

Newport City Council: Education Services

School Admissions Forum

Minutes of the Meeting



Date: 16th March 2021

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

Clerk to the Forum

Apologies: SEN Manager
VA Schools Representative
Looked After Children Representative (non - voting)
Service Children Regional School Liaison Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

AR opened the meeting and welcomed those present. Apologies as noted above were given and accepted.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 17th November 2020

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

3. Matters Arising

Representation from the Anglican Diocese – AR informed the Forum, due to the pandemic, recruitment for a new Director has been pushed back until the end of this academic year.

VC was welcomed as the new Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools representative.

4. Annual Admission Round

JL summarised the report confirming the position for the September 2021.

- Nursery late rounds are continuing;
- Reception 2021 decisions are due to be issued on 16th April 2021;
- Over 1700 Secondary applications were received during the on time round, 86% of which were submitted online;
- 94% of first preferences were met, 80% of which were for the catchment school;
- Additional capacity was created at Bassaleg and The John Frost Schools, however 1 in catchment applicant was refused at Bassaleg;
- Appeals are currently being received with a deadline of 29th March - hearings have been scheduled for May;
- 47 Newport residents do not have an offer, however 159 places remain available.

PB reported that St Joseph's RC High received 320 applications. Despite the fact that the catchment area was changed, 56 in catchment applications were refused. PB thanked the School Admission Team for their assistance.

PB expressed that he would seek to liaise with SEN outside this meeting with regards to better co-ordination on SEN decisions. JL explained Welsh Government's School Admissions Code and Special Educational Needs Code of Practice require different things, this year acted as a pilot to try a different process and is hopeful the issues will be resolved for next year.

AR suggested monitoring the position and raising it at the all Wales Admission forum, to look into best practice.

Cllr AN queried the number of English medium places left in the system. JL confirmed this is the current position, however it's subject to change as circumstances change. Generally, this will be the position going forward for year 7 across the academic year. There is a small surplus concentrated in the east of the city, however this has been the position for the last 2 academic years.

Cllr AN queried the situation of growth – DW confirmed the Council is aware of the increasing population and is making additional provision at Bassaleg School. This will take effect from September 2023. The Planning of School Places group is also monitoring the position at The John Frost School closely. If someone moves to the area and the preferred school is full, they will be offered a place at an alternative school and placed on a waiting list for consideration in case anyone leaves.

LPI asked where the remaining 19 pupils without an offer are from – JL confirmed they are from a mixture of Monmouth, Torfaen and Caerphilly areas.

Cllr LL queried the Bassaleg refusals – JL confirmed the last allocation came down to the distance tie - breaker and no out of catchment children were admitted.

FR asked if there would be any "bubble classes" implemented within the Bassaleg cluster for Reception 2021. JL explained there was no early indication at this time however the team are currently going through the verification process and collaboration with the VA schools. DW confirmed that the position will be looked at again shortly in advance of the offers going out and if required those conversations will take place imminently.

5. In - Year Admissions

JL reported on the Autumn Term 2020 position:

- 643 in year applications were received during this period. This was a little higher when compared to 2019 and shows that there has been very little change in the volume of applications despite the pandemic;
- 44% were received as a result of a move into the city;
- The situation regarding surplus places has not changed for some time. Generally majority of the places available are located in the east and there are far less English medium places available in comparison to Welsh medium places

Cllr AN queried whether all appeals relating to the Autumn term have now been heard and whether places available data was considered in the Planning of School Places group. JL confirmed all hearings relating to the Autumn term had taken place and the places available data is a regular agenda item.

JL and EK informed the forum the Council are anticipating a rise in, in year applications from Hong Kong nationals. To date we haven't received many, however EK confirmed she would provide more information on this as and when it becomes available.

6. Newport LA Monitoring and Evaluation Report

JL explained the Monitoring and Evaluation report is produced for the Senior Management Team on a termly basis, to support monitoring of team functions and preparation in the event of any Estyn inspections. It also includes a self-evaluation at the end which is currently ranked as excellent.

One of the key duties of the School Admissions Forum is to monitor the effectiveness of the School Admissions Policy and therefore a copy of this report has been circulated to all members for information and comments.

Cllr AN asked about the inclusion of the expected housing growth. DW explained there is a separate Monitoring and Evaluation report around the planning of school places which could be shared on request. Whilst linked the 2 areas are completely separate processes.

AR queried inclusion of the voluntary aided schools within the report. JL explained that informal co-ordination takes place across the city, however the purpose of this report is to monitor the procedures relating to the allocations the School Admissions Team is responsible for, i.e Community and Voluntary Controlled schools only.

7. Fair Access Policy

A copy of the draft Fair Access Policy was circulated to all members for consideration and comment.

KD explained that the Fair Access Panel will form part of the Managed Move meetings held on a weekly basis and is being piloted for secondary schools in the first instance.

KD highlighted the list of circumstances, which pupils fall into, however explained this is not an exhaustive list.

EK noted some of the identification groups are quite specific however, some learners within each group are not always considered vulnerable or where they are, it could be for reasons

relating to language rather than anything else. KD explained that each application would be considered on a case by case basis and only taken for additional consideration where required.

GB noted the importance of transition plans to be clearly identified. KD explained the Change of Placement form had been amended to capture that additional information. This process is more about the in-year admission stage and making sure the child is placed correctly. The Managed Moves Panel are used to looking at those packages of support.

PB queried the inclusion of VA schools in the process. JL explained this policy is not part of the Managed Moves protocol, as those referrals are put forward by schools. This is an extension of the School Admissions Policy, for which referrals will be put forward by the Council where a child falls between the gaps because of their circumstances.

DW confirmed that VA schools are encouraged to join, however would need to make reference in their own admissions policy.

Cllr AN noted the report was welcomed and the principles are very good as they concentrate on the needs of the child and support schools.

Cllr AN also requested clarity around the wording of "homeless". KD confirmed this would be revised to ensure fair and accurate representation.

8. Consultation on Admissions Arrangements 2022

JL confirmed the consultation on Admission Arrangements 2022 had been issued with no changes proposed.

One slight amendment will be made in relation to the wording around home to school distances and the method that is applied, following a recent change in the software. Included is a summary of comments received however none of which, resulted in a policy change.

The proposal is to take these arrangements to the Cabinet Member next for determination.

PB requested notification on the distance wording.

9. Reorganisation Programme

A copy of the Reorganisation Programme report was circulated before the meeting. No comments were made.

10. AOB

EK provided some further explanation surrounding the anticipated increase in applications from Hong Kong.

A National Transfer Scheme was set up to support Asylum Seeker children and to encourage Local Authorities to volunteer to support those unaccompanied. Discussions are still ongoing, however it is understood majority of the children coming from Hong Kong will be secondary age and Newport and Cardiff are expecting between 25 and 30 children.

These transfers are not being co-ordinated through the Vulnerable Relocation Project however, a separate group has been established to look at the position from a strategic and operational level. This is currently at the early stages and more information will be shared when available.

LPi queried the frequency of this intake and whether additional funding will be provided to support them. EK confirmed Newport will be expecting this intake annually, however additional funding will be provided as part of the National Transfer Scheme.

11. Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting is due on 22nd June 2021 and the Autumn term's meeting was agreed for 16th November 2021.