



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

CONSULTATION REPORT

Review of Admission Arrangements in
Monmouthshire

Outcome of Consultation
undertaken between:

18th January 2019 to 1st March 2019

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Distribution of the Consultation Report	4
3. The role of the Council as an Admissions Authority	5
4. Background to the review	6
5. Reminder of the Proposals.....	6
6. Oversubscription Criteria - the status quo	7
7. Proposed new criteria for Primary Schools.....	8
8. Proposed new criteria for Secondary Schools.....	9
9. Why did we consult on these changes?	10
10. Consultation Arrangements	11
Background	11
Methodology.....	11
Public Consultation Meetings	12
11. Consultation results	13
Proposal 1 - Feeder School criteria	13
Proposal 2 - Prioritise catchment over out of catchment but with siblings	15
12. Finance	17
13. General overview on consensus	17
Appendix 1 - List of Consultees	18

1. Introduction

On 18th January 2019, the Local Authority commenced a public consultation on a review of its School Admissions Policy. In particular, the consultation sought views on revising the oversubscription criteria used to determine which children and young people are to be awarded places in the event of oversubscription.

The consultation was open for a period of 6 weeks, concluding on 1st March 2019.

This consultation report now seeks to inform consultees and other interested parties of the outcome of the consultation by means of firstly summarising each of the responses received by consultees, and secondly responding to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal, or rejection to the concerns with supporting reasons.

2. Distribution of the Consultation Report

This consultation report has been published on the Monmouthshire Council Council website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk. The following consultees and interested parties will be contacted and advised of the availability of this report

The governing body of the relevant schools

1. Governing bodies of All secondary schools in Monmouthshire
 - Caldicot School
 - Chepstow School
 - King Henry VIII Comprehensive School
 - Monmouth Comprehensive School

2. Governing bodies of All primary schools in Monmouthshire:

Neighboring Local Authorities affected by the proposals

- Newport City Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Herefordshire County Council
- Torfaen County Council
- Powys County Council

Admission Authorities for all other maintained schools in the area

- Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary
- St Marys RC Primary
- Our Lady and St Michaels RC Primary
- Magor CIW Primary

Parents of Children Likely to be affected

- All parents of children and young people currently attending a Monmouthshire Primary / Secondary School

Other key parties

- Members of the School Admission Forum
- County Councillors
- Church in Wales Diocesan trust, director of Education
- Roman Catholic Diocesan trust, director of Education

3. The role of the Council as an Admissions Authority

An admission authority is a body responsible for setting and applying a school's admission arrangements. Local Authorities in most instances are the admission authorities for community and voluntary controlled schools. Governing bodies are the admission authorities for voluntary aided and foundation schools.

The County of Monmouthshire is comprised of 30 Primary Schools, 4 Secondary schools and a special school.

In Monmouthshire, the Council is the admission authority for 31 of the 35 schools within the county. The individual governing bodies are the admission authorities for:

Archbishop Rowan Williams VA Church in Wales Primary
Magor VA Church in Wales Primary
Our Lady and St Michaels RC Primary
St Marys RC Primary

The Council is the admission authority for all other nursery, primary and secondary schools within the county.

In line with the School Admissions code of practice (2013), parents must complete an application form in order to obtain a nursery / school place. Parents / carers will have the opportunity to complete an application online or alternatively via a paper application.

All parents are invited to express a preference on a common application form, regardless of the status of the schools for which they wish to apply and whether the school is in/out of county. The Council has a responsibility to consider all preferences equally and comply with the preference wherever possible. All applications must be determine the outcome of the application in line with its agreed school admissions policy.

In the event that the number of application requests exceeds the number of available places, the agreed oversubscription criteria is used to award the available school places. Any applicant unsuccessful in obtaining a place at the preferred school will receive a statutory right to appeal against the decision to an independent appeal panel.

4. Background to the review

The adopted oversubscription criteria that forms part of the school admissions policy has been in place for many years. The Council has previously been challenged on the fairness of the current oversubscription criteria and how school places are awarded.

A review of oversubscription criteria was last undertaken in 2015, where the Council entered into a formal consultation seeking views on a proposal to amend the order of the oversubscription criteria. A particular focus was placed on the positioning of those residing within the catchment area for the preferred school against those with relevant siblings. However, the significance of the proposed changes led to a Cabinet decision to re-engage in a more intensive consultation with the Monmouthshire community prior to implementing any changes.

In February 2018, the Council adopted a new corporate plan that sets out the 22 priorities to be completed by 2022. A review of the school admissions policy has been identified within the corporate plan as one of the priorities to be revisited.

5. Reminder of the Proposals

The Council consulted on making amendment to the existing oversubscription criteria. This is a criteria used to award places in the event that there are more application requests for a preferred school than there are places available.

In particular, the Council sought views from consultees on making the following amendments to the existing oversubscription criteria:

Proposal 1 - Introduce a new criteria into the oversubscription criteria for secondary schools that affords a priority to children on roll at a designated Primary feeder school.

Proposal 2 – Afford a priority to children and young people resident in the designated catchment area for the preferred school over those residing outside of the catchment area but with relevant siblings.

Important: The Council proposed that priority will continue to be afforded to out of catchment children with existing sibling links for a period of five years from the date of implementation of this policy (September 2020), over those children in catchment but without relevant sibling links. This criteria would be relevant for existing siblings only, placed on roll at the preferred school by September 2019, with younger siblings eligible to start Primary School (Reception) / transfer from Primary to Secondary school those children eligible to start Primary School / transfer to secondary school in September 2020, September 2021, September 2022, September 2023, and September 2024.

6. Oversubscription Criteria - the status quo

The adopted oversubscription criteria in its current form for community and voluntary controlled schools in Monmouthshire is:

Priority rank	Criteria
	Children and Young People in receipt of a statement of Special Educational Needs (Statutory requirement for admission)
	1. Looked After Children or previously Looked After Children. i.e. children who are in the care - or have previously been in the care of the Local Authority
	2. Children with exceptional medical circumstances
	3. Children with relevant siblings who are in attendance at the preferred School
	4. Children residing within the preferred school's catchment area
	5. Children residing outside of the catchment area
	6. After applying the categories above, or should the school continue to be in a position of over-subscription in any of the above categories, priority will be based on closeness to the preferred school, measured using the shortest safe walking route.

Please refer to the full admission policy 2020/21 for a full description of how children and young people qualify under each criteria above.

7. Proposed new criteria for Primary Schools

The proposed new criteria for Primary Schools on which we consulted is:

Priority rank	Criteria
<i>Children in receipt of a Statement of special educational needs (statutory requirement for admission)</i>	
1.	Looked after children or previously looked after children i.e. children that are in the care of or have previously been in the care of a local authority.
2.	Children with exceptional medical circumstances
3.	Children residing within the catchment area for the preferred school who have relevant siblings
4.	Children residing outside of the catchment area for the preferred school, but with relevant siblings who will continue to be in attendance at the preferred school due to being unsuccessful in their application for a place at their catchment school.
5.	Children residing outside of the catchment area, but with relevant existing siblings enrolled at the preferred school by September 2019. ***Please see explanatory note below
6.	Children residing inside the catchment area for the preferred school
7.	Children residing outside of the catchment area for the preferred school, with a relevant sibling (who will be in attendance at the preferred school at time of admission) that does not meet criteria points 4 and 5 above
8.	After applying the categories above, or should the school continue to be in a position of over-subscription in any of the above categories, priority will be based on closeness to the preferred school, measured using the shortest safe walking route.

*** This criteria would be relevant for existing siblings only, placed on roll at the preferred school by September 2019, with younger siblings eligible to start Primary School (Reception) in September 2020, September 2021, September 2022, September 2023, and September 2024.

Please refer to the full draft school admissions policy 2020/21 for details on how children qualify for each of the above criteria.

8. Proposed new criteria for Secondary Schools

The proposed new criteria for Secondary Schools on which we consulted is:

Priority rank	Criteria
<i>Children in receipt of a Statement of special educational needs (statutory requirement for admission)</i>	
1.	Looked after children or previously looked after children i.e. children that are in the care of or have previously been in the care of a local authority.
2.	Children with exceptional medical circumstances
3.	Children residing within the catchment area for the preferred school who have relevant siblings
4.	Children residing outside of the catchment area for the preferred school, but with relevant siblings who will continue to be in attendance at the preferred school due to being unsuccessful in their application for a place at their catchment school.
5.	Children residing outside of the catchment area, but with relevant older siblings enrolled at the preferred school by September 2019. ***Please see explanatory note below
6.	Children residing inside the catchment area for the preferred school
7.	Children residing outside of the catchment area for the preferred school, with a relevant sibling (who will be in attendance at the preferred school at the time of admission) and does not meet criteria points 4 and 5 above
8.	Children currently on roll at a primary school that is designated to be a feeder school for the preferred secondary school
9.	After applying the categories above, or should the school continue to be in a position of over-subscription in any of the above categories, priority will be based on closeness to the preferred school, measured using the shortest safe walking route.

*** This criteria would be relevant for existing siblings only, placed on roll at the preferred school by September 2019, with younger siblings eligible to transfer from primary to secondary school in September 2020, September 2021, September 2022, September 2023, and September 2024.

Please refer to the full draft school admissions policy 2020/21 for details on how children qualify for each of the above criteria.

9. Why did we consult on these changes?

Proposal 1 - Introduce a new criteria into the oversubscription criteria for secondary schools that affords a priority for children on roll at a designated Primary feeder school.

The oversubscription criteria in its current form does not currently afford priority to children in attendance at a primary school considered as a feeder for the preferred secondary school.

Parents are invited to express a preference for a school for their child to attend. As a result, primary schools within the county often have children and young people on their roll that do not form part of their catchment area / the catchment area for the feeding secondary school.

Following the application of the priority criteria for children living within the catchment area for the preferred school, allocations are made based on the distance calculated from the home address to the preferred school. During times of oversubscription, some children in attendance at a feeder primary school are often unsuccessful in obtaining places at the feeding secondary school, resulting in them being unable to transition to secondary school alongside their peers.

The Council proposes the introduction of the feeder school criteria to respect the collaborative and transitional arrangements that exist between Monmouthshire primary and secondary schools, and increase the support for peer groups to remain together in their journey to secondary school.

Proposal 2 - Afford priority to children and young people resident in the designated catchment area for the preferred school over those residing outside of the catchment area but with relevant siblings.

The oversubscription criteria in its current form affords a priority to children with relevant siblings attending the preferred school, regardless of whether or not they reside within the catchment area for the preferred school.

Parents have the opportunity to express a preference to the primary school in which they wish their child to attend – this does not need to be the designated catchment school. In the event that their application is successful, the current oversubscription criteria offers a high priority to their siblings who follow into primary school in future years.

Whilst the Council recognises the importance of siblings being able to attend the same school, the current position results in many in catchment children being displaced and transported to primary schools outside of their community.

The Council is seeking your views on whether children residing within the catchment area for a preferred school should be afforded priority over those residing out of catchment but with relevant siblings

10. Consultation Arrangements

Background

The School Admissions Code Wales (July 2013) confirms that Local Authorities must consult on the admission arrangements for those schools for which it is the admissions authority. Where changes to existing arrangements are proposed, including school catchment areas, consultation must be undertaken with those likely to be affected by the proposals.

The Council is required to undertake this consultation by 1st March 2019 and determine the outcome of the proposals by 15th April 2019 should it wish to implement the proposals for September 2020 onwards.

Methodology

On 5th December 2018, the Council's Cabinet approved proposals to engage with key stakeholders on proposed changes to the School admissions Policy, namely a review of the oversubscription criteria and school catchment areas.

On 18th January 2019, the council opened the consultation seeking the views on the proposals identified under section 5 of this report. The formal consultation period lasted for 6 weeks, concluding on 1st March 2019.

The consultation document and key information was either circulated to or made available to the consultees listed under appendix 1 of this report. The document was also published on the Council's website via www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/catchmentconsultation

The Council raised awareness of the consultation through a marketing campaign, which included regular publications via the Councils' social media networks.

Consultees were advised of the following opportunities to respond to the consultation proposals:

- 1) Attending one of the dedicated public consultation sessions.
- 2) Completing the consultation questionnaire, which was made available on our website at www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/catchmentconsultation

Consultees were also advised that they could contact us via 01633 644508 or by emailing acesstolearning@monmouthshire.gov.uk if they had any questions on the proposals.

Public Consultation Meetings

During the consultation process, the Council facilitated public consultation sessions with the communities likely to be affected by these proposals. The purpose of the sessions were to engage with the community who may wish to hear more about the proposals, ask any questions or share their views.

The public consultation sessions took place on the following dates:

Review Area	Date	Venue	Number in attendance
Caldicot Cluster	7 th February 2019 at 6pm	Durand Primary School	4
Chepstow Cluster	14 th February 2019 at 6pm	Chepstow School	2
Abergavenny Cluster	11 th February 2019 at 6pm	Cantref Primary School	0
Monmouth Cluster	21 st February 2019 at 6pm	Overmonnow Primary School	2
All areas day time drop in session	6 th February 2019 9.30am to 11.30am	Innovation House, Magor	7
	22 nd February 2019 9.30am to 11.30am	County Hall, Usk	1

All of the consultation meetings were attended by senior officers of the councils' directorate for children and young people, and provided interested parties with an opportunity to learn more about the proposals and ask any questions / raise any concerns.

Copies of the full consultation document and feedback proformas were made available at each of the consultation sessions.

Officers in attendance at the consultation meetings provided reassurance that any comments / concerns raised would be recorded and themes raised would feed into the consultation outcomes. However, consultees were advised of the need to submit their formal responses through one of the preferred available methods.

Any key themes of support / concern raised during these sessions have been summarised and included as part of the overall consultation results for each of the individual proposals, found under section 11 of this report.

11. Consultation results

Proposal 1 - Feeder School criteria

The Council have received a number of formal responses to this proposal, submitted either via the online survey or via email / letter. The table below offers a broad profile of the consultees responding to the consultation, together with a view on whether they are in support of or against the proposals.

Respondent category	Total number of responses	Total number in support of proposals	Total number not in support of proposals
Parent / Carer	166	137	29
School Governor	8	7	1
Staff Member	1	1	0
Other	2	2	0
Total	177	147	30
Percentage		83%	17%

The Council has studied the formal responses received in relation to this proposal and has extracted the key themes for consideration in determining how the proposal moves forward.

The themes coming through from those in favour of the proposals were:

Theme	Comment
1. Transitional Arrangements	A view that the proposal will help with planning a child's transition to secondary school
2. Peer / friendship Groups	A view that the proposals will help to keep friendship groups together, which is more important than simply who lives closer to the school
3. Support	Enables children and young people to have continuity of support from both primary and secondary schools
4. Wellbeing	A view that the current policy prevents peer groups staying together, which impacts on mental health and wellbeing. The feeder school policy will help this

The themes coming through from those not in favour of the proposals were:

Theme	Concern summary	LA Response
1. Access to places	A concern that some children can't get places at a feeder school	The Council establishes feeder schools generally on the basis of the schools residing within the secondary school cluster. If a place is not available at the preferred school, the Council is confident in being able to offer a place at an alternative feeder within the cluster. However, parents have the right to express a preference for their child's school.
2. Distance/ Proximity	<p>A view that the criteria should reflect the nearest school, not based on the primary they attend</p> <p>Children who live further away will get places over those that live closer, just because they are in a feeder school</p>	The current policy determines places on a distance as a final determining factor. This consultation seeks the views on whether those attending a feeder school with developed friendship and transitional links should take priority, or whether proximity to the school is more important.
3. Catchment priority	Not all attending a feeder school live in catchment so shouldn't be prioritised	Should proposals proceed; children residing within the catchment area will continue to receive priority over those attending a feeder school but residing out of catchment.
4. Preference	A view that parents should have a preference for their child's school	The feeder school policy isn't seeking to replace parental preference. Parents do not have to send their child to the secondary feeder as parental preference will still apply.

Proposal 2 - Prioritise catchment over out of catchment but with siblings

The Council have received a number of formal responses to this proposal, submitted either via the online survey or via email / letter. The table below offers a broad profile of the consultees responding to the consultation, together with a view on whether they are in support of or against the proposals.

Respondent category	Total number of responses	Total number in support of proposals	Total number not in support of proposals
Parent / Carer	166	101	65
School Governor	8	5	3
Staff Member	1	1	0
Other	2	1	1
Total	177	108	69
Percentage		61%	39%

The Council has studied the formal responses received in relation to this proposal and has extracted the key themes for consideration in determining how the proposal moves forward.

The themes coming through from those in favour of the proposals are:

Theme	Comment
1.	A view that children living in an area build friendship groups so should be able to go to the catchment school
2.	A view that children living in the same area and attending the same school helps to build social interaction outside of school
3.	A view that catchment children should take a priority as long as existing siblings are not separated and any new families are aware of the new criteria
4.	A view that parents choose to send their child to an out of catchment school. This shouldn't block those who want a place at their catchment school
5.	A view that children shouldn't have to travel long distances to schools outside of the area

The themes coming through from those not in favour of the proposals are:

Theme	Concern summary	LA Response
1.	A view that its impractical to have children at different schools	The Council recognizes the importance of siblings remaining together at the same school. Should proposals be implemented, to minimize the risk of siblings

	A view that siblings being together is far more important	being separated, those children already in schools with a younger sibling coming through over the next <u>5 years</u> will continue to receive priority in line with existing policy. It is only those admitted to a school after September 2019 with younger siblings coming through that will be impacted by the new policy. These families will be aware of the new criteria prior to accepting a place for an out of catchment school and will be aware of the risks of a younger sibling not obtaining a place.
2.	A view that parents have reasons for sending their children to an out of catchment school	The Council understands that parents have a right to express a preference for their child's school place. There is no requirement from the Council for parents to apply for their catchment school. This consultation seeks to determine how places should be allocated in the event of oversubscription i.e. whether siblings be prioritized regardless of catchment, or alternatively whether catchment children receive priority to their local school.
3.	A view that sibling links should be prioritised for more than 5 years.	The proposal for 5 years to honor existing sibling links will mean that those born prior to September 2019 will be eligible to start school within the next 5 years and will therefore be considered under this criterion.
4.	Concerns re the available capacity in schools within the local areas due to increasing developments	The Council works closely with the planning department and is consulted on capacity within local schools before planning permission is granted. In situations where the Council identifies a pressure on education as a result of the proposed development, funding can be sourced from the developer to increase available capacity in schools

5.	A concern that Monmouthshire families are not being prioritised for School places over out of county families. Large numbers of children from out of county are admitted into our schools taking all of the places.	The Council has an agreed criteria for determining how school places are allocated. Within that criteria school catchment areas are in place for Monmouthshire families. In the event that the number of applications received is fewer than the number of places available, the Council has a duty to offer places to all applicants regardless of whether or not they reside within the County.
6.	A concern that catchment areas in Caldicot are going to be changed to a Newport School	The Council can confirm that there are no proposals to amend Monmouthshire catchment areas to feed schools outside of Monmouthshire.

12. Finance

There are no additional costs associated with the outcome of these proposals.

13. General overview on consensus

The consultation process undertaken by the Council has without question been a useful exercise, providing a full and open opportunity to test and critic the proposed changes to the School Admission policy oversubscription criteria.

Through analysis of the feedback received from the formal consultation responses, as well as feedback from the public consultation sessions, the Council is able to draw a conclusion of clear support for the following proposals:

Proposal 1 - Introduce a new criteria into the oversubscription criteria for secondary schools that affords a priority to children on roll at a designated Primary feeder school.

Proposal 2 – Afford a priority to children and young people resident in the designated catchment area for the preferred school over those residing outside of the catchment area but with relevant siblings.

The consultation process has draw some concerns towards the implementation of the proposals, however, the council feels that it is able to mitigate most if not all of the concerns raised.

Appendix 1 - List of Consultees

The governing body of the relevant schools

3. Governing bodies of All secondary schools in Monmouthshire
 - Caldicot School
 - Chepstow School
 - King Henry VIII Comprehensive School
 - Monmouth Comprehensive School
4. Governing bodies of All primary schools in Monmouthshire:

Neighboring Local Authorities affected by the proposals

- Newport City Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Herefordshire County Council
- Torfaen County Council
- Powys County Council

Admission Authorities for all other maintained schools in the area

- Archbishop Rowan Williams CIW Primary
- St Marys RC Primary
- Our Lady and St Michaels RC Primary
- Magor CIW Primary

Parents of Children Likely to be affected

- All parents of children and young people currently attending a Monmouthshire Primary / Secondary School

Other key parties

- Members of the School Admission Forum
- County Councillors
- Church in Wales Diocesan trust, director of Education
- Roman Catholic Diocesan trust, director of Education