

Bridgend County Borough Council

Minutes of the Bridgend Admission Forum meeting at Civic Offices on 16 March 2020

LA Representatives

Mr R Davies (RD) Chair	Group Manager - Business Strategy and Performance
Mrs D Davies (DD)	Principal Officer, Knowledge and Learner Support

School Representatives

Mr John Tarran (JT) Vice chair	Headteacher, Archdeacon John Lewis Church in Wales Primary School
Mrs Sharon Jayne (SJ)	Headteacher, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr
Mr Andrew Slade (AS)	Headteacher, Porthcawl Comprehensive School

Governor Representative

Mr W Bond (WB)	Croesty Primary School
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Also present at the meeting

Ms C Christy (CC)	Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
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1. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Mr C Smith, Ms K John, and Mr J Evans. No apologies had been received from Mrs A Keller.

RD thanked the members present for their attendance, given the current situation.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2019

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

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Admission Forum Annual Report 2018 – 2019

DD highlighted that the local authority had sought clarification from Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School regarding the school's final published admission number (PAN), as the figure significantly exceeds the PAN recorded by the local authority. As a response continued to be outstanding, the report had been provided to Welsh Government (WG) with a caveat that the matter was still under examination.

No response had been received from WG and DD advised that there had been no feedback from WG on annual reports in the last few years. CC advised that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council does not usually receive any response or feedback from WG on its annual reports.

5. School Admissions Policy 2021-2022

DD advised that no comments had been submitted during the consultation period and the policy had been submitted for Cabinet approval.

6. School Places and Admissions Prototype Dashboard Report, Autumn Term 2019

DD presented the report for discussion and explained that the intent is to produce the report on a termly basis. Members were invited to provide feedback on the prototype report, to inform the content of future reports.

RD commended the comprehensive, informative content of the report and the work that had been involved in its production.

RD and DD highlighted a number of specific points including the information on the availability of school places across the clusters and the county as a whole and the points of pressure. It was noted that the report confirms that there are no schools in Bridgend that are full. RD highlighted the pressure in certain year groups in certain areas, for example, in Brackla, areas in Porthcawl and in Pencoed, and in particular year groups.

The significant percentage of in-year admissions/transfers requests for children moving into the county was of particular note. RD stated that when new housing developments are built, they attract many young families into the area, which affects the number of school places available.

RD highlighted the significant increase in the number of admission appeals registered and the potential reasons for the increase were discussed. It was considered that, in part, parents are becoming more willing to exercise their right to appeal.

DD highlighted that Pencoed Primary School had the most appeals registered compared to other primary schools. CC highlighted that quite a number of parents who live near or on the border, contact Rhondda Cynon Taf Admissions Team and request admission to Dolau Primary School as they have been refused a place at Pencoed Primary School.

DD advised that the reasons for numbers on roll in any year group being above PAN have to be explained in detail both in the local authority's written statement and at appeal hearings.

JT was interested in the knock-on impact for Croesty Primary School of refusals at Pencoed Primary School.

DD referenced the first appeal for refusal of a place at a Welsh-medium school had taken place very recently, but the outcome was not yet known. DD highlighted that it had been necessary to give detailed explanations on the reasons for the number of pupils in Year 4 being significantly over PAN. Briefly, the main reason was the spike in admission requests for the September 2015 reception intake in the county, resulting in a decision to admit numbers in excess of PAN to every Welsh-medium school. However, numbers admitted to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr had exceeded to PAN by the greatest margin. The situation had not repeated since

JT commented that the report was very welcome, thorough and easy to assimilate. JT enquired whether a copy of the report could be provided to all HTs.

RD and DD explained that the report would likely be presented first to Team Bridgend, so that the data and issues could be explained, then all subsequent reports would be sent to schools or made available on the Q drive. DD advised that she would be happy to discuss the position and data for any specific school with the HT.

7. 2020 – 2021 admissions rounds update

With regard to the secondary admission round for September 2020, DD advised that Year 7 places at Bryntirion Comprehensive School had been oversubscribed. It had been necessary to initially refuse 14 applications. However, since the offer date, places had become available as parents/carers who had applied to both Bryntirion Comprehensive School and Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School had decided to accept places at the latter school. In consequence, a further 10 places have been allocated at Bryntirion Comprehensive School, leaving four refusals, with appeals having been registered for three.

JT enquired whether the parents who had applied for both Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School and Bryntirion Comprehensive School have children attending the feeder schools of Bryntirion Comprehensive School. RD and DD explained that there are no feeder schools as such, only catchments but there has been a historic picture of the parents of pupils attending Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School applying for places at Bryntirion Comprehensive School. It was further explained that Pen y Fai village is located in the catchment area of Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen. DD advised that out of a total of 30 Year 6 pupils attending Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School, 28 were the subject of applications for Year 7 places at Bryntirion Comprehensive School.

JT stated that the headteacher of Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School has difficulty with parents applying for the two schools, as places are limited and are

being allocated to pupils whose parents would actually prefer the offer of a place at Bryntirion comprehensive School and are waiting for that to happen. JT questioned whether there was a weakness in the admission process and whether it is possible for the local authority to establish if parents had submitted applications for both schools, either by asking questions on the applications forms or through direct liaison with Archbishop. RD and DD referred to a complaint having been raised with the local authority a year ago and a challenge to the right of the local authority and the school to liaise when they are separate admitting bodies.

JT questioned if Archbishop's offer date could be before the national offer date, so parents are aware of any offer of a place at that school before the local authority releases its offers. RD and DD confirmed that the requirement for all admitting bodies to comply with the national offer date is in the statutory code and Archbishop, therefore, cannot offer places before the national offer date.

DD referenced the upcoming reception and nursery admission rounds. It was noted that for reception admissions for September 2020, the local authority will likely be refusing in two schools. The nursery admissions round was noted to still be open but the numbers are showing oversubscription in certain schools.

DD referred to the high volume of late applications for reception places, despite the heavy social media campaign and letters to parents via schools. With reception, the local authority cannot predict the number of overall applications, as education prior to this is not statutory and not all the children will be already attending a Bridgend school in a nursery class.

JT advised that his school experiences an issue with parents applying for nursery places, and places being allocated, but when September comes, the children do not attend. This has a financial impact on the school. DD advised that a similar situation is experienced by the local authority every year, particularly in respect of part-time nursery places.

8. Any other business

No additional matters were raised.

RD thanked all attendees.