

SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2025/2026

EDUCATION (CLLR SARAH MERRY)

AGENDA ITEM: 5

Reason for this Report

1. In accordance with Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006, Admission Authorities are required to review their School Admission Arrangements annually.
2. This report is to inform the Cabinet of responses received following public consultation on the Council's School Admission Arrangements 2025/2026.

Background

3. In order to comply with the legislation above, School Admission arrangements for implementation in the 2025/2026 academic year (i.e., from September 2025) must be determined on or before 15 April 2024.
4. The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the School Admissions Code set out the procedure which admission authorities should follow when determining their admission arrangements, including that proper consultation must be carried out and that the arrangements should be determined by 15 April in the school year beginning two years before the school year which the arrangements will be for.

Issues

Summary of the Council's School Admission Arrangements 2025/2026 Consultation

5. The Council's draft School Admissions Policy 2025/2026 (see Appendix 1) was issued for consultation on 04 December 2023 to all those the Council are required to consult with as set out in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code (Headteachers, Governing Bodies, Diocesan Directors,

neighbouring Local Education Authorities). The consultation closed on 19 January 2024.

6. The proposed changes to the arrangements for 2025/2026 compared to the arrangements for 2024/2025, relate to the following:
 - Deletion of the section on children in receipt of a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
 - Clarification on coordinated school admission arrangements
 - Clarification on changing school during the academic year
 - Information on admission arrangements for Ysgol Gynradd Groeswen Primary School
 - Clarification on compelling medical/compelling social grounds
 - Addition of paragraph on siblings in the same school year who are not multiple birth siblings
 - Clarification on submission of documents relating to a Child's Home Address
 - Changes to Published Admission Numbers, where applicable.
7. The policy was published on the Council website with details of how responses could be submitted which provided an opportunity for any interested parties to comment. Responses were requested to be returned by 19 January 2024.
8. Details of the consultation were promoted via social media and schools.
9. Proposed oversubscription criteria for 2025/2026 are set out on pages 10, 13 and 15 of Appendix 1. The oversubscription criteria remain unchanged, but changes have been made to how applications are assessed against them.

Responses received in respect of the draft admissions policy during the consultation period

10. Prior to the annual consultation, the Council works closely with the Admissions Forum to consider how well existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of children and parents city-wide. The Cardiff Admissions Forum includes Diocesan representatives, representatives of community, voluntary controlled, foundation and voluntary aided schools, parent governors and local community representatives.
11. The role of admission forums is to provide a vehicle for admission authorities and other key interested parties to discuss the effectiveness of local admission arrangements. This includes raising any particular issues that they may be privy to and consider how to deal with difficult admission issues and advise admission authorities on ways in which their arrangements can be improved and whether this would represent issues that should be included in the wider consultation.

12. The points of view raised in the responses received in relation to the issues consulted upon are set out in *italics* below. The Council's response to each point can be seen underneath, under the heading "Appraisal of views expressed".
13. A total of three responses were received.

Formal Responses

14. One formal response was received from Cllr. Robert Hopkins, Liberal Democrat Education spokesperson.
15. The response included the following points:
 - In relation to section 1.4 *Community School Catchment Areas* I wish to make a request for a local consultation to review and redesignate the catchment area for numbers 1-7 Werngoch Road, Cyncoed from the English medium schools Springwood Primary School and Llanishen High School to Lakeside Primary School and Cardiff High School. On the catchment area map these properties are in the catchment area of Springwood Primary School and Llanishen High School. I believe this to be inappropriate.
 - Section 2.7 *Changing school during academic year* refers to a child being placed on a waiting list where there is no place available in the relevant year group. Would it not be helpful to make clear that parents wishing to remain on a waiting list beyond the end of the school term would need to make further applications.
 - Section 4.6 *Ysgol Gynradd Groes-Wen* refers to the lower admission number of 15 per stream in 2025/2026. Would it be helpful to clarify that the admission number from 2026/2027 will increase year on year in line with the admission numbers in reception, year 1 and year 2 as pupils move through the school.
16. A copy of the full response can be seen at Appendix 2.

Appraisal of views expressed

17. The Council acknowledges the views expressed.
18. The consultation response on section 1.4 does not comment on the changes proposed within the draft Admissions Policy 2025/26. There were no changes to school catchment areas proposed as part of these arrangements.
19. There is no error in the catchment area for the houses in Werngoch Road. Catchment boundaries often intersect a postcode resulting in some

properties falling on one side of the catchment boundary while other properties with the same postcode fall on the other side of the boundary. The Council's website includes a facility to check school catchment areas for each address at <https://ishare.cardiff.gov.uk/mycardiff.aspx>.

20. Distances to schools are calculated as the shortest, safe walking routes using the Council's Geographical Information System (GIS) which operates in line with the Welsh Government's guidance relating to safe walking routes to school. Distances based on driving routes are only considered in circumstances where there is no safe walking route. Springwood Primary School is the closest primary school to the addresses in Werngoch Road at less than 0.3 miles walking distance. Lakeside Primary School is approximately 0.65 miles from the addresses on Werngoch Road.
21. The Council is committed to ensuring that every school in Cardiff has an Active Travel Plan to support and encourage active travel to school. Most journeys to education in Cardiff are within 3km / 1.9 miles of people's homes.
22. Llanishen High School is approximately 2.1 miles walking distance from the addresses in Werngoch Road. This is within the statutory walking distance for secondary school pupils. In accordance with the Welsh Government's Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, free transport is provided to pupils who reside over the statutory walking distance of 3 miles for a secondary school pupil in Years 7 -11. There are many addresses within the Llanishen High School catchment that are closer to Cardiff High School than to Llanishen High School, reflecting the relative locations and sizes of the schools compared to the population they serve.
23. Catchment areas reflect a traditional boundary relative to the location and capacity of a school, and the distribution of demand for admission from its local community at the time of establishment. Although the Council no longer holds records that confirm how or when the catchment area boundary at Werngoch Road was last amended, the establishment of each individual school catchment area requires the Council to undertake a formal consultation and any changes made to catchment areas take account of pupil populations and projected demand, and align with planned places.
24. Members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee have put forward a recommendation that a catchment area review be undertaken.
25. Officers have agreed to work with members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee to consider the issues associated with catchment area arrangements and to support development of principles to underpin the necessary future changes.

26. Area based projections, the demand for school places, and catchment areas are kept under continual review and careful consideration has been given to when a full consultation on primary and secondary school catchment areas may be brought forward in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code.
27. The Council has consulted on a number of changes to its admission arrangements in recent years, including to oversubscription criteria and secondary school catchment areas, in order to better support parents and to promote equality of opportunity.
28. Further consultation on changes to English-medium community secondary school catchment areas would be brought forward at the appropriate time, as proposals to change capacities of secondary school provision are progressed, in order to provide a suitable balance in the supply of and take-up of places. Any consultation on school catchment areas would include a wide range of stakeholders, including local members, schools, and parents of children who may be affected by any changes.
29. The need to submit a further application to remain on a waiting list is addressed in section 9.5 *Waiting lists*. This will also be included in section 2.7 of the draft Admissions Policy 2025/26. An updated copy of the draft policy can be seen at Appendix 3.
30. Section 4.6 states that a phased increase in the Admission Number will apply to admissions into Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary School.
31. The changes proposed within the draft Admissions Policy 2025/26 apply to school admissions in that academic year. For 2025/26 admissions to Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 at Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary School will be up to 30 pupils per stream with Years 3 and 4 operating a lower Admission Number of 15.
32. Whilst it is expected that the lower admission number of 15 places per stream will remain for those two year groups as pupils move through the school, the Council will monitor the take up of places each year and consider whether an increase to 30 places would be appropriate.
33. The demand for school places is under continual review and admission numbers, particularly for new schools with phased intakes to a limited number of year groups, can be subject to change. Therefore it would not be appropriate to state admission numbers for following years in the 2025/26 policy.

Other responses received

34. Two responses were received via email. Points raised in the responses are summarised below:

Disagreement over applications where there is shared parental responsibility

35. *I do have a concern regarding the school admission arrangements. As a single parent and in possession of a court ordered Child Arrangements Order it is unclear to me on the application for a child progressing to year 7. Should both parents make applications? Can you clarify the procedure around applications if both parents are to make applications to different schools in different counties? For example if one lives in Cardiff and one lives in the Vale of Glamorgan.*

Appraisal of views expressed

36. In circumstances where parents are separated and both have parental responsibility, the process for making an application is covered in Cardiff Council's Admissions Policy under section 2.3 'The Applicant'. Where parental responsibility is shared, all parents should be in agreement about the preferences listed in the application before the application is submitted.
37. Where an agreement cannot be reached, one of the parents can make an application to Court for a Specific Issue Order to determine which school preferences are listed in the application. Ideally, any Court proceedings should be resolved prior to the school application process deadline.
38. Whether agreement is reached between the parents or ordered by the Court, it is the parents' responsibility to come to this agreement. The Council is unable to make decisions about which parent's preferences take priority. However, if more than one application is received, with no further legal instruction, the first application submitted will be processed so as not to disadvantage the child in obtaining a school place.
39. Cardiff Council does not have a coordinated admissions arrangement with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and, as such, does not have oversight of applications made to schools within the Vale of Glamorgan. If two applications have been made, each to a separate Admissions Authority then the child may be offered more than one school place. Again, in this situation, the parents would need to come to an agreement on which place to accept or apply to Court to resolve the matter.

Proposal to delete the section on children in receipt of a Statement of Special Educational Needs

40. *It is only fair to delete the section on children in receipt of a Special Educational Needs statement if a section is added on children in receipt of an IDP, as students with additional learning needs should not be disadvantaged.*
41. *More schools should have a specialist resource base so that students with additional learning needs are not denied the option to attend a local school in their community. This would also save on transport costs.*

Appraisal of views expressed

42. The draft Admissions Policy includes section 1.5 *Children with ALN who have an IDP (Individual Development Plan)*.
43. From September 2025 all children previously in receipt of a Statement of SEN will have been transferred to an Individual Development Plan, therefore there is no longer a need to include a section on children with statements of SEN in the Admissions Policy.
44. A consultation on proposals to increase the number of specialist resource base places across Cardiff began on 20 November 2023 and ran until 19 January 2024. The consultation sought the views of stakeholders on proposals to formally establish ten specialist resources bases for autism/complex learning needs and for emotional health and wellbeing needs, located in different areas of the city.

Coordinated school admission arrangements

45. *The application process for the coordinated admissions should be simplified by having just one place to submit applications for all schools rather than having to fill in additional forms for voluntary aided schools. A separate application form for St Teilo's was not received by the school, however the school's own website implied that the application had been successful.*

Appraisal of views expressed

46. All faith-based schools in Cardiff are Voluntary Aided schools, with the exception of St Mellons Church in Wales Primary School, which is a Voluntary Controlled school. The Governing Body of a Voluntary Aided school is the Admission Authority for the school and is, therefore, able to set the admission criteria for the school, independent of the Local Authority, including how applications for a school place are submitted.
47. All applications for faith primary schools within the co-ordinated admission arrangements are submitted only via a Common Application Form on the Council website. However, some secondary schools have opted to retain a supplementary form, which is submitted directly to the school, as well as completing the form on the Council website. Parents/carers applying for a secondary place would have to complete separate applications if that is the preferred process of the relevant school Governing Body.
48. Submitting only one application for secondary schools via the Common Application Form would simplify the application process, as only one form would need to be completed. Council officers continue to work with the Voluntary Aided secondary schools to review application forms with the aim of developing a single Common Application Form that suits the requirements of all schools within the secondary co-ordinated admissions.

49. The “Notes For Parents and Carers” provided on the admissions page of the St Teilo’s Church in Wales High School website states “Receipt of your application will be acknowledged automatically by email... If you do not receive an email acknowledgement, you have not submitted your application correctly”. In addition, point five in the school’s Admissions Checklist is to “ensure that you regularly check the email address you have provided on your application form. This is how the school will confirm your submissions...”
50. Following submission of a completed online application via the Council’s website, applicants receive an automated email which reminds them to supply any additional evidence or information that is required for the schools they have expressed preferences for e.g. medical/baptism certificates or supplementary forms.
51. It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that all applications submitted have been received by the relevant Admission Authority before the application deadline.

Submission of documents relating to a Child’s Home Address

52. *Secondary catchments should be changed to move Penylan into the catchment for Cathays High School or Willows High School. Both of these are closer to Penylan than Cardiff High School. Llanedeyrn, Pentwyn and Pontprennau should be in the catchment for Cardiff High School so that students have less distance to travel.*
53. *Some parents are renting properties near Cardiff High School for the secondary application and moving back when the application has been submitted without updating the council. Cardiff Council is unable to spot-check where parents live and so clarifying the submission of documents to confirm the child's current address will have no effect.*

Appraisal of views expressed

54. Penylan sits mostly within the catchment area of Cardiff High School, with some parts in the catchments of Willows High School, Llanishen High School and Eastern High. However there is no guarantee of an offer of a place at a child’s catchment area school. Other English-medium schools serve the south and central parts of Cardiff including Cathays High School and Willows High School.
55. Whilst children who are resident in the catchment area of a school have priority for admission to that school over those who are not, children outside the catchment area cannot be refused a place if there are sufficient places available.
56. Applicants for secondary schools can apply for five schools in the coordinated admissions scheme, in order of preference. It is recommended that all applicants apply for the maximum number of

schools in order to secure a place for their child at secondary school in the first round of allocations, as some schools will have all places allocated at this stage, meaning that there is a reduced choice of schools in later rounds.

57. Proposals to expand Cathays High School to a Published Admission Number of 240 places to increase capacity and to replace the existing buildings with new build accommodation and to replace the existing Willows High School buildings with a new build school on the basis of its Category D condition were approved by Cabinet in 2021. This would provide sufficient capacity to accommodate all pupils within the catchment areas of the two schools whilst also providing additional capacity to manage excess demand in other areas, including the Cardiff High School catchment
58. The points raised around changes to catchment areas are addressed at paragraphs 24 – 28.
59. As stated in the Admissions Policy section 8.2 *Submission of documents relating to a Child's Home Address*, the Council undertakes checks of records held by Council Tax, Electoral Register, the child's school (if appropriate) and external organisations including credit reference agencies for applications made for a place at a school that is expected to be fully subscribed.
60. Where there is any concern regarding the consistency of information held, documentation is requested from the applicant. A list of documents accepted as proof of residency is provided in section 8.2 of the Admissions Policy.
61. If the Council is not satisfied with the evidence provided, the claimed address will not be accepted for the purposes of the admission request.
62. Checks continue to be carried out on admission addresses for fully subscribed schools until the start of the school term in September. If it is found, prior to a child taking up a place at a school, that an application was made in fraudulent circumstances, the offer of a place may be withdrawn. The Council cannot withdraw a child's place should they change address following admission to the school.

Local Member consultation

63. All members were consulted on the draft Admissions Arrangements 2025/2026.

Scrutiny Consideration

64. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee will consider these proposals on 12 March 2024.

Reason for Recommendation

65. The Council is required to review its school admission arrangements annually and to agree the arrangements following appropriate consultation.

Financial Implications

66. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Legal Implications

67. The Council has a statutory obligation under the Education Act 1996 to promote high standards of education for primary and secondary schools in its local authority area. Section 89 of the School standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education Act 2002 determines that the Admission Authorities must carry out consultation before determining the admission arrangements which are to apply. The report shows that consultation has been conducted.
68. The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006 set out the procedure which the Admissions Authorities should follow when determining their admission arrangements, including the consultation and notification process as well as timescales. In particular, the Admission Authority must determine arrangements in the school year beginning two years before the school year which the arrangements will be for, take all steps necessary to ensure that they will have completed the consultation required by Section 89(2) before 1st March and determine the admission arrangements by 15th April. The arrangements must then be published within 14 days of the determination and appropriate bodies must be notified. The report shows the consultation was conducted before 1st March.
69. The Welsh Government has issued the School Admissions Code, which sets out the process for Local Authorities To follow when determining their admission arrangements. The School Admissions Code requires that no prohibited criteria (as set out on page 12 of the Code) are included in the admission arrangements and gives guidance on using various types of oversubscription criteria. This report reflects the requirements.
70. In considering this matter, the Council must have regard to its public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). This means the Council must give due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, gender reassignment, sex, race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion or belief – including lack of religion or belief.

71. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards and consider the impact of its decision upon the Welsh Language
72. When taking strategic decisions, the Council also has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage ('the Socio-Economic Duty' imposed under section 1 of the Equality Act 2010). In considering this, the Council must take into account the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers (WG42004 A More Equal Wales The Socio-economic Duty Equality Act 2010 (gov.wales) and must be able to demonstrate how it has discharged its duty.
73. An Equalities Impact Assessment aims to identify the equalities implications of the proposed decision, including inequalities arising from socio-economic disadvantage, and due regard should be given to the outcomes of the Equalities Impact Assessment

HR Implications

74. There are no HR implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Transport Implications

75. No significant transport implications are anticipated.
76. Within-catchment applications having a higher priority for admission generally supports the Council's commitment to local schools serving local children, and to promoting active travel.

Property Implications

77. There are no property implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

Impact on the Welsh Language

78. The Council is committed to developing a Bilingual Cardiff. The Council's Welsh in Education Strategy (WESP) 2022 – 2031 will help Cardiff to support the Welsh Government's vision to see one million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.
79. The WESP is an integral part of the Council's 5-year Bilingual Strategy. The Council recognise that a strong and inclusive Welsh-medium education sector is vital if Cardiff is to develop as a truly bilingual city where Welsh is a vibrant living language.

- 80. The Bilingual Strategy aims to increase the number of Welsh speakers within Cardiff and promote the use of the language throughout the city. The Council recognise that the education system is a key element in ensuring that children are able to develop their Welsh skills, and for creating new speakers.
- 81. Officers will continue to monitor birth rates, the yield from proposed housing and the patterns of take up in Welsh-medium provision at primary and secondary age with a view to being forward appropriate plans to meet any increased demand.
- 82. The teaching of Welsh within an English-medium setting is subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum. This would not change.

Wellbeing of Future Generations

- 83. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to make sure their decisions take into account the impact they could have on people living in Wales in the future. The Council has done so in relation to its proposed school admission arrangements. All Admission Authorities in Wales are legally bound to Section 84 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act (1998) (the Welsh Government’s School Admission Code) and the Council has also complied with that legislation. Account is also taken of the Council’s responsibility to provide and promote high standards of Education under the Education Action 1996.

Single Impact Assessment

- 84. A Single Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached as Appendix 4. This includes an Equality Impact Assessment, Child’s Rights Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 85. Cabinet is recommended to determine the attached Council’s draft School Admission Arrangements 2025/2026 as set out in the Admission Policy 2025/2026.

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Melanie Godfrey Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
	15 March 2024

The following appendices are attached:

- Appendix 1 – Draft School Admissions Policy 2025/26
- Appendix 2 – Formal Responses

Appendix 3 – Updated Draft School Admissions Policy 2025/26
Appendix 4 – Single Impact Assessment