



Approved minutes of the Bridgend Admission Forum meeting held on 25 May 2021, via Teams

Local authority representatives

Mr R Davies (RD) - Chair
Mrs D Davies (DD)

Group Manager - Business Support
Principal Officer, Business Strategy and Performance

School representatives

Mr J Tarran (JT) – Vice-chair

Headteacher, Archdeacon John Lewis Church in
Wales Primary School

Mrs S Jayne (SJ)

Headteacher, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr

Mrs K John (KJ)

Headteacher, Brackla Primary School

Mr J Evans (JE)

Headteacher, Heronsbridge School

Mrs H Castle

Headteacher, Cynffig Comprehensive School
(attending in place of Mr A Slade)

Parent governor representative

Mr W Bond (WB)

Croesty Primary School

Also present at the meeting

Ms C Christy (CC)

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

1. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr A Slade, Headteacher, Porthcawl Comprehensive School and Cllr Dr C Smith.

RD thanked the members present for their attendance at the virtual meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record.

There were no matters arising.

3. Membership of the forum

The requirements regarding the membership of admissions forums were reviewed and it was agreed that the local authority would take actions aimed at extending the forum's membership for 2021-2022.

4. Local authority School Admissions Policy 2022-2023 update

DD reminded the members that the forum had agreed the consultation draft of the School Admissions Policy for 2022-2023 at its meeting in November 2020. The consultation period for the draft policy was 19 January 2021 to 19 February 2021.

DD advised the members of the representations that had been received, as part of the consultation, from one of the Welsh-medium schools, and the actions that were taken in response. Where appropriate, changes had been made to the draft policy for approval by Cabinet, which were:

- The policy section relating to catchment areas was extended with a specific statement that there are no catchment areas for the Welsh-medium schools in Bridgend. The same clarification was stated for faith schools in Bridgend.
- Section 6 of the policy was amended and extended to clarify the position as regards eligibility for home-to-school transport to Welsh-medium schools in the county.
- The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (WLWM 2011) makes provision for the development of standards of conduct relating to the Welsh language, which are intended to gradually replace the existing system of Welsh language schemes provided for by the Welsh Language Act 1993 (WLA 1993), but Part II of the WLA 1993 remains in force. Accordingly, the WLWM 2011 was referenced in section 11 of the policy, in addition to the WLA 1993.
- All sections in the policy relating to oversubscription criteria were amended to make it clear that catchment areas are only applicable in respect of applications for English-medium, non-faith schools and that proximity to the school is applicable in respect of applications for Welsh-medium and faith schools. (It was referenced in the policy that the local authority is the admission authority for only one faith school, ie Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School.)

Cabinet approved the policy on 9 March 2021, complying with the requirement in the statutory code to have the policy/arrangements determined by 15 April 2021.

5. Initial data for the admissions rounds for September 2021

The members considered the data and noted the following specific points:

- The increase in the percentage of applications submitted online.
- The decrease in the percentage of applications for which the first preference school was the catchment school (English-medium and non-faith schools only).
- The decrease in the percentage of applications where no second preference school had been recorded.
- All children with a statement naming a defined placement for Year 7 in September 21 were allocated a place at the named school, in accordance with policy.
- All looked after and previously looked after children were allocated places at the first preference schools, in accordance with policy. Validation checks on applications for currently looked after children had been time consuming as few applications had been submitted by the corporate parent, as required by policy.
- Few parents/carers who expressed a preference for a school on the basis of a future address, complied with the evidence requirements for future address. This was despite the guidance in the application form. Therefore, the applications were assessed on the basis of the current address, in accordance with policy.
- Few parents/carers who expressed a preference for a school for medical / psychological / social reasons, complied with the evidence requirements, despite the guidance in the application form.
- Once again, Y7 places at Bryntirion Comprehensive School were oversubscribed, resulting in 18 first preference refusals – an increase on the 12 refusals for September 2020. All expressed second preferences were met on offer day.
- Reception places were oversubscribed at West Park Primary School in the west of the county. It was notable that over 60% of the applications for the school were in respect of children living outside the school's catchment area. All expressed second preferences were met. The number of children admitted was 55 against the published admission number of 54 due to the application of the multiple births criterion.
- In the north east, reception places were oversubscribed in Coety Primary School, Coychurch Primary School, Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr. Many of the parents/carers who had expressed a first preference for one of these schools had recorded another school in this group as a second preference. The allocation process was, therefore, challenging. Some parents/carers whose expressed first preference for a Welsh-medium or faith school could not be met, appeared to have chosen second preference schools solely on the basis of location.

- Full-time nursery places were oversubscribed at Afon y Felin Primary School and West Park Primary School in the west, but all expressed second preferences were met.

In the north east, places were oversubscribed at Coety Primary School, Coychurch Primary School, Litchard Primary School and Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School. Many of the parents/carers who had expressed a first preference for one of these schools had recorded another school in this group as a second preference. The allocation process was, therefore, challenging. For ten applications, it had been necessary for the local authority to refuse at the first and second preference schools on offer day.

Places at Cwmfelin Primary School in the north were oversubscribed. Almost 70% of the applications were in respect of children living outside the school's catchment area. All expressed second preferences were met on offer day.

- Validation checks had been required on a significant number of submitted applications for reasons of duplication, parental disputes, inconsistent information, erroneous information, and failures to supply required evidence. All applications for oversubscribed schools where it had been recorded that a sibling would be in Year 6 at the preferred school/s in 2021-2022 had been manually checked following identification of many cases where the sibling was in the current Year 6 but would have left the school by September 2021. The checks had been particularly challenging given the reduced officer capacity, but essential given the sibling oversubscription criteria.

6. Any other business

RD informed members of the local authority's substantial investment to procure the Capita One system, and the expected benefits when implemented.

7. Date of next meeting

No specific date was agreed but an early meeting in the Autumn Term 2021 was favoured in light of the previous discussions regarding membership.

RD thanked all attendees for their attendance and contributions.