

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017-2018

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date 21st March 2018

**REPORT OF:
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
LIFELONG LEARNING**

Agenda Item No. 4

School Admissions Process

**Author: - Catrin Edwards – Head of Service Transformation
(Tel No 01443 744205)**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide a summary of the annual School Admission process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

Acknowledge the contents of the report and consider whether they wish to scrutinise any parts in greater depth.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Schools Admission Code 2013 contains practical guidance and imposes requirements, on local authorities and Admission Authorities, regarding the discharge of their duties in respect of admissions.

3.2 The entry of children to schools is controlled and administered by an 'Admissions Authority'. In respect of community schools the Admissions Authority is Rhondda Cynon Taf Council (the Authority). In the case of voluntary-aided (church) schools, the Admissions Authority is the governing body of the individual church school.

Parents/carers must submit an application form for a school place at the following stages of their child (ren)'s education:-

1. On admission to the Pre-Nursery Year (dependant on capacity at the school).
2. On admission to the Nursery Year.
3. On admission to the Reception Year.
4. On transfer from infant to a junior school.
5. On transfer from a junior or primary school to secondary school.
6. At any time that parents/carers may wish to transfer their child from one school to another.

- 3.3 The Admissions Number (AN) for a school is calculated in accordance with the Welsh Government 'Measuring the capacity of schools in Wales' guidance Circular No 021/2011.

If the number of preferences received for a school is below the school's AN, all applications for admissions to the school will be granted.

- 3.4 If the number of preferences received for a school is above the school's Admission Number the following over subscription criteria will be applied, in the priority order listed, to determine the allocation of available places;

Oversubscription Criteria

- Priority Category 1: 'Children Looked After (children in public care) & previously 'Looked After' children.
- Priority Category 2: Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, at the date of application, who will continue to attend that school in September 2018.
- Priority Category 3: Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.
- Priority Category 4: Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, at the date of application, who will continue to attend that school in September 2018.
- Priority Category 5: Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.

For the avoidance of all doubt the reference to 'home' in the oversubscription categories above and the 'tie breaker' refers to the actual location of the residential dwelling in which the child lives and to which Child benefit is paid.

3.5 Late Applications

Only applications received by the published closing date for receipt of applications will be considered in the initial round of allocation of places. Other applications received after the closing date will be considered as late applications. Late applications will be processed after applications which were received by the closing date and therefore late applications may find that their preferred school is already full.

3.6 Tie Breaker

Preference will be given to the children living nearest to the school. Distance will be measured by the Authority using the shortest, safe

walking route between the home address and the nearest open school gate. In areas where no safe walking route has been identified by the Authority, the shortest driving route between the home address and the nearest open school gate will be used. All distances are measured using the Mapinfo System only.

3.7 **Nursery Education**

Nursery education is widely provided across Rhondda Cynon Taf through maintained registered education providers both of whom are subject to regular inspections through Estyn.

Nursery places are only available to residents of RCT i.e. those persons paying council tax to this Authority.

Some schools are able to offer ‘pre-nursery’ places to children the term following their 3rd birthday. From September 2017, parents are able to apply on-line for a January 2018 place (the term after their child’s 3rd birthday) and from January 2018 for an April 2108 place (the term after their child’s 3rd birthday). These places are provided strictly subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed at any school. Once the Nursery accommodation is deemed to be full, no further pre-Nursery pupils may be admitted.

Where schools are unable to meet the demand a part time placement will be funded in other registered provision within the private and voluntary sector settings. A nursery place will only be funded in alternative provision if there is no capacity in a local school, to meet the child’s needs. Non-maintained registered education provision will not be funded cross country.

The admission of pre-nursery children to any school will not be possible any later than the Friday which follows the May Half term break.

Pupils who are admitted either to pre-nursery or nursery class will not have an ‘automatic’ right to continue education within that school. A formal application must be made at the appropriate time.

3.8 **Pre-Nursery Admissions**

In RCT from September 2017, parents were able to apply on line for a pre-nursery place starting January 2018 for children whose 3rd birthday fell between 01/09/17 and 31/12/17, between 01/01/18 – 31/03/18 for an April start for children who are three between 01/01/18 – 31/03/18, parents were notified on March 16th.

	1 st Pref School	2nd Pref School	3 rd Pref School	Registered Education Providers	Not Offered	Total

Jan 2018 start	394	39	8	216	105	762
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3.9 **Admission Timetable 2018/19 Academic Year**

Each Local Authority must publish an annual composite prospectus which sets out the determined admission arrangements, including a timetable for the admissions process detailing the relevant dates for the receipt and determination of applications and for the receipt of appeals.

For the academic year 2018/19 the admission timetable is set out in the table below and is published in the starting schools booklet.

Admission Cohort	Age of Pupil	Applications available from	Applications to be returned by	Decision notifications issued
Secondary school Yr 7	12 th birthday falls between 01/09/18 – 31/08/19	04/09/2017	20/10/2017	01/03/2018
Primary Yr 3 – Infants to Junior	8 th birthday falls between 01/09/18 – 31/08/19	04/09/2017	17/11/2017	16/04/2018
Reception – Age 4 before 1 st Sept 2017	5 th birthday falls between 01/09/18 – 31/08/19	04/09/2017	17/11/2017	16/04/2018
Nursery Class – Age 3 before 01/09/2017	4 th birthday falls between 01/09/18 – 31/08/19	04/09/2017	17/11/2017	16/04/2018
Pre – Nursery	3 rd birthday falls between 01/09/18 – 31/12/2018	01/09/2018	05/10/2018	23/11/2018
Pre- Nursery	3 rd birthday falls between 01/01/19 – 31/03/2019	01/01/2019	15/02/2019	15/03/2019

4. **CURRENT POSITION**

4.1 **Normal/Routine Admissions**

For September 2018 the Authority processed 7169 applications of which 5758, i.e. 80% were applied for on-line.

Of the 7169 applications 7092 applications, i.e. 98.92% were allocated their first preference.

	Nursery	Reception	Junior	Yr 7 Secondary	Total
Online	1627	2011	145	1974	5758
Paper	491	397	12	511	1411
Total applications	2118	2408	157	2486	7169
1 st Preference	2084	2408	157	2443	7092
2 nd Preference	34	0	0	43	77

In September individual letters are provided to every pupil currently registered in Nursery, Year 2 in an Infant school and Year 6, which details their User Identification Number and the application process that they need to undertake to apply for a place for the following September.

Information is also provided the Welsh Medium primary schools in Merthyr and two schools in the Vale of Glamorgan for children who plan to attend schools in RCT, e.g. YG Rhydywaun and Y Pant.

Decision letters were issued for applications for Year 7 places for September 2018 on 1st March 2018. Parents have until 23rd March 2018 to appeal the decision if their application was unsuccessful.

4.2 **Appeals**

Membership of Appeals Panels

Under the 2005 Regulations, the LA or governing body must appoint either 3 or 5 members to each panel. Each panel must consist of :

- At least one lay member. This means people without personal experience in the management of any school or with the provision of education in any school. People with experience in education in a voluntary capacity or as governor would be permitted.
- At least one person with experience in education, who is acquainted with educational conditions in the area of the authority, or who is the parent of a pupil registered at another school.

The following people are disqualified from membership of an appeal panel:

- Any member of the LA (e.g. councillors), or of the governing body of the school in question.
- Anyone, other than a teacher from another school, employed by the LA or by the governing body.
- Any person who has, or who has ever had, any connection with the LA or school, or with any member or employee of the LA or governing body such that doubts might reasonably be raised over his or her ability to act impartially regarding the LA or the school. Employment by the LA as a teacher is not in itself a reason for disqualifying someone from membership – unless there is another reason to call into question their ability to act in an impartial manner.
- Any person who was party to, or took part in, any discussions regarding the decision not to admit the child or young person about whom the appeal is concerned.

Training for Panel Members

Admission authorities must not let panel members and clerks participate in appeal hearings before they have received appropriate training. Panel chairs should have, specific up to date, training on chairing a panel, so that they conduct the hearing properly and make correct and effective use of the clerk. Regular refresher training should also be provided for these individuals.

Appeal process

Parents/carers wishing to appeal against the outcome of their application for admission must give the Authority notice of their appeal by March 23th 2018 for Secondary and May 4th 2018 for Primary. It is the parents/carers responsibility to prove that an appeal request has been sent and therefore we strongly advise that all appeal requests are sent via recorded delivery or a tracked e-mail for evidence purposes.

For the Sept 17 admission round, the Authority received 14 appeals from parents/carers whose applications for children to attend community schools had been unsuccessful. Of these 14 appeals the outcome was:-

- Successful 5
- Unsuccessful 9
- Withdrawn 0

There are no appeals in respect of nursery and pre-nursery admissions.

4.3 Waiting List

Following the allocation of places during the normal admission round, any pupil that is refused admission to an oversubscribed school will be placed on the waiting list. The list will be maintained until the 30th September (in line with the School Admission Code). Thereafter parents/carers must make a fresh application for admission (by completing the application form) and/or provide a written request to remain on the waiting list.

Admissions in respect of pupils on waiting lists are determined by application of the over-subscription criteria, not be the length of time a child has been on the waiting list.

4.4 Admissions at Other Times

During the course of any academic year children transfer between schools due a number of reasons ranging from house moves and those moving into the County Borough. We advise parents to first contact their present Headteacher to alert them of the decision and then if parents wish to proceed they should contact the School Admissions'

Team for advice in making the application to the new school. At present In Year Transfers (IYT) applications are not on-line and must be made via a paper application.

Applications to any year group within a school will be judged against the relevant AN for that year group and the overall capacity of the school. Only if there is space will a place be allocated. The timescale is 15 days from the day of application to the start date.

For children in years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) an Intention to Transfer form must be completed and signed by the child's current Headteacher at a school meeting. This is to ensure that the school move is in the best interest of the young person, as changing secondary schools at a stage when choice of accredited courses may be different, could impact on their outcomes at GCSE.

From September 2016 a Key Stage 3 protocol has been introduced to ensure that all the relevant documentation and information about a child is shared between the leaving and receiving school to aid the transfer.

Between 01/09/16 and 31/08/17 there were a total of 1010 Primary in year transfer applications. Table 1 summaries the applications made per year group.

Table 1 – Number of IYT Applications

Primary	PN/N	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Total 16/17	159	134	156	132	129	108	124	68	1010
House moves 16/17	93	73	89	84	67	64	76	33	579

Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
Total 16/17	77	87	71	46	18	299
House moves 16/17	50	52	42	23	10	177

5. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

It is the Authority's policy that all children, as far as is possible within the terms of the Education Act 1996, should be educated in mainstream schools within their local communities.

If parents/carers feel that their child may have special education needs they should, in the first instance, arrange to discuss their child's difficulties with the Head Teacher of the child's current school.

There would be an expectation that schools adopt a gradual response in line with meeting a learners needs in line with the SEN Code of Practice Wales (2002) requirements.

For learners with significant or complex needs referrals should be made to Access and Inclusion service, will be required in order to inform further intervention and if appropriate referrals to the relevant Local Authority SEN panels. These panels consider if a specialist placement is required.

If the threshold criteria for a specialist placement are met, then placements will be agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion service in line with the SEN Code of practice.

6. FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL

The School Admission Code (Statutory Code document no: 005/2013, 7/2013) states that all Local Authorities (LAs) must have appropriate protocols in place for admitting children they consider to be hard to place so that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered suitable school places promptly. In accordance with this requirement, Rhondda Cynon Taf has developed a Fair Access Protocol (FAP).

From April 2018, a draft pilot will start and the FAP will be administered for secondary schools through a Fair Access Protocol Panel (FAPP) consisting of representatives from schools and the LA. For primary school learners requiring a place through the FAP, the functions of the FAPP will be undertaken by the LA's School Admissions Service, in partnership with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the Access and Inclusion Service.

Schools, PRUs and the LA can refer cases to be considered under the FAP but must ensure that informed parental consent is secured prior to submission. No referral will be considered without a parental signature and the agreement to share confidential information.

Following agreement on placement, a provisional pre-admission meeting date and a confirmed start date should be agreed in the panel. The start date agreed in panel should be binding and placement should commence at the earliest opportunity but no later than 15 working days from the panel meeting.

7. CONCLUSION

- The admission of pupils into schools is controlled and administered by the Admissions Authority.
- 80% of all online applications were made online.
- The majority of applications are allocated their first preference, i.e. 98.92%
- For children not allocated their first preference there is an appeal process, the criteria of which must be adhered to.
- Admissions at other times must be done in consultation with both the leaving and receiving school, but places can only be allocated by the Admissions Authority.

- Admission to a specialist setting are only made if the threshold criteria is met, and then are agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion service.
- The Fair Access Panel, will ensure that appropriate protocols are in place for admitting children considered to be hard to place so that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered suitable school places promptly.

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