

Date: 17 March 2021

My Ref: SS/CYP/SAPD



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Councillor Sarah Merry  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
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Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 MARCH 2021 –  
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2022/23**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating to School Admissions 2022/23. Please also pass on our thanks to Mel Godfrey, Michele Duddridge-Friedl and Richard Portas. The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

Members raised a number of questions around the demand for places, including the formula used when allocating school places. Members also asked around issues relating to pinch-points in particular parts of the city; projections and forecasting; what more could be done proactively to address over subscription to some schools; and how often the process is reviewed. In responding to these questions, you referred to the WISERD study that had been undertaken, and suggested that Members receive a copy. Therefore we request that a copy of this be provided to the Committee.

Whilst Members acknowledged the current rationale for allocating places, we still remain concerned with the uncertainty in the planning of school places. Members stated that, in their role on this Committee and wider roles as school governors Appeals Panel Members etc, there is a feeling amongst us that evidence is growing around demand for school places and oversubscription across a growing number of schools. This indicates to us as a Committee that the time is now right to review the approach strategically, and ahead of the completion of the Band B Programme, as stated by officers.

Members asserted that within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, decisions had been taken (for example, closing Rumney and Llanrumney High and replacing them with Eastern High) that has resulted, over a short period of time, in an oversubscription to this school. Therefore, we are interested to know how review decisions stack up in the longer term. We are concerned that decisions taken about likely projections at the time of review later result in schools becoming oversubscribed and we believe that this cannot continue. We believe that contingencies should be put in place to address this going forward.

We also discussed the effect that this may have on children in terms of their mental health and well-being. Given discussions around this issue on this and other agenda items at this meeting, we are uneasy about the impact that children being separated from friends, peers and support networks built in primary schools will have on them.

We asked questions around whether planning decisions had taken account of pressures on existing school places and enquired whether this had led to a provision change of that school. We would request that you provide us with examples of where this has happened and the outcome from this.

We also remain concerned about the impact of safe travel to and from schools for those pupils that have to take longer journeys via public transport, cycling etc. and having the right infrastructure in place to allow this to happen safely.

To this end, as a Committee, we believe that a city-wide catchment review be undertaken and this be commenced as soon as possible. We therefore **recommend** that the catchment area review be brought forward before the completion of Band B and that the outcome from this review be reported back to this Scrutiny Committee in 12 months. This review should include:

- A review of the provision of school places and demand for school places;
- Details of the likely decline in primary school places; and
- Contingencies to be built in for changes in capacity to ensure that fluctuations in demand for school places at both primary and secondary level are addressed.

To recap, the Committee **is requesting**:

- A copy of the WISERD study that has been undertaken; and
- Provide the Committee with examples of where planning decisions had taken account of pressures on existing school places and had resulted in a provision change of that school.

The Committee is **recommending** and will formally monitor:

The catchment area review be brought forward before the completion of Band B and that the outcome from this review be reported back to this Scrutiny Committee in 12 months. This review should include:

- A review of the provision of school places and demand for school places
- Details of the likely decline in primary school places
- Contingencies to be built in for changes in capacity to ensure that fluctuations in demand for school places at both primary and secondary level are addressed.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

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

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**

**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: CYPSC Members

Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Michele Duddrige-Friedl, Operational Manager, Planning & Provision

Richard Portas, Programme Director of SOP

Joanne Watkins - Cabinet Officer Manager

Melanie Jackson, Cabinet Support Office

Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning