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12 December 2003

To: Headteachers and Chairmen of Governors of all Schools

Dear Colleague

Admissions Forum and Code of Practice

As you will be aware, recent legislation has brought about changes in respect of admissions and the purpose of this letter is to keep schools informed as to the latest developments in Norfolk.

Admissions Code of Practice

This is an essential document that sets out good practice to which all admission authorities should have regard. The Code is available on www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode. In Norfolk, foundation and aided schools are their own admission authorities. The admission authority in all other cases is the LEA.

Multiple Preference Systems

It is now a legal requirement that parents should be offered the opportunity of expressing more than one preference for a High School. In Norfolk, we have adopted a scheme whereby parents have expressed up to three preferences for the High School to which they will transfer in September 2004. We will shortly be consulting on a scheme whereby parents will be able to express up to three preferences for a Primary School from September 2005. In both cases the LEA will have a key role in co-ordinating the offer of places by all admission authorities in the County and acting as a clearing-house. In respect of first admissions to Primary School, the scheme, when adopted will prompt changes in our current approach that will result in the LEA making the offer of a place for all first admissions to Primary

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Schools. This change will have to be carefully considered as part of the consultation on proposed admission arrangements for September 2005.

Admissions Forum

There is now a mandatorily established Admission Forum in Norfolk and a description of its role and a list of its membership are attached as appendices to this letter. The Forum will become an influential body to whose decisions all admission authorities in the County should have regard. Its first meeting has now been held at which the following key principles taken from the Code of Practice were considered.

Admission Numbers

The law is quite clear that a child cannot be refused admission to a school if the admission number for that year group has not yet been reached. This applies both at the point of transfer and at any time during the school year. Account must, therefore, be taken of the need to accommodate any casual admissions i.e. children admitted during the year, in determining the organisation of a particular year group, especially when it is known that there are a lot of families moving into the area. It is appreciated that admission during the year into years 10 and 11 can cause particular problems but the legal position remains unaltered. These children must be admitted. In cases where Key Stage 1 class sizes have already reached 30 and the admission limit has been reached, it may be possible for an additional child to be admitted during the year provided it is possible to organise Key Stage 1 the following year without the figure of 30 being exceeded. In these instances, the LEA or the relevant admissions authority must be able to demonstrate that there is no reasonable alternative before admitting an additional "excepted" pupil.

Children with Special Educational Needs but without Statements

Children with special educational needs or challenging behaviour, but without statements must be treated in the same way as any other applicants. It is illegal for admissions to be refused on the grounds that a school considers it is unable to cater for the child's special needs or because a child is being assessed. It is clear from this that a child should be admitted first and there should be no delay in doing this whilst waiting for an assessment to take place. All schools are funded on the same basis annually to cater for all children other than those whose assessment places them in Band E. There can be no grounds therefore for discouraging parents from applying for a place at a particular school because their child may have special needs.

Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs

The position here is equally clear. Children with statements that name a school are required to be admitted to the school that is named. The LEA will consult with the school before naming it in a statement.

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Interviews

The new Code of Practice has further defined the position concerning the interviewing of parents/prospective pupils. Previously it was allowed to assess religious/denominational commitment or suitability for boarding. From September 2005 no parents or children should be interviewed as any part of the application or admission process in any school other than for a boarding school place. This position on interviewing should not, however, be read as ruling out auditions which are part of objective testing for aptitude, conducted by a school with a specialism in a prescribed subject in accordance with its published admission arrangements or discussion of subject choice for those applying for sixth form.

It is important that all schools recognise that these principles must be followed by all admission authorities in the County, in a way that reflects current best practice.

The Forum also formally adopted on a County wide basis a Managed Moves Scheme for children on the point of permanent exclusion from secondary schools. After a pilot scheme in the Central Area and wide consultation, this scheme has already been circulated to secondary schools and is a good example of the important role that can be played by the Forum.

As an early task, the Forum will be considering how it can best communicate across the County. It is important that there are effective channels of communication on admissions issues since they can have such a significant impact on our education service in Norfolk and individual schools. As part of this, the parent representatives on the Admissions Forum, Dr Lucinda Poliakoff and Mr John Riddett, are asking schools for volunteer "parent contacts". These would be individuals willing to form part of a network of contacts that the representatives could communicate with regarding the work of the Forum. The person need not necessarily be the school's parent governor but ideally it would be someone with access to e-mail as the communication will mainly take this form. If you are able to provide us with a volunteer, please either complete the attached form or e-mail the details to Helen Bates (Deputy Head of Admissions) at helen.bates@norfolk.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Director of Education

Encs.

Parent Contact Network

I am willing to be included in a network of parent contacts with which to share the work of the Admissions Forum.

Name	
School	
Contact Address	
Tel No	
E-mail address	

Signed

Date

Please return by Friday, 9th January 2004 to:

Helen Bates
Deputy Head of Admissions
Admissions Section
County Hall
Norwich, NR1 2DL

THE ADMISSIONS FORUM IN NORFOLK

CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Admissions Forum in Norfolk is established in accordance with the Education (Admission Forums) (England) Regulations 2002.

1. Interpretation

1. In this Constitution –

"the Act" means the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;

"authority" in relation to a forum or the establishment of a forum means the local education authority for the area for which the forum has been, or is to be, established;

"core members" are the members of a forum appointed under section 4(1)(a);

"city technology college" includes a city college for the technology of the arts;

"forum" means an admission forum established in accordance with this Constitution;

"other members" are the members of a forum appointed under 4(l)(b);

"parent governor representative" means a person appointed to an education overview and scrutiny committee of a local education authority in accordance with the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001**[b]**;

"school group" shall be construed in accordance with section 3;

"secretary" means the secretary of a forum appointed under section 7.

2. Role of a forum

1. The role of the forum shall be to -

- (a) consider how well existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of children and parents within the area of the authority;
- (b) promote agreement on admission issues;
- (c) consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the admission literature and information for parents, produced by each admission authority within the area of the forum;

- (d) consider the effectiveness of the authority's proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements;
- (e) consider the means by which admissions processes might be improved and how actual admissions relate to the admission numbers published;
- (f) monitor the admission of children who arrive in the authority's area outside a normal admission round with a view to promoting arrangements for the fair distribution of such children among local schools, taking account of any preference expressed in accordance with arrangements made under section 86(1) of the Act;
- (g) promote the arrangements for children with special educational needs, looked after children and children who have been excluded from school;
- (h) insofar as not included within sub-paragraphs (a) to (g), consider any admissions issues arising.

2. For the purposes of this section –

- (a) (a) a child shall be treated as having arrived outside a normal admission round where -
 - (i) at the time of his arrival in the authority's area he does not fall within a relevant age group; or
 - (ii) he does fall within a relevant age group but any application for his admission to a school falls to be considered after the time when the admission authority for the school in question have determined, in accordance with the school's admission arrangement, which children in that age group are to be admitted to the school.
- (b) the reference to "looked after children" has the same meaning as in section 22 of the Children Act 1989^[3].

3. Schools groups

- 1. For the purposes of this Constitution schools shall be divided into the following groups -
 - (a) community and voluntary controlled schools;
 - (b) voluntary aided schools;
 - (c) foundation schools.
- 2. Any reference in this Constitution in relation to an authority to a school group is a reference to one of the groups of schools as specified in paragraph (1) maintained by the authority.

Admissions Forum – Membership

Membership requirement	Name	School / Organisation	Type	Headteacher/ Governor	Area
Secondary - Community/VC	Christine Oakes	Charles Burrell High	Comm	Governor	South
Secondary -Community/VC	Wendy Down	Framingham Earl High	Comm	Headteacher	Central
Secondary - Foundation	Mr A Yates	Springwood High	Found	Governor	West
Primary - Community/VC	Simon Court	Bure Valley Junior	Comm	Governor	North
Primary - Foundation	John Dye	West Flegg Middle	Found	Headteacher	East
Primary - VA	Linda Phillips	Lt Plumstead Primary	VA	Headteacher	Central
Diocesan Representation	Julie O'Connor	RC Diocese of East Anglia		Director of Schools' Services	
Diocesan Representation	Cynthia Wake	Norwich Diocesan Board of Education		Diocesan Director of Education	
Local Community rep	Sue Harradine	Parent Partnership Group			
Parent Representative	Dr L Poliakoff				
Parent Representative	Mr J Riddett				
Norfolk County Council	David Rye			Member for Freebridge Lynn	
Norfolk County Council	Janice Eells			Member for Dersingham	
Norfolk County Council	Tony Adams			Member for Horsford	
Norfolk County Council	Peter Harwood			Member for Woodside	
Norfolk County Council	Mervyn Scutter			Member for Eaton	
LEA officer	Mike Shenstone			Assistant Director of Education	
LEA officer	Richard Snowden			Head of Admissions	
LEA officer	Helen Bates			Deputy Head of Admissions	