

Children and Young People Cabinet Member Meeting 28th March 2011.

Summary of responses to the admissions consultation for 2012/13

Voluntary Aided School Issues

Cardinal Newman School

Two Church of England Primary Schools and 8 parents responded to the proposed revised admission arrangements for Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic VA Secondary School. The background is that the school had decided that in order to conform to the requirements of the School Admissions Code, it had to alter the way in which it gave priority to pupils attending faith based primary schools. The Code says that priority should not be given on the basis of a child having attended a particular type of school previously. This is described as conditionality, and is only allowed where specific schools are named as feeder schools.

The proposed admission arrangements set by Cardinal Newman School were changed to include two categories of named feeder school, the higher priority going to named Catholic feeders (priority 1 feeder schools) and a lower priority (after the admission of all categories of Catholic children) to named Church of England schools (Priority 2 feeder schools) in Brighton & Hove and one in West Sussex.

Comments from the schools expressed concern that the changes:

- Did not take sufficient account of religious commitment on the issue of regular church attendance.
- Could reduce the opportunities for Brighton & Hove children who had a Christian if not Roman Catholic background to attend the only faith based secondary school in the City.
- Would give priority to some children living outside the City on the basis of school attended rather than clear religious commitment that might be evident from CE school pupils in the City.

Both schools acknowledged that Cardinal Newman was a Roman Catholic School and could of course prioritise on the basis of religious affiliation, but expressed concern about the possible reduction in local children and children attending B&H CE primary schools gaining a place.

The eight parental comments on the subject were similar in content. The accent was on questioning why Cardinal Newman should give priority to Catholic pupils outside the City or those attending RC schools from outside the City, and the potential jeopardy in which current

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secondary transfer patterns in the City were placed. Issues of evidence of religious commitment were also raised, both in the priorities and the way in which the Priests forms were completed.

Cardinal Newman School will be amending its final proposed arrangements in light of consultation responses and Diocesan advice.

Other VA schools

No comments were received from schools or parents about the proposed arrangements for other VA schools in the City.

Other responses from schools

Four other responses from schools were received.

Two were from VA Primary schools which simply confirmed their agreement to the proposed admission number for their school. Another was from a Community Primary giving agreement to its admission number and to the proposal that adopted children should be given priority for admission under the B&H Community School priority 2.

Another was from Dorothy Stringer High School proposing that its admission number should be increased from 311 to 330.

Other responses from parents

Six other responses were received from parents.

Adopted children

Four made strong representations in favour of the introduction of extending the Community School priority 2 to include adopted children as proposed by the Council. Their case was made on the basis of:

- The need to minimise anxiety on school admission and transfer for a group who may have experienced extreme anxiety in the past.
- The need to maintain friendship and peer attachments which have greater significance for adopted children.
- The fact that adopted children have a history of under-achievement in education, including those adopted in early childhood.
- Uncertainty around school transfer can lead to behavioural and academic regression for an adopted child.

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Other responses

One expressed concern at the restriction of the sibling criterion in secondary schools to the catchment area school. This limitation was agreed when the Council changed secondary arrangements to catchment areas from distance measurement. The forthcoming change has been published in the admission booklet every year since to forewarn parents and carers. In this case the parent was concerned about admission year September 2012 – however, the change does not start until September 2013 admission.

The other correspondent made a case for shifting the catchment area border between the Stringer/Varndean and Hove Park/Blatchington Mill areas so that the boundary would change to bring the area west of Dyke Road into the Stringer/Varndean catchment. The scheduled review of secondary community school admission arrangements for 2013/14 will include a review of the catchment area borders.

