



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

Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning Service
Strategic School Improvement Programme

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH SPECIALIST PROVISION
FOR SECONDARY AGE PUPILS WITH
AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)
AT
DWR Y FELIN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL,
CONSULTATION REPORT**



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CONSULTATION REPORT

Responses from formal consultation on the proposal to establish specialist provision for secondary age pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School.

Introduction

The Council has consulted with interested parties on its proposal to establish specialist provision for secondary age pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School. If implemented, this proposal will take effect on 20th April 2020.

The consultation period ran from 23rd September to 5th November 2019. A list of consultees is included at Appendix A. The consultation document was e-mailed to all consultees and was also available on the Council's website.

Legislative Process

The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. Under the Welsh Government Statutory Code for School Organisation the Council is required 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.

If approved, the next stage of the process is to publish a statutory notice outlining the proposal. This would need to be published for a period of 28 days and formal written objections would be invited during this time.

If objections are received, an objection report will be published summarising the objections and the Council's response to those objections. The Council's Cabinet will need to consider the proposal in light of objections received when making its decision on whether the proposal is to be implemented.

Consultation Responses

17 written responses were received on or before the closing date for returns for the formal consultation on this proposal.

Governors	2
Teaching Staff	1
Non-teaching Staff	7

Parents	5
Estyn	1
Other	1

A written response was also received from pupils in years 8, 9, 10 and 11, and a consultation meeting took place with the school's Senedd, representing pupils from across the school.

All responses received were positive and fully supported the proposal. Comments made highlighted the inclusive ethos that exists at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School, the suitability of the school for this provision and the recognition that this provision is needed. The proposal was welcomed by Governors who felt that this would increase opportunities for Dwr y Felin Comprehensive to thrive as a fully inclusive school.

It was noted by respondents that the quality and experience of the staff employed to work in the provision were vital to the success of the provision, and that traffic management and pupil safety would need to be considered.

In response to these points it is agreed that the need for experienced, suitable staff is a priority to ensure the success of the provision. It is planned to appoint staff with relevant qualifications and experience to key posts before the provision is occupied in order for extra training and support to be provided.

Traffic management on site is the responsibility of the school Governors and senior staff, however officers will support the school to draw up a traffic management plan which will ensure all changes will be considered and planned for. Additionally as part of the remodelling works extra fencing and gates will be included to create a secure area for pupils and to divide vehicles and pedestrians while on the school site.

Pupil Responses

Officers met with the school's Senedd on Wednesday 16th October and notes of the meeting are included as Appendix B to this document.

Pupils were wholly supportive of the proposal and were keen to point out that Dwr y Felin is the right school for such a provision, where all children are made to feel welcome and are supported by staff and peers to manage their particular needs and develop individually to reach their potential. They felt they would be

able to welcome pupils from other schools and help them integrate successfully into their classes and activities.

The written response received by pupils also expressed very positive views and it was noted that as Dwr y Felin Comprehensive is a caring school this would be another way for pupils to help others.

One concern raised by pupils was the location of the proposed provision in M block, as it was noted that music rooms are also located here and so the area could be too noisy for ASD pupils.

Officers have considered this point carefully and will continue to be mindful of this as the scheme is developed and when planning the building works.

Additionally pupils wanted to know whether pupils in the school with ASD would be able to attend the centre and also raised concerns about the impact of extra traffic, especially in the mornings due to pupils arriving by taxis to access the provision.

In response officers can confirm that while the provision will be managed by the school and be under the school's governance, admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria will apply. It may be the case that some Dwr y Felin pupils will be admitted to the provision, however it is likely that all ASD pupils at the school will be able to gain some benefit from the specialist staff employed within the provision. Mainstream staff could also benefit from the training opportunities that would exist through having the provision on site, further improving mainstream provision for ASD pupils.

It is indeed a possibility that there will be increased numbers of taxis arriving at the site in the mornings and this has been considered by the school and officers. Extra fences and gates will be included as part of the building works, and additionally school senior staff and Governors will carefully consider how best extra traffic can be safely managed to keep all pupils safe and review the school's Traffic Management Policy accordingly

Estyn response to the proposal:

Estyn overall response to the proposal states that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standard of education, noting that 'The proposer has clearly defined the benefits of establishing provision for pupils who have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. The proposal has been developed in line with the local authority's programme to improve its educational provision

and meet the needs of children and young people with ALN. This proposal offers pupils and young people with ASD the opportunity for educational experiences within a mainstream setting within their county borough.'

Additionally Estyn note 'The provider has carried out a risk assessment relating to implementing the proposal. The proposal lists as potential risks educational outcomes for pupils not improved; integration at the provision unsuccessful; negative response from parents of host schools; staff with appropriate skills and expertise not available; increased governance and staff responsibilities; increased home to school travel time for some pupils and Welsh language development not supported. However, the proposer notes that failing to implement the proposal will result in a range of teaching and learning as well as financial benefits not being fully realised. The proposal does not identify actions to mitigate against these risks.'

In response should the proposal not be implemented then there is a risk that the benefits for teaching and learning as well as the financial benefits would not be realised, therefore the mitigating action would be to implement the proposal, thus ensuring all benefits can be realised.

Estyn also note the following 'The proposer appears to have considered the extent to which the proposal would support the targets in the approved Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. It notes that the LSC will provide for those pupils who speak Welsh as their first language or whose base school is a Welsh-medium school. However, it is not clear whether the teaching and learning experiences would be fully equitable with that of English medium provision.'

As outlined in the Consultation Document, provision in the LSC will mainly reflect the provision on offer to mainstream pupils. As Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School is an English medium school, pupils attending the ASD provision who come from English medium schools will find that teaching and learning experiences would be fully equitable. For pupils who have transitioned from Welsh medium schools and /or who speak Welsh as their first language extra provision will be made to ensure staff are available who can support them through the medium of Welsh.

The full Estyn response is included as Appendix C

Appendix A

List of Consultees	
Dwr y Felin Pupils	NAASH (Secondary Schools Forum)
Parents / carers	LLAN (Primary Schools Forum)
Staff	Bordering authorities – Swansea/ Bridgend/ Carmarthenshire/ Powys/ RCT
Governing Body	
Wider School Community	
All other NPT schools	Neath Town Council
NPT Elected Members	WG Schools Management Division
Diocesan Directors of Education	MP (for Aberafan)–Stephen Kinnock
- Diocese of Menevia, Swansa	MP (for Neath) – Christina Rees
- Diocese of Llandaff, Vale of Glamorgan	AM (for Aberafan) – David Rees
	AM (for Neath) – Jeremy Miles
Trade Unions	Regional Assembly Members
Estyn	Local Members
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	NPTC Group
NPTCBC Officers	SEN Partners

Appendix B

Notes of a meeting with pupils from Dwr y Felin School

(16th October 2019)

Pupils were wholly supportive of the proposal and were keen to point out that Dwr y Felin is the right school for such a provision where all children are made to feel welcome and are supported by staff and peers to manage their particular needs and develop individually to reach their potential. They felt they would be able to welcome pupils from other schools and help them integrate successfully into their classes or activities ready for when they need to return to their own schools.

Issues Discussed:

It was explained to all present the background to the proposal, the process and the reasons that it was felt that Dwr y Felin was the right school. The provision would have 16 young people that will have statements or be assessment placements. They will go through a diagnosis to decide whether they need provision in mainstream or a specialist school.

- **Would the ASD pupils embrace inclusion or would some suffer?**

It was explained that these pupils came with a statement for Special Education Needs and assured pupils that extra staff trained with ASD will be part of the unit. There are different needs with pupils as ASD has a wide spectrum. This could include possible social sensory problems, but the focus will be to provide a safe place for any pupils who are anxious with smaller classes and appropriately trained staff. Many will have the academic ability to benefit from mainstream and have good role models and will just transition more smoothly into the school. Transition into mainstream is important but will be undertaken at the right time for the pupil. Some may find it too much due to anxiety and they will build up transition over time with specialist teachers and support staff.

- **Where will they go during break and lunchtime?**

M block has been identified and the conversion of the old changing rooms. The school would look at different ideas linked to break and lunch and would research and find the best solution for the pupils and give them the space they need.

- **What would be done about some autistic pupils who struggle with noise and congestion?**

The school are looking at different entrances, exits and corridors to use to make it safe and comfortable for the pupils. The school would work with the ALN team to ensure that the best solutions are used for pupil movement about the school. Care will be taken that pupils affected by noise will have lessons in the appropriate soundproofed rooms.

- **What would happen if one of the ASD pupils 'acted out' and needed space?**

The school would have strategies in place and will really get to know these pupils and know how to address their needs behaviourally and socially and de-escalation techniques would be used if appropriate. The school will ensure that the right support is in place from the outset.

- **Would staff be trained?**

The staff within the provision will be specialist trained, but also wider training would be provided for other staff at the school including lunchtime staff and pupils. It was noted that the school's senior management team felt that the school also has very supportive at DYF. Staff at the school will also become better at managing pupils generally with ASD.

- **Will lessons be different?**

The rooms within the provision will be designed to meet the needs of a range of ASD strategies and the correct space to allow group and individual learning and quiet time when required. It is also envisaged to utilise other rooms (and developments) to support the pupils' development.

- **If the situation is not right would the children be moved?**

The ultimate aim is success for the individual child. This provision is about getting the right support in place but if a pupil needed more specialist support that would be looked into.

- **Would this provision overshadow support for other things like bullying or mental health?**

The school reassured the pupils that this would add another support mechanism for pupils and some of the strategies used would help make staff and pupils more aware and empathetic.

Appendix C

Estyn response to the proposal by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to establish specialist provision for a maximum of 16 secondary age pupils with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Dŵr y Felin Comprehensive School, Neath from the summer term 2020.

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.

Introduction

The proposal is by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

The proposal seeks to address identified need for further provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) of secondary age within Neath Port Talbot. It is proposed to complement the specialist provision already available within the County Borough by establishing a self-contained Learning Support Centre (LSC) for pupils in receipt of a statement of special educational needs for ASD. The new facility will provide for a maximum of 16 places and will be an integral part of Dŵr y Felin Comprehensive School.

Summary / Conclusion

The proposer has clearly defined the benefits of establishing provision for pupils who have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. The proposal has been developed in line with the local authority's programme to improve its educational provision and meet the needs of children and young people with ALN. This proposal offers pupils and young people with ASD the opportunity for educational experiences within a mainstream setting within their county borough.

There will be a one-off capital cost for the conversion work for which the money has been identified from the council's resources. Funding will be added to Dŵr y Felin's budget to manage the provision for up to 16 pupils.

It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standard of education.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given clear rationale for the proposal. The proposer clearly states that the proposal has been made in order to meet the identified growing need of secondary age pupils with ASD living in Neath Port Talbot with the aim of ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils. The proposal appears to indicate that there is room to accommodate the new self contained LSC within disused accommodation within the food technology block. This will have a minimum impact on the main teaching facilities. Making provision for a specialist LSC will have no effect on the school's full time capacity.

The proposer clearly defines what the proposal means in practice and the expected benefits of the proposal. The LSC would be an integrated part of the mainstream provision furnished with specialist staff within a nurturing and supportive environment. It is also envisaged that the provision will be able to provide support and training both within the mainstream setting at Dŵr y Felin as well as other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot working with pupils with ASD.

The provider has carried out a risk assessment relating to implementing the proposal. The proposal lists as potential risks educational outcomes for pupils not improved; integration at the provision unsuccessful; negative response from parents of host schools; staff with appropriate skills and expertise not available; increased governance and staff responsibilities; increased home to school travel time for some pupils and Welsh language development not supported. However, the proposer notes that failing to implement the proposal will result in a range of teaching and learning as well as financial benefits not being fully realised. The proposal does not identify actions to mitigate against these risks.

The proposer has also considered the disadvantages well within the proposal when compared with the status quo. Maintaining the status quo would not realise the opportunities of specialist provision within the county neither would it alleviate the current pressure to address demand for places for pupils with ASD. Vulnerable pupils could have their education interrupted which could possibly lead to long term consequences and an increase in exclusion rates.

The proposer has provided appropriate evidence to show that it has considered other alternatives to the current proposal and has given good reasons why these have been discounted.

The proposer has duly considered reasonable travelling distances for pupils likely to attend the LSC. Dŵr y Felin is centrally located within Neath Port Talbot ensuring travelling distances are reasonable for pupils. Financial provision has

been made within the Council's revenue budget to support the possible transport costs of pupils living further than 3 miles away from the provision.

The proposer appears to have considered the extent to which the proposal would support the targets in the approved Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. It notes that the LSC will provide for those pupils who speak Welsh as their first language or whose base school is a Welsh-medium school. However, it is not clear whether the teaching and learning experiences would be fully equitable with that of English medium provision.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has considered suitably the impact of the proposal on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management. The proposer appropriately notes that Dŵr y Felin Comprehensive School was last inspected by Estyn in 2017. The school's performance was judged to be good with prospects for improvement to be excellent. The proposer refers to Estyn's findings as good regarding standards, well-being and teaching and learning. In addition, findings were excellent in leadership and management and significantly "the support and care for pupils with additional learning needs is an exemplary feature ... As a result of the quality and extent of support, pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress." The proposer also makes reference to the fact that Dŵr y Felin has consistently been, and is currently, a green school under the Welsh Government school categorisation process.

The proposer asserts that the provision will ensure specialist continuity from key stage 2 to secondary provision. It will increase the opportunity for secondary pupils to access support in a specialist provision based within the environment of a mainstream secondary school. It also maintains that the LSC will further complement the specialist provision within the county borough. The LSC will aim to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils with ASD. The proposer also envisages that the provision will provide greater opportunities for working with and providing support for parents and carers. The specialist knowledge of the staff employed to work at the provision will be available to share with mainstream staff at Dŵr y Felin and other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot. In turn, this will build expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD and indirectly will benefit ALN standards and provision.

There seems to be no disruption to pupils as the LSC will be a new addition to the school.

There appears to be no adverse impact on community usage as there is no closure or reduction in community facilities involved.

It seems that staff at Dŵr y Felin Comprehensive School will not be adversely affected by this proposal. Increased number of pupils would appear to secure staff employment.

The proposed remodelling of the school should ensure there is minimal disruption to pupils and provision.