



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020-21
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24TH MARCH 2021
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide a summary of the annual School Admission process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

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

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A report was provided for the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on the 26th of February 2020, which detailed the Council's school admissions process. This report provides an update on developments within school admissions in the last 12 months and planned developments for the next admissions round.

4. ADMISSION YEAR 2020/21

4.1 Normal/Routine Admissions

In September individual letters are annually sent to the parent/carer(s) of every pupil registered in nursery, year 2 in an infant school and year 6. The letter details their User Identification Number and the application process that they need to undertake to apply for a school place for the following September.

Information is also provided to the Welsh medium primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil and two schools in the Vale of Glamorgan for children who plan to attend schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf (e.g. Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun and Y Pant Comprehensive School).

4.2 **Applications for the Academic Year 2020/21**

For the academic year 2020/21, the local authority processed 8782 applications, of which 7188 (i.e. 81.85%) were applied for on-line. There were 1302 pre-nursery, 2352 nursery, 2534 reception, 71 junior and 2523 year 7 applications.

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf there are 8 voluntary aided (church) schools. The admission arrangements for these schools have been formulated by the schools' governing bodies and requests for admission into these schools are the responsibility of the relevant government bodies.

Decision letters were issued for applications for year 7 places for September 2020 on the 2nd of March 2020. Parents had until the 20th of March 2020 to appeal the decision if their application was unsuccessful.

For nursery, reception and year 3 applications, decision letters were issued on the 16th of April 2020.

The table below provides a summary of the breakdown of the 8782 applications received.

	Pre-Nursery Jan 2021	Pre-Nursery April 2021	Nursery Sept 2020	Reception Sept 2020	Junior Sept 2020	Yr. 7 Sept 2020	Total
Online	928	326	1673	2108	57	2164	7256
Paper	83	66	679	426	14	359	1627
Total	1011	392	2352	2534	71	2523	8883
1 st Preference	N/A	N/A	2281	2491	70	2391	7233
2 nd Preference	N/A	N/A	25	11	0	35	71
3 rd Preference	N/A	N/A	3	0	0	3	6
Applied too soon	273	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	273
School Place	410	122	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	532
REP	293	245	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	538
No. of places offered	50	25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	75

Of the 7310 single applications made for nursery, reception, junior and year 7 children, 98.95% were offered their first preference, 0.97% their second and 0.08% their third.

For pre-nursery, 1011 applications were made for January 2021. Of these 1011, a total of 273 were not eligible as the children were not three years of age between September and December 2020. A total of 410 children were offered places in 59 schools and 293 were offered places across 32 Registered Education Providers (REPs). A total of 50 applications were refused a place due there not being sufficient capacity in their chosen school or REP in their area. These refused applications were distributed across 32 schools.

For pre-nursery April 2021, a total of 392 applications were received for and 245 were offered a place in 32 REPs and 122 in 31 schools.

4.3 **Appeals Processes**

Parents/carers wishing to appeal against the outcome of their application for secondary admission had until the 22nd of March 2020 to notify the authority. This extended to the 1st of May 2020 for primary schools. It is the parents/carers' responsibility to prove that an appeal request has been sent and therefore parents are strongly advised that all appeal requests are sent via recorded delivery or a tracked e-mail for evidence purposes.

For the September 2020 admission round, the authority received 27 appeals - 10 successful; 17 unsuccessful.

5. **ADMISSION YEAR 2021/22**

5.1 **Late Applications**

For September 2021 applications, a late application will only be accepted by the Admissions Authority when a good reason is given for the lateness of the application (e.g. when a single parent has been ill for some time or a family member has just moved into the area). Where a good reason is given, a late application will be accepted provided it is received before offers of places are made at the preferred school(s).

5.2 **Parental Responsibility**

Only persons holding responsibility for the named child are able to make an application and they will be required to make a declaration to this effect as part of the application process. Ordinarily it is expected that this person resides at the same address as the child and is referred to as the parent for admission purposes. Where parental responsibility is equally shared, the Council will ask the child's parents to determine which parent should submit the application. If parents cannot agree and neither has obtained a court order stating who should be making the application, the Council will accept an application from the parent in receipt of Child Benefit for the child. The Council is not in a position to intervene in disputes between parents over school applications and will request that these are resolved privately.

If an application is received from a step-parent, they will need to produce a parental responsibility order confirming that they have parental responsibility. Such documentation is required to proceed with processing the application.

5.3 **All Through Schools**

The parents and carers of children already attending an all through school, do not need to apply for a secondary school place as they will automatically transfer from year 6 to year 7 in the same school, unless they wish to attend a different secondary school.

Children will still have to apply for a pre-nursery, nursery and reception place at the relevant time.

5.4 **Timetable 2021/22**

Each local authority must publish an annual composite prospectus which sets out the determined admissions 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 2021/22, 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 - year 7	12 th birthday falls between 01/09/2021 – 31/08/2022	02/09/2020	18/10/2020	02/03/2021
Primary School - year 3 Transfer from Infant to Junior or Primary School	8 th birthday falls between 01/09/2021 – 31/08/2022	02/09/2020	15/11/2020	16/04/2021
Primary School Reception Class (i.e. age 4 before 01/09/2020)	5 th birthday falls between 01/09/2021 – 31/08/2022	02/09/2020	15/11/2020	16/04/2021
Primary School Nursery Class (i.e. age 3 before 01/09/2021)	4 th birthday falls between 01/09/2021 – 31/08/2022	02/09/2020	15/11/2020	16/04/2021
Pre-Nursery Admission from January 2022 (Spring Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/09/2021 – 31/12/2021	01/09/2021	02/10/2021	20/11/2021
Pre-Nursery Admission from April 2022 (Summer Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/01/2022 – 31/03/2022	04/01/2022	12/02/2022	12/03/2022

5.5 **Waiting List**

Following the allocation of places during the normal admission round, any pupil who is refused admission to an oversubscribed school will be placed on the

waiting list. The list will be maintained until the 30th of 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 by the length of time a child has been on the waiting list.

5.6 **Admissions at Other Times**

During the course of any academic year, children transfer between schools due to 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 to change schools and then if parents wish to proceed they should contact the School Admissions Team for advice in making the application to the new school.

Between 01/09/2019 and 31/08/2020 there were 874 primary and 213 secondary in-year transfer applications, of which 567 (52.16%) were due to a house move.

Of the total in-year transfers (IYT) 36.61% of primary and 35.21% secondary children were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and 4.58% and 4.69% were children looked after (CLA).

Number of IYT Primary Applications

Primary	PN/N	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2016/2017	159	134	156	132	128	109	124	68	1010
2017/2018	155	147	151	148	154	125	110	57	1047
2018/2019	133	150	150	174	151	159	131	58	1106
2019/2020	121	102	122	127	110	132	109	51	874
FSM Children	19	37	52	55	38	50	47	22	320
CLA Children	4	5	6	5	6	4	7	3	40
House moves 2019/2020	61	41	59	69	61	62	53	33	439

Number of IYT Secondary Applications

Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
2016/2017	77	87	71	46	18	299
2017/2018	56	66	69	33	4	228
2018/2019	79	75	87	49	8	296
2019/2020	48	65	65	27	8	213
FSM Children	20	26	16	9	4	75
CLA Children	2	2	3	3	0	10
House moves 2019/2020	27	38	44	16	3	128

6. WELSH MEDIUM TRANSFERS

6.1 Primary Welsh Medium Transfers

During the academic year 2019/2020, 82 children transferred into a Welsh medium primary school and 76 left (i.e. a net increase of 6, compared to a net reduction of 16 in the previous year).

	Primary	PN/N	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2017/2018	Receiving	6	10	10	7	13	9	15	3	73
2017/2018	Leaving	8	12	14	11	15	17	12	9	88
2018/2019	Receiving	14	8	12	8	9	5	7	2	65
2018/2019	Leaving	6	16	13	10	7	10	17	2	81
2019/2020	Receiving	12	16	11	10	5	11	12	5	82
2019/2020	Leaving	7	8	9	12	10	15	9	6	76

6.2 Secondary Welsh Medium Transfers

During the academic year 2019/2020, 6 children transferred into a Welsh medium primary school and 12 left (i.e. a net reduction of 6, compared to a net reduction of 18 in the 2018/2019).

	Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
2017/2018	Receiving	4	1	6	3	0	14
2017/2018	Leaving	4	3	3	1	0	11
2018/2019	Receiving	7	2	4	3	0	16
2018/2019	Leaving	9	15	7	3	0	34
2019/2020	Receiving	1	3	1	0	1	6
2019/2020	Leaving	1	3	4	2	2	12

6.3 Year 7 Welsh Medium Applications September 2020

Of the 386 children in year 6 at a Welsh medium primary school or Welsh medium all-through school in Rhondda Cynon Taf in July 2020, 368 applied for and were offered a place in a Welsh medium secondary school or Welsh medium all-through school in the County Borough (i.e. 95.37%) for September 2020.

In the dual language schools, there were 62 children in Welsh medium streams in year 6 and 57 applied for and were offered a place in a Welsh medium secondary school or Welsh medium all-through school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (i.e. 91.94%).

In September 2020, 94.87% of children in year 6 Welsh medium primary schools or Welsh medium dual language schools continued their education in Welsh medium secondary schools or Welsh medium all-through schools.

7. ADMISSIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

It is the local 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 headteacher of the child's current school.

There is an expectation that schools adopt a graduated response to meeting a learner's needs in line with the SEN Code of Practice Wales (2002) requirements. For learners with significant or complex needs, referrals should be made to the Access and Inclusion Service, to inform further intervention from the Educational Psychology Service and/or the Learner Support Service. If appropriate, referrals can be made to the relevant local authority SEN panel should a specialist placement be required. If the threshold criteria for a specialist placement is met, then placements are agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion Service.

8. FAIR ACCESS PANEL

In April 2018, a Fair Access Placement Panel (FAPP) was established. The forum consists of representatives from schools and the local authority who discuss and agree to placements for children deemed to be hard to place for a range of reasons. This has resulted in some of the most vulnerable children being offered suitable school places promptly. For primary school learners requiring a school place, the functions of the FAPP are undertaken by the local authority's School Admissions Service, in partnership with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the Access and Inclusion Service.

In the academic year 2019/2020, 40 children were brought forward to discuss and placements made. Of the 40, 16 were managed moves, 24 were parental in-year transfer requests.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The consultation process in respect of the local authority school admissions and school admission appeals is undertaken as outlined in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

13.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2020–2024 highlights the Council's commitment to delivering three main priorities, namely:

- Ensuring People are independent, healthy and successful;
- Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play; and
- Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

13.2 This report is linked to ensuring that the Council's School Admissions supports children and their families to be independent, healthy and successful.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 The admission of pupils into schools is controlled and administered by the Admissions Authority. A total of 81.85% of all applications were made online. The majority of applications were allocated to their first preference (i.e. 98.95%).

14.2 For children not allocated their first preference school there is an appeal process, the criteria of which must be adhered to. There is no appeal for pre-nursery or nursery places. There were 27 appeals for September 2020 - 10 successful; 17 unsuccessful.

14.3 Between 01/09/2019 and 31/08/2020 there were 874 primary and 213 secondary in-year transfer applications, of which 567 (52.16%) were due to a house move. Of the 874 in-year primary transfers and 213 in-year secondary transfers, 320 and 75 respectively were for learners eligible for free school meals.

14.4 During the academic year 2019/2020 there was a net increase of 6 learners attending the Welsh medium primary sector, compared to a net reduction of 16 in 2018/2019. There was a net reduction of 6 in 2019/2020, compared to a net reduction of 18 in the 2018/2019, in the Welsh medium secondary sector.

14.5 In September 2020, 94.87% of children in year 6 Welsh medium primary schools or Welsh dual language schools continued their education in Welsh medium secondary schools or Welsh medium all-through schools.

14.6 Admission to specialist settings are only made if the threshold criteria for specialist placement is met. These placements are agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion Service.

14.6 In the academic year 2019/2020, 40 children were discussed, and placements made. Of the 40 - 16 were managed moves; 24 were parental in-year transfer requests.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None