



Wrexham County Borough Council

Post Consultation Report on the Ceiriog Valley Federation of Schools

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1. Introduction

Wrexham County Borough Council has recently completed a period of Consultation in relation to the Ceiriog Valley Federation of Schools. **The consultation Period began on 9th January 2018 and ended on 21st February 2018.**

The consultation has been carried out in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 which requires the School Organisation Code 2013 to be issued to and give guidance to relevant bodies (Local Authorities, Governing Bodies).

This document will set out the steps taken during the formal Consultation Period, will refer to findings obtained during the Consultation and will aim to answer and tackle queries that have been put to the Authority.

2. Publication of Consultation

The Consultation began with the bilingual publication of the Consultation Document on 9th January 2018. Hard Copies of the Document were delivered to the three schools and letters were issued to staff and parents informing them of the proposals. The table below sets out the list of recipients, as guided by the the School Organisation Code, who received a copy of, or were directed to the Consultation Document. There were 349 formal consultees.

Name/Organisation	No of Recipients
Teachers and Staff at Llanarmon DC School, Pontfadog CP School and Cynddelw CP School	24
Parents at Llanarmon DC School, Pontfadog CP School and Cynddelw CP School	150
Governing Body at Ceiriog Valley Federation of schools	1
Estyn	1
Assembly Members: AM Llyr Gruffydd, AM Lesley Griffiths, AM Mark Isherwood, AM Ken Skates, AM Nathan Gill, AM Michelle Brown.	6

Members of Parliament: MP Susan Elan Jones, MP Ian Lucas	2
Gwe	1
Welsh Government – School organisation	1
The proposed maintaining authority of Cynddelw CP, Wrexham Council Borough Council (Executive Board).	1
Other local authorities, Powys County Council, Flintshire County Council and Denbighshire County Council, Cheshire West, Shropshire.	5
Teaching and staff trade unions representing teachers and other staff	10
Wrexham Council's Integrated Transport Unit (ITU)	1
The Police and Crime Commissioner	1
Llansantffraid Glyn Ceiriog Community Council and Glyn Traian Community Council (Pontfadog) and Ceiriog Uchaf Community Council	3
Independent nursery providers in the Ceiriog area including Mudiad Meithrin	2
The Children and Young People's Partnership and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships	2
The Church in Wales and the Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located	2
All Wrexham Schools including PRU	71
Teaching and staff Trade Unions	10
All Wrexham Councillors	52
Communities First	3

3. Consultation Meetings

As part of the Consultation process meetings were held by Education Officers with stakeholders at:

School	Stakeholder	Date	No. of Attendees
Pontfadog CP School	Parents and Community	25 th January 2018 8.30 am	11
Pontfadog CP School	Parents and Community	25 th January 2018 2.30pm	7
Cynddelw CP School	Parents and Community	1 st February 2018 5pm	12
Cynddelw CP School	Parents and Community	9th February 2018 8.30am	4
Cynddelw CP School	Parents and Community	9th February 2018 2.30pm	5

In total 39 people attended the drop in sessions. That is only 11.17% of formal consultees.

Consultation with Governing Body

Officers from the local authority met with the Governing Body of the three Federation schools in the Ceiriog Valley on the **5th February 2018**.

Consultation with Staff

Officers from the local authority met with the staff of the three Federation schools in the Ceiriog Valley on the **6th February 2018**. The issues raised in the meetings are summarised below:

- There is a perception that we are treating Ysgol Llanarmon differently.
- Parents remain confused around how the dual stream school works and how pupils are taught.
- Do the Governing Body need to send in a formal response.
- If Pontfadog closes how would the Local Authority look to use the savings generated, would they enable improvements to the remaining schools within the Federation.
- Would the savings be sufficient to support the school in the repayment of the Federations current commitment to repayment of Prudential borrowing.

4. Consultation with Children

A pupil version of the consultation document was available throughout the consultation period and was distributed to pupils, however no written responses were received from pupils.

Officers from the local authority met with the School Councils of the three Federation schools in the Ceiriog Valley on the **7th February 2018**. The issues raised in the meetings are summarised below:

School	Stakeholder	Date	No. of Consultees
Pontfadog CP	School Council	07.02.2018	12
Cynddelw CP	School Council	07.02.2018	10
Llanarmon CP	School Council	07.02.2018	10

During the school council meetings, the children were asked if they had seen copies of the children's consultation document and officers explained what the consultation was about. The children were encouraged to ask any questions and share ideas that they may have.

The following feedback was recorded on the day and the children were also asked if they could send their ideas and opinions to Wrexham Council via the school co-ordinators.

Feedback from School Councils:

Questions	Responses		
	Pontfadog	Cynddelw	Llanarmon
1.Children were asked what the thought of idea (Option	12 children and 1 parent Children all said this was a	10 children All liked this idea.	10 children 5 children said they liked this

<p>1)</p>	<p>good idea, that all 3 schools would stay the same.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you make buildings strong? 2. Why are we talking about change when all schools are good as they are? 3. We like this school so this school is the best and we are happy. 4. All children have visited Cynddelw but not may have been to Llanarmon. 5. I don't want to go to another school, it is gooder here. <p>Show of hands – All 12 Children like this idea.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This would be a fair option. 2. Why are we looking at the other ideas? <p>Show of hands: 10 Children voted in favour of this idea.</p>	<p>idea, 5 didn't mind.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do we need to talk about ideas we could just stay the same. 2. There will be lots of people chatting to each other.
<p>2. Children were asked what the thought of idea (Option 2)</p>	<p>Majority of children did not like this idea.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are too many children. 2. Dinner time would be a problem it would be too noisy. 3. Teachers will do a bad job. 4. Maybe they could bring a teacher with them? 5. I have been to another school in a class of 30 and I came here as I needed a 	<p>The majority didn't like the idea.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No we don't like this. 2. It would be unfair on new children. 3. Friends/brothers/sisters would be separated. 4. My little sister wants to come here but she would have to go to another school from me. 5. If we change to welsh what 	<p>9 children liked this idea, 1 didn't.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This might be a good idea. 2. My mum only speaks English, she only sent me to this school as it was the only school she could afford.

	<p>smaller class to learn. 6. Maybe some kids don't know welsh</p> <p>Show of hands: 10 said No, 2 said yes.</p>	<p>will happen to the teachers?</p> <p>Show of hands: 2 voted for, 8 voted against the idea</p>	
<p>3. Children were asked what they thought of idea (Option 3)</p>	<p>All said No.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close Cynddelw instead. 2. It would be an outrage 3. It would be too noisy. 4. Mum and dad will not drive to Glyn it is too far. 5. We would be bullied at Glyn. 6. We spent a day at Glyn and I had to phone ChildLine as it was awful there. 7. They pulled my hood. 8. A girl tried to pick me up from behind. 9. The children might not like us. 10. Life wouldn't be worth living if we had to go there. 11. They pick on us. 12. There are lots of bullies there. <p>Show of hands – 12 voted against this idea.</p>	<p>Initially undecided majority.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It would be heart breaking for the children in Pontfadog. 2. But they would have friends here. 3. They would still be with their friends it is just a change of building. 4. This won't affect Llanarmon. 5. If Pontfadog closes who will lose their jobs? 6. Would we have to change the name Cynddelw if Pontfadog came here? 7. There are only 18 of them so I don't think we'd have to change. 8. We do have room for them. 9. They have friends here. 10. We know their names. 11. What would happen to Pontfadog Building? 12. Could it be a welsh school? 	<p>5 children liked the idea, 5 said No</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I'd be super sad if I went there. 2. I know someone who goes there so I don't think it's a nice idea. 3. If you close Pontfadog will it affect our school?

		<p>13. Maybe the children could decide what to do with it as it is their school?</p> <p>14. When and will this happen?</p>	
Other Comments	<p>1. I have an idea – All schools could do English Language and Welsh.</p> <p>2. Another idea – Build a new school to be Pontfadog</p> <p>3. Pontfadog is the ‘goodist’ school.</p>	<p>Safest option is option 1 but if Pontfadog has to close it would only be a change of building and they would have friends here.</p>	<p>1. Make a 4th school. It would cost lots of money. My dad had loads of bricks and wood you should see my dad.</p> <p>2. Maybe move the children to another school?</p> <p>3. Take the English from Cynddelw to Pontfadog?</p> <p>4. If Llanarmon and Pontfadog were to shut Glyn wouldn’t be big enough so it would mean spending more money.</p>

5. Consultation Feedback

During the course of the Consultation Period Wrexham County Borough Council received 253 responses to the consultation Document. The table below demonstrates the format of response used by stakeholders.

Format of Response	Number of Responses Received
Consultation Response Form	192
Email/Letter	61
Total Received	253

6. Feedback and Responses

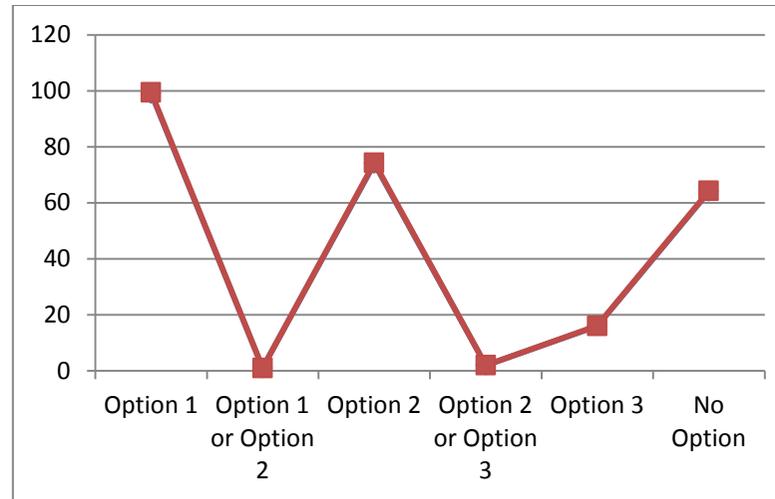
Out of the 253 responses received throughout the consultation period :

99 (39.13% of respondees) identified Option 1 – Status Quo as their preferred way forward.

74 (29.25% of respondees) identified Option 2 – Change Language designation at Ysgol Cynddelw to Welsh medium with any new English Medium pupils being allocated to the Ysgol Pontfadog site as their preferred way forward.

16 (6.32% of respondees) identified Option 3 - Retain the Dual-Stream status of Ysgol Cynddelw, close Ysgol Pontfadog and re-locate pupils to the Ysgol Cynddelw dual stream site as their preferred way forward.

64 (25.29% of respondees) did not indicate any any option.



- Unions responded – 2 (UNISON and NASUWT)

UNISON 1 response:

Option 1 - This option places provision and jobs at risk and UNISON does not support it on those grounds

Option 2 - This option appears to be sustainable with a clear plan to deal with any staffing matters that arise. UNISON therefore believes this to be a matter for those directly affected, children, parents and potential parents within the area

Option 3 - This option also appears to be sustainable with a clear plan to deal with any staffing matters that arise. UNISON therefore believes this to be a matter for those directly affected, children, parents and potential parents within the area

NASUWT 1 response:

The NASUWT supports **Option 1**: that the current set up of both Ysgol Pontfadog and Ysgol Cynddelw's English Stream remain open.

The NASUWT acknowledges that this is not a risk free, easy option and sympathises with the Local Authority's predicament. The three Ceiriog Valley Federation Schools are all undersubscribed.

Furthermore, as Section 2.2 (Page 9) of the Local Authority's document *School Organisation Strategy 2017-25* states:

"In percentage terms, population growth in Wales is projected to be highest in Cardiff, Wrexham, Swansea and Newport. It should be recognised that larger cities, such as Cardiff and Swansea, have the capacity to absorb rapid, unpredictable and substantial fluctuations in growth. The geography of Wrexham with its urban town centre and more rural outskirts makes this more challenging."

It could be postulated that Wrexham County Borough is effectively two counties. The sparsely populated, ethnically homogenous, rural regions such as the Ceiriog Valley and - to a lesser extent - The Dee Valley (what we could refer to as the Clwyd South part of the county), which have a lot in common with Gwynedd, or Ceredigion: transport-access issues (with associated costs) due to their remoteness, stagnating population figures, ageing demographics (and so falling school rolls), the difficulties of servicing country communities. On the other hand you have the town centre part of the county (what we could refer to as Wrexham Constituency), far more akin to Swansea or Cardiff. Here the population has grown exponentially (especially the youth population), in recent years and the demographic background is more ethnically heterogeneous.

The NASUWT would offer that the Welsh Assembly Government's settlements for Wrexham do not acknowledge the county's growing and varying needs. **In bringing this to the Welsh Assembly Government's attention - AND pushing for change - the Local Authority will always find a strong friend and ally in the NASUWT.**

Supporting isolated rural schools - especially in times of national austerity - is always going to be a costly venture. But then maintaining telecommunications and utilities in isolated, rural areas is always going to be less cost effective than doing so in a densely populated urban environment. These things are in the inherent nature of isolated rural communities.

Into this mix comes the Welsh Assembly Government's plans to create '**A Million Welsh Speakers**'. With the Welsh Assembly Government making clear that education and schools are going to be the main drivers of their visions, in this area.

This is also reflected in Section 5 on Page 13 the Consultation Document:

"Why are we proposing the changes? . . . Supporting the Welsh Government's vision and strategy of a Million Welsh Speakers"

Once again the NASUWT sympathises with the Local Authority, who - as civil servants - are charged with implementing the theoretical ideologies of Cardiff Bay-based mandarins, on the ground, in Wrexham County Borough. Especially considering that this policy and what it means for staff who work in schools and live in wider local communities, is highly divisive for community cohesion **and constitutes a very real threat to teacher's jobs.**

- **MP responded – 1 response**

In response to this consultation to request that Wrexham County Borough Council do everything possible to act in the best interests of all residents of the Ceiriog Valley with regards to primary school provision.

- **Local residents responded with concerns regarding the possible decline of the Community and local business should Ysgol Pontfadog**

'closing Pontfadog will rip the heart out of the community'

'This would be a great loss to the village of Pontfadog in terms of parents being able to walk to school and the negative effect on the community including the one and only village shop.'

'losing the village school would be devastating to the pupils and the wider community. Pontfadog is a fully functioning community in it's own right with the Church of St John the Baptist, the village shop and post office'

'Closing the school would have a big impact on the community. Our village has a shop/post office, pub, school, church and garage. Take one away we all struggle to survive'

There were also positive responses from members of the community:

'it would make more sense to combine the pupils at Ysgol Cynddelw'

'I think Pontfadog should close as it is a smaller school. I think the children from Pontfadog will benefit from being with more kids their own age and in a bigger environment. It will make transition easier from primary to secondary and if they were in Glyn school they would be with more kids of their own age to socialise with and more children at their level of learning'

'Whilst I understand the emotional attachment people have to having a school in their village this is a time when change is necessary and should be a positive one for the pupils at Pontfadog who can benefit for the social interaction at a bigger school'

- **Community council**

Llansantffraid Community Council

Option 1 – The options were discussed at a meeting of the Llansantffraid Community Council last year and Councillors were of the opinion that given the small number of pupils in Ysgol Pontfadog the status quo being maintained was not a viable option particularly in terms of ensuring adequate teaching cover for a very small number of pupils. Such small numbers is not helpful in ensuring the children's education and development as well as not being viable financially.

Option 2 – This is the best option for all the schools within the federation as it would provide the right level of staffing for Welsh and English medium pupils.

Option 3 – Councillors were of the opinion that this option is not possible without substantial investment in the building. Closing Ysgol Pontfadog could also adversely have an impact on the on the community generally.

- **Governing Body**

Response to Consultation from the Full Governing Body of the Ceiriog Valley Federation

Option 1 – The Full Governing Body do not support this option.

Option 2 – Full Governing Body Supported option

Option 3 - The Full Governing Body do not support this option

Below are a selection of comments received from the respondees during the consultation period, including the Local Authority responses, these are representative of all the areas for concern obtained from comments made both negative and positive to the proposals outlined.

Responses received that raise Discrimination & Equality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic direct discrimination against those selecting the English medium • Discrimination through language • Segregation as pupils are physically separated • Equality advice service and equal opportunities commission that there is a case for direct discrimination • The existing methods for dealing with English and Welsh speakers by segregating the English speaking children at Ysgol Cynddelw is discriminatory and divisive and highly likely to create community disharmony. • 'Pure discrimination against the English language predominantly an English speaking area despite the 	<p>Comments are noted.</p> <p>The Local Authority disagrees with the statements.</p> <p>The proposal does not discriminate against any individual with protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was been undertaken at the start of the consultation.</p> <p>This will now be finalised to take account of views gathered during the consultation</p>

<p>doctored figures'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Why close an English medium school unless you are Racist towards the English' • Cutting English is discrimination as we live by the border with England • Cohesion at its most blatant in favour of the Welsh stream at Cynddelw • This is racial inequality • This consultation contravenes the Equality act 2010 • In opposition to Healthy Wales • Not in line with Welsh Governments Vibrant Culture • Racial Segregation, Educational apartheid • Manipulated piece of social engineering • Close Pontfadog as all children in the valley educated together. This togetherness is critical to a cohesive playground and a cohesive community. • Currently fragmentation and division is evident at the school gate • To close Pontfadog would be a potentially discriminatory act against families of faith. 	
<p>Responses received in relation to the presumed impact on the Local Community and Businesses</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood obesity , ability to walk to the local school • Possible impact on the local business community and the Church • Pontfadog is the heart of the village • Ripping the heart out of the community 	<p>Comments are noted.</p> <p>A community Impact Assessment has been undertaken and was updated and made available during the consultation.</p>

- Local community events and working with the church
- Removing the school will not encourage young families to move to Pontfadog
- We do not expect you 'Town folk' to understand because you are attempting to rip the heart out of community with this act of cruelty.
- Why change something like this that will be lost forever.
- Better for Pontfadog to close as this is better for community integration
- Devastating blow to the community as it celebrates its 110th year.
- Impact on house prices
- Provides central service for the village.
- A poorer community, job losses and de enrichment of valley culture
- Do not agree with selling off the school and land and evening hire of school facilities would generate income
- 'We want a school that belongs to us'
- The post office is a lifeline for vulnerable members of the community
- Removal of such essential village hubs will significantly impact on the health & cohesive nature of the community.
- Should bear the importance of community cohesion in mind
- Option 2 would have a positive effect on the community, and no negative impacts. It would retain Pontfadog as part of its rural community and continue to sustain its local businesses
- Community agent scheme, further isolate pensioners in a rural area

This will now be finalised to take account of views gathered during the consultation

Wraparound/childcare provision in the Valley	
There were nine respondees that raised the issue of Wraparound care within the Federation. In particular they were concerned that whilst there is a Cylch based at Ysgol Cynddelw there is no corresponding English medium provision based at Pontfadog.	<p>Comments are noted.</p> <p>The local Authority is under no statutory obligation to provide wraparound childcare at any school site. The groups that exist throughout Wrexham exist independently of the LA, some are located within school grounds and in these cases the schools Governing body is responsible for leasing the space to the groups. Not all Wrexham schools provide wraparound care as many do not have space or the numbers to sustain the groups running costs.</p>
Finance Analysis	
Further financial analysis required.	<p>Option 1: Status Quo – all three schools remain as they are currently.</p> <p>If this option was adopted the three sites would be allocated their delegated budget on the same formula basis as current.</p> <p>The delegated budgets for each of the sites for 2018-19 are;</p> <p>Ysgol Cynddelw Community Primary - £438,707</p>

	Pontfadog Community Primary -	£172,041
	Llanarmon DC Community Primary -	£173,760
	These budgets include an element of small schools protection for the Pontfadog and Llanarmon sites and also additional sums to recognise the dual language stream organisation at Ysgol Cynddelw.	
	Small School Protection included :	
	Pontfadog	£63,080
	Llanarmon	£54,034
	Dual Language Stream (Ysgol Cynddelw)	£81,968
	Schools Net Planned Expenditure and income for 2018-19: *	
	Ysgol Cynddelw	£478,026
	Pontfadog	£181,387
	Llanarmon DC	£172,309
	These figures exclude any projected balance or deficit carried forward from 2017-18.	
	The Deficits for 2018/2019 would therefore total £47,214	
	Overall Per Pupil Costs 2018/2019 Budget	
	Cynddelw	£4,409.11

Llanarmon £7,722.67

Pontfadog £9,830.91

Option 2: Change Language designation at Ysgol Cynddelw to Welsh medium and re-locate English Medium pupils to the Ysgol Pontfadog site.

There are currently 36 English Medium pupils at Ysgol Cynddelw. This option proposes that those pupils would be allowed to remain at Ysgol Cynddelw for the remainder of their Primary education.

Nursery	3
Reception	0
Year 1	0
Year 2	8
Year 3	2
Year 4	10
Year 5	11
Year 6	2

2018 – 36 pupils

2019 – 25 pupils

2020 – 15 pupils

2021 – 13 pupils

2022 – 5 pupils

2023 – 5 pupils

2024 – 2 pupils

2025 – 2 pupils

There is currently a requirement for these pupils to be taught in one KS2 class and one Foundation Phase class for this language stream

At max. salary costs for a teacher, this cost is £86,380

For the next three financial years, two classes would be required for these pupils.

The deficit of funding against cost would increase year on year until 2025.

2019	-25,169.30
2020	-48,691.60
2021	-54,839.03
2022	-31,398.85
2023	-31,398.85
2024	-31,398.85

	<table border="1" data-bbox="1131 193 1529 233"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1131 193 1361 233">2025</td> <td data-bbox="1361 193 1529 233">-38,455.54</td> </tr> </table> <hr data-bbox="1153 319 1982 322"/> <p data-bbox="1131 343 2004 454">Option 3 : Retain the Dual-Stream status of Ysgol Cynddelw, close Ysgol Pontfadog and re-locate pupils to the Ysgol Cynddelw dual stream site.</p> <p data-bbox="1131 486 2027 821">If this option was adopted, there would be a saving resulting from the closure of Ysgol Pontfadog. This would be £98,290. This sum is the portion of Ysgol Pontfadog’s delegated budget that is not allocated by reference to the number of pupils on roll at the school. The portion of the budget that relates to pupils would form part of the budget for the school(s) to which the pupils currently at Pontfadog would transfer to</p> <p data-bbox="1131 853 1937 965">Presuming that the English medium pupils moved to Cynddelw it would make the English stream classes economically viable.</p>	2025	-38,455.54
2025	-38,455.54		
Transport Implications			
<ul data-bbox="235 1125 1075 1380" style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the school leads to additional transport requirements and the impact of this on the environment • Pupils travel from as far as Chirk and St Martins to Pontfadog which shows they value the school • Children being transported around the valley does not encourage a sense of belonging • The children from Pontfadog would be required to make 	<p data-bbox="1131 1125 1467 1157">Comments are noted.</p> <p data-bbox="1131 1189 2027 1268">A Transport Impact Assessment has been undertaken and made available during the consultation.</p> <p data-bbox="1131 1300 2049 1380">This will now be finalised to take account of views gathered during the consultation.</p>		

<p>their own way to Cynddelw resulting in an added burden to the parents</p>	
<p>Consultation</p>	
<p>There were 12 respondees that were against the consultation in its entirety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have fought this battle many times and if you think it will be a walk over this time you are very much mistaken • How can we make a decision based on flimsy statistics which are clearly misleading • This consultation needs to be opened to community input • WCBC has drafted and promulgated a clearly biased document littered with loaded and misleading statements 	<p>Comments are noted.</p> <p>The consultation has been undertaken in line with the Schools Organisation Code 2013 as is required by Welsh Government.</p> <p>All data within the consultation is factually correct and accurate as at the date of publication.</p>

7. ESTYN Feedback

The feedback provided by ESTYN is prepared by answering set questions to ensure that the local Authority have taken into account all educational requirements within their proposals. In answer to the question 'Are the proposals likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area?' ESTYN commented as such:-

Estyn response to the proposals on the future of primary education in the Ceiriog Valley.

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

Introduction

This is a proposal by Wrexham County Council to explore the options available to ensure the medium and long term sustainability of the Federation of three primary schools currently providing education in the Ceiriog Valley area. Currently, the federation consists of:

Ysgol Cynddelw - a dual stream primary school where the demand for Welsh-medium education is increasing, and as a consequence decreasing demand for English-medium education.

Ysgol Llanarmon - a Welsh-medium primary school which is 6.7 miles from Ysgol Cynddelw.

Pontfadog County Primary School - an English-medium primary school which is 1.8 miles from Ysgol Cynddelw.

Summary

The proposal by Wrexham County Council includes three options with the intention that the chosen option will take effect from the 1st September 2019:

Option 1: Status Quo with all three schools continuing as they are.

Option 2: Change language designation of Ysgol Cynddelw to Welsh-medium with English-medium pupils transferring to Pontfadog CP School (1.8 miles away).

Option 3: Closure of Pontfadog CP School with pupils transferring to the English-medium stream of Ysgol Cynddelw, followed by subsequent expansion of facilities at Ysgol Cynddelw.

The proposal asserts reasonably that options 2 and 3 will help to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet the growing demand for Welsh-medium education in the area. It is Estyn's opinion that options 2 and 3 of the proposal are likely to at least maintain the current standards of education in the area.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a coherent rationale for the proposal. The proposer states that options 2 and 3 will ensure the long term sustainability of the Ceiriog Valley Federation of schools, and therefore at least maintain the current standard of provision.

The proposer has noted the advantages and disadvantages for each option

The proposer asserts that the expected benefits of the proposal would include increased efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money so as to provide the best possible education for pupils of the Ceiriog Valley.

The proposal supports the aims and objectives within Wrexham's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the Welsh Government's vision and strategy of a million speakers by 2050. It seems likely that Options 2 and 3 will help to ensure that English medium pupils have better opportunities for social interaction in peer groups.

In addition the proposer notes appropriately that revenue costs associated with maintaining the federation, and especially the two smaller schools are significantly higher than for those schools with greater pupil numbers. According to the proposer, option 3, involving the closure of Pontfadog CP Schools would result in an annual saving of £98,550 whilst adoption of option 2 would result in annual savings of £98,700. The annual savings would result from a reduction in the number of teachers and teaching assistants required.

The proposal indicates that the current site of Ysgol Cynddelw is categorised as overall building condition B, while Ysgol Llanarmon and Pontfadog CP School are both categorised as condition C, which means poor.

The proposer has identified suitably the disadvantages of each option within the proposal. These focus on the impact on pupils and parents due to the increase in journey time involved in adopting option 2 or 3. At present, the council cannot foresee the additional travel costs for the authority, as this would depend on the choices of the families affected, although it states that the number of pupils likely to be affected would be low.

The proposer has recognised further possible risks to include those involving current staff. The proposer notes clearly that if Option 2 or 3 are adopted then staff with contracts would have to be relocated to other schools within the federation or be in a redeployment situation.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer states that it is of the view that should the proposal be implemented, it would maintain and continue to improve the current standard of education provided in the area.

For all schools affected, the proposer has submitted a comparison of the schools' performance in the main end of key stage indicators with the performance of the Local Authority and Wales. However, the proposer does not provide comparison of performance against similar schools in terms of eligibility for free school meals (although the cohorts in two of the three schools are very small).

For all schools affected, the proposer makes appropriate reference to the outcomes of the schools' most recent Estyn inspections and identifies correctly that both the current performance and the prospects for improvement of Ysgol Cynddelw (February 2016) and Pontfadog CP School (March 2015) were judged to be adequate whilst they were judged to be good at Ysgol Llanarmon (September 2014). However, the proposer does not make any reference to the Estyn monitoring visits, where both Ysgol Cynddelw (July 2017) and Pontfadog CP School (September 2016) were adjudged to have made sufficient progress against recommendations to be removed from Estyn monitoring.

The proposer briefly refers to the regional consortium, GWE and its role in school improvement, but does not include any categorisation information on the affected schools. There is also no reference to the Local Authority's view on the quality of leadership and management at the schools.

As regards pupils with additional learning needs, the same arrangements as current will apply under all proposed options. None of the schools have any resourced provision for Special Educational Needs and there will be no change to any additional support arrangements for mainstream pupils.

The proposal asserts reasonably that consolidating the English streams (Options 2 and 3) will provide English-medium pupils with better opportunities for social interaction in peer groups (which are currently small and decreasing in size). It also notes that Option 2 would immediately provide more capacity for the increasing demand for Welsh-medium education. Under Option 3, increasing the capacity for more Welsh-medium pupils within the Federation would require investment to expand the facilities at Ysgol Cynddelw.

8. Executive Board Decision

Wrexham County Borough Council Executive Board will meet on **10th April 2018** to discuss the consultation on the Ceiriog Valley Federation of Schools.

Local Authority Officer Recommendation being proposed is that we move to implement Option 3 - Retain the Dual-Stream status of Ysgol Cynddelw, close Ysgol Pontfadog and re-locate pupils to the Ysgol Cynddelw dual stream site.

Given the sustainability issues of such a small English medium cohort within the dual stream setting, a move to close the English medium only school at Pontfadog and those pupils accessing a larger dual stream school will lead to a more effective and efficient education system within the Valley Federation. There would be investment required to increase the provision at Cynddelw to accommodate a larger group of pupils.

The Executive Board will be asked for approval to continue to the Statutory Notice for determining the proposed change. This consists of a 28 day formal Objection Period whereby any objections to the proposal must be made in writing.

Following this the Local Authority will return to the Executive Board in July 2018 to determine the decision whether to proceed.