

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board**

**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

### **REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION ANDREW THOMAS**

#### **MATTER FOR DECISION**

**WARDS AFFECTED: All**

#### **PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR PRIMARY AGE PUPILS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To obtain approval to implement a proposal to establish a specialist provision for primary age pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Blaenhonddan Primary School.

#### **Executive summary**

2. The Council is responsible for ensuring suitable provision is made for pupils with special educational needs
3. Recent work on reviewing the number and type of planned places and assessment provision across Neath Port Talbot has indicated that there is a need for extra places in the area of ASD.
4. The Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board at its meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 approved consultation on a proposal to establish a specialist provision for primary age pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Blaenhonddan Primary School.
5. The proposal seeks to complement the specialist provision and support already available within the County Borough.

6. This proposal has been the subject of external consultation and no objections were received during the statutory publication period.
7. It is recommended that Members approve implementation of this proposal, effective from 9th January 2024.

## **Background**

8. 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 and support for those pupils with additional learning needs.
9. Implementing the Council's 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.
10. 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
11. The Council provides for the pupils of Neath Port Talbot who require specialist support for their educational needs at special schools and at learning support/ inclusion centres attached to community primary/secondary schools.

12. Currently, within NPT, there are 18 Learning Support Centres (LSC) offering 262 planned places for primary aged pupils with a range of Additional Learning Needs. The Local Authority also has 5 Learning Support Centres at secondary level, offering 177 planned places. These Learning Support Centres offer specialist placements for children and young people with needs including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD); Speech, Language and Communication (SLC); Hearing Impairment (HI) and Moderate / Severe / Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties S/M/PMLD. Additionally within NPT there are 2 special schools, catering for the needs of children and young people with the most complex ALN. There are currently 295 planned places within Ysgol Maes Y Coed and Ysgol Hendrefelin special schools.
13. Recent work on reviewing the number and type of primary planned places and assessment provision across Neath Port Talbot has indicated that there is a need for extra places in the areas of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech and Language Difficulties (SLD), Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).
14. This proposal seeks to address identified need for further provision for pupils with ASD, specifically for primary aged pupils, with the aim of ensuring best possible outcomes for pupils.
15. Currently for primary age pupils with ASD who need specialist support or assessment, provision is made at Gnoll Primary (18 places), Maesmarchog Primary (18 places) and Waunceirch Primary (21 places). Secondary provision is available at Cwmtawe Community School (13 places), Ysgol Bae Baglan (29 places), Dwr y Felin (16 places) and Ysgol Hendrefelin (32 places). The high demand at both primary and secondary level is placing pressure on current provisions which are consistently full.

## **The Proposal**

16. It is proposed to establish a specialist provision for primary age pupils at Blaenhonddan Primary School. The provision will be a self-contained facility for up to 16 pupils in receipt of a statement of special educational needs or a Local Authority Maintained IDP for ASD.

17. The provision will be managed by the school and be under the school's governance. However, it will be a provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN and pupils admitted to the provision would be in addition to the admission number of the school. Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply.
18. Pupils at the proposed provision will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs. There is also the possibility that mainstream pupils with ASD could also benefit from the expertise available.
19. The provision will alleviate the current pressure to address demand for places for pupils with more complex needs, avoiding potential costly out of county placements and allowing opportunities for children to access learning within their local community.
20. The proposal seeks to complement the specialist provision and support already available within the County Borough.

### **Impact on pupils**

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

### **Impact on travel arrangements**

23. Pupils' travel needs will be assessed in line with the Council's Home to School Travel policy. Primary age pupils living 2 miles or more from the provision will be considered for assistance with travel costs.
24. 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
25. Blaenhonddan Primary School is a well-established school with established walking routes for children.
26. It is relatively centrally located within the County Borough and is readily accessible by vehicle.

### **Impact on governors**

27. The governing body and the school leadership team at Blaenhonddan Primary School will be responsible for the day to day management of the provision, including the specialist staff who will become part of the school's staffing complement. The school budget will be funded accordingly. The Governing Body fully support the proposal.

### **Impact on special needs education provision**

28. As a self-contained provision, the facility will not have a direct impact on the ALN provision of Blaenhonddan Primary School where pupils with additional learning needs, including children with statements of special educational needs and Local Authority maintained IDPs, are supported in a mainstream setting with appropriate funding for this purpose.
29. However, the specialist knowledge and skills-set of the staff employed to work at the provision will be available to share with mainstream staff and, as such, will indirectly benefit ALN provision at the school.
30. It is also envisaged that the provision will be able to provide support and training for other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot, building skills, competencies, expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD.

### **Financial Impacts**

31. Blaenhonddan Primary School will receive additional funding to manage the provision for up to 16 pupils. The provision will be funded from the delegated schools budget and the school will

receive funding for additional places at Band F which equates to approximately £242k per annum.

32. Meeting the special needs education of pupils in local settings, i.e. within the County Borough, avoids having to secure expensive out-of-county provision. The cost of providing education outside the County Borough for pupils with specialist needs in the 2022/ 2023 financial year was circa. £188,000. This annually presents a significant demand on the Council's education budget.
33. Provision has been made within the Department of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (DELLs) revenue budget to fund the establishment of the provision.
34. The provision will be resourced by specialist teachers and teaching assistants or key workers with the appropriate skills set.
35. The self-contained accommodation will be developed in new modular accommodation at the school. There will be a one-off capital cost for the 2 modular buildings and associated work for which £745k has been secured from the capital programme.
36. Primary age pupils living 2 miles or more from the identified provision will be considered for assistance with travel costs and as such there is likely to be an increase on transport costs as a result of this proposal. Annual transport costs are difficult to predict as this will depend on the number of children needing to be transported and on the distance they will need to travel to the provision from their home.
37. There are no capital receipts or recurrent costs savings directly related to this proposal other than savings from potential home education/out-of-county placement costs.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

38. An integrated impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

39. The assessment has indicated that there is no adverse effect on any particular group and the process has checks and monitoring in place to ensure that any unmet need is identified and any potential adverse effect is fully evaluated and impact mitigated.
40. The establishment of an ASD provision for primary aged pupils in Blaenhonddan Primary School will provide vital support and specialist teaching for pupils with ASD. It will support ALN reform and ensure that the Council is able to fulfil its legal obligations to meet the needs of pupils with ALN.
41. Establishing the ASD specialist provision within a mainstream primary schools breaks down barriers and aids the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Both the primary school and the ALN provision are inclusive for pupils of all backgrounds. The proposal will promote the understanding of the needs of different groups.
42. Having the ASD provision attached to mainstream school in Blaenhonddan allows the pupils attending to have the same opportunities as their mainstream peers as all pupils will be able to access the same curriculum and facilities.
43. Blaenhonddan Primary School is categorised as an English-medium school where Welsh is taught as a second language as appropriate in accordance with the Curriculum for Wales. The Council is satisfied that the provision for Welsh language education at the provision will be sufficient to meet the language requirements of the pupils admitted.
44. The Wellbeing of Future Generations has been considered and the establishment of an ASD provision directly impacts on the Council's wellbeing objective 1—'to ensure all children have the best start in life'.
45. The integrated impact assessment is included as Appendix A.

### **Valleys Communities Impacts**

46. The impact on Neath Port Talbot's valley communities will be the same as all other areas of the County Borough as the provision will admit pupils from across the whole of the county borough.

## **Workforce impacts**

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

## **Legal impacts**

49. The proposal will establish ALN provision in a mainstream school (Blaenhonddan Primary) where the pupils admitted are in addition to the admission number for the school and where the provision is recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with ALN. As such, this constitutes a regulated alteration requiring the statutory publication of the proposal. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) provides the legislative framework by which the Council may implement a proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018, made under Sections 38 and 39 of the Act, imposes on the Council requirements and guidelines on matters relating to school organisation. The Council's procedures are in line with legislative requirements.
50. 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.
51. 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.
52. The management of staff affected by the proposal will follow the relevant school policy and procedure requirements.



## **Risk management**

53. A risk assessment has been carried out under the Council's Risk Management Policy 2018.

54. Potential risk areas in implementing the proposal include:

- educational outcomes for pupils are not improved
- integration at a provision is unsuccessful
- negative response from parents of host school
- negative response from parents of pupils to be accommodated at the provision
- discrimination against protected characteristics resulting in a negative impact on one or more protected groups
- staff with appropriate skills and expertise not available
- increased home to school travel time for some pupils leading to poor attendance.
- Welsh language development not supported

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

- opportunities for a pupils to access specialist staff and support
- early intervention for younger pupils, reducing the risk of more costly support at a later stage
- host school indirectly benefit from specialist staff on site
- mainstream schools benefit from increased support and training in order to improve skills and build capacity

## **Impact on community usage**

56. The proposal should have no adverse impact on community usage at the school as there is no closure or reduction in community facilities involved with this proposal. The provisions will be a self-contained provision within the school and therefore will have no impact on the school's operation regarding community usage.

## **Consultation**

57. This school organisation proposal is being brought forward under the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme. Formal

consultation has been undertaken in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, November 2018.

58. A report on the outcome of consultation together with recommendations was presented to Members on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 [Blaenhonddan Primary School Back from Consultation.pdf \(npt.gov.uk\)](#).

### **Statutory Publication**

59. At the Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 Members noted responses to the consultation and as there were no issues raised during the consultation suggesting that the proposal should be reconsidered, Members determined to move to the statutory publication of the proposal.
60. To this effect a statutory notice was published on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 allowing the required 28 day period for submitting objections, which ran until 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023.
61. The statutory notice is attached to this report as Appendix B.

### **Objections**

62. No objections were received during the objection period.
63. With no objections to the proposal and with no separate requirement for referral to the Welsh Government for approval, the decision to implement the proposal falls to the Council's Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board.
64. In reaching a decision there is an expectation that Members will have familiarised themselves with the relevant documents and Cabinet Board reports relating to this proposal. These are listed below in the appendices.

### **Recommendation**

65. Having given due regard to the integrated impact and risk assessments, it is recommended that, in line with Section 53 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Members determine that

- the proposal to establish specialist provision for primary age pupils with ASD at Blaenhonddan Primary School be implemented as of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024
- authority be delegated to the Head of Transformation to implement the proposal

### **Reasons for proposed decision**

52. This decision is necessary to comply with the formal publication requirements imposed on the Council by the School Organisation Code and associated legislation. Implementation of the proposal will enable the Council to promote high educational standards and the fulfilment of every child's potential. It will also enable the Council to meet its duty to secure efficient education in its area.

### **Implementation of the decision**

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

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix B: Statutory Notice

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

This Integrated Impact Assessment considers the duties and requirements of the following legislation in order to inform and ensure effective decision making and compliance:

- Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016

**Version Control**

Version	Author	Job title	Date
Final	KWB	Transformation Co-ordinator	07.09.23

**1. Details of the initiative**

	<b>Title of the Initiative:</b> PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR PRIMARY AGE PUPILS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)
<b>1a</b>	<b>Service Area:</b> Strategic School Improvement Programme

<b>1b</b>	<b>Directorate:</b> ELLLS
<b>1c</b>	<b>Summary of the initiative:</b> Establishment of specialist provision for primary age pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Blaenhonddan Primary School
<b>1d</b>	<b>Is this a 'strategic decision'?</b> Yes - forming part of the Council's SSIP plan to increase the number of planned places for pupils with ALN.
<b>1e</b>	<b>Who will be directly affected by this initiative?</b> Service Users, staff and members of the community.
<b>1f</b>	<b>When and how were people consulted?</b> Formal consultation took place between June 6th and July 18 <sup>th</sup> 2023. Consultation was undertaken at a formative stage and allowed for intelligent consideration and response. The consultation period was 6 weeks to allow consultees time to consider the proposal and submit comments.  A consultation document was published on Neath Port Talbot Council website, and sent directly to relevant consultees. Hard copies were available on request.  The consultation document invited views and opinions to be submitted in respect of the proposal. The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code requires the Council to consult on its proposal and 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.
<b>1g</b>	<b>What were the outcomes of the consultation?</b> The responses received were positive and supported the proposal to establish specialist provision for primary age pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Blaenhonddan Primary School.  The Authority received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 email response from ESTYN <span style="float: right;">In support</span></li> <li>• Pupil responses from Blaenhonddan Primary School pupils <span style="float: right;">In support</span></li> </ul>

The Council is using the feedback and responses received to the engagement and consultation exercises carried out in relation to the proposal as part of its decision making process.

It is recognised that a low number of responses were received and this will be mitigated by future monitoring and actions as stated in the relevant section below.

## 2. Evidence

### What evidence was used in assessing the initiative?

Following consultation a Consultation Report has been prepared summarising the comments received and officer responses. This should be read alongside this impact assessment.

Respondents were asked to complete an Equalities Monitoring form included in the consultation document.

A great deal of information is available with relation to the population within Neath Port Talbot. This can be accessed from the following sources.

- Equality Act 2010

- Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- NPT draft WESP 2022-2032
- Consultation Report
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)
- School Organisation Code, 2018
- Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data has also been used along with the Local Authority data relating to school staff
- **National Autistic Society research information, [Diverse Perspectives](#) (2014)**

All Neath Port Talbot schools are inclusive for pupils of all ethnic groups and ethnicity is not a criterion under the Council's Admissions Policy. In addition, the Council is an inclusive employer.

Inclusivity and respect of others is an intrinsic element of the Local Authority and the National Curriculum, and the proposed new LSC would seek to provide an inclusive environment which meets the needs of all pupils irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. The Estyn School Inspection Handbook also details how inspection would evaluate how well individual pupils benefit from the provision and states it may be relevant to pay particular attention to those with protected characteristics, therefore including transgender pupils. Under spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Estyn would look for evidence where pupils develop awareness and respect for diversity in relation to, for example gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and disability.

It is recognised that there is a lack of general data for some of the protected characteristics. To mitigate this, the Local Authority will continue to monitor protected characteristics in the future.

### 3. Equalities

a) How does the initiative impact on people who share a **protected characteristic**?

Protected Characteristic	+	-	+/ -	Why will it have this impact?
Age	<b>x</b>			<p>The Equality Duty covers the protected characteristic of age, which refers to a person having a particular age or being within an age group.</p> <p>Data indicates that there are currently 470 pupils with ASD in Neath Port Talbot (PLASC 2023).</p> <p>Increasing numbers of pupils with ASD has led to pressure on current provisions and this proposal will seek to address the needs of these pupils and future pupils identified as having ASD by providing an additional provision for primary age pupils. It will increase the number of specialist places available within the county borough for pupils with ASD, ensuring greater numbers of pupils are able to access specialist support.</p> <p>Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply.</p>



			<p>Pupils at the proposed provision will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs.</p> <p>Consultation responses have indicated that a provision of this kind is welcomed by pupils and ESTYN.</p> <p>The provision will have a positive impact on primary aged pupils of Blaenhonddan Primary School as pupils admitted to the provision will become part of the school roll, taking a full part in the life and activities of the school as appropriate. Consultation responses indicate that pupils welcome this provision and feel it will enhance an already inclusive school.</p> <p>It is also envisaged that the provision will be able to provide support and training for other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot, building skills, competencies, expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD.</p> <p>Employees within the school will be protected by the policies adopted by the Governing Body and will have access to suitable HR advice.</p> <p>The establishment of the ASD provision in Blaenhonddan Primary School is therefore likely to have a positive impact on pupils aged 3-11.</p>
Disability	x		<p>The Council's arrangements for education across the county borough include those children and young people with a disability. The proposed provision will specifically provide education for pupils with an additional learning need, therefore the impact on these pupils is likely to be high.</p> <p>Data indicates that there are currently 470 pupils with ASD in Neath Port Talbot (PLASC 2023).</p> <p>This proposal will seek to address the needs of these pupils and future pupils identified as having ASD by providing a provision designed to meet their needs.</p> <p>As a self-contained provision, the facility will not have a direct impact on the ALN provision of Blaenhonddan Primary School where pupils with additional learning needs, including children with statements of special educational needs and Local Authority maintained</p>

			<p>IDPs, are supported in a mainstream setting with appropriate funding for this purpose. However, the specialist knowledge and skills-set of the staff employed to work at the provision will be available to share with mainstream staff and, as such, will indirectly benefit ALN provision at the school.</p> <p>It is also envisaged that the provision will be able to provide support and training for other mainstream primary schools across Neath Port Talbot, building skills, competencies, expertise and capacity of all staff working with children with ASD.</p> <p>This proposal therefore will have a positive impact on pupils with ASD not just within the provision but in Blaenhonddan Primary School mainstream classes and in other schools across Neath Port Talbot where support and training is accessed by staff.</p> <p>The new facility will be fully compliant in terms of requirements for disabled users. This will potentially have a positive impact on pupils as yet unknown who may have an additional disability.</p> <p>The Council is required to have regard for the needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties when assessing transport needs.</p> <p>Transport decisions made on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) grounds form part of the Children and Young People service's arrangements for children with additional learning needs. The Council will make suitable arrangements for learners with special needs to attend school including arrangements, as necessary, for home to school travel. An assessment of a learner's level of travel need will inform the type/level of transport that may need to be provided. The entitlement will be reviewed on an annual basis. (Home to School Travel Policy Neath Port Talbot Council).</p> <p>The establishment of an ASD provision in Blaenhonddan Primary School will have a positive impact on disability.</p>
Gender reassignment		x	It is expected that all NPTCBC schools meet the needs of pupils and staff who are transgender.

			<p>Local Authority and school policies will be in place in terms of gender reassignment. Employees and pupils within the school will be protected by the policies adopted by the Governing Body.</p> <p>It is possible that the planned new modular buildings may provide facilities that will facilitate easier management of the practicalities of gender reassignment through opportunities for private changing and toilet facilities.</p> <p>The proposal therefore is likely to have a neutral impact on this aspect.</p>
Marriage & civil partnership		x	<p>Pupils at the school are below the legal marriage age. Staff will continue to receive protection under the Equalities Act 2010 which would be referred to by the new Governing Body and Council in order to support the staff at the school.</p> <p>Employees within the school will be protected by the policies adopted by the Governing Body and will have access to suitable HR advice.</p> <p>The proposal is designed to have a neutral impact on those with protected characteristics accessing the new school.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity		x	<p>It is not considered that there would be a negative impact on pupils in this protected group as there is a minimal likelihood of pupils falling within this protected group due to the age range of the proposed new school. The provision of education for any pupil identified as being within this protected group would remain unaltered by the proposal.</p> <p>Employees within the school will be protected by the policies adopted by the Governing Body and will have access to suitable HR advice.</p> <p>The proposal therefore is likely to have a neutral impact on this aspect.</p>
Race	x		<p>All Neath Port Talbot schools are inclusive for pupils of all ethnic groups and ethnicity is not a criterion under the Council's Admissions Policy. In addition, the Council is an inclusive employer.</p>

			<p>PLASC 2023 data indicates that 95% of the pupil population with a statement of special educational need (SEN) or LA IDP identify as White British and just 6% of pupils with a statement for ASD are Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME).</p> <p>In 2014 the National Autistic Society published a report entitled <i>Diverse Perspectives</i> which detailed research undertaken on the experiences of BAME families with children with ASD. It concluded that difficulties were primarily related to their child's autism, not their ethnicity, however many also faced additional challenges that appear to reflect shared experiences within BAME communities. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Challenges getting a diagnosis:</li><li>-Barriers to accessing support services</li><li>-Communication problems with professionals</li><li>-Awareness and understanding of autism within communities</li><li>-Denial and isolation, alongside feelings of blame and shame: many said that these issues could lead to parents, carers and siblings missing out on support and becoming socially isolated.</li></ul> <p>Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply. Pupils of any race would be eligible for admission to the provision, and once admitted pupils would have equal opportunities to access the support available.</p> <p>Future employees of the school will be entitled to receive protection under the relevant employment and equalities law and policies which will be adopted by the Governing Body.</p> <p>The proposal would therefore have a potentially positive impact on this group, by enabling families to have better access to support and services.</p>
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Religion or belief	x		<p>It is expected that the Council’s educational arrangements will meet the needs of pupils or staff members of different religions or with different beliefs.</p> <p>Religion or belief is not a criterion under the Council’s Admissions Policy which will be applicable to the new provision. Admission to the provision would be in line with this policy.</p> <p>Staff would continue to receive protection under the Equalities Act 2010 which would be referred to by the newly established Governing Body and Council in order to support the staff at the new school.</p> <p>Respect for all religious and non-religious beliefs would not change as a result of implementing this proposal. Similarly, the aspect of the curriculum relating to religion and belief would not change because of this proposal. The proposal does not seek to reduce the number of faith school places and increase the number of community (not-faith based) school places.</p> <p>The Estyn School Inspection Handbook also details how inspection would evaluate how well individual pupils benefit from the school. Under spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Estyn would look for evidence where pupils develop awareness and respect for diversity in relation to, for example gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and disability.</p> <p>Research (<i>Diverse Perspectives, 2014</i>) has shown that some ASD pupils from BAME can be disadvantaged due to their culture with some participants emphasising that their faith gave them strength, while others reporting a lack of support from faith groups and at places of worship.</p> <p>This proposal would seek to improve opportunities for pupils with ASD as specialist staff appointed will be able to better understand and support pupils and families, who may be experiencing particular difficulties due to religion or belief.</p>
Sex	x		<p>The Council is an inclusive employer. Across the Local Authority both male and female staff are employed within primary education settings.</p>

			<p>Children of both sexes would be treated and taught equally at the proposed new LSC. There would be no different methods of teaching or curricula based on sex sex. The school would aim to reduce, as far as possible, segregating pupils and students by gender.</p> <p>Current data (Plasc Jan 2023) indicates that there are 319 pupils with a statement for ASD and of these 251 are boys and 68 are girls. There are an additional 4 boys with LA maintained IDPs for ASD. This would suggest that the proposed provision may have greater numbers of male than female pupils attending.</p> <p>Studies have shown that behavioural characteristics of ASD females can vary greatly compared to those of autistic males. In general, ASD girls are often isolated or have fewer friends than other girls in their peer group and can struggle more than usual with adolescence. This can lead to depression and anxiety. Due to greater numbers of boys than girls in need of support this could mean that girls accessing the provision are in a minority, and so could increase feelings of isolation and anxiety.</p> <p>As the proposal aims to establish an ASD provision in a mainstream school it should provide greater opportunities for female ASD pupils to socialise and make friends with pupils attending mainstream classes, thus ensuring that friendship groups become larger than just the pupils attending the provision. Due to the support available from the experienced staff planned for the provision, and the fact that Blaenhonddan Primary School is recognised to be an inclusive and caring school community where children and young people with differing needs and abilities are all supported to thrive, this is likely to have a positive impact on female pupils attending the provision.</p> <p>The benefits of the provision being based in a mainstream, inclusive school is also likely to benefit male pupils, ensuring that their peer groups are also extended beyond those pupils attending the provision.</p>
Sexual orientation	x		Inclusivity and respect of others is an intrinsic element of the National Curriculum, and the proposed new LSC would seek to provide an inclusive environment which meets the needs

				<p>of all pupils irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.</p> <p>Research demonstrates an increased prevalence of autistic children and young people who are gender questioning. This proposal could have a positive impact by ensuring support can be accessed for those pupils who need it from the specialist staff employed in the provision, who will already know the pupils well and be better placed to advise and support them.</p>
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#### What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

This proposal, if implemented would be closely monitored with information gathered regarding characteristics and circumstances of the individuals involved. From the evidence currently available the proposal should have mainly positive or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics due to the following actions-

- Implementing the proposal and establishing an ASD provision for primary aged pupils in Blaenhonddan Primary School will ensure that the positive impacts on the protected characteristics identified are realised
- Recruitment of specialist and experienced staff will be essential with extra training provided as necessary
- Policies and procedures would be in place to support the school with inclusive practice; local authority policies would be adopted and adhered to

b) How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Public Sector Equality Duty**?

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	x			<p>Policies adopted by the Governing Body and teaching and learning will aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.</p> <p>Employees within the school will be protected by Local Authority policies and policies adopted by the Governing Body and will have access to suitable HR advice.</p> <p>Pupils will be protected by Local Authority policies and policies adopted by the Governing Body.</p> <p>Pupils with an additional learning need could be at risk of discrimination, harassment and victimisation by others. The establishment of an ASD provision at Blaenhonddan Primary School will not only support pupils attending but will also aim to raise awareness with mainstream pupils and staff about ASD, promoting greater acceptance and understanding and eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The National Curriculum will also promote inclusivity and acceptance through teaching and learning within the school.</p>
To advance equality of opportunity between different groups	x			<p>The establishment of the provision at Blaenhonddan Primary School would address the increased numbers of pupils aged 3-11 who have a statement of ASD or Local Authority IDPs needing specialist support. These pupils would therefore benefit most from this provision. Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply. All pupils with a statement of ASD would be eligible for admission to the provision from any of the protected groups.</p>



				As the provision is being established in a mainstream school it is expected that pupils who attend the provision will also have the opportunity to experience and take part in a wide range of activities open to all pupils, thus providing greater equality of opportunity.
To foster good relations between different groups	X			Raising awareness and promoting greater understanding of ASD pupils will help to foster good relationships between pupils attending the mainstream school and those attending the provision. Work undertaken with other mainstream schools by staff employed at the provision will also help to promote understanding and awareness of ASD and foster good relationships.

#### What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

- Implementing the proposal and establishing an ASD provision for primary aged pupils in Blaenhonddan Primary School will ensure that the positive impacts identified are realised
- Blaenhonddan Primary school staff will raise awareness of the purpose of the provision , and staff and pupils will support pupils in the provision with integration and further promote inclusion throughout the school
- Outreach work with other mainstream school will be undertaken following the establishment of the provision to further promote awareness of ASD

#### 4. Socio Economic Duty

Impact	Details of the impact/advantage/disadvantage
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Positive/Advantage	<p>The proposal, if implemented, should have a positive impact on groups who experience socio economic disadvantage.</p> <p>The proposal aims to provide local, accessible, sustainable, community-focused provision to meet the growing demand for ASD places within the Local Authority.</p> <p>The proposal would therefore have a positive impact in this regard.</p>
Negative/Disadvantage	<p>For some pupils, distance to the provision would be further than to their catchment mainstream school, this could result in increased travel costs for parents</p>
Neutral	<p>The facility is accessible to pupils with Statements or LA maintained IDPs for ASD (via the admissions panel) regardless of any specific socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>The facility will be fully accessible to pupils with Statements or LA maintained IDPs for ASD (via the admissions panel) regardless of any specific socio - economic disadvantage.</p>
<p><b>What action will be taken to reduce inequality of outcome</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home to school travel assistance will be provided to eligible pupils ,for example for those living further than two miles from the school</li> </ul>	

## 5. Community Cohesion/Social Exclusion/Poverty

	+	-	+/ -	Why will it have this impact?
Community Cohesion			x	It is not expected that the establishment of the ASD provision will impact on community cohesion
Social Exclusion	x			The establishment of the provision will aim to support those pupils with ASD who may have difficulty participating fully in society, and will give them the opportunity to experience similar life experiences to mainstream pupils
Poverty	x			The provision will aim to ensure that pupils are not at risk of participation poverty by providing opportunities for them to be included in activities experienced by their mainstream peers.

**What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?**

- Implementing the proposal and establishing an ASD provision for primary aged pupils in Blaenhonddan Primary school will ensure that the positive impacts identified are realised
- Staff recruitment will ensure that experienced specialist staff are appointed who are able to provide the best opportunities for pupils
- Blaenhonddan Primary School staff will raise awareness of the purpose of the provision , and staff and pupils will support pupils in the provision with integration and further promote inclusion throughout the school

**6. Welsh**

	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this effect?
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What effect does the initiative have on: -people's opportunities to use the Welsh language	x			<p>Although the provision is planned to be established in an English-medium primary school, staff who are able to speak Welsh will be available to support pupils who transition from a WM school or who speak Welsh as their first language.</p> <p>Pupils attending the provision from a WM school or who speak Welsh as their first language will benefit from the specialised support available to them.</p>
-treating the Welsh and English languages equally	x			

#### What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

- Recruitment of staff who are able to speak Welsh would be deemed desirable for the provision
- Support for Learning and Inclusion available from Welsh speaking staff

## 7. Biodiversity

How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Biodiversity Duty**?

Biodiversity Duty	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity			x	<p>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) has a legal duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Council's Biodiversity Duty Plan demonstrates how we will fulfil that duty and will act as a driver for conservation activities throughout Neath Port Talbot (NPT).</p> <p>The Biodiversity Duty Plan not only delivers our statutory duties with regards to biodiversity but also explains how, through meeting the Biodiversity Duty, we are delivering well-being objectives and the ways of working under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.</p> <p>This is not a criterion that will be impacted upon by this proposal</p>
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.			x	

**What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?**

- Any future impacts will be monitored closely following the opening of the LSC

## 8. Well-being of Future Generations

How have the five ways of working been applied in the development of the initiative?

Ways of Working	Details
<p>i. <b>Long term</b> – looking at least 10 years (and up to 25 years) ahead</p>	<p>Data indicates that the number of pupils with ASD who require support is increasing. This provision will support the Councils wellbeing objective 1 – ‘to improve the wellbeing of children and young people’ through establishing a specialist provision to support pupils currently identified as well as those who will be identified in the future.</p> <p>The cost of providing education outside the County Borough for pupils with specialist needs is high, and can amount to circa. £80k per pupil per year. This annually presents a significant demand on the Council’s education budget. Meeting the special needs education of pupils in local settings, i.e. within the County Borough, avoids having to secure expensive out-of-county provision, at the present time and in the future</p>
<p>ii. <b>Prevention</b> – preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>By establishing a specialist provision the Council will be providing support and specialist teaching for children and young people with ASD in Neath Port Talbot. This will avoid costly out of county placements thus reducing the demand on the Council’s education budget.</p> <p>It will help to prevent absenteeism and possibly exclusion rates as pupils will be educated in a setting that meets their needs which should improve their wellbeing and desire to attend school. It will also ensure that pupils are able to access the support they need to make progress, ensuring that they are able to gain qualifications and life skills for the future.</p>
<p>iii. <b>Collaboration</b> – working with other services internal or external</p>	<p>A range of Council services are involved in establishing the provision should the proposal be approved, including Support for Learning, Education Development Service, Environment Department, Access Managed Services and Transport Services</p>

iv. **Involvement** – involving people, ensuring they reflect the diversity of the population

Informal consultation has taken place with a range of stakeholders to help shape the proposal. Additionally the proposal has been subject to a comprehensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders for a six week period.

The formal consultation process sought the views of the following groups

Blaenhonddan Primary School: Pupils, Parents/carers, Staff, Governing Body, Wider School Community

All other NPT schools

NPT Elected Members

Neath Town Council

Blaenhonddan Community Council

Cilybebyll Community Council

NAASH (Secondary Schools Forum)

LLAN (Primary Schools Forum)

Bordering authorities – Swansea/ Bridgend/ Carmarthenshire/ Powys/ RCT

WG Schools Management Division

Diocesan Directors of Education- Diocese of Menevia, Swansea, Diocese of Llandaff, Vale of Glamorgan

MP and MS for Neath

Regional Members of the Senedd



	<p>Trade Unions</p> <p>Regional Assembly Members</p> <p>WG Schools Management Division</p> <p>Estyn</p> <p>Local Members</p> <p>Regional Education Consortium (ERW)</p> <p>Children and Young Person Partnership (inc. Early Years Development and Childcare)</p> <p>NPTCBC Integrated Transport Unit</p> <p>Police and Crime Commissioner</p> <p>Communities First Partnership</p> <p>NPTCBC Officers</p> <p>ALN Partners</p>
<p><b>v.Integration</b> – making connections to maximise contribution to:</p>	<p>The proposal to establish an ASD provision in Blaenhonddan Primary school has a positive contribution to the Council’s well-being objectives as it aims to ensure that pupils with ASD are supported and are able to make progress</p>
<p><b>Council’s well-being objectives</b></p>	<p>To improve the wellbeing of children and young people</p>
<p><b>Other public bodies objectives</b></p>	<p>Promote wellbeing through and in the workplace</p>

## 9. Monitoring Arrangements

Provide information on the monitoring arrangements to:

Monitor the impact of the initiative on Equalities, Community Cohesion, the Welsh Measure, Biodiversity Duty and the Wellbeing Objectives.

If the proposal is implemented then Blaenhonddan Primary school staff will monitor the progress and wellbeing of pupils in the provision to ensure that identified positive impacts are being implemented.

Monitoring will take place on a regular basis by Support for Learning and Inclusion officers, ESO officers and outside bodies including Estyn.

## 10. Assessment Conclusions

Please provide details of the conclusions reached in relation to each element of the assessment:

	Conclusion
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<b>Equalities</b>	The establishment of the provision will have a positive impact on age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It will have a neutral impact on gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.
<b>Community Cohesion/ Social Exclusion/Poverty</b>	The establishment of the provision will have no effect on community cohesion, but should have a positive impact on social exclusion and poverty
<b>Welsh</b>	Staff who are able to speak Welsh will be available to support pupils who transition from a WM school or who speak Welsh as their first language.  Pupils attending the provision from a WM school or who speak Welsh as their first language will benefit from the specialised support available to them.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The establishment of the provision has no impact on biodiversity
<b>Well-being of Future Generations</b>	This proposal directly contributes to the Council's wellbeing objective 'to improve the wellbeing of children and young people'

### Overall Conclusion

Please indicate the conclusion reached:

- **Continue** - as planned as no problems and all opportunities have been maximised
- **Make adjustments** - as potential problems/missed opportunities/negative impacts have been identified along with mitigating actions
- **Justification** - for continuing with the initiative even though there is a potential for negative impacts or missed opportunities
- **STOP** - redraft the initiative as actual or potential unlawful discrimination has been identified

Please provide details of the overall conclusion reached in relation to the initiative

The establishment of an ASD provision for primary aged pupils in Blaenhonddan Primary School will provide vital support and specialist teaching for pupils with ASD. It will support ALN reform and ensure that the Council is able to fulfil its legal obligations to meet the needs of pupils with ALN.

It will have positive impacts on age, disability, race, religion/belief, sex and sexual orientation and will assist the Council’s ability to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. Additionally it will have a positive impact on social exclusion and poverty, and a positive impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language and in treating Welsh and English equally.

The Wellbeing of Future generations has been considered and the establishment of an ASD provision directly impacts on the Council’s wellbeing objective –‘to improve the wellbeing of children and young people’.

## 10. Actions

What actions are required in relation to obtaining further data/information, to reduce or remove negative impacts or improve positive impacts?

Action	Who will be responsible for seeing it is done?	When will it be done by?	How will we know we have achieved our objective?
Recruitment of staff	Inclusion services and Blaenhonddan Primary School	By January 2024	Suitably qualified and experienced staff appointed

<b>Building works undertaken</b>	<b>SSIP/Environment</b>	<b>By January 2024</b>	<b>Work completed and ready for occupation</b>
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**11. Sign off**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Completed by</b>	Kate Windsor-Brown	Transformation Co-ordinator		07.09.23
<b>Signed off by</b>	Andrew Thomas	Head of Service/Director		07.09.23

**Draft Statutory Notice**



**This Statutory Notice is published by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Port Talbot. SA13 1PJ**

**NOTICE** is given in accordance with Section 42 of the School Standards and Organisation Act (Wales) 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council having consulted such persons as required, propose to:

**Establish a new specialist provision for primary age pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Blaenhonddan Primary School, Main Road, Bryncoch, SA10 7PE.**

The Learning Support Centre will provide for up to 16 boys and girls, age 3-11 years in receipt of a statement of special educational needs or a Local Authority Maintained IDP and who require support in a specialist setting. Admission will be via a special admission panel of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Pupils admitted to the Learning Support Centre will be in addition to the admission number for the relevant age group at the school. Blaenhonddan Primary is a community school for boys and girls, age 3-11 years, maintained by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Currently, the school has the capacity to accommodate 226 full-time pupils and 40 nursery pupils per session. As of PLASC 2023, there are 208 full time and 44 part time nursery pupils at the school. The school also hosts a specialist Key Stage 2 MLD provision for 9 pupils.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the

Council's response to these queries and the views of Estyn are available at: <https://www.npt.gov.uk/1891#contents1>

It is proposed to implement the proposal on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Transport arrangements will be in line with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's Home to School Travel Policy.

Within a period of 28 days after the date of publication of this proposal, that is to say by the **1<sup>st</sup> November 2023**, any person may object to the proposal. Objections should be sent to: Andrew Thomas, 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](mailto:SSIP@npt.gov.uk).

Signed:



Andrew Thomas, Director of Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

**Dated: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

## **Explanatory Notes:**

(This note does not form part of the Notice but is intended to explain its general meaning)

- (i) It is intended to establish a Learning Support Centre (LSC) for primary aged pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Blaenhonddan Primary school.
- (ii) The facility will provide learning support for up to 16 pupils of primary school age pupils with ASD. Pupils at the proposed provision will benefit from being taught by specialist staff, experienced in working with pupils with ASD needs. This facility will be for pupils in receipt of a statement of SEN or a Local Authority Maintained IDP and who require longer-term provision.
- (iii) The LSC will be a self-contained facility managed by Blaenhonddan Primary school and be under the school's governance. However, it will be a provision recognised by the Council as reserved for pupils with a statement of special educational needs or a Local Authority Maintained IDP and although it is in a mainstream school the pupils who are admitted to the LSC will be in addition to the admission number of the school.
- (iv) Admission to the provision would be via a special admission panel of the Council and specific entry and exit criteria would apply.
- (v)
- (vi) The facility will be housed in 2 new modular buildings within the school site. Pupils admitted to the Learning Support Centre will be in addition to the admission number for the relevant age group at the school. As such, accommodating the LSC will not adversely impact on school admissions.
- (vii) It is intended that the LSC will open on 9th<sup>th</sup> January 2024.
- (viii) The reasons for the proposal are set out in the consultation document which is available on the SSIP webpage on the Council's website: [Consultation Documents – Neath Port Talbot Council \(npt.gov.uk\)](#)
- (ix) The Authority's School Transport policy is available from the Council's website: [npt\\_home\\_to\\_school\\_travel\\_policy\\_2017.pdf](#)
- (x) Hard copies or alternative versions of all documentation may be obtained upon request from the Strategic School Improvement



Team, Education Department, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Port Talbot Civic Centre, Port Talbot.