

Analysis of Responses including Pupil Consultation

April 2018

Produced by Cardiff Research Centre on behalf of
Cardiff Council Education Directorate

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Consultation on Improving and Expanding Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Provision in Cardiff.

Background

An increasing population means that a growing number of learners require special school or places within a specialist resource base. Cardiff currently has seven special schools providing educational needs to 570 pupils aged 4-19. A series of proposals have been put forward to expand, and in some instances adapt the current level of provision to help meet this increasing need.

The proposals outlined within this document represent a first step in a rolling programme of initiatives designed to ensure that ALN provision meets the need across the city.

Cardiff Council has sought to engage with anyone potentially affected by the changes including pupils, parents governing bodies and teaching staff. By listening effectively our aim is to protect what is most important to schools, pupils and parents, and alleviate any anxieties prior to changes coming into place.

This report includes a general overview of the findings alongside an analysis of the results on a school-by-school basis.

Methodology

Online public survey – An online survey designed for completion by Parents, Governors, teachers and the wider public.

Online/paper survey for pupils – Mainstream pupils were provided with an opportunity to have their views with regard to the proposals recorded either via an online survey or via classroom led paper.

Classroom based activities for pupils with ALN – this comprised a number of participatory activities such as vote casting, rating scale activities and verbal reasoning. Bespoke focus group discussions were facilitated with older pupils, to gauge opinion and address concerns regarding the proposals.

Promotional activity

- Initial emails to the 8 schools included in the proposals with follow up meetings in person offered to discuss the plans for the consultation.
- Links to the public survey were available in the Councils education pages as well as the 'have your say' consultation pages.
- The survey was promoted on the twitter/social media accounts of the relevant schools.
- A banner was placed on the front page of www.cardiff.gov.uk to further increase the visibility of the consultation to the wider public.
- A press release was provided to promote the consultation.
- Posters were designed and distributed to schools to help promote the changes and direct people to the questionnaire.
- Email reminders forwarded to all head teachers.
- Promotion of the consultation via the education SLA website.

RESPONSE

Responses came into the consultation via a variety of sources including the two separate surveys as well as open comments to the proposals via letter and email.

Method	Number
Public wide Survey (online and hard copy)	197
Pupils Survey (online and hard copy)	399
Other correspondence	15
Pupil participation in classroom activities	31
TOTAL	642

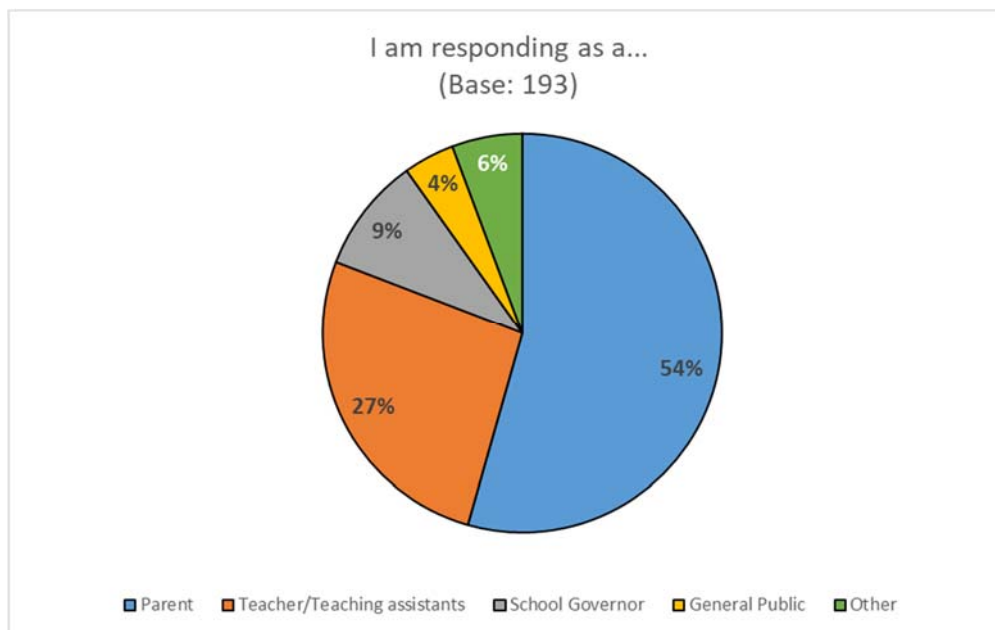
RESULTS - PUBLIC CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

- Significant variation existed in the level of participation across each of the eight schools.
- Several teachers expressed feelings that this was '*a road they had been down many times before*' in relation to ALN provision. As a result, some felt disillusioned by the promise of change. Despite this there remained hope with comments made, that plans now felt as if they were beginning to move beyond that which had occurred previously.
- With one or two exceptions, namely The Hollies and Allensbank Primary School, the consultation found a high level of support towards the proposals in principle. Positivity was evident from teachers, parents and pupils alike. Conversely, there were frequently voiced concerns regarding the delivery of the proposals, the detail of which was felt to be currently lacking. Respondents wanted assurances that whilst they approved the plans in principle any implementation would ensure the provision of adequate facilities and resources to meet the increased numbers.
- Young people were active participants in the consultation process and expressed a genuine enthusiasm within the role. Pupils from Greenhill School, Meadowbank Special School and Ysgol Glantaf were able to provide a meaningful contribution and shared insightful views regarding their learning environments.
- Schools were requested to promote a separate survey aimed specifically at pupils. Completed returns totalled 399 however, these were heavily skewed to just one school – Ysgol Glantaf with a response of 366.

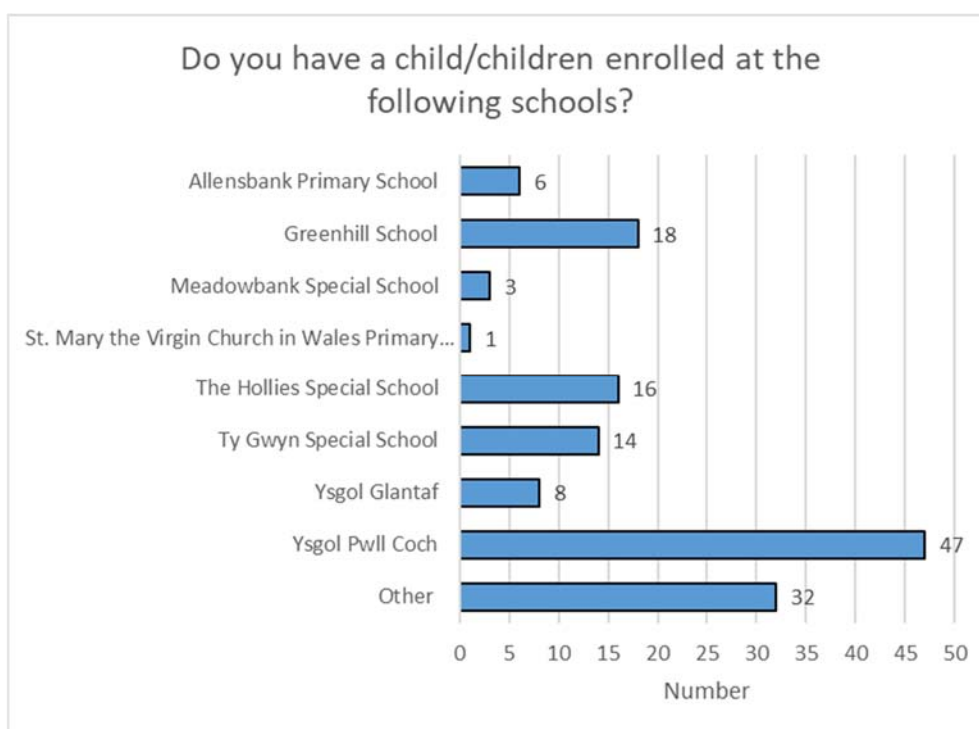
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Respondent Profile

Parents accounted for more than half (54%) of the responses to the public facing survey. Teaching staff accounted for more than a quarter and school governors for approximately a tenth. Those indicating 'other' covered a variety of roles including speech and language therapists, psychologists and support workers.

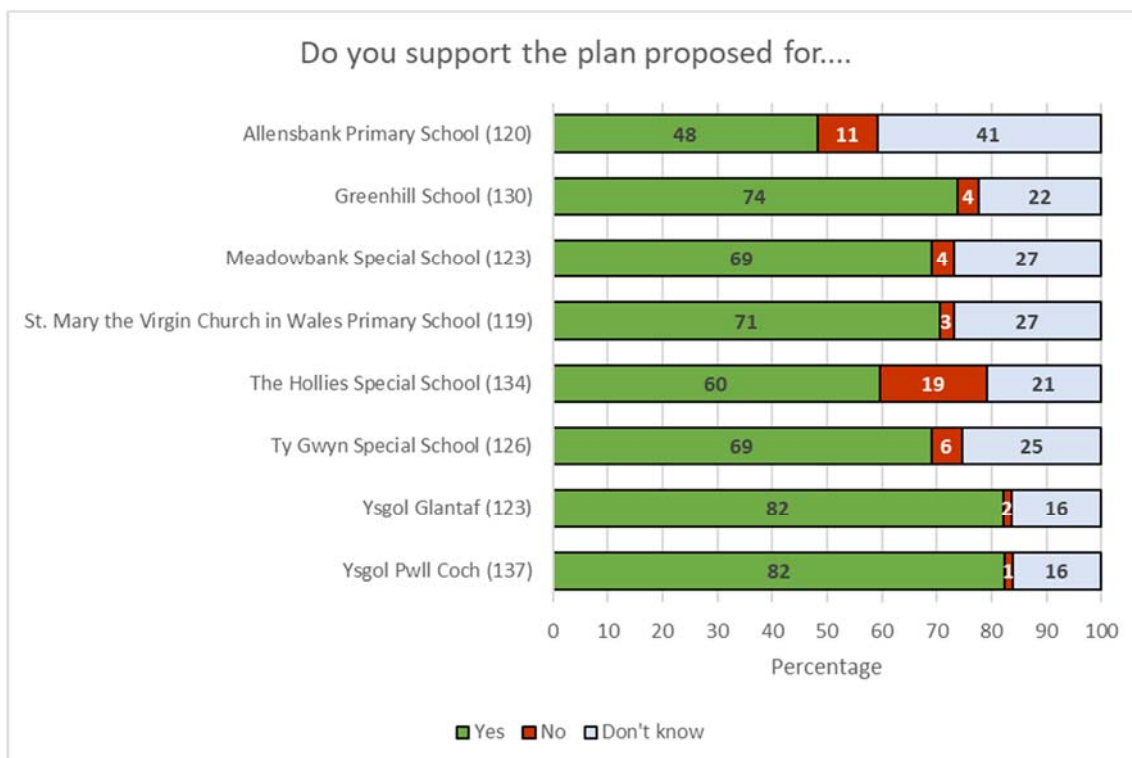
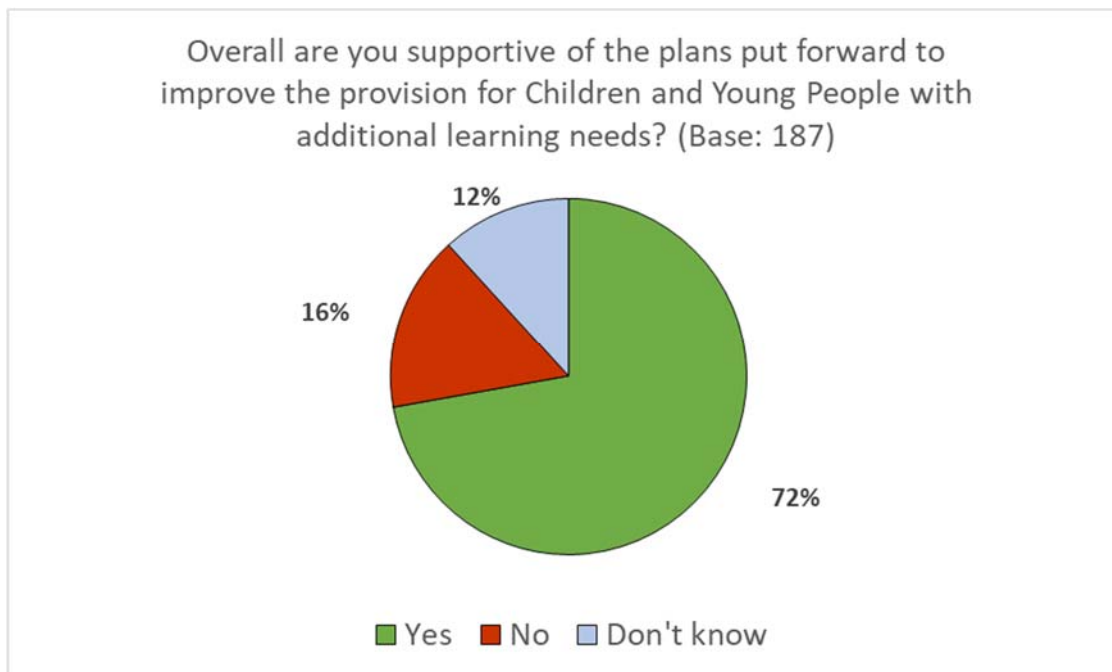


The highest number of responses came from those parents with children enrolled at Ysgol Pwll Coch (47).



Are you supportive of the plans put forward to improve the provision for Children and Young People with additional learning needs?

Almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents to the public consultation indicated that they were overall supportive of the proposals.



Broken down by individual school, support was highest in relation to proposals for Ysgol Glantaf and Ysgol Pwll Coch (Both with 82% in support).

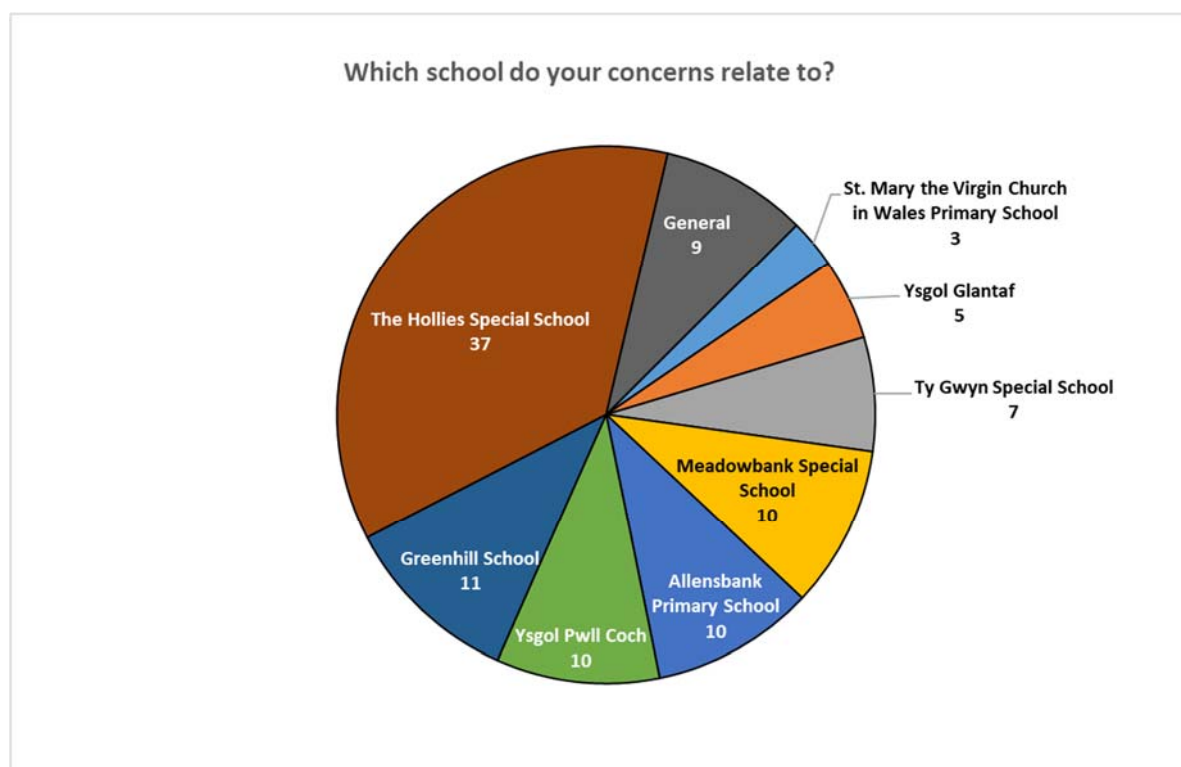
The highest proportion of responses opposed to the proposals were in relation to The Hollies (19%).

Approximately two fifths (41%) of respondents were unsure with regard to the proposals made for the future of ALN provision at Allensbank Primary School.

Do you have any specific concerns?

Seventy-eight respondents indicated that they had specific concerns regarding the proposals.

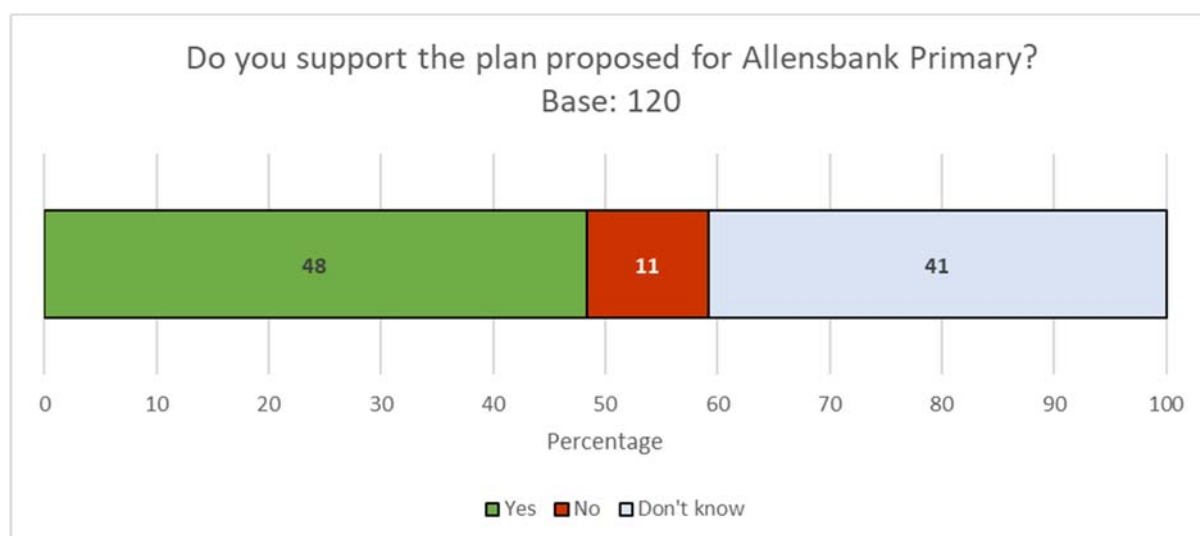
The highest number of concerns were in relation to The Hollies Special School.



ALLENSBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL

The proposal was to phase out the specialist resource base designated for pupils with specific language impairments and open an eight-place early intervention class (1st cohort Sept 2019).

- A total of six respondents had pupils enrolled at the school.
- Additional responses were also submitted on behalf of both the school governing body and the specialist teaching team as well as interested parties in the wider population.
- Reaction to the plans outlined for Allensbank Primary raised the highest levels of uncertainty from respondents.
- The governing body were generally supportive of the proposals and recognised the proposed model of early intervention as 'sound'.



Ten respondents raised specific concerns or comments in relation to the proposed changes. Several of these came from the existing teaching team within the school as well as parents and governors.

Queries were made as to whether 8 places were sufficient to meet demand. Additionally respondents sought clarification regarding the criteria for entry to the class and the mechanism to enable move on.

The Specialist Teaching Team based at Allensbank Primary raised several points for consideration. They believed further thought is required in relation to the age and needs mix, if this is, as proposed, a constantly changing and evolving class. They also questioned

whether the proposed 4:1 ratio would be the most effective in terms of social interaction and curriculum matching.

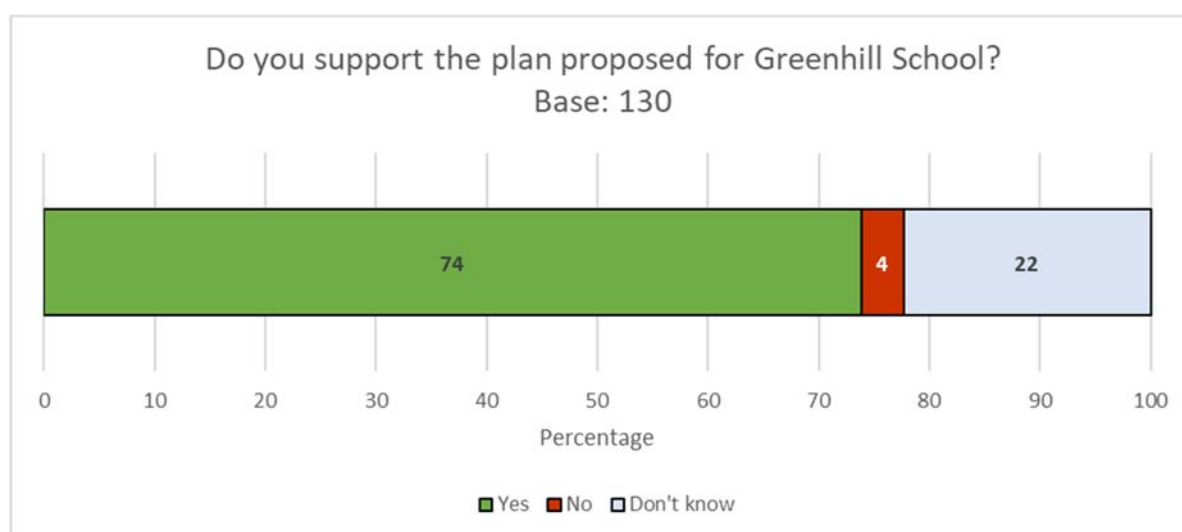
As an alternative, the team suggested 2 cohorts of up to 8 attending on a 2 day basis. This, they felt would extend the time in mainstream and could greater opportunity for a compatible age/need mix. The remaining day could be used effectively for outreach by the team to support the pupils in mainstream schools.

Several responses also stated that they would like to see involvement from Meadowbank as resources and expertise are already in place at that site.

GREENHILL SCHOOL

Greenhill currently has an age 11-16; proposals are to extend the age range up to 19 to better aid transition into employment, college or training.

- A total of 18 respondents had pupils enrolled at the school.
- Responses were received from ten parent/guardians. Additional responses were also submitted from a selection of teachers, support staff and school governors as well as interested parties in the wider population.
- Three quarters (74%) of responses were supportive of the proposals for the school. Just 4% of responses were opposed to the plans.



Significant support was evident for the proposal from teachers, pupils and parents:

“I feel the sixth form provision is a crucial part to helping our pupils here go on and become successful. We’ve needed a sixth form provision for years and over that time I have seen vulnerable, lost children leave our safe, secure base and rather than go to other placements, having not had the support from the authorities and at home have fallen through the net. Enabling another generation to fall by the wayside. This proposal is a huge step to help all our pupils succeed.” (Greenhill teaching assistant)

“If we could get an extra year it would allow me to catch up on stuff we have missed – I missed three years in school before I came here.” (Greenhill Pupil)

Nine respondents raised specific concerns in relation to the proposed changes. Comments made by teachers, support staff and governors all highlighted potential difficulties regarding the impact of pupils from outside of Greenhill joining the school for post 16 education. Additional clarification is therefore required to confirm to staff that the current proposal relates only to those pupils already based in the Greenhill setting.

Pupil Consultation

- Eighteen pupils from Greenhill took part in the online survey relating to the changes whilst a further six participated in focus group activity where the proposals were considered in greater detail.
- Pupils spoke with appreciation for the opportunities that Greenhill and the staff provide to them. When asked how Greenhill compared to their previous mainstream schools answers included – *“Amazing” and “Better”*. Further comments included:

“They make us do some work but they don’t force us, they help us, if it was mainstream we would be in isolation”.

“Some kids want to be here for the family environment.”

- Some of the things that pupils described liking most about the school was the opportunity to try new things alongside study for formal qualifications. Whilst this included frequent trips and excursions it also covered the opportunity to learn trades such as mechanics, plastering and animal care.
- Teachers confirmed the change in focus over recent years with regard to pupils post 16 development:

“When they used to leave Greenhill years ago it was a case of goodbye – have a nice life, now all of the pupils are encouraged to go onto employment or further education, for many they are the first in their family to go to college.”

- Most pupils had ideas for what they wanted to do following Greenhill. For some this involved vocational courses at college, for others finding work or joining the armed forces. Pupils recognised the assistance provided by the school to help them move on successfully. Despite this, anxiety remained with the thought of leaving the school described as *'nerve-wracking'* and *'very different'*.
- Many pupils recognised that an opportunity to stay on at Greenhill for an extra year would potentially enable them to gain additional skills and qualifications and better prepare them for their life beyond:

"Staying in the school longer, get a chance to get more exams and qualifications."

"I will be able to get a further education."

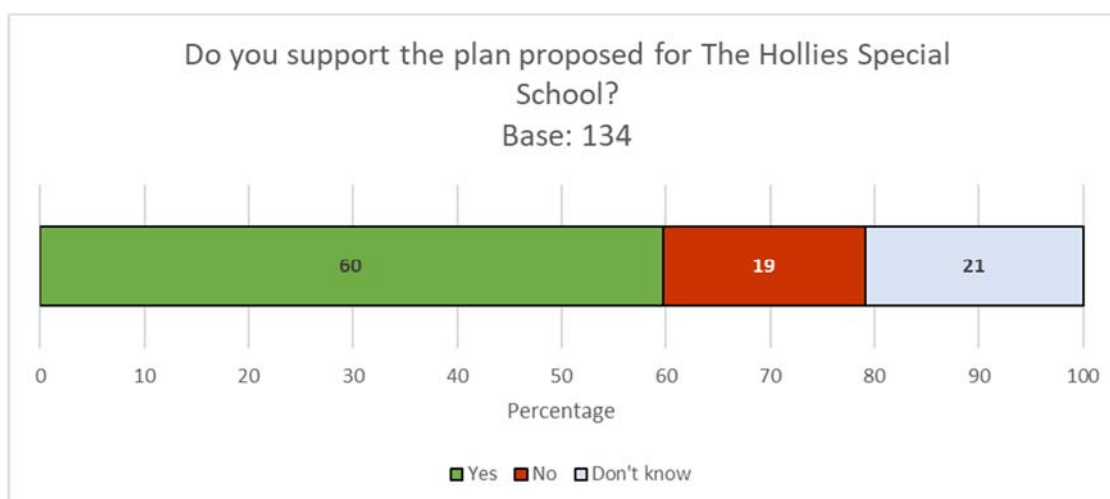
- There was widespread support for the proposal to develop the caretaker site (Ray's House) into a 6th form facility with more than half indicating that they would be interested in staying on for an additional year if possible. The proposal itself was described by pupils as *'wonderful'*, *'cool'* and *'needed'*.
- Pupils were quick to grasp the possibilities of the proposal and studied maps of the building before compiling a wish list of facilities and specifications they would like to see included in the final plans. These included:
 - Closed access to year 12's only – potentially via a security fob to allow some privacy.
 - Large cooker on site to allow preparation of lunches as well as some life skill learning.
 - Chill out space with tv/sofa/computer.
 - Gym space
 - Mechanic area
 - Outdoor area with seating, fire pit, allotment. Some pupils were also potentially interested in using some of the outside space for animal care such as rabbits or chickens.
 - Washing machine for life skills.
 - Bathrooms and a staff office.
 - Pupils were keen that the building have a homely feel, even suggesting that slippers be worn inside.

Pupils were also very keen to have an opportunity to visit the actual building to get a better feel for the space available.

THE HOLLIES SPECIAL SCHOOL

The proposal is to increase pupil numbers to 138. Move to a split site approach utilising the vacated Glan Morfa Site and introduce an option for pupils to remain at Hollies age 11-14.

- A total of 16 respondents had pupils enrolled at the school.
- Responses were also submitted from a selection of teachers, support staff and school governors as well as interested parties in the wide public.
- Approximately a fifth (19%) of responses were opposed to the proposals for The Hollies Special School. This was the highest level of opposition amongst all of the plans.



Thirty seven respondents raised specific concerns in relation to the proposed changes.

Typically, those commenting opposed proposals to move to a split site. Some felt strongly that this 'double transition' would be a particularly negative experience for pupils with ASD diagnoses.

"As children and young people with ASD find any sort of change stressful, operating on two sites would cause anxiety and undermine their security and confidence." (Parent)

Additionally it was felt that a move to a split site would place undue strain on a new leadership team, waste staff time and add to administrative costs. The proposed Glan Morfa site was considered 'unsuitable', placed in an area of busy traffic with a considerable amount of modernisation and refurbishment required to make it fit for purpose.

As an alternative, respondents were keen to see consideration given to the extension and modernisation of the existing Hollies site. Whilst this would potentially allow for an increase

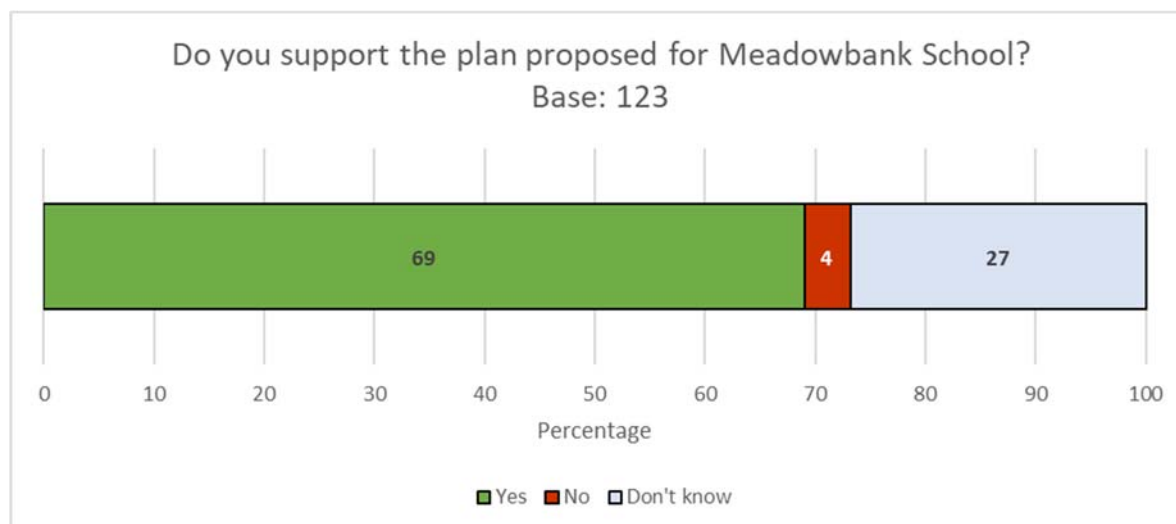
in pupil numbers, several suggestions also detailed the benefits of extending the current provision at The Hollies up to age 16+.

Improved communication was called for between the Council and The Hollies to ensure that any plans taken forward in the future are done so with the full involvement of those impacted and a shared understanding of the relevant issues.

MEADOWBANK SPECIAL SCHOOL

There are currently places left empty within this setting. A proposal exists to extend the designation of the school from specific language difficulties to include complex learning disabilities.

- Three responses were received from parents with children enrolled at the school.
- Additional responses were submitted from teachers, staff, the governing body and the Head as well as interested parties in the wider public.
- Seven in ten responses were in favour of the proposals. Just 4% were in opposition whilst a (27%) remained uncertain.



Ten respondents raised specific concerns in relation to the proposed changes to ALN provision at Meadowbank Special School. Typically, comments focused on the proposed amendments to the criteria for entry. Assurances were required that the mixing of speech and language difficulties with complex learning needs would not be to the detriment of

either group. Respondents suggested that an entirely separate class be established to accommodate those pupils with complex learning needs, however, some also sought clarification regarding the definition of the term.

“All the children at Meadowbank have the ability for continuous improvement and I am concerned that children with more complex learning needs may not have the ability to improve and have static learning capabilities.” (Parent)

“If Meadowbank is opened up to a wider range of needs, where will the children who find speech difficult go? Where will they find the focussed, individualised curriculum with such a strong focus on language?” (Student)

Several references were also made to the existing specialist resources and skilled staff available at Meadowbank able to provide early intervention for speech and language difficulties, similar to those proposed for Allensbank Primary.

Pupil Consultation

Classroom engagement activities were undertaken with twelve children aged between 6 and 11.

Outside space was a priority for the children and in particular their ‘pirate ship’ which was named as a favourite place to play.

“I like playing in the playground, it’s my favourite place – I like the pirate ship”.

The school hall was identified as important as it was used for a number of different activities including PE, and music, two of the pupils favourite activities.

School trips were something that the pupils also clearly enjoyed with the park, Super Jump (trampoline), Jump, Mambo’s and swimming (Splott – older group only) all named as well-liked activities.

Meadowbank currently does not have a functioning school kitchen so no food is prepared on site. Meals are delivered to the handful of pupils whilst the remainder take in packed lunches. This is something that would need to be addressed further should pupil numbers expand.

Eleven out of twelve pupils agreed that more people in their class would be a good thing. Positive comments included:

“More people to play with outside”

“More people to share with”

Similarly, the majority of pupils were excited at the prospect of more classroom space and had no concerns about the changes. For a small minority however the idea of more people and a busier environment did raise concern with comments including:

“It will be a little bit crowded”

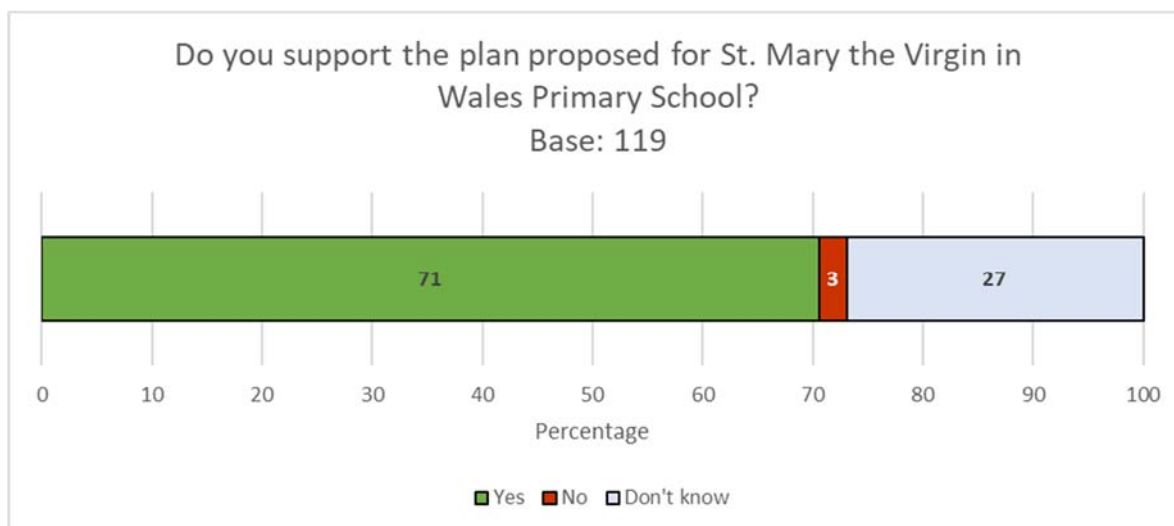
“Big rooms are more scary”

"I'm worried it might be too noisy"

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH IN WALES PRIMARY SCHOOL

No specialist support is available on this site at present. It is proposed a that a resource for up to 20 pupils be opened at the school as part of a future new building.

- Just one response was received from school governor who also had a child enrolled at the school. Other responses came from interested parties in the wider community.
- Seven in ten responses (71%) were in favour of the proposals. Just 3% were in opposition however, there was a significant portion (27%) who remained uncertain.



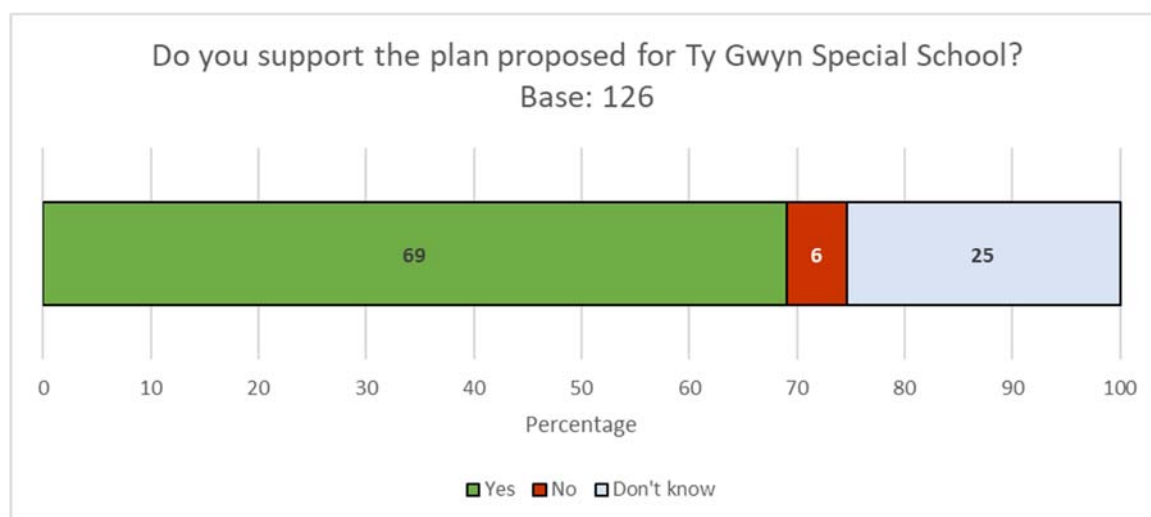
Just three respondents raised concerns specifically in relation to the proposed changes for St. Mary the Virgin Church in Wales Primary School. These included a question regarding how the facility would be resourced and queried the existing expertise available, given that the school has not previously had a SRB on site.

A second commenter considered the provision of 20 spaces as quite high for an entirely new provision whilst a third queried whether speech and language support would be available within the SRB to those pupils entering the school with English as a second language.

TY GWYN SPECIAL SCHOOL

Plans are to increase the number of places to 198 by the installation of 3 new classrooms including the redevelopment of Trelai youth centre.

- Fourteen responses were received from parents with children enrolled at the school one of whom was also a school governor. Additional responses came from interested parties in the wider community.
- Around seven in ten respondents (69%) were in favour of the proposals to increase the number of pupil spaces at Ty Gwyn Special School. Just 6% were opposed to the plans although a quarter (25%) remained unsure.



Seven respondents raised concerns specifically in relation to the proposed changes for Ty Gwyn Special School

Respondents described Ty Gwyn as an already well-resourced facility whilst many young people in the area travel to access specialist services elsewhere. An alternative suggestion was that resources be focused in local areas of shared access. It was felt this would ensure benefit to the wider community. Well-being support for secondary school girls and additional resources for ACE's, particularly in transition from primary to secondary education were highlighted as particular areas for attention.

"Think it is short sighted for the Trelai Barn to be incorporated into the special school federation when the mainstream primaries are struggling with pupils with needs which equally require specialist support, and primaries are having to deal with this in classes of 30." (School Governor, Cardiff West High School)

Some parents expressed concern regarding the extra pressure on existing resources that additional pupils would place. Whilst teacher numbers have reportedly increased in line with demand, medical staff such as OT's and Speech and Language Therapists were described as severely stretched. Additionally parents were concerned as to how growing numbers would affect the feel and culture of the school:

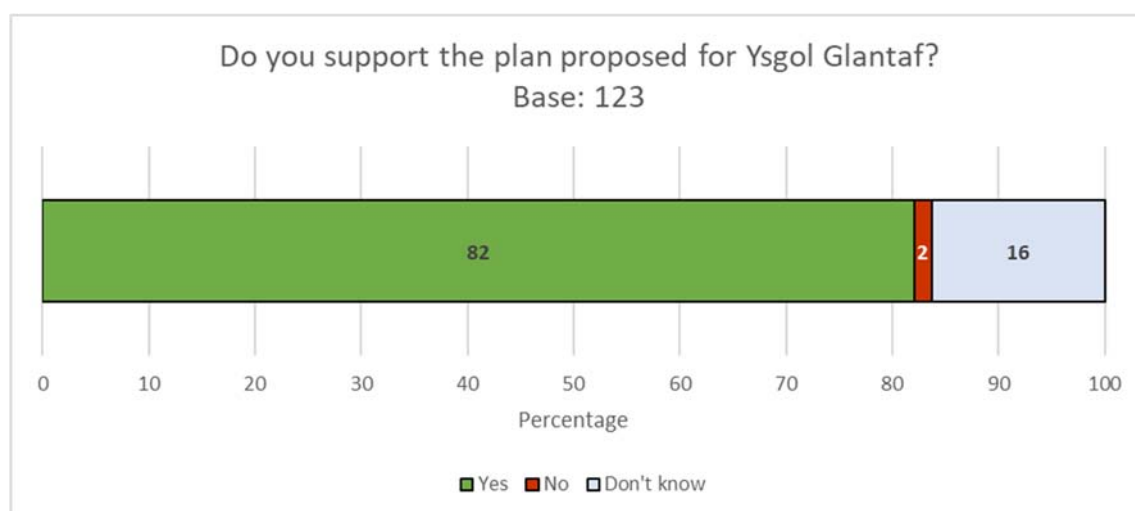
"Concern that it's already a big school. Don't want to lose the positives such as staff knowing all pupils. (Parent)

"...as the years have advanced the school has gradually increased pupil intake. The teaching staff have also increased to cope with this expansion but, unfortunately, the medical professions (Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, and Physiotherapist) still supply the same level of output. An even further influx of pupils would put more strain on these services."

YSGOL GLANTAF

The school currently hosts a specialist resource base for 13 pupils. The proposal is to increase the number of places within the SRB to 30.

- Eight responses came from the parents of children enrolled at the school.
- Fourteen teachers from the school participated in the survey as well as a school governor. Additional responses to the consultation also came from interested parties in the wider community.



Just 2% of responses were opposed to the proposals in relation to Glantaf. The idea of extending the current excellent practice received widespread support however members of the school community also expressed serious concerns about how this will be managed in terms of available space.






“The current accommodation for these learners is limited and it will need significant and extensive investment to meet the individual needs and different challenges experienced by a much larger number of pupils with diverse needs.” (Ysgol Glantaf ALN School Governor)

The current accommodation allows space for 10 pupils however there are already 13 in place with 16 planned for intake in September 2018. Additionally several pupils requiring lower levels of support, also use the SRB, taking the total number of current users to around 20. Further communication is required regarding the details of how and where additional ALN pupil numbers are to be accommodated.

Pupil Consultation

- 366 pupils participated in a survey to record their views on the proposed changes. Additional classroom engagement was undertaken with 13 pupils aged 11-18 that currently use the specialist resource base.
- 87% of pupils were either ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ with the proposals outlined. Just 4% had any opposition to the plans.

On a scale of one to 5 (1 being Very happy and 5 Very sad) how do you feel about the changes planned?

1 Very Happy	2	3	4	5 Very Sad
				
254	67	33	9	3
69%	18%	9%	3%	1%

- Positive outcomes related to the proposal were that the school would better reflect society and *‘feel more like a community’*. Pupils were keen to see a ‘greater range of characters and abilities’ in the school and considered it important that more children with complex needs have the opportunity to learn to speak Welsh and/or receive their education in their first language.

- Concerns raised by pupils included: the availability of suitable space, that everyone would treat the new pupils equally and fairly and that finances would be taken from other areas and projects within the school to fund the project.
- All pupils within the SRB also participate in mainstream classes. When asked about their favourite place in the school several pupils made specific mention of the existing SRB. This was described as a place where they could ‘chill out’ ‘relax’ and have access to their personal lockers and belongings.
- The pupils with ALN were generally very happy with all aspects of their school life. Outside space prioritised for the use of pupils at the SRB included space to relax and opportunities to grow fruit and vegetables.
- Pupils also particularly enjoyed opportunities to take swimming classes and go on school trips. Recent visits had included the theatre, St Fagans Museum, Story Arms and Pugh’s Garden Centre.
- The sensory room was highly valued by the group. The space was used to ‘chill out’ ‘dance’ and listened to music. Whilst the space was viewed as a priority pupils also commented on the lack of size, something that was to be a greater issue with an increase to pupil numbers within the SRB.

“I’d like it to be bigger, only two can fit in at a time”.

- Most of the group were positive about the prospect of increased pupil numbers within the SRB. Those attributing the potential change as ‘good’ commented that this would mean *“new friends”* and *“more people to play with.”*
- Those feeling an increase in numbers to be a bad thing referenced concern about overcrowding. One pupil explained that they would find it difficult emotionally to come into contact with a large number of people when entering class whilst another commented:

“It would be busy, I like it when it’s quiet”

More people in my class would be...		
GOOD	BAD	NOT SURE
7	4	2

- The majority of the group viewed the potential of more space as a positive. Pupils hoped that this would enable them to: *“move about more freely”* and *“not feel so claustrophobic”*.

More space in my class would be:		
GOOD	BAD	NOT SURE
12	1	0

- The SRB currently has six computers. Pupils enjoy using these for carrying out online research, creating PowerPoint presentations and for gaming in their free time. An increase to the number of machines was considered necessary to maintain the current level of access should pupil numbers within the SRB increase.
- Increased noise within the space was a concern to several pupils with comments including:

“If you are doing work and trying to concentrate it’s a bad thing”

“Less work would get done and more talking”.

More noise in my class would be...		
GOOD	BAD	NOT SURE
2	7	4

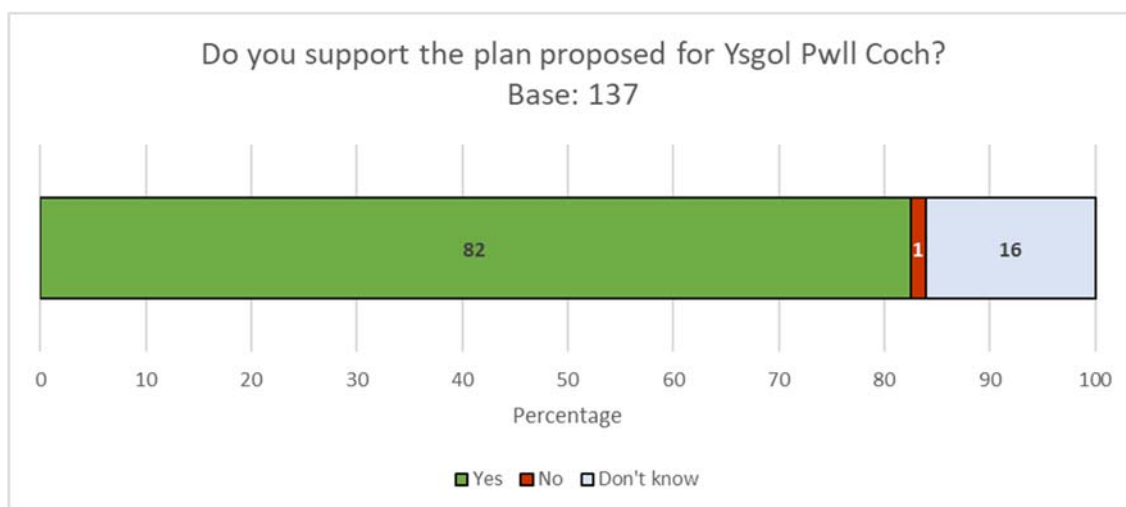
- Whilst most pupils wanted to ensure that their classroom remained largely the same, several pupils were in favour of updates. These included expansion of the sensory room and the addition of male/female toilets and dedicated changing space. (Currently the SRB has one toilet/changing space shared by all pupils. Access to a suitable changing area was particularly necessary as many of the pupils find the noisy and chaotic atmosphere of changing areas in the main school particularly stressful and use the facilities in the SRB as an alternative).
- Overall pupils express a high level of support regarding plans for a larger space with more pupils.

I like the changes planned for my class...		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
10	0	2

YSGOL PWLL COCH

No specialist support is available on this site at present. It is proposed to open a resource for initially 10 (with possibility of growing to 20) pupils in a Welsh medium setting.

- Forty-seven responses came from parents of pupils enrolled at the school.
- Ten teachers and school governors from Ysgol Pwll Coch also participated in the survey whilst the remainder of responses came from interested parties in the wider community.
- Support for the proposals was expressed in a separate, standalone response, provided by the Ysgol Pwll Coch Governing Body.
- Proposals for the introduction of ALN provision at Pwll Coch received the highest level of support within the consultation.



Eleven respondents highlighted specific concerns that they held in relation to the proposals for Ysgol Pwll Coch.

Predominately these were related to the logistics of operation rather than concern over the introduction of the resource. Respondents were keen to understand the detail of how the unit would fit in with the rest of the school with regard to lessons, lunch and play. Further explanation as to who i.e. ages, needs etc. the class would be for was desired whilst respondents also wanted assurances that the facility will be effectively resourced, both in terms of funding and appropriately skilled staff.

“My concern is that sufficient resources will be allocated to provide a suitable learning environment for all pupils at the school and high standard of facilities will be provided to meet the needs of children with specific requirements.” (School Governor)