

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	12 MARCH 2024
Report Title:	SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY 2025-2026
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT
Responsible Officer:	EMMA GILES SENIOR PUPIL SERVICES OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The admission of pupils is a statutory responsibility, which supports the raising of educational standards and the well-being of children, young people and their local communities. The applicable legislation requires that school admission arrangements for 2025-2026 are determined by 15 April 2024.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 at Appendix A.

2. Background

- 2.1 Welsh Government's School Admissions Code 2013 (the Code) imposes requirements on local authorities and admission authorities, regarding the discharge of duties in respect of school admissions. The Council must act in accordance with the Code, as determined by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- 2.2 As part of the statutory process, the local authority has a duty to consult with stakeholders as identified in the Code. This includes the governing bodies of all schools in Bridgend (including voluntary-controlled and voluntary-aided schools), all neighbouring local authorities and the bodies representing the religion or religious denomination of faith schools in Bridgend.
- 2.3 The local authority is required to publish annually an admissions policy and guidance on the admission arrangements for its schools. These are published on the local authority's website. The policy and arrangements include details of the published admission number (PAN) for each school in Bridgend for which the local

authority is the admission authority. The PAN for a school is the number of pupils that can be admitted to any year group for pupils of statutory school-age.

3. Current situation/proposal

- 3.1 The Bridgend Admissions Forum agreed the draft School Admissions Policy for 2025-2026, as per the requirements under the Code, in October 2023.
- 3.2 The aforementioned consultation on the 2025-2026 policy took place with all parties between 8 January 2024 and 2 February 2024.
- 3.3. Two responses to the consultation were received.
- 3.4 The first response was a request regarding a minor point of clarity in relation to section 3.1 of the School Admissions Policy 2025-2026. An amendment was made to the title to remove the reference to voluntary-aided schools, for which the local authority is not the admission authority.
- 3.5 The second response was from a Bridgend school and was a request to consider the inclusion of cross-border admission arrangements within the policy for pupils within the area of Neath Port Talbot Council, given the transfer of pupils from that local authority to some Bridgend schools. However, where cross-border arrangements are currently referenced in respect of other local authorities in the policy, for example for Bridgend pupils attending schools in the area of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, those arrangements pertain to school transport only. As a cross-border arrangement does not currently exist for pupils from Bridgend attending schools in the area of Neath Port Talbot Council's or vice versa and as a fundamental principle of the School Admissions Code is to allow parental choice, no amendment to the policy was considered to be required.
- 3.6 The PAN for a school represents the number of pupils that can be admitted to any year group for statutory-age pupils. The PAN for each school reflects the outcome of calculations undertaken in accordance with the capacity assessment method set out in the Welsh Government guidance document 'Measuring the capacity of schools in Wales'. There are no proposed changes to the PAN of any maintained school, for which the local authority is the admission authority.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1. An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.
- 4.2 It is a statutory duty that admission authorities are mindful of their duties with regards to equalities legislation. The School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 adheres to these requirements.
- 4.3 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been carried out (**Appendix B**). The outcome of the assessment is that the local authority's proposed School Admissions Policy for 2025-2026 should have a neutral impact on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, opportunities to promote the Welsh language, the

Council's compliance with the statutory Welsh Language Standards and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment has been completed. A summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is as follows:

Long-term

The school admissions policy sets out how the local authority will balance the discharge of its statutory duty in relation to parental preference, the need to safeguard the delivery of effective education and the safety of pupils, and the need to support pupils in particular circumstances (for example, learners with specific vulnerabilities), in circumstances where the applications for places at a school exceed the number of available places.

Prevention

Consultation on the school admissions policy allows stakeholders to raise issues or make comments on proposals, for consideration of appropriate actions.

Integration

The school admissions policy supports the provision of education in the communities in which pupils live.

Collaboration

Each year, the local authority works in conjunction with key stakeholders to develop proposed school admission arrangements, for those schools for which it is the admissions authority.

Involvement

In accordance with the specified requirements of the Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the School Admissions Code 2013, the local authority consults each year on the proposed admission arrangements for those schools for which it is the admissions authority. Consultation takes place beginning two years before the school year in which the admission arrangements will apply.

- 5.2 A summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the Council's new seven well-being objectives, is as follows:

1 A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable

The local authority's School Admissions Policy 2025 -2026 adheres to the statutory requirements to ensure that admissions for vulnerable learners are processed as detailed in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code 2013. Section 8 of the School Admissions Policy (see Appendix A) ensures fair access to mainstream school places for individual children within the specific groups, in accordance with the defined terms of reference.

2 A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns

Access to good education and ensuring children have equal opportunities to realise their potential are critical to helping young people acquire the knowledge and skills they need for work. The School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 ensures the statutory requirements are met to provide an admissions system that is accessible to all, encompassing the principles of fairness, consistency and openness across all aspects of schools' admissions. It plays a crucial role in delivering equality of opportunity.

3 A County Borough with thriving valleys communities

Access to good education, raising standards of achievement and ensuring children have equal opportunities to realise their potential, wherever they may reside, are critical to helping young people acquire the knowledge and skills they need for work. The School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 ensures the statutory requirements are met to provide an admissions system that is accessible to all, encompassing the principles of fairness, consistency and openness across all aspects of schools' admissions. It plays a crucial role in delivering equality of opportunity.

4 A County Borough where we help people meet their potential

The School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 ensures that children and young people have access to good education and equal opportunities to realise their potential.

5 A County Borough that is responding to the climate and nature emergency

Once approved and published, the School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 is accessible to all residents online at: <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/school-admissions/apply-for-admission-to-school/>. This helps reduce the local authority's carbon footprint.

6 A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community

The School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 has regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents/carers, so far as that would be compatible with the provision of efficient education and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure (section 9 Education Act 1996).

7 A County Borough where we support people to live healthy and happy lives

The local authority's School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 allows children and young people by providing access to schools and education where they can learn to thrive and make the best use of their talents, live healthy and safe lives, be confident and caring individuals and know and receive their rights.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The local authority, as the admission authority has a strategic role in considering the impact of net zero carbon and how to deliver this important national initiative.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Education (Admission of Looked after Children) (Wales) Regulations 2009 places a duty on the admission authority to admit children looked after by the local authority, where an application is made by the corporate parent on their behalf. The School Admissions Policy 2025-2026 ensures that the local authority adheres to this statutory requirement.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications regarding this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Schools Admissions Policy 2025-2026 at Appendix A.

Background documents

None