

# Newport City Council: Education Services

## School Admissions Forum

### Minutes of the Meeting



Date: 19 March 2019

Present: Roman Catholic Diocese (in the Chair)  
Service Manager (Vice Chair)  
VA Schools Representative  
Primary Community Schools Representative  
Parent Governor Representative  
Secondary Community Schools Representative  
Looked After Children in Education  
(Non – Voting)  
Education Scrutiny & Commissioning Officer  
Local Community Representative (GEMS)

Apologies: VA Schools Representative  
Community Schools Representative  
School Admissions & Appeals Manager  
Advisor for Behaviour & Autism (non-voting)

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

AR opened the meeting and welcomed those present. All members introduced themselves to those new members attending for the first time. Apologies as noted above were given and accepted.

#### **2. Minutes of meeting held on 13 November 2018**

The minutes of the meeting were held to be a true and accurate record.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

Item 10 – LP informed the forum that the annual report 17/18 has now been completed, circulated to all forum members and submitted to Welsh Government.

#### **4. Review of Membership**

LP outlined that 3 Elected Members have been put forward for membership of the Forum. This will take the total number of LA representatives to 5, which is the maximum permissible. LP also advised that the Early Years Advisor, has been nominated to fill a vacant Community Representative role. Given these changes, KD will be transferred to a non-voting role. These changes were agreed by Forum members.

It was also noted that the terms of office for four current Forum members had either already ended or were due to end shortly. These members all indicated that they would like to be re-elected and thus this was approved by Forum members, extending terms of office for AR, DW, PB and NK.

## **5. Phase Admissions Update**

LP referred to the previously circulated paper and outlined that the Council was facing an unprecedented demand for places in the September 2019 Year 7 group from pupils within the city and across the wider catchment areas.

DW then explained that this situation was not identified until after the closing date for applications and added that whilst provision was satisfactory for pupils within the City, consideration had to be given to those pupils living in other LA areas but who are in catchment for a Newport secondary school.

As a result of this demand, four secondary schools have agreed to an artificial increase in PAN for the September 2019 Year 7 group. To date however, this has only applied to two schools – Bassaleg and The John Frost – with the proposed additional provision at Llanwern and Lliswerry being used to accommodate late applicants.

As at the offer date, there were a number of children in current Year 6 classes for whom an application for secondary school had still to be made. The School Admissions Manager is working with schools, the Education Welfare Service and GEMS to target these families. Whilst the number has reduced significantly, there are still approximately 48 outstanding.

PB asked whether the spike in numbers was a one-off and DW confirmed that the Year 5 cohort number is similar and therefore arrangements for September 2020 will need to be considered with headteachers. PB then outlined that applications for St Joseph's RC High School for September 2019 were also far higher than they had been in previous years. In future, he will ensure that parents are also advised to apply for a place at a LA school. LPi asked whether parents were restricted in the number of preferences they could make, but DW confirmed that this was not the case.

PB then raised an issue he had faced with Gloucestershire County Council who issued their offers in advance of the published offer date. DW suggested that this would need to be taken up directly with the LA, although he may find it useful to speak with colleagues in Monmouthshire County Council beforehand to see if this also affected their offers.

Notwithstanding these pressures, LP reported on the following headlines:

- 88% of secondary school first preferences were met for the on-time round;
- 79% of secondary school applications were made online;
- Whilst the Reception offer date is 16 April 2019, 1779 applications were received by the closing date, 81% of which were made online.

## **6. In - Year Admissions Update**

LP referred to the previously circulated paper, noting the following key points:

- 41% of in-year applications received relate to families moving into the city. DW noted that this was a further demonstration of the unpredictable pupil numbers across the city.
- 65% of first preferences were met, an increase from 63% in 2017.

DW again outlined the pressures arising from split sibling arrangements, noting the impact on attendance and punctuality. AS and EK noted that this also causes instability in some schools with very transient populations. DW confirmed that the LA was aware of these issues and hoped that the primary expansion planned under Band B of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme would assist.

## **7. Availability of school places**

LP referred to the previously circulated paper, and noted the following:

- There are less places available in schools on the West of the city than the East;
- There is very limited availability in the Bassaleg cluster, particularly in Foundation Phase year groups;
- The overall surplus across the city is 9%, just under the Welsh Government target of 10%.

LPi asked about currently large surplus in the Welsh-medium secondary school and whether it was expected that these places would be filled. DW confirmed that the school was originally opened as a growing school, in part to stimulate demand for Welsh-medium education to assist in supporting Welsh Government's Charter of 1 million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.

## **8. Consultation on Admission Arrangements 2020**

LP referred to the previously circulated paper, and confirmed that the Consultation on Admission Arrangements for 2020 had been undertaken and concluded. The consultation generated a single response, but this related to a proposal put forward under Monmouthshire's Consultation on Admission Arrangements and thus was not something that this LA could act upon.

AR outlined that the Roman Catholic primary schools across Newport were now co-ordinating admissions amongst themselves to support catholic children being able to receive a catholic education.

## **9. Reorganisation Programme**

DW confirmed the final determination was now in progress on the proposal to establish a LRB at Caerleon Lodge Hill Primary. This is likely to be effective shortly, with the proposal subsequently being implemented from the start of the Summer term 2019.

Last summer, a bid was submitted to the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund to seek capital investment to expand Ysgol Bryn Derw. Formal confirmation of this funding has now been received and therefore a school reorganisation proposal will be progressed shortly. The Cabinet Member for Education & Skills has already approved permission to consult on this proposal.

The Council has also been successful in a grant funding application to establish a fourth Welsh-medium primary school across the city. Details relating to the proposed location of the new school will be shared in early April 2019.

## **10. Fair Access Policy**

LP outlined that this item will be brought to the next meeting by KD who is drafting a policy to support hard to place admissions. This should assist in ensuring that hard to place / vulnerable pupils are placed in schools or provisions that are best placed to meet their specific and complex needs.

## **11. AOB**

DW asked PB whether any appeals had been received thus far in relation to the September 2019 Year 7 group at St Joseph's RC High. He confirmed that to date approximately 15 have been lodged. AR added that Cardiff City Council has recently implemented an "Appeals Fact Sheet" which appears to have reduced the number of appeals being progressed by parents. DW asked AR to share this with LP for information.

MBJ offered her view that some parents appear to think that reducing their number of preferences will increase the likelihood of being offered a place at their 1<sup>st</sup> preference school. PB further added on this and outlined an intention to consult on a policy change for 2021 to support admission of pupils from the school's diocese area. DW suggested that he speak to SP in the Newport Intelligence Hub for any information required in relation to postcode areas.

AR noted that the secondary admission round had been difficult and praised the School Admissions team for their hard work and professionalism.

## **12. Future Meeting Dates**

Summer Term - 24 June 2019

Autumn Term - 19 November 2019

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