

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

15 November 2017

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
County Hall
CARDIFF CF10 4UW



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Sarah

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 14 November 2017 to provide an opening statement and answering questions on **School Admission Arrangements 2019/20 – draft Cabinet Report**

I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning Michele Duddridge-Hussain, Operational Manager, Planning and Provision, Brett Andrewartha, and Chris Taylor, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods, Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences (WISERD), for their attendance, reports and answers to Members questions. Members really welcomed the opportunity to discuss the research report that Education had commissioned as well as being able to comment on this report prior to Cabinet.

The Committee noted that the draft Cabinet report informed Cabinet of recent research undertaken regarding school admission criteria and proposed changes to Cardiff Council's school admission arrangements in advance of consultation on the Council's School Admissions Policy 2019/20. The draft report recommended Cabinet to:

1. authorise officers to consult on the revised admissions oversubscription criteria for admission to nursery, primary and secondary education as included in Appendix 4.
2. note that Cabinet will receive a report in Spring 2018 on the outcome of the consultation to support determination of the Admission Arrangements for 2019/20
3. authorise officers to give further consideration to how alternative admissions criteria may impact positively on diversity and/or socio-economically disadvantaged pupils
4. note that revisions to school catchment areas will follow the consultations on proposed changes to the existing pattern of school provision arising from the 21st Century School Band B programme.

The Committee discussed, at some length, the changes to the Admissions Criteria, Catchment area changes and 21st Century School Programme (Band B), and the

WISERD research report and its recommendations. The Committee agreed not to fully commend the report to Cabinet.

Recommendation 1 – The Members agreed that the Cabinet should consult on the minor changes to admissions criteria as set out in the report, namely:

Removal of:

- Directed sibling
- Premature admission
- Nearest to alternative

Potential new criteria at secondary:

- Attendance at in catchment primary school
- Children with Individual Funded Health Plans (IFHP)

The Amendment of:

- EYAP/CAP funding to become IFHP

Recommendation 2 - The Committee also agreed to commend to Cabinet, that Cabinet receives a report in spring 2018 on the outcome of the consultation to support determination of the Admission Arrangements for 2019/20.

The Committee, agreed to recommend to Cabinet that it not approve:

Recommendation 3 - to authorise officers to give further consideration to how alternative admissions criteria may impact positively on diversity and/or socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, at this point in time. The Members felt that it was too early, to undertake any further reviews of admission criteria, and the Committee also recommended that the Cabinet agree the guiding principles for the review, prior to considering any alternative admissions criteria.

The Committee also agreed to recommend to Cabinet that it not approve:

Recommendation 4 - the revisions to school catchment areas, which will follow the consultations on proposed changes to the existing pattern of school provision arising from the 21st Century School, Band B programme. The Members recommended that a future report should be presented to Cabinet, once the sizes of schools as a result of any agreed reorganisation project, has been fully developed.

Following the question and answer session the Committee raise a number of issues which they felt should be considered prior to the publication of the 2019/20 School Admission Arrangements, namely:

- That the Admissions Booklet, which is provided to Parents of children seeking admissions to schools, is reviewed to ensure that the each of the admissions criteria is fully explained and clarified;
- That within the booklet it is made clear that the admissions criteria have been consulted on with statutory stakeholders and that this does not include parents.

The Committee also wished to highlight that it disagrees with a statement in the research report "*However, there is still evidence that segregation is higher where*

there are faith schools. Allen (2013) makes the very useful observation that faith-based criteria should be based on a binary criterion of religious adherence (i.e. yes or no) rather than the current form of a 'continuum' approach to religious adherence (e.g. baptised, regular attendance, attended a faith primary school) that so many faith schools tend to use". The Committee was informed that considerable work has been undertaken by the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff, over the last three years, to reduce the perceived segregation in their Faith Schools, and recommended that the Director of Education and Cabinet member should reference this work in future.

Finally a letter was tabled at Committee from Albany Solicitors, who represents Asylum Seeker, Refugees and members of the BME communities. The letter provides its comments and concerns on the arrangements, I have therefore attached a copy for your consideration at Cabinet.

I hope that these comments will be of use and support in the School Admission Arrangements, Criteria and Catchment Areas, and the Committee looks forward to working with the Directorate and Cabinet in the future. As such I would wish this letter to be considered by Cabinet prior to its consideration of the draft Cabinet report, and provide the Committee with a response within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong learning
Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manger
Michele Duddridge-Hussain, Operational manager, Planning and Provision.