

<b>Meeting</b>	Bridgend County Borough Council Bridgend Admission Forum
<b>Date</b>	22 October 2024
<b>Time</b>	2pm to 4pm
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams

**Attendees:****Local authority representatives**

Mr R Davies (RD) – Chair

Ms Emma Giles (EG) – Secretary

Ms R Garner (RG)

Group Manager - Strategy, Planning and Support

Senior Pupil Services Officer

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

**School (community and voluntary controlled) representatives**

Mr R Pawar (RP)

Mrs K John (KJ)

Ms Delyth Davies

Headteacher, Bryntirion Comprehensive School

Headteacher, Brackla Primary School

Acting Headteacher, Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr

**School (voluntary-aided) representatives**

Mr A Howells (AH)

Headteacher, Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School

**Church in Wales Diocesan representatives**

Ms Clare Werrett (CW)

Acting Diocesan Education Lead for the Llandaff Diocese

**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 SS, BD, Cllr Martyn Jones (Cllr MJ) and AR.

Absent without apologies Ms Claire Bloomfield (CB) and Ms Rebecca Owens (RO).

Welcome new members – CW.

## **2. Election of the Chair, Vice-chair and Secretary for the 2024-2025 school year**

EG requested nominations for Chair, Vice, and Secretary.

RD and EG were proposed as the interim Chair and Secretary. The proposal was approved by all present. RD and EG accepted the positions for the 2024-2025 school year. There were no nominations for the position of Vice and this is to be revisited during the spring term meeting.

## **3. Membership of the forum for the 2024-2025 school year**

EG referred to Attachment B, which was the document detailing the proposed membership of the forum for 2024-2025.

EG highlighted the changes from last year's forum members:

Cllr Jon-Paul Blundell (Cllr JPB)	Cllr JPB has been replaced by Cllr MJ as Cabinet Member for Education.
Mr John Tarran(JT)	Headteacher, Archdeacon John Lewis Church in Wales Primary School, has retired and a new representative is to be sought. KJ informed the forum that Mrs Carmen Beveridge (CBe), headteacher at St. Robert's Roman Catholic Primary School has expressed an interest in becoming a member. EG to extend an invitation to the spring term meeting.
Ms Rebecca Morteo (RM)	Acting Diocesan Education Lead for the Llandaff Diocese is no longer in post and CW has taken on this role and has joined the Bridgend Admission Forum as a new member.

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

## **4. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 and matters arising**

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

## **5. Draft work programme 2024-2025**

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 2024-2025 school year. It was highlighted that two meetings were proposed for the year in order to comply with the forum's statutory duties, with a third schedule for the summer term.

EG highlighted that some aspects of the work programme were reliant on information provision from the voluntary-aided schools, for example contributions for the Starting School Prospectus.

EG advised that the template for the forum's annual report had not yet been received by Welsh Government but previous timetables for provision of the forum's annual report for 2024-2025 to Welsh Government would suggest the end of November. EG to circulate draft annual report to all members for feedback, once the template has been received from Welsh Government.

RD enquired if Welsh Government provided any feedback on the annual report. EG confirmed that there was no feedback received for last year's report.

## **6. Draft School Admissions Policy 2026-2027 – local authority**

EG outlined that the base document was the 2025-2026 policy, with all proposed changes for 2026-2027 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 7 has a small change to the wording regarding transport arrangements to attend schools in other local authorities to provide clarity in that this section is in reference to transport and not admission arrangements.
- All dates have been changed to reflect 2026-2027.

EG confirmed that there are no changes to the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for 2026-2027.

EG informed the forum that once they had agreed the draft admission policy, it would be sent to the dioceses, neighbouring local authorities and to all governing bodies for consultation with a timeframe of one month, with a view for it to go to Cabinet meeting January 2025 for determination.

RG highlighted that the section regarding statements of additional learning needs or individual development plans would need to be updated for the 2027-2028 School Admissions Policy, as during 2026-2027 the transition from statements should be complete. The forum agreed to retain the information as is in the 2026-2027 School Admissions Policy, in case there were any delays in the transfer to individual development plans.

MT queried if the section in respect of managed moves should reference the Mainstream Fair Access Panel. RD confirmed that the managed move protocol is a draft protocol, so this will need to be picked up outside of the forum meeting.

Members were invited to comment on any of the proposed changes and requested if the forum agreed to the policy. The draft policy was agreed by the forum and approval was given to proceed to consultation.

## **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:

**Terminology for religious education and collective worship** – previously the Director of Education raised a query around this terminology and further advice has been sought from the Group Manager (Schools) and Central South Consortium. The advice received is that ‘Religion, Values and Ethics’ should be a separate to ‘Collective Worship’, due to the changes in the ‘right to withdraw’, and they have provided the as an example which also contains further links for supporting information:

### **Example**

#### **Religion, values and ethics**

Religion, values and ethics (RVE) is an academic subject within the humanities AoLE and is central to the knowledge, skills and experiences learners receive in our school. The religion, values and ethics curriculum is in accordance with the denominational teaching and practice of the Church-inWales, along with the mandatory and statutory requirements of the Curriculum for Wales Framework. More information regarding this can be found in the school’s prospectus, in the [RVE legislation section](#) and the [humanities Area of Learning \(AoLE\)](#) along with the [RVE Guidance](#), all found on Hwb and on the [Church-in-Wales website](#).

#### **Collective worship**

The Daily Act of Collective Worship (DACW) is a central focus of the spiritual experience learners receive in our school. Collective Worship is in accordance with the denominational teaching and practice of the Church in Wales.

- **Archdeacon John Lewis Church in Wales Primary School’s** policy is extensive and mirrors very much the format of the local authority’s admission policy, which is helpful to parents who need to refer to more than one policy when considering making an application.

#### **Amendments**

**page 12** reads ‘*No applications for 2026-2027 admissions rounds that are received by the governing body after 31 August 2024 will be processed.*’ This will need to be 31 August 2026.

**Page 15** Notification to applicants of offer or refusal of places this date needs to be Thursday 16 April 2026 in order to comply with the School Admissions Code. This will make the submission of appeal date Thursday 14 May 2026.

- St Robert's Roman Catholic Primary School's policy is very basic and lacks information regarding appropriate dates regarding when and how to apply/appeal.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School's policy has a closing date for applications but no date for when round opens.
- The policies are generally focused on admissions rounds, with minimal detail in relation to in-year admissions.

RD suggested that there was some work required to provide a more standardised approach across the voluntary-aided schools in relation to their admission policies.

CW confirmed that there is currently a process underway of collecting the policies for the voluntary-aided schools, not just for Bridgend but across the Llandaff and Monmouth diocese.

AH noted that the clerk to their admission appeals panel looks at their admission policy and provides advice to ensure it is legally compliant.

KJ suggested that as there were several new/acting headteachers within the faith cluster it would provide an opportunity for the policies to be reviewed as a cluster, to share good practice and so on.

## **8. Co-ordinated school admission arrangements update**

EG informed the members that the local authority (LA) are currently in the process of drafting a co-ordinated school admission arrangements for the school year 2027-2028, which needs to be approved by 1 January 2025 and Welsh Government (WG) to be informed by 28 February 2025.

WG have confirmed that it is for each LA to decide upon its consultation period and that consultation would not need to be a public one. The consultation needs to only be with the admission forum and the governing bodies within the LA. The guidance also states that consultation with any other LA that is likely to be affected by the co-ordinated scheme. WG confirmed that if we are unlikely to have out of county applications to VA schools then there would not be the need to consult with other LAs.

EG informed the members that a draft version of the co-ordinated admission arrangements will be issued for consultation shortly.

RD explained that there is a very tight turnaround for this to be determined by Cabinet in the December meeting. Advice from the local authority's Legal Services is that the framework has to be approved by Cabinet because it supports the admission policy that

is already determined by Cabinet. This process will need to be built into the admission timetable going forward. The forum agreed to a two-week consultation period.

## **9. 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 05 July 2024 was cancelled.

Meetings took place on 13 September and 18 October 2024 which were mainly focussed around the Co-ordinated School Admission Arrangements:

- The amended regulations have now been laid and will come into force on 4 November. These amendments do not affect any of the guidance already provided.
- WG clarified that there was no legal duty in respect of cross-border applications and the legislation only effects applications within our own LA.
- Concern was raised to WG regarding the closing date of 31 October for the Secondary rounds, as this means that there will be a need to open the round at the beginning of September or it was even suggested at the end of July. Concerns were voiced about there not being enough time available to chase applications and to support applications for vulnerable learners. WG stated that the 31 October is in the legislation and therefore has to be abided by.
- The date of the 31 October will also have implications for the publishing of the Starting School Prospectus, as this needs to be published 6 weeks before the round opens, meaning a publication date of before the schools break up for the summer holidays.
- WG confirmed that late applications should be handled by the LA as part of the co-ordinated scheme. Questions were raised over how this will work over the summer holidays, with applications being received up to the 31 August and the VA schools will not be available inform the LA of any offer of places. Neath, Port Talbot Council have had it in writing from the governing body of a VA school, that if places are not oversubscribed they have given authority to the LA to offer a place on their behalf. If VA schools are oversubscribed, processing of late applications over the summer period is potential problematic and could delay offers especially where other school choices need to be considered.

Members of the forum who are headteachers expressed concerns on how the timetabling required by the co-ordinated admission arrangements will impact on open evenings and transition events for the schools.

CC noted the potential issues around the inclusion of late applications in these arrangements and the implications for appeals.

RD re-iterated that the LA are not removing any responsibility from the voluntary-aided schools and they will still need to determine the offer/refusal of places in compliance with their oversubscription criteria.

AH requested clarification regarding dates. RD confirmed these arrangements are for the 2027-2028 admissions. There are dates specified in the legislation regarding the closing dates for the admission rounds and there have been no changes for the 'Offer Day' dates. All other dates in the draft arrangements are suggested processing dates and there is room for discussion around these.

#### **10. Any other business**

RD enquired if there had been any update provided by Welsh Government regarding a revised School Admission Code. EG confirmed there was no further update.

RD updated the forum on the new Home-to-School Transport Policy which comes into effect September 2025 and that a significant piece of work required in advising parents of the changes.

#### **11. Date of the next meeting**

4 February 2025 – to be confirmed

RD thanked all attendees for their attendance and contributions. Meeting concluded at 3.15pm.