

Welsh Language Impact Assessment June 2022

Introduction

Neath Port Talbot Council are proposing 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.

As a general rule, if a new or updated policy has the potential to impact on people, it will also have the potential to impact in some way on Welsh speakers and therefore on the Welsh language.

This is due to not only the regulations on bilingual Education provision and considerations under **Cymraeg 2050**, but the requirements of the **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**, under which the Welsh Language Standards require policy decisions of any kind to be assessed as to their effect on the Welsh language in the policy and/or geographic area in question. The same policy-making standards apply to both Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot Council.

The proposal

This is a proposal 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.

Abbey Primary school currently operates between three separate sites and has relocated to a new build single site school at Heol Penlan in the Longford area of Neath during April 2022.

The most recent assessment of building condition of the St John's Terrace site reports that the main building has received a moderate amount of investment and is performing well whilst the rear building requires remedial works to the external façade. Both buildings would benefit from a new heating distribution system.

The buildings are largely compliant with accessibility legislation although some works are still required.

Overall the site is graded C+ for condition and B for accessibility with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs being assessed at £671K.

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. Work will include fully refurbishing the two toilet facilities in the main building (new toilets, hand basins, cubicles flooring etc.), remodelling 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.

This new Welsh-medium starter school would open for Nursery pupils in January 2023 to avoid leaving the buildings vacant for a lengthy period of time. The first cohort of Reception pupils would attend the new school from September 2023. This proposal would allow nursery and reception aged children in the Neath Abbey area to access Welsh-medium education in their local area.

It is anticipated that all pupils would be within walking distance of the new school with some exceptions for pupils from the Llandarcy and Jersey Marine area.

The Welsh Language in Neath Port Talbot

Welsh language impact assessments must reference a range of factors including links to legislation and details of supporting evidence and mitigating factors.

This section of the assessment therefore pulls together additional supporting evidence from a number of sources of information, from relevant Council policies and strategies to national regulations and Census data, in order to support Neath Port Talbot Council as it decides on the proposal to establish a new school.

i) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

Welsh in Education Strategic Plans are a requirement under the **Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019**.

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.

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.

Currently, 125 pupils from the Neath Abbey, Coedffranc and Crymlyn area travel to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn in order to seek Welsh-medium education. It is anticipated therefore that the decision to locate the starter school in this area will alleviate the capacity issues in both these schools (nearly or at full capacity) and will stimulate demand for this type of education provision, resulting in a legacy that will benefit the whole authority as more and more parents consider this a preferred option for their children.

ii) Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

Under Welsh Language Standard 145 (see Neath Port Talbot Council's [compliance notice](#)), local authorities had to develop and implement 5-year promotion strategies, working with partner organisations to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in their respective areas. Amongst other matters the strategy had to include the following:

- a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in the area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the 5-year period concerned;
- a statement setting out how they intend to reach that target; and conduct a review of the strategy and publish a revised version on their website within 5 years of publishing a strategy (or of publishing a revised strategy).

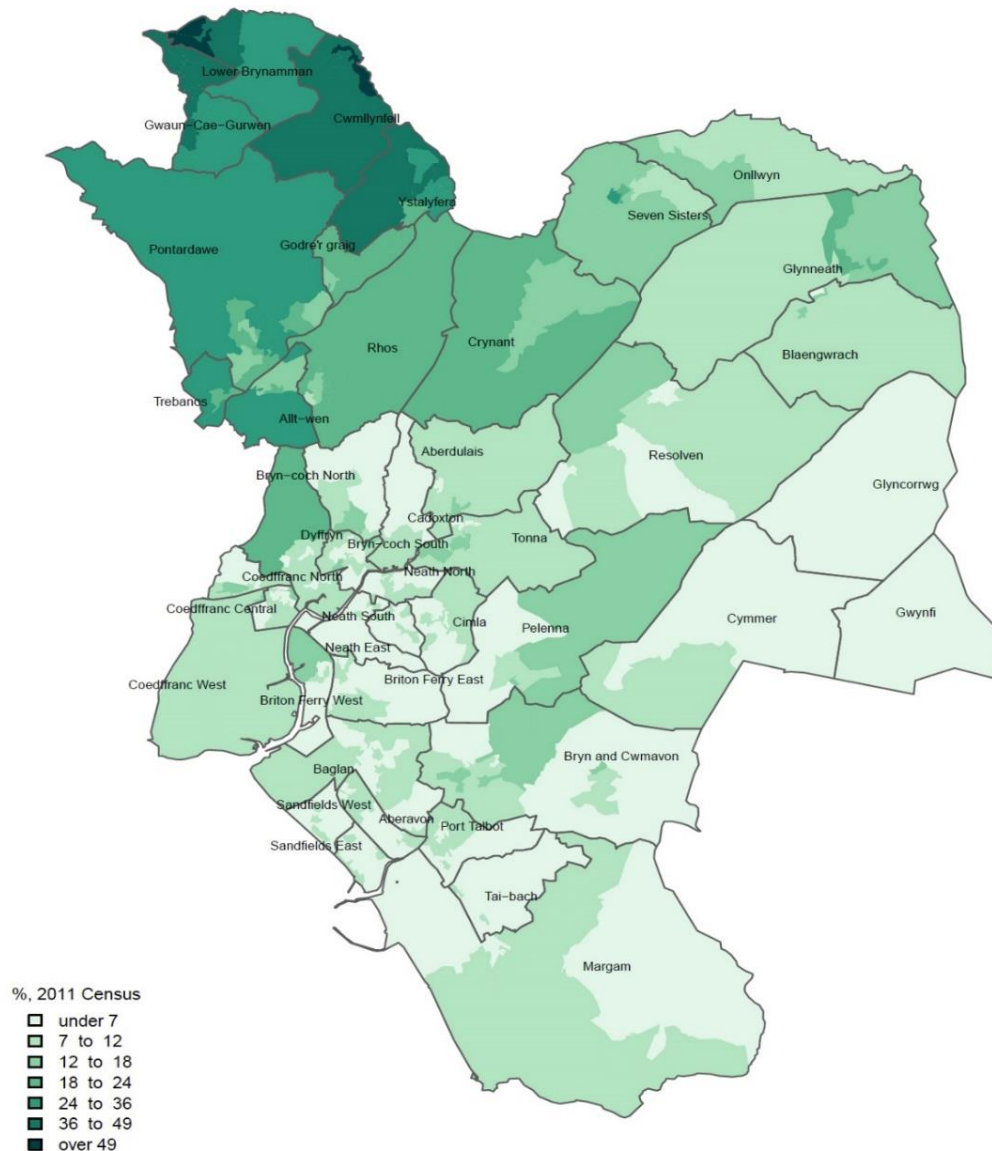
Welsh-medium education, whether in the form of full Welsh-medium provision via Welsh schools, or the teaching of Welsh as a second language in English-medium schools, directly supports this aim and intrinsically links this strategy with the WESP.

iii) Map of fluent Welsh speakers by Ward

The [map](#) below provides 2011 Census data demonstrating the Welsh language skills of people in the Neath Port Talbot area

Neath Port Talbot

Table: Welsh language skills
KS207WA0014 (Can speak, read and write Welsh)



The maps show percentages within Census 2011 output areas, within electoral divisions

Map created by Hywel Jones. Variables KS208WA0022-27 corrected

Contains National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right 2013; Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013

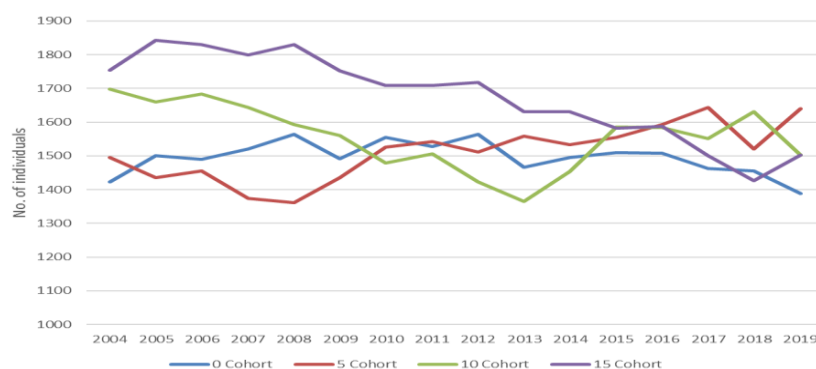
Current trends and projected forecasts

The overarching 10 year target in the WESP is set as a result of a geographic and demographic assessment. The analysis tells us:

- The number of children within the zero age cohort gradually increased in the early 2000s but this process has now flattened out and returned to the lower levels previously seen at the beginning of the period.

- The three year average number of individuals within this cohort in 2017-19 is 1,436, which is 5.9% down on the level seen a decade earlier when the three year average for 2007-09 was 1,526 (90 individual per year higher).
- The age five cohort has displayed considerable growth over the last decade with the three year average 15.2% higher for this age group during 2017-19 than compared to 2007-09 (up from 1390 to 1601). This is in contrast with older age cohorts with the number of 15 year olds present within the County Borough seeing a sustained fall over the last 15 years, with the number in this age group now 17.7% lower than a decade earlier.

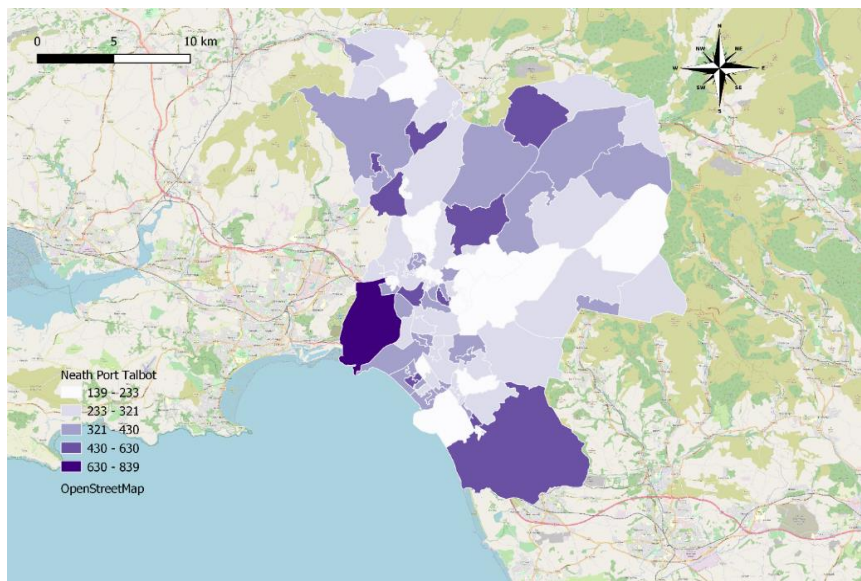
County level population chart



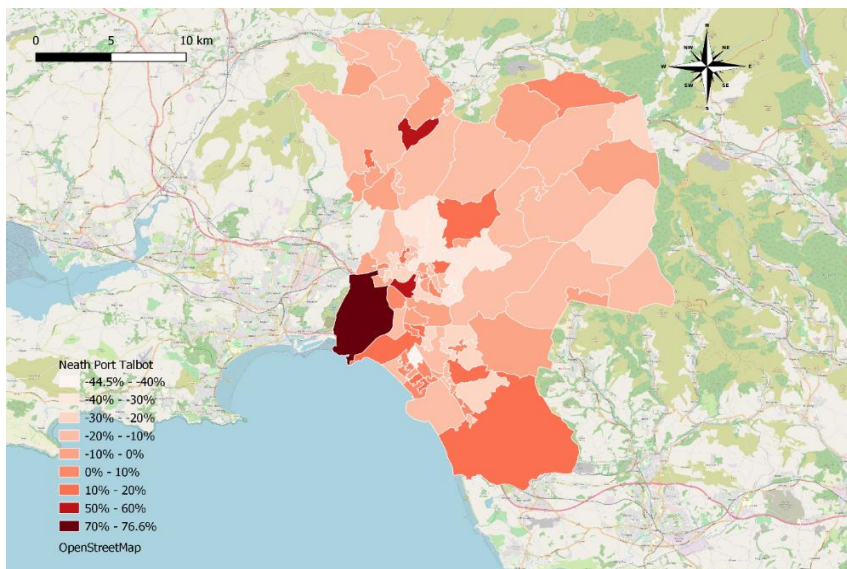
The above data shows a decrease in zero age population, however, an analysis of factors which will impact on the future of Welsh medium education has showed a projected plateauing in the school age population and a potential to substantially increase the number of Welsh medium learners within the next 10 years. The factors taken into consideration when conducting the assessment included population change, population density, population composition, existing Welsh language skills, current Welsh-medium learners and potential additional demand for Welsh-medium education.

The data from the assessment shows that some areas within the Local Authority are showing significant population growth in the under 19 category with one showing a population increase of 76.6% from a three year average of 475 in 2002-04 to 839 in 2017-19. The three year average for this area of 839 makes this the largest in terms of absolute population for this age group.

Under 19 Population 2017-19 Average



Under 19 % Population Change 2002-4 Average to 2017-19 Average

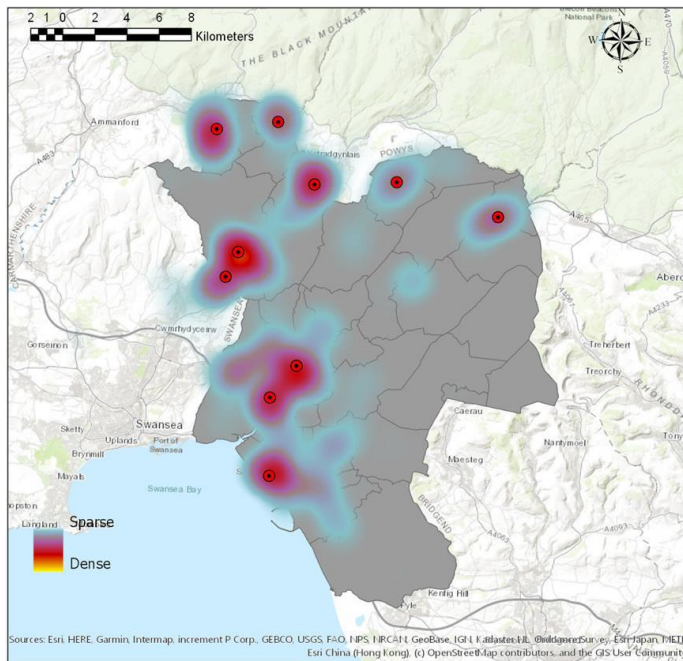


Current Welsh-medium pupils

Primary school Welsh-medium learners are largely drawn from the areas relatively close to the existing Welsh-medium schools. The exceptions to this are pupils drawn from the Taibach, Cwmavon and northern area of Resolven.

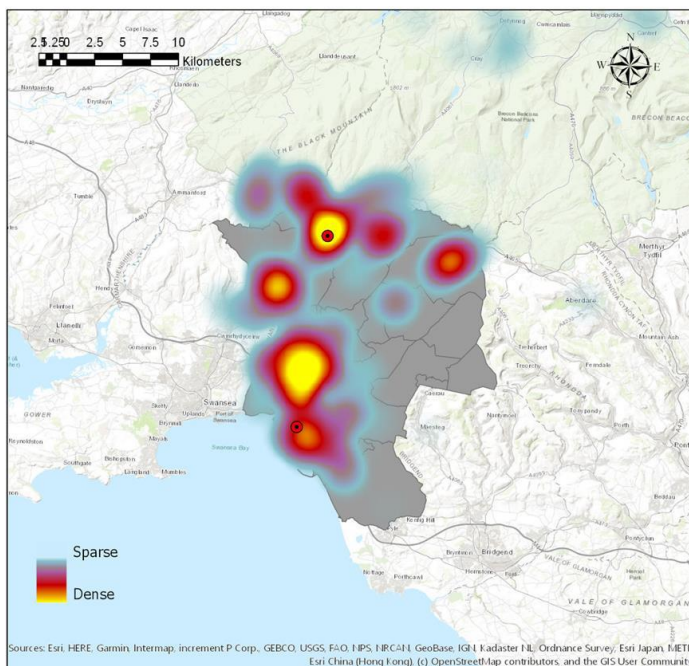
Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen 1 and Pontardawe 2 have provided the highest number of pupils on average into Welsh Medium Primary Schools over the last ten years, while Gwynfi and Cymer have provided the least. There are also a large number of pupils attending Welsh Medium Primary education traveling from out of County, although this number has dropped somewhat from the early 2000's, it is still close to 100 learners per year.

Current Welsh-medium primary learners (Plasc 2019)



There is a very high density of secondary school age WM learners close to Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur North Campus, while the highest density to the South of the County is found in the Neath and Skewen areas. Pontardawe and the areas around Glynneath and Blaengwrach also appear to be hot spots.

Current Welsh-medium Secondary Learners (Plasc 2019)



Of the individual LSOA's Seven Sisters and Glynneath consistently send the most Secondary age pupils to Welsh Medium Education, while Cymmer 2 and Gwynfi did not send any pupils for Welsh

medium secondary education during the last ten years, while Cymmer 1, Bryncoch North and Margam 1 also reported very low numbers.

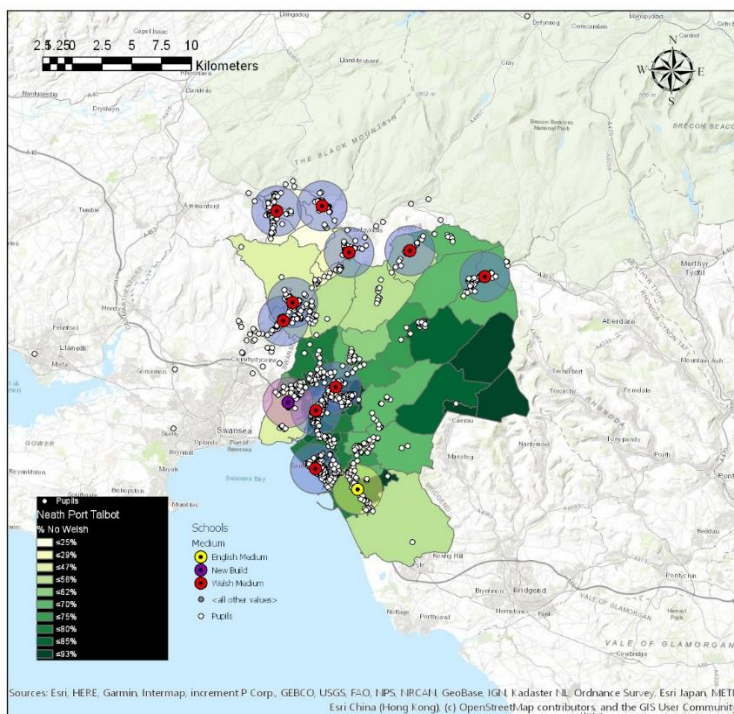
As with Primary learners a considerable number of Welsh Medium pupils travel in from out of county with on average 153 doing so. This is higher both numerically and proportionally than within the Primary age group and represents some 15.9% of all Welsh medium secondary School pupils.

Possible Future Plans

Using current data it is possible to model future growth patterns enabling us to anticipate where the potential exists to increase WM provision to meet the target of 30%.

This modelling estimates that the range of growth could be between 818 and 1697 new WM places needed by 2030. This would suggest 2 primary schools and one secondary school would need to be created to meet the WG targets.

By using a combination of variables it is possible to estimate where a new WM primary school could be created to increase the number of WM learners. The wards of Coedffranc West and Taibach have been identified as the most likely places for new primary schools.



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.

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 1

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 2

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

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.

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, South Campus

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, South Campus, Seaway Parade, Port Talbot, SA12 7EQ, is a Welsh-medium, 11-16 school. This school is not a subject of the proposal and is not considered to be directly affected, however the number of pupils expected to progress to Year 7 admission for this school will be greater from September 2030 than the current admission number. The south campus currently has the capacity for 650 11-16 year old pupils who transition into the school from the current three Welsh-medium primary school in the south and is anticipated to reach full capacity by 2028. Further consideration will therefore be needed to ensure sufficient capacity within the Welsh-medium secondary phase in the near future.

Childcare

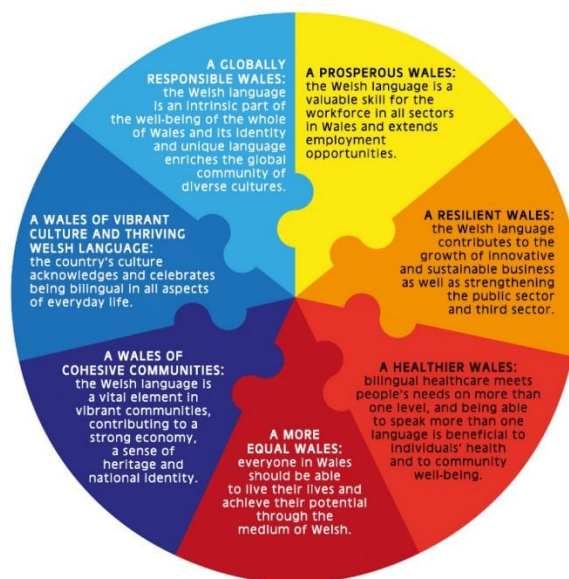
The nearest Welsh-medium childcare provision is some distance away in Neath and a new setting in the proposed new school would ensure that families from the area are offered greater choice and flexibility, and will also support parents to opt for a Welsh medium school for their children, as well as helping to develop early Welsh language speaking and listening skills in preschool children.

The proposal will see an increase in the total childcare provision across Neath Port Talbot through the creation of 12 additional places at the new Welsh-medium primary school. This will have a positive impact on Welsh-medium education through stimulated demand.

The Welsh Language and Future Generations

In order to achieve the desired growth in terms of the numbers of Welsh language speakers contained within Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 national strategy and Neath Port Talbot's own draft WESP, looking at each of the 7 aims of the Well-being "wheel" from a Welsh language perspective provides a useful perspective of how the language is an intrinsic part of each aim, and therefore all aspects of the Council's work, not simply part of the aim in which the Welsh language is explicitly referenced.

The adapted wheel below shows how the Welsh language forms a part of, and plays a part in all aspects of education, health and social care, community cohesion, the economy and so much more.



It is included in this assessment therefore in order to be considered as a general principle and as part of the decision-making process with regard to this proposal.

Consultation

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.

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.

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.

In total 47 responses were received

Online responses	44
Emails	3
Paper forms/letter	0

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.

19 consultees raised concerns relating to the traffic management of the proposed site and age of the current building.

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.

Impacts

Overall the proposal is expected to have many positive impacts on the Welsh language and many consultees responded to express this view.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Conclusion

This proposal would seek to establish a Welsh-medium starter primary school in premises previously occupied by Abbey Primary School.

The WESP 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.

A new Welsh-medium school should provide greater choice for families in the area and it is expected that this proposal will increase the number of pupils being educated through the medium of Welsh, as well as having a positive impact on families and the local community through providing opportunities to improve and increase the use of the Welsh language in daily life.

The proposal therefore should impact positively on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language and in treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English, by expanding the Welsh-medium education provision in Neath Port Talbot.