



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11TH JANUARY 2021

SUBJECT: MANAGING SCHOOL PLACES - FAITH MEDIUM

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members on how the demand for faith medium education provision is being met within the County Borough.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 There is 1 Voluntary Aided Faith School within the Authority, namely St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School. Of the total cohort, 72.4% of the pupils attending are of the Catholic Faith with the remaining 27.6% from non-Catholic backgrounds.
- 2.2 St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School has a published admission number of 30 and an overall capacity to 210 (plus nursery). In 2020/21 the school were able to accommodate all bar 1 pupil who was non-Catholic and upon appeal was offered a place. At present there are currently 213 pupils on roll of which 163 are of the Catholic Faith (excluding nursery). It should be noted that the additional 3 pupils were admitted via an appeals process.
- 2.3 The denominational census data, outlined in the body of the report, and current evidence outlined in 2.2 above, demonstrates that there is currently sufficient provision in place to meet demand for pupils from a faith background within the County Borough.
- 2.4 As part of the Authority's process in managing and planning the provision of school places, the delivery of Faith Medium Education is continually monitored, and members will be updated if there is a change in demand.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the information contained in the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To provide an update to Members on the current demand and provision for faith education within the County Borough.
- 4.2 This report was requested by a Member of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Local authorities must ensure that there are sufficient schools providing primary and secondary education for their area. Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, schools are regarded as sufficient if they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education and to meet parental demand. In order to fulfil these duties, local authorities must ensure that they plan thoroughly and engage fully with relevant partners, including the appropriate religious bodies for schools serving their area which have a designated religious character.
- 5.2 An appropriate religious body is, in the case of a Church in Wales or Roman Catholic school, the appropriate diocesan authority, or in the case of other schools, the body representing the religion and religious denomination stated in relation to the school in an order made under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
- 5.3 Section 85a of the 1998 Act (inserted by section 46 of the Education Act 2002) requires all Local Authorities to establish an admission forum. Admission forums provide a vehicle for admission authorities and other key interested parties to discuss the effectiveness of local admission arrangements, consider how to deal with difficult admission issues and advise admission authorities on ways in which their arrangements can be improved. In relation to St Helen's School, they are their own admissions authority, however they work with the Local Authority in delivering this requirement. In addition, an invite is also extended to Anne Robertson, the Director of the Diocesan Education Department to ensure there is full representation in relation to this faith element.
- 5.4 The 2011 Census return for the authority demonstrates a mixed denominational make up:

2011	All usual Residents	No Religion	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other	Not stated
Caerphilly	178,806	73,084	90,669	278	174	69	391	152	665	13,324
Population %		41%	51%	0.16%	0.10%	0.04%	0.22%	0.09%	0.37%	7.45%

- 5.5 There is 1 designated Faith School within the Authority, namely St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School. St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic School and functions under the Trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. The School is a mixed primary with a capacity of 210 (excluding nursery) with a published admission number of 30.

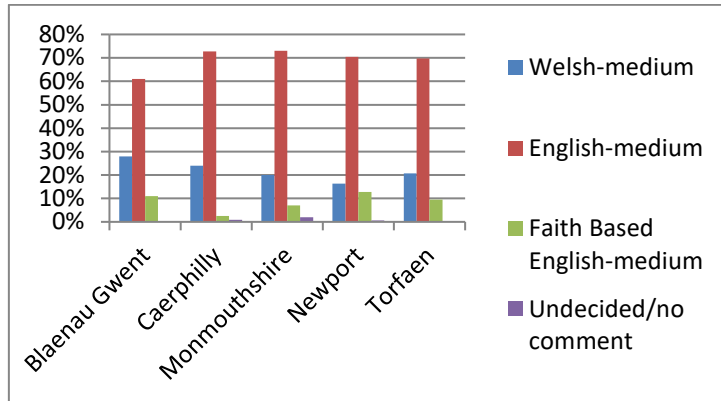
- 5.6 The general expectation is for the pupils currently attending St Helen's to transfer at Year 7 into Cardinal Newman Secondary School (RCT) or subject to parental preference alternative Secondary provision.
- 5.7 To give this report a full context, in relation to demand for faith medium education hosted outside of county, we can confirm that prior to the Covid outbreak in March 2020, the Authority was transporting 357 pupils at a daily cost of £1,654 in order to meet parental preference.
- 5.8 The proportion of pupils attending St Helen's equates to 1.5% of the entire primary age pupil cohort across the Authority and of those in attendance of the school, as of September 2020, 72.4% of the pupils attending are of the Catholic Faith with the remaining 27.6% from non-Catholic backgrounds.

<u>St Helens Catholic Primary School</u>	<u>As at September 2020</u>	<u>As at September 2020</u>	<u>As at September 2020</u>
Year Group	Catholic	Other	Total
Nursery*	10	16	26
Reception	22	9	31
Year 1	21	9	30
Year 2	22	9	31
Year 3	22	8	30
Year 4	25	5	30
Year 5	20	10	30
Year 6	31	0	31
Total	173	66	239

**Nursery is a non-statutory provision but included to provide a full overview.*

Data has been provided by St Helen's School as they are their own admissions authority with their own admission oversubscription criteria.

- 5.9 The catchment area for St Helen's School caters for the whole Authority. The data indicates that the demand for Faith Medium Education within the Authority is relatively low in comparison to other areas of educational provision. There is adequate provision for pupils of the Catholic faith as demonstrated by the denominational breakdown.
- 5.10 The Welsh Government School's Admission Code 2013 states that a faith school can only admit up to their published School Admission Number. If the number of applications exceeds the published admission number then the admission authority would be required to apply the oversubscription criteria and if any pupils are refused admission the parents would be able to go through the appeals process. Over the last 4 years, no children of the Catholic Faith have been refused admission.
- 5.11 In 2018 Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Newport Councils developed a co-ordinated approach and devised a single questionnaire that was circulated to parents of pupils born within a specific age category. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish parental demand in particular for Welsh Medium Education but also incorporated a question to indicate demand for Faith Medium Education. From the 1,959 returns for Caerphilly, 2.06% of parents surveyed stated that they would opt for Faith school education for their child, substantially lower than those of neighbouring authorities as demonstrated in the infographic below:



6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 Whilst the Caerphilly CBC Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) advises the Local Authority on worship and the religious education to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus including methods of teaching, advice on materials and the provision of training for teachers; It is the remit of the 21st Century Schools Team to manage the planning of school places. It is assumed that the two areas are complementary and that there are no known conflicts.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 Caerphilly's Shared Ambitions Strategy: To raise standards and ensure our learners are healthy, confident, proud and ambitious and can access high quality educational opportunities, settings and experience.
- 7.2 Caerphilly's Wellbeing Objectives 2018 to 2023. This proposal will assist the Authority in meeting these objectives in particular the following:
Well-being Objective 1 – Improve Education opportunities for all

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 The Well-Being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It requires public bodies to think more about the long-term, working with people and communities, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales.
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales.
- A Wales of cohesive communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.
- A globally responsible Wales.

8.2 The Act sets out the sustainable development principle against which all public bodies in Wales should assess their decision-making. The aim of the legislation is to ensure the well-being of future generations through maximising the contribution public bodies make towards the well-being goals. In using the sustainable development principle it is incumbent that the authority considers the whole of the population it serves and considers the effect of its actions on future generations. The principle, also known as the five ways of working is assessed below:

- **Long Term** - Forecasting of pupil numbers has been utilised to identify the demand for school places to ensure sufficient Educational places in our schools.
- **Prevention** – Effective management and planning of school places will ensure there is adequate provision within each educational provision to meet demand and parental preference where applicable.
- **Integration** – Ensuring that there are adequate educational opportunities within our schools to meet the needs of the community.
- **Collaboration** – The Authority and the School will continue to work together effectively through partnership working to ensure the needs of all pupils and parents are met, e.g. the School Admissions Forum.
- **Involvement** – Through the consultation process the Council will ensure that there is full engagement with all relevant stakeholders, e.g. parents, pupils and the local community.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Equality implications arising from the report as this is an update on existing arrangements.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There is no specific personnel implication directly resulting from the report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
Education Act 1996
School Standards and Framework Act 1998
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Schools Admissions Code 2013

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