

Estyn response to consultation

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.

Summary/ Conclusion

The proposer has suitably identified the benefits and potential disadvantages of the proposal to improve specialist provision for children and young people with additional learning needs in Cardiff (2018-2019). It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to improve the current provision and resource available for children and young people with additional learning needs in Cardiff.

Description and benefits

The aim of the proposed schemes is to respond to the growing number of children and young people with additional learning needs who need a place in a special school or specialist resource base in order to fulfil their educational potential, by:

- *Increasing the number of special school and specialist resource base places available in Cardiff*
- *Establishing two new specialist resource bases in Cardiff schools and one new early intervention class for pupils with speech, language and communication needs*
- *Closing one specialist resource base provision for pupils designated as having specific language impairment*
- *Changing the areas of specialism on offer in some of Cardiff's special schools and specialist resource bases*

The proposal relates to schemes in the following eight schools:

- *Allensbank Primary School*
- *Greenhill School*
- *The Hollies Special School*
- *Meadowbank Special School*
- *St. Mary the Virgin Church in Wales Primary School*
- *Ty Gwyn Special School*
- *Ysgol Glantaf*

- Ysgol Gymraeg Pwll Coch

Estyn will first describe the proposal and its potential benefits as a whole and then provide a description of the proposals and potential benefits relating to each individual school.

The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal overall. The proposer identifies an increased current and future demand for additional learning needs provision across Cardiff. For example, they demonstrate that demand for places in special schools and specialist resource base classes has risen by 103 places over the last 5 years and state that current provision is not enough to meet current or future need. The proposer argues sensibly that the proposal should help more pupils with additional learning needs to complete their education within the local authority and should reduce the need for pupils to be educated in independent special schools both within and outside Cardiff.

The proposer has suitably considered the impact on other schools in the area that may be affected by the proposals. It has outlined how the proposal could benefit all schools in Cardiff by increasing the level of staff expertise in providing for pupils with additional learning needs across the city.

The proposer has considered the highways and transport implications relating to all eight schemes and the impact of the proposal on learner travel arrangements. The proposer intends to continue to support home to school travel in line with the council's home to school transport policy. The proposer has completed an initial equality impact assessment that concluded that the proposal would not adversely affect a particular group in society. The proposer also considers the impact of the proposals on the Welsh language and reasonably concludes that there will be a positive impact on the Welsh language or Welsh medium provision in the city.

The proposer states that funding has not been secured for all schemes and says that if funding were not available it would be necessary to reprioritise the eight schemes within the proposal. It is not clear how this reprioritisation would be conducted or the criteria that the proposer would use.

In around half of the eight schemes, the proposer states that potential disadvantages of the proposals are the implications for health services provided in partnership with the schools. The proposer does not clearly state what these implications are although they do commit to working with Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board, to continue to ensure children's assessed needs are met, and to further develop collaborative approaches to promote wellbeing and positive outcomes for pupils.

Individual schemes within the proposal

Allensbank Primary School

The proposal is to close the existing 16-20 place specialist resource base for pupils aged between 4 and 11 years with speech, language and communication needs in 2020 and to open an early intervention speech, language and communication class for 8 pupils aged between 4 and 7 years in September 2019.

The proposal refers suitably to the advice provided by the Speech and Language Reference Group. The proposer notes that the current specialist resource base has surplus places and that projections demonstrate that over half of all places currently on offer will be unfilled by 2022. The proposer outlines the success of Cardiff's early language intervention programmes and suggests that this is one of the reasons for the surplus places at key stage 2. The proposer confirms that provision for future statemented key stage 2 pupils with speech, language and communication needs will be offered at Meadowbank Special School or through a mainstream statement.

The proposer suitably notes that pupils will attend the early intervention class for a period of between one and three years dependent on each pupil's individual progress. Pupils will be dual registered at their local school and at Allensbank Primary and will maintain links with their local primary by attending that school for at least one day per week. The proposer suggests appropriately that they will continue to liaise with the Joint Speech and Language Service to anticipate future need.

Greenhill School

The proposal is to extend the age range of the school from 11 to 16 years to 11 to 19 years and to increase the number of places available from 56 to 64.

The proposal refers suitably to data that demonstrates that over the last three years around 50% of Greenhill pupils become NEET after Year 11. The proposer identifies that young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs find the transition from school exceptionally difficult and that providing additional transition support in Year 12 will help them progress more easily into further education or work. The proposer notes appropriately that the staff at Greenhill have existing expertise to support these young people. The proposer has considered waiting to introduce this part of the proposal until Band B funding has been secured to improve the condition of the school. However, the decision to act now is sound due to the identified existing level of need.

The Hollies Special School

The proposal is to extend the age range of the school from 4 to 11 years to 4 to 14 years and to increase the number of places available from 90 to 138.

The proposer has identified the need to increase autism spectrum condition provision to meet future projected demand for places at key stage 2 and key stage 3. The proposer outlines three options for increasing the provision all of which relate to the current school site and using the vacated primary provision at Ysgol Glan Morfa. The proposer explores suitably the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three options and provides sound reasoning for their preferred option. The proposer notes that the existing leadership and staff at the school have the expertise to cope well with the extended age range and that this should enable them to build on the existing good practice in the school.

Although the proposal outlines the range of settings which pupils can transfer to in key stage 4, there is a lack of overall clarity about how the future demand for key stage 4 will be met. In addition, the proposals do not give sufficient assurance that pupils with

autistic spectrum conditions can continue to access appropriate specialist provision at key stage 4.

Meadowbank Special School

The proposal is to extend the designation of the school to include complex learning disabilities as well as speech, language and communication needs. The school was originally designated for pupils with specific language impairment but this diagnosis is no longer used and has been replaced by the more commonly used term of speech, language and communication needs.

The proposer provides a clear rationale for the proposal. Meadowbank Special School can accommodate 40 pupils but numbers on roll have fallen to 15. This is due to a drop in requests for specific language impairment places. To ensure the future financial viability of the school the proposer's suggestion to extend the provision to include places for pupils with complex learning disabilities as well as continuing to provide places for pupils with communication needs appears to be sensible. The proposer identifies suitably the projected need for additional complex learning disability places. The proposer has considered carefully the advice from the Specific Language Reference Group and makes a well-reasoned argument why the early intervention class for pupils with speech, language and communication needs should be sited within a mainstream primary school rather than in the special school.

St. Mary the Virgin Church in Wales Primary School

The proposal is to open a new 20 place specialist resource base for pupils with complex learning disabilities. The governing body of the school requested this provision as part of the 2015 Band B new school building proposal. The Band B funding was agreed in 2015.

The proposer identifies suitably the increased demand for complex learning disability places in the south central area of Cardiff City. The proposer notes that this new provision would reduce the pressure on the four other primary specialist resource bases for complex learning disabilities and would also reduce the travelling time and distances for pupils with complex learning disabilities who live in the south central area of the city.

Ty Gwyn Special School

Ty Gwyn Special School along with Riverside Special School and Woodlands Special School form the Western Learning Campus Federation. Ty Gwyn Special School is designated to provide for pupils aged 3 to 19 years with complex learning disabilities or autism spectrum conditions. The proposal is to increase the capacity of the school to 198 places.

The proposer provides a clear rationale for the proposal and provides projections that demonstrate a year on year increase in demand for places up to 2022. The proposer outlines considered options to increase the school's capacity and makes sound arguments for adapting the Trelai Youth Centre building in order to provide three new classrooms connected to the main school via an enclosed corridor. The proposer makes suitable reference to how this project would work in tandem with the multi-

agency project established under the Disability Futures Programme and how it would contribute further to a multi-agency approach to supporting children and young people with additional learning needs.

Ysgol Glantaf

The proposal is to increase the number of places in the specialist resource base for Welsh medium pupils with complex learning disabilities or autism spectrum conditions from 20 places to 30 places.

The proposer provides a clear rationale for the proposal and provides projections that demonstrate future increased demand for the provision. The proposer illustrates appropriately how the existing accommodation would be extended and improved to facilitate the increased number of places on offer. The proposer indicates that the increase in specialist Welsh medium additional learning provision would provide benefits for Welsh medium pupils across the city.

Ysgol Gymraeg Pwll Coch

The proposal is to open a new 10 place Welsh medium specialist resource base for pupils with complex learning disabilities or autism spectrum conditions. The proposal indicates that there would be scope to increase the number of places on offer from 10 to 20 should the need arise.

The proposer provides a clear rationale for the proposal citing that the local authority has identified between 5 and 10 pupils in Welsh medium schools who might currently benefit from a place in a specialist resource base. The proposer anticipates this number will increase over the next 3 to 5 years. The proposer has considered alternative options and provides sound arguments why the new provision should be placed in Ysgol Gymraeg Pwll Coch. For example, the school is in the same cluster as Ysgol Glantaf which hosts the secondary specialist resource base for pupils with complex learning disabilities or autism spectrum conditions and this may help specialist resource base pupils to transition more easily to secondary school whilst maintaining their friendships.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has not provided pupil performance data for any of the schools included in the proposal.

Below is a table that shows the latest inspection outcomes, level of follow-up if applicable and the Welsh Government 2017 categorisation for the eight schools involved in the proposal.

Name of school	Inspection year	Current performance	Prospects for improvement	Level of follow-up	Date removed from follow-up	Welsh Government 2017 categorisation
Allensbank Primary School	2013	Adequate	Adequate	Significant Improvement	2015	Amber
Greenhill School	2013	Good	Good	N/A	N/A	Green
The Hollies Special School	2013	Good	Good	N/A	N/A	Yellow
Meadowbank Special School	2013	Good	Adequate	Estyn Monitoring	2015	Green
St Mary the Virgin Church in Wales Primary School	2012	Excellent	Excellent	N/A	N/A	Amber
Ty Gwyn Special School	2012	Excellent	Excellent	N/A	N/A	Green
Ysgol Glantaf	2017	Good	Good	N/A	N/A	Amber
Ysgol Gymraeg Pwll Coch	2011	Good	Good	N/A	N/A	Yellow

The Welsh Government classifies schools in line with the level of support the school is judged to need.

A green school is a highly effective school, which is well run, has a strong leadership and is clear about its priorities for improvement.

A yellow school is an effective school, which is already doing well and knows the areas it needs to improve.

An amber school is a school in need of improvement, which needs help to identify the steps to improve or to make change happen more quickly.

The proposer has suitably outlined how it will work with and support school leaders and governing bodies as they implement the proposed changes.

The proposer has suitably outlined how the proposal will likely improve the provision for pupils with additional learning needs and how the proposal will likely enhance the quality of teaching and learning and facilitate better the sharing of resource and practice across Cardiff.

Appraisal of views expressed

The Council acknowledges the views expressed.