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SOUTHAMPTON ADMISSIONS FORUM  
HELD ON  
11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2010

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Present:

Richard Harris (Chair)	-	Cantell Maths and Computing College – Community Secondary Schools
Joe Alford	-	Sholing Junior School – Community Junior Schools
Paul Gregory	-	Portswood Primary – Parent Governors
Glyn Oliver	-	Swaythling Primary School – Community Primary Schools
Andy Peterson	-	Bitterne C of E Junior School – Voluntary Control Schools
Urszula Topp	-	Roman Catholic Diocese
Colin Warbugh	-	Springhill Primary – Voluntary Aided Primary Schools
Ross William	-	Admissions Manager, Southampton City Council
Natalie Noke	-	Democratic Services, Southampton City Council

In Attendance

Barbadette Barrett-John	-	St Annes School
Ruth Evan	-	Headteacher – Cantell Maths and Computing College
	-	Oasis Academy - Lordshill
Elaine Pearson	-	Chamberlayne College
Pippa Wood	-	Woodlands Community College

5. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCC COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

RW outlined the proposed Admissions Policies for 2011/12, which included the proposed changes to published admission numbers for some primary school; and in year admissions scheme for Southampton 2010.

He explained that a sibling link had now been included to cover children at linked infant and junior schools, as it felt that this was a link for parents that had children at primary schools and therefore should also apply to infant and junior schools. This was supported by the Forum.

It was AGREED by the Forum that the medical or psychological criteria should be above the sibling criteria, as it was felt that this was a more vulnerable group.

RW also explained that deferred entry to Year R had been made clearer, although there was still concerns about the clarity on who would make the decision on what is in the “child’s best interest”.

He stated that under the new timescales the allocation of Year R and Year 3 places would not be notified to schools until 6<sup>th</sup> May and he appreciated that this could possibly cause planning issues for the schools.

The definition for what was classed as regular attendance at church had been defined, and was based on the letter and form currently used by HCC. It was agreed that this would be circulated to members.

The Forum requested that the oversubscription criteria for in-catchment application should be made clearer, by re-stating all of the relevant criteria and not referring to another part of the policy.

RW stated that the linked feeder criteria only applied during the normal admissions round and that this had been made clearer.

Concerns were raised again about the imposed application deadlines and also the wording that states “submitted by”.

RW informed the Forum of the proposal to allow Bitterne Park Secondary School to select up to 30 children (10%) on the basis of aptitude for performing arts.

It was AGREED that the Forum was opposed to this proposal and would urge the school to rethink, taking into account the impact that it could have on other schools in the locality and also its own catchment children.

There were concerns that this type of selection deprived local children from attending their local school. The Forum understood that St Annes had a policy to select for an aptitude for music; however there was no catchment area; and it was felt that music was a much narrower specialism than performing arts.

RW explained that the Bitterne Park would take no part in the selection process as this would be the responsibility of the Admissions Team.

The Forum also wanted to raise the following issues if this category was allowed:-

1. As with all of the other policies medical or psychological grounds should be above sibling and therefore above aptitude. This was especially important for Bitterne Park as they were the only school which had a specialist Autistic Unit and not all children that needed this provision would necessarily have a statement.
2. How would a natural aptitude for performing arts be judged as it covers such a wide range of talents.
3. Funding for the admissions process for this criteria should be met from the school and not a central budget.

It was AGREED that the issue relating to the funding of the testing for the performing art selection would be referred to the School Forum for discussion.

RW explained that within the secondary timetable the allocation of places to unplaced children did not include the word “community school” as he felt that it was best to be flexible. Not including it could stop any further time delays for these children if they had not originally applied to a VA or Academy

school and there was a possible place which could be offered without insisting on them completing another application form.

The Forum expressed its concern about the timescale for in-year admissions and how difficult it would be for schools, especially own admissions authorities, to meet the weekly requirements. RW understood this, however explained that the proposed timescale meant that it could still take up to 3 school weeks before a child could be offered a place.

UT stated that as an authority Southampton were being very accommodating and that others such as HCC were giving even less time.

Concerns were raised that more attention need to be given to ensure that school knew when in-year pupils had been offered a place at their school. It was agreed that each school should have a designated named person and a preferred form of communication.

The In-Year scheme was agreed in principle, which the specific details of the timelines and communications systems being agreed.

RW detailed the proposed changes to the published admission numbers (PAN) for some of the City's primary schools. He explained that the increases were needed to accommodate the predicted increase in numbers of children. He stated that their prediction calculations were normally very good, and were only 10 out in 2009. However unfortunately it was hard to predict what part of the City these children may be living in. And it was also necessary to ensure that class sizes were multiples of 30 to ensure that they comply with infant class size legislation.

Concerns were expressed about the lack of consultation that had taken place about which schools would have their PANs increased, and the effects that it could have on other neighbouring schools. It was expressed that there had been a primary review full consultation and this had just been added on.

It was felt that a proper strategy should have been applied rather than just adding place to those schools that have a spare room. A strategy would also be needed for future years.

It was noted that there was unlikely to be an issue of the increases having an impact on numbers in neighbouring schools as they will all be full.

Concerns were also expressed about the lack of planning when children and their families were moved as part of the Council's housing programme. No consideration was given as to whether there was a school place available in the new area or even if it was appropriate to change schools in the case of older children. No consideration for transport was made, often then causing attendance problems. And if a bus pass was issued it was only for a pupil and not the parent which was an issue for the younger children. It was agreed that these issues would be included in the Forum's annual report.