

Proposal to Change the Age Range of Ysgol Swiss Valley from 4-11 to 3-11

Consultation Report



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Executive Summary

The Consultation Period

On the 11th January 2021 Carmarthenshire County Council published a proposal to:

- Change the age range of Ysgol Swiss Valley from 4-11 to 3-11.

The consultation period commenced on 11th January 2021 in line with the publication of the proposal and closed on 16th July 2021 with a total of 36 responses received (excluding the responses received from Estyn and the pupils' consultation events) in response to the formal consultation.

Responses Received		
Online Survey	E-mail	Total
34	2	36

It must be noted that of the 36 observations received, all were received prior to the end of the consultation period.

Consultation Events

Due to the ongoing implications of the Coronavirus pandemic, we were advised to postpone all events where there was interaction between staff, parents and the wider community and as a result, virtual drop-in sessions were held via Microsoft Teams.

A virtual formal drop-in session was held on **4 February 2021 at 10:30am**. The formal consultation drop-in session was attended by 1 stakeholder.

Responses Received

The responses received have been categorised into the following themes:

Supportive

- Theme 1 - No reason
- Theme 2 - Improved provision for Early Years
- Theme 3 - Support for the Proposal
- Theme 4 - Fairness of Early Years provision
- Theme 5 - Funding
- Theme 6 - Facilities required

Concerns

- Theme 1 - Equality
- Theme 2 - Ensure appropriate funding

Overall Summary

Supportive	92%	Not supportive	8%
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Workshops

Following the closure of the consultation period on the 16 July 2021, a workshop was held to analyse the observations received.

Next Steps

The Consultation Report will be presented to the Cabinet (previously known as the Executive Board) who may decide to publish the proposal as consulted upon with appropriate modifications, to abandon the proposals and retain the status quo or to significantly recast the proposal and reconsult.

Should the Cabinet decide to proceed to publish a Statutory Notice, this will be published in due course.

Summary of Observations received and Local Authority Responses

Point Number	Point Raised	Local Authority Response	Number of responses raising this point	% of responses raising this point
Supportive Comments Raised				
1.	No reason Some respondents did not provide a reason for their support.		22	61%
2.	Improved provision for Early Years Respondents recognised the benefit of access to Early Years provision from the age of 3 at the school.	The proposal aims to provide equal provision within the Llanelli area, aligning Ysgol Swiss Valley with neighbouring schools that are already 3-11 schools. The school has been running a pilot scheme for a number of years. The outcomes of the pilot scheme have been positive and the Local Authority now wish to proceed with a proposal to change the age range of the school to 3-11 through formal consultation.	6	17%
3.	Support for the Proposal Respondents noted that they fully supported the proposal to change the age range of Ysgol Swiss Valley from 4-11 to 3-11 aligning the school with neighbouring schools.	The support was noted.	2	6%

4.	<p>Fairness of Early Years Provision Respondents noted the need to have consistency in access to early years provision across the County.</p>	<p>The proposal aims to provide equal provision within the Llanelli area, aligning Ysgol Swiss Valley with neighbouring schools that are already 3-11 schools.</p> <p>There is a combination of 3 -11 and 4 – 11 primary schools in the county and a review is currently being undertaken on nursery provision, with a report expected to be submitted to elected members in the next 6 months for consideration.</p> <p>If all schools in the county were 3 -11 then there would be a risk of non-maintained providers becoming unsustainable. It is important that the authority considers how their policies would impact private providers.</p>	1	3%
5.	<p>Funding Respondents noted that appropriate funding resources will need to be provided.</p>	<p>The school will be funded in accordance with the Fair Funding Policy based on pupil numbers.</p>	1	3%
6.	<p>Facilities required Respondents noted that although they fully supported the proposal that changes would need to be made at the school for the proposed change in age range to work effectively e.g. larger staff car park and replacing current demountable with purpose-</p>	<p>The school has been running a successful pilot scheme for a number of years using the facilities already available at the school. There are currently no plans for investment at the school, however the Department are currently undertaking a review of their Modernising Education Programme which includes all of the county's schools.</p>	1	3%

	built classroom for Nursery/Reception.			
Concerns Raised				
1.	<p>Equality Respondents thought that equal provision should be provided across the county and should have been implemented at the school sooner.</p>	<p>There is a combination of 3 -11 and 4 – 11 primary schools in the county and a review is currently being undertaken on nursery provision, with a report expected to be submitted to elected members in the next 6 months for consideration.</p> <p>If all schools in the county were 3 -11 then there would be a risk of non-maintained providers becoming unsustainable. It is important that the authority considers how their policies would impact private providers.</p> <p>The school has been running a pilot scheme for a number of years. The outcomes of the pilot scheme have been positive and the Local Authority now wish to proceed with a proposal to change the age range of the school to 3-11 through formal consultation.</p>	2	6%
2.	<p>Funding Respondents noted that appropriate funding resources will need to be provided.</p>	<p>The school will be funded in accordance with the Fair Funding Policy based on pupil numbers.</p>	1	3%

Estyn's Observations regarding the Proposal

Estyn's response to the proposal by Carmarthenshire County Council to formally change the age range from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11 at Ysgol Swiss Valley to incorporate nursery provision into the school from the 1st September 2021.

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

The proposal is by Carmarthenshire County Council.

The proposal is that the age range at Ysgol Swiss Valley is change from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11 to incorporate nursery provision into the school aligning the school with most other schools in the area from the 1st September 2021. Carmarthenshire County Council say they are committed to providing the best possible start in life and meeting the aspirations of Welsh Government.

Summary/ Conclusion

The proposal has been developed in line with the council's vision to provide the best possible start in life for young people and to improve and clarify its educational provision.

It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standard of education provision in the area.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal. The proposer clearly states that it believes that the change in age range will improve the capacity for children in the local community and become less confusing for parents. It will also align the school with most other schools in the area. The school has undertaken a pilot scheme since 2013 as a 3 to 11 year age range, the outcomes of which have been positive. However,

the school is still advertised as a 4 to 11 year age range which is confusing for parents making it unclear what nursery provision is available.

The proposer clearly defines the expected advantages of the proposal to increase the age range. These appear to be reasonable and well thought out. They include:

- seamless transition from nursery to primary school
- clarification to parents as to what the school offers
- opportunity for more employment within the school
- reducing the attainment gap for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

The proposer has considered the disadvantages of the proposal. They include:

- reduction in demand for places at private nurseries
- unemployment due to the lack of demand for private nurseries

The proposer has detailed the risks involved, such as failure to obtain support for the proposal, listed counter measures and considered alternate options. The proposer has provided information about the nursery school pupil numbers in the area since 2016 and pupil capacity information. The proposal does not contain any information about how pupils with special educational needs may be affected. The proposer has considered suitably how the proposal will improve the provision of Welsh medium education for 3 year olds.

The proposer has considered the financial implications of the proposal and states that there will not be any change to the funding. The proposal includes suitable arrangements for consultation and how objections can be registered. The proposer has undertaken a detailed equalities impact assessment.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has considered suitably the impact of the proposal on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management. It makes reference to the most recent Estyn inspection for the school.

Local Authority Response to Estyn's Observations

As can be seen from Estyn's observations they are of the opinion that the proposal is at least likely to maintain the current standard of education. Their observations include supporting statements as noted below.

Statements of support for this proposal by Estyn

The proposer clearly defines the expected advantages of the proposal to increase the age range. These appear to be reasonable and well thought out.

The proposer has considered suitably how the proposal will improve the provision of Welsh medium education for 3 year olds.

The proposer has undertaken a detailed equalities impact assessment.

Issues raised by Estyn and LA responses

- 1. The proposal does not contain any information about how pupils with special educational needs may be affected.*

LA Response

It is not intended that the proposal will adversely affect any pupils with special educational needs.

Carmarthenshire County Council's policy is that all its schools should be inclusive, with children with additional learning needs being educated in a mainstream setting alongside their peers wherever possible. Schools deliver a person-centered approach to children's learning supported by personalised learning packages with individually targeted interventions, strategies and opportunities and the support required for delivery.

Establishing a Nursery class in Swiss Valley is seen as a great benefit to children of the area with additional needs. Baseline assessments identify those pupils who may need additional support and earlier intervention clearly result in better outcomes later in a child's life. Once the children commence in the pilot nursery, they are provided all the support they require as they are in the remainder of the school. They are therefore able to access multi-agency support at an earlier stage in their development, for example, early Speech and Language support, Educational Psychologist advice, Team around the Family support, visually impaired advice, behaviour support intervention, etc.

Consultation with the Pupils

Children and Young People Consultation Document

A Children and Young People's version of the Consultation Document was provided to the school to distribute to all pupils.

Pupil Consultation Event

School: Ysgol Swiss Valley

Date: 05/02/21

Consultation undertaken by: Educational Support Adviser (ESA)

Interviewed: School Representatives (conducted on-line)

Observations noted during the Pupil Consultation Event:

1. What do you think of the school to keeping its classes for 3 year olds?

Really good idea – start at a younger age. Make the school bigger and they can meet more people. My class has a small amount of girls and if we'd had a nursery we'd have more girls. Get them learning at a younger age. If parents need to go to work they can send them there and they can learn. Children get educated in a different way than if they went to creche – routines, literacy & numeracy. Socialise and make friends at a younger age. More likely to send them to SV – other schools don't have 3-11. Better they are learning at a young age. Good idea – settle in at a younger age.

2. What are the advantages (good things) of being a 3-11 school?

As above. Most pupils thought it was a good idea for the LA to advertise the fact there is a nursery. Young children get use to the format of school and the routine.

3. Do you remember being in the nursery or do you know someone in the nursery – what was good about it? What could be better?

Sister went to nursery and it really helped her x2. Brother went to the nursery really liked it x2 and gained independence and gained friends. Brother enjoyed it and wasn't upset moving into reception. Friend went there and she gained lots of skills. Helped my brother with his speech.

4. Are there any disadvantages (bad things) of being a 3-11 school? Is there anything that you would be worried about?

Make sure there is enough space in the canteen. More staff if numbers go up.

Alternative Options

During the formal consultation period, stakeholders were provided with the opportunity to submit alternative options for consideration. The alternative options (not already considered in the consultation document) received are noted below and will be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.

To change the age range of all schools to 3-11 and allowing full time nursery provision	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Continuity of provision across the county	Risk of non-maintained providers being unsustainable
Effective transition from nursery provision to primary provision	Lack of adequate space in all schools to incorporate nursery provision
Full time childcare/education provision from an early age	Costly model of provision if there is no uptake