

Newport City Council: Education Services

School Admissions Forum

Minutes of the Meeting



Date: 15th March 2022

Present: NCC Elected Member (in the Chair)
NCC Service Manager
NCC School Admissions & Appeals Manager
Roman Catholic Diocese
Community and VC Schools Representative
Local Community Representative (GEMS)
NCC Elected Member
VA Schools Representative
NCC Elected Member
Parent Governor Representative
Looked After Children Representative (non - voting)
Secondary Community Schools Representative
Community and VC Schools Representative

Clerk to the Forum

Apologies:

Advisor for Behaviour & Autism (non-voting)
VA Schools Representative
Parent Governor Representative
Local Community Representative (EY)

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr AN welcomed those present and apologies as noted above were given and accepted.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 22nd June 2021

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

3. Matters Arising

JL confirmed there were no further updates from Welsh Government regarding revision of the School Admissions Code. A small consultation has been issued asking LA's for comment on a proposal to make hard copies of the policy no longer required. NCC will be in support of this.

Current affairs were noted in respect of the Ukraine situation arising and EK informed the Forum that there was a potential of refugees coming to Newport. GEMS perspective is that they would be supported as with any other and reference was made to the Hong Kong and Afghan resettlement schemes. Updates will be provided as this progresses.

4. Membership

Forum noted the renewal of DW & JM's tenure of office. Responses from VA Schools were still being received with regards to VA representation and this will therefore be confirmed at the next meeting.

5. Annual Admission Round

JL summarised the report providing an update on the current position:

- Additional capacity was created at Bassaleg, Lliswerry High and the John Frost Schools to accommodate demand and as a result, all children that expressed an “on-time” preference for their catchment school were successful;
- 4 out of the 7 English – medium secondary schools have availability remaining and also the Welsh – medium secondary school, Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed;
- 38 secondary applications are currently outstanding and a further 14 Newport pupils are currently without an offer. Those without an offer have been invited to submit alternative preferences.
- 1618 applications have been received for the on-time Reception 2022 admissions round, decisions for which will be issued on the 19th April 2022.
- As at the 9th March 2022 (the 3rd late admission round), there are 28 English-medium nurseries with spaces left available and 3 Welsh-medium nurseries.

Forum discussed the secondary position with DW explaining the pressure on secondary school places manifested itself much earlier than anticipated. A school reorganisation proposal is underway however to increase the Admission Number at Bassaleg School to 330 from September 2023. Temporary classrooms are currently in place to accommodate the current increases and once the new facilities have been created the demountable will be removed.

The increase at The John Frost School has resulted from creative thinking around the space that they have and 6th form admissions being lower in recent years.

PB noted that the change in catchment area for St Joseph’s RC High has had a positive impact this year.

6. In - Year Admissions

JL informed the Forum that the Admissions Team faced a difficult Summer term last year; more applications received (highest number in a single term over the last 5 years) and significant staffing changes within the team which resulted in creating a backlog of applications in the Autumn term. New staff have now been secured, albeit on a temporary basis and therefore the Spring Term analysis should show improvement.

61% of first preferences were met and 41% of applications were made as a result of a move into the city.

As at the 8th March, the Council was holding the following level of surplus places:

- 9% EM primary school places
- 14% WM primary school places
- 7% EM secondary school places
- 32% WM secondary school places

JB queried the extent of monitoring application reasons for those transferring between Welsh and English medium schools. It was confirmed only the reason identified by the applicant is recorded, however other analysis’ are carried out by the intelligence hub over the course of the academic year.

7. VA Schools

The Forum Terms of Reference require the effectiveness of all admission authorities across Newport to be monitored. If there is a pressure among voluntary aided schools, this may need to be accommodated in community-maintained schools.

The Forum was updated on the VA position with both secondary and primary schools reporting an increase in the volume of applications being received. With regards to September 2022, 3 out of the 7 VA primaries are full and also St Joseph's RC High School.

8. School Admissions Forum Perception Survey

JL took the Forum through the results of the members perception survey, noting 100% of respondents felt they understand the role of the Forum and are aware of the issues faced by the Council.

DW confirmed the question being raised by the Senior Management Team is about what the Council does to make sure the Forum is effective, noting whilst some members are very experienced others are relatively new. A proposal was therefore put forward and welcomed by members to instigate a training programme with the aim of getting the absolute best out of meetings and members were therefore asked to think about any suggestions they may have or areas they feel could be targeted.

9. Fair Access Policy

A two – term pilot of the Fair Access Policy is currently underway and due to finish at the end of the Spring Term. Applications considered under this policy form part of the Managed Move meetings which are held on a weekly basis.

10. Consultation on Admission Arrangements 2022

A copy of the consultation was previously circulated to all members and concluded on 18th February with no changes proposed for this year. Following consultation, a small amendment has been made to create a closing time of 5pm for Phase admission closing dates instead of midnight as there is no back-office support available for parents after this time.

No comments were received, and the policy is therefore going through the democratic process ready for determination by 15th April 2022.

PB confirmed there were no changes proposed for St Joseph's for 2022.

11. Reorganisation Programme

DW confirmed there are no live proposals at the moment, however updated the Forum on the following:

- The proposal to expand Ysgol Bryn Derw was determined in January 2022. Refurbishment works are underway ready for implementation in the summer term.
- The federation of Gaer and Maesglas Primary Schools is now in place, following approval in December 2021 and is therefore now known as the Gaer and Maesglas Primary School Partnership.
- Unfortunately, there have been delays to stages 2 and 3 (relating to hand over of land) of the proposal to relocate Pillgwenlly Primary and Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli. As a result, a report is currently in progress to modify the implementation dates by one calendar year.

A discussion ensued regarding the effectiveness of federations and good examples were shared.

JB asked what effect would further delays to the Pillgwenlly Primary / Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli relocation have on Admissions / is there scope for Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli to stay in Caerleon for a third year.

DW confirmed that Newport Norse is fully aware of the position and a system build approach is being applied, providing efficiencies in terms of cost and time. The new school will therefore be ready for occupation by the revised dates.

Pillgwenlly Primary is in a relatively good condition and arrangements will be made shortly with the executive Head Teacher of Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli to consider plans.

Caerleon Lodge Infants remains an Education Service asset and future possibilities for the site are being considered.

1. AOB

None.

2. Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting was agreed for 21st June 2022.

A proposal was also put forward and confirmed to move to 6 monthly meetings following this, which will be held in May and November of each year.