

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
 Date of meeting: **Tuesday 15th March 2022**
 Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**
 Report Submitted by: **Claire Gardner, Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	17.02.22	02.03.22			15.03.22	16.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to outline the outcome of the annual consultation process, in line with the revised draft of the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24. Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide their views and comments on the document in preparation for the 2023/24 admission round, prior to its determination and publication on the 15th April 2022.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Welsh Government’s School Admissions Code (2013) dictates that Councils must review their admissions policies annually for consultation and publication by April 15th in the academic year preceding the admissions round. Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy outlines the arrangements, criteria and relevant legislation that underpin school admission processes and methodology, and has been drafted in line with the aforementioned Code, along with the Admissions Appeals Code (2013). The Admissions Authority must ensure that the following information is provided during the consultation process:

- 2.2
- i) The admission numbers for each school
 - ii) Application procedures and the timetable for the admission process
 - iii) The criteria to be applied to applications in the event that there are more applications than places for a school
 - iv) Arrangements for waiting lists and how they operate
 - v) Arrangements for the processing of late applications
 - vi) Details of how parents will be notified of a decision on their application, as well as appeal procedures should their application be unsuccessful

2.3 The primary changes (detailed in red within **Appendix 1**) to the policy document for the 2023/24 academic session are as follows:

- Updated consultation and application details;
- A review of the nursery, primary and secondary admission numbers in line with the annual capacity review process, which considers

changes to the configuration of teaching and learning environments. This process is carried out in line with the Welsh Government Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011). The final agreed capacity calculations are then used to inform admission numbers detailed with the policy document;

- A review of the dates for the admission round(s), associated processing and offer deadlines;
- A review of the admissions appeals for primary and secondary school places. This is due to the Welsh Government introducing legislation which temporarily relaxed the requirements relating to admission appeals, in order to allow appeals to take place despite the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic;
- Changes to terminology in line with ALN reform;
- A section was added to the policy, highlighting the arrangements for:
 - Children of UK Service Personnel and other Crown Servants
 - Children housed via domestic violence services
 - Gypsy and traveller children
- Cylch Meithrin Brynithel have been added to the policy in line with their early year's education provider status; and,
- Updates as requested by consultees (detailed below).

2.4 The draft Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2023/24, please refer to **Appendix 1** for the policy document), was distributed to relevant consultees as outlined within Welsh Government's School Admissions Code (2013, pages 6-7) and detailed on page 2 of the appended policy consultation document. The consultation period commenced on Monday 21st January 2022 and concluded on Friday 11th February 2022. During the consultation period, 3 responses were received as follows:

- Glanhwy Primary School made a request for the Nursery intake timings to reduce to support and improve early language skills. The Admissions Authority explained to the consultee that the policy is developed in line with the framework detailed within the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) paragraph 2.57 that states that Local authorities in Wales are under a duty to secure sufficient provision of nursery places for their area for children in the term following their third birthday. Therefore, there is limited flexibility in terms of what can be changed in respect of the nursery intake.
- St Mary's R.C. Primary School requested that the policy was updated to reflect the changes they have made in offering full-time nursery places to all pupils e.g. both rising 3's and nursery pupils – the policy was amended on Page 4 to reflect this.
- Cwm Primary School asked that the processes around statemented pupils are reviewed – the policy reflects the process, but was strengthened to include more information on excepted pupil status.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the policy document; or,

3.2 **Option 2:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the policy document and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made in consideration of the publication date (15th April 2021).

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Admissions and Admission Appeals Code (2013), there is a statutory requirement upon the Council to determine and publish their admissions arrangements annually by the 15th April, the year preceding the admissions round to which they apply.

4.2 Education is a priority in the Council's Corporate Plan of which the planning of school places, is an essential component.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

There are no direct budget implications associated with this report.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There is a risk that Council will not be compliant with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013), if the policy is not approved and published by the 15th April 2021. The timeline for approval take account of the publication requirements and dates.

5.3 **Legal**

The Council are legally required to prepare, implement and update accessibility strategies for all schools for which they are the responsible body.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

5.4.1 The Schools Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2022/23 has been developed by the Education Transformation team, who oversee implementation and reviews of the policy within Blaenau Gwent.

5.4.2 The Corporate Director, supported by Wider Corporate Leadership Team, will have a key role in ensuring the key staff-related actions are effectively delivered.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Please refer to **Appendix 2**, for a summary of the 2021/22 Admissions Round. The Council are presently implementing the 2022/23 policy.

- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
The public can expect a fair and equitable admissions process for all pupils in accessing education, and where possible place allocation in line with parent/pupil preference.
- 6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
Stakeholders and end user needs and engagement are of paramount importance and a key focus of both the policy development, and ongoing admissions process. The Policy is subject to consultation on an annual basis, in line with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013). In addition, the admission arrangements and forms are developed in consultation with key stakeholders including: schools, partners, governing bodies, parents etc.
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
The admissions process contributes to effective pupil place planning and management, ensuring that there are sufficient pupil places and promoting access to education for all Blaenau Gwent pupils.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**
The admissions process prevents oversubscription of schools and inequality in line with access to education.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
The Admissions Authority works with other internal admission authorities i.e. the faith and foundation schools, along with external admission authorities within the region and partners such as Social Services, to ensure that there are sufficient arrangements and pupil places for Blaenau Gwent Schools. Also, supporting effective appeal, capacity assessment, childcare offer and other associated processes. The Blaenau Gwent Admission Forum which is comprised of school, council, governor and other service representatives; oversee application of the policy, procedures and compliance with the Welsh Government School Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes (2013).
- 6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**
The Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education is aligned to early year's education, pupil place planning, school organisation, the work of social services, planning in line with housing developments etc. Service integration is essential to ensure effective policy implementation, whilst also securing appropriate access to education for current and prospective pupils. The Admissions process is monitored and assured by the Admissions Forum, works in accordance with ALN and Managed Move Panels and associated process. Work with Social Services, Health & Safety, Early Years, Health, Occupational etc. is ongoing to ensure effective transition processes are in place.
- 6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**
Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings are planned in order to take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon

emissions. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language Jeremy Miles, announced on November 2nd 2021 that all new school and college buildings, major refurbishments and extension projects, will be required to meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1st 2022. The Council are committed to and have begun working with Welsh Government in planning implementation of this agenda.

6.9a Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment

A Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment has been carried out in line with the final draft of the policy prior to approval, with the impact overall being neutral.

6.9b. Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (EQIA) has been completed in line with the policy, which determined that there is no negative impact upon the protected characteristics. The policy promotes equality of opportunity for all, with regards to accessing education.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The Admissions Authority monitors the development and delivery admission round(s) and processes on a weekly basis; reporting the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Forum quarterly, providing monthly data analysis and undertaking annual appraisals in line with the delivery of the admission arrangements, which are reported via Councils political processes.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Draft Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2023/24)

Appendix 2 – Annual Admissions Analysis 2021/22