



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH 2022

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 admissions 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 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 application date for the forthcoming 2022/2023 admissions year.

4. ADMISSION YEAR 2021/22

4.1 Normal/Routine Admissions

In September of every year individual letters are 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.

Parents/carers have the right to express a preference when selecting a school for their child(ren). If the number of preferences received for a school is below the school's admission number (AN), all applications for admission to the school will be granted.

If the number of preferences received for a school is above the school's AN the published over subscription criteria will be applied, in the priority order listed, to determine the allocation of available places.

Information is also provided to the Welsh medium (WM) 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 2021/22**

For the academic year 2021/22, the LA processed 9096 applications, of which 7382 (i.e. 81.16%) were applied for on-line. There was 1668 pre-nursery, 2332 nursery, 2361 reception, 68 junior and 2578 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 governing bodies.

Decision letters were issued for applications for year 7 places for September 2021 on the 1st of March 2021. Parents had until the 19th of March 2021 to appeal the decision if their application was unsuccessful.

For nursery, reception and year 3 applications, decision letters were issued on the 19th of April 2021.

The table below provides a summary of the breakdown of the 9096 applications received.

	Pre-Nursery Jan 2022	Pre-Nursery April 2022	Nursery Sept 2021	Reception Sept 2021	Junior Sept 2021	Year 7 Sept 2021	Total
Online	1187	395	1668	1910	61	2161	7382
Paper	52	34	723	493	6	406	1714
Total	1239	429	2391	2403	67	2567	9096
1 st Preference	N/A	N/A	2354	2345	64	2435	7198
2 nd Preference	N/A	N/A	16	27		27	70
Did not take up their offer			21	29	4	105	159
Age ineligible to apply	486	25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	511
School Place	430	175	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	595
REP	278	222	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	500
Parent refused place/no longer required	45	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	62

Of the 7,427 single applications made for nursery, reception, junior and year 7 children, 96.92% were offered their first preference and 0.94% their second. The remaining 159 (2.14%) applications were awarded places but they were not accepted.

For pre-nursery January 2021, 1,239 applications were received. Of these 486, were not eligible as the children were not three years of age between September and December 2021. Of the remaining 753, 430 children were offered places in 61 schools, 278 were offered places across 32 Registered Education Providers (REPs) and a further 45 offers were made but these places were refused by parents/carers as they were not for their preferred place.

For pre-nursery April 2021, 429 applications were received. Of these 25 were ineligible due to age. Of the remaining 404, 175 were offered places in 40 schools, 222 were offered a places across 32 REPs and 7 were offered but refused a place.

4.3 **Appeals Processes**

Parents/carers wishing to appeal against the outcome of their application for secondary admission had until the 19th of March 2021 to notify the LA. 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 2022 admission round, the LA received 17 appeals; 7 were successful, 9 unsuccessful and 1 withdrew.

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 2022/23**

Each LA 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 2022/23, 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 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	15/10/2021	01/03/2022
Primary School - Year 3 Transfer from Infant to Junior or Primary School	8 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	12/11/2021	19/04/2022
Primary School Reception Class (i.e. age 4 before 01/09/2020)	5 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	12/11/2021	19/04/2022
Primary School Nursery Class (i.e. age 3 before 01/09/2021)	4 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	12/11/2021	19/04/2022
Pre-Nursery Admission from January 2023 (Spring Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/12/2023	01/09/2022	30/09/2022	11/11/2022
Pre-Nursery Admission from April 2023 (Summer Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/01/2023 – 31/03/2023	02/01/2023	10/02/2023	10/03/2023

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 01/09/2020 and 31/08/2021 there were 1074 primary and 292 secondary in-year transfer (IYT) applications, of which 731 (53.51%) were due to a house move.

Of the total IYTs, 499 (46.46%) of primary and 120 (41.1%) secondary children were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and 36 (3.35%) and 19 (6.5%) 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
2020/2021	188	177	133	127	131	142	114	62	1074
FSM Children	67	80	71	60	71	68	55	27	499
CLA Children	6	5	3	4	7	5	3	3	36
House moves 2020/21	77	90	71	63	69	68	61	45	544

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
2020/2021	77	84	64	47	20	292
FSM Children	34	35	24	22	5	120
CLA Children	1	5	4	5	4	19
House moves 2020/21	49	55	44	27	12	187

Parents have no legal requirement to provide a reason to transfer their child and the LA can only refuse an application if there are no places available in the selected school.

	Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
2019/2020	Receiving	1	3	1	0	1	6
2019/2020	Leaving	1	3	4	2	2	12
2020/2021	Receiving	2	2	4			8
2020/2021	Leaving	9	4	10	2	2	27

6.3 **Year 7 Welsh Medium Applications September 2020**

There continues to be a high level of WM retention between year 6 and year 7. For September 2021; 362 out of the 379 children in year 6 at a WM primary school or WM all-through school in Rhondda Cynon Taf in July 2021, transferred into a WM secondary school or WM all-through school in the County Borough (i.e. 95.5 %) for September 2021.

In the 3 dual language schools, there were 59 children in Welsh medium streams in year 6. Of these 50 transferred into a WM secondary school or WM all through school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (i.e. 84.74%).

In September 2021, 94.06% of children in year 6 WM primary schools or WM dual language schools continued their education in WM secondary schools or WM all through schools.

7. **ADMISSIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

From the 1st of September 2021, section 48 of the 2018 Act requires the governing body of a maintained school in Wales to admit a child to the school if the school is named in the child's individual development plan. This duty applies despite the limits on infant class sizes and even if admitting the child would result in the school exceeding its admission number. The duty to admit applies at all times, including where a school is named in a plan outside the normal admission round.

Schools may only be named for the purpose of securing admission in certain circumstances, so not all individual development plans will name a school in this way. Where a school is named for that purpose, it is named in section 2D.1 of the individual development plan. Where a school is named in an individual development plan for the purpose of securing admission, the admissions provisions in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 do not generally apply [1].

If a child or the child's parent wishes to appeal against the school named in the child's individual development plan for the purpose securing admission, or the fact that no school is so named, the appeal is to the Education Tribunal for Wales.

It is the LA'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 LA 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 LA 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 LA's School Admissions Service, in partnership with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the Access and Inclusion Service.

In the academic year 2020/21, 11 children were brought forward to discuss and placements made. Of the 11, 8 were managed moves, 2 were parental IYT requests and 2 were withdrawn.

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 LA 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 The LA's Schools Admissions Policy incorporates the Schools Admissions Code 05/2013, the Schools Admissions Appeals Code 07/2013, the ALNET Act 2018, the code is made under section 84 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and changes to the law on admissions as a result of the implementation of the ALNET Act 2108 Published on the 16th of November 2021.

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;
 - 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. For the academic year 2020/21 the LA received 9096 applications, of which 7382 (i.e. 81.16%) were made online.
- 14.2 Of the 7428 applications for nursery, reception, junior and year 7, 96.92% were allocated their first preference school. For children who were not allocated their first preference school, there is an appeal process. There is no appeal for pre-nursery or nursery places. For September 2021, there were 17 appeals, 7 successful, 9 unsuccessful and 1 withdrew.
- 14.3 Between 01/09/2020 and 31/08/2021, there were 1074 primary and 292 secondary IYT applications, of which 544 (50.65%) primary and 187 (64.04%) secondary were due to a house move. An overall total of 53.51%.
- 14.4 Of the total IYT children, 46.46% of primary and 41.1% secondary children were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and 3.35% and 6.5% were children looked after (CLA).
- 14.5 During the academic year 2020/21 there was a net reduction of 22 learners attending the WM primary sector, compared to a net increase of 6 in 2019/20. There was a net reduction of 19 in 2020/21, compared to a net reduction of 6 in 2019/20 in the WM secondary sector.
- 14.6 In September 2021, 94.06% of children in year 6 WM primary schools or Welsh dual language schools continued their education in WM secondary schools or WM all through schools.
- 14.7 Admission to specialist settings is only made if the threshold criteria for specialist placement is met. These placements are agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion Service.
- 14.8 In the academic year 2020/21, 11 children were discussed at FAPP. The outcome being, 8 managed moves, 2 parental IYT requests and 2 were withdrawn.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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