

Analysis:

School Admissions – 2019/20 Admissions Round Analysis

The Admissions team have successfully implemented the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2019/20, which is evidenced by the following assessment:

- 100% of applications were processed within 48 hours and 100% of standard in-year transfer requests were processed within 15 days of receipt in accordance with the WG School Admissions Code (2013) and Blaenau Gwent's School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2019/20.
- Transfer rates have fluctuated over the last 3 academic sessions, from 140 in 2017/18, up to 343 in 2018/19 and then a slight increase of 355 in 2019/20. The primary reason for in-year transfer has been inward migration of families into the Blaenau Gwent area, with an upward trend in inward migration seen over the last academic session resulting in approximately 215 pupils – (168 of which were primary pupils), moving into Blaenau Gwent between September 2018 and August 2019 via in-year transfer. The net migration based upon school transfers in-year for 2018/19 was 399, with 184 pupils recorded by schools as moving out of county. It should be noted that historically a number of schools have failed to accurately record outward migration, which is presently being addressed via the Admissions Forum.
- 9 complex transfers were received and referred to the SEN team for consideration at ALN Panel.
- The admissions officer has attended all ALN Panel meetings and/ or liaised directly with the SEN team on pupil placement.
- There were 5 appeals held for the reception year group during the summer period 2019, which is less than the number of appeals held in 2018. All 5 appeals were upheld in favour of the Council due them being class size appeals.
- The numbers of in-time applications received for the 1,786 pupils who applied for a school place during the 2019/20 admission round, decreased for nursery and reception, but increased for secondary when compared to 2018/19, whereby 2,061 pupils applied for a school place. The lower number of in time applications is attributable to a decrease in the live birth rates for the nursery cohort, which decreased from 770 for nursery during the 2018/19 admission round; to 533 for nursery during the 2019/20 admission round. Overall there were 275 more applications made for a school place in 2018/19 than in 2019/20. Please refer to Figure 1 overleaf for the in-time percentage comparisons:

Figure 1: In-time Application (%)

Percentage of In-time Applications 2017/18	Percentage of In-time Applications 2018/19	Percentage of In-time Applications 2019/20
Nursery – 66%	Nursery – 58%	Nursery – 51%
Reception – 75%	Reception – 79%	Reception – 74%
Secondary – 90%	Secondary – 71%	Secondary – 89%

- The Council were able to sustain 100% of parental first preferences for a 4 years period in respect of both nursery and secondary place allocation, and 99% of first preferences were met for the reception year group (please refer to **Figure 2** below). This is attributable to the effective monitoring and management of school capacities and pupil places along with the continued achievement of surplus place reduction, whereby school admission numbers for primary schools with a high surplus have been reduced over the last year and in turn the admission number has also been reduced.
- First preferences met for late applications are also extremely high due to effective pupil place management processes

Figure 2: First Preferences Met %

% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2016/17	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2017/18	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2018/19	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2019/20
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%
Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%
Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%
% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2016/17	% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2017/18	% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2018/19	% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2019/20
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 99%
Reception – 96%	Reception – 97%	Reception – 96%	Reception – 99%
Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%

The Welsh Government 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. The primary changes to the policy document for the 2020/21 academic session were as follows:

- A review of the nursery, primary and secondary admission numbers in line with the annual capacity review. This is an annual process which reviews changes to school plans and physical space within the school, which affect the provision of teaching and learning. This 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.
- A review of the dates for the admission round(s), associated processing and offer deadlines.
- A Blaenau Gwent schools catchment areas overview map was appended to the policy.

The Admissions Policy for 2020/21 was consulted upon and published in line with the Welsh Government's deadline (April 2019). The pilot phase of on-line admission arrangements was launched on September 1st 2016. Online applications have increased overall within the last academic session as outline below:

2017/18

- 158 out of a possible 976 applications received online for nursery;
- 6 out of a possible 796 applications received online for reception; and,
- 16 out of a possible 685 application received online for secondary.

2018/19

- 94 out of a possible 705 applications received online for nursery;
- 93 out of a possible 586 applications received online for reception; and,
- 58 out of a possible 770 application received online for secondary.

2019/20

- 205 out of a possible 659 applications received online for nursery;
- 186 out of a possible 676 applications received online for reception; and,
- 161 out of a possible 654 application received online for secondary.

The aim of the team is to become paperless in preparation for the 2021/22 admission round. A review has been undertaken with the Corporate Transformation team and work is underway in developing a business case which seeks to replace the Abavus System with a suitable

alternative. 2 companies have thus far been approached in order to obtain quotes and comparisons. In addition, promotion and awareness raising of online admissions has increased.

The Admissions Forum met 4 times over the last year (September 2018 – August 2019), with the minimum number of meetings required being 3. The Forum has sustained a good level of attendance at each meeting. The Forum has worked closely with the Education Transformation team in order to:

- improve school and Council awareness and partnership approaches in respect of the implementation and monitoring of the admissions round;
- improve tracking processes from live birth to secondary education (whilst ensuring alignment with Inclusion);
- address issues i.e. ensure that when in-year transfers are allocated a place a start date is offered within 10 days; and,
- explore a wider ranging data set i.e. Flying Start, placement outside of the chronological year group, home tuition and attendance data etc. Ensuring that there is a holistic approach to the management of pupil places.

A Hard to Place Protocol has been developed in line with the emerging need to effectively manage pupil admissions that sit outside of the remit of the School Admissions Policy and Managed Move Protocol. Forum meetings have been programmed in for the 2019/20 academic session.