

Public

**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**  
**Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd**

**Democratic Services**  
**Gwasanaethau Democrataidd**

**Chief Executive:** K.Jones

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Dear Member,

**CABINET - WEDNESDAY, 29TH JUNE, 2022**

Please find attached the following replacement/updated Welsh Medium Starter School Report which is for consideration at the next meeting of the **Cabinet - Wednesday, 29th June, 2022.**

**Item**

7. **Welsh Medium Starter School - Neath Abbey (Pages 1 - 40)**

Yours sincerely

p.p Chief Executive

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## NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Cabinet**  
**29<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,  
LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING  
ANDREW THOMAS**

### **MATTER FOR DECISION**

**WARDS AFFECTED:** Briton Ferry West, Coedffranc Central, Coedffranc North, Coedffranc West, Dyffryn, Neath North

### **STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW WELSH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NEATH ABBEY**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To obtain approval to publish a proposal to establish a new Welsh – medium primary school at St John’s Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND
2. Publication of the proposal provides a 28 day period for the submission of objections. Following the period for submitting objections, Cabinet will need to meet to consider objections received before taking a decision as to whether or not the proposal should be implemented.
3. This Cabinet report needs to be read in conjunction with the consultation report (appendix A), the consultation document (appendix E) and the Cabinet report of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (appendix F)

## **Executive summary**

4. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP 2022-32, is the cornerstone for the Council's vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life.
5. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.
6. In recent years, pupil numbers in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas have risen with the result that both the English-medium schools in those areas and the Welsh-medium schools that admit pupils from those areas are facing accommodation pressures. New housing developments in Crymlyn and Coed Darcy in particular have contributed to the increase in pupil numbers, as well as increased numbers of families moving into the area.
7. Modelling work on expanding Welsh- medium provision suggests that the Neath Abbey area is a good location for creating a new Welsh-medium school.
8. This proposal would seek to establish a Welsh-medium starter primary school in premises previously occupied by Abbey Primary School at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND which occupy a prominent position off the A4230 between Neath Abbey and Skewen.
9. It is proposed that a new Welsh-medium starter school would open for part time nursery pupils in January 2023 with the first cohort of full time reception pupils expected to attend the new school from September 2023.
10. Consultation on this proposal took place from 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

11. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code requires the Council to consult on its proposal and to publish a consultation report summarising any issues raised by consultees, the Council's response to those issues and Estyn's view of the overall merit of the proposal. This report will be published on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## **Background**

12. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner is the challenge facing the Council. Achieving this will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities.
13. Implementing the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP) involves reviewing existing provision and determining the number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough. It will most likely lead to substantial change involving opening new schools, closing existing schools, merging or amalgamating schools, federating schools and promoting new initiatives that support collaborative working between schools.
14. The Council has determined to review its provision on the basis of:
  - educational standards
  - the need for places and the accessibility of schools
  - the quality and suitability of school accommodation
  - effective financial management
15. Neath Port Talbot currently has nine Welsh-medium primary schools, and one Welsh-medium middle (3-18) school over two sites, one at the north in Ystalyfera and one in the south in Sandfields/Baglan. Three of the nine primary schools are situated in the south of Neath Port Talbot – Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhos Afan in Sandfields, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd in Neath centre and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn in Briton Ferry. All three schools have seen an increase in pupil numbers and are facing accommodation pressures. The numbers of pupils choosing Welsh-medium in the south of the county borough has seen an increase year on year.

Table 1

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
YGG Castell-nedd	364	356	360	359	362	384	387	405	415	419	417
YGG Rhosafan	339	366	355	354	361	360	360	359	365	381	392
YGG Tyle'r Ynn	211	219	218	218	230	239	236	227	226	230	258
Total	914	941	933	931	953	983	983	991	1006	1030	1065

16. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot and all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives through the medium of Welsh. This principle is underpinned by ensuring universal access to this provision across the county borough. Neath Port Talbot Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.
17. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP 2022-32, is the cornerstone for the Council's vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life. It both complements and assists in facilitating the National vision for the Welsh language, to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050:

*The year 2050: The Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society, and economy of Wales. Our vision is to secure favourable circumstances throughout the country that support language acquisition and use of Welsh language skills. We want to see an increase in language transmission in the family, early introduction of Welsh to every child, an education system that provides Welsh language skills for all*

**Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers (Welsh Government, 2017)**

18. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from

16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.

## Current Situation

19. In recent years, pupil numbers in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas have risen with the result that both the English-medium schools in those areas and the Welsh-medium schools that admit pupils from those areas are facing accommodation pressures. New housing developments in Crymlyn and Coed Darcy in particular have contributed to the increase in pupil numbers, as well as increased numbers of families moving into the area.
20. Modelling work on expanding Welsh- medium provision suggests that the Neath Abbey area is a good location for creating a new Welsh-medium school.
21. Currently, 125 pupils from Neath Abbey, Skewen, Llandarcy and Jersey Marine travel to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn to access Welsh-medium education, from nursery to year 6, shown below in tables 2 and 3. Approximately 50 pupils from Neath Port Talbot also attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las which is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school.

Table 2

English-medium School Catchment Areas	YGG Castell Nedd									
	N2	N1	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Abbey Primary School	1	4	5	0	3	2	1	3	6	25
Coedffranc Primary School	1	5	6	7	5	3	3	4	2	36
Crymlyn Primary School	0	0	1	3	3	2	2	1	2	14
Total	2	9	12	10	11	7	6	8	10	75

Table 3

English –medium School Catchment Areas	YGG Tyle'r Ynn									
	N2	N1	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Abbey Primary School	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
Coedffranc Primary School	0	5	3	8	3	3	4	6	7	39
Crymlyn Primary School	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	8
Total	0	9	5	8	3	6	4	8	8	50

22. It is anticipated therefore that locating a new Welsh-medium school in this area will alleviate the capacity issues in both Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn (nearly or at full capacity) and will further stimulate demand for Welsh-medium education provision in the area.

### The proposal

23. This proposal would seek to establish a Welsh-medium starter primary school in premises previously occupied by Abbey Primary School at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND which occupy a prominent position off the A4230 between Neath Abbey and Skewen.
24. Abbey Primary School currently operates between three separate sites and the school has relocated to a brand new build single site school at Heol Penlan in the Longford area of Neath during April 2022.
25. It is proposed that a new Welsh-medium starter school would open for part time nursery pupils in January 2023 with the first cohort of full time reception pupils expected to attend the new school from September 2023.
26. The new school would provide for up to 210 full-time primary age pupils and 45 part-time nursery age pupils by September 2029. This will deliver sufficient accommodation for the total combined forecasted pupil numbers, including potential growth in pupil population.



27. An application to Welsh Government for grant funding to completely refurbish and modernise the building was unsuccessful, however it is intended that work will be undertaken to adapt the building to make it suitable for childcare and younger primary aged children. Work will include fully refurbishing the two toilet facilities in the main building (new toilets, hand basins, cubicles flooring etc.), remodelling classrooms to ensure that they are suitable for delivering the new curriculum, new flooring to the reception area and corridors and upgrading the school hall. A complete mechanical and electrical upgrade will be made in order to facilitate learning walls and digital equipment. External works including new fencing will also be completed. It is estimated that these works would cost approx. £200k and will be funded from the education capital maintenance budget.
28. The admission arrangements will be in line with the Council's approved admission arrangements for primary schools. For the purpose of consultation, the proposed admission number for primary phase education is 30.
29. The proposed new Welsh-medium school will serve the combined catchment areas of Crymlyn, Coedffranc and Abbey primary schools, making it easier for parents to easily understand their Welsh-medium and English-medium choices, and is a change to the current situation where pupils in this area attend either Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn for Welsh-medium education. Approximately 50 pupils from the Skewen area also attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las which is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school.
30. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils attending will live within a two mile radius of the proposed new school, ensuring that Welsh medium education is available within their local area. Current data indicates that of the 125 pupils who currently travel from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, 117 live within a 2 mile radius of the proposed new school site.
31. A starter school model is considered the most appropriate solution for new Welsh-medium schools. Whilst demand is growing for Welsh-medium education, opening the school immediately to all year groups could destabilise other schools across the authority and could adversely affect the ability to support effective provision.

- **What is a starter school?**

32. A starter school is a model that can be used when establishing a new school to allow the facilities and staff to be used efficiently while the school grows to its full potential. The school opens initially with only Nursery class, and a year group is then added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6.

33. During the *first* year of the starter school opening, one mainstream class will be in operation as follows

- A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;

34. In the *second* year, the starter school will consist of:

- A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **30** places;

35. In the *third* year, the school will consist of:

- A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **30** places;
- A **Year 1** class with a maximum of **30** places;

36. In the years following, each new reception year group will have a maximum of 30 places. Full capacity of the school will be realised in September 2029 when all year groups will operate under a one-form entry arrangement.

37. The table below shows an example of the starter model of growth for a one form-entry school.

Table 4

Available Places by Academic Year							
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Nursery (January)	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Reception (September)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 1		30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 2			30	30	30	30	30

Year 3				30	30	30	30
Year 4					30	30	30
Year 5						30	30
Year 6							30

- **What are the benefits of a starter school?**
  - The school capacity grows as demand increases;
  - Stable growth to support existing schools;
  - Reduces the possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools;
  - Effectively manages class sizes to support staffing and the school budget;
  - Pupils living outside the school catchment area can still apply for a place at the school and if places are available may be successful.
  
- **What are the disadvantages of a starter school?**
  - Takes a number of years to deliver growth
  - Possible implications for siblings with changing catchments;
  - Possible implications for families moving to Neath Port Talbot with different aged children due to changing catchments;

## **Childcare provision**

38. The proposal includes the intention to incorporate a new Welsh-medium childcare setting on the school site, to offer pre-school and wraparound care for children through the medium of Welsh. This would increase the total childcare provision across Neath Port Talbot through the creation of 12 additional places and will have a positive impact on Welsh-medium education through stimulated demand.
  
39. The nearest Welsh-medium childcare provision is some distance away in Neath and a new setting in the proposed new school would ensure that families from the area are offered greater choice and flexibility, and will also support parents to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, as well as helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.

## **Consultation**

40. This school reorganisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme. Formal consultation is required in line with the Welsh Government's School organisation Code, November 2018, which specifies the procedures

to be followed, including the content of the consultation document, those to be consulted and timeframes.

41. The consultation period ran from 25th January 2022 to 8th March 2022. The consultation document was made available by e-mail to consultees. It was also available on the Council's website. Hard copies were available on request.
42. Responses to the consultation were submitted by email, and via the Council's online consultation portal. Details of how to respond were included in the consultation document and links to the online consultation portal were included on the website and on the Council's social media channels.
43. In total 47 responses were received

Online responses	44
Emails	3
Paper forms/letter	0
44. In total 28 consultees supported the proposal recognising the need for an additional Welsh-medium school in the area, the linguistic benefits to the community and the vision of making Welsh-medium education accessible to all.
45. 19 consultees raised concerns relating to the traffic management of the proposed site and age of the current building.
46. The consultation report has been made available to those required by the Code, including responders who requested a copy, with the latter being contacted by email advising of the link to the report on the Council's website.
47. The Consultation Report contains details of comments received with officer responses and is attached as Appendix A.

### **Impact on Pupils and Parents**

48. The proposed new school will offer the opportunity for pupils to access Welsh-medium education in their immediate area rather than travelling to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn. It is anticipated that this will prove to be

attractive to many parents in the area and that interest in the Welsh language will therefore grow.

49. The additional benefit of an onsite childcare provision will also support parents and may help and encourage those who do not speak Welsh to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, as well as helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.
50. Parents of children who currently attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from the Neath Abbey and surrounding areas will not be affected by this proposal as their children will remain in their current schools. Younger siblings (preschool or nursery age) will be able to access the proposed new school and parents/carers will be encouraged to take advantage of the more local provision.
51. Pupils and parents from Neath centre, Briton Ferry and surrounding areas will also benefit from the proposal as Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn will, should this proposal be approved, have capacity to admit more pupils from their immediate areas and will be able to avoid the possibility of catchment pupils being refused a place at their nearest suitable school.

### **Impact on Governors**

52. A temporary governing body will be established prior to the opening of the proposed new school. The temporary governing body will take important decisions about the new school including the appointment of a head teacher, agreeing a staffing structure and adopting operating procedures and agreeing a name for the school. The temporary governing body will also resolve other issues including school uniform which, in line with good practice, will be determined following consultation with parents and if possible with pupils.
53. The temporary governing body is expected to include existing governors from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn with the aim of ensuring good working relationships between the three schools, and to ensure that the good practice currently evidenced in the two schools is shared and developed into the new school.

## **Impact on Travel Arrangements**

54. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils attending will live within a two mile radius of the proposed new school, ensuring that Welsh medium education is available within their immediate local area. Current data indicates that of the 125 pupils who currently travel from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, 117 live within a 2 mile radius of the proposed new school site.
55. Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. This means that primary school aged pupils living 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable or designated school will be considered for transport assistance.
56. Under the School Travel Plan requirements, all schools, together with the Council's Road Safety Team, are committed to:
  - improving road safety within the local community
  - raising awareness about travel issues
  - encouraging walking, cycling and public transport for the school journey where applicable
  - encouraging independent travel where applicable.

## **Financial Impact**

57. An application for Welsh Government grant funding to completely refurbish and modernise the building was unsuccessful, however works will continue to adapt the building to make it suitable for childcare and younger primary aged children.
58. Work will include fully refurbishing the two toilet facilities in the main building (new toilets, hand basins, cubicles flooring etc.), remodelling the classrooms to ensure that they are suitable for delivering the new curriculum, new flooring to the reception area and corridors and upgrading the school hall. A complete mechanical and electrical upgrade will be made in order to facilitate learning walls and digital equipment. External works including new fencing will also be completed. It is estimated that these works will cost approx. £200k and will be funded from the education capital maintenance budget.

59. Revenue funding for schools is distributed on an annual basis by means of an approved formula. This ensures school budget shares are allocated on a simple, objective and measurable basis.
60. Revenue costs for the first three months of opening are estimated to be £107,086, which includes costs for a Headteacher from November 2022, to enable the necessary preparations to be made for the school to open for pupils in January 2023.
61. Revenue costs for the first full year of opening are estimated to be £319k, based on the current costs of teaching and support staff required to operate a starter school at the point of opening and the current running costs of the building plus an inflationary uplift.
62. Additional revenue costs associated with the opening of the new welsh medium starter school can be met from existing resources within the current financial year. Recurring revenue costs for future financial years will need to be factored into the work associated with the development of the medium term financial plan as there is currently no provision for opening of additional schools within the delegated schools budget quantum. As such the revenue costs for the new starter school represents a pressure on Council resources and additional funding will need to be secured to operate the school successfully.
63. Once the starter school is in operation the budget allocation for the school will come from the annual overall Schools Budget quantum. The school will receive an annual budget share allocation, using the same budget formula methodology as every other primary school within the authority. The school will need to operate within the financial constraints of its annual schools budget, the same as every other school.
64. Most of the revenue budget allocation to schools is generated by pupil numbers. Therefore the proposed new school budget will be based mainly on the pupil roll, and as the pupil numbers grow the budget will also increase. Based on a school of 210 full time pupils and 45 part time nursery places the projected budget share for the proposed new school is estimated to be approx. £957k when the school is fully occupied.

65. Transport costs are unlikely to be affected by this proposal as while it is expected that pupils attending the proposed new school will no longer require transport, the current buses will still be required to transport pupils to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from other areas, although it is possible that smaller vehicles could be used, or routes could be combined so less vehicles are needed.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

66. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Environment (Wales) Act 2016).
67. The IIA is attached as appendix C. This indicates that the proposal is likely to have an impact on pupils, staff and other potential users of the new school. The proposal may also impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language. Members are asked to consider the same as part of any decision making.

### **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and impact on Welsh Language**

68. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot. We believe that all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh. The local authority underpins this principle by committing to enabling all learners to benefit from its universal access to this provision.
69. Our statutory education system also has a vital role to play in increasing the number of Welsh speakers as highlighted by Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. In order to achieve our goals, we must significantly increase the number of school learners who have the opportunity to develop Welsh-language skills in all settings and thus use it in their everyday lives.
70. Welsh Government have set a target for Neath Port Talbot to increase the number of learners accessing Welsh-medium education



of between 17% and 27% over a 10 year period. This target is based on increasing the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.

71. In order to reach our target of an increase of 208 pupils by the end of the 10 year plan, we will aim to establish 3 new Welsh-medium schools within Neath Port Talbot. The first of the 3 schools is the subject of this proposal, a new single form entry starter school in Neath Abbey area subject to member approval and compliance with the extant criteria of the Schools' Organisation Code.

### **Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

72. Overall the proposal is expected to have many positive impacts on the Welsh language. The proposal will support the council's progress towards the Welsh in Education Plan targets of increasing the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032 and will also provide the opportunity to increase the numbers of primary aged pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision within their immediate area.
73. The proposal should allow further growth in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from their local areas at the same time as creating school places for a growing population in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas.
74. Additionally onsite childcare provision should support parents and encourage those who do not speak Welsh to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.
75. To further improve the positive impacts the council will ensure that the new school, if approved, will be publicised to raise awareness with prospective parents, with the aim of ensuring that there is a growing Welsh speaking pupil population in the area.
76. Negative impacts on the language identified by consultees could occur if pupil numbers at in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn do not increase as expected. It is unlikely that overall pupil numbers in Neath Port Talbot would not increase with the introduction of a new school, however it is recognised that the current schools may need additional support to

ensure that the recent rise in pupil numbers continues. It will be necessary to ensure that additional support is provided and that these schools are also publicised in their local areas. Additional building work has already taken place at both schools to increase the capacity and to improve the learning environments.

77. Admission arrangements will need to ensure that new pupils are not 'swapping' between schools and that catchment areas are adhered to as much as possible while still allowing for parental choice. The proposal to open the starter school one year group at a time will prevent sudden destabilisation of the current schools as children who are already attending will not be able to move into the new school, as only nursery pupils will be able to apply.
78. The Welsh Language Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix B and members are requested to consider the same as part of decision making.

### **Valley Communities Impacts**

79. There are no impacts on valley communities as result of this report.

### **Workforce impacts**

80. This proposal seeks to establish a new Welsh-medium school and as such any workforce impacts are positive, as new teaching and support staff would be required for the new school.
81. There is a risk that pupil numbers at existing schools that could be affected by this proposal could reduce, leading to possible job losses. This is not anticipated in the early years of the school opening as numbers in the catchment areas have demonstrated significant growth which is predicted to continue. However if this was to be the case then staff from the Welsh-medium schools or who have the appropriate Welsh language skills in the English-medium schools could transfer to the new school, where additional staff would be needed.
82. The draft Welsh in Education Plan outlines the need for additional staff with appropriate Welsh language skills across Neath Port Talbot in future years and how training and development needs will be identified and addressed. It is expected that staff in the current English-medium schools in this area may wish to develop Welsh

language skills in the future enabling them to also transfer to the new school if they should wish to do so and if the pupil numbers grow as expected.

## **Legal impacts**

83. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement a proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation. The Council's procedures are in line with legislative requirements.
84. Pupil travel arrangements will be in line with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008; the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014; and the Council's Home to School Travel Policy, 2017.
85. Revenue funding will be in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998; the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010; and the Council's approved formula for funding schools.

## **Risk Management Impacts**

86. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
87. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.
88. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:
  - forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise
  - the demand for Welsh-medium places is not as high as expected
  - current Welsh-medium schools pupil numbers reduce
  - increased staff anxiety in current schools affected by the proposal
  - resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support
  - educational standards not maintained
  - 21st Century School capital funding opportunity not realised

- the development of Welsh in the early years is not realised due to no available, suitable site for a childcare provision
  - budget allocation insufficient to meet needs
89. Failing to implement the proposal will result in the following teaching/learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:
- progress towards the Welsh in Education Plan targets of increasing the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032
  - increasing the numbers of primary aged pupils accessing Welsh-medium provision within their immediate area
  - allowing further growth in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from their local areas
  - creating school places for a growing population in the Neath Abbey, Skewen and Crymlyn areas
  - avoiding increased transport costs as a result of having to transport children across Neath Port Talbot to access suitable provision due to nearest suitable schools being full
  - onsite childcare provision to support parents and encourage those who do not speak Welsh to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children
90. The benefits of implementing the proposal will mitigate the effects of identified risks. A new Welsh-medium school in Neath Abbey will ensure progress towards the targets of increased numbers of pupils taught through the medium of Welsh as outlined in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, and will enable existing Welsh-medium schools to continue to grow and flourish with pupils from their local areas.
91. The full risk assessment is attached to this report as appendix D.

## **Recommendation**

92. Having given due regard to the impact assessments in relation to equality, risk and Welsh language, and to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales 2015), together with the legal implications, it is recommended that,

(a) In line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve the statutory publication of a proposal to establish a new Welsh –medium primary school at St John’s Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND

(b) The proposed date of implementation to be 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

(c) Notice of the proposal to be published on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, allowing 28 days for receipt of objections and a report be brought back to members following the outcome of this period for final determination by members.

### **Reasons for proposed decision**

93. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal publication requirements of the School Organisation Code and associated legislation. A draft statutory notice is attached as appendix G. Implementation of the proposal will enable the Council to promote high educational standards and the fulfilment of every child’s potential. It will also enable the Council to meet its duty to secure efficient education in its area.

### **Implementation of the decision**

94. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation following consultation with the chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: Consultation report

Appendix B: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix D: Risk Assessment

Appendix E: Consultation Document

Appendix F: Cabinet Board report January 2022

Appendix G: Draft Statutory Notice

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning  
Service  
Strategic School Improvement Programme

## **CONSULTATION REPORT**

**Proposal to establish a new  
Welsh-medium  
3-11 school in Neath Abbey**



## **Response to consultation on the Proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey**

### **- analysis and comments**

#### ***Introduction***

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the Council's Cabinet determined to consult on the proposal to establish a Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey. The consultation period ran from 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022. A list of consultees is included at Appendix A. This consultation report summarises the issues raised by consultees during the consultation period. It responds to these by means of clarification and commentary, with supporting reasons.

Consultation responses were received in support of the proposal recognising the need for an additional Welsh-medium school in the area, the linguistic benefits to the community and the vision of making Welsh-medium education accessible to all. Concerns were raised relating to the traffic management of the proposed site and age of the current building.

The view of Estyn, the schools' inspectorate, is included in this consultation report together with views from parents, the community, the Community Council, Governing Bodies and Menter Iaith.

This report needs to be read alongside the consultation document, 'Proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey.'

#### ***Context***

The Council has consulted with interested parties on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey located on the vacant site of the former Abbey Primary, St John's Terrance, Neath Abbey.



## ***Background***

The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner is the challenge facing the Council. Achieving this will involve reviewing the number and type of schools the Council has in its area and assessing whether or not best use is being made of resources and facilities.

Implementing the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP) involves reviewing existing provision and determining the number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough. It will most likely lead to substantial change involving opening new schools, closing existing schools, merging or amalgamating schools, federating schools and promoting new initiatives that support collaborative working between schools.

The Council has determined to review its provision on the basis of:

- educational standards
- the need for places and the accessibility of schools
- the quality and suitability of school accommodation
- effective financial management

The Council is proposing to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey.

It has been proposed that the new school will be located on the vacant site of the former Abbey Primary, St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey and is expected to open to nursery pupils in January 2023.

The new Welsh-medium primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years will be a starter school. It will open initially with only Nursery class, and a year group will be added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6. Full capacity of the school will be realised in September 2029 when all year groups will operate under a one-form entry arrangement. As a result, the proposed new school will provide for up to 210 full-time primary age pupils and 45 part-time nursery age pupils in September 2029. This will deliver sufficient accommodation for the total combined forecasted pupil numbers, including potential growth in pupil population.

The proposed new Welsh –medium school will serve the combined catchment areas of Crymlyn, Coedffranc and Abbey primary schools, making it easier for parents to easily understand their Welsh-medium and English-

medium choices, and is a change to the current situation where pupils in this area attend either Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn. Approximately 50 pupils from the Neath Abbey area also attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las which is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school.

It is anticipated that the majority of pupils attending will live within a two mile radius of the proposed new school, ensuring that Welsh medium education is available within their local area. Current data indicates that of the 125 pupils who currently travel from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, 117 live within a 2 mile radius of the proposed new school site.

## ***Consultation process***

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the Council's Cabinet determined to consult on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey. The consultation period ran from 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022. A list of consultees is included at Appendix A. The consultation document was made available by e-mail to consultees. It was also available on the Council's website. Hard copies were available on request.

Responses to the consultation were submitted by email, and via the Council's online consultation portal. Details of how to respond were included in the consultation document and links to the online consultation portal were included on the website and on the Council's social media channels.

The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code requires the Council to consult on its proposal and to publish a consultation report summarising any issues raised by consultees, the Council's response to those issues and Estyn's view of the overall merit of the proposal.

The proposal and the consultation report will be considered by elected Members of the Council and should it be agreed to proceed with the plans consulted upon then the next stage of the process will be to publish a statutory notice outlining the proposal. This would be published for a period of 28 days during which written objections may be submitted.

Where objections are received, an objection report will be published summarising the objections and the Council's response to those objections. Elected Members of the Council will consider the proposal in light of

objections received when taking a decision as to whether or not the proposal is to be implemented.

## **Consultation Responses**

Online responses                    44, 26 in support  
 Emails                                    3, 2 in support  
 Paper forms/letter                0, 0 in support

In total 47 responses

Although a count of the responses is shown below, no particular weight is given to the number received as it is the views expressed and issues raised which informed this consultation report.

Table 1

Parents/Carers	12	Members of the Community	20
Staff	1	Others	6
Governors/ Governing Bodies	2	Community Council	1
ESTYN	1	Prospective parents/ carers	4

### **- Summary of comments received**

In order to reflect the sentiment and feelings expressed by respondents, extracts from the responses to the consultation are included below. These are a sample of the views expressed. Individual concerns and queries have been addressed either directly or indirectly in the officer response to each of the main themes arising from the consultation.

*-I'm supportive. It is important that we allow accessible Welsh-medium education for everyone close to home.*

*-This will contribute towards the government's target for a million Welsh speakers.*

*- We agree that it is a great idea to establish a new Welsh-medium school in the area. Looking at statistics in the consultation we can see that the demand is here. The Council needs to remember how important it is to promote the benefits of Welsh-medium education with parents in the area, so that they understand all the benefits that they and their children have as they attend a Welsh-medium school. We as Menter Iaith would be keen to help with this important promotional work.*

- The governing body of Ysgol Gymraeg Castell-nedd has recently met to discuss your plan to establish a new Welsh-medium school aged 3-11 in Neath Abbey and we are pleased to say that we are in favour of the scheme.
- I think it would be excellent to have a school in the village of Skewen. It would serve a large area, reduce congestion through Neath Town Centre. Save parents from Skewen having to travel.
- YGG Castell Nedd is currently over subscribed with limited capacity to expand. Having more local Welsh school encourages more people to speak Welsh and can only be a good thing for our community.
- I think it gives a lot more options to the area if this was an option when my son started I would off 100% put him in the Welsh school.
- My son would have a great opportunity to learn the Welsh language within the community. He would potentially start on January in the first nursery class. I think this would be great for children of Neath Abbey and Skewen.
- The Welsh language is an important part of Wales. It is currently a dying language and it is our responsibility to not let it die out completely.
- For children living in Skewen and Neath abbey area there is no Welsh language school within walking distance at present. The Welsh government aims to give all children in wales the opportunity to learn in Welsh medium, and as it stands children in this area have less of a change due to having to commute in neighbouring towns and as a result a slap being out of catchment area.
- As a very local resident i would be pleased to see a welsh school in skewen, wish it was available when we moved here 4 years ago as we would have sent our daughter, unfortunately its to late for our daughter but wiuld be a fantastic benifit to local children when they reach school age, as well as being an asset to skewen itself.
- It is high time that there was a choice as to whether Welsh-medium learning would be provided within the local community.
- Having better access to Welsh Schools in the area would be a phenomenal advancement for Wales.
- There are no welsh schools this side of Neath and living in skewen but working in Swansea this would be ideal when my 1 year old comes to start school.
- This is a wonderful proposal to keep the Welsh language alive and thriving.
- I would likely move out of the area should there not be an opportunity to send my kids to welsh school. The building should be protected and rescued, as should the other site. Parking will continue to be an issue as it is now, however this could be mitigated with better policing in the area during key times.
- As a welsh speaker I would want my child to go to a welsh medium school the only option is Ysgol Castell Nedd and with Bro Dur open now too I feel there should be stronger and better feeder primary schools in the area.
- As a previous pupil and current community member it would be a waste for the building to be vacant, there's also no local Welsh schools that are easily accessible for our local community, I believe this will help the Welsh language flourish and create a stronger local Welsh community.

- It would definitely have a positive impact because we are going to offer golden opportunities for the children of the area to use the Welsh language.
- I would question why it is being sited where it is given the current chaos that traffic and parking causes for both residents and parents every day.
- This is far too dangerous for a school, so pleased new school built in Longford, so this is adding even more traffic to already congested chaos and no parking outside school.
- My understanding of the reason the current school was moved was due to safety concerns of children on the main road. This is not a good location for a school. I support the opening of extra Welsh schools in the area but not in this location.
- Whilst a new Welsh school is much needed the site was closed as unsuitable for English medium education but is deemed suitable for children attending a Welsh medium school. It is situated on an extremely busy road which is not suitable for young children.
- Traffic ,congestion, pollution. All the reasons the previous school was moved. Why should children at a Welsh school be of less concern of these issues than those at an English one. Not good enough for those attending an English speaking school but ok for Welsh speaking ones. Is this another example of the resurgence of the Welsh Knot?
- The establishment of the new school on this site will bring with it all the traffic problems previously experiences by Mynachlog Nedd Junior School over the years.
- It is a pity that the proposal is not a brand new building rather than being established in an old building.
- Another ageing building, limited site capacity to grow, failure to take into account what it takes to develop a high performing school, and a failure to address the ageing and limited site capacities of existing welsh schools in the area. It also fails to take into account the needs of a site in line with the new curriculum e.g outdoor space and a flexible learning space.
- Once again Welsh language schools are being given the leftovers when English medium schools are built a new campus to suit today's needs. It is not fair on Welsh medium children. Why do they not get a purpose built state of the art school?
- Why not a new building rather than an old building?
- Only as long as the school is temporary and leads to a move to a brand new school.
- My understanding is that there would be a school sited closer to the Coed Darcy estate. I am not sure why this isn't happening.
- Also my children are now settled with friends and class mates in castell nedd I would not like them to be forced to move schools due to this decision.
- There are already two Welsh medium schools within the area and how will this new school affect their intake/numbers?
- Long has been the expectation, and difficult to understand this choice of site after 25 years and in remembering the consultation that has been and the promise to build a Welsh-medium school in Llandarcy

## **Governing Body Responses**

The governing body of Ysgol Gymraeg Castell-nedd have responded and state *'The governing body of Ysgol Gymraeg Castell-nedd has recently met to discuss your plan to establish a new Welsh-medium school aged 3-11 in Neath Abbey and we are pleased to say that we are in favour of the scheme'*.

Additionally the following specific point was raised:

- *'While we support the proposed opening of a new Welsh-medium school we would like to express our disappointment that that school is to be established in the old Neath Abbey school buildings'*

### **Trade Unions**

No responses were received from Trade Unions

### **Community and Town Councils**

A responses has been received from Clydach Community Council.

Clydach Community Council raised concerns around traffic and parking issues around the site of the proposed new school.

### **Estyn**

It is Estyn's view that that the proposer has given a clear explanation of the rationale behind the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey.

Estyn states that it would also provide more local Welsh-medium education in an area where there are parents who want Welsh-medium education for their children. Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to maintain current standards of education, provision, and leadership and management.

They also consider that a 'seedling school' is the most appropriate solution for a new Welsh-medium school, which would prevent the problem of creating instability in existing Welsh-medium schools that currently provide education for this catchment area.

ESTYN states that another major advantage is the new Welsh-medium childcare provision that will be located on the school's site as the nearest provision is currently some distance away in Neath. Locating the new childcare provision at the school will give parents more choice and flexibility to choose Welsh-medium education for their children.

Estyn have commented that - *The proposer has not clearly explained the process they intend to follow in terms of securing an effective governing body*

*for the seedling school, nor the plans for recruiting a headteacher and staff.* Should the proposal be approved then a new Governing Body will be formed, which might include some Governors from other Welsh-medium schools in the area, and governors who are local to the proposed new school. The Governing Body will receive support and advice from officers to help guide them through the process of recruiting and appointing staff.

When considering the four options in the consultation, ESTYN agree with the decision to support this option as the ideal one, especially when considering the local authority's target of increasing the number of pupils in Welsh-medium education over a 10-year period.

The full response is included as Appendix B.

## ***Officer responses***

### ***-Coed Darcy***

Comments have been received asking why the new Welsh-medium school will not be built as previously stated in Coed Darcy.

It is anticipated that when a school is built in Coed Darcy, it will be a Welsh-medium school. At present, the Local Authority does not own any land on this site. There is currently an outline planning application, with all matters reserved except for strategic access, for residential uses (C2 & C3 use class), including land for education (D1 use class) with associated public open space, commercial uses (A1, A2, A3, B1, D1 & D2), commercial/employment (B2 & B8) uses, public open space, highway works, sustainable drainage, ecological mitigation and enhancement, landscaping, ground remediation, and associated engineering and infrastructure work.

This is currently undetermined, but within the masterplan a site for education provision to serve the development has been identified.

It is for this reason that we have taken the decision not to wait for further building developments in Coed Darcy and to open a Welsh-medium seedling school in the area. Currently there are 124 pupils from the area attending Welsh medium education within NPT. 52 of these pupils are traveling on school transport from the area to YGG Castell-nedd and Tyle'r Ynn (schools at or close to full capacity) along with an additional 51 pupils in the area attending Welsh medium schools in a neighbouring authority. The current need for a Welsh-medium school in this area is clear.

The seedling school will have 210 places (one form entry) and could potentially transfer to Coed Darcy when a new school is built in the future. Alternatively, if the demand for Welsh medium education should grow as expected, there is a possibility that the Welsh-medium seedling school will

remain in Neath Abbey and an additional Welsh-medium school could be built in Coed Darcy to accommodate the growing numbers. Comprehensive demographic and geographic assessments will be completed in order to assess the situation when contractors complete the number of builds needed to trigger the build of a new school in line with planning requirements.

## **-The proposed location**

Comments have been received which question why the site was not fit for purpose for an English-medium school but is acceptable for a Welsh-medium school. Abbey Primary did not move to a new site as a result of the poor condition of the buildings nor as a result of any issues relating to safety. The decision in relocating the English-medium school was made due to capacity issues and the practical issues of having one primary school split over 3 sites. Therefore, the site in St. John's Terrace remains suitable for a one form entry school.

Another key reason for using an existing site as a starter school using the seedling model is to ensure that when a new Welsh-medium school is built in Coed Darcy, it will be of a correct size and capacity. At present, using catchment area data and the number of existing pupils from the area in Welsh-medium education, it is predicted that a single form entry Welsh-medium school is needed within the Neath Abbey area. Due to the high percentage of population growth in the area and its proximity to neighbouring Local Authorities, it is expected that the school will grow. At this stage, it is not possible to accurately predict the rate of growth in Welsh-medium education in this area due to the existing lack of Welsh-medium provision. Therefore, by establishing the first cohorts within the existing site and analysing admission application trends and population growth over the first years, we will be able to better predict the size and capacity needed for a new build Welsh-medium school within the area in the future.

A comment has been received in relation to lack of outdoor learning space on the proposed site. The site in St. John's Terrace comprises of a range of hard surface playground areas and an extensive grassed area adjacent to the buildings. These areas provide an excellent opportunity to develop a range of flexible outdoor learning spaces in line with the new curriculum.

## ***-Pupils forced to move schools***

Pupils who live within the catchment area but are currently attending other schools are not expected to transfer to the new Welsh-medium school. As the new school is a starter school, there will be no option for pupils in other



schools to transfer in January 2023, other than Nursery pupils, with Reception pupils in September 2023, Year 1 in September 2024 and so forth.

### ***-Traffic/ parking issues***

The proposal currently under consultation relates to establishing a new Welsh-medium school on an existing school site. It is proposed that this school will be for pupils within a two mile catchment radius and therefore within walking distance to school. It will open with a possible maximum number of 45 part time pupils (spread over 2 sessions) in January 2023 with an additional maximum of 30 pupils per additional year group per year. When at full capacity in 2029, the single form entry school will have a maximum of 210 full time pupils and 45 part time pupils. This total will be significantly less than the current number of pupils attending Abbey Primary.

During the first few years of the school opening the situation will be closely monitored by road safety and health and safety officers. Discussions have already taken place about some possible mitigating measures which could address traffic concerns, and these could be progressed if there is a need to do so, as the school population grows.

### ***– Transport to school, Travel***

All schools in Neath Port Talbot are committed to encouraging walking and cycling to school where possible. For many of the primary aged pupils the location of the proposed new school remains within 2 miles travel distance for homes in the catchment area.

It is anticipated that the majority of pupils attending will live within a two mile radius of the proposed new school, ensuring that Welsh medium education is available within their local area. Current data indicates that of the 125 pupils who currently travel from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, 117 live within a 2 mile radius of the proposed new school site.

Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. This means that primary school aged pupils living 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable or designated school will be considered for transport assistance.

Under the School Travel Plan requirements, all schools, together with the Council's Road Safety Team, are committed to:

- improving road safety within the local community
- raising awareness about travel issues
- encouraging walking, cycling and public transport for the school journey where applicable
- encouraging independent travel where applicable

In the longer term this proposal will negate the need for transport from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn.

### – ***Impact on other Schools***

A comment has been received which questions the impact of this proposal on intake/ admission numbers of the two Welsh-medium schools in the area, Ysgol Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn.

The new Welsh-medium school will follow the starter school model. A starter school is a model that can be used when establishing a new school to allow the facilities and staff to be used efficiently whilst the school grows to its full potential. The benefits of using the starter school model is that the new school capacity will grow as demand increases, it will ensure stable growth to support existing schools and it will reduce the possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools.

The starter model of growth will minimise the likelihood and impact of a reduction in intake numbers in YGG Castell-nedd and YGG Tyle'r Ynn by limiting the availability of additional pupil places in older year groups.

The school opens initially with only Nursery class, and a year group is then added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6. The benefits of using this model is that it ensures stable growth to support existing schools and reduces the possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools.

In the last 2 years significant funding has been secured for Ysgol Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn and Ysgol Gymraeg Castell-nedd, with the aim of increasing the school capacity and providing enhanced teaching and learning environments across the school due to capacity pressure.

In Tyle'r Ynn, £1.14m of funding was awarded which enabled the provision of 2 extra classroom spaces and a new Welsh medium childcare provision. It is anticipated that this will ease accommodation pressures in the area, with demand for Welsh medium pupil places increasing year on year. The project

has been successfully completed and is a very welcome and timely addition to the school. Pupil numbers have already shown an increase with both nursery and reception classes full in September 2021.

A new 60 place Foundation Phase classroom provision at YGG Castell-nedd has also been provided as part of the Reducing Infant Class Size grant in order to alleviate capacity pressures. Pupil numbers have already shown an increase with most classes near or at full capacity.

## ***Alternative Options***

Consultees have responded with alternative suggestions which are responded to below.

### **A. Build a new Welsh-medium school on an alternative site**

Comments have been received suggesting a new Welsh-medium school should be built on an alternative site. Suggestions have included Coed Darcy, Longford, Bryncoch and Neath Abbey. Progress with the developer as regards a proposed new Welsh-medium Primary school at Coed Darcy (funded through a S106 Planning Agreement) continues to move forward slowly. Consideration has also been given to the building of another whole new school in the Neath Abbey area. Land of sufficient size to accommodate a new Welsh-medium primary school in the area is scarce and given the likely planning and construction programme associated with delivery of a new school, there is unlikely to be any timely easing of the short-term pressures on the increasing demand for Welsh-medium primary education in the general Neath Abbey area.

### **B. Extend YGG Castell-nedd to accommodate increases pupil numbers**

YGG Castell-nedd benefitted from two additional modular classrooms funded through the Welsh Government's Infant Class Size Reduction Grant totalling £325K. YGG Castell-nedd occupies a restricted site in a town centre setting and is now fully developed. The school is easily sustainable from pupils attending from the designated catchment. The majority of pupils likely to attend from the Neath Abbey would not be within walking distance which would lead to an accompanying increase in transport costs. Also, land of sufficient size to accommodate a new Welsh-medium primary school in Castell-nedd is scarce and given the likely planning and construction programme associated with delivery of a new school, there is unlikely to be any timely easing of the short-term pressures on the increasing demand for Welsh-medium primary education in the general Neath Abbey area.

### **C. Make the new school a dual language school**

At present there are sufficient numbers of English-medium places within the catchment area but no Welsh-medium provision or places. The purpose of this proposal is to promote and grow the Welsh language and to ensure that there is equity between both languages thus ensuring that parents have a choice. The aim of this proposal is not to further increase the sufficient number of English-medium places within the catchment. Also, a larger site would be required to accommodate a dual language school as it would attract more pupils from within the catchment area. This would potentially put English-medium schools within the area at risk.

#### **D. New build on the existing site**

There is no room on this site to expand the capacity further or build a new school that meets Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Standards in terms of area per pupil. Due to the size of the site, the new Welsh-medium school will be a single form entry school. The current site would not allow expansion due to its limited area.

### ***Conclusion***

Having considered all the information gathered to date, it is the view of officers that establishing a Welsh-medium starter school on the site of the former Abbey Primary in St John's Terrace, Neath will deliver the greatest benefits to pupils, staff and the wider community as a whole within the given constraints of time, and capacity issues in neighbouring Welsh-medium schools.

The inclusion of a Welsh-medium childcare facility would ensure that families from the area are offered greater choice and flexibility, and will also support parents to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, as well as helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.

### ***The next step***

Following the publication of this consultation report, should the Council decide to progress with its plans as consulted upon then the next stage will be for it to approve the publication of a proposal, allowing 28 days for objections.

Consultees are advised that, unfavourable comments made during the consultation period will not be treated as objections. Anyone wishing to object

will need to do so in writing during the statutory objection period. Comments submitted as part of this consultation process will need to be re-submitted in writing during the statutory objection period if they are to be considered as objections.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

<b>List of Consultees</b>	
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn:  Pupils Parents / carers Staff Governing Body Wider School Community	NAASH (Secondary Schools Forum)
	LLAN (Primary Schools Forum)
	Bordering authorities – Swansea/ Bridgend/ Carmarthenshire/ Powys/ RCT
All other NPT schools	Dyffryn Clydach Community Council Coedffranc Town Council
NPT Elected Members	WG Schools Management Division
Diocesan Directors of Education  - Diocese of Menevia, Swansea - Diocese of Llandaff, Vale of Glamorgan	MP (for Neath) – Christina Rees
	AM (for Neath) – Jeremy Miles
Trade Unions	Regional Assembly Members
Estyn	ALN Partners
Regional Education Consortium (ERW)	Children and Young Person Partnership (inc. Early Years Development and Childcare)
NPTCBC Integrated Transport Unit	Police and Crime Commissioner
Communities First Partnership	NPTCBC Officers

**Estyn response to the proposal**

**Response by Estyn to the proposal by Neath Port Talbot Council to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey.**

**Introduction**

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales. Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals. Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

**Summary/Conclusion**

The proposer has given a clear explanation of the rationale behind the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school in Neath Abbey. Currently, 125 pupils from the Neath Abbey, Coedffranc and Crumlin area travel to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Tyle'r Ynn to receive Welsh-medium education. Both of those schools are full, or almost full, so a new school in this area would probably alleviate the problem in those schools. It would also provide more local Welsh-medium education in an area where there are parents who want Welshmedium education for their children. Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to maintain current standards of education, provision, and leadership and management.

**Description and advantages**

The proposer has set out a clear rationale for providing Welsh-medium education locally to a number of parents who choose Welsh-medium education for their children. They also consider that a 'seedling school' is the most appropriate solution for a new Welsh-medium school, which would prevent the problem of creating instability in existing Welsh-medium schools that currently provide education for this catchment area. The proposer explains the 'seedling school' model in detail and how this model works as it develops from nursery-only to a fully-grown school. They have also set out

clearly the expected timetable for statutory procedures and implementation of the proposals. Neath Port Talbot Council has identified the expected advantages and disadvantages of establishing a 'seedling school' and has also listed the expected advantages of the proposal. These include moving towards the local authority's WESP targets, providing more opportunities for pupils to benefit from Welsh-medium provision and reducing travel times to school. Another major advantage is the new Welsh-medium childcare provision that will be located on the school's site. The nearest provision is currently some distance away in Neath. Locating the new childcare provision at the school will give parents more choice and flexibility to choose Welsh-medium education for their children. The proposer has considered potential risks and risk management actions appropriately. Risks are identified, such as the risk that demand for Welsh-medium education is lower than expected or that there is resistance to change leading to a lack of support from pupils, parents and staff. The main factor in mitigating these risks is the local and national pattern of growth in demand for Welsh-medium education when a new school opens. The main risk to consider is the failure to realise the opportunity for capital expenditure, since this will greatly affect the nature of the project as the scheme will need remodelling and renovation which will significantly impair the plans and advantages listed in the consultation. The proposer considered four options before deciding on this proposal as the ideal option. The other three options include either expanding another Welsh-medium school or allocating a different site in the Neath Abbey area. Expanding other Welsh-medium schools would not meet the requirements for Welsh-medium education locally and allocating land for a new school would be more time-consuming and much more costly. We agree with the decision to support this option as the ideal one, especially when considering the local authority's target of increasing the number of pupils in Welsh-medium education over a 10-year period. To achieve this, they aim to establish three new Welsh-medium schools within the local authority, and this consultation is the first. The Council has given fair consideration to the effect of the changes on learners' travel arrangements. It is reasonable to expect that the majority of pupils that will attend the school will live within two miles of the new school. This is because current data show that of the 125 pupils that travel from the area to neighbouring Welsh-medium schools, 117 live within 2 miles of the site of the proposed new school. In the long term, this should reduce the need for transport from the area to the two neighbouring Welsh-medium schools. The proposer gives detailed consideration to financial costs including the impact on the budget as the school grows. The main factor is whether or not the Council will succeed in its bid for grant funding to help meet additional capital and revenue costs through the 21st Century Schools programme. Without this funding, the proposal cannot be realised in full.



**Educational aspects of the proposal**

The proposer has not clearly explained the process they intend to follow in terms of securing an effective governing body for the seedling school, nor the plans for recruiting a headteacher and staff. For example, it is not clear whether the seedling school will be under the supervision of a successful headteacher or governing body from another school as it establishes. The proposal appears to consider recruiting new staff and a new governing body at the outset, but this is not considered a risk and there are no steps to mitigate the impact should the process not succeed. The proposer has considered information from the latest Estyn reports for the two neighbouring Welsh-medium schools that are likely to be affected. They have also considered the potential impact on other nearby schools.

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