

HARROW ADMISSIONS FORUM

MINUTES

10 FEBRUARY 2010

Chairman:	* Reverend P Reece
Councillors:	* Mrs Anjana Patel * Bill Stephenson
Community School Representatives:	<u>Governor</u> (Vacancy) † <u>Primary</u> Sue Jones * <u>Secondary</u> Janice Howkins
Jewish School Representative:	* Mrs D Samuels
Roman Catholic School Representative:	† Mr M Murphy
Church of England School Representative:	(Vacancy)
Krishna Avanti Primary School Representative:	* Dr S Agarwal attending as Alternate Member for Dr K Bahl
Church of England Diocese Representative:	* Rev'd Paul Reece
Catholic Schools Diocese Representative:	* Miss M Ryan
United Synagogue Representative:	(Vacancy)
I-Foundation Representative:	* Mr Nitesh Gor

Primary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	† Mrs D Speel
Secondary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	* Mr R Chauhan
Harrow Council for Racial Equality Representative:	* Julia Smith
Early Years Development Partnership Representative:	* Helena Tucker
Children's Services Representative:	* Farzana Aldridge

- * Denotes Member present
- † Denotes apologies received

148. Attendance by Reserve Members and Alternate Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting and that Dr Agarwal was attending as an Alternative Member for Dr Bahl.

149. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests.

150. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

151. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

152. Feedback From Consultation on Community School Admission Arrangements for 2011-2012

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Forum received a report of the Director Schools and Children's Development, which was admitted late to the agenda to enable consideration of the responses to the consultation within the statutory timescale. The report

had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated in order to allow details of the consultation to be included.

The Forum, an independent body, considered the report, which set out the feedback received following consultation on admission arrangements for the 2011/12 academic year and the extension to the sibling link to sixth forms. An officer reported on the responses received to the consultation and identified those responses which had been added to the draft proposals. A representation was circulated at the meeting which supported the proposal to change the nursery tie-breaker from the 2010/11 academic year to distance from home to nursery measured in a straight line.

The Forum discussed the response from the Governors of Nower Hill High School, which supported the oversubscription criteria for High School admission at Year 7 except for the exclusion of a sibling link to students in the sixth form. The view of the Forum was not to support the sibling link to the sixth form for the reasons outlined in the report.

Subsequent to discussion on the recommendations proposed in the report and following minor amendments the Forum agreed the report.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet) That

(1) the nursery criterion be amended as follows:

If more applications were received than there were places in a Nursery, places would be allocated to children in date of birth order, with older children being offered places before younger children, as follows:

- First Children, in date of birth order, who are Looked After by a local authority.
- Next Children, in date of birth order, referred by Harrow's Special Education Needs Assessment and Review Service.
- Next Other children, in date of birth order.

If, under any criterion, there were more children with the same date of birth than there were places remaining in the nursery, the available places would be offered to child(ren) who lived closest. Distance would be measured in a straight line from the home address to the entrance to the nursery. Home to school distance would be measured by Harrow's School Admissions Service.

Parents would only be able to apply to one nursery. However, all unsuccessful applicants be advised that their child's name could be added to the waiting list for any school.

In addition, and to ensure transparency and consistency across the borough, nursery class headteachers agree a protocol, including a timetable for nursery applications and ways of dealing with multiple applications to ensure each child is only offered one nursery place (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report);

- (2) nursery headteachers be requested to indicate in the offer letter that a place in the nursery did not give automatic entry to the school and that parents must make a separate application for Reception;
- (3) the admission arrangements including the amended oversubscription criteria for primary and high schools be adopted (as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report) to ensure twins and other multiple birth children could attend the same school, with the proviso that the School Admissions Code of Practice was changed to include twins and other multiple birth children, as exceptions for infant class sizes;
- (4) clarification of the medical criterion be agreed as follows:

For Primary and High School

In line with the guidance and framework already provided, the letter from the hospital consultant must provide compelling medical evidence, name the school and state why, in his/her view, this school was the most suitable to meet the child's / parent's medical needs.

If the school was not the closest to home, the consultant must set out in detail the wholly exceptional circumstances for attending this school and the difficulties if the child had to attend another school.

For High School only

Parental medical claims solely on the grounds of the young person's need to be accompanied on the journey to school will not be allowed.

Assessment of medical claims for parents

For parent(s) making a medical claim on mental health grounds independent advice be sought. Forum Members be updated on the arrangements put in place to assess other medical claims when this information was confirmed.

- (5) The proposed schemes of co-ordination for Primary admissions, Secondary transfer, Infant to Junior transfer, In-Year admissions be adopted'
- (6) in relation to Admission Arrangements 2010, the proposal to amend the nursery tie-breaker to distance from home to school for the 2010 nursery admissions round be agreed as follows:

If more applications were received than there were places in a Nursery, places would be allocated to children in date of birth order, with older children being offered places before younger children, as follows:

- First Children, in date of birth order, who are Looked After by a local authority.
- Next Children, in date of birth order, referred by Harrow's Special Education Needs Assessment and Review Service.
- Next Other children, in date of birth order.

If, under any criterion, there were more children with the same date of birth than there were places remaining in the nursery, then the available places would be offered to child(ren) who lived closest. Distance would be measured in a straight line from the home address to the entrance to the nursery. Home to school distance would be measured by Harrow's School Admissions Service;

(7) the Fair Access Protocol be amended as follows:

- a. To make it clear that through the Protocol Harrow may exceptionally require schools to admit children in excess of the published admission number in order to protect the interests of vulnerable children and those with challenging behaviour. These pupils would be shared equally among Harrow schools. Pupils placed through the Protocol would take priority over children on the waiting lists;
- b. To confirm that the principle underlying the whole protocol was that it applied only to children living in Harrow;
- c. To include that wherever possible children would be allocated to a school of their faith;
- d. To clarify that the protocol did not cover newly arrived children where a school place had been allocated but the parents had not taken up the place / the child had not started at the school;
- e. To clarify that, as far as was possible, primary pupils would be shared equally across the borough.

Reason for Decision: There is a requirement under the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 for admission authorities to determine admission arrangements by 15 April in the determination year (ie by 15 April 2010).

RESOLVED ITEMS

153. Voluntary Aided Schools - Consultation with Harrow Admissions Forum on Admission Arrangements for 2011-2012

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Forum received a report of the Director Schools and Children's Development, which was admitted late to the agenda in order to ensure that statutory requirements were met. The report had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated as it was being consulted upon.

The Forum considered the report, which detailed the submissions from the Voluntary Aided Schools and showed how each school met the requirements of the Code of Practice both in relation to admission arrangements and supplementary information forms (SIFS):

Moriah Jewish Day School

An officer undertook to provide guidance to the Moriah Jewish School on the criteria.

Krishna Avanti School

The Forum noted the advice from the Council's Legal and Governance department that the continued use of nominations from ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor as an admissions criteria resulted in potential breaches of the Code of Practice on School Admissions. The Legal advice considered it to be insufficiently clear, fair or objective and that it placed a limitation on parental choice by removing five places from the Planned Admission Number. It was suggested that the Chairman attend and observe a meeting between the Director Schools and Children's Development and representatives of the school.

The I-Foundation Representative stated that the School Governors had unanimously agreed to retain the five places beyond the three year permission agreed by the School Organisation Committee. As the faith partner for the school, ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor had been instrumental in the establishment of the school and worked in partnership with the school and Governing Body. Legal advice obtained by the school was that the admission arrangements secured places rather than reduced the places available and that it was not unusual for faith schools to give priority to a certain place of worship. With regard to the process being insufficiently clear, the Code put the onus on the school to consult.

In response to the concern that the extension of the three year permission for nominations from the Manor would result in places not being available to children within the locality, the I-Foundation Representative stated that this would be valid if there were several Hindu schools. This was not the case and there were 30 places available in the country in total.

In response to a question regarding consultation, particularly with the wider Hindu community, it was stated that the Hindu Forum of Britain, National Council of Hindu Temples and Hindu Council had all verbally supported the position with regard to the ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor. The Forum considered it important that there was a proper and sufficient paper trail of consultation and the Representative agreed to obtain declarations of support from the consultation in writing.

An officer advised that the Code of Practice required the Voluntary Aided schools to consult and the Local Authority had to independently follow the same route.

Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Schools

An officer undertook to clarify with the Diocese Representative the advice that had been given to schools to ensure their admission arrangements complied with the School Admissions Code of Practice.

St John's Church of England School

It was noted that St John's Church of England school no longer included ten places for community use in their admission arrangements.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Chairman attend and observe a meeting between the Director of Schools and Children's Development and representatives of the school;
- (2) approval in principal be given to the admission arrangements submitted by the Krishna Avanti School subject to a proper and sufficient paper trail of consultation responses that showed acceptance by the wider Hindu community;
- (3) the officers provide guidance to the Moriah Jewish Day School on the wording for twins and multiple-birth children, and clarify with the Catholic Schools Diocese Representative the advice given to schools to ensure their admission arrangements complied with the School Admissions Code of Practice;
- (4) the Chairman write to St George's Roman Catholic School, St Teresa's Roman Catholic School and Sacred Heart Language School to request necessary amendment to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice;

[A member of the Forum requested that her dissent from the resolution be recorded due to her opinion that the five places allocated to the ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor would be unfair to children who lived in the school locality.]

154. Any Other Business

(i) I-Foundation Representative

At the last meeting, the Forum had requested that legal advice be sought on the status of the I-Foundation as a representative of the Hindu faith on the Forum.

The Forum was advised that the representative from the religious denomination was separate to the representative for the type of school under 8(1)b) of the School Admissions (Local Authority Reports and Admission Forums) (England) Regulations 2008. The I-Foundation was the relevant religious authority for the Krishna Avanti School and represented a branch of Hinduism that promoted Vedic culture.

RESOLVED: That the Legal advice be noted.

(ii) Dates of Meetings 2010/11

RESOLVED: That meetings of the Forum be held on the following dates at the Civic Centre:

Monday 7 June 2010	6.00 pm
Wednesday 20 October 2010	6.00 pm
Wednesday 26 January 2011	5.30 pm

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 8.20 pm).

(Signed) REVEREND P REECE
Chairman