

Newport City Council

School Admission Arrangements 2022/23

Consultation Report

Legislation

It is a statutory requirement of the Welsh Government School Admissions Code that Newport City Council, as the admissions authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in Newport, carries out an annual consultation on its school admission arrangements. The consultation must conclude by 1st March each year so that the resulting admission arrangements can be determined, either in their original form or with such modifications as the Council think fit, by 15th April in the determination year.

The determination year is the school year beginning two years before the school year in which the arrangements will apply. Consequently, Newport City Council recently undertook public consultation on the admission arrangements that will become effective from September 2022, even though no changes were proposed.

Consultation Period

Whilst the School Admissions Code states that consultation on admission arrangements must be carried out between 1st September and 1st March in the determination year, the actual length of the consultation period is not specified. Newport City Council's consultation on admission arrangements for 2022 therefore commenced on 1st December 2020 and closed on 12th February 2021. This afforded a consultation period of ten weeks.

Purpose of the report

To inform consultees and other interested parties of the outcome of the consultation on admission arrangements for the academic year 2022/23.

This consultation report includes the following sections:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Consultation responses
- Learner Voice
- Recommendations

Stakeholder Engagement

In accordance with Welsh Government's School Admissions Code, formal consultation was undertaken with the following statutory and non-statutory consultees:

Statutory consultees	
The governing body of relevant schools	The governing bodies of all community and voluntary controlled schools in Newport
All neighbouring local authorities	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Caerphilly County Borough Council Cardiff City Council Monmouthshire County Council Torfaen County Borough Council
Admission authorities for all other maintained schools in the area	The governing bodies of all voluntary aided schools in Newport
In the case of schools with a religious character, such body or person representing the religion or religious denomination in question	Diocesan Director, Church in Wales Diocesan Director, Roman Catholic
Non-statutory consultees	

The admission forum serving the area	Newport School Admissions Forum
Headteachers	The Headteachers of all schools in Newport
Elected members	All Newport City Council elected members
Community councils	All community councils in Newport
Other organisations	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations Newport Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership
Newport City Council Teams	Children & Young People's Services Law & Regulation Family Information Service Flying Start Housing & Regeneration Integrated Transport Vulnerable People Relocation Project

The consultation document was also publicised through the Council's 'Have your say' web page and via their social media channels.

Consultation Responses

In total, 3 responses were received during the consultation period from 2 members of the public and one community council.

A breakdown of the points raised, along with the Council's responses, is summarised as follows:

Point raised	Council Response
<p>Over subscription criteria: where the council moves the catchment area for a given school. This can have consequences to families living in the catchment area being moved. I cannot see anywhere in the document that this is taken into account. An example could be: 2 older children are in a particular school, the 3rd child applies for a place in the same school. However the council have opened a new seedling school and as such changed the catchment area. As the over subscription criteria stands: the 3rd child is likely to get a place in the catchment area seedling school. If this happens, the other 2 children cannot be moved to the new seedling school as the older classes do not exist. Further to this, it is unlikely that any child within the family will be entitled to school transport, making travel logistics impossible. Therefore you must take this case into account for over subscription criteria. If, even if this is taken into account, there is still not enough space, free transport should be provided to all children to allow them to attend class on time and reduce car journeys.</p>	<p>In terms of developing Welsh-medium education in Newport, the Council's preferred method of growth is via a seedling school arrangement, which allows a school to grow incrementally over a number of years, protecting existing schools from mass pupil migration and potential loss of staff to the new school. It is acknowledged that there may be some challenges to families during this interim period.</p> <p>However, the parents of pupils affected by a catchment area change (including as a result of a new school opening) are still able to apply for a place at the elder siblings' school, albeit as an out-of-catchment applicant. If the school is oversubscribed, all out-of-catchment applications will be assessed equally against the same criteria, and those with relevant siblings already attending the preferred school will have a higher priority in terms of securing a place, as follows:</p> <p>Oversubscription criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked-after children (children in public care) and previously looked-after children; 2. Pupils living within the catchment area making an application on medical grounds; 3. Pupils living within the catchment area with relevant siblings;

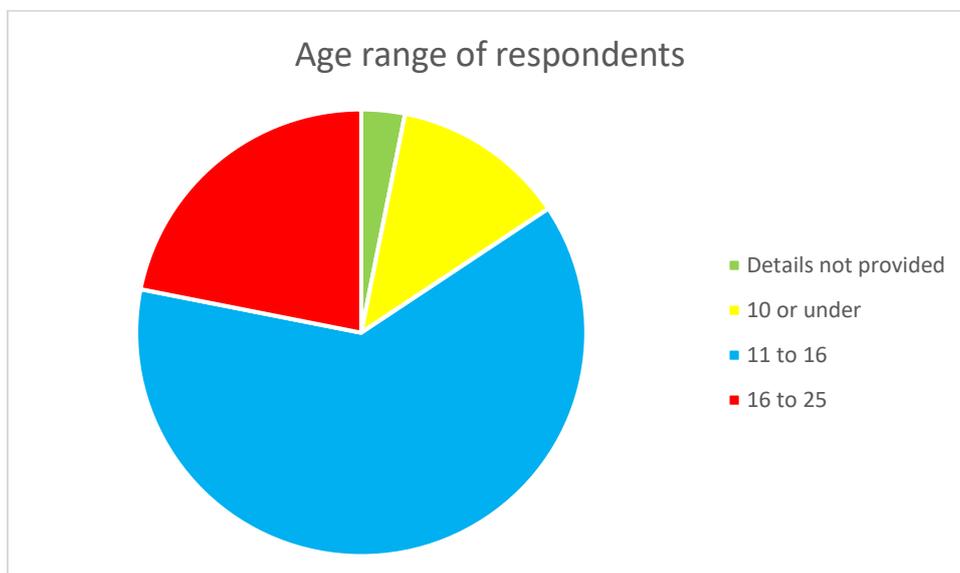
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Pupils living within the catchment area; 5. Pupils living outside of the catchment area making an application on medical grounds; 6. Pupils living outside of the catchment area with relevant siblings; 7. Pupils living outside of the catchment area. <p>If the application was refused, parents would be offered the right to an independent appeal where all extenuating circumstances could be aired for consideration.</p> <p>Furthermore, the home to school transport policy provides free transport to those pupils that meet the qualifying distance when attending their catchment or nearest available school. This includes pupils who continue to attend a school that was their catchment school when admitted but has since changed. It would also include children attending a new, seedling school, provided it was the catchment/nearest-available school.</p> <p>Additionally, in some circumstances where there is no entitlement, parents have the opportunity to purchase vacant seats on existing contracted vehicles.</p>
<p>Home address: There should be some allowances in [the] policy for those that are moving into a new build estate and trying to apply for the school within that estate. [Applicants are] unfairly considered as although [they have] exchanged contracts on the purchase [they] cannot physically move in until it is built.</p>	<p>Within the context of Newport, i.e. where the demand for school places is particularly high, the Council does not consider it appropriate to award priority for a place to those who intend to move into the area over those that already reside within Newport at the closing date for applications.</p>
<p>Evidence: Concerned about tightening up loopholes - i.e. if renting a house then evidence of proof of address should be shown year on year. Within the admissions policy there is no follow-up.</p>	<p>The Council requires specific proof of home address for each school admission application in order to be able to assess a pupil's eligibility within the published oversubscription criteria. This assessment is only required where the Council receives more applications than there are places available and the current process of evaluating evidence is considered satisfactory.</p> <p>However, once a pupil has qualified for a place in a school and has subsequently been added to the school roll there are very limited circumstances in which the place can be withdrawn and therefore there is no value in continuing to monitor home address once a pupil has enrolled at the school.</p>
<p>Siblings: Year 12 & Year 13 siblings should be considered relevant siblings when processing a sibling application.</p>	<p>Legislation directs the Council, as the admission authority, to define the term 'relevant sibling' within its school admissions policy. In doing so, the Council does not consider students in years 12 and 13 to be relevant siblings given that when</p>

	processing a sibling application during the normal admissions round, there is no guarantee that these pupils will move to or remain in post-16 education as they are of non-statutory school age. Therefore, applicants are not awarded priority on this basis.
Nurseries: In the west of the city, we feel that we're greatly lacking in nursery places compared to the rest of the city.	All community-maintained primary schools operate under 3-11 models and therefore have an attached nursery unit. The availability of non-maintained settings is monitored through the Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership. A tender exercise was carried out in the 2019/20 financial year, with eligible settings being commissioned from September 2020 for a new 5-year period. This tender exercise included work to ensure availability and equality of provision across all parts of the city.
Secondary school numbers: Admission number - is this intended intake or capacity figures? If this is intended intake then a list with capacity figures would be a good idea.	The admission numbers included within the consultation document and the resulting school admissions policy represent the total number of pupils that can be admitted into the year group. The figure is derived from the physical capacity of the school and is calculated using the Welsh Government formula specified by the document 'Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales'.

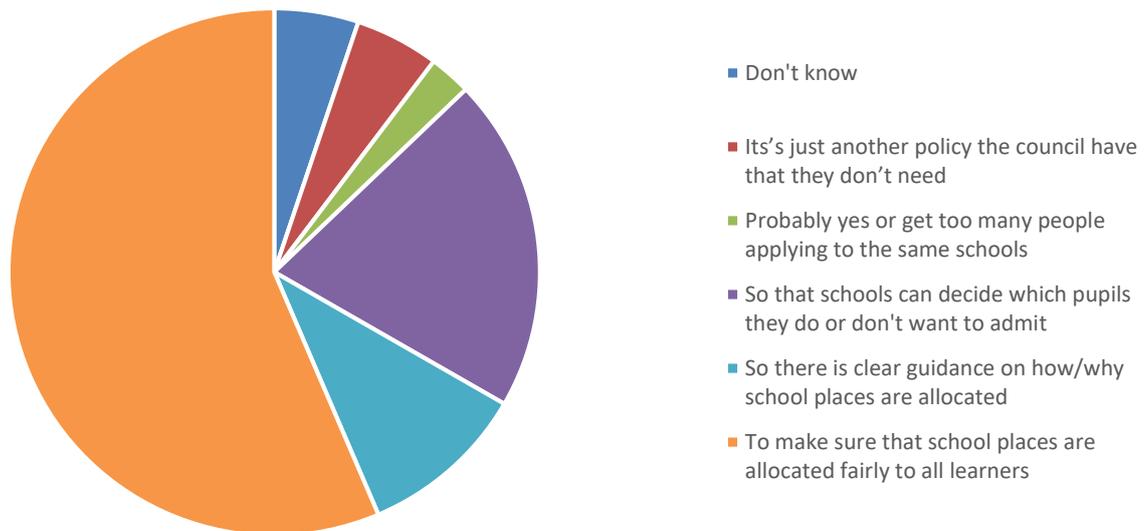
Learner Voice

The Council is keen to gain the views of learners when proposing policy changes. As a result, whilst the School Admissions Code does not stipulate that consultation should include engagement with learners, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to the Newport City Youth Council (who did not respond) and to school pupils for whom English is an additional language. The latter was facilitated by Bilingual Teaching Assistants from Gwent Education Minority-ethnic Service (GEMS). A copy of the questionnaire is appended to this report.

The questionnaire was taken in 11 different languages and 32 valid responses were received by the deadline, the details of which are as follows:



Why do you think it necessary to have a school admissions policy?



- 21 pupils (66%) had not previously heard of the school admissions policy but all thought it was necessary to have one;
- After having read a summary of the policy, 29 pupils (91%) believe there is enough choice available to meet their personal preference of school; 1 pupil believes that there are not enough schools with special classrooms for children with extra needs;
- Within the oversubscription criteria:
 - 22 pupils (69%) agree that the highest priority for a school place should be given to children with additional learning needs and those who are in the public care system;
 - 22 pupils agree that priority should be given to those pupils living within the catchment area/nearest the school, over those who live outside/further away;
 - 25 pupils (78%) think a child should be offered a place in a school if they have a sibling that already attends
- When asked if they thought the school admissions policy was clear and contained all the information needed to make an informed decision on school preference, 20 pupils (63%) did not know. 3 pupils considered that the policy should be translated into other languages; however, at the front of the parents' booklet, there is an introductory paragraph in 16 different languages to advise applicants of the support available from GEMS;
- Only 4 (13%) pupils felt that the school admissions policy affected them.

Additional considerations

Since launching the consultation, there has been a national change to the Ordnance Survey data sets used to measure home to school distances. As a result, the wording of the policy must now change to reflect this.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the admission arrangements be taken forward for implementation with effect from September 2022, incorporating revised wording in the section on home to school distance.

This decision will be now referred to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and taken through the Council's agreed democratic process.

Appendix

Newport City Council School Admissions Policy



Introduction

Newport City Council is the 6th largest of 22 authorities in Wales. It covers a geographical area of just over 73.5 square miles (**which is 5,000 times as big as the Principality Stadium in Cardiff!**).

At the last count in January 2020, there were 26,562 children and young people attending a nursery or school across Newport.

For all those children and young people Newport has:

- 2 separate nursery schools
- 43 primary schools (most of which have a nursery attached)
 - 3 are Welsh-medium schools and a fourth Welsh-medium primary school will open in September 2021
 - 8 are faith schools
 - 6 Roman Catholic schools
 - 2 Church in Wales schools
- 9 secondary schools
 - 1 of which is a Welsh-medium school
 - 1 of which is a Roman Catholic faith school
- 2 special schools for pupils with additional learning needs

An application must be made for every child that needs a school place and, with the exception of the seven Roman Catholic schools and one of the Church in Wales primary schools, the Council manages all applications for admission to these schools. **Almost 7,000 applications were received during the 2019/20 academic year!**

As each school has a maximum number of learners that it can physically accommodate comfortably and safely, and to ensure that school places are allocated fairly, admission arrangements are carried out in accordance with a school admissions policy, which specifically sets how an application should be made and will be processed. A school admissions policy has 2 functions:

1. To ensure that no school takes more learners than it can accommodate. An oversubscribed school cannot effectively provide efficient education for its learners.
2. To ensure that places are allocated fairly and equitably for all groups of children and young people

In simple terms, the school admissions process requires a parent or carer to submit an application for their child to go to school and the Council offers a place at the preferred school, if available.

Sometimes though, a particular school can receive more applications than there are places available and it is then the Council's job to apply a set of criteria to decide which learners are given a place.

The **oversubscription criteria** below is in order of priority and ensures that the most eligible are allocated a place first.

1. Children or young people with additional learning needs
2. Children or young people looked-after (or previously looked-after) by the local authority (in care)
3. Children or young people living within the catchment area with specific medical grounds
4. Children or young people living within the catchment area with a sibling already attending the school
5. Children or young people living within the catchment area
6. Children or young people living outside of the catchment area with specific medical grounds
7. Children or young people living outside of the catchment area with a sibling already attending the school
8. Children or young people living outside of the catchment area

After considering the above categories, or if a tie-break is necessary, priority is given to those living nearest the school. Those that are refused a place at a school are given the right to appeal against this decision to an independent panel.

Questionnaire

1. What age group are you?

10 and under

11 to 16

16 to 25

2. What language are you using to complete the questionnaire?

3. Do you think there is enough choice available to you when selecting a school to meet your personal preference (e.g. Welsh Medium, faith schools)? **Yes / No**

If no, please explain why.

4. Have you ever heard of a school admissions policy? **Yes / No**

5. Why do you think it is necessary to have a school admissions policy? Please choose one of the following options or add your own reason below:

- **So that schools can decide which pupils they do or don't want to admit?**
- **To make sure that school places are allocated fairly to all learners**
- **Its's just another policy the council have that they don't need**
- **So there is clear guidance on how/why school places are allocated.**
- **Other, please specify:**

6. Look at the oversubscription criteria, which shows the order of priority given for a school place.

- Do you agree that the highest priority for a school place should be given to children with additional learning needs and those who are in the public care system?

Yes / No / Don't Know

- Do you think it's a good idea to give a higher priority to children living nearest the school?

Yes / No / Don't Know

- Do you think priority should be given to those applying for a school that their sibling attends?

Yes / No / Don't Know

- Or, do you think you should be offered a place in a school if you have a sibling that already attends?

Yes / No / Don't Know

- Would you change the order of the criteria or add any other priorities?

Yes / No / Don't Know

If yes, please explain:

7. Each property in Newport has an English-medium and a Welsh-medium catchment school and priority is given to those pupils living within the catchment area over those who live outside. Do you agree with this? **Yes / No / Don't Know**

If not, why?

8. Do you think the policy has is clear and has all the information needed to enable you to make an informed decision on the school you want to apply for? **Yes / No / Don't Know**

If no, please explain.

9. Does the school admissions policy affect you? **Yes / No / Don't Know**

If yes, please explain how and what you feel about this?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire
School Admissions Team School.admissions@newport.gov.uk