

Gwynedd Schools Admission Forum Minutes

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Monday, 9th March 2026 at 9.30
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present: Alison Halliday, Debbie Jones, Owain Dewi Hughes, Ffion Griffith (minutes), Joanna Thomas, Rhian Parry Jones, Colette Owen, Aimee Jones, Dr Einir Thomas

Apologies: Ffion Edwards Ellis, Gwern ap Rhisiart

1. Welcome and Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting. The apologies were accepted.

2. Cofnodion cyfarfod 20 October 2025 meeting minutes

It was agreed that the minutes were correct. It was noted that there are no specific matters rising that aren't already on the agenda today.

3. Confirmation that the authority has consulted (including reporting on the consultations)

A report has already been shared outlining the Authority's arrangements for consulting on school admissions. Some responses have been received following the most recent consultation, and the Authority will consider them before moving forward. If there is an objection to the new arrangements after that, then an objection will need to be made by contacting the Welsh Government Ministers.

CO noted, in relation to the Church's consultation arrangements for Catholic schools, that they are willing to align with the Authority's processes, but that parents need to complete an additional form indicating the faith of the child/children. This could be done by providing a link from the Authority's website to the School's website so that they have access to all information about the school. It was agreed that closer collaboration during consultation would be beneficial going forward.

It was noted regarding next steps that, in accordance with the School Admissions Code, the Authority will consider the comments received during the consultation and determine the arrangements by 15 April 2026. Following that, the Authority will notify all consultees within 14 days.

4. Present the First draft of the proposals for Year 7

ODH noted that the deadline for secondary school admissions has passed. In Gwynedd, 100% of children received their first choice—over 1,100 applications. All of these have received a letter confirming their choice. Following this, a number of late applications have been received or some have changed their minds, and offer letters have also been sent to them. It is anticipated that further offer letters will be sent out this week as a result of late applications the Authority has received. It was noted that approximately 55 applications have not yet been received, which is somewhat higher than last year. The majority of these children are from two primary schools, and it will be necessary to remind the Headteachers there again to remind parents to complete an application form. **AH asked ODH to let her know which schools these are so that the Supporting Officer can also remind the Headteacher.**

DAWJ noted that, in one sense, it is good news that the Authority is able to offer every child their first choice, but of course this reflects a decline in pupil numbers and the impact of demographics. This is likely to be the pattern for a number of years now. This raises concerns regarding the viability of schools and the financial impact resulting from fewer children overall.

5. Elective Home Education

It was noted that the report prepared by Ellen Rowlands has already been presented.

DAWJ noted that the Authority is giving ongoing attention to this area—it is being monitored through the Department's Performance Challenge arrangements and so on. The number receiving Home Education is a concern, but it also reflects the national situation.



RhPJ supported this concern from a school perspective as well. It was noted that there is concern that parents are deregistering children if the school raises questions about their attendance, or if the child is placed under any kind of academic pressure in Years 10 and 11. Rather than supporting the children, parents are choosing to deregister them. This then increases concern about the standard of education they are receiving at home. RhPJ expressed concern that Extended Work Experience is no longer available as it once was. Local companies are not willing to accept 15- and 16-year-old pupils for work experience. This means that children come to school and struggle to cope with the work, or stay at home and do not engage at all. Having a package around the child to offer extracurricular or workplace experiences would make a difference in terms of keeping children in school and providing an alternative timetable for them. Some begin home education and then return to school—the break in education also has an impact. It was agreed that a discussion at the Secondary Headteachers' Strategic Meeting would be beneficial to discuss this area.

6. Report on the admissions of Vulnerable Groups / ALN / Medical Needs

It was noted that a report has already been shared. ET noted, in relation to IDPs (Individual Development Plans), that it is difficult to gather evidence for children who have needs but do not have an IDP. In addition, tribunals are referring cases back if there is no medical evidence from a specialist. A letter from a GP is not sufficient; a letter from a specialist in the field is required, for example a diabetes nurse.

There was discussion about how difficult it is to admit children to school with additional needs when there is no background information. It is very difficult to support these children. This was agreed. ET noted that, under the new ALN Act, there is no time to create an IDP and get to know the child as was possible before; it is necessary to act in line with the new legislation. It was also noted that in the Bangor catchment area there have been cases where there was no early identification of children's needs in the early years through the Health Visitor and so on. Children have been arriving in Nursery class without an IDP and clearly need one. ET noted that she became aware of this concern in the Bangor catchment area in September 2024. The Authority has been working with the DECLO, and training has been provided by DECLO and Betsi Cadwaladr for everyone involved with children in their early years to understand how to refer a child and open an enquiry in order to begin an IDP. Headteachers were asked to inform ET if the concerns continue.

Schools were asked to discuss individual cases with the Quality Officer. In the context of school admissions, the Authority has robust arrangements in place alongside the ALN process. The Authority recognised how challenging the situation is for schools.

RhPJ noted that when pupils arrive at secondary school from primary with additional needs, the support available during the transition from primary to secondary should be commended—there are strong systems in place.

7. Schools Admission Form

It was noted that this item arises from the previous meeting, and the possibility of revising the form slightly so that more information is available regarding the child's transfer—so that the receiving school can support them as needed. DAWJ noted that discussions have been held with the Legal Unit, but unfortunately it is not possible to ask additional questions as part of the Admissions process, as they are not relevant to the criteria for allocating a school place. Asking for negative information about a pupil could create a perception of bias, and considerations around data collection and data protection would also be key issues.

Further discussion on this was held in the Secondary Strategic Headteachers' Group (GCSU), and although there is no firm and clear guidance in the School Admissions Code, the Authority agreed, following the discussion, to seek to establish a Hard-to-Place Pupils Panel. Panels of this type already exist in some counties, but the guidance and criteria are fairly vague, so the Authority will work on terms of reference, criteria, and membership of this Panel between now and the end of the Summer Term, to ensure that the Panel is operational by September 2026. The Authority will share the relevant draft documents with the Admissions Forum for comments before the Panel becomes operational.

RhPJ noted their thanks for this. Facilitating discussions between schools would certainly help to support children as much as possible as they transition.