

Risk Assessment

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

Context

1. This risk assessment has been carried out in line with the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.
2. Implementing the proposal will result in the establishment of a new a new Welsh –medium primary school at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND

3.

The reasons for the proposal

4. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. 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 in order to ensure future provision is sustainable.
5. 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.
6. The Council have recently submitted an expression of interest to Welsh Government for specific Welsh-medium capital funding to support an exciting project that aspires to refurbish, re-model, and adapt the existing buildings at the St John's Terrace site to establish a new Welsh-medium starter school including a 45 place nursery and a 12 place childcare setting.
7. A decision from Welsh Government on whether the expression of interest for capital grant funding is successful is expected early in 2022.
8. 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.

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn for Welsh-medium education. Approximately 50 pupils from the Skewen area also attend Ysgol 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.

Risks associated with the proposal

14. The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the

Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.

15. 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, leading to possible job losses
- pupil numbers at existing English-medium schools reduce, leading to possible job losses
- 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
- pressure on Welsh-medium secondary school places if numbers grow as anticipated in the primary phase

14. 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 as predicted
- 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

Risk assessment

15. The benefits of the proposal along with specific actions will mitigate the effects of identified risks.
16. A significant number of pupils from the Neath Abbey, Skewen, Llandarcy and Jersey Marine areas travel to YGG Castell-nedd and YGG Tyle'r Ynn, indicating that there is currently a demand for Welsh-medium education in the area and it is clearly growing, therefore it is unlikely that the forecasted numbers would not materialise or that the demand would not continue or grow. Additional evidence from a recent demographic and geographic survey shows a potential increase in pupil numbers in this area through modelling.
17. The school will be a starter school with a growing workforce on an annual basis. This will ensure that new staff will be introduced gradually over a period of time. An effective Headteacher and Governing Body will be appointed to ensure a high level of management and leadership. This should minimise the effects of change and ease anxiety for staff in the current schools and for the school communities, as well as ensuring that good standards of education and pupil well-being are prioritised.
18. Additional training and staff development has been identified as a priority within the WESP, with the aim of providing support for staff who wish to transition from existing schools into the proposed new school as appropriate, including from English to Welsh-medium.
19. The proposal will be subject to a full consultation and will enable the school communities to voice opinions and raise queries. This will support the process of change and aim to reduce anxiety.
20. An Integrated Impact Assessment will be required to fully progress this proposal and will be undertaken as part of the consultation process.

Risk register

No	Risk description	L'hood score	Impact score	Overall Risk (Lxl)	Prox'ty *	Planned action to mitigate	Target Date	Owner	Update	Trend Up Down
1	Forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise	2	4	Medium Risk	4	Consultation with stakeholders; implementation of the proposal; information sharing with parents in the locality;	January 2022 ongoing	- SSIP team - EDS - GB - Headteacher	31.5.22	No change
2	The demand for Welsh-medium places is not as high as expected	2	4	Medium Risk	4	Consultation with stakeholders; Awareness raising, working with partners to stimulate demand in the area	January 2022 - ongoing	- SSIP team - WESP forum and partners	31.5.22	No change
3	Current Welsh-medium schools pupil numbers reduce leading to possible job losses	1	2	Low Risk	3	Use of starter school model to promote a smooth transition; work with WESP partners to ensure that all schools benefit from awareness raising in the local communities with the aim of increasing pupil numbers; monitoring admissions; additional training and staff development provided to support staff to transition from existing school into new school as appropriate	January 2022 – ongoing	- SSIP team - WESP forum and partners - Admissions officers - HR	31.5.22	No change

4	Pupil numbers at existing English-medium schools reduce, leading to possible job losses	2	2	Low Risk	3	Additional training and staff development provided to support staff to transition from existing school into new school as appropriate, including from English to Welsh-medium		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SSIP team - WESP forum and partners - HR 	31.5.22	No change
4	Increased staff anxiety in current schools affected by the proposal	2	3	Medium Risk	1	Starter school model grows the workforce gradually; training and development needs identified to support staff, including with transitioning from EM to WM as appropriate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temp GB - Headteacher - EDS - SSIP 	31.5.22	No change
5	Resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support	2	5	Medium Risk	1	Information on the proposal to provide greater awareness for those affected. Effective communication with parents and staff as early as possible	January 2022 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SSIP team 	31.5.22	No change
6	Educational standards not maintained	1	5	Low Risk	3	Implementation of proposal together with appropriate support and challenge	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SSIP team - Temp GB - Headteacher - EDO Team 	31.5.22	No change

7	The development of Welsh in the early years is not realised due to no available, suitable site for a childcare provision	3	4	High Risk	1	Implementation of proposal along with childcare setting situated onsite	January 2022-ongoing	- SSIP team - EYs Officers	31.5.22	No change
8	Budget allocation insufficient to meet needs	2	5	Medium Risk	2	When the new school opens it will receive a budget appropriate for the size of the school and the number of pupils attending.	January 2023	- ELLLS - Temp GB - Headteacher	31.5.22	No change