

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM**

### **Minutes of the meeting of the School Admissions Forum held at Ty Trevithick on 29 January 2016**

#### **Present:-**

Claire Christy	Admissions Officer, RCT (Chairperson)
Helen Cook	Governor Representative (Vice Chairperson)
Catrin Edwards	Head of Service Transformation and Data Systems
Anne Robertson	Diocesan Director of Education, RC
Rebecca McMahon	Bursar, Cardinal Newman RC School
Helen Griffiths	School Admissions Officer, Merthyr Council
Andrea West	School Admissions Officer, Caerphilly Council
Jessica Allen	Attendance and Wellbeing Service Manager
Nigel Hunt-Davies	Parent Governor Representative
Hefin Gruffydd	Headteacher, YGG Garth Olwg
Angie Williams-Roberts	In Year Transfer Co-ordinator

#### **Apologies:-**

Those absent from the meeting with apologies were as follows:-

Alison McTiffin

Those absent from the meeting without apologies were as follows:-

Rev Edwin Counsell  
Gareth Evans  
Mike Condon  
Alun Lewis

#### **1. Minutes**

##### **Noted**

- 1.1.1 The minutes of the Admissions Forum Meeting held on 29 June 2015 were accepted as an accurate record.

#### **2. Matters Arising**

##### **2.1 Min No. 6.1**

##### **Noted**

- 2.1.1 The Forum was informed that passports are no longer being checked by the School Admissions Team.
- 2.1.2 Guidance has been received from Welsh Government with regard to this matter.
- 2.1.3 Welsh Government has informed us that the pupil's eligibility to be in the UK is irrelevant to whether a child should be granted a place at a school.
- 2.1.4 We must treat all admission applications equally. We cannot request information from one group of people and not another. Therefore, the Local Authority can no longer request this type of documentation at the application stage of the process.

- 2.1.5 School Clerks have been informed of this at the recent School Clerk/Office Manager Training Session.
- 2.1.6 School Clerks have been informed that in order to ensure that a child is placed in the correct year group and that they have the correct legal name on SIMS, it is necessary for documentation to be checked before the pupil starts at the school, which can be :-
  - UK Birth Certificate
  - Valid current Passport
  - European Economic Area (EEA) identity cards
  - Official documents from the National Asylum Seeker Service
- 2.1.7 If School Clerks have concerns regarding passport or Visa's they can contact the Home Office and/or let us know of any concerns or queries they may have.

### **3. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson**

- 3.1. It was agreed that Mrs Claire Christy remain as the Chairperson.
- 3.2.1 It was agreed that Mrs Helen Cook remain as the Vice Chairperson.

### **4. Membership**

- 4.1 Mrs Kate Duffin has now been replaced on the forum by Mrs Rebecca McMahon.
- 4.2 Mrs Eleanor Aubrey has been replaced by Mr Mike Condon.
- 4.3 Mr Hefin Gruffydd should be included on the Membership list as Schools – Foundation Representative.

### **5. Consultation on RCT's Admissions Policy 2017/2018**

#### **Noted**

- 5.1.1 CC informed Forum members that the consultation document has been sent out to all forum members and all neighbouring LA's to consult upon Rhondda Cynon Taf's Admission Arrangements for the 2017/2018 Academic Year.
- 5.1.2 All comments and recommendations that have been raised by Welsh Government with regard to the Starting School Book 2016/2017, have been addressed and the changes have been incorporated into the 2017/2018 Booklet.
- 5.1.3 All members of the Forum were taken through the main changes which were highlighted throughout the document.
- 5.1.4 Under Section E. Changing Schools: Primary Education, a section has been added explaining that If a pupil does not take up their offer of a school place within 4 weeks of the agreed start date, the school place will be withdrawn and the parent will need to re-apply.
- 5.1.5 CC made forum members aware that further changes to the document are required.
- 5.1.6 The Decision Letters Issued date will be amended for Primary School Applications from 17<sup>th</sup> April 2017 to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017, due to 17<sup>th</sup> falling on a bank holiday.
- 5.1.7 The Admission Number for Ton Infant School will reduce from being 51 to 45. This is due to the Dining Area which is included in the capacity no longer being used and therefore, the Headteacher has requested for this to be removed from the capacity calculation which would reduce the nursery admission number to being 45.
- 5.1.8 This will come into force for the 2017/2018 Admission Round.
- 5.1.9 AW informed CE that formal consultation on reducing the Admission Number was only required in accordance with the Planning of School Places Document.
- 5.1.10 School Governors will be informed of the proposed reduction of the school's admission number at their next meeting by the Headteacher to receive their approval.
- 5.1.11 Under the Foot notes Section, Catchment Area's Point 19 will be slightly amended to read Any child living in the areas which transferred to the Bryncelynnog catchment area, who had an older sibling attending Y Pant in September 2015 (the effective date of the catchment change), this will relate to children in Years 7 to 11 and not sixth form, will have their application considered as if they still resided in the Y Pant catchment area. The rest of the text will remain the same in this section.
- 5.1.12 HC raised the wording of section I. Regular Attendance at School.

- 5.1.13 JA informed governors that following the recent press and the Education Minister's Statement, it is still the same stance on parents removing children from school during term time. Also, fixed penalties still stand.
- 5.1.14 More information will be going out to School Governing Bodies with regard to this matter at their Spring Term Full Governing Body Meetings.
- 5.1.15 The word Zero tolerance will not be able to remain in the booklet, as we are now unable to use this terminology. This section will be amended accordingly to reflect this.
- 5.1.16 HG made the forum aware of the difficulties that Head teachers face and the inconsistencies by schools dealing with requests for authorised leave throughout the County
- 5.1.17 JA explained that the Authority wants consistency and that was the reason for the Introduction of the Policy. Also, the majority of governors requested the Policy to remove the inconsistency and to tackle the ongoing issues across RCT schools.
- 5.1.18 NHD expressed his concerns that some pupils will not be able to have holidays due to the price of holidays outside term time which is another matter that needs to be addressed at a higher level.
- 5.1.19 AR requested that wording be changed under Admission Policies – Voluntary Aided and Controlled (Church) Schools. It was agreed that the wording be changed to 'The admission arrangements for these schools have been formulated by the schools governing bodies in consultation with the Authority'.
- 5.1.20 In the Appeal Section, under Voluntary Aided (Church) Schools, AR requested that the wording will be amended to include addressing the letter of appeal to the Clerk to the governing Body and forwarding it to the school.

## **6. Update on Online Admissions**

### **Noted**

- 6.1 The Admissions Online System closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 for Primary applications and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015 for Secondary applications.
- 6.2 The Admissions Team are continuing to promote the use of the online system.
- 6.3 We were really pleased with the increased uptake this year and are hopeful that this will continue year on year.
- 6.4 A total of 1766 Nursery online applications were received compared to 722 last year.
- 6.5 A total of 1970 Reception online applications were received compared to 1,729 last year.
- 6.6 A total of 177 Infant to Junior/Primary online applications were received compared to 95 last year.
- 6.7 A total of 2,045 Secondary online applications were received compared to 1,627 last year.
- 6.8 Late applications have been chased up and having received all these applications in the Capita One System has helped CE to base the School Formula Allocations on this information.

## **7. New Admissions Process**

### **Noted**

- 7.1 CC explained the New Admissions Process, whereby agreed start dates for all new starters is now obtained.
- 7.2 This helps to generate a Child Missing in Education (CME) Report, as it identifies children that have not started at the new school a week after the agreed start date. The Attendance and Wellbeing Team can then start their investigations at this stage. All children that have not started four weeks after the agreed start date get identified through a Report. CC will then find out why the child hasn't started or if the place is no longer required. If a pupil does not take up their offer of a school place within 4 weeks of the agreed start date, the school place will be withdrawn and the parent will need to re-apply.

- 7.3 New letters will be generated from the Capita One System which will be sent out to the parents informing them of the outcome of their application. An e-mail copy of the letter will then be e-mailed to both the receiving and outgoing schools.
- 7.4 HC asked if there is a timescale that a child has to be placed at a new school if they have moved out of the area.
- 7.5 JA informed HC that there is no legal timeframe for children to attend a school in a new area if the family have moved out of RCT.

## **8. In Year Transfers update**

- 8.1 CC informed the forum that during the Academic Year 201/2015, there were 1387 Primary and 451 Secondary In Year Transfers, of which 417 were for primary children moving into Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 8.2 Since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015, we have received over 800 In Year Transfers.
- 8.3 The volume of In Year Transfers was discussed and AW informed the Forum that they receive the same volume in Caerphilly.
- 8.4 AWR informed the forum that she felt that the number of transfers received for Years 10 and 11 seem to be reducing.

## **9. Welsh Government Advisory Document on Infant Class Size: Limit Compliance and School Admissions Appeals**

- 9.1 CC brought this to the attention of the forum and informed them that the document is available to download on the Welsh Government's Website.

## **10. Hard to Place Children**

- 10.1 AWR explained the process to the forum and how she is making progress with working more closely with secondary schools.
- 10.2 An Informal Hard to Place Information meeting has been set up which meets fortnightly to discuss hard to place pupils and receive updates.
- 10.3 Mrs Jessica Allen from The Attendance and Wellbeing Team and Mr Andrew Brasier from Access & Inclusion Team attend this informal Hard to Place Information Meeting.
- 10.4 Mr Andrew Brasier informs us of any Managed moves or permanent exclusions that have occurred to keep us updated and make us aware that they will be applying for a school place elsewhere.
- 10.5 HC informed that it would be useful for the Governing Body to undertake Exclusion training and she would contact Mr Andrew Brasier to arrange this.

## **11. Any Other Business**

### **Noted**

- 11.1 AR informed the Forum that she had attended an Admissions Meeting at Cardiff Council.
- 11.2 They discussed the problems that occur regarding allocating school places where there have been multiple offers, due to parents applying for both faith schools and mainstream schools.
- 11.3 As a result of this, governors have agreed for each faith school in Cardiff to be involved in Voluntary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements.
- 11.4 Colour Category Banding of schools within Wales was discussed as the results were published yesterday.

