

TUESDAY 19TH MARCH 2024

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

I HEREBY SUMMON YOU TO ATTEND A **MULTI LOCATION MEETING** OF THE **CABINET** WHICH WILL BE HELD IN THE **CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, CARMARTHEN, SA31 1JP AND REMOTELY AT 2.00 P.M. ON MONDAY, 25TH MARCH, 2024** FOR THE TRANSACTION OF THE BUSINESS OUTLINED ON THE ATTACHED AGENDA

Wendy Walters

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Democratic Officer:	Michelle Evans Thomas
Telephone (direct line):	01267 224470
E-Mail:	MEEvansThomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

**This is a multi-location meeting.
Members can attend in person at the venue detailed above or remotely via the Zoom link which is provided separately.**

**The meeting can be viewed on the Authority's website via the following link:-
<https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>**

Wendy Walters Prif Weithredwr, *Chief Executive*,
Neuadd y Sir, Caerfyrddin. SA31 1JP
County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP

CABINET

MEMBERSHIP – 10 MEMBERS

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO
Councillor Darren Price	Leader
Councillor Linda Evans	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Homes
Councillor Glynog Davies	Education and Welsh Language
Councillor Ann Davies	Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy
Councillor Hazel Evans	Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism
Councillor Philip Hughes	Organisation and Workforce
Councillor Alun Lenny	Resources
Councillor Edward Thomas	Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services
Councillor Jane Tremlett	Health and Social Services
Councillor Aled Vaughan Owen	Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability

A G E N D A

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST**
- 3. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS**
- 4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
- 5. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS - PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS REVIEW (RISING 4S)** 5 - 18
- 6. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING LABOUR GROUP CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE CABINET ADVISORY PANELS:-**
 - Councillor Tina Higgins to take the vacant seat on the Rural Working Group Advisory Panel
 - Councillor Michael Thomas to take the vacant seat on the Development of the Local Development Plan Advisory Panel
 - Councillor Edward Skinner to take the vacant seat on the Corporate Parenting & Safeguarding Advisory Panel
 - Councillors Crish Davies and Edward Skinner to take the vacant seats on the Climate Change & Nature Emergency Cross Party Advisory Panel
- 7. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING PLAID CYMRU GROUP CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE CABINET ADVISORY PANELS:-**
 - Councillor Russell Sparks to replace Councillor Hefin Jones on the Climate Change Advisory Panel
 - Councillor Meinir James to replace Councillor Liam Bowen on the Climate Change Advisory Panel
- 8. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100B(4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972.**

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CABINET

25th March 2024

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Primary School Admissions Review (Rising 4s)

Recommendations / key decisions required: It is recommended that Cabinet considers the contents of the report and its recommendation.		
Reasons: To provide information on the results of a consultation on the removal of the Rising 4s Policy during the annual admissions consultation exercise in January 2024, for potential implementation in September 2025.		
Preliminary Cabinet Consulted: YES		
Relevant Scrutiny Committee Consulted: NO		
Cabinet Decision Required YES Council Decision Required NO		
Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education and Welsh Language)		
Directorate: Education & Children Name of Head of Service: Simon Davies Report Author: Allan Carter	Designations: Head of Access to Education Schools Transformation and Change Manager	Tel Nos. / E-Mail Addresses: 01267 246518 SiDavies@carmarthenshire.gov.uk 01267 246518 acarter@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CABINET

25th March 2024

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Primary School Admissions Review (Rising 4s)

Background

In 2018/19 the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee completed a Task & Finish Review of the current provision for early years education, childcare and play opportunities.

One of the conclusions identified in the report was that that the Authority's 'Rising 4s' policy is markedly different to other neighbouring local authorities' and that the 'Council undertake a formal review of its current admissions policy for full time education for 4-year-olds (the rising 4s policy).'

Cabinet has already considered:

- A report into the rationale for potential removal of the policy
- An assessment of the implications of removal of the Rising 4s Policy in individual schools in the form of a gap analysis.

As a result, on the 11th December 2023 Cabinet resolved to consult on the removal of the Rising 4s Policy during the annual admissions consultation exercise in January 2024, for potential implementation in September 2025.

An extensive consultation exercise took place between 19th January and 1st March 2024.

Purpose

The attached document presents the results of the consultation exercise.

Conclusion

The review of the full-time education admissions policy forms only part of an overall review of early years education and childcare provision across the County.

The Cabinet's Vision statement outlines a desire to 'improve the availability of early years education and childcare settings across the county, particularly in rural areas; with a particular focus on providing and strengthening Welsh-medium childcare in all areas'.

Via a thorough analysis of gaps in the provision of the early years' education and childcare offer across Carmarthenshire, officers have identified communities where there is currently a limited offer i.e. a lack of early years education and/or childcare provision. As part of implementing a revised Admissions Policy officers will develop proposals to address those gaps and present these to Cabinet for their consideration.

This will include working with partners on the delivery of early years education or creating 3-11 schools to provide the education offer across the County. Officers will also work on enhancing the childcare offer in those communities, to ensure that families are able to access the Welsh Government's 30-hour free Childcare Offer locally.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Carmarthenshire as the Admissions Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary schools proceeds to remove the Rising 4s Policy and implement the following:

- From 1st September 2025, admit full time learners to primary schools in the school term following their fourth birthday (OPTION B).

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES: Consultation Report

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Signed:  **Head of Access to Education**

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Any changes to primary school admission arrangements will affect Carmarthenshire’s School Admissions Policy and require the appropriate consultations as laid out in the Welsh Governments School Admissions Code.

2. Legal

Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and amended by Section 40 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced the requirement for the Welsh Ministers to issue a Code in respect of the discharge of admissions functions. In particular, the Code also sought to safeguard the interests of parents, children and young people by ensuring that school admissions are administered in the fairest and most equitable way possible.

The most recent School Admissions Code was issued in 2013 and is intended to clarify the process for everyone with an interest in school admissions and school admission appeals, help admission authorities to fulfil their duties correctly and improve working practices.

<p>3. Finance</p> <p>There is an opportunity to explore altering the full-time admission of pupils, creating more 3-11 schools to offer part time nursery provision in their locality, provide more business opportunities to the non-maintained sector to provide early years provision/wrap around care and make budget efficiencies. This would require further detailed financial modelling as recommended by the task and finish report.</p>
<p>4. ICT</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>5. Risk Management Issues</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>6. Staffing Implications</p> <p>A change to the primary school's admissions policy and a more detailed review into the impact on each school may have staffing implications which will be addressed in accordance with the County Council's Policy and Procedures.</p>
<p>7. Physical Assets</p> <p>N/A</p>

CONSULTATIONS

<p>I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:</p>									
Signed: <i>S. Lewis</i>	Head of Access to Education								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%; padding: 5px;">1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination</td> <td style="width: 30%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">NO</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Scrutiny Committee</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Date the report was considered:-</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 5px;">Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-</td> </tr> </table>		1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination	NO	Scrutiny Committee		Date the report was considered:-		Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-	
1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination	NO								
Scrutiny Committee									
Date the report was considered:-									
Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-									
<p>2. Local Member(s) – Not applicable at this stage.</p>									
<p>3. Community / Town Council – Not applicable at this stage.</p>									
<p>4. Relevant Partners – Not applicable at this stage.</p>									
<p>5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – Not applicable at this stage.</p>									

EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED YES	N/A
Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:	
Title of Document	File Ref No. / Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
PRIMARY SCHOOLS Admissions Review (Rising 4s) – Gap Analysis	https://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=131&Mid=7042&Ver=4
PRIMARY SCHOOLS Admissions Review (Rising 4s)	https://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=405&Mid=7154&Ver=4
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS - Primary School Admissions Review (Rising 4s)	https://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=131&Mid=5719&Ver=4
Carmarthenshire County Council School Admissions Policy 2021-22	https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/1225137/school-admissions-policy-2021-22.pdf
School Admissions Code (Wales) 2013	https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/school-admissions-code.pdf

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Rising 4s Policy Review

Consultation Report



sirgar.llyw.cymru
carmarthenshire.gov.wales

Cyngor Sir Gâr
Carmarthenshire
County Council



Page 11

Rising 4s Policy Review

Consultation Report

Background

Carmarthenshire is the only one of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales to have a Rising 4s Policy, whereby children can leave part-time nursery education and enter full-time primary education in the term of their fourth birthday. A policy change would mean the implementation of either of the following options:

- Children enter full-time provision in the term following their fourth birthday. This is the case in three other LAs, which include Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire's nearest neighbours.
- Children enter full-time provision in the September following their fourth birthday. This is the case in eighteen other LAs.

The rationale for change was presented to Cabinet in October 2022 and although there was broad agreement that consulting on removing the Rising 4s Policy would be desirable, Cabinet understandably wished to explore the implications in more detail. Carmarthenshire operates a very mixed economy of pre-school provision across the Authority. There is a mixture of maintained and non-maintained early years settings and a combination of both 3-11 and 4-11 schools. Between them they provide 10 hours per week of statutory education for nursery children and a range of wrap around care options to meet varying demand across the county. Provision is further complicated by the geographical context of Carmarthenshire with schools in urban, rural, and often remote rural settings.

Removing the Rising 4s Policy would mean that children currently in part-time provision in both maintained and non-maintained settings would remain in that provision for a longer period of time before becoming eligible for full-time depending on which of the above options were to be implemented. This could have implications for existing capacity to meet wrap around care requirements as well as provision of the 10 hours education element in some settings.

A gap analysis has been undertaken to identify the potential impact of removing the Rising 4s Policy in each individual school. The gap analysis illustrates the complexity of the picture in Carmarthenshire but enables the Authority to provide recommendations for schools where gaps in provision may be created by removal of the Rising 4s.

On the 11th December 2023 Cabinet considered the Gap Analysis Report and resolved to consult on the removal of the Rising 4s Policy during the annual admissions consultation exercise in January 2024, for potential implementation in September 2025.

An extensive consultation exercise took place between 19th January and 1st March 2024.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the results of the consultation.

Options

Consultees were asked to consider three options:

- **OPTION A:** Admit full time learners to primary schools in the school term of their fourth birthday (current arrangements)

- **OPTION B:** Admit full time learners to primary schools in the school term following their fourth birthday.
- **OPTION C:** Admit full time learners to primary schools in the September following their fourth birthday.

Consultees were also asked an additional standard Welsh Language question:

- We would like to hear your thoughts on the **possible impact on the Welsh language**. Please provide any additional mitigation measures below regarding the proposals:

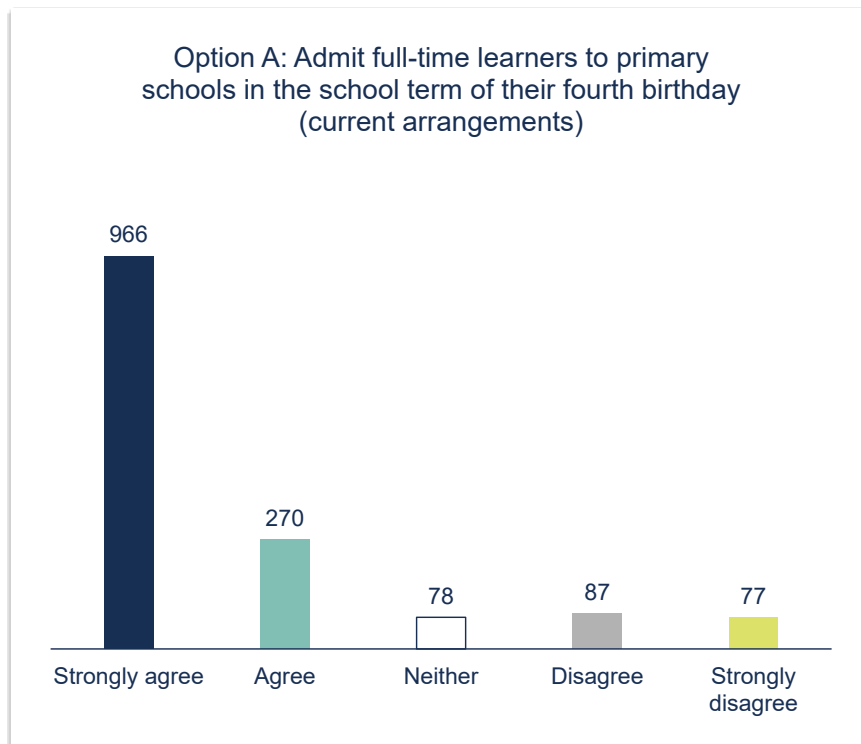
Responses

Overall, a total of **1494** responses were received for the consultation.

The responses to the individual questions are provided below.

Question 1 - OPTION A: Admit full time learners to primary schools **in the school term of their fourth birthday** (current arrangements).

A total of **1478** responses were received for **Option A**.



From the table above over 80% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that **Option A** (current arrangements) should remain. Whilst just over 10% disagreed / strongly disagreed.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they strongly agreed / agreed for **Option A** to remain is as follows:

- Full time education at an earlier age advantageous to those children that find nursery provision is not challenging enough.
- Childcare costs are high and do not encourage two-parent families in full-time employment.
- Supports parents to continue working part or full time.
- Allows part-time workers to increase their working hours.

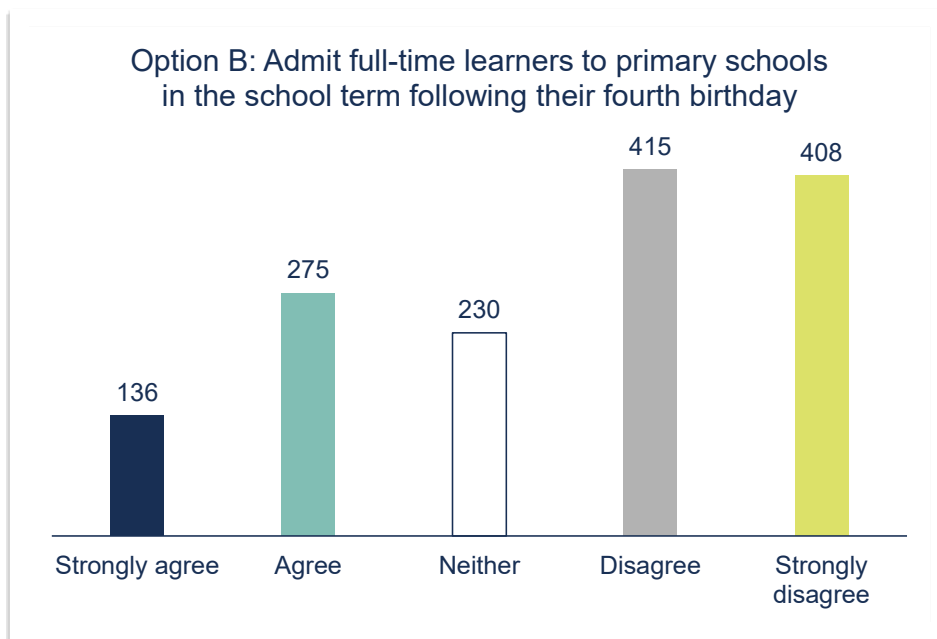
- Not all childcare provision supports the wraparound childcare needs of working parents.
- Development of Welsh language skills may suffer for those from non-Welsh speaking families starting later.
- Admission of pupils to school allows staff in non-maintained nurseries to support younger learners.
- Lack of full-time Welsh language childcare provision.
- Waiting lists for childcare settings.
- Risk of English language families not sending their children to Welsh language schools.
- Lack of childcare in rural areas.
- Benefits a child's social development.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they disagreed / strongly disagreed for **Option A** to remain is as follows:

- Learners should be full time after turning 3.
- Children physically and mentally unready to start school at 4.
- Potentially distressing for young children starting school full time.
- Pupils should not start school until they are 5.

Question 2 - OPTION B: Admit full time learners to primary schools **in the school term following** their fourth birthday.

A total of **1464** responses were received for **Option B**.



From the table above just under 30% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed that **Option B** should be implemented. Whilst just over 55% disagreed / strongly disagreed.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they strongly agreed / agreed for **Option B** to be implemented is as follows:

- Allows children to start full time education as soon as they are ready.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they neither agreed nor disagreed for **Option B** to be implemented is as follows:

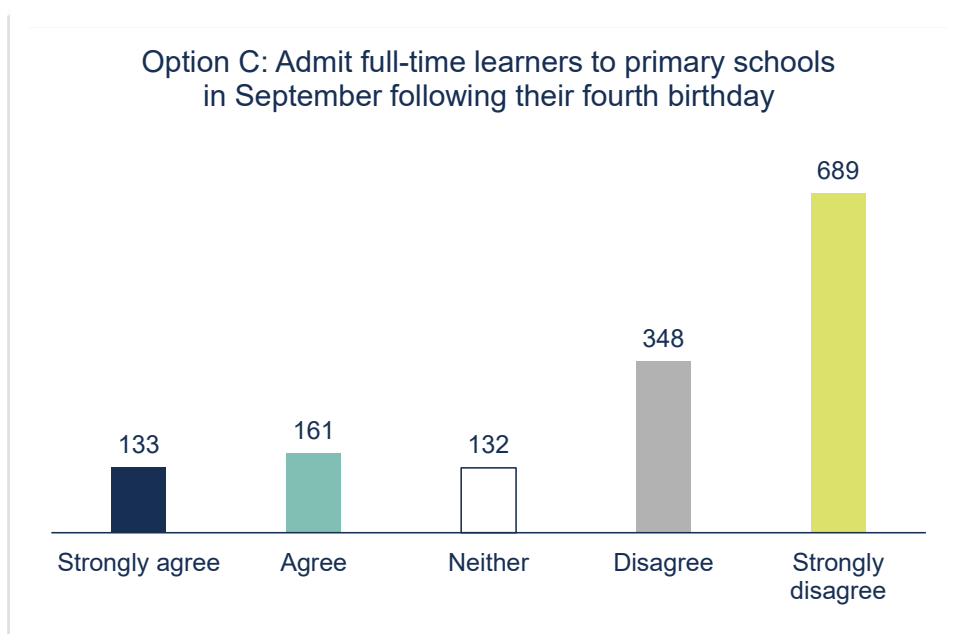
- Allows children to familiarise themselves with attending school before they become full time.
- Full time education may not be suitable for all 4 year olds.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they disagreed / strongly disagreed for **Option B** to be implemented is as follows:

- Childcare costs and availability.
- Children should be admitted to full time education as soon as possible.
- Challenging for working parents.
- Later start may be detrimental to children with ALN.
- Losing the opportunity to be immersed in the Welsh language early.
- Children may lost developing their social skills.
- Pupils should not start school until they are 5.

Question 3 - OPTION C: Admit full time learners to primary schools **in the September following** their fourth birthday.

A total of **1463** responses were received for **Option C**.



From the table above just over 20% of respondents strongly agreed / agreed that **Option C** should be implemented. Whilst just over 70% disagreed / strongly disagreed.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they strongly agreed / agreed for **Option C** to be implemented is as follows:

- Parity with the admission policies of surrounding counties.

A summary of the reasons given by respondents as to why they disagreed / strongly disagreed for **Option C** to be implemented is as follows:

- Missed learning opportunities and experiences of learners who start school later.
- Challenging for working parents to maintain employment and make career choices.
- Childcare costs and availability.
- Pupils should not start school until they are 5.

Question 4 - We would like to hear your thoughts on the possible impact on the Welsh language. Please provide any additional mitigation measures below regarding the proposals:

A summary of the responses provided by respondents to Question is as follows:

- Adoption of Welsh by pupils from non-Welsh speaking households is better because of the current policy.
- Introduction of Welsh to children from non-Welsh speaking households may suffer from starting school later.
- Welsh language schools may suffer as parents of non-Welsh speaking families may choose other language provision at another school.
- Working parents may opt to send their children to childcare settings for wraparound care instead of children attending Welsh medium schools as they currently do under Option A.
- The number of non-Welsh speakers arriving at school is already significant and early structures assist in developing their Welsh language skills.
- Difficulty meeting the 1,000,000 Welsh speakers by 2050.
- May result in a lower requirement for Welsh language provision across the county.
- No impact – children will absorb when they become full time, regardless of when that is.
- Negative impact on the availability and quality of Welsh medium childcare settings.
- Loss of learners to other catchments where Welsh language childcare provisions can cater to need.

Summary

A summary of the number of responses is provided below.

Option	Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A	966	270	78	87	77
B	136	275	230	415	408
C	133	161	132	348	689

Option	Response		
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
A	1236	78	164
B	411	230	823
C	294	132	1037

A summary of the number of responses in percentage terms is provided below.

Option	Response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A	65.4%	18.3%	5.3%	5.9%	5.2%
B	9.3%	18.8%	15.7%	28.3%	27.9%
C	9.1%	11.0%	9.0%	23.8%	47.1%

Option	Response		
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
A	83.6%	5.3%	11.1%
B	28.1%	15.7%	56.2%
C	20.1%	9.0%	70.9%

Conclusion

It is clear from the responses received that the majority of respondents wish for the status quo (**Option A**) to remain the Primary full time Admission Policy of Carmarthenshire.

Second to the status quo is **Option B** which would mean that pupils would start full time primary education the term after their 4th birthday.

The least popular option is **Option C** which would mean that pupils would start full time primary education in the September after their 4th birthday.

Recommendation

The gap analysis information considered previously suggests that removal of the Rising 4s Policy so that children move from nursery to reception classes and begin full-time education later, would mean there would be opportunities redistribute funding to enhance childcare, create more 3-11 schools across the county where required and therefore increase equity in provision.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of Officers that the Authority proceed with the implementation of **OPTION B**: - Admit full time learners to primary schools in the school term following their fourth birthday.

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