

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: PROPOSED PROJECTS FOR THE COUNCIL'S 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS CAPITAL FUNDING PROGRAMME - BAND B (2019-2024)

Context

1. This Welsh language impact assessment¹ has been carried out to inform Member decision making in respect of the proposal's alignment with Council's position on the promotion and celebration of Welsh language and Welsh culture.
2. Implementing the Band B programme of projects will result in improved facilities for delivering Welsh language education and for supporting Welsh cultural activities.

The reasons for the proposed programme of projects

3. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education.
4. Having the right schools in the right place and ensuring that they are fit for the 21st century learner is the challenge facing the Council.
5. The Council established a Strategic School Improvement Programme (SSIP) in 2008; a programme that has brought about significant change to the school estate during the ensuing period, including new build schools supported by Band A of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme of capital funding.
6. Continuing to implement the Council's school reorganisation programme will involve an ongoing review of existing provision to determine the optimum number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough.
7. The Council continues to review its provision on the basis of:
 - educational standards
 - the need for places and the accessibility of schools

¹ First iteration: 190917

- the quality and suitability of school accommodation
 - effective financial management
8. The Council is committed to Welsh language education. Its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)² is integrally supported by its school organisation programme, the delivery of which has used Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme capital funding (Band A) together with the Council's own resources to enhance provision for Welsh language education. This has included specific investment in Welsh-medium education, delivering new build accommodation in the north of the County Borough, at both secondary and primary phase level, and by establishing a new build school for pupils aged 11-16 in the south.
 9. A new school in the south of the County Borough improves access to education through the medium of Welsh, the effect of which will be to stimulate demand for places at Welsh-medium schools. This initiative, combined with reorganisation of primary phase education in the north of the County Borough, delivering a more sustainable Welsh-medium provision, reaffirms the Council's commitment to Welsh language education.
 10. The Band B programme seeks to build on Band A investments, further enhancing the quality of the Welsh-medium school estate by replacing poor condition buildings in the north of the County Borough with new build accommodation. It also supports Welsh second language education by delivering new build, fit for purpose, English-medium schools.

Welsh language impacts associated with the proposal

11. The Council recognises that language and culture are essential parts of an individual's identity and it is committed to promoting and celebrating the Welsh language and culture in a pro-active and inclusive way. The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) details how it intends to further develop Welsh language education in schools. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot schools where all children benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives in a Welsh-medium environment. The Council underpins this principle by ensuring universal access to this provision.

² NPT Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP): 2014 – 2017 & 2017 – 2020 (*awaiting approval*)

BAND B

12. The programme of projects in Band B will enhance pupils' Welsh language experience by creating more stimulating and aspirational teaching and learning environments in state of the art, 21st Century facilities that will impact positively on the self-esteem and well-being of pupils, leading to improved learning outcomes for all children across the ability range.
13. A new school will bring more choices and greater opportunities because there is more space and there are better facilities. Estyn (2007) reports that the attainment and achievement of pupils improves significantly when they move into new or significantly refurbished buildings, particularly when schools are in areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation.
14. New schools will ensure that pupils have adaptable ICT facilities suitable for learning in the 21st century. Mobile technology will be integrated with a sound pedagogical base to provide pupils with enhanced learning experiences, equipping them with the key skills and motivation needed to raise standards.
15. Band B new build schools will be exciting places for pupils and staff both internally and externally. There will be spacious, light and airy classrooms, access to a range of high quality and appropriate spaces for social interaction supporting the delivery of a pupil centred, inclusive and skills based curriculum that extends to social, sporting and cultural activities.
16. The Council supports and promotes the use of Welsh language through the development of Welsh language education policy and practices in first and second language settings. Implementation of proposals for 21st Century schools and school reorganisation plans ensure the delivery of sustainable Welsh language provision.
17. The 21st Century school environments resulting from the Band B programme of projects will contribute to increasing the number of pupils achieving A*-C at GCSE in Welsh second-language. New build schools stimulate effective teaching and learning. All pupils in new build English-medium schools will be given the opportunity to sit an accredited examination in Welsh at the end of Key Stage 4.
18. Within the Band B programme of projects there is support for the successful continuum from Welsh-medium primary schools to Welsh-medium secondary schools, ensuring a greater rate of

transfer from KS2 to KS3 and for ensuring that the post 16 curriculum offered through the medium of Welsh is broad and meets the aspirations of all students. Likewise pupils with ALN will have linguistic equality of opportunity in terms of Welsh-medium education and support.

19. By helping learners achieve fluency in Welsh through promoting easier access to Welsh-medium schools, Band B supports the Council's vision and aims for Welsh-medium education, as set out in the WESP, and also the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy³ and its vision for Welsh speakers by 2050⁴.
20. The Band B programme of projects secures secondary phase Welsh-medium education in the north of the County Borough, including provision for pupils from a neighbouring authority, Powys.
21. The provision of services associated with the delivery of the Band B programme of projects will not treat the Welsh language less favourably than English, in line with the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011.

Welsh language impact assessment

22. In light of the evidence presented it is concluded that:
 - implementing the Band B programme of projects should result in a positive impact on Welsh language development with increased access to Welsh-medium education and improved provision in Welsh second language settings;
 - the proposal will consolidate Welsh-medium education in the County Borough by creating a viable and sustainable provision; and
 - the proposal contributes the Welsh Government's aspiration for Welsh language and Welsh language education.

³ Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy: April 2010

⁴ Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* Strategy