

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Present: Bob Thompson (BT) – Community Member (Chair)
 Lisa Crossley (LC) – Telford & Wrekin CYPS
 Claire Gaskin (CG) – Aided School Head Teacher

In attendance: Phil Wilson (PW) – Shropshire Local Authority
 Carol Sneddon (CS) Shropshire Local Authority
 Sally Herbert (SH) - Shropshire Local Authority

Late Arrival: Cary Tay – Early Years Setting

Apologies: Karen Bradshaw (KB) – Shropshire Local Authority
 Martin Watson (MW) – Parent
 Karen Morris – Primary School Head Teacher
 Hilary Burke (HB) – Secondary Head Teacher
 Sabrina Hobbs (SH) – Special School Representative
 Phil Adams (PA) – Own Admissions Authority Schools Head Teacher
 Roger Evans (RE) – Council Member
 Nick Bardsley (NB) – Council Member (apologies received 29/11/17)

Date: Tuesday, 28 November 2017

Venue: Ludlow Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

No.	Action	Owner
1.	<u>Apologies for absence</u> Apologies were confirmed as above.	
2	<u>Welcome to new members</u> Unfortunately Clare Aspinall was not able to attend.	
3.	<u>Declaration of interest in agenda items</u> BT explained that this is a standard item and asked members to declare their interest, as and when relevant.	
4.	<u>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2017</u> The minutes were read and agreed as an accurate record.	
5.	<u>Matters arising from the minutes</u> 5. <u>Adjudication</u> This time last year LAF agreed to raise objections to two cases which were brought before them.	

	<p>Lacon Childe wanted to give priority to children who attended their trust schools above those children who attended a feeder school and on the recommendation of LAF an objection was submitted. (The year before the same proposal had been made but it became apparent to the Adjudicator that the Academy had not correctly determined the arrangements so the objection was null and void). This year there was a considerable period of time before it was eventually decided that the arrangements subject to Shropshire Council's objection, were not the ones actually determined. The Adjudicator found that the Trust was able to set the priority as they wished.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed with regard to any future primary schools joining the Trust from outside the catchment. A couple of objections have been raised in other areas of the country around catchment children. However, in Shropshire priority is given to Trusts and as long as catchment children are being accommodated the Academy is considered to be compliant with requirements. It was difficult to see when objections could be raised if additional primary schools joined the Trust.</p> <p>The second case taken to the Adjudicator was more successful.</p> <p>Shrewsbury Academy proposed to reduce its Published Admission Number (PAN) by 50 places. The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide school places for all children in each area of the county and was concerned about this proposal as demand for school places was going to increase and those places would be required. An objection was raised with the Trust but the Trust continued to press ahead.</p> <p>As a result there was a very thorough investigation into the case by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. CS and PW met with the Adjudicator and were closely questioned in relation to place planning. Having the evidence to back up the objection was crucial and clearly demonstrated the need for the retention of the places. Although the Adjudicator was sympathetic to the Trust's situation created by the EFA's insistence that they move to one site, Shropshire Council's objection was upheld.</p> <p>BT questioned whether this decision could be challenged again by the Trust and PW explained that the Academy can go out for consultation each year and there is nothing to stop the Trust appealing the adjudicator's decision through judicial review. However, this had to be done by October and PW does not believe this happened.</p>	
6	<p><u>Admission Arrangements 2019/20</u></p> <p>There are no major changes proposed, although a few changes to Published Admission Number's and minor alignments of designated catchment areas.</p> <p>CS advised that as a result of the Adjudicators involvement and comments made about admission policies, amendments have been made to policies. For example, previously medical and social reasons why someone needed a place at a school, was a footnote, but since the Adjudicator indicated this was insufficient it is now in the policy as a specific listing as priority 2.</p> <p>Although the local authority denotes catchment area, individual schools should have a copy of their catchment area included with their admission arrangements and each admission authority should show this.</p>	

	<p>The main changes to the Admission Policy for Shropshire are on page 13 of the LAF paper.</p> <p>CS explained that the Local Authority is proposing to rectify a number of oddities in secondary catchment areas so that they are in line with primary catchments. The situation was brought to the authority's attention when a parent moved from west to east within a primary catchment area. As a result of that move, although in the same catchment area for the primary school, the older children were then in a different catchment for secondary school. This also meant that the older children were no longer entitled to free transport as they were not then attending their secondary catchment school.</p> <p>It is proposed to change the catchment areas with consultation starting before Christmas for the statutory 6 week period, with residents being made aware of the proposals in writing. Most of the cases involve very small numbers of properties with the largest being 30 properties. Individual properties will be approached to seek their opinions, regardless of whether they have school age children.</p> <p>Next year could result in larger amendments. It is intended to consider more densely populated areas of Shropshire, including Bridgnorth and some of Shrewsbury.</p> <p>The Adjudicator also recommended the need for a list of feeder link primary schools in the main policy which is now included.</p> <p>Also included in the Policy on Page 10 is a more in-depth description of allowances made for service families. As service personnel must not be 'advantaged' the Policy sets out what the local authority will do, clarifying that this does not mean they will automatically get a place at an over-subscribed school. It was agreed that schools should be advised to include information about service personnel in their policies.</p> <p>There are a couple of schools who are proposing an increase to their PAN but consultation is not required for this. Discussion has been held with these schools if appropriate about not increasing the PAN above capacity as schools always have the option to exceed their admission limit if they wish to do so.</p> <p>Crowmoor Primary is now a foundation school and an admission authority in their own right. Two years ago they increased their PAN to 34 but this extra admission number has created difficulties in class organisation and resulted in mixed classes due to fluctuation in numbers. Crowmoor have proposed a reduction back to 30 as there is not the demand for catchment places above 30.</p> <p>Barrow is the only Free School in Shropshire. When originally established they dispensed with catchment areas but are now proposing to give priority to children of teaching staff and to children living within two miles from the school when measured in a straight line.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>CT had requested Summer Born Children be raised under AOB.</p> <p>CS explained that in previous years Shropshire has received just a couple of requests per academic year for children to defer starting school and that the local definition of summer born children would previously have been a child born in the summer holiday.</p>	

National government have now indicated that 'summer born' children will be those born between 1 April and 31 August – this is nearly half of a cohort. There is a definite increase in requests for deferment across the county and Shropshire received 30 requests for deferment last year. Telford and Wrekin local authority received just six requests last year and similar this year.

The School Admissions Code advises that Local Authorities must take into account a number of factors before approving a deferral, with a considerable number of questions being asked of parents, early year's settings and preferred primary schools before a decision is made. Although the DfE are instructing that if parents are requesting a deferral they know best, local authorities are still required to complete the investigations to ensure it is in a child's best interests. Currently there is nothing in the law that says a child has to continue their education in the cohort behind and in year 5 parents must apply to defer transfer to secondary school. By deferring, this does mean that a child can leave school at 15 without sitting GCSE's and consequently with no qualifications. The whole deferment process causes difficulties and makes place planning very challenging.

CG commented that she has a number of parents who after being allocated places in Reception for their child, then expressed concern that their child was not ready for school. The school took time to talk to these parents and the majority agreed to accept the places and after a few months at school agreed they had made the correct decision, commenting that they should have trusted the school judgement initially. The school are also offering a staged move up from the nursery.

CT joined the meeting.

CT advised that from an early year's perspective it is very difficult to calculate capacity. She also explained that it is complicated for those children where you cannot demonstrate why a child should not be deferred. Nesscliffe House currently have two children where it is very clear that the children are not ready for school. What is more difficult is those children who often have attachment to parents. There are 12 in the 2018 cohort, including four deferment requests. CT believes this to be a national issue and commented that Weston Lullingfields are offering part-time school which is attracting a number of parents. CT explained that Nesscliffe House feeds into over-subscribed schools and it would appear that some settings are pro-actively encouraging parents to defer their child and they are not considering the long term consequences.

CS advised that DfE previously advised they would change the Admissions Code to meet the tighter recommendations. However, The School Admissions Code has not been refined since 2014. It is anticipated that the amendment will state that if a parent wishes to defer their child then this can happen and will be for children born between 1 April and 31 August.

Ideally parents need to apply for a Reception place in the usual way and by the closing date. This means that the potential schools can then be contacted and there is time to investigate if this request is in the best interests of the child and, if it is agreed, to withdraw the offer of the school place and re-allocate before the national allocation date. The difficulty arises when agencies involved do not believe it is in the best interests of the child, but they are being directed by DfE to agree to the request. If the deferment is agreed after offer day then the place is withdrawn and then re-allocated to the next eligible pupil on the waiting list using the over-subscription

	<p>criteria.</p> <p>CT suggested this be included as an item on the agenda for Early Years Forum Meeting and PW suggested discussion at CPG (Central Policy Group for Primary Head Teachers) which is chaired by CG.</p> <p>Agreed: CS to attend the Early Year's Forum meetings. CT to send CS the dates of the meetings. CG to include on CPG agenda and assess how big an issue it appears to be.</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>CG</p>
8.	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next meetings will take place on; Tuesday, 30 January 2018, 5pm, Shirehall Tuesday, 12 June 2018, 5pm, Shirehall</p>	