

EXECUTIVE BOARD

21ST DECEMBER 2020

MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME PROPOSAL TO REVIEW PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE BLAENAU AND LLANDYBIE AREAS

Recommendations / key decisions required:

It is recommended that the Executive Board approves:

1. The proposal as outlined below and in the attached consultation document;
2. Officers to initiate formal consultation on the proposal;
3. That a report is submitted to the Executive Board at the end of the consultation period.

Reasons:

To comply with statutory procedures and guidance in relation to school re-organisation.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee Consulted: Yes – 23/11/2020

The Education and Children Scrutiny Committee resolved:

- That the proposal to review Primary Education provision in the Blaenau and Llandybie areas, as detailed in the report be endorsed;
- That it be recommended to the Executive Board that a formal consultation process be initiated

Council Decision Required

NO

Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education & Children)

Directorate:

Education & Children

Name of Head of Service: Simon
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Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE BOARD
21ST DECEMBER 2020

MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME

PROPOSAL TO REVIEW PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE BLAENAU AND LLANDYBIE AREAS

Background

The Authority has a legal responsibility to review the number and type of schools it has in an area and whether it is making the best use of resources and facilities to deliver the opportunities that children deserve.

Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau

Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau is a Welsh medium, community primary school located in the village of Blaenau with capacity for 99 pupils aged between 4-11 years. In recent years, pupil numbers at the school have declined. January 2020 PLASC showed that there were 34 pupils at the school meaning that there were 65 surplus places, or 66%. Welsh Government through the School Organisation Code advises local authorities to review their provision where there are more than 10% surplus places in an area.

Whilst there are 44 pupils living within Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau's catchment area **only 8 of those pupils attend the school**, meaning that 36 pupils living within the school's catchment area attend other schools.

Based on current pupil projections (2020) it is estimated that the pupil figures will remain low in the foreseeable future. Additionally, Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau's building condition is 'poor' and the school has been in deficit since 2011/12 and remains with a deficit of £83,895 for 2019/20. Their original funding allocation for 2020/21 was £149k and their forecast position for the year is an increase to the deficit balance.

From an educational perspective having such a small number of pupils and mixed age classes makes it extremely difficult for the school to deliver the breadth and depth of curricular and social experiences which pupils of this age require to fully develop.

The culmination of these unavoidable facts presents a school model which does not represent a sound, stable educational model or best use of resources. With no prospect of there being a significant increase in pupil numbers for the foreseeable future consideration is required on the sustainability of the school.

Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie

Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie is a transitional (working towards Welsh medium) 3-11 primary school located in the rural village of Llandybie approximately two miles north of the town of Ammanford in Carmarthenshire.

Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie is a successful school which by January 2019 had reached its capacity and although there was a slight decrease in pupils at January 2020 this trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future based on current pupil projections (2020). As a result the Local Authority are developing a scheme to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie to 315 places with 45 nursery places by providing a new school with facilities fit for the 21st Century on a new site.

The project will re-locate Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie from its current site to a new site which is within the current catchment area of Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie. The new school will provide a Welsh Government standard primary school building with capacity to accommodate 315 pupils and 45 nursery pupils between the ages of 3-11 years old and ensure that the school is able to deliver the full curriculum in modern, safe and inspiring learning environments with enhanced outside areas.

This proposed investment will address poor building condition and lack of adequate space and provision in the existing school by providing a category **A** school with sufficient places for current and projected demand.

Over the last 5 years there has been a sustained increase in the number of pupils choosing to enter the Welsh medium stream and a fall in the number of pupils choosing to enter the English stream.

The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide all pupils with the best education possible and believes that providing bilingual opportunities has a role to play in this. This aligns with Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020's objective of **ensuring "that all pupils are able to speak, read and write the Welsh language fluently by the end of Key Stage 2 in accordance with their expected stage of development."** The best way to create confident, bilingual individuals is through immersing pupils in the Welsh language and as a result the Local Authority is looking to change the nature of provision.

As a result of the ongoing challenges that both schools face, it is not possible to sustain current arrangements and a review of the education provision within the areas of Blaenau and Llandybie is required.

The Proposal

- Discontinue Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau as of 31 August 2021.
- From 1 September 2021 all pupils will be registered at Ysgol Llandybie operating on both sites (Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie and the former Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau) increasing its capacity to 287 + 50 nursery places.
- Re-designate Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie's catchment area to include that of the former Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau catchment area as of 1 September 2021.
- Change the nature of provision at Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie to Welsh Medium as of 1 September 2021.
- Relocate Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie to a new school site and increase its capacity to 315 + 45 nursery places as of September 2024, when occupation of the new school is proposed.

The transitional capacity noted above (287 + 50 nursery places) combines both schools' current capacity including nursery places. As a result, the nursery places in the transitional capacity is greater than the final school's capacity. The final capacity figure (315 + 45 nursery places) meets the need and demand of the area for the longer term.

It is the Local Authority's intention that all current pupils remain at the school and continue to receive their education through the current language. It is important to note that there will be no change for current pupils attending Ysgol Llandybie

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive Board approves to proceed with the proposal as outlined above and a formal consultation be initiated.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES: Draft Consultation Document

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed:  Head of Access to Education

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Developments are consistent with the Authority's Corporate Strategy and the Modernising Education Strategic Outline Programme.

2. Legal

Appropriate consultation will need to be initiated in accordance with the relevant statutory procedures.

3. Finance

Revenue implications will be catered for within the Local Management of Schools Fair Funding Scheme.

4. ICT

ICT colleagues will be consulted with in relation to the potential relocation of IT equipment.

5. Risk Management Issues

Continuing with current provision would see current problems being perpetuated with the education of children in the area being placed at unacceptable risk and the County Council failing to meet WG target that all buildings should be of an appropriate standard.

6. Staffing Implications

Staffing implications will be addressed in accordance with the County Council's Policy and Procedures.


7. Physical Assets

- i. One redundant school site – Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau. Should the proposal be adopted the property will be transferred to Corporate Property Division of the Regeneration and Policy Department for the procedures outlined in the 'Future Use/Disposal of Redundant Land and Buildings arising from the Modernising Education Programme policy to be actioned.

This policy has been developed to allow the community to be offered the asset in the first instance before placing the site on the open market.

- ii. If the proposal is implemented to discontinue Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau, Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie will proceed to operate on split sites occupying both current Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie and Ysgol Gynradd Blaenau locations until the proposed new Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie school building is ready for occupation.
- iii. Following the project completion of developing a new school building for Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie the current Ysgol Gynradd Llandybie will become redundant as point i above.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below	
Signed: 	Head of Access to Education
<p>1. Scrutiny Committee – Consulted on 23/11/2020. The Education and Children Scrutiny Committee resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the proposal to review Primary Education provision in the Blaenau and Llandybie areas, as detailed in the report be endorsed; • That it be recommended to the Executive Board that a formal consultation process be initiated <p>2. Local Member(s) – The local members will be notified of the proposal and will be consulted during the formal consultation period.</p> <p>3. Community / Town Council – Will be consulted during the formal consultation period.</p> <p>4. Relevant Partners – Will be consulted during the formal consultation period.</p> <p>5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – Will be consulted during the formal consultation period.</p>	
EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED	YES

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information	
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:	
Title of Document	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Stage 1 (Permission to Consult) – ECS Scrutiny Committee Report	Summary.pdf (gov.wales)
Carmarthenshire’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-democracy/strategies-and-plans/welsh-in-education-strategic-plan/
MEP Biennial Review	www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk Executive Board 20 th June 2016
21 st Century Schools Website	www.21stcenturyschools.org
School Organisation Code 2018	https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf