

Newport City Council: Education Services

School Admissions Forum

Minutes of the Meeting



Date: 8th November 2022

Present: NCC Elected Member (in the Chair)

NCC Assistant Head of Education (Resources)
NCC School Admissions Manager
Roman Catholic Diocese
Community and VC Schools Representative
Parent Governor Representative
Looked After Children Representative (non - voting)
Community and VC Schools Representative
VA Schools Representative

Clerk to the Forum

Apologies:

VA Schools Representative
Advisor for Behaviour and Autism (non-voting)
Local Community Representative (EY)
Head of GEMS
CLA Education coordinator

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed those present, and apologies as noted above were given and accepted.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 21st June 2022

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

10. Fair access Policy – JL confirmed that the Secondary Heads have now adopted this as standard procedure from November 2022

3. Matters Arising

4. Annual Admission Round

JL updated the Forum on the latest position. Additional key points were noted as follows:

Admission to nursery:

- Admissions window opened 7th July 2022
- Closing date was 5pm on 15th September 2022
- Offer date is 1st December 2022

Admission to Reception:

- Admissions window opened 2nd November 2022
- Closing date is 5pm on 11th January 2023
- Offer date is 17th April 2023*

Admission to secondary school:

- Admissions window opened 21st September 2022
- Closing date is 5pm on 23rd November 2022
- Offer date is 1st March 2023*

* These are common offer dates set by Welsh Government

5. In - Year Admissions

JL reported on the latest In Year position highlighting the following key points from the Sprint Term analysis.

Key points:

- 635 applications received during the summer term 2022 (average 492). This brings the total number of applications received this academic year to 1832 (average per year 1516).
- Around half (41%) of applications continue to be made because of a move into the city. For 2021/22, the number of applications made because of a move into the city was 748.
- 55% of first preferences met, which is indicative of the city context (large numbers of applications received versus limited capacity in certain areas).
- 77% of applications processed within WG timescales, with valid reasons recorded for those going over the deadline.
- On 17th October, the Council was holding the following level of surplus places (WG-recommended optimum level is 10%):
 - 9% EM primary school places
 - 17% WM primary school places
 - 5% EM secondary school places
 - 34% WM secondary school places
 - Within the Roman Catholic cluster, surplus places are 1% primary school and 0% secondary school.

DW - Do RC schools collate data on percentage Catholic families applying for Catholic schools?

AR - There is an annual census across England and Wales (like PLASC) to all schools, that will provide a yearly trend.

Newport RC schools, co-ordinate their admissions to try to divert a child to another RC school if their catchment RC school is full.

PB - About percentages of Catholic children attending St Joseph's High, current Year 7 is now 75% an increase from 55% in previous years. There has been a gradual increase throughout the years.

The effects from this are that we currently have been rejecting some non-Catholic children/siblings from our feeder RC primary schools within Newport, due to the demand on St Josephs.

Due to the change in our over-subscription criteria, we no longer accept Catholic pupils coming from outside Newport, except for south Monmouthshire. The good news from this is that the Catholic children that do go to our feeder schools can come to St Josephs.

We had 20 appeals through the Summer, 4 in October. All those were turned down by the Appeal Panel. Out of the 25 In Year Transfer applications, we have accepted 3 of those but they were all Catholics.

The Chair asked, do you still have capacity with little surplus? What happens if a Catholic family moves into Newport, what are their options?

PB –replied, years 7.8.9.10.11 Year groups are at, or over capacity. Over capacity due to appeals or managed moves. The situation is that this family would be refused. Independent panels will then decide if the parents have sufficient grounds to overturn our decision.

JB – Asked JL is it still an east and west split, where more places are available in the east side of Newport?

JL replied, yes this hasn't changed at all. The primary schools in the Bassaleg and The John Frost clusters are near full or at capacity, resulting in alternative places being offered in the next nearest available schools stretching to the east side of Newport.

VC asked, following JB question, if places are full in the west but east schools are not, are we allowing schools to go over PAN in the west to cut down on transport costs getting children to the east?

JL answered, if anyone is refused a place, they have a right to appeal and we will seek to allocate an alternative school, either one chosen by the parent or if it is the nearest available school. If the school is over 2 miles for primary or 3 miles for secondary, they would be entitled to transport. If they will not accept the next nearest available school and have lost their appeal, then they will be referred to Education Welfare. We would not admit over PAN unless they are successful in their appeal.

6. VA Schools update:

AR informed the Forum that Cardiff have now Local Authority Coordinated admissions with most VA schools.

7. Membership Training: The Statutory School Admissions Code

DW Presentation on School Admissions Code.

A short presentation to ensure all members have the same level of understanding and offering the opportunity to ask any questions.

DW Read through the presentation

Chair – Questioned Home to school transport.

DW – Explained home to school transport eligibility: Distance criteria, 2 miles for Primary and 3 miles for Secondary.

Each child has 3 catchment schools, WM, EM, VA.

DW asked if there were any other areas that members would like more information on.

AR – Requested a presentation on the ALN Code.

DW will speak to NK and KD.

8. Consultation on Admissions Arrangements 2024

JL - Currently making last minute changes.

The only changes being proposed are,

- Tidy up of the wording around ALN. Not changing the policy, simply providing a clearer explanation.
- May also provide clearer explanation of admissions outside the chronological year group. OGYO. Not changing policy, just clarifying the wording.

No other changes to the arrangements for 2024. Draft copies will be circulated to all members as soon as it is ready.

Aiming to issue the Consultation Document to the public in early January 2023, for a conclusion by the end of February.

Cllr AN asked the members if they were all happy with that.

PB – St Josephs do not see any big changes to their arrangements but will look at the proposals that JL will be making and see if there are any that can be brought over.

9. Annual Report

JL shared on screen the latest Admissions Forum Annual Report 2021/2022 and read through it, explaining each section.

JL asked any if there were any questions after each section.

JL will circulate this report for anyone who wish to add or correct and will submit the completed report to the Welsh Government by the 30th November 2022.

AR question on appeals – could a sentence be added regarding the challenge with virtual appeals under appeal regulations?

JL will include this in the report.

JL- Newport has recently provided some data for the Welsh Government on the number of appeals held and how many were held virtually and were successful.

Current ongoing debate, since the end of temporary regulations that were brought in during the pandemic, it allowed us to hold virtual appeals. The Government announced that this came to an end of the 30th September and we were reverting back to the original regulations, which made no mention of virtual appeals.

However, across Wales there is certainly an appetite to continue virtual appeals but LAs are struggling to come to a common agreement because WG have confirmed that each local authority must make their own interpretation of the regulations to determine if virtual appeals are compliant. Newport's legal team have recently confirmed that we intend to offer hybrid appeals and that means is that parents can continue to be offered a virtual appeal or by Teams/Zoom if they need to or can have a face-to-face appeal/written submission.

This means that the panel will not be able to be virtual all the time because if the parent wants a face-to-face appeal, the panel must come in.

Several other LA's have taken the same approach, but currently there is no consistency across Wales.

Chair – A parent can insist on having a face to face, then all members of the appeal panel must attend?

JL – Most members of the appeal panel not all. The clerk must be present.

Chair – When can people look at and make comments on the Annual Report?

JL – up until the 29th November. This date will be in the email.

10. Reorganisation Programme

Nothing to report on the programme currently. Looking to launch a new proposal at the end of November.

This will look to increase specialist ALN facilities in the Secondary sector from next September. More details will emerge. Once the proposal is live, I can share a copy of the documentation and information with you all.

11. AOB

No other business

12. Future Meeting Dates

Summer Term 28th June 2023 Wednesday 2pm

Autumn Term November 2023