

EDUCATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY CAERDYDD 2024 - 2033 SUMMARY DOCUMENT 2026

SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY AGE LEARNERS WITH COMPLEX LEARNING NEEDS

9 FEBRUARY - 26 MARCH 2026



This document can be made available in Braille.

A full version of this document is available at [Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) provisions](#)

Information can also be made available in other community languages if needed.

Please contact us at [029 2087 2720](tel:02920872720) to arrange this.



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INTRODUCTION

What is this booklet about?

This booklet is for parents/carers, school staff, school governors and anyone who has an interest in education in Cardiff.

It will be of particular interest to parents/carers of children and young people attending or expecting to attend specialist Additional Learning Needs provision and those that have or currently work with children and young people with Complex Learning Needs.

Children and young people with Complex Learning Needs have a range of issues and combination of layered needs. These could include needs related to learning, communication, physical or sensory disabilities.

The Council wants to make changes to the provision for primary and secondary age learners with Complex Learning Needs.

This booklet sets out a range of proposals to increase the number of Specialist Resource Base and special school places for learners aged 3 – 19 with Complex Learning Needs and the reasons for these proposed changes

What are we proposing to do?

To meet demand for specialist places for learners with Complex Learning Needs it is proposed to:

- Establish a new 10 place Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Adamsdown Primary School from January 2027 within the existing buildings
- Establish a new 20 place Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Pencaerau Primary School from January 2027 within the existing buildings
- Establish a new 20 place Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Peter Lea Primary School from January 2027 within the existing buildings
- Increase the designated number of places at Meadowbank Special School from 98 to 110 from January 2027
- Increase the capacity of Tŷ Gwyn Special School from 240 places to 300 places, utilising the existing buildings and the vacated accommodation at Riverbank Special School, Vincent Road, Ely for a transition period from January 2027. The expanded school would transfer to new build accommodation on the Tŷ Glas site in Llanishen with a further increase in capacity to 320 places from September 2030
- Increase the capacity of Woodlands High School from 240 places to 300 places from January 2027. The school would be accommodated across two sites including the Fairwater Campus site and the existing Vincent Road campus site. The capacity of the school would be further increased to 360 places from September 2032 upon completion of new build accommodation at the Vincent Road campus site

The Council is also consulting on separate proposals to increase provision for learners with:

- Autism/Social Communication Needs
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Needs

You can find details of these proposals at [Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) provisions](#)

Where can I find more information?

- Full details can be found in the Consultation Document on the Council website at [Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) provisions](#)
- If you are unable to access the information on-line, you can request that a printed copy of this consultation document is posted to you. You can request this by e-mailing schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk or by telephoning **029 2087 2720**.
- We will advise families with children at the schools included as part of these proposals on how they can access a copy of the document.
- We will hold public meetings and drop-in sessions for anybody to attend where the changes we are proposing will be explained. You will have an opportunity to ask questions as part of these sessions. Both in-person and online sessions will be offered.
- Council officers will meet with the Governing Bodies and staff (as required) of the schools included as part of these proposals.
- You can also write to the Council to tell us what you think.

The dates of the consultation meetings are set out below:

Table 2: Consultation Meeting Dates

Nature of consultation	Date/Time	Venue
Drop-in session	Thursday 19 February 2026 9:30am - 11:30am	Llanishen Hub
Drop-in session	Friday 27 February 2026 10:30am -12:30pm	Ely and Caerau Hub
Drop-in session	Friday 6 March 2026 11:30am - 1:30pm	Star Hub
Drop-in session	Monday 9 March 2026 12 noon - 2pm	Loudon Culture and Media Centre
Drop-in session	Wednesday 18 March 2026 11am - 1pm	St Mellons Hub
On-line drop-in session	Wednesday 18 February 2026 12 noon - 1pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Monday 23 February 2026 1pm - 2pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Tuesday 24 February 2026 2pm - 3pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Monday 2 March 2026 5pm - 6pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Friday 13 March 2026 12:30pm - 1:30pm	Teams
Public meeting (in person)	Thursday 19 March 2026 5:30pm - 6:30pm	Central Library

How can I give my views

Your views matter and we want you to tell us what you think about the changes we have suggested in this document.

You can do this by:

- Attending an in-person drop-in session. You do not need to pre-book for these sessions. Just attend the venue at the date and time specified
- Attending an online drop-in session. Please contact us via e-mail to schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk confirming which session you would like to attend, and we will provide a link and instructions on how you can access the meeting

- Attending the in-person public meeting. If you wish to attend, please contact us via e-mail to schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk and we will reply to confirm arrangements
- Completing the electronic response form which you can find at [Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) provisions](#)
- Printing and completing the consultation response form, which you can find at Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provisions and returning the form by post to School Organisation Planning Team, Room 463, County Hall, Cardiff, CF10 4UW
- Writing to the School Organisation Planning Team by e-mail to schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk or by post to Room 463, County Hall, Cardiff, CF10 4UW. This can include requesting an officer call back if you have a specific question that you feel you would like further information about.

Please note that all comments sent in writing or by e-mail must contain the full name and postal address of the person making the comments.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is 26 March 2026.

Unfortunately, we will not be able consider any consultation responses received after this date.

Why are we proposing these changes?

The Council has a number of strategies that support these proposals.

Stronger Fairer Greener

The Council's 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener' policy prioritises education as the key to reducing poverty and driving long-term prosperity, committing to make every Cardiff school a good school through investment, improved attainment, and support for vulnerable children from early years to higher education.

Stronger Fairer Greener is available to view at [Stronger Fairer Greener](#)

Cardiff 2030

Cardiff's 2030 vision aims to give every child and young person fair access to education, helping them to thrive and achieve their ambitions. It focuses on overcoming barriers for those learners who face the most challenges.

Cardiff's 2030 vision is available to view at [Cardiff 2030](#)

Inclusion Strategy

The Inclusion Strategy aims to make sure schools in Cardiff include everyone so that most learners with Additional Learning Needs can thrive in their local mainstream schools. Specialist provision is also available when needed to best support learners.

Cardiff's Inclusion Strategy is available to view at [Education Inclusion Strategy](#)

Education Investment Strategy Caerdydd 2024 – 2033

The Education Investment Strategy Caerdydd 2024–2033 sets out a long-term plan to improve Cardiff’s education system in line with local and national priorities. It focuses on fair, aspirational, and sustainable learning.

The Education Investment Strategy Caerdydd 2024 – 2033 is available to view at [Education Investment Strategy 2024 to 2033](#)

Cardiff’s Sustainable Communities for Learning Rolling Programme 2024-2033

The Cardiff Sustainable Communities for Learning Rolling Programme 2024-2033 is a plan to improve schools in Cardiff. It aims to make education better by spending money on school buildings to make them more modern and suitable for everyone.

Cardiff’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

The Cardiff Welsh in Education Strategic Plan aims to help the Welsh Government reach its target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. It does this by creating more chances to learn in Welsh, supporting learners with additional needs, and training more teachers to teach in Welsh.

The Cardiff Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is available to view at [Cardiff Welsh in education strategic plan.pdf](#)

Sufficiency in the Special Sector

Cardiff Council is committed to the principles of inclusion.

Most learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) attend a local mainstream school and are supported by Additional Learning Provision (ALP). Learners who have more severe or complex needs attend a special school or Specialist Resource Base.

A special school is a school for children and young people with an additional learning need or disability, whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school. Learners benefit from a specialist curriculum taught by specialist teachers and learning support assistants.

A Specialist Resource Base is a small class in a mainstream school for learners with significant Additional Learning Needs. The learners are taught by specialist teachers and learning support assistants, and have opportunities to learn, play or socialise with other mainstream learners.

The number of learners with severe and complex needs, who need a place in a special school or Specialist Resource Base has continued to grow.

This is due to:

- Improved survival rates for children born with significant disabilities, resulting in a higher number of pupils with severe and complex disabilities
- Increased complexity in needs, which has meant that the demand for specialist provision has continued to grow. The range of expertise, specialist support and facilities required in special schools and Specialist Resource Bases has also increased

- Increased incidence and identification of specific needs such as autism, ADHD, physical disabilities and sensory impairments
- More children and young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs. This was a trend before COVID 19 but has been exacerbated by school closures and other measures to manage the pandemic

Current provision

There are currently four special schools and twelve Specialist Resource Bases for learners with complex learning needs.

Whilst there are a number of existing specialist settings across Cardiff, there are not enough places available. The number of children who would benefit from a place has increased in recent years and is projected to increase further over coming years.

As there are not enough special school and Specialist Resource Base places in Cardiff, the Council has also funded some places at special schools in other council areas or in independent schools.

The total spend on these places for learners of all ages was £15.4m in 2024/25. The budget for 2025/26 for these types of places is currently set at £16.9m.

Expanding Council maintained provision would be more cost-effective than continued reliance on places in independent schools.

Geographical distribution of specialist provision

In some areas of Cardiff there are insufficient specialist places to support learners with Additional Learning Needs. This can disadvantage learners living in those areas.

Some families are unfamiliar with the areas where provision is located or may not be able to travel easily to those areas.

Although free home to school transport is available for such children, sending a young child to school in an unfamiliar area is a difficult decision for parents/ carers.

A better distribution of Additional Learning Needs places across the city would improve access for pupils. It would reduce travel times for many pupils, as well as increasing the number of places available.

Demand for places

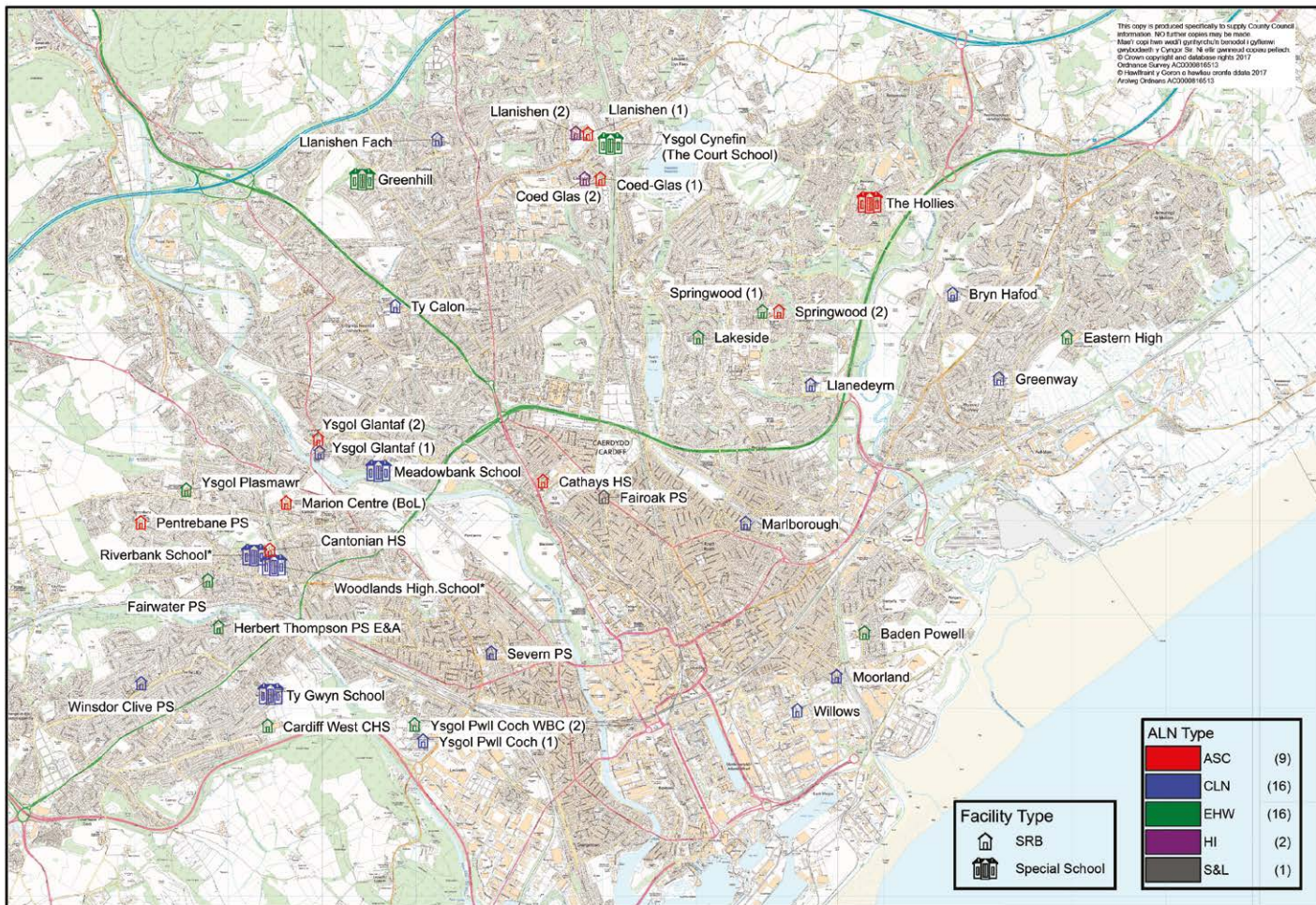
The Council is committed to further developing and increasing provision for learners with Additional Learning Needs in specialist provision where permanent placements are appropriate.

The development of proposals has been prioritised to ensure there is an appropriate balance in the number and type of specialist places for Cardiff learners.

This set of proposals would provide 262 additional permanent Complex Learning Needs specialist places.

Each of the schools would receive investment to ensure there are appropriate classrooms and support facilities for the learners placed at the school.

Cardiff Specialist ALN Provision 2025/26



This copy is produced specifically to supply County Council information. No further copies may be made. Many copies have been distributed to various schools. Ordnance Survey AC200816513 © Ordnance Survey 2017



**Schools affected by
proposed changes**

Proposal to establish a Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Adamsdown Primary School

Adamsdown Primary School is an English-medium community primary school for pupils aged 3 – 11. The school is located at System Street, Adamsdown, Cardiff, CF24 0JF.



The school admits up to 60 learners per year group and has 80 nursery places.

To meet increasing demand for primary age specialist provision the Council is proposing to:

- establish a new 10 place Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Adamsdown Primary School from January 2027.

It is proposed that the base would be accommodated within the existing school buildings.

Proposal to establish a Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Pencaerau Primary School

Pencaerau Primary School is an English-medium community primary school for pupils aged 3 – 11. The school is located at Cyntwell Ave, Caerau, Cardiff, CF5 5QN.



The school admits up to 60 learners per year group and has 80 nursery places.

To meet increasing demand for primary age specialist provision the Council is proposing to:

- establish a new 20 place Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Pencaerau Primary School from January 2027

It is proposed that the base would be accommodated within the existing school buildings.

Proposal to establish a Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Peter Lea Primary School

Peter Lea Primary School is an English-medium community primary school for pupils aged 3 – 11. The school is located at Carter Place, Fairwater, Cardiff, CF5 3NP.



The school admits up to 45 learners per year group and has 80 nursery places.

To meet increasing demand for primary age specialist provision the Council is proposing to:

- establish a new 20 place Complex Learning Needs Specialist Resource Base at Peter Lea Primary School from January 2027

It is proposed that the base would be accommodated within the existing school buildings.

Proposal to increase the number of places at Meadowbank Special School

Meadowbank Special School is an English-medium special school for primary age learners with Speech and Language Difficulties and Communication Needs and Complex Learning Needs, located at Colwill Road, Gabalfa, CF14 2QQ.



To meet increasing demand for primary special school places for learners with Complex Learning Needs it is proposed to:

- increase the designated number of Meadowbank Special School from 98 to 110 from January 2027

It is proposed that the additional learners be accommodated within the existing buildings.

Proposal to increase the number of places at Tŷ Gwyn Special School and transfer the school to new build accommodation at Tŷ Glas

Tŷ Gwyn Special School is an English-medium special school for primary and secondary age learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties, Autism and Complex Medical Needs located at Vincent Road, Caerau.



To meet increasing demand for primary and secondary special school places for learners with Complex Learning Needs it is proposed to:

- increase the capacity of Tŷ Gwyn Special School from 240 places to 300 places, utilising the existing buildings and the vacated accommodation at Riverbank Special School, Vincent Road, Ely for a transition period from January 2027
- the expanded school would transfer to new build accommodation on the Tŷ Glas site in Llanishen with a further increase in capacity to 320 places from September 2030

Proposal to increase the number of places at Woodlands High School

Woodlands High School is an English-medium special school for secondary age learners with Complex Learning Needs and/or Autism located at Vincent Road, Caerau.



The school will be transferring to the new site at the Fairwater Community Campus, Fairwater from September 2026.

To meeting increasing demand for secondary special school places for learners with Complex Learning Needs and/or Autism it is proposed to:

- increase the capacity of Woodlands High School from 240 places to 300 places from January 2027
- the school would be accommodated across two sites including the Fairwater Community Campus site and the existing Vincent Road campus site.
- the capacity of the school would be further increased to 360 places from September 2032 upon completion of new build accommodation at the Vincent Road campus site.

Benefits of the proposed changes

To support the expansion of specialist provision, the proposals:

- Make use of existing school accommodation where possible
- Better match the number of mainstream places to local demand and reduce surplus places

The proposals would also:

- Increase the number of places for learners with Complex Learning Needs and help meet future demand
- Make the best use of the existing school buildings where possible
- Reduce the need for out of county placements by providing more places in Cardiff
- Offer more places for learners with Additional Learning Needs close to their home, so they spend less time travelling and families can be more involved
- Improve learners' wellbeing, by making existing spaces easier to access and more inclusive for learners with Additional Learning Needs
- Allow for the changes to happen in stages and make it possible to change the use of spaces again in the future if learner numbers go up or down
- Avoid the need for big building projects, which supports sustainability targets

Potential disadvantages of the proposed changes

- Some learners with Additional Learning Needs can find change difficult. They may find moving to a new building on a new site unsettling. We know they will need carefully planned support to adapt to the new setting. However, there would be sufficient time and well-established processes to plan and support such a change.
- There is potential for increased traffic congestion around the school sites at the start and end of the day. The Council would work with the Governing Bodies of the schools to develop a Travel Plan to minimise any potential disruption.

Risks

- If building work or refurbishments are needed, problems might arise that delay the work. This might happen if it is hard to find the right contractors, if the project takes longer than expected, or if there is not enough funding. However, the Council has a lot of experience in managing school building projects, so it is well prepared to deal with any problems that might arise.

Quality and Standards

The Council works with the Governing Bodies of schools to make sure that standards in schools are high, that teaching is good and that leadership and governance is strong.

The standards at the five schools included in the proposed changes are good.

The most recent Estyn report for each school can be found by following the links below.

- [Inspection report Adamsdown Primary School 2023](#)
- [Inspection report Pencaerau Primary School 2019](#)
- [Inspection report Peter Lea Primary School 2018](#)
- [Inspection report Meadowbank Special School 2019](#)
- [Inspection report Western Learning Federation Ty Gwyn Special School 2023](#)
- [Inspection report Western Learning Federation Woodlands High School 2023](#)

How would support for learners be affected?

The school would continue to provide support that is appropriate to the individual needs of all learners.

There is no information to suggest that the needs of any of the below groups would be negatively affected by the proposed changes:

- learners with Additional Learning Needs
- learners with English as an Additional Language
- learners receiving Free School Meals
- Minority Ethnic learners

Learner Travel Arrangements and Traffic and Transport

The Council's Transport Policy can be viewed on the Council's website www.cardiff.gov.uk

The Council must provide free home to school transport to primary school learners who live 2 miles or more from the nearest suitable school and secondary school learners who live 3 miles or more from the nearest suitable school, as measured by the shortest available walking route.

The Council provides free home-to-school transport for special school and Specialist Resource Base learners based on the above. Some learners living within the above distances may also get free transport to school due to individual needs or social issues.

Should the proposals go ahead most special school learners would still be eligible for free home to school transport. However, some learners may have shorter travel distances due to more local specialist provision. This may allow some to travel independently. The Council supports learners with Independent Travel Training and cycle training. It also plans simpler public transport routes supporting active and sustainable travel.

Each school location will need suitable drop-off and pick-up areas on site for Learner Transport vehicles.

The drop-off and pick-up areas must be big enough for the appropriate number of vehicles. This is usually one taxi for every three learners. Sometimes minibuses can be used, depending on learner needs, where they live, and how routes are coordinated.

Developing the Education Workforce

The planned growth of specialist places will affect how many staff are needed. As more learners move to specialist schools, some mainstream schools will need fewer staff. More jobs will be created in the new specialist provision. There will be opportunities for the Council to create new roles for existing staff, including teachers, Higher Level Teaching Assistants, Teaching Assistants, Mid-Day Supervisors and other support staff.

The Council has a Workforce Development Group with stakeholders that supports the recruiting, training, and retention of school staff. The group works out the best staffing models for learners in each specialist provision.

What happens next?

Key Dates

The Council will collect and summarise the feedback from this consultation. Council officers will then report this to the Council's Cabinet. This will help the elected members understand stakeholders' views and will give them information to help make their decision.

If the Cabinet decides to continue with the proposals, it must publish a document called a 'statutory notice'. The statutory notice sets out the details of the proposals and asks anyone who wants to object to do so. Objections must be written. They must be sent to the Council within the dates given on the notice.

The Cabinet may decide to approve or reject the proposal, or they may approve the proposal with some changes (modifications). The Cabinet would take any objections received in the Objection Period into account when making their decision.

Once a decision is made, we will let everyone affected by the proposal know. The decision will also be published on the Council's website.