

HARROW ADMISSIONS FORUM**6 MARCH 2006**

Chair:	* Councillor Bill Stephenson		
Councillors:	* Janet Cowan * Ray		
Community School Representatives:	<u>Governor</u> (Vacancy)	<u>Primary</u> * Sue Jones	<u>Secondary</u> * Allan Jones
Jewish School Representative:	* Mrs D Palman		
Roman Catholic School Representative:	* Mike Murphy		
Church of England School Representative:	Mrs S Hinton		
Church of England Diocese Representative:	† Mrs K Uttley		
Catholic Schools Diocese Representative:	* Mr Billiet		
Primary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	† Mr H Epie		
Secondary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	Mr R Sutcliffe		
Harrow Council for Racial Equality Representative:	Prem Pawar		
Early Years Development Partnership Representative:	* Helena Tucker		
Children's Services Representative:	(Vacancy)		

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Feedback from Consultation on Admission Arrangements for 2007/8 Academic Year**

The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy (People First), detailing the feedback from consultation on admission arrangements for the 2007/8 academic year.

The officer advised that comments received from schools had highlighted the value of the sibling link but mixed comments had been received from parents. Some had strongly disagreed with the sibling link. A general theme occurring in comments received from parents and schools had been uncertainty about the effect of the introduction of sixth forms on the sibling link. The Forum was also advised that the government had drafted a Code of Practice but that its introduction had been deferred.

In response to a query concerning the post-16 link and whether students were technically members of their school or members of the Harrow Collegiate system, the Chair stated that there was no significant practical difference between which body students belonged to, and that from 2007 students would be members of the school. The Chair also stated that the school would be responsible for the overall admissions procedure, regardless of whether there was a franchise.

A member of the Forum commented that some families might consider it discriminatory if post-16 children were at a school and a younger child was not allowed there. An officer advised that the majority of authorities stated that both children should be attending the school to qualify for the sibling priority as this was regarded as less discriminatory. However, in relation to sixth forms the matter was less clear due to the

timescale for sixth form admissions, which could mean that when allocating places at the school it may not be known whether the older sibling had been offered a sixth form place.

A member of the Forum commented that the response received from parents indicated that most of them supported the proposed change to the sibling link. The Chair suggested deferring a decision on the sibling link in relation to the post-16 scenario until further information was available.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (To Cabinet)

That (1) the sibling link be changed so that children would have to be attending the school at the same time to qualify for the sibling priority;

(2) the Planned Admissions Number for Little Stanmore First & Middle School be reduced from 45 to 30;

(3) the single intake to Reception pilot be extended for a further year; and

(4) a proposal regarding the introduction of post 16 on the sibling link be deferred.

[REASON: Authorities are required to determine their admissions arrangements for 2006/07 by 15 April 2006.]

(See also Minute 79).

PART II - MINUTES

72. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

73. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

74. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

75. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

76. **Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the following matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting be noted:

(i) **Resolution 68(1) – Admission Arrangements for the 2007-08 Academic Year (Sharing Council Data Sources)**

The Forum was advised that no definite reply had been received regarding the issue of sharing Council data sources, and that this issue was widespread and not restricted to Harrow. The Forum was advised there was a basic view that data could not be shared at that level due to legal restraints.

(ii) **Resolution 68(2) – Admission Arrangements for the 2007-08 Academic Year (Early Years Partnership Group)**

An officer informed the Forum that a letter had been sent to the Early Years Partnership. A paragraph highlighting the position on the issue of prioritisation when moving from a nursery class to reception within that primary school had been included in the letter.

77. **Feedback from Consultation on Admission Arrangements for 2007/8 Academic Year:**

(See Recommendation 1 above).

78. **Allocation and Co-ordination of Offer of Places for 2006/7 Academic Year:**
The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy (People First), which detailed the outcome of the allocation of places for the 2006/2007 academic year. An officer tabled information on transfer at 11-plus at the meeting. The Forum was advised that the data provided did not include figures for independent schools.
- The officer advised the Forum that there were more children in both the Reception and 12-plus transfer groups than last year. The Forum was referred to Appendix 3 (i) of the report, which detailed information on transfer at 12-plus and provided information on numbers of linked school applicants not offered places. The Chair observed that the percentage of successful First Rank applicants had decreased, which indicated that parents had a clear understanding of how the equal preference system worked.
- A member of the Forum observed that no information had been provided on transfer at 11-plus to Catholic schools and the officer advised that this information would be added to the report in future years.
- A member indicated that it would be useful for the Forum to receive up-to-date data on the number of in-year applications considered by the Admissions Panel. The officer indicated that this could be provided for each Forum meeting.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the outcome of the allocation of places for the 2006/2007 academic year be noted; and
- (2) a report providing information on in-year applications referred to the Admissions Panel be made available to members of the Forum once a term, with the report including data on the previous year as well as the current one.
79. **Single Intake to Reception - Pilot 2005/2008:**
Further to discussion earlier in the meeting on admission arrangements (Recommendation 1 above refers), the Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy (People First) which detailed the single intake to reception pilot scheme 2005/2008. An officer advised that it might be possible to make evaluation forms, which were to be sent to schools, playgroups, parents and carers, available in an electronic format.
- A member of the Forum commented that there was under-subscription in a number of nurseries, despite children being admitted at an increasingly young age. The officer advised that a contributory factor could be that some parents were choosing to place their children in playgroups instead.
- RESOLVED:** That the format and content of the evaluation of the single intake pilot be agreed.
80. **E-applications:**
The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy (People First), which detailed the arrangements to be put in place to ensure that Harrow met the e-Government agenda in relation to online applications for school places. An officer advised that a single London Portal had been decided upon, as this would be easier for parents to use. She advised that parents would be able to search for schools according to certain specifications, for example, they would be able to search for single sex schools and schools within a certain radius of their home. The officer also advised that she would be meeting with the Chair and Project Manager of the London e-Admissions Focus Group to discuss issues particular to Harrow, in terms of 12-plus transfer.
- A member of the Forum enquired whether statistics were available on whether parents would be more likely to provide inaccurate information if they applied for a school online. Officers advised that no such statistics were currently available. In response to a query regarding the potential effects of an online system on less well-off parents and on ethnic minorities, the officer advised that schools and libraries might be able to provide support to parents although there were resource implications. A member of the Forum commented that there could also be implications for parents with special needs.
- A member of the Forum commented that the potential difficulties raised by members of the Forum were not a reason to delay progressing with e-applications, rather, viable measures to assist those who may have difficulty with e-applications should be considered.
- The officer advised that there was the possibility that in the future appeals would also be done online.

RESOLVED: That (1) the arrangements to be put in place to ensure that Harrow meets the e-Government agenda in relation to on-line applications for school places be noted; and

(2) officers be requested to consider how the Authority could help parents with e-applications.

81. **Voluntary Aided (VA) School Admission Arrangements 2006/7:**

The Forum discussed a report of the Director of Strategy (People First), which detailed 2006/7 admission arrangements for Voluntary Aided (VA) schools.

An officer advised that children identified as having Special Education Needs (SEN) should be given priority in the admissions arrangements. A Jewish school representative commented that Moriah Jewish Day School had not been aware of the requirement.

In response to a question from a member of the Forum, an officer confirmed that looked after children should be given priority in the admission arrangements.

RESOLVED: That (1) the admission arrangements for Harrow VA schools be noted; and

(2) officers be requested to send advice relating to SEN applicants to both the Jewish school representative and the Church of England school representative.

82. **Feedback On Guides To Primary And Secondary Schools in Harrow 2006:**

The Forum considered a report of the Director of Strategy (People First), which detailed feedback from parents on Harrow's 2006 Guides to Primary and Secondary Schools in Harrow.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

83. **Dates of Future Meetings:**

RESOLVED: That (1) a provisional date of 10 October 2006 be set for the next meeting of the Forum, with the date to be confirmed after the Council elections; and

(2) a further meeting take place in early March 2007.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.37 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chair