

^ NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 February 2007

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Early Years education and all school related education issues and advisory services)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WATSON OBE

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2008/09

Following completion of the annual School Admissions Consultation, the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2008/09 will be determined by the County Council on 21 February 2007. There is one amendment suggested to the arrangements outlined in the County Council papers. This follows advice from the DfES.

New School Admissions Code of Practice

The new School Admissions Code of Practice was laid before Parliament on 8 January 2007. The Code will come into force on from 28 February 2007. Admission authorities must ensure that their determined admission arrangements for 2008 comply with the mandatory provisions of the Code.

In the foreword the Secretary of State has emphasised the stronger statutory basis of this Code over previous Codes. All admission authorities are required to act in accordance with the mandatory provisions. In previous Codes they had only to 'have regard' to the provisions.

The Code places a clear emphasis on the need to promote social equity and social cohesion. The Code states that 'fair oversubscription criteria are key to fair admission arrangements' and to this end it expressly forbids the application of a number of unacceptable oversubscription criteria, such as the 'first preference first' criterion. Admission authorities are required to ensure that their admission arrangements operate in a fair way. There is an expectation that Local Authorities, as commissioner of services and champion of parents will assess the admission arrangements of all schools in their area and object to unfair practices or failure to comply with the law or the mandatory requirements of the Code.

The Code establishes a new right of parents to object to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator if they believe that any aspect of a school's admission arrangements fail to comply with the law or the mandatory provisions of the Code.

The Admissions Forum will monitor compliance with the Code and the overall impact of an area's admission arrangements on fair access. Forums have been given a new power to produce an annual report on how well admission arrangements of all schools in the area are serving the interests of all pupils. These reports will be of use to the Schools Commissioner in drawing up his biennial national review of fair access.

TRANSPORT 2006 – EDUCATION & INSPECTIONS ACT

The school travel and transport provisions made in the 2006 Act are intended to promote choice and flexibility of educational provision and also to support disadvantaged families in gaining access to schools that best meet the talents, needs and aspirations of their children.

It is also envisaged that links to the health, sustainability and environmental agendas will promote more walking, cycling, bus use and reduction of car use on the school run.

The DfES is currently consulting upon school travel guidance but it is considered unlikely that this will alter, in any fundamental way, the requirements contained in the Act.

The DfES makes provision for groups of children who have to have transport arrangements made for them. They include children eligible to free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit and living certain distances from particular schools.

Under the Act the Local Authority has a Number of Duties and Powers.

They include

- A duty To Promote Safe and Sustainable Travel including use of the Local Transport Plan and sustainable travel and transport infrastructure.
- A duty Relating To Travel Arrangements For Eligible Children
- A duty to publish its policies relating to home to school transport
- A duty to have a robust published appeals procedure for parents to follow should they have cause for complaint or disagreement reached concerning the eligibility of their child for travel support.

The details of appeals procedures should be published alongside travel policy statements no later than six weeks before the date upon which parents are asked to express a preference for a school in the relevant school year. These details

include arrangements for “eligible” children, and those made under the Local Authority’s discretionary powers.

To cover the duty to assess travel and transport needs and promote sustainable travel the Government has undertaken to provide additional funding.

No details of allocations to individual local authorities have yet been made available but a consultation is underway for the future funding.

PROPOSED MAINTAINED NURSERY CLASS AT CAWOOD CE (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Governors of Cawood CE (VA) Primary School have come forward with a proposal to establish a maintained nursery class at the school which could accommodate 26 children on a part-time basis. It is proposed that the nursery class be opened in September 2007.

Parents, providers and other interested parties have been consulted, the response to the consultation has been mainly positive. The North Yorkshire Early Years and Childcare Partnership Core Group supports the proposal.

If the proposal is to be taken forward, the Governors will publish statutory notices. There would be a six week period following publication for objections or comments, the proposal would subsequently be referred to the School Organisation Committee for determination.

Executive Members of the Children and Young People’s Service have been asked to support the Governors in publishing a statutory notice to establish a nursery class and after receiving a report detailing the proposal, this support has been given.

RICHMOND SCHOOL

The current position is:

The planning application was lodged shortly before Christmas. It is expected to be considered by the Planning Regulatory Foundations Committee on 24 April.

The process of selection and appointment of a contractor through the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) has begun.

Subject to the above, it is still anticipated that building works will begin in the Summer with final completion Summer/Autumn 2009.

County Councillor John Watson OBE
Executive Member for Education

12 February 2007