

Estyn response to the proposal to establish a new primary school from the closure of Brynhyfryd Infant and Junior schools.

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.

Introduction

This consultation proposal is from Swansea County Council.

The proposal is to establish a new primary school from the closure of Brynhyfryd Infant and Junior schools with the new school operating on the same sites and using the same buildings.

Summary/ Conclusion

Are the proposals likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area?

Based on the fact that the new school is an amalgamation of two existing schools and will remain on the same sites, it is likely that the proposed action will maintain the standards of education in the area.

What effect do the proposals have on other schools and educational institutions in the area?

As the proposal is to create a new school by 'amalgamating' Brynhyfryd Infant and Brynhyfryd Junior schools, no other schools or educational institutions are involved. It would appear that there would be no effect on any other school or educational institutions in the area.

Description and benefits

How well has the proposer:

- **Given a clear rationale for the proposals and set out clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo?**

The local authority has given a clear rationale of the expected benefits when compared with the status quo as outlined in the report. The report identifies clearly that: 'the school would continue to be based over two separate sites. It is not anticipated that pupils would need to move between sites to any great extent during a normal school day and it is likely that the school will continue to operate as an infant site, a junior site and a nursery unit.' This appears to detract from many of the perceived benefits of 'amalgamation', which focus around shared practices. Also, it is not made clear why many of these benefits could not be accomplished by a closer working partnership between the two schools.

- **Managed any risks associated with the proposals?**

The proposer has provided no risk and counter measure study.

Both current schools provide a breakfast club facility. The proposer envisages that 'breakfast club provision will continue. The breakfast club may only be provided on one site if the proposal was accepted.' It has not outlined issues that may arise from this arrangement, such as how pupils will move safely from one site to the other.

Brynhyfyd Junior school provides parent/community classes. In its community impact assessment, the proposal provides no clear information on their continuation, other than 'it is envisaged that groups could continue to use the school premises.'

- **Considered suitable alternatives and given good reasons as to why these have been discounted?**

The local authority has provided appropriate supplementary evidence that it has considered alternatives to this current proposal.

- **Considered the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements and on accessibility of provision.**

As the proposal involves only those pupils in the two 'amalgamating' schools, there would appear to be no impact on learner travel arrangements. The local authority confirms that transport would continue to be provided for any pupils that met agreed criteria i.e. those living more than 2 miles from their catchment area school or where there was no available walking route to school.

- **Effectively show how surplus places will be affected? If surplus places will be increased, does the proposer give adequate reasons for this?**

The current proposal appears to create no new nursery or school places. Based on the figures provided by the local authority, the current infant school will be at full capacity from September 2016 and the current junior school will have a very few unfilled places from September 2015. The proposer does not address these issues in the proposal. The proposer has provided no figures on expected nursery numbers beyond January 2014. It is therefore not possible to assess the impact of these pupils on the proposed new school.

- **Where relevant, taken sufficient account of the impact of the proposals on Welsh medium provision within the local authority?**

Neither the proposed new school, nor the current separate schools provide education through the medium of Welsh, except where Welsh is taught as a second language. There would therefore appear to be no impact on the Welsh language arising from this proposal.

Educational aspects of the proposal

- **Considered the impact of the proposals on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management?**

The local authority has provided no analysis of the impact of the proposals on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management. A synopsis of the last the Estyn reports of both schools along with a screenshot of information from the 'my local school' website is included.

Statements in the Equalities Impact Assessment relate to outcomes and/or provision. For example:

'Having one school with one ethos and one philosophy will:

- Improve attainment and pupil wellbeing;
- Raise Standards and pupil wellbeing;
- Increased opportunities for FSM learners; and
- Improved "all round" learner experience'

However, the proposer gives no evidence to back these assertions.

The proposal also makes the statement that: 'Brynhyfryd Infant School is a 3-7 school and Brynhyfryd Junior School is a 8-11 school. This project will have a positive impact on the Education of all 3-11 year olds who attend the new primary school if the proposal goes ahead.'

However, there is no evidence to support this statement.

The local authority has given no up-to-date analysis of recent pupil outcomes from either school mentioned in the proposal. It is therefore not possible to make a valid assessment of the impact of the proposal on outcomes for pupils.

- **How well has the proposer considered the likely impact of the proposals to ensure delivery of the full curriculum at the Foundation Phase and at each key stage?**

The local authority has provided little information in its proposal on the delivery of the full curriculum at the Foundation Phase and at key stage 2. However, as both schools are well-established, it would seem likely that the new school would provide the full curriculum at Foundation Phase and key stage 2

How well has the proposer considered the impact of the proposals on vulnerable groups, including children with Special Educational Needs?

The proposer has undertaken an 'Equalities Impact Assessment'; however, this provides little information on the impact of the proposal on pupils with Special Educational Needs.

The proposal list the number of pupils in each school at different levels of additional need, but does not say how the proposal will affect their education.

In addition, a statement is included in the proposal that: 'All the needs of pupils with disabilities are considered by the schools as part of the accessibility planning of the school, thus ensuring all pupils have full access to the curriculum.' However, no information is provided as to how this will be accomplished.

- **How well has the proposer ensured that the disruption to learners is minimised?**

This proposal recognises that 'amalgamating two schools into one will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty for a period of time.' Insufficient evidence is provided as to how this will be minimised for learners apart from the statement that: 'experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum and that the children's education does not suffer'.