



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning Service Strategic School Improvement Programme

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**Proposal to establish a new Welsh-
medium
3-11 school in Neath Abbey**



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Introduction

What is this report about?

This document is for pupils, parents/carers, school staff, school governors and others who have an interest in education in Neath Port Talbot.

The Council has produced this consultation document as it is proposing to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school at Neath Abbey.

It is proposed that the school will be located on the vacant site of the former Abbey Primary, St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey.

The school is expected to open to nursery pupils in January 2023

1. Background

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.

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.

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

On 19th January 2022 the Council's Cabinet gave permission to consult on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium 3-11 school at Neath Abbey. The Council wishes to receive the views of pupils, parents, prospective parents, staff, Governing Bodies and other key stakeholders.

2. The proposal and why change is being proposed

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 is due to relocate to a new build single site school at Heol Penlan in the Longford area of Neath during March 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.

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 to establish a new starter school including a 45 place nursery and a 12 place childcare setting.

A decision from Welsh Government on whether the expression of interest for capital grant funding is successful is expected early in 2022.

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.

Neath Port Talbot's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (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 WESP outlines a commitment to stimulate demand for Welsh-medium education across Neath Port Talbot. 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.

Catchment

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 Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn. Approximately 50 pupils from the Neath Abbey area 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.

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.

This data is outlined in the following tables:

YGG Castell-nedd

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

YGG Tyle'r Ynn

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

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.

What is a starter school?

A starter school is a model that can be used when establishing a new school to allow the facilities and staff to be used efficiently whilst the school grows to its full potential. The school opens initially with only Nursery class, and a year group is then added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6.

During the *first* year of the starter school opening, one mainstream class will be in operation as follows:

- A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;

In the *second* year, the starter school will consist of:

- A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **30** places;

In the *third* year, the school will consist of:

- A **nursery class** where up to **45 part-time** places will be offered over either a morning or afternoon session;
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **30** places;
- A **Year 1** class with a maximum of **30** places;

In the years following, each new reception year group will have a maximum of 30 places. Full capacity of the school will be realised in September 2029 when all year groups will operate under a one-form entry arrangement.

The table below shows an example of the starter model of growth for a one form-entry school.

Available Places by Academic Year							
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Nursery (January)	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Reception (September)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 1		30	30	30	30	30	30
Year 2			30	30	30	30	30

Year 3				30	30	30	30
Year 4					30	30	30
Year 5						30	30
Year 6							30

As a result, the proposed new school will provide for up to 210 full-time primary age pupils and 45 part-time nursery age pupils in September 2029. This will deliver sufficient accommodation for the total combined forecasted pupil numbers, including potential growth in pupil population. For the purpose of consultation, the proposed admission number for primary phase education is 30. The admission arrangements will be in line with the Council's approved admission arrangements for primary schools. Staff will need to be appointed to accommodate the pupil numbers. The Headteacher and the Governing Body will manage this in line with agreed recruitment processes.

What are the benefits of a starter school?

- The school capacity would grow as demand increases;
- Stable growth to support existing schools;
- Reduces the possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools;
- Effectively manages class sizes to support staffing and the school budget;
- Pupils living outside the school catchment area can still apply for a place at the school and may be successful.

What are the disadvantages of a starter school?

- Takes a number of years to deliver growth;
- Possible implications for siblings with changing catchments;
- Possible implications for families moving to Neath Port Talbot with different aged children due to changing catchments.

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 expected benefits of the proposal

The **benefits** of the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium Primary School are:

- The number of Welsh-medium primary school places will increase in line with WESP targets;
- Increased opportunities for pupils to access Welsh-medium provision;
- Increased opportunity to have Welsh-medium provision as a local school;
- A Welsh-medium Childcare facility will be created;
- Reduced pupil journey times to school;
- Opportunities and facilities for local community engagement through the medium of Welsh;
- Fully refurbished location to 21st Century Schools standards;
- Effective use of an unused Education asset;

Potential Risks and Risk Management

The potential risks associated with the proposal comprise the Council's reputation, educational standards, financial management, staff employment and service delivery.

Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:

Risk	Mitigating Factor
The demand for Welsh-medium places is not as high as expected	This is unlikely due to the increase in demand in recent years. Additional evidence from a recent Demographic and Geographic Survey shows a potential increase in demand in this area.
Resistance to change leading to lack of pupil, parent and staff support	There is a significant number of pupils from the areas travelling to YGG Castell-nedd and YGG Tyle'r Ynn, therefore there is currently a

	demand for Welsh-medium education in the area. This will not be a significant change.
Forecasted pupil numbers do not materialise	It is not possible to predict with any certainty the number of applications that will be received for the new school. By utilising the vacant former Abbey Primary building in St John's Terrace, the LA has chosen to invest in an existing asset rather than spending on new build facilities. This represents better value for money, especially when pupil numbers are unknown.
Staff anxiety and new management arrangements	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.
21 st Century School Welsh-medium capital funding opportunity not realised	21 st Century School Welsh-medium capital funding has been sought. Failure to secure this grant will result in the project scope being reduced meaning that the planned remodelling and refurbishment works will be limited.
Demand for all provision increases	Admissions and the WESP forum will continue to monitor projections and act accordingly.

The benefits of implementing the proposal will mitigate the effects of identified risks. A new Welsh-medium school will lead to greater numbers of pupils with the ability to speak Welsh within the Local Authority. This aligns with the following documents:

- Neath Port Talbot Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (draft)
- Neath Port Talbot Welsh Language Promotion Strategy
- Welsh Government's national Welsh language strategy 'Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers by 2050' The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language'
- Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017-21- A desire for learners to become increasingly bilingual

- The Welsh in Education, Action Plan 2017-21- Sets the direction for the development of Welsh-medium education

3.Details of the schools affected by this proposal

The two current Local Authority maintained Welsh-medium Primary schools in Neath Port Talbot that may be affected by the establishment of the new Welsh-medium school are ***Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd, Woodland Road, Neath, SA11 3AL and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, Llansawel Crescent, Llansawel, Port Talbot, SA11 2UN***. These two schools could be affected as parents may choose to send or transfer their child to the new primary school for convenience of location, and therefore there could be a risk that their pupil numbers could decrease. The starter model of growth will minimise the likelihood and impact of this risk by limiting the availability of additional pupil places in older year groups.

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd is a Welsh-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the town of Neath approx. 2 miles from the possible site of the proposed new school.

Pupil Numbers

As at January 2021 there were 320 full-time and 97 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 340 full-time and 65 part-time (nursery) pupils per session, the school has a surplus capacity of 5.88% (20 full-time pupil places). Forecasts, based on current school admission trends, from January 2021 to January 2022 suggest a slight increase in pupil numbers.

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd</i>				
		<i>Jan 2021</i>		<i>Jan 2022</i>
	<i>School capacity</i>	<i>Actual Pupil Numbers</i>	<i>Surplus places</i>	<i>Projected Pupil Numbers</i>
<i>Full-time</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>20 (5.88%)</i>	<i>331</i>
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	<i>65 (per Session)</i>	<i>97 (total of both current sessions)</i>	<i>33 (25.38%)</i>	<i>86</i>

The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2017 – 2021 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Sept.22</i>
<i>Pupil numbers</i>	<i>387</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>404</i>
<i>Full Time</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>339</i>	<i>337</i>	<i>336</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>350</i>
<i>Part Time</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>54</i>

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 20-21 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report 2021

Quality and standards in education

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd was last inspected in March 2016 and Estyn reported that it was a school with good and excellent features, awarding good judgements in the 3 inspection areas. Past judgements from the school National Categorisation System placed the school in the green support category which recognises it as an effective school which has secured good levels of learner outcomes in key performance indicators.

Standards

Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning of pupils was judged to be ‘good’ in the recent Estyn report (March 2016) which states: ‘There is a strong sense of belonging to a happy and friendly community across the school.’

Attendance has been consistent, with current data showing a percentage of 94.6% for 2019 (pre Covid data), where nearly all pupils are punctual and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance at school.

Teaching and Learning

Estyn, in 2016, report that across Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd 'The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school, with a few elements of excellence'.

The Estyn report states that 'Teachers question probingly in order to develop previous knowledge and extend pupils' understanding' and 'have a sound understanding of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and they introduce new information and skills clearly, and model high standards of language.'

Care, Support and Guidance

Estyn also reported that care, support and guidance were good, noting that the Headteacher has established effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. This has improved pupils' wellbeing very effectively.

Estyn also report that there is a wide range of valuable provision to meet the needs of pupils who have additional needs.

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd has skilled teaching assistants providing high quality care and support to ensure that pupils with a range of additional needs integrate seamlessly into the daily life of the school, this led Estyn to report that, 'An effective team of teaching assistants supports the work well'.

Leadership and Management

In 2016, Estyn judged Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd's leadership and management to be good with excellent elements, reporting that: 'The headteacher has a clear vision which is based on developing each pupil as a whole individual '.

The most recent Estyn inspection report can be viewed at:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection-reports>

Quality of accommodation

The most recent assessment of building condition of YGG Castell Nedd reports that the original main building is in relatively good condition considering its age whilst other more recently added areas including the kitchen, dining hall, two storey teaching block require limited works.

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

Overall the site was graded B for condition and B for accessibility with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs being assessed at circa. £391K.

Continued investment at the school since the date of the last condition assessment, including the very recent installation of a brand new large modular classroom funded from Welsh Government's Class Size Reduction Grant will in all probability result in an improved situation when the assessment is next updated.

Ysgol Gynradd Tyle'r Ynn

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn is a Welsh-medium community school serving boys and girls aged 3-11 years. It is situated in the town of Briton Ferry approx. 3.5 miles from the possible site of the proposed new school.

Pupil Numbers

As at January 2021 there were 202 full-time and 56 part-time (nursery) pupils on roll. With the physical capacity to accommodate 236 full-time and 34 part-time (nursery) pupils per session, the school has a surplus capacity of 14.4% (34 full-time pupil places). Forecasts, based on current school admission trends, from January 2021 to January 2022 suggest a slight increase in pupil numbers.

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn</i>				
		<i>Jan 2021</i>		<i>Jan 2022</i>
	School capacity	Actual Pupil Numbers	Surplus places	Projected Pupil Numbers
<i>Full-time</i>	236	202	34 (14.4%)	208
<i>Part-time (Nursery)</i>	34 (per session)	56 (Total of both sessions)	12 (17.65%)	50

The table below shows pupil numbers over a 5 year period:

<i>Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn</i>						
<i>School Census Jan 2017 – 2021 + Sept. '22 roll</i>						
<i>Year</i>	17	18	19	20	21	<i>Sept.22</i>

<i>Pupil numbers</i>	236	227	226	230	258	257
<i>Full Time</i>	193	190	182	179	202	226
<i>Part Time</i>	43	37	44	51	56	31

Notes:

- Capacity: Taken from 20-21 Capacities
- Actual Pupil numbers: Taken from PLASC Report 2021

Quality and standards in education

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn was last inspected in May 2017 and Estyn reported that it was a school with adequate and good features, awarding adequate judgements in the 3 inspection areas. Past judgements from the school National Categorisation System placed the school in the yellow support category in 2019-20 which recognises it as an effective school which has secured good levels of learner outcomes in key performance indicators.

Standards

Since 2020, Welsh Government do not expect returns for all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place before the school summer holidays as a result of the Covid pandemic. This includes National Data Collection (NDC) 2020 data collection and Welsh National Tests (WNT) 2020 data collection.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning of pupils was judged to be 'good' in the recent Estyn report (May 2017) which states: 'nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing are consistently good within the school's caring and familial community.'

Attendance has been consistent, with current data showing a percentage of 96.2% for 2019 (pre Covid data), where nearly all pupils are punctual and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance at school.

Teaching and Learning

Estyn, in 2017 report that across Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn 'Nearly all teachers provide interesting tasks that stimulate most pupils' interest successfully. They use appropriate teaching methods across the school, which meet the needs of most pupils suitably'.

The Estyn report states that teachers 'offer useful oral feedback to pupils in many lessons and question purposefully to reinforce learning and to develop pupils' thinking skills appropriately.'

Care, Support and Guidance

Estyn also reported that care, support and guidance were good, noting that 'The school is a caring community in which pupils feel safe'. It also notes that 'The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on the care, support, wellbeing and satisfaction of pupils and staff'.

Estyn also report that the school has effective arrangements to address the requirements of pupils with additional learning needs.

Leadership and Management

In 2017, Estyn judged Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn's leadership and management to be adequate with good features.

The most recent Estyn inspection report can be viewed at:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection-reports>

Quality of accommodation

The most recent assessment of building condition of YGG Tyle'r Ynn reports that the building is in fair condition and has received moderate investment over recent years including an extension comprising classrooms, toilets and staffroom. The site is largely compliant with accessibility legislation although some works are still required.

Overall the site was graded C- for condition and B for accessibility with backlog maintenance and accessibility costs being assessed at circa. £886K.

The site is largely compliant with accessibility legislation although some works were still required.

Whilst issues were identified in a number of areas including car park, internal floor coverings, decoration as well as heating and lighting installations, many of these will have been addressed with the recent completion of a significant investment funded through the Council and

Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Capital Grant that has also resulted in the delivery of a brand new nursery and community room.

The recently completed works mentioned above will in all probability result in an improved situation when the condition assessment is next updated.

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, South Campus

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, South Campus, Seaway Parade, Port Talbot, SA12 7EQ, may also be indirectly affected by the proposal. Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur, South Campus 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.

Abbey Primary, Coedffranc Primary, Crymlyn Primary

Abbey Primary School, St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, SA10 7ND, Coedffranc Primary School, Stanley Road, Skewen, SA10 6LP and Crymlyn Primary School, School Road, Jersey Marine, SA10 6JJ could also be indirectly affected by the proposal, as the proposed new starter school will be the Welsh-medium primary school for the three catchment areas. Coedffranc Primary school is also within close proximity to the proposed new school. There is therefore a possibility that the number of applications for nursery and reception places at the three English-medium primary schools are reduced as a result of the starter Welsh-medium school.

However the starter model of growth is expected to minimise the likelihood and impact of this risk by limiting the availability of additional pupil places in older year groups. It is also the case that the three schools are over or nearing their capacity, each one demonstrating consistent increased pupil

numbers in the last 6 years and pupil numbers continue to grow in the area. Therefore it is anticipated that there will be little impact in the early years of the school opening.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Abbey Primary	370	389	405	425	440	455
Coedffranc Primary	386	385	392	396	400	418
Crymlyn Primary	64	59	56	70	87	113

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon Las, Swansea

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon Las, Walters Road, Swansea, SA7 9RW could also be potentially affected by this proposal. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las is a Welsh-medium school in the City and County of Swansea, approximately 3.5 miles from the location of the proposed new school. Currently 50 pupils from Neath Port Talbot attend there and potentially live within the proposed catchment area of the new starter school. There is therefore a possibility that in the future pupil numbers at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las might be affected if parents living in Neath Port Talbot opt to send their children to the new school instead of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las. However it is likely that for many pupils living on the borders between Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Lon-las would be nearer than the proposed new school, and would therefore likely remain as the first Welsh-medium school of choice for pupils in that area.

4.What options have been considered?

Option 1 new build primary school on an alternative site in the Neath Abbey area

Progress with the developer as regards a proposed new Welsh-medium Primary school at Coed Darcy (funded through a S106 Planning Agreement) continues to move forward slowly. Consideration has also been given to the building of another whole new school in the Neath Abbey area. Land of sufficient size to accommodate a new Welsh-medium primary school in the area is scarce and given the likely planning and construction programme

associated with delivery of a new school, there is unlikely to be any timely easing of the short-term pressures on the increasing demand for Welsh-medium primary education in the general Neath Abbey area.

Option 2 extend YGG Castell-nedd to accommodate increases pupil numbers

YGG Castell-nedd has benefitted from two additional modular classrooms funded through the Welsh Government's Infant Class Size Reduction Grant totalling £325K. YGG Castell-nedd occupies a restricted site in a town centre setting and is now fully developed. The school is easily sustainable from pupils attending from the designated catchment. The majority of pupils likely to attend from Neath Abbey would not be within walking distance which would lead to an accompanying increase in transport costs.

Option 3 extend YGG Tyle'r Ynn to accommodate increases pupil numbers

YGG Tyle'r Ynn have recently reconfigured their Foundation Phase and key stage 2 classrooms to provide improved learning experiences. The school have also recently taken possession of 2 new extra classroom spaces, a Welsh-medium dedicated childcare setting and a Community Hub which were funded through the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium, Childcare Offer and Community Learning Centres/Community Hub Capital grants totalling £1.554m. The site is in effect now fully developed and the school is sufficiently sustainable for pupils attending from the designated catchment. The majority of pupils likely to attend from the Neath Abbey area would not be within walking distance which would lead to an accompanying increase in transport costs. This option is not favoured.

Option 4 starter school (including childcare) provision in the Neath Abbey area

This scheme would see the current Abbey Primary School (Junior site) refurbished, re-modelled and adapted to accommodate a new Welsh-medium starter school and childcare provision. Abbey Primary pupils and staff are due to move into a new 21st century school building in March 2022. It is proposed that this new Welsh-medium starter school provision would open to Nursery pupils in January 2023 to avoid leaving the vacated building empty for a lengthy period of time. The first cohort of Reception pupils would

attend the new school from September 2023 with additional year groups being added year on year thereafter.

Preferred option - Option 4 starter school (including childcare) provision in the Neath Abbey area

5. Impacts of the Proposal

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and impact on Welsh Language

Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot. We believe that all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh. The authority underpins this principle by committing to enabling all learners to benefit from its universal access to this provision.

Our statutory education system also has a vital role to play in increasing the number of Welsh speakers as highlighted by Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. In order to achieve our goals, we must significantly increase the number of school learners who have the opportunity to develop Welsh-language skills in all settings and thus use it in their everyday lives.

Welsh Government have set a target for Neath Port Talbot to increase the number of learners accessing Welsh-medium education of between 17% and 27% over a 10 year period. This target is based on increasing 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.

In order to reach our target of an increase of 208 pupils by the end of the 10 year plan, we will aim to establish 3 new Welsh-medium schools within the Local Authority. The first of the 3 schools is the subject of this consultation, a new single form entry starter school in the Neath Abbey area subject to member approval and compliance with the extant criteria of the Schools' Organisation Code.

A Welsh language Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix A.

What is the financial impact?

Applications for grant funding have been submitted to assist with additional capital and revenue costs for identified projects through the 21st century schools programme, including this proposal.

Based on Welsh Government's standardised costs for a "medium" refurbishment, an initial budget calculation of up to £2.43M has been identified for necessary works to refurbish, re-model, and adapt the existing Abbey Primary junior site buildings to establish the proposed new school and childcare provision.

Additional revenue costs for two years for the proposed starter school are estimated at £652,651, based on the current costs of teaching and support staff required to operate a starter school at the point of opening. Two year revenue costs for the new childcare setting have been estimated at £16,000, based on similar provision within Neath Port Talbot, and an application for an additional revenue support grant has been submitted along with the Welsh medium grant funding bid.

Revenue funding for schools is distributed on an annual basis by means of an approved formula. This ensures school budget shares are allocated on a simple, objective and measurable basis.

Most of the revenue budget allocation to schools is generated by pupil numbers. Therefore the proposed new school budget will be based mainly on the pupil roll, and as the pupil numbers grow the budget will also increase. Based on a school of 210 full time pupils and 45 part time nursery places the projected budget share for the proposed new school is estimated to be approx. £957k when the school is fully occupied.

Transport costs are unlikely to be affected by this proposal as while it is expected that pupils attending the proposed new school will no longer require transport, the current buses will still be required to transport pupils to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn from other areas, although it is possible that smaller vehicles could be used, or routes could be combined so less vehicles are needed.

Land and Buildings

It is proposed to locate the new Welsh-medium starter school in premises previously occupied by Abbey Primary School at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND which occupies a prominent position off the A4230 between Neath Abbey and Skewen.

Abbey Primary school currently operates between three separate sites and is due to relocate to a brand new build single site school at Heol Penlan in the Longford area of Neath during March 2022.

The Council benefit from a longstanding fully repairing lease of the land and buildings at St John's Terrace, Neath Abbey, Neath, SA10 7ND with the Diocese of Llandaff.

What is the impact on travel arrangements?

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.

Support with home to school travel will be made available in line with the Council's Home to School Transport policy. This means that primary school aged pupils living 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable or designated school will be considered for transport assistance.

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

In the longer term this proposal will negate the need for transport from the area to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn.

Impact on community usage

A community Impact Assessment (CIA) was undertaken when Abbey Primary was established in 2015, and at that time it was found that there was little use of the school buildings by the community. This situation has not changed although it is expected that the new build at Longford will greatly increase opportunities for community participation.

The proposed Welsh-medium school will utilise the junior site and is some distance away from Abbey primary's new build. The proposal therefore should still provide opportunities for community use in the Neath Abbey area, and in addition can be seen as an opportunity to further support, enhance and expand the local community's Welsh language provision.

Local residents should not be subjected to any additional school traffic as pupil numbers for the primary will be significantly less in the first years of the starter school with the potential of growing to the total number of pupils currently attending the English medium school.

6. Legal process and Consultation

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.

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.

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.

The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is the proposer and the Council wishes to hear the views of all interested parties before deciding whether to progress its proposal. All responses to this consultation will be considered when making its decision and a consultation report will be published following the end of the consultation period. The consultation report will summarise the issues raised by consultees and include a response. The consultation report will also set out Estyn's view on the proposal.

Having considered the views expressed by interested parties, if the Council decides to proceed with its plan it will publish a statutory proposal. Once the statutory proposal is published there will be a 28 day period to respond in writing, known as the 'objection period'. Only objections submitted during this period will be considered. If objections are received, an objection report will be published following the end of the objection period. The report will summarise objections raised and provide a response.

Please note that only written objections submitted during the statutory notice period will be considered. Comments submitted as part of the consultation period will need to be re-submitted in writing during the statutory notice period if they are to be considered as objections.

Following the conclusion of the objection period the Council is required to determine the proposal and the matter will go before the Council's Cabinet for decision. In its decision making the Council's Cabinet will give due consideration to any objections raised alongside the case for the proposal. The proposal will be determined in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and associated School Organisation Code 2018.

Process Timetable

The main activities and actions, and the dates/periods that they are scheduled to take place is set out below

What	When
Publication of consultation document	25th January 2022
Period for submitting responses	25th January 2022- 8th March 2022
Consultation report published	June 2022
Proposed implementation date	9th January 2023

Making comment on the proposal

The purpose of this consultation document is to provide information and to invite views on the Council's proposal to open a new 3-11 Welsh-medium school in Neath Abbey.

Formal consultation will take place during the period: 25th January 2022- 8th March 2022. Comments on the proposal must be submitted in writing by letter or e-mail.

Consultation responses can also be submitted using the Consultation Portal on the Council's web site or by email to SSIP@npt.gov.uk.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is 8th March 2022
Unfortunately we will not be able consider any consultation responses received after this date.

Responses should be sent to the following address: **The Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning, (marked for the attention of the SSIP Team), Civic Centre, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ** or e-mail to: SSIP@npt.gov.uk

A full list of those being consulted can be seen below:

List of Consultees	
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn: Pupils Parents / carers Staff Governing Body Wider School Community	NAASH (Secondary Schools Forum)
	LLAN (Primary Schools Forum)
	Bordering authorities – Swansea/ Bridgend/ Carmarthenshire/ Powys/ RCT
Governing Body of: Abbey Primary School Coedffranc Primary School Crymlyn Primary School YG Ystalyfera –Bro Dur	Briton Ferry Town Council Coedffranc Town Council Dyffryn Clydach Community Council Neath Town Council
All other NPT schools	
NPT Elected Members	WG Schools Management Division
Diocesan Directors of Education	MP (for Neath) – Christina Rees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diocese of Menevia, Swansea - Diocese of Llandaff, Vale of Glamorgan 	MS (for Neath) – Jeremy Miles
Trade Unions	Regional Assembly Members
Estyn	ALN Partners
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	NPTCBC Officers
Welsh Language Commissioner	