



Consultation Report:

Proposal to increase the planned places at Ysgol Penybryn Special School

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1. BACKGROUND

Special schools are funded on planned places. Ysgol Penybryn Special School is set up to cater for 130 pupils in total. There are 93 places (E band) for secondary aged pupils who have moderate to severe learning difficulties. The school also provides for pupils (both primary and secondary aged) with severe autism. There are 37 (G band) places for these pupils. School organisation regulations require a statutory proposal to take place if a special school increases their planned places by more than 10% (or 20 places, whichever is the lesser) from a count date of 19 January 2013. Ysgol Penybryn Special School had 118 planned places on the count date and therefore require a statutory proposal to increase planned places over 130 (the current number of places).

Increasing planned places at Ysgol Penybryn Special School would alleviate pressure on the moderate autistic spectrum disorder Specialist Teaching Facilities (ASD STFs). The pupils with the more severe needs (i.e. high ASD symptomatology) would transfer to Ysgol Penybryn Special School, allowing the authority to place pupils with moderate ASD into the appropriate STFs. It would also alleviate pressure on secondary mainstream schools and STFs who are struggling to cope with the demands of managing pupils with more severe learning difficulties.

2. METHODOLOGY

Consultation took place with the prescribed consultees contained within the School Organisation Code 2013 via a letter/email with a link to the consultation document on the Swansea Council website <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/penybrynproposal>

Consultation meetings were also held as follows:

5 June 2018	Start of consultation period/letters circulated
12 June 2018	Consultation meetings for staff, governors and parents of Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn, held at the school
18 July 2018	Closing date for views on proposal to be received by Education Department

The publication of a consultation document is central to the consultation process prescribed by Welsh Government for school reorganisation. The consultation document outlined the changes being considered, the rationale for these, details of the consultation process and incorporated a response form. Consultees were advised of the availability of an online version to complete and also contact addresses to send in comments via e-mail.

The consultation process was extensively promoted online, via the Swansea Council website and social media channels, and also received coverage in the local press.

3. RESULTS AND COMMENTS

During the consultation period 179 responses were received, with 160 of those responding being in support of the proposal, including 94 responses from learners. 9 of the responses did not express a view for or against the proposal and 10

responses were against the proposal. All consultation responses have been made available for Cabinet to view.

The main objections to the proposal were around having more learners on site and the potential for increased class sizes, particularly with a larger cohort of the learners having ASD, and how this would affect learners with more severe and complex needs; however the school has recently been extended and the additional pupils would generate funding for new classes to be established and the school welcomes the new planned places for ASD learners. One objector also commented on the traffic infrastructure around the school; however the Traffic Management Assessment that has been produced shows that the additional taxis for learners would be minimal and could comfortably be accommodated on the school site, and this would continue to be reviewed as learners are admitted if the proposal is implemented.

A summary of the issues raised and the local authority response is attached at Appendix 1.

4. ESTYN RESPONSE

Estyn, the schools' inspectorate for Wales, were also required to comment on the proposal, as per the School Organisation Code, and no concerns were raised as follows:

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 the City and County of Swansea to increase the planned places at the Special School Ysgol Pen-y-bryn by 20 places from 1st of April 2019.

Summary

The proposal by Swansea City and County Council seeks to increase the planned places at Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn by 20 places for children and young people with moderate/severe autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) aged 3-18.

The proposal states that the school is currently full and is likely to be for the foreseeable future. Due to a significant demand for places, the local authority have had to place pupils into independent and out of county schools. It is Estyn's view that the proposal is likely to improve the provision for children and young people with moderate/severe ASD.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposed expected benefits in relation to the additional 20 planned places are needed to increase the overall number of special school places available to help to meet the increased demand.

The proposer notes appropriately the advantages of the proposal, which include that pupils with the more severe needs (i.e. high ASD symptomatology) would transfer to Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn, allowing the authority to place pupils with moderate ASD into the appropriate STFs. The proposer makes appropriate reference to the fact that this would alleviate pressure on the moderate ASD STFs in Swansea and on secondary mainstream schools and STFs who are struggling to cope with the demands of managing pupils with more severe learning difficulties.

The proposal indicates that an increase in planned places would unlikely affect the schools performance as staff are already working with learners with similar difficulties successfully now and increasing staffing would bring more flexibility.

The proposer has identified suitably the disadvantages of the current proposal, which focuses on the associated transport costs for the learners to attend the school, as per the Home to School Transport Policy. However, the current proposal appears to create new school places and a reduction in the current level and future out-of-county placements. This would possibly provide opportunity for pupils who are currently attending out-of-county provision to re-integrate back into their local area to continue their education.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer makes appropriate reference to the outcomes of the schools' most recent Estyn inspection. It notes that current performance and prospects for improvement at the school were judged to be good at the time of the core inspection.

The proposer notes that increasing the number of places available within the school community would not have any detrimental impact on the provision and quality of educational outcomes in the special school sector.

The local authority has no further comment to make on Estyn's response.

5. CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A consultation paper was shared with all learners at the school. The paper explained the proposal and included a reply slip for learners to respond. 94 learners responded (72% of learners at the school).

The majority of pupils supported the proposal but 12 had concerns around having too many people in their school/class or felt anxious about meeting new people or having a change of routine. This is an understandable response from learners with complex needs which include severe and complex learning difficulties and associated social anxieties. However, school staff are skilled in managing transitions and change and understand learners concerns. Secondly, the additional places will not change routines that are already well established.

6. CONSULTATION MEETINGS

The response from the consultation meetings with parents, staff and governors was supportive. Notes of these meetings have been made available to Cabinet members.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The local authority would recommend to Cabinet that this proposal is taken to the next stage i.e. the publication of a Statutory Notice.

Consultation Responses

Number of consultation responses received = 179 (including Estyn and the Mynyddback Ward Member)

Support Proposal/Happy	160
Against Proposal/Unhappy	10
Undecided	9
<i>Responses from:</i>	
Pupil	94
Parent/Carer	12
Member of Staff	45
Governor	3
Community Member	7
Other	18

	Point Raised	Local Authority Response	Number of Written Responses Raising Point	% of Responses Raising Point
1	Suitable placements made available for more pupils with complex needs is welcomed in light of rising demands	Agree	29	16%
2	Welcome the opportunity to reduce costs on out of county provision and alleviate pressure on other STF units.	Agree	8	4%
3	Acknowledgement that Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn is a good school and therefore welcome additional places so more can benefit from good practice. Children with ASD deserve access to education.	Agree	11	6%

4	Adding places to Ysgol Pen-Y-Bryn will have a positive impact on the wellbeing of learners who are able to move to the school. It will provide learners who previously would be leaving school at 16 the opportunity to achieve social and life skills required to progress in life and further education.	Agree	7	4%
5	Happy providing adequate staffing, funding and so on are in place.	The extra places are fully funded and the headteacher and governing body would be responsible for providing adequate staffing	7	4%
6	Positive response from Pupils - Make new Friends, Interested in the new classes, help other children, there will be more children to play with. It would be exciting. The school is cool and the teachers are great.	Agree	53	30%
7	Concerns raised about the fact that the increased places are specifically for learners with ASD, and the potential impact on other learners attending the school with severe and complex needs possibly becoming marginalised.	It is agreed the main demand is for learners with ASD diagnoses but there are a range of E and G band places so not all places would be taken up by those with severe and complex ASD. The local authority (LA) would maintain a balance in consultation with the school in line with the current legislation	1	1%

8	Question raised about whether the size of Pen-y-Bryn is suitable for learners with ASD as large settings are often a source of agitation. Particular concern raised about moving learners already placed in a unit without approval or consent from parent/carer which will disturb the children and be a distressing factor.	Penybryn already successfully educates learners with ASD and severe and complex needs. Class sizes are appropriate for the needs of pupils and the modular build has added appropriate classroom space. The LA would not move pupils who were making good progress within an STF setting and would certainly ensure parents/carers and the pupil were involved fully in any decision making. The LA understands that moving learners with ASD who are settled can be distressing and would seek to avoid this.	2	1%
9	Comment that 'Parents of STF pupils feel strongly that it is unfair for Pen-y-bryn to offer three more years of SEN education.'	The LA does not offer STF places post 16 in mainstream schools. Learners have the opportunity to move on to college or if they are able to access a 6th form A level curriculum continue their education at 6th form. All secondary STFs were proposed on this basis and subject to consultation.	1	1%
10	Concern raised regarding the space and number of Staff at Pen-Y-Bryn	The LA will fund the extra places and the school have recently completed a modular build which has provided the extra classroom space. It is the responsibility of the headteacher and governing body of the school to ensure adequate staffing is provided.	3	2%
11	Will the school be given extra funding with the increased pupil number?	The school will receive extra funding from the LA for the proposed additional 20 planned places.	3	2%

12	Negative response from pupils - too many people in my school/class. Feeling anxious about meeting new people or change of routine.	This is an understandable response from learners with complex needs which include severe and complex learning difficulties and associated social anxieties. However, school staff are skilled in managing transitions and change and understand learners concerns. Secondly the additional places will not change routines that are already well established.	12	7%
13	Acknowledge that extra places are needed however, a concern raised over how children with difficulties are being segregated instead of being taught alongside mainstream. It is felt that this separation may result in children with educational needs continuing to be valued as 'less' in society.	The LA understands this concern and tries where possible and appropriate to educate learners with SEN alongside their mainstream peers. Also the school has a strong inclusion policy which includes ensuring learners are given the independence skills to take up a valued place in society.	1	1%
14	Concerns raised about the unsuitable infrastructure and current suitability of school building, noting investment is needed in the school generally before expanding the school.	The school has recently invested a in new modular building to house the additional proposed places. The LA also has broader plans for the development of the school stock across the authority as part of its School Organisation Programme which includes the need to address special school places.	1	1%
15	Comment made that the traffic and parking situation is 'already dangerous'.	The Traffic Management Assessment that has been produced shows that the additional taxis for learners would be minimal and could comfortably be accommodated on the school site, and this would continue to be reviewed as learners are admitted if the proposal is implemented.	1	1%

16	Care needed to ensure class sizes don't increase too much as a result	Agreed. All proposed new places are funded and it is the responsibility of the headteacher and governing body to ensure class sizes are appropriate and staffed according to the needs of learners.	1	1%
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