



Meeting to discuss summer born children and school admissions

Date	29 th January 2013
Location	Sanctuary Buildings 8.01
Time	1315 – 1415
Publication	Not protectively marked
Present	Stefan Richter – parent Stacy Wright – parent David McVean – DfE Jamie Zucker – DfE (note taker)

Background

- Stefan Richter and Stacy Wright came to discuss the issue of school start dates and summer born children with David McVean.
- Both parents feel it is in the best interests of their summer born children to delay the start of school (in year R) to the September following their fifth birthday.
- Mr Richter and Ms Wright have faced difficulties in arranging for this to happen and are members of associated campaign groups on Google and Facebook.
- Both parents have achieved different levels of success. Mr Richter has agreed the arrangement in principle with the head of his daughter's future school (an own admissions authority academy).
- Ms Wright is still facing resistance from Kent County Council regarding her son's start at a local maintained school.

At the start of the meeting it was noted that summer born children were the topic of a PQ delivered in Parliament last week. David McVean confirmed that he will be meeting with BLISS next week to discuss the issue of premature summer born children.

The main points raised by Mr Richter and Ms Wright were as follows:

- There is confusion in local authorities about this aspect of the

Admissions Code. This is leading to a growing number of cases of conflict within and between authorities. This is causing a great deal of struggle and heartache for many parents.

- Admission authorities seem fixated with date-of-birth rather than the needs of the child and the wishes of parents. Within admission authorities it is often unclear who has the authority to deal with this issue and parents get passed between staff.
- Teachers and children's services officials usually agree that a delayed start date is in the interests of some summer born children. However, they are often reluctant to say so officially and do not want to interfere with the work of admissions teams.
- Local authorities claimed that summer born children often require additional educational support. Allowing them a later start would save resources and money.
- The new Admission Code seems less clear on the issue of delaying entrance. Admission authorities are being too prescriptive in their interpretation of Section 2.17 and do not see it as relevant.
- There is evidence that in cases where schools are their own admission authority, parents have enjoyed slightly more success. This was the case for Mr Richter.
- Parents are becoming increasingly active on this issue. Related Facebook and Google Groups are growing in size.
- Other than Wiltshire, which has made some positive improvements (particularly in the case of premature children) there are no identified examples of good practice. However, this may be due to the fact that satisfied parents are unlikely to join the associated groups and forums.
- Ms Wright indicated that she had recently been contacted by reporters from the Telegraph to discuss the issue.

David McVean offered the following:

- We are grateful for all the work of the groups in raising the issue and all the above points were useful information. The Department is meeting with BLISS next week and will consider what, if any, action may be needed to improve the situation.
- The new Admissions Code (2012) aims to be as succinct as possible. Section 2.17 allows parents to seek places for their children outside of their age group and obliges admission authorities to make decisions based on the circumstances of *individual* cases. This drafting was less prescriptive than previous Codes, but it was not intended to be a definitive list.

- David asked that the group continued to send cases and examples, though he would also welcome any where it was working well.

Action Points:

1. Ms Wright to send her case to David in the event that she is not satisfied with the response from Kent County Council.
2. Mr Richter and Ms Wright to continue to send David more case studies so that the Department can a) gain a better understanding of exactly where the resistance is coming from, b) identify examples of where the process is working well.
3. Jamie Zucker will send web links to:
 - a. The School Admissions Code
 - b. The Appeals Code
 - c. Month of Birth and Education - Schools Analysis Report
 - d. The Information on FAP that was recently published on Fair Access Protocols.