

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **28th February 2023**

Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2024/25**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**

Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education – Lynn Phillips
Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change – Joanne Watts**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	02.02.23	15.02.23			28.02.23	01.03.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 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 2024/25. The People Scrutiny Committee is asked to provide their views and comments on the document in preparation for the 2024/25 admission round, prior to its determination and publication on the 15th April 2023.

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:
- 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
- 2.2 The primary changes (detailed in red within **Appendix 1**) to the policy document for the 2024/25 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's 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.
- Updating of the policy in relation to Managed Moves, Resource Bases, Special School and Complex Placements in line with ALN reform developments and learning from the current year.
- Changes to terminology in line with ALN reform.
- Updates as requested by consultees (detailed below).

2.3 The draft Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2024/25, 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 Wednesday 11th January 2023 and concluded on Wednesday 25th January 2023. During the consultation period, 5 responses were received as follows:

- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg requested that the policy be updated to include a comment clarifying that parents need to specify their preference on the application form as to which campus they would prefer their child to attend i.e., Tredegar or Blaina campus.
- Coed y Garn requested that the policy be amended to reflect that they offer a full-time provision for nursery only and not for rising 3's.
- St Mary's RC requested the policy be changed to reflect the fact they offer a full-time provision for rising 3 as well as nursery.
- The Early Years team requested the name of Mrs Tiggy Winkles be amended to Tiggy's Day Care as the name has changed.
- Brynmawr Foundation School requested that the name of the Digital Mapping system be incorporated (GIP which is a Geographic Information System).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

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

3.2 **Option 2:** The People Scrutiny Committee considers the policy document and provides recommendation relating to improvements that can be made in consideration of the publication date (15th April 2023).

4. **Evidence of how 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 the 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 2023. The timeline for approval takes account of the publication requirements and dates.

5.3 **Legal**

The Council is 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.

5.5. The Schools Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2024/25 has been developed by the Education Transformation team, who oversee implementation and reviews the policy within Blaenau Gwent.

5.7 The Education Directorate Management Team along with Wider Corporate Leadership Team, have a key role to play in ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and reviewed in accordance with relevant strategy, policy and regulatory frameworks.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Please refer to **Appendix 2**, for a summary of the 2022/23 Admissions Round. The Council is presently implementing the 2023/24 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.
- 6.8.1** The Minister for Education and Welsh Language, 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 are working with Welsh Government in the implementation of this agenda.

6.9 ***Integrated 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 the Councils political processes.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Draft Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2024/25)

Appendix 2 – Annual Admissions Analysis 2022/23

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