



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 26TH FEBRUARY 2020

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Agenda Item No. 3

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND ALLOCATION OF SCHOOL PLACES

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report presents information on the annual school admission arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

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

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 RCT has a statutory duty to ensure there are enough school places for children in the County Borough and to make certain every parent receive an offer of a school place. Applying for a school place must be a fair and transparent process for everyone. The Council must be clear on how school places are allocated and must comply with the Statutory School Admissions Code 2014 and Appeals Code.

3.2 A report was provided for the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 20th March 2019, 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 2019/20

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 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 2019/20

For the academic year 2019/20, the Authority processed 9082 applications, of which 7196 (i.e. 79.23%) were applied for on-line. There were 1301 pre-nursery, 2562 nursery, 2577 reception, 69 junior and 2573 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 2019 on the 1st March 2019. Parents had until the 22nd March 2019 to appeal the decision if their application was unsuccessful.

For nursery, reception and Year 3 applications, decision letters were issued on the 16th April 2019.

The table below provides a summary of the breakdown of the 9082 applications received.

	Pre-Nursery Jan 2020	Pre-Nursery April 2020	Nursery Sept 2019	Reception Sept 2019	Junior Sept 2019	Yr. 7 Sept 2019	Total
Online	925	288	1675	2180	63	2065	7196
Paper	81	7	887	397	6	508	1886
Total	1006	295	2562	2577	69	2573	9082
1 st Preference	N/A	N/A	2425	2526	69	2455	7475
2 nd Preference	N/A	N/A	67	17	0	20	104
3 rd Preference	0	0	11	0	0	0	11
Applied too soon	258	0	N/A	0	0	0	0
School Place	403	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	402
REP	287	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	287
No. of places offered	58	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	317

Of the 7,590 applications made for nursery, reception, junior and year 7 children, 98.5% were offered their first preference, 1.37% their second and 0.14% their third.

For pre-nursery, 1006 applications were made for January 2020. Of these 1006, a total of 258 were not eligible as the children were not three years of age

between September and December 2019. A total of 403 children were offered places in 59 schools and 283 were offered places across 27 Registered Education Providers (REPs). A total of 58 applications were refused a place due to there not being sufficient capacity in their chosen school or REP in their area. These refused applications were geographically spread across 25 schools throughout the County Borough.

A total of 377 applications have been received for April 2020. Decision notifications will be issued on the 12th March 2020.

4.3 **Appeals Processes**

Parents/carers wishing to appeal against the outcome of their application for secondary admission had a deadline of the 22nd March 2019 to notify the Authority. This extended to the 3rd May 2019 for primary schools. For nursery places the School Admission Code confirms that there is no right of appeal for an allocation of a place. 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 2019 admission round, the Authority did not receive any appeals.

5. **ADMISSION YEAR 2020/21**

5.1 **Late Applications**

For September 2020 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 2020/21**

Each local authority must publish an annual composite prospectus which sets out the determined admission 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 2020/21, 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 01/09/2020 – 31/08/2021	02/09/2019	18/10/2019	02/03/2020
Primary School - Year 3 Transfer from Infant to Junior or Primary School	8 th birthday falls between 01/09/2020 – 31/08/2021	02/09/2019	15/11/2019	16/04/2020
Primary School Reception Class (i.e. age 4 before 01/09/2019)	5 th birthday falls between 01/09/2020 – 31/08/2021	02/09/2019	15/11/2019	16/04/2020
Primary School Nursery Class (i.e. age 3 before 01/09/2020)	4 th birthday falls between 01/09/2020 – 31/08/2021	02/09/2019	15/11/2019	16/04/2020
Pre-Nursery Admission from January 2021 (Spring Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/09/2020 – 31/12/2020	01/09/2020	02/10/2020	20/11/2020
Pre-Nursery Admission from April 2021 (Summer Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/01/2021 – 31/03/2021	04/01/2021	12/02/2021	12/03/2021

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 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 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 01/09/2018 and 31/08/2019 there were 1106 primary and 296 secondary in-year transfer applications, of which 724 (51.64%) were due to a house move.

Of the total in-year transfers (IYT) 35% of primary and 33% secondary children were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and 3.88% and 3.7% 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
FSM Children	27	63	57	64	58	53	47	19	388
CLA Children	1	4	10	7	10	4	5	2	43
House moves 2018/2019	61	79	80	87	67	84	66	35	559

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
FSM Children	26	22	26	30	3	97
CLA Children	5	3	7	3	0	11
House moves 2018/2019	51	40	42	28	4	165

6. WELSH MEDIUM TRANSFERS

6.1 Primary Welsh Medium Transfers

During the academic year 2018/2019, 65 children transferred into a Welsh medium primary school and 81 left (i.e. a net reduction of 16, compared to 15 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

6.2 Secondary Welsh Medium Transfers

During the academic year 2018/2019, 16 children transferred into a Welsh medium primary school and 34 left (i.e. a net reduction of 18, compared to a net increase of 3 in the 2017/2018).

	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

6.3 Year 7 Welsh Medium Applications September 2019

Of the 315 children in Year 6 in a Welsh medium primary school in Rhondda Cynon Taf in July 2019, 302 applied for and were offered a place in a Welsh medium secondary school in the County Borough (i.e. 95.87%) for September 2019.

In the dual language schools, there were 73 children in Year 6 and 52 applied for and were offered a place in a Welsh medium secondary school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (i.e. 71.23%).

In September 2019, 91.24% of children in Year 6 Welsh medium primary schools or Welsh medium dual language schools continued their education in Welsh medium secondary 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 placement of 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 2018/2019, there were 12 FAPPs at which 56 children were brought forward to discuss and placements made. Of the 56, 34 were managed moves, 21 were parental in year transfer requests and 1 application was withdrawn.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The admission of pupils into schools is controlled and administered by the Admissions Authority. A total of 79.23% of all applications were made online. The majority of applications were allocated to their first preference (i.e. 98.5%).
- 9.2 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 no appeals for September 2019.
- 9.3 Between 01/09/2018 and 31/08/2019 there were 1106 primary and 296 secondary in-year transfer applications, of which 724 (51.64%) were due to a house move. Of the 1106 in-year primary transfers and 296 in-year secondary transfers, 388 and 97 respectively were for learners eligible for free school meals.
- 9.4 During the academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 there was a net reduction of 16 and 15 learners attending the Welsh medium primary sector. There was a net reduction of 18 in 2018/19, compared to a net increase of 3 in the 2017/2018, in the Welsh medium secondary sector.
- 9.5 In September 2019, 91.24% of children in Year 6 Welsh medium primary schools or Welsh dual language schools continued their education in Welsh medium secondary schools.

- 9.6 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.
- 9.6 In the academic year 2018/2019, there were 12 FAPPs at which 56 children were discussed and placements made. Of the 56, 34 were managed moves, 21 were parental in year transfer requests and 1 application was withdrawn.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers-

None