

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board

23rd November 2023

Report of the Head of Education Development Chris Millis

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED – ALL WARDS

ADMISSION TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: 2025/2026

Purpose of Report

1. To obtain Cabinet approval to consult on the admission arrangements for community schools in relation to the 2025/2026 academic year.

Executive Summary

2. The Council is the admission authority for community schools in its area (the relevant area) and is required to determine by 15th April 2024 its admission arrangements in relation to the 2025/2026 academic year.
3. Proposed admission arrangements that detail the procedures to be followed when allocating school are attached as Appendix A. It is these proposed arrangements that are to be consulted upon. These arrangements are the same as the previous year.
4. These proposed arrangements conform to the legislative requirements and the good practice guidelines set out in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code, 2013.

Background

5. The Council, as local authority for the relevant area, is responsible for determining the admission arrangements for community schools¹ and has a duty to consult annually on those arrangements.
6. In drawing up admission arrangements, the Council must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide on the allocation of school places:
 - are clear in the sense of being free from doubt and easily understood
 - are objective and based on demonstrable fact
 - are procedurally fair and are also equitable for all groups of children
 - provide parents or carers with easy access to helpful admission information
 - comply with all relevant legislation and have been determined in accordance with the statutory requirements and the provisions of this Code

Proposed admission arrangements for consultation

7. The proposed admission arrangements for consultation are attached as Appendix A. These arrangements are the same as the previous year.
8. They include oversubscription criteria specific to secondary school admissions that support the principle of partner² schools. This reflects the need to ensure the admission arrangements give suitable priority to partner schools at secondary school transfer. This is the same as the previous year.

¹ The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006

² For the purpose of admission to community schools the term:

- ‘partner’ school is defined as a school that has a catchment area in common with another school of the same category, e.g. an English-medium community primary with an English-medium community secondary or a Welsh-medium community primary with a Welsh-medium community secondary.
- catchment area is defined as the geographical area served by a school, as determined by the Council.

Consultation

9. The Council, as local authority is required to consult each year on the admission arrangements for those schools which it is the admission authority.
10. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is the admission authority for community schools. Admission to voluntary aided (i.e. Faith) schools is the responsibility of the respective governing bodies.
11. The requirements of consultation are set out in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code³.
12. In the case of this Council, consultation is required with:
 - the governing bodies of community schools
 - the governing bodies of voluntary aided (i.e. Faith) schools
 - all neighbouring local authorities.
13. In addition, the Council should also consult the Admission Forum for the relevant area. The consultation process will cease on 12th January 2024.

Financial Impact

14. There is no financial impact directly associated with this proposal. The admission arrangements support the efficient and effective delivery of education across the County Borough.
15. Administration of the admission process is within the Council's staffing cost envelope and is a statutory function that falls to the Council.

Integrated Impact Assessment

16. A Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been determined that this Policy does not require an Integrated Impact Assessment. This policy is the same as in previous years.

³ School admissions code: Statutory Code document No. 005/2013

Valleys Communities Impacts

17. No Implications

Workforce Impact

18. As a statutory function of the Council, the admission process is administered centrally. The current staffing complement associated with this function will be maintained and there will be no change to the staffing arrangements consequent upon the implementation of the proposal.

Legal Impacts

19. The Council, as an admission authority, has a statutory duty to act in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code, 2013.
20. In relation to the specific purpose of this report, there is a legal requirement that school admission arrangements must be determined by 15th April 2024.

Risk Management

21. There are requirements placed on the Council, as an admission authority, intended to ensure the admission system works for the benefit of both schools and pupils. Admission authorities are required to consult on their admission arrangements, and to offer places within timeframes and deadlines specified by legislation.
22. The proposed admission arrangements recommended for consultation in this report conform to the legislative requirements and the good practice guidelines set out in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code, 2013.

Recommendations

23. To approve for consultation the proposed 2025/2026 community schools admission policy.

Reasons for the Proposed Decision

24. To enable the Council to meet statutory duties and good practice guidelines in respect of the admission of pupils to community schools.

Implementation of Decision

25. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendix

Appendix A: Proposed admission to community schools in Neath Port Talbot County Borough, 2025/2026

List of Background Papers

- a. Welsh Government: School Admissions Code (No. 005/2013).
- b. Welsh Government: Measuring the capacity of schools in Wales
- c. Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006
- d. Education (Objections to Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006
- e. Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999
- f. School Admissions (Common Offer Date) (Wales) regulations 2013
- g. The Education Act 2002 (Commencement No.8) (Wales) Order 2006

Officer Contact

Mrs H Lewis, School Admissions.
h.lewis@npt.gov.uk Tel: 01639 763580.