

RICHMOND UPON THAMES ADMISSIONS FORUM

17 September 2008, 6pm-6.35pm, Teddington Room,

Curriculum and Training Centre, Clifden Road, Twickenham

Chair of meeting: Cllr Stephen Knight

Present: Hatija Bhatia, Ian Dickinson, Sara Freeman, Janet Hilton, Charles Hoseason, Sabi Hothi, Carol Jerwood, Lesley Kirby, Cllr Bob King, Cllr Stephen Knight, Cllr David Marlow and Cllr Brian Miller.

Officers: Matthew Paul (Secretary to the Forum) and Kim Stanford-Smith (Senior Admissions Officer).

Apologies received from: Christine Brett, Richard Burke, Andrew Cole, and Anne-Marie True.

	Minutes	Action
1.	<p>Membership</p> <p>The Forum noted that: Sabi Hothi had been appointed as the London Borough of Hounslow representative; Lesley Kirby, Headteacher of Shene School, had replaced Sue Demont as a secondary school headteacher representative; and Harvey Woolfe, one of the two parent governor representatives, had resigned due to other commitments. A replacement parent governor representative would be sought from the secondary schools.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2008 were agreed as a correct record, with one amendment to be made in regard to the incorrect attribution of role to Cllr David Marlow, who was in fact the Opposition spokesperson for Children's Services, and not Transport. There were no other matters arising.</p>	
3.	<p>Objection to Christ's School's admission arrangements for 2009 – Adjudicator's decision.</p> <p>The Forum briefly discussed the Adjudicator's report and noted that the decision, not to uphold Marshgate primary School's objection, was not a great surprise, since the compromise position agreed by Christ's, to offer a partial link to pupils at Marshgate and any other primary schools within two kilometres of Christ's as long as they are also living within that distance, had not yet been tested through a secondary transfer round. That had broadly been the Local Authority's view, as expressed to the Adjudicator during his investigation.</p>	
4.	<p>DCSF consultation on admission arrangements.</p> <p>The Forum noted the two main proposals of the consultation – that LAs would, from the 2010/2011 intakes onwards, take on the additional responsibilities of coordinating reception class admissions beyond their own boundaries and of coordinating all in-year admissions via a common application form to be submitted by parents to their home LA. Neither the consultation document, draft</p>	

	<p>Code nor regulations stated how the DCSF expected LAs to manage those responsibilities in practical terms. The DCSF had stated that the proposals were “cost-neutral” but it appeared that most LAs would be likely to find the additional responsibilities would considerably stretch the resources of their Admissions Team. The speed of responses from schools regarding in-year applications would, in some cases, have to increase, and voluntary-aided schools in particular might find it hard to convene Admissions Committees sufficiently regularly to keep up with demand. Demand for places, and appeals, would inevitably increase through the use of a common application form for in-year admissions as parents would be able to express several preferences, rather than just approaching whichever school had a vacancy as at present. Although some LAs currently coordinated in-year admissions, those LAs were in a minority and there would still be a need for a mechanism, possibly a national version of the ‘pan-London register’, to enable regular, secure data exchanges between LAs. It was also felt that full coordination of in-year admissions could undermine the efforts of Fair Access Panels to ensure that vulnerable children or those with significant attendance and/or behavioural issues received appropriate school placements.</p> <p>The Forum also discussed the issue of ‘ethos’ and whether or not admissions criteria should be allowed to include reference to parents supporting the ethos of a school. The consensus of the Forum was that it felt this should not be allowed, since it was not an objectively-measurable test.</p> <p>The Forum requested that the Secretary collate and circulate to members a draft response to the consultation on its behalf.</p>	
5.	<p>Admissions Forum annual report.</p> <p>The Forum felt that the information given in the report was useful and should be circulated to schools and the diocesan boards of education.</p>	
6.	<p>Any other business.</p> <p>The Forum noted that the Secretary was changing his role within the Authority (but would continue to convene the Forum), and that Kim Stanford-Smith would become Head of Admissions from 13 October.</p>	
7.	<p>Date, time and venue of next meetings.</p> <p>Wednesday 4 February 2009 and Wednesday 10 June 2009, both at 5.45pm for 6pm start, in the Teddington Room, First Floor, Curriculum & Training Centre, Clifden Road, Twickenham.</p>	