

<b>Meeting</b>	Bridgend County Borough Council Bridgend Admission Forum
<b>Date</b>	4 June 2024
<b>Time</b>	2pm to 4pm
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams

#### Local authority representatives

Mr R Davies (RD) – Chair  
Ms Emma Giles (EG) – Secretary  
Ms R Garner (RG)

Group Manager - Business Support  
Senior Pupil Services Officer  
ALN (Additional Learning Needs) Lead Early Years,  
Cognition and Learning and CMMI (Complex Medical  
and Motor Impairment)  
Childcare Team Manager  
Cabinet Member for Education

Ms B Davies (BD)

Cllr J-P Blundell (Cllr JPB)

#### School (community and voluntary controlled) representatives

Ms Delyth Davies  
Mrs K John (KJ)  
Mr R Pawar (RP)

Acting Headteacher, Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr  
Headteacher, Brackla Primary School  
Headteacher, Bryntirion Comprehensive School

#### School (voluntary aided) representatives

Mr J Tarran (JT) – Vice-chair

Mr A Howells (AH)

Headteacher, Archdeacon John Lewis Church in  
Wales Primary School  
Headteacher, Archbishop McGrath Catholic High  
School

#### Roman Catholic Diocesan representatives

Ms Anne Robertson (AR)

Director of Schools, Archdiocese of Cardiff

#### Church in Wales Diocesan representatives

Ms Rebecca Morteo (RM)

Acting Diocesan Education Lead for the Llandaff  
Diocese

#### Parent Governor representatives

Ms Claire Bloomfield (CB)

Ms Rebecca Owens (RO)

Parent Governor, Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen  
Parent Governor, Heronsbridge School

#### Community representatives

Mr Shaun Sweeney (SS)

Community governor, Tremains Primary School

#### Additional members

Ms C Christy (CC)

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Mrs M Treharne (MT)

Education Engagement Co-ordinator,  
Bridgend County Borough Council

## **1. Welcome, introductions and apologies**

RD invited introductions from those in attendance.

Apologies were noted from Cllr JPB, DD, and BD.

Absent with no apologies RM, CB, and SS.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February and matters arising**

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record

## **3. Draft membership of forum 2024-2025**

EG referred to Attachment B, which was a draft document detailing the proposed membership of the forum for 2024-2025, to request any changes to be made and highlighted the following:

- Cllr Martyn Jones is the new Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services, EG asked if the members would like to invite Cllr Martyn Jones to become a member of the Bridgend Admission Forum. Members were in agreement that an invitation to join should be extended;
- JT informed the members that he will be retiring at the end of this school year and would no longer be a member of the forum. RD thank JT for his contribution as a member of the forum and in his role as vice chair. JT offered to contact the headteachers of the voluntary aided school for an alternative representative;
- JT also informed the members that a replacement would be required for RM and advised that PB may be the next point of contact; and
- AR queried the proposed membership with reference to the Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services. RD confirmed that there is no requirement for political representative and that the invite would be extended for that of a community representative, to represent the wider community within Bridgend while also providing relevant expertise and knowledge required of their position.

## **4. Work programme 2023-2024**

EG referred to Attachment C and provided an update in respect to the responsibilities of the Bridgend Admission Forum and confirmed the responsibilities had been appropriately discharged during the school year 2023-2204.

RD queried if this need to be signed off and sent to Welsh Government. EG advised that this had been presented as an internal document to assist the forum as a means of confirming compliance. EG confirmed the required Annual Report will be issued to Welsh Government in the autumn term 2024.

#### 4.1 Local authority Admissions Report – Vulnerable Learners

EG referred to Attachment D and gave an overview of the Mainstream Fair Access Panel (MFAP).

EG informed the members that the purpose of the MFAP is to consider the most complex individual cases for admission to mainstream places, ensuring that pupils are placed fairly and as quickly as possible, in schools that can meet their needs, with negative impacts on the effectiveness of education provision both for the learner and the provider being minimized.

EG provided examples of applications that are considered by MFAP:

- Any application for a mainstream place at an alternative school in respect of a learner who has been permanently excluded;
- Any request for a learner to be admitted to a year group that is different to the chronological age year group;
- Any learner for whom it has been determined that a managed move will be beneficial;
- Any learner who has been out of education for a significant period (at least two months or more) or has severe attendance problems despite ongoing involvement from the Educational Welfare Service and may require a fresh start elsewhere;
- Any learner currently attending The Bridge Alternative Provision who needs to be reintegrated back into a new mainstream setting;
- Any learner with whom the Youth Justice Service is involved and may benefit from a change of mainstream school;
- Applications where the learner will be, or is already in the UK, under a national refugee scheme and a mainstream place has been applied for; and
- Any other vulnerable or hard-to place mainstream learner not specifically covered above.

EG informed the members that the data in Appendix D is representative of those schools where the local authority is the admission authority and requested that the voluntary-aided schools could provide similar information to the forum to provide a further overview.

EG presented the data to show the number of applications considered by MFAP for primary schools is relatively low at 1.83% of the total number of applications received so far for this school year. In comparison, 18.78% of secondary school applications received so far this year have been considered by the Panel, with the majority of being due to applications for permanent excluded learners.

EG informed the members this data will be updated on a termly basis and presented to the forum.

MT presented the data in respect of permanent exclusions for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 noting the following:

- the increase in the number of permanent exclusions with 30 permanent exclusions for 2023-2024, 23 secondary and seven primary as opposed to 15 permanent exclusions for 2022-2023;
- predominantly in 2022-2023, the highest reason for permanent exclusion was physical assault on a pupil, and the verbal abuse and threatening behaviour towards an adult. For 2023-2024 the main reasons for exclusion has slightly changed with verbal abuse and threatening behaviour towards an adult, followed by physical assault on a pupil and physical assault on an adult; and
- The concerns regarding the available provision.

RD and RP noted the impact of cuts to school budgets, cuts to support services and the increase in behavioural issues.

RP noted that pupils are remaining for longer in mainstream provision while waiting to go through the Access to Education Panel.

AH raised a concern that permanently excluded learners are being passed around local authority schools, rather than specialist provision being available.

KJ raised a concern regarding the increase of permanent exclusions at a primary school level, the cuts in budgets and resources and the length of the waiting list for specialist provision.

JT stated that teachers and support staff are having to support those pupils in need of extra management which was difficult with cuts being made and it is a continuing pressure.

MT stated that they are now dealing with twice permanently excluded learners.

RD to explain to the members the responsibilities of MFAP in respect of once permanently excluded pupils. RD confirmed to the members that parental choice still stands and the role of the MFAP is to monitor the situation and ensure there is not a disproportionate pressure placed on any one school.

RD explained that MFAP is a professional forum to discuss and determine the appropriateness of those admission previously mentioned under the remit of MFAP. The panel cannot prevent the application or admission. It is to ensure a prompt and smooth transition. MFAP was established based on legal advice to ensure the admissions authority are in compliance with the School Admissions Code, but the panel does not have enhanced powers and parental choice is the overriding factor.

RP questioned if parental choice in respect of a permanently excluded pupil would an admission be made if the school/year group was at capacity. RD confirmed this is not a permitted exception and the pupil would not be admitted over PAN.

RP raised a concern regarding safeguarding when admitting permanently excluded pupils and sought clarification if parental choice takes priority. RD confirmed that parental choice is still the overriding factor but that assessments of the pupil and any associated risks are assessed following their admission and being placed on roll. The legislation does not allow the admission authority to prevent the pupil for accessing the requested place of education. RD acknowledge the challenges that this presents to schools.

RD explained that circumstances are regarding twice permanently excluded pupils and there is more control regarding the appropriateness of a provision.

## **5. ADEW (Association of Directors of Education in Wales) Admissions Group update**

EG advised the members of the following items of discussion at the ADEW Admissions Group meeting on 26 April 2024:

### **Updates from Welsh Government**

- Welsh Government advised that the guidance Pupil Exclusions which was previously issued in November 2019 (doc no. 255/2019) has been updated in April 2024 (doc no. 294/2024).

MT confirmed that this guidance had been shared with the schools.

### **Co-ordinated School Admission Arrangements**

- Welsh Government informed the group that there had been 22 responses to the consultation, with 13 being from local authorities. Most responses were in agreement to the proposal, and they expect to have a decision by the end of May.

The proposed timeframe is that for the first qualifying scheme must be formulated and adopted by local authorities by 1 January 2025 and by 1 January for all subsequent years. The first qualifying scheme will apply to admission arrangements in the 2027 to 2028 school year.

### **Admissions Code**

- Welsh Government are expecting to be able to consult on this in the new school year.

### **Foreign Nationals**

- Welsh Government enquired about any new pressures being experienced. NPT & Swansea explained that they are still seeing an increase in numbers.

EG provided the members with an indication of the number of mainstream in-year applications received by the local authority for 2023-2024 to date:

1.23% of Primary applications  
2.08% of Secondary applications

### **Appeals Training**

- An enquiry was made to those in attendance as to their provision for appeals training. There was a mixed response with some providing in-house training as others used outside legal firms. EG informed the forum members that admission appeals, and exclusion appeals training had recently been undertaken by the local authority on the 17 May 2024.

### **Published Admission Arrangements**

- A request was made from Cardiff Council if other local authorities could share their published school admission arrangements and handbook to parents for 2024-2025. Of those that have shared they all cover the information that is required, some include more detailed information.

EG suggested that consideration could be made to the inclusion of:

- the Council Tax Reference Number on the application form
- Term dates in the Starting School Prospectus

### **Term Dates**

- WG informed the group that a statement is expected in May regarding the term dates for 2025-2026. EG confirmed to the members that these dates have not yet been received.

Next ADEW meeting is scheduled for 5 July.

## **6. Any other business**

No items raised.

## **7. Date of the next meetings**

15 October 2024 2-4pm

4 February 2024 2-4pm

3 June 2024 2-4pm

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RD thanked all for attending and meeting ended at 2:50pm