

Bridgend County Borough Council

Approved minutes of the Bridgend Admission Forum meeting held 17 October 2023, via Teams

Attendees:

Local authority representatives

Mr R Davies (RD) – Chair

Ms E Giles (EG) – Secretary

Ms R Garner (RG)

Group Manager - Business Support

Senior Pupil Services Officer

ALN (Additional Learning Needs) Lead Early Years,
Cognition and Learning and CMMI (Complex Medical
and Motor Impairment)

Ms B Davies (BD)

Childcare Team Manager

School (community and voluntary controlled) representatives

Mr R Pawar (RP)

Mrs K John (KJ)

Headteacher, Bryntirion Comprehensive School

Headteacher, Brackla Primary School

School (voluntary aided) representatives

Mr J Tarran (JT) – Vice-chair

Mr A Howells (AH)

Headteacher, Archdeacon John Lewis Church in
Wales Primary School

Headteacher, Archbishop McGrath Catholic High
School

Roman Catholic Diocesan representatives

Ms A Robertson (AR)

Director of Schools, Archdiocese of Cardiff

Parent Governor representatives

Ms C Bloomfield (CB)

Parent Governor, Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen

Additional members

Ms C Christy (CC)

Mrs M Treharne (MT)

Schools Admissions Officer,

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Education Engagement Co-ordinator,

Bridgend County Borough Council

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

RD welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies were noted from Cllr JPB, SS, RO, DD and RM.

2. Election of the Chair, Vice-chair and Secretary for the 2023-2024 school year

RD, JT and EG were proposed as the Chair, Vice-chair and Secretary. The proposal was approved by all present. RD, JT and EG accepted the positions for the 2023-2024 school year.

3. Membership of the forum for the 2023-2024 school year

EG referred to Attachment B, which was the document detailing the proposed membership of the forum for 2023-2024.

EG highlighted new members that were joining the forum after the last meeting in January 2023. The new members were recorded as follows:

Miss Emma Giles	Senior Pupil Services Officer
Mr Ravi Pawar	Headteacher, Bryntirion Comprehensive School
Mr Ashley Howells	Headteacher, Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School
Ms Rebecca Owens	Parent governor, Heronsbridge School
Ms Claire Bloomfield	Parent Governor, Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen
Mr Shaun Sweeney	Community governor, Tremains Primary School

It was recorded that Mrs Catrin Coulthard, Headteacher, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon y Cymoedd had stepped down as a member of the forum and that Ms Delyth Davies, Acting Headteacher, Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr would be the new representative.

EG to update the Membership of the Bridgend Admission Forum, attachment A to reflect this change.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2024 and matters arising

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. Draft work programme 2023-2024

EG presented the draft work programme, which reflected the responsibilities of the forum, as set out in the School Admissions Code, and proposed the means by which the forum could discharge those responsibilities in the 2023-2024 school year. It was highlighted that two meetings were proposed for the year in order to comply with the forum's statutory duties.

JT requested that the second meeting be scheduled for the end of the Spring term, to allow for the new policies to be determined before 15 April. EG confirmed she would confirm date of new meeting via email.

EG highlighted that some aspects of the work programme were reliant on information provision from the voluntary aided schools.

EG advised that the timetable for provision of the forum's annual report for 2022-2023 to Welsh Government was 30 November.

6. Draft School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 – local authority

EG outlined that the base document was the 2024-2025 policy, with all proposed changes for 2025-2026 tracked. Questions and discussion on any proposed changes were invited but it was noted that many changes were minor, such as dates. The changes that were highlighted were as follows:

- Section 1.4 has a small change to the wording regarding our special schools, to now detail school names.
- Section 8 details a minor changes which now refers to the Mainstream Fair Access Panel (MFAP) in the Fair Access section
- Section 8.10 details a very minor changes regarding Managed Moves, with the addition that parents/carers will be required to complete an application form.
- All dates have been changed to reflect 2025-2026.

EG confirmed that there are no changes to the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for 2025-2026.

JT highlighted that in Section 1.2 the wording should be amended to remove reference to 'Roman', so for example it should be Saint Robert's Catholic School.

RG raised a concern regarding Section 8 in reference to providing clarity around the wording about naming schools in an IDP, especially for those applications being submitted for other LA's. RD and RG agreed to add in 'following consultation with the local authority'.

CC confirmed that they would go through the consultation process with the transferring LA.

RP informed the forum of the discussions that had taken place with Schools Programme Manager, regarding the new build at Bryntirion Comprehensive School and the impact on the PAN.

RD explained there's a scrutinization of a project due to the way that the public notice process works, that supersedes the arrangements that a local authority has in terms of the PAN. The public notice changes the plan by default, so it wouldn't be mentioned in the policy. Changes to the PAN could be made on the basis of the public notice at future date. The code does allow us to amend the PAN in line with relevant school modernization arrangements so that there is flexibility within the legislation to dynamically change the PAN.

The draft policy was agreed by the forum.

7. Draft School Admissions Policies 2025-2026 – voluntary aided (VA) schools

RD referred to the draft policies that had been distributed to members and the responsibility of the forum to ensure that all policies comply with the School Admissions Code.

EG highlighted the following points on the VA policies:

- Archdeacon John Lewis policy – the dates for the timetable need to be updated. JT confirmed he had been waiting for the LA admission policy in order to update the dates and this can now be completed. It was also highlighted that there would need to be an amendment to the date of birth for Full-time Nursery as should read September 2021.
- St Robert's policy refers to oversubscription criteria but does not provide the details on what they are. AR confirmed that she will chase this up with the school.
- The policies are focused on admissions rounds, with minimal detail in relation to in-year admissions. AR will feed this back to the schools.

JT reiterated that he had remodelled the policy for his school on the local authority policy because of its comprehensiveness, which had the benefit of clarity and being 'tried and tested', making it easier to deal with any challenge, particularly in the event of an appeal. JT advised that he had shared his views with colleagues in the VA schools.

RD reaffirmed that there is support available from the local authority in respect of any admissions-related matters and provide bespoke feedback if schools required additional advice and support.

AR confirmed that the policies for the VA schools in Bridgend are similar to those VA schools across the Diocese. In respect of appeals, AR informed the forum that she receives a report from the independent appeal panel members, which highlights any issues that have been highlighted in terms of their policies, which are then shared with the schools.

8. ADEW (Association of Directors of Education in Wales) Admissions Group update

EG advised the members of the following items of discussion at the ADEW Admissions Group meeting on 06 October 2023:

Ukraine nationals

- WG has paused the collection of data for Ukrainian admissions as numbers have become static. The LA has noted a decrease in the number of applications from those arriving in the country and seen more of an increase in transfers of Ukrainian pupils from other LAs.
- The central Ukraine/foreign nationals response team have confirmed that there are a number of funding streams in operation, depending upon the cohort arriving

in the area. They are working on a financial tariffs matrix which will hopefully explain what avenues of funding is available and an update will follow,

- Up to date WG guidance is available on funding for Homes for Ukraine (Homes for Ukraine: funding | GOV.WALES). The team have confirmed that currently there is education tariff for the 2023/24 financial year.
- With regard to notice of arrivals, unfortunately the nature of their arrivals mean the Home Office have to accommodate quickly. They are trying to better plan for this but the numbers arriving has made this challenging.

A New Tribunal System for Wales

- The consultation for the white paper 'A New Tribunal System for Wales' ended on the 2 October.
- After consultation, admission appeals should remain with local authorities and not to be included in the Education Tribunal for Wales.
- Implementation of new system will be over a period time, rather than a 'big-bang' approach.
- Feedback to WG was that the white paper was far too complex to be able to respond appropriately. People struggled with the document and felt they were unable to make comments on what is a significant change. WG explained that this was due to the area which the white paper covers and the legality surrounding it.

Managed moves

- Cardiff reported a huge increase in managed moves and that the issues from an admissions perspective are significant.
- Most LAs reported not agreeing a managed move if there is no place available at the school being considered. Most reported that their 'Hard to Place' panel or their equivalents makes the decision.
- One LA reported that due to a large increase in managed moves being considered, it is trialling a rota for managed moves to avoid overload for any individual school, with its panel making the decisions.

Pupil Exclusions

It was noted that there appears to be an increase in parents requesting pupil transfers before the exclusion process can be completed and therefore not having that exclusion against their child. They then start at the transferred school for a short time before requesting a transfer back to the original school. These applications then need to be considered through Fair Access panels and hard to place protocols.

MT confirmed that permanent exclusions in Bridgend are dealt with through the proper channels, going through the Fair Access Panel for discussion and linking in with the schools.

MT shared that we are receiving a few applications that are out of authority back into Bridgend that have been permanently excluded and the issue lies with a lack of background information and we're relying heavily on other authorities to share that with us.

JT sought confirmation of the turnaround for a transfer application. EG confirmed it's 15 school days or 28 calendar days, whichever is soonest.

JT queried the timing of the PDC in relation to a possible transfer application.

MT explained that permanent exclusion process is that the Pupil Disciplinary process has to happen within 15 school days of the permanent exclusion. We always try and ask schools to leave it as long as possible to have the PDC so that we can take it to our access to education panel for further discussion, in case a child needs a specialist provision and then we can move them on before the PDC. That isn't always the case and some of these children that are permanently excluded, we have to move them on to another mainstream school, but it's usually 15 days.

RD queried if a school would withdraw the permanent exclusion of a pupil was moving to another LA. MT advised that they strongly advise Headteachers to complete the process, as from a legal stance, if they don't the pupil could re-apply to that school. There have been occasions where we've put children into specialist provision and that and then the head teachers have agreed to rescind the permanent exclusion.

RP confirmed that they would see the Pupil Disciplinary process through to conclusion.

Annual Prospectus

The question was asked at ADEW if local authorities publish the VA schools admissions policies in their prospectus. There was a mixed response, where some just publish a link to those policies rather than the whole document, others have an agreed policy across the VA schools which they publish and then include the over-subscription criteria for each one, while others publish everything.

RD queried whether there was advice on the most appropriate method. EG confirmed it was at the discretion of each local authority.

Further updates for WG

- The governance and admission departments have now been merged.
- Admission appeals amendment has gone through and the code updated to reflect the provision of online appeal meetings. The lay-in period is due to end at the end of this month.
- Co-ordination of admission arrangements – new regulations drafted and hoping to consult in the Autumn term with a view for the changes by the end of this school year and then the code will be updated.

9. Any other business

No items were raised.

10. Date of the next meeting

No date was agreed. EG agreed to communicate with members as regards the next meeting date.

RD thanked all attendees for their attendance and contributions.