

## 9. School Admissions Arrangements for Sexey's School, Bruton

Lead Officer: *Tim Pollock*  
Contact Details: [tpollock@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:tpollock@somerset.gov.uk)  
01823 355615

### Purpose of the Report

Sexey's School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Secondary School providing boarding and day schooling for the children of the Bruton area. Following the 2010 School Admissions Consultation, SCC will be objecting to the school's proposed increase in day places. The purpose of this paper is to give JAC East the opportunity to carry out an "area based scrutiny" role on this issue.

### Recommendation(s)

JAC East is recommended to:

1. take a view on whether it supports or objects to Sexey's proposals as outlined in paragraph 11 of the background section below
2. submit a summary of its views as a party with interest in local school admissions to the Schools Adjudicator by 31st July 2009

### Background

#### Somerset's School Admissions Arrangements for 2010

- 1 Admissions Arrangements are reviewed and consulted on annually in order to ensure fairness and equality for all parents, children and young people (the new Admissions Code has made this an optional annual consultation in future years, though it must take place at least once every three years). The consultation exercise is central to Admission Authorities reaching agreement concerning admission arrangements and practices across local and wider areas.
- 2 The LA is the Admissions Authority for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and the Governing Body of the School itself is the Admission Authority for a Voluntary Aided or Foundation school. Each Admission Authority of a maintained school is required to set an Admission Number for the year of entry and consult on these proposals for an eight week period before 1<sup>st</sup> March in the year preceding implementation. The formal consultees to this process include all other Admission Authorities (Governing Bodies for Voluntary Aided Foundation Schools) in the County, neighbouring LAs, Dioceses, School Admissions Forum and any other local faith, parent or community groups with an interest in admissions arrangements.
- 3 There are currently 53 Admission Authorities in Somerset. Every Admissions Authority must prepare and consult fully on proposed admission arrangements applicable to the school(s) for which the Admission Authority is responsible.
- 4 45 of the Somerset Admission Authorities currently buy back a traded admissions service provided by the LA and consequently the LA takes delegated responsibility for ensuring that a comprehensive and legally compliant consultation is undertaken on behalf of these Governing Bodies. The remaining five Admissions Authorities retain full responsibility for the compliance of proposed arrangements and for conducting a consultation

against statutory deadlines.

- 5 The LA in conjunction with all schools annually reviews and proposes admission numbers following careful consideration of current and future need for school places across local and wider areas. Adjustments are proposed where considered necessary to ensure sufficient places are available for all children to attend their catchment school, where this might be the preferred option, while ensuring that levels of surplus places are appropriately managed. This approach enables budget and other resources to be used in an efficient and effective manner, maintaining as far as possible efficient delivery of education across all schools.
- 6 A statutory consultation was conducted between 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009, detailing proposed admission arrangements for starting and transferring school in September 2010.
- 7 The Annual Admissions consultation provides the opportunity for all local Admission Authorities and other consultees to formally raise comment or objection to any proposed Admission Numbers. All comments/objections received during the consultation are then set before the School Admissions Forum for further discussion.
- 8 The School Admissions Forum now plays an important role in considering the fairness and equality of all admission arrangements for maintained schools and Academies across the LA and neighbouring authority areas. The Forum has no decision making powers, although members are expected to reach consensus of opinion regarding appropriateness of Admission Authority arrangements and make recommendations as considered necessary.
- 9 The LA considers it essential that all proposals to significantly increase or decrease Admissions Numbers are linked to area school place planning, in order to ensure that the implications for all schools across the local and wider area are fully considered. Not supporting this planned approach risks the inefficient use of budget and resources and potentially leaves school provision in some areas of the Authority destabilised.
- 10 The LA admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and Governing Body arrangements for Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools needed to be determined by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2009, as required by statute.

### **Sexey's Proposals**

- 11 In 2002, Sexey's School secured approval to have day admission places in addition to its traditional boarding place provision. In 2009, Sexey's School's Admission Number was 64, inclusive of 20 day places. In its consultation for 2010, Sexey's School sought to:
  - increase its Admission Number for boarding by 61, having secured funding from the Department for Children, Families and Schools for a boarding house providing 61 places
  - increase its Admission Number for day places to 31 to make up for a shortfall in funding from the Schools Forum

### **Response**

- 12 The outcomes of the consultation and recommendations concerning Admission Numbers were reported to the School Admissions Forum on 10<sup>th</sup> March. At this meeting, Sexey's School explained the reasoning behind the higher admission numbers. The case for opposing the increase was put forward by Ansford School and King Arthur's Wincanton.

- 13 The consensus at this meeting was to support Sexey's increase in boarding admissions but object to its increase in day places. The reasoning for this decision was that Sexey's increase in day places represents a short-term solution to a funding shortfall that could negatively impact school admissions in the area. A long-term solution is needed, and this needs to be arrived at through local collaboration.
- 14 However, the LA's South Somerset Area Review (available Summer 2009) would provide the necessary context. The Forum therefore resolved to object to the proposed increase in day admission numbers and to review this in due course when the Area Review is available.
- 15 On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, the outcomes of the 2010 School Admissions Consultation were presented to SCC's Executive Board along with the recommendations of the School Admissions Forum. The Executive Board endorsed the Forum's objections to the proposed increase in day places at Sexey's.

**Background Papers:** *School Admissions Consultation 2010*  
*Minutes of the School Admissions Forum – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009*  
*Minutes of SCC Executive Board – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009*

---