was attributed to the success of new parental preference applications for Year 6 pupil transfers to high schools.

The Admissions and Transport Officer explained to the Forum that 87% of parents had received their first preference and that 96% of parents had received one of their declared 3 preferences. The success of the new application system was further reflected by the fact that only two recorded complaints had been made. This was recognised as an unusually low number.

The Forum was presented with a table detailing schools and their respective Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and the number of children on their waiting lists. Mr Marson, Secondary Headteacher Representative, informed Members that in the case of the Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School the figures presented had altered and that the waiting list had now reduced compared to the figure stated in the report.

The Admissions and Transport Officer informed the Forum that currently there were no Year 6 pupils in Herefordshire who were without a high school place for September 2004. However, this position might change if families moved into Herefordshire over the coming months.

Councillor Stone outlined a case brought to his attention from a ward member regarding a particular secondary school application. In response to questions raised by Councillor Stone the Forum discussed the general issues of the case and whether cross referencing took place between local authorities. Members discussed the general implications of the case and received clarification from officers.

Members further discussed the general situation regarding appeals for this and other popular schools and the number of appeals upheld.

RESOLVED: That the up-to-date information on the transfer of Year 6 pupils to High School for September 2005 be noted.

5. APPLYING FOR A PLACE AT HIGH SCHOOL AND STARTING SCHOOL

The Forum considered the format of the simple guidance notes in relation to admission of children into reception class at 4 years of age and the transfer of pupils into high school at age 11.

The 'Applying for a Place at High School' document was discussed as set out in the Appendix to the report. The School Services Manager explained that the document had had slight amendments made to it from last year's version, covering changes of dates and Members were advised that Worcestershire and Gloucestershire would have co-ordinated schemes from September 2005. Forum Members were informed that this document continued to be a simple and effective way of providing parents with general information on the secondary transfer process. After discussion with Forum Members the School Services Manager agreed to increase the text size to facilitate reading.

The 'Starting School' document was discussed by Forum Members as set out in Appendix 2 of the report. The School Services Manager informed the Forum that this leaflet was produced to explain to parents in basic terms the actions they were required to take if they wished to apply for a place at a particular school. Extra emphasis had been placed on the date by which applications needed to be made. Also highlighted was the issue of children who were born in the summer due to reach school age by September the following year also need to apply in order not to miss out on a reception class place. Additionally the document referred to the new

Primary Co-ordinated Scheme and the two preferences for parents. The School Services Manager informed Members that the leaflet would be available from various premises that provided services for the under 5's such as playgroups and health centres.

RESOLVED: That the 'Starting School' and 'Apply for a Place at High School' documents for printing be approved.

6. STANDARD APPLICATION FORMS FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2005/06

The Forum considered the layout of the 'common application form' to be used for the co-ordinated secondary transfer arrangement for September 2005 – SA1, and the new PA1 form for the primary co-ordinated scheme.

The School Services Manager informed the Forum that the new SA1 form, as set out in the report, had had minor amendments made to it relating to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and children in the 'looked after' system.

The new PA1 form, as appended to the report, had been designed for the extension of the parental preference system for primary schools. The School Services Manager informed the Forum that minor editorial changes had been made including the inclusion of a date for the return of completed forms. He informed the Forum that the PA1 form would be sent directly to all parents of children known to be approaching school age for them to return indicating their two preferred schools before notification of places on 21st March 2005.

It was suggested by Forum Members that Primary Schools should receive a preliminary list of new pupils during the winter term before the application deadline so that they could ascertain if any known children were missing. The Admissions and Transport Officer agreed to consider the suggestion and noted that schools often had close links with parents, so could be in a position to prompt an application which otherwise may not have been submitted.

The School Services Manager informed the Forum that a meeting with all primary Headteachers would be carried out to inform them of the arrangements for the new system.

Mr Marson, Secondary Headteacher Representative, expressed concern regarding the increase in work for the Pupil Admissions and Transport Office. He raised the issue that the introduction of parental preference applications for primary schools could disrupt the application process for secondary schools. The Admissions and Transport Officer agreed that the introduction of primary preference applications would create more work for officers and as a consequence staff time would need to be effectively managed.

As a point of interest the School Services Manager informed the Forum that Herefordshire LEA had been awarded £70,000 to take part in a national pilot scheme to trial on-line applications for schools.

RESOLVED: That the format and contents of SA1 and PA1 application forms be approved.

7. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS BOOKLET

Members discussed the 'Information for Parents Booklet 2005-2006' composite prospectus for the admission/transfer of pupils into primary and high schools.

A copy of the 'Information for parents Booklet 2005-2006' is appended to the report.

The School Services Manager informed the Forum of various changes which had been made to the booklet since the previous edition. The most significant of these changes related to Chapter 4 and Appendix 2 which had been adapted due to the implementation of the new Co-ordinated Primary Admission Scheme.

The Forum was also informed of other minor editorial changes and Members suggested a number of further minor changes in addition to the changes highlighted by the School Services Manager.

RESOLVED: That subject to the agreed amendments the 'Information for Parents Booklet 2005-2006' be approved for publication.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIRMAN