

# The provision of additional English-medium and Welsh-medium primary school places in and around the Llanishen area (15 December 2014)

## Reason for this Report

1. To set out the objections received to the statutory notice to increase the capacity of Ysgol Y Wern from 2 Form Entry to 2.5 Form Entry with additional nursery places along with the Council's response to the objections.

## Background

2. At its meeting on 18 September 2014 Cardiff Council Cabinet in accordance with the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act, approved a recommendation for the publication of a statutory notice to:
  - Increase the capacity of Ysgol Y Wern from 2 Form Entry to 2.5 Form Entry with an additional 8FTE nursery places in permanent accommodation, in order to meet increasing local demand for Welsh-medium primary education in the Llanishen area from September 2015.
3. The notice was published on the Council website, displayed at Ysgol y Wern and in the local area on 03 October 2014. Additionally stakeholders identified in the Welsh Government School Organisation Code as needing to receive either a hard copy of the notice or be emailed a link to the Council website were notified of the publication of the notice.

## Issues

4. Sixty eight objections to the proposal have been made and have not been withdrawn in writing before the end of 28 days beginning with the end of the objection period.

## Objections Received & Council Response

5. The points raised in the objections received are set out in *italics* below and have been grouped according to the issues raised where appropriate. The paragraphs following these points contain the Council's response to the objections and concerns raised.
6. **Objections raised regarding mixed age classes**
  - *Objections raised regarding the logistics of managing mixed age*

*classes, teaching two curriculums within one class and detrimental disruption to students*

- *Concerns over how a mixed age class may operate - who will decide which children will be in which class, how will it be organised?*
- *Mixed age classes in a Welsh-medium setting could impact on Welsh language development at the Foundation Phase and create further difficulties when English is introduced in Key Stage 2*

7. The Council acknowledges concerns regarding mixed age classes. However, half form entry classes and mixed age classes are common throughout Wales. Research carried out on the impact of mixed age classes on children's achievement indicates that children make the same progress in mixed age classes as those children in same age classes. The research also indicates that children in mixed age classes may have significantly more positive attitudes towards school, themselves and others (Veenman, 1996).
8. The organisation of classes and class structures are a school management issue and it would therefore be the schools responsibility to decide how best to organise the pupils within the mixed age classes, and not the Council. Advice and support on teaching strategies are available for all schools from the Central South Consortium.
9. There is no evidence available which suggests that mixed age classes have a negative impact on Welsh language development. The provision of half form entry classes and mixed age classes is common throughout Wales, and there are mixed-age classes operating successfully in Welsh-medium primary schools in other parts of Wales, such as Caerphilly.
10. The management and planning of mixed age classes would remain a school management issue. Schools can seek advice and support on teaching strategies from Teaching Advisors within the Central South Consortium.
11. Additionally in their response to the consultation Estyn who considered the Council's proposal for the expansion of Welsh-medium provision and stated that the proposal "is likely to maintain the present pupil standards".
12. Ysgol Y Wern has admitted up to 75 children per year group for the last three years and managed this effectively to date. Furthermore it is the view of the head teacher that the current organisation and associated staff resources could continue to be managed from a revenue perspective going forward.

### **13. Objections raised regarding the consultation/statutory notice Process**

- *The information presented was inaccurate and it was not possible to make an accurate and informed decision with the figures presented. The 2015 projection data was insufficient;*
  - *The consultation document failed to set out the potential for half forms of entry to result in mixed age classes. The lack of reference to this in the document suggests an intention by the Council to hide this as a way of getting the proposal approved without much objection.*
  - *The public meeting scheduled for Ysgol y Wern was changed at late notice and took place one day before the end of the school year.*
  - *The hard copy of the consultation document was distributed late and the letter including the email link to the electronic version on the relevant website was not in line with the requirements set out in The School Organisation Code.*
  - *The Statutory Notice published on 03 October 2014 contained an error – the proposal for Ysgol Y Wern was under the heading “English-medium primary school provision” instead of Welsh-medium provision.*
  - *The Cabinet Report made for a disappointing read, demonstrating that the council had not taken on board parents and others genuine concerns, comments and objections to the proposal.*
  - *Not everyone who responded to the consultation received notification of the publication of the consultation report. Of those who did, some who had responded to the proposal through the medium of Welsh received a response in English.*
14. The content of the consultation document was prepared in accordance with statutory requirements. The Council responded to concerns around the data by providing those that had raised concerns with further information and clarification which the Council believes explains the rationale behind the proposal.
15. The historic number on roll and catchment area information presented was taken from the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) returns. PLASC data is submitted and verified by schools on a specified census date annually and is therefore the most robust source of pupil data.
16. Some respondents misinterpreted historic and projected catchment area data presented in tables. The data included in the consultation document and presented at public meetings detailed the numbers of pupils resident in each of the primary school catchment areas in the west part of Llanishen, who are enrolled in any primary school of the relevant language medium, rather than the number of pupils enrolled in each school. This was clarified at public meetings.

17. Since the completion of the consultation, Health Service population data for 2014 has been made available. Initial analysis confirms that the population in the relevant areas is broadly consistent with that provided in previous datasets and suggests that the proposed expansions of 0.5FE in English-medium and 0.5FE in Welsh-medium provision are both necessary and appropriately sized.
18. Projections will be updated when verification and analysis of PLASC data for 2014 (provided by schools) has been completed; however, the data is not expected to indicate a significant change to the recent trends in the take-up of places. Furthermore, all Reception classes serving the Llanishen area are fully subscribed for the September 2014 intake.
19. The council use of data clearly evidences the need to provide additional school places. In their response, Estyn state that the proposal is thorough in its use of data with regard to past, current and future pupil numbers in the schools considered. It clearly shows that the proposal would increase capacity in order to meet the rising pupil numbers.
20. All information currently available affirms the need to provide additional English-medium and Welsh-medium primary school places to serve the west part of the Llanishen High School catchment area.
21. Planning permission has been granted for housing sites in Llanishen and Lisvane that, if progressed, would increase the demand for school places in the local area. Additional pupil yields from these developments would further exacerbate the overall shortfall. In accordance with the Council's approved Supplementary Planning Guidance, financial contributions would be sought by the Council requesting housing developers contributed sufficient funds to meet the demand arising from proposed additional housing.
22. If it is subsequently found that there is a need to provide additional places beyond the 0.5FE currently proposed either from growth within the existing residential populations or from new housing development, further consultation would need to be undertaken regarding this and whether there needed to be any additional provision made available to serve the locality.
23. The consultation document sets out that 2.5FE means 75 children in each year group. The organisation of classes is a matter for individual school management processes and the possibility of mixed age classes was discussed with those who attended meetings, drop in sessions and with pupil representatives. Ysgol y Wern has admitted up to 75 children per year group as a temporary enlargement for the last three years and managed this effectively to date.
24. The meeting scheduled at Ysgol y Wern for 10 July had to be rearranged due to industrial action on that day. The alternative date was agreed with the school and stakeholders were made aware of this in writing as quickly

as possible with letters sent out on 7 July. Additionally the Council's social media forums were used to communicate the change. The re-arranged meeting on 17 July was very well attended which suggested that people were aware of the change.

25. Details regarding contacting members of the team were included in the consultation document and online. Several members of the public also used this method to ask questions and check information. Owing to difficulties with the printing of the document, hard copies were distributed after the start of the consultation. However in order to mitigate this officers wrote out to all stakeholders due to receive the hard copy in advance of the consultation to advise them of the meeting dates and to inform them of the consultation start and end dates.
26. Stakeholders were provided with the exact web link should they want to access the document on the start date. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is not ideal, all stakeholders had full information as to how to access the information and how to contact members of the team in the event they were unable to access the webpage. Copies were also emailed to the schools directly affected on the first day of the consultation.
27. A typing error was made on the Statutory Notice for Ysgol y Wern published on 03 October 2014, however this did not affect the legality of the proposal.
28. The Council did take on board the comments made during the public consultation, and this is reflected in the Cabinet Report dated 18 September 2014. The report listed the views expressed and provided an appraisal underneath each point raised and based on the responses provided the decision was taken to proceed with publishing a statutory notice consistent with the original proposals put forward.
29. In accordance with statutory requirements all those who requested notification of the publication of the cabinet report which was published before the proposal was published. However it is acknowledged that it was an oversight that the notification was not translated into Welsh in all cases.

### **30. Objections raised regarding traffic**

- *Increasing the pupil population will put a strain on traffic in the area and on relationships within the local community.*

31. Traffic and transport implications will be considered as part of the Transport Assessment that would be required in order to achieve planning consent for building works should this proposal be implemented.
32. If there are highways improvements that are stipulated as conditions of any planning permission sought these will be addressed and there has been a nominal amount of funds built into the costs of the proposals to cover this in the event they are permitted to proceed.

### **33. Objections raised regarding building works**

- *The suggested timescale of providing the finished building by September 2015 is optimistic and children would end up being educated on a building site.*

34. As set out in the consultation document, it is intended that building work would be expected to start in 2015. Discussions have been held with the school regarding accommodation needs for September 2015 and a number of options have been identified which would allow for the increase in pupil numbers to be managed in the interim subject to approval of the proposal.

35. The Council has increased experience in the successful delivery of building projects on the sites of occupied schools resulting from the progression of a growing school organisation programme. Both schools have successfully worked alongside construction contractors on previous investment projects and ensuring high quality education provision for the children being educated throughout. The work carried out on the school site would be managed effectively in consultation with the school management to ensure the full curriculum continues to be delivered and that high education standards and safety standards are maintained.

### **36. Alternative suggestions to increasing the capacity of Ysgol y Wern to 2.5FE**

*The following alternative suggestions were put forward:*

- *Retain Ysgol y Wern as a 2FE school, reduce the catchment in the north east of Cardiff and focus instead on developing Ysgol Pen y Groes.*
- *The failure of Ysgol Pen y Groes to establish itself is likely to be linked to its sharing a site with a low performing English school. One option may be to close Bryn Celyn Primary School and work effectively to build a good quality Welsh-medium school on the site to accommodate the current catchment and beyond if catchments are altered.*
- *Increase the capacity of Ysgol y Wern to 3FE as the site is large enough to accommodate this number of pupils, with proper investment and this number of places will be needed going forward.*
- *Increase the capacity of Ysgol y Wern and revise the Mynydd Bychan/Ysgol y Wern catchment border in line with this proposal, at and around Heathwood Road, to ease some of the pressures on Mynydd Bychan.*

37. The current projections indicate projected demand for both Welsh-medium and English-medium places at entry to Reception increasing from 2FE to 2.5FE. Since the completion of the consultation, Health Service population data for 2014 has been made available. Initial analysis confirms that the proposed expansions of 0.5FE in English-medium and 0.5FE in Welsh-medium provision are both necessary and appropriately sized.
38. Reducing the catchment of Ysgol y Wern and enlarging the catchment and/ or premises of Ysgol Pen y Groes would not provide a suitable solution.
39. The Council is committed to ensuring that Welsh medium education is available to all children whose parents / guardians wish them to receive their education through the medium of Welsh, and this within reasonable travelling distance from the children's homes.
40. The Ysgol y Wern catchment area lies adjacent to the catchment area of Ysgol Pen y Groes. Projections suggest that there are sufficient places at Ysgol Pen y Groes for it to serve the demand from within its catchment area, and for there to be approximately 10-12 surplus places. However, this option has been discounted for the following reasons:
  41. It would not provide a local solution to the increased demand for places in the Ysgol y Wern catchment area and could result in considerable ongoing transport costs for which the Council would be liable. Ysgol Pen y Groes is more than 2 miles away from the home addresses of all pupils resident in the Ysgol y Wern catchment area and therefore pupils resident in any area that could transfer from the Ysgol y Wern catchment area to the Ysgol Pen y Groes catchment area would be eligible for free home to school transport. The cost of transporting pupils who have to travel more than 2 miles to attend primary school is approximately £14k per pupil by the time they leave primary education. Providing the additional places within 2 miles of the seat of demand would avoid these costs. In addition, this would mean pupils using polluting modes of transport to travel to and from school. Congestion would also be exacerbated due to an increase in traffic traversing the city.
  42. The surplus of approximately 10-12 places in the Ysgol Pen y Groes catchment area needs to be retained as the Council has recently approved plans for 1,170 additional dwellings within the area. This is expected to yield demand for approximately 9 Welsh-medium places per year group. Demand is also set to rise further as additional housing is planned in the area.
  43. There is no evidence at this time to suggest that expanding Ysgol Y Wern to 3FE and also enlarging its catchment area, whilst reducing the catchment area of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, is necessary.
  44. Following public consultation in Spring 2013, the Council implemented changes to the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan catchment area in September 2014

to reduce its size and to balance the supply of and demand for places with the newly established neighbouring catchment area of Ysgol Glan Ceubal.

45. The Council has also engaged with stakeholders in Summer 2014 on proposals to increase Welsh-medium provision serving Grangetown and Butetown. Should the Council consult on and proceeds with proposals to provide additional Welsh-medium primary school places to serve Grangetown and Butetown, it would be expected that a review of the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan catchment area, which serves Butetown, would take place at this time.

### **Catchment Area Arrangements**

46. There are no proposed changes to the Ysgol y Wern catchment area as a result of this proposal.

### **Resource Implications**

47. The capital funds required for this proposal has been identified as £2.388m based on existing accommodation and site conditions.
48. This is to be partly funded by a capital grant from the Welsh Government 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme and is subject to Business Case approval.
49. Officers have met with the Headteacher of Ysgol y Wern who has confirmed that the school will be able to organise for 75 pupils per year group with a revised funding formula budget allocation should the proposal be implemented.

### **Cabinet Decision**

50. RESOLVED: that

- a) the proposal as set in paragraph 2 (b) of the Cabinet report dated 15 December 2014 be approved without modification.
- b) Officers be authorised to take the appropriate actions to implement the proposal as set out in paragraph 2 of the report.
- c) Officers be authorised to publish a summary of the statutory objections and the Authority's response to those objections (referred to as the "Objection Report") within 7 days of the determination of the proposal.
- d) the approval, only following the respective grant approvals by Welsh Government, of any necessary contracts be delegated to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Corporate Director Resources & Section 151 Officer, Director of Legal Services and the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services & Performance and Education & Skills.

[View a copy of the Cabinet Report](#) from 15 December 2014

[View a copy of the Decision letter.](#)

Nick Batchelar

Director for Education and Lifelong Learning

19 December 2014