

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

12th September 2019

REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR SECONDARY AGE PUPILS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Purpose of report

1. To obtain approval to consult on the establishment of specialist provision for secondary age pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School.

Executive summary

2. The Council is responsible for ensuring suitable provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
3. Recent work on reviewing the number and type of planned places and assessment provision across Neath Port Talbot has indicated that there is a need for extra places in the areas of ASD and Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), and for those early years pupils with identified additional learning needs which require further assessment.

4. Approval is sought to consult on a proposal to establish a specialist provision for secondary age pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School.
5. Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School has been identified as being suitable for hosting this provision. The headteacher and the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) have been involved in the development of this proposal and are fully supportive of this initiative. The Governing Body and staff have also shown initial support for the proposal.
6. The proposal seeks to complement the specialist provision and support already available within the County Borough.

Background

7. 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 21st 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. This will include ensuring suitable provision for those pupils with special educational needs/additional learning needs.
8. Implementing the 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. It will also involve re-organising education provision to ensure pupils gain access to and benefit from the specialist support, skills and expertise available within the County Borough.
9. The Council has decided 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
10. The Council provides for the pupils of Neath Port Talbot who require specialist support for their educational needs at two community special schools and at learning support/ inclusion centres attached to community primary/secondary schools.
 11. Currently there are 8 specialist provisions available in Neath Port Talbot mainstream secondary schools for supporting secondary age pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) including those for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Visual Impairment (VI), Hearing Impairment (HI), Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD), Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), Speech Language and Communication Difficulties (SLCD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).
 12. Recent work on reviewing the number and type of planned places and assessment provision across Neath Port Talbot has indicated that there is a need for extra places in the areas of ASD and SEBD, and for those early years pupils with identified additional learning needs which require further assessment.
 13. Initial work has led to the development of a continuum of support for pupils with SEBD with the aim of ensuring that pupils at all stages have their needs assessed and are appropriately supported to make progress. As a result, provisions for secondary age pupils with SEBD were established at Ysgol Hendrefelin and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School and for primary age pupils at Coedffranc Primary and Crynallt Primary schools in recent years.
 14. This proposal seeks to address identified need for further provision for pupils with ASD, specifically for secondary aged pupils, with the aim of ensuring best possible outcomes for pupils.
 15. Currently for primary age pupils with ASD who need specialist support or assessment, provision is made at Gnoll Primary (18 places), Maesmarchog Primary (18 places) and Waunceirch Primary (17 places). Secondary provision is available at Cwmtawe Community School (13 places), Ysgol Bae Baglan (29 places) and Ysgol Hendrefelin (16 places). The high demand at both primary and secondary level is placing pressure on current provisions which are consistently full.

Identifying Potential Host Schools

16. All schools were invited to express an interest in hosting a new ASD provision, but only Dwr Y Felin is now currently being considered.
17. In identifying host schools for the proposed secondary ASD provision the following criteria has been applied.

The host school will:

- be fully committed to inclusion and provide a caring and supportive environment that will have a positive impact on pupils' personal well-being and development
 - demonstrate a good track record for ensuring the progress of all pupils
 - be a mainstream school delivering secondary phase education as pupils will need to access Key Stage 2 and 3 curriculum
 - provide the opportunity for integration, as appropriate, into mainstream classes and mainstream activities
 - be able to provide pupils with high quality learning experiences
 - have space available suitable to meet the needs and requirements of the pupils
 - be within reasonable travelling distance for secondary age pupils and have easy vehicular access
18. Applying these criteria Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School has been identified as being suitable for hosting this provision. The headteacher and the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) have been involved in the development of this proposal and are fully supportive of this initiative. The Governing Body and staff have also shown initial support for the proposal.

The Proposal

19. It is proposed to establish a specialist provision for secondary age pupils with ASD at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School.
20. The facility will provide learning support for pupils with ASD for up to 16 pupils who are in receipt of a Statement of SEN.
21. The provision will be managed by the school and be under the school's governance. However it will be a provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN and pupils admitted to

the provision would be in addition to the admission number of the school. Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply.

22. Pupils at the proposed provision will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs. There is also the possibility that mainstream pupils with ASD could also benefit from the expertise available.
23. The provision will alleviate the current pressure to address demand for places for pupils with more complex needs, avoiding potential costly out of county placements and allowing opportunities for children to access learning within their local community.
24. The proposal seeks to complement the specialist provision and support already available within the County Borough.

Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School

25. Dŵr y Felin is an 11-16 Comprehensive School for boys and girls, situated on the outskirts of Neath. In 2012 the school became a single site school, with a state of the art teaching and learning facility based at Cwrt Herbert.
26. The school is currently a 'professional learning pioneer school' meaning that it is working with the Welsh Government and other professional learning pioneer schools to develop a national model of professional learning.
27. The school was inspected by Estyn in 2017 and current performance was judged to be good, with prospects for improvement reported to be excellent. It is reported that 'Over the last four years, the school's performance in most indicators at key stage 4 has been strong and compares favourably with that in similar schools. Over the same period, many pupils have made more progress than expected from previous key stages.' (Estyn 2017)
28. Dwr y Felin Comprehensive has a good track record for inclusion and pupils make good progress. Estyn report that: The support and care for pupils with additional learning needs is an exemplary

feature' adding that 'As a result of the quality and extent of support, pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress'.

29. Estyn also report that: 'The quality of care, support and guidance provided for pupils is an outstanding feature of the school's work. The school provides an extremely caring and supportive environment that focuses relentlessly on the wellbeing and personal development of all pupils. This is coupled with a clear emphasis on ensuring that all pupils achieve their academic potential.'
30. It is intended that the provision will be housed in a building within the school site that is surplus to requirements and currently unused by pupils.

Consultation

31. This school organisation 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, July 2013, which specifies the procedures to be followed, including the content of the consultation document and those to be consulted.
32. Subject to approval, it is intended to consult on this proposal between September 23rd and November 5th 2019.
33. Responses to the consultation will be reported to Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board for consideration by Members.

Impact on pupils

34. The proposed new provision will increase the opportunity for secondary pupils to access support in a specialist setting, based within the environment of a mainstream secondary school. The provision will enable pupils to acquire the skills and understanding to manage their individual behaviours and learning requirements.
35. The proposed specialist provision will be accessible to secondary age pupils from across the County Borough.

Impact on travel arrangements

36. Pupils' travel needs will be assessed in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. Secondary age pupils living 3 miles or more from the provision will be considered for assistance with travel costs.
37. 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
38. Dwr y Felin Comprehensive is a well-established school with established walking routes for children.
39. It is relatively centrally located within the County Borough and is readily accessible by vehicle.

Impact on governors

40. The governing body and the school leadership team at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School will be responsible for the day to day management of the provision, including the specialist staff who will become part of the school's staffing complement. The school budget will be funded accordingly.

Impact on special needs education provision

41. As a self-contained provision, the facility will not have a direct impact on the SEN provision of Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School where pupils with additional learning needs, including children with statements of special educational needs, are supported in a mainstream setting with appropriate funding for this purpose.
42. However, the specialist knowledge and skills-set of the staff employed to work at the provision will be available to share with mainstream staff and, as such, will indirectly benefit SEN provision at the school.
43. It is also envisaged that the provision will be able to provide support and training for other mainstream primary schools across Neath

Port Talbot, building skills, competencies, expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD.

Financial Impacts

44. Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School will receive additional funding to manage the provision for up to 16 pupils.
45. Meeting the special needs education of pupils in local settings, i.e. within the County Borough, avoids having to secure expensive out-of-county provision. The cost of providing education outside the County Borough for pupils with specialist needs is high, and can amount to circa. £80k per pupil per year. This annually presents a significant demand on the Council's education budget.
46. Provision has been made within the Department of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (DELLLs) revenue budget in 2019-2020 to fund the establishment of the provision.
47. The provision will be resourced by specialist teachers and teaching assistants or key workers with the appropriate skills set.
48. Self-contained accommodation will be developed in surplus accommodation at the school. There will be a one-off capital cost for the refurbishment/conversion work.
49. Secondary age pupils living 3 miles or more from the provision will be considered for assistance with travel costs and as such there is likely to be an increase on transport costs as a result of this proposal. Annual transport costs are difficult to predict as this will depend on the number of children needing to be transported and on the distance they will need to travel to the provision from their home. Again provision has been made within DELLLs revenue budget in 2019-2020 to help fund any additional transport costs.
50. There are no capital receipts or recurrent costs savings directly related to this proposal other than savings from potential home education/out-of-county placement costs.

Integrated Impact Assessment

51. A first stage impact assessment 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, the well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
52. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in depth assessment will be required if the proposal is progressed.
53. Should the proposal proceed it is likely to have an impact on pupils, staff and other potential users of the school. The proposal may also impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language. It is unknown whether the proposal would impact on biodiversity. Further consideration of how the proposal embraces the sustainable development principle is needed.
54. Following full consultation where views of all stakeholders will be gathered, greater information will be available which will further help to inform the full assessment.

Valleys Communities Impacts

55. There are no implications on the Valley Communities as a result of this report. Potential impacts will be assessed should this proposal succeed.

Workforce impacts

56. The position of staff currently employed at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School will not be adversely affected by this proposal. In fact, the increased number of pupils secures staff employment by creating additional employment opportunities by way of an increased staffing complement.
57. Additional staff posts have been identified and these will comprise of specialist teachers and teaching assistants or key workers. The skills and expertise that these additional staff members will possess will be available to be utilised for the benefit of the wider, mainstream school communities.

Legal impacts

58. The proposal will establish SEN provision in a mainstream school where the pupils admitted are in addition to the admission number for the school and where the provision is recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with SEN. As such, this constitutes a regulated alteration requiring the statutory publication of the proposal. 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.
59. 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.
60. 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.
61. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.

Risk management

62. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2015.
63. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:
- educational outcomes for pupils are not improved
 - integration at a provision is unsuccessful
 - negative response from parents of host school
 - staff with appropriate skills and expertise not available
 - increased governance and staff responsibilities
 - increased home to school travel time for some pupils leading to poor attendance.
 - Welsh language development not supported

64. Failing to implement the proposal will result in a range of teaching/learning and financial benefits not being fully realised, particularly in relation to:

- opportunities for a pupils to access specialist staff and support
- host school indirectly benefit from specialist staff on site
- mainstream schools benefit from increased support and training in order to improve skills and build capacity

65. The risk assessment is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Impact on community usage

66. The proposal should have no adverse impact on community usage at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School as there is no closure or reduction in community facilities involved with this proposal. The provision will occupy accommodation surplus to the school's requirements and will be a self-contained provision having no impact on the school's operation regarding community usage.

Recommendation

67. Having given due regard to the integrated impact and risk assessments, it is recommended that, in line with Section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members approve consultation on a proposal to establish specialist provision for secondary age pupils with ASD at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School.

Reasons for proposed decision

68. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal consultation requirements imposed on the Council by the School Organisation Code. Subject to the outcome of consultation, 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

69. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix A: Integrated Impact First Stage Assessment

Appendix B: Risk Assessment

List of background papers

a) Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper:
September 2008

[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/\\$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf)

b) Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: November 2018

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

c) School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf

d) Learner Travel (Wales) Measure: 2008 & the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance: 2014.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/pdfs/mwa_20080002_en.pdf

<http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/140616-ltog-en.pdf>

e) Home to School Travel Policy: 2017

https://www.npt.gov.uk/pdf/NPT_Home_to_School_Travel_Policy_2017.pdf

f) Estyn

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/search>