

**SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND CO-ORDINATED
PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2023/2024**

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS

AGENDA ITEM: 10

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 2023/2024.

Background

3. In order to comply with the legislation above, School Admission arrangements for implementation in the 2023/2024 academic year (i.e., from September 2023) must be determined on or before 15th April 2022.
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 15th April in the school year beginning two years before the school year which the arrangements will be for.
5. Prior to the annual consultation, the Council works closely with the Cardiff 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 and voluntary controlled, foundation and voluntary aided schools, parent governors and local community representatives.

Issues

Summary of the Council's School Admission Arrangements 2023/2024 Consultation

6. The Council's draft School Admission Arrangements 2023/2024 were issued for consultation on 22 November 2021 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). As a significant change was proposed to the application process for entry to primary education, the Council also consulted directly with those parents whose children would enter primary education in 2023/2024.
7. The proposed changes to the arrangements for 2023/2024 compared to the arrangements for 2022/2023, relate to the following:
 - Reference to the 'Fresh Start' panel in place of the 'Hard to Place' panel.
 - Clarification of the Childcare Offer.
 - Expansion of co-ordinated arrangements.
 - Increased Published Admission Numbers for Pentyrch Primary School, Ysgol Y Wern, Cantonian High School and Radyr Comprehensive School.
8. 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 the consultation closing date of 17 January 2022. The draft School Admission Arrangements 2023/2024 are attached as Appendix 1.
9. Details of the consultation were promoted via social media and schools.
10. Proposed oversubscription criteria for 2023/2024 are set out on pages 8, 11 and 13 of Appendix 1.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

11. As part of the consultation on the School Admission Arrangements 2023/24, responses were sought on the proposals to:
 - Implement a co-ordinated primary school admissions process for the Reception age group intake from September 2023.
 - Include The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School within the co-ordinated secondary school admissions process for the Year 7 age group intake from September 2023.
12. A copy of the consultation document explaining the changes is attached at Appendix 2.
13. The introduction of co-ordinated arrangements does not constitute a change to admissions oversubscription criteria but proposes a revised

system for administering the admissions process in partnership with other admission authorities operating in Cardiff.

14. Cardiff Council has successfully entered into co-ordinated admissions with three partner secondary schools since the 2018/2019 intake year. A pilot ran as part of 2018-2020 school admission arrangements, with co-ordinated admissions between all community secondary schools, Whitchurch High School (foundation school), St Teilo's Church in Wales High School (voluntary aided) and Corpus Christi Catholic High School (voluntary aided).
15. Each of the above schools has decided to remain as a partner within the co-ordinated admission arrangements. Each of the schools retains the responsibility for consulting on and determining its admission arrangements.
16. The Council has also co-ordinated admission arrangements with St Mellons Church in Wales Primary School since September 2021. St Mellons Church in Wales Primary School is a Voluntary Controlled Primary School and admissions to the school are now administered by the Council.
17. The Council, the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff, the Church in Wales Diocese of Llandaff, the Church in Wales Diocese of Monmouth and a number of primary schools propose that the benefits of co-ordinated admission arrangements be extended to primary schools and to parents of children entering primary education.
18. At present, parents apply for primary education places by submitting a school admission form to the Admission Authority of their preferred school. Any request for admission to a voluntary aided (faith-based) primary school must be made directly to the Governing Body of that school. Requests for admission to any Community school must be made to the Council.
19. Whilst parents may apply for multiple schools and inform the Council of which community schools are their preferred option(s), they are not required to confirm whether they have made applications to other admission authorities, nor which non-community school is their higher or lower preference. As a result, parents could be offered more than one school place for their child with some parents choosing to 'hold' offers for more than one school, preventing other children being offered these places.
20. As a result of this, whilst some parents receive offers for their child at multiple schools, other parents have been unsuccessful in securing a place at any of their school preferences.
21. Consequently, there is uncertainty as to which pupils will start at which schools because the order of parental school preferences is unclear at the time of application and some pupils remain unallocated after the first round of allocations.

22. The Council is also seeking to expand the co-ordinated arrangements for secondary schools by including The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School in the process from September 2023.
23. The aim of this proposal is to have a fairer, more equitable system of allocating school places in Cardiff.
24. Each school Governing Body that is interested to participate would also need to undertake a consultation on changes to its arrangements, and determine its arrangements by 15 April 2022, to coordinate its admissions with the Council in the 2023/2024 school year.

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

25. 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".
26. A total of 58 responses were received during the consultation period.

Formal Responses

27. One formal response was received from The Rainbow Federation (Bryn Hafod Primary School and Glan Yr Afon Primary School). The formal response is attached as Appendix 3.
28. *As Chair of Governors and in discussion with the Executive Head we have agreed that the proposed changes will make for a more streamlined system. We are in favour of the proposals as it gives greater clarity to families and schools.*

Appraisal of views expressed

29. The Council acknowledges the view expressed and welcomes the support of The Rainbow Federation.

Responses received from online survey

30. Views were sought from interested stakeholders via an online survey and a hard copy version of the survey within the engagement document.
31. The majority view expressed at drop-in sessions and via the online survey was one of support for the proposed implementation of a co-ordinated primary school admissions process for the Reception age group intakes and expanding co-ordinated arrangements for secondary schools.
32. Contemporaneous notes of issues raised at the online drop-in sessions are attached as Appendix 4. A summary analysis of the responses received from all stakeholders is attached as Appendix 5.

33. Of the 58 responses received to the consultation, there were 47 respondents who identified that they were responding as parents/guardians or grandparents, three who identified that they were responding as governors, two who identified that they were responding as a local residents, one who identified that they were responding both as a parent/guardian and a governor, one who identified that they were responding as both a parent/guardian and local resident, one who identified that they were responding as both a local resident and a member of staff and one who did not specify who they were responding as.

34. Respondents stated an affiliation with the following schools:

- Bryn Deri Primary School
- Danescourt Primary School
- Llandaff Church in Wales Primary School
- Llysfaen Primary School
- Meadowlane Primary School
- Pontprennau Primary School
- Radyr Primary School
- The Rainbow Federation (Bryn Hafod Primary School and Glan Yr Afon Primary School)
- Rhiwbeina Primary School
- Rhydypenau Primary School
- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
- St David's Church in Wales Primary School
- St Fagans Church in Wales Primary School
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
- St Peter's Catholic Primary School
- Thornhill Primary School
- Ton Yr Ywen Primary School
- Ysgol Gynradd Gwaelod Y Garth Primary School
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen Y Groes
- Ysgol Glan Ceubal
- Ysgol Gymraeg Melin Gruffydd
- Ysgol Mynydd Bychan
- Ysgol Pencae
- Ysgol Y Berllan Deg
- Ysgol Y Wern
- Corpus Christi Catholic High School
- Fitzalan High School
- Llanishen High School
- Radyr Comprehensive School
- St Teilo's Church in Wales High School
- Whitchurch High School
- The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern

Responses regarding the implementation of co-ordinated primary school admissions

35. Of those who responded to the consultation in respect of the implementation of co-ordinated primary school admissions, 45 respondents supported the proposal, three did not support the proposal and three had no opinion.
36. Points raised in response to the consultation in support of the proposal are summarised below:
- *It streamlines the process and makes it easier and more straightforward for parents and pupils.*
 - *People holding multiple places is not fair. This is a much fairer system.*
 - *The only disadvantage is for people wishing to 'play the system'.*
 - *There is a better chance for pupils to secure a school place in the first round of admissions, which avoids unnecessary stress for the families that otherwise would not secure a place.*
 - *The secondary arrangements from previous years have been successful.*

Appraisal of views expressed

37. The Council acknowledges the views expressed.
38. Whilst there was support for the implementation of co-ordinated primary school admissions there were a number of concerns raised. Some of these concerns are not matters that the Council could address through its admissions arrangements and/ or through the admissions process.

Admissions policies

39. *The separate admissions policies cause confusion for parents and council officers.*
40. *[It is] misleading to have different criteria for different schools and system is open to abuse.*

Appraisal of views expressed

41. 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.
42. The Governing Body of a Voluntary Aided school is the Admission Authority for the school and is therefore required to consult on and set the admission criteria for the school, independent of the Local Authority, in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government's Admissions Code.
43. The Council publishes a school admissions booklet every year to provide information and guidance for parents to help make an informed decision

about the schools they would like to apply for and make the application process as smooth as possible. The admissions oversubscription criteria for faith schools are included in this booklet, along with information about applying for a community school place.

Applying to multiple schools

44. *When applying for a faith school, I also had to apply for a non faith school. Total waste of time for me, and the non faith school that offered my daughter a place.*

Appraisal of views expressed

45. The Council strongly advises parents to use all preferences available to them when applying for a school place. However, parents do not have to apply for more than one school and it is possible to apply only for a faith school place.

Local schools

46. *Primary schools should be for local children.*

Appraisal of views expressed

47. Parents are entitled to state a preference for any school they wish their child to attend.
48. In the event of a school being oversubscribed, applications are assessed against the oversubscription criteria. The admissions criteria are predicated on a geographical basis, giving priority to those living within a school catchment area and also considering proximity of school to home address. This seeks to maintain, where possible, children attending a local school.
49. 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 denied a place if there are sufficient places available.
50. The Council is committed to ensuring that every school in Cardiff has an Active Travel Plan by 2022 to support and encourage active travel to school. Most journeys to education in Cardiff are within 3km of people's homes.

Changes to the process

51. *Everyone knows how the process works now. It's too complicated to change it.*

Appraisal of views expressed

52. The Council publishes a school admissions booklet every year to provide information and guidance for parents to help make an informed decision

about the schools they would like to apply for and make the application process as smooth as possible.

53. Guidance on how to apply for a place in the Reception year group for the 2023-24 school year would be included within the booklet for that year, as well as on the Council website.
54. Parents with children attending nursery at a school may also receive guidance on applying for a Reception year place from the nursery.
55. Submitting an application via the Common Application Form would simplify the application process, particularly for parents applying for both a community place and faith place, as only one application form would need to be completed if that is the preferred process of the relevant school Governing Body.

Responses regarding the inclusion of The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School within the co-ordinated secondary school admissions process

56. Of those who responded to the consultation in respect of the implementation of co-ordinated primary school admissions, 39 respondents supported the proposal, four did not support the proposal and eight had no opinion.
57. Points raised in response to the consultation in support of the proposal are summarised below.
 - *It simplifies the admission process, making it more straightforward.*
 - *All schools should be included in the process. The more schools included, the better the allocations process will work.*
 - *It's a fairer process.*
 - *There is no strong argument not to include The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School in the process.*
 - *It will be clearer for schools how many pupils allocated a place actually want a place at the school.*

Appraisal of views expressed

58. The Council acknowledges the views expressed.
59. Whilst there was support for the implementation of co-ordinated secondary school admissions there were a number of concerns raised.

Admissions policies

60. *Own Admission Authority Schools (Faith Schools) governing bodies can decide the application criteria at the moment. (E.g.: giving preference to students from certain faiths overruling catchment area criteria thus students in the catchment area will dropout)*
61. *Faith- based schools are not funded by the LEA so why on earth would the council even consider changing the application process for faith- based*

schools. If you add faith based schools in the application process how are pupils with genuine faith be granted a place. Will the council provide funding to faith based schools for offering additional places? If you do one faith school then have them all on the application form.

62. *The high school should have its own admission arrangements.*

63. *It's the only church school this side of Cardiff.*

Appraisal of views expressed

64. The proposal does not have any impact upon a school's admissions policy nor impose any change to its governance. The Governing Bodies of faith schools would retain the responsibility to consult on and determine their own admission arrangements and would still rank the order of applicants against their own oversubscription criteria.

65. Applicants for faith schools would have to submit a supplementary form directly to the school, as well as completing the Common Application Form on the Council website.

66. The points raised around separate admission policies are addressed at paragraphs 41 – 43.

Responses regarding whether co-ordinated admissions should be extended to other schools

67. Of those who responded to the consultation in respect of whether they wished for co-ordinated arrangements to be extended further to include schools that are not proposed for inclusion at this time, 28 respondents answered yes, three answered no and 20 had no opinion.

68. Nine respondents commented on which schools the co-ordinated arrangements should be extended to. Of these seven said that the arrangements should include all schools.

69. Other schools named in response to the question were Radyr Comprehensive School, Mary Immaculate Catholic High School, Corpus Christi Catholic High School and St Teilo's Church in Wales High School.

Appraisal of views expressed

70. Radyr Comprehensive School, Corpus Christi Catholic High School and St Teilo's Church in Wales High School are already included in the secondary co-ordinated admission arrangements.

71. The Council cannot instruct the Governing Bodies to co-ordinate their arrangements with the Council. Each Governing Body has been approached and had the opportunity to discuss how the arrangements work. Each must consider whether to co-ordinate their own admission arrangements. The Council and current partner schools have advised they would provide full support to any school wishing to opt into co-ordinate their admission arrangements.

Other responses received

Offer day date

72. *Waiting times for informing allocation of place within primary schools could be changed for dates to coincide with February half-term. This would then take the pressure off uniform shops in the six weeks holidays. Also, consider looking into additional 'logo/ emblem' shops to cater for the schools in Cardiff. Three specialist uniform shops cannot always cope with the demands on purchasing uniform.*

Appraisal of views expressed

73. The Welsh Government's School Admissions Code 2.24 states that "For primary school applications, admission authorities should ensure that all offers are made on the prescribed Primary Offer Day, 16 April or the next working day".
74. The supply of school uniform is a matter for the Governing Bodies of individual schools to consider. All have been made aware of the Statutory guidance for school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies Education, Wales (2019) which is intended to support families to enable purchasing of uniform from a range of outlets and to keep costs down by reducing the number of logo/emblem items or providing alternatives.

Demand for school places

75. *Even with this improved process there are issues. Housing is being built at a much greater rate than school places are increasing. North-East Cardiff needs a new secondary school.*

Appraisal of views expressed

76. There are sufficient school places within the secondary school sector in Cardiff.
77. As part of the process for the planning of school places, the Council continually reviews secondary school capacity and the evolving need for places. Proposals will be brought forward to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet the demand for school places in each area of the city. However, the current demand for English-medium places can be met within existing school provision, as sufficient places are available.

Sibling criteria

78. *Sibling groups must be prioritised in admissions. Splitting up families is not something that should happen regardless of whether school is faith based or not. Once one child is in all family siblings should be accepted.*

Appraisal of views expressed

79. The Council has reviewed the inclusion of oversubscription criteria which gave priority to siblings of children enrolled in a school in previous consultations on school admission arrangements.
80. In the event of there being more applications than places available, allocations are prioritised according to the published over subscription criteria as set out in the agreed School Admissions Policy.
81. The highest priority for admission is given to Looked After Children and children with a statement of Special Education Need specifying a school or equivalent followed by catchment area applications.
82. Within the oversubscription criteria weight and prominence is given to qualifying sibling applications received within agreed deadlines. Priority is given to qualifying sibling applications from pupils already on roll at a school.
83. Whilst within-catchment applications have a higher priority than out of catchment applications, qualifying out of catchment sibling applications are also given higher priority than non siblings applications. 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.
84. In circumstances where an older sibling is admitted as a within catchment pupil and there are subsequent changes to the catchment area, priority is also given to younger siblings as set out in the Admissions Policy.

Summary

85. It is recommended that primary school co-ordinated admissions are implemented. The inclusion of other Admission Authorities will be subject to their own consultations on admission arrangements and approval of the arrangements by their Governing Bodies by 15 April 2022 in accordance with the determination period set in the Welsh Government Admissions Code.
86. It is recommended that The Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School be included in the secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements from September 2023 subject to the approval of the admission arrangements by the Governing Body of the school.
87. Should any Governing Bodies elect to remain outside of the coordinated process, the process for applying to these schools will remain unchanged and information regarding admissions to these schools will continue to be included in the Council's Admissions to Schools booklet available to view on the Council's website.
88. The other changes are for clarification or to reflect changes to published numbers and received no comments. These are also recommended for implementation.

Local Member consultation

89. All members were consulted on the draft Admission Arrangements 2023/2024.

Scrutiny Consideration

90. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee will consider these proposals on 8 March 2022.

Reason for Recommendations

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

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

93. 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 determines that the Admission Authorities must carry out consultation before determining the admission arrangements which are to apply.
94. The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006 set out the procedure which the Admission 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 1 March and determine the admission arrangements by 15 April. This report shows that the consultation was conducted before 1 March.
95. The Welsh Government has issued a guidance circular 'Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales', which sets out the methodology for Local Authorities to follow when determining their admission arrangements. There is also a requirement to consider the guidelines contained in the Welsh Government School Admissions Code. This report reflects these requirements.
96. The Council also has to satisfy its public sector duties and obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (including the specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, Councils must in making decisions have 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 Council must also not directly or indirectly discriminate against any pupil in its admission arrangements, this means that no pupil or group of pupils may be treated less favourably based on a protected characteristic. 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 belief

97. The Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 6) specifically considers how the proposals may affect pupils with protected characteristics. The purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that the Council has understood the potential impacts of the proposal in terms of equality so that it can ensure that it is making proportionate and rational decisions having due regard to its public sector equality duty. The Council must have due regard to these obligations when this decision is taken to determine the admission arrangements.
98. In accordance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language standards, the Council also has to consider the impact upon the Welsh language any decision that it makes and in accordance with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, the Council must consider how it can promote Welsh medium education. This report reflects those requirements.
99. The Council must also consider its legal obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.
100. There are also legal obligations under the Education Act 1996 which require pupils with statements of special educational needs to be admitted to the school named in the statement and the Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (Wales) Regulation 2009 which requires the Council to admit children who are currently looked after (in accordance with the definition in section 74 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014. The report and proposed admission arrangements reflect these obligations.

HR Implications

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

Transport Implications

102. No significant transport implications are anticipated.

103. The 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

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

Impact on the Welsh Language

105. The Council is committed to developing a Bilingual Cardiff.
106. Cardiff's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2031 sets out a series of ambitious commitments to build on the progress achieved to date. These will ensure that every child in the city can receive an education in the language of Welsh, the number receiving their education in Welsh-medium schools will increase, and through the significant use of Welsh in English medium education all will have the opportunity to become confident in speaking Welsh.
107. At its meeting of 14 October 2021, the Cabinet considered the draft WESP 2022-2031 and authorised officers to proceed to undertake an eight-week public consultation on the content of the draft with the outcome to be presented to Cabinet prior to submission to the Welsh Government.
108. Following consultation, the Cabinet approved Cardiff's WESP 2022-2031 at its meeting of 24 February 2022, for submission to the Welsh Government Ministers.
109. The draft WESP sets out a number of measures to support and grow the Welsh language which include the publication of information to support parents and guardians through the admissions process. There are no changes required within the published 2023/2024 admissions arrangements to implement these measures.

Wellbeing of Future Generations

110. 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 Act 1996.

Equality Impact Assessment

111. An Equality Impact Assessment on this proposal has been carried out. The assessment concluded that this proposal would not adversely affect a

particular group in society (details of the Equality Impact Assessment can be seen at Appendix 6).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to determine the attached Council's draft School Admission Arrangements 2023/2024 as set out in the Admission Policy 2023/2024.

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Melanie Godfrey Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
	4 March 2022

The following appendices are attached:

- Appendix 1 – Draft School Admissions Policy 2023/24
- Appendix 2 – Coordinated Admission Arrangements consultation document
- Appendix 3 – Formal response
- Appendix 4 – Notes of points raised at online drop-in sessions
- Appendix 5 – Summary analysis of consultation responses
- Appendix 6 – Equality Impact Assessment