

APPENDIX 9

Records of parent drop-in sessions

- Allensbank Primary School (15 June 2023)
- Gladstone Primary School (14 June 2023)
- St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School (13 June 2023)
- Ysgol Mynydd Bychan (09 June 2023)



**Schools Programme
Record of Parent Drop in Session
Allensbank Primary School
15 June 2023 at 2pm**



Present: Brett Andrewartha (SOP), Rosalie Phillips (SOP), Ceri Tanti (SOP), Ian Warburton (SOP), Jo Phillips (SOP), Allensbank parents

Please note: The following is not a transcript but a contemporaneous note of the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Brett Andrewartha opened the session and welcomed parents. Here as part of public consultation on proposed changes to primary schools serving the area.

He advised that there are three school sites, five buildings and lots of potential options to re-organise, with the Council's Cabinet deciding on the three options being consulted on with the reasons for this set out in the consultation document.

Having English-medium provision on the Gladstone Primary School/St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School site provides a more appropriate distribution of English-medium places for current and future intakes overall.

Demand for Welsh-medium is concentrated in the northern part of the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, in close proximity to the existing Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site and Allensbank with significant travel distances to alternative Welsh-medium schools; there is also high demand for places in Welsh-medium schools in the north.

BA asked whether parents present had read the consultation document and summarised the proposed changes.

Questions and Answers

BA invited questions from the parents.

The questions asked/comments made by those who attended the meetings are set out in *italics* below with the officer response given directly below.

Is there a preferred option?

Cabinet asked for the consultation to include all three options and would be willing to implement any of these three or the decision may be not to progress with any of the options.

How likely is it that one of the options will be implemented?

The Council has consulted previously on a proposal which was not progressed. The Cabinet could decide not to progress any of the current options, seeking as much feedback as possible.

What is the difference between Option 1 and Option 2?

How do the proposals benefit education?

The options were explained.

Funding for larger schools is generally more sustainable, the management and development of staff can be better. There is less duplication of roles e.g., headteacher and deputy headteacher and some other staff, and a lower proportion of the budget spent on fixed costs, meaning that more of the school's resources can be devoted to the pupils and education.

How would Option 1 affect staff?

The governing body of the new school would be responsible for the development of the staffing structure and the appointment of the senior leadership team and staff. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher roles would be subject to national advert with all other posts ringfenced to existing staff in the first instance (subject to the agreement of the temporary governing body); pupil numbers are falling, and some temporary contracts are not being renewed; staff may also decide to leave. Appreciate that the situation is stressful.

Are all staff represented e.g., union representation?

Yes, unions have been consulted as part of the process and have attended meetings with staff; HR providing support and working directly with schools. The position for schools with fewer than 210 pupils is challenging with a smaller proportion of the budget spent on teaching and learning however a deficit budget position is not unique to small schools. Option 1 allows for a more efficient organisation with streamlined leadership, lower proportion of fixed costs and more resources available for teaching and learning.

The Ysgol Mynydd Bychan catchment area will be enlarged to increase the number of pupils; why could this not be done for Allensbank in order to increase viability?

Changes to catchment areas are not part of the consultation but we're not saying there won't be changes in the future. Allensbank has more than 30 pupils per year in its catchment but not enough attend the school. Some children in the catchment are attending other schools e.g., another school is closer. Welsh-medium catchments are larger because there are fewer schools. The Ysgol Mynydd Bychan catchment extending from Gabalfa to Newport Road. There are very few children from the south of the catchment attending the school with the vast majority who state a preference for the school living in the northern area of the catchment; position where children could not be admitted to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan but were not able to gain a place at one of the other Welsh-medium schools in the north. The learner population is currently falling and there may be a need to rebalance catchments with Ysgol Glan Ceubal wanting a larger catchment. The Welsh Government has set targets for Council's to increase the number of Welsh-medium places.

Concerned that the rationale for the proposals is based on providing places and not take up. The school reflects the diverse local community and would be sad for this to be the end of Allensbank; multicultural including Welsh.

Two children at Allensbank with a third child elsewhere which is a difficult situation; children adapting to a different environment and settled now.

Allensbank is representative of the diverse local community as is Gladstone Primary School and St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School; whilst Ysgol Mynydd Bychan is not as diverse, there has been the option for families to move in and out of English medium schools which has not been the case in Welsh-medium.

Can children transfer into Welsh-medium in older year groups? I didn't think they could?

Children can transfer into Welsh-medium in older year groups and the immersion process for doing so was outlined.

How would Ysgol Mynydd Bychan double in size if there are not enough staff?

This is not an issue at primary level in Cardiff at present however there are issues around Teaching Assistant support and subject specialists at secondary. It is the Welsh Government's responsibility to ensure there is a system in place for increasing the Welsh-medium workforce.

Why the emphasis on Welsh from the Welsh Government? Don't think the issue has been thought through as a national policy and the Council is then jumping; no one will care at Allensbank, target is places not pupils.

Extra funding is provided for Welsh-medium. Can't get into English-medium in Whitchurch and need more English-medium in that area not Welsh-medium.

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan was oversubscribed by 6 last year and proposing to increase by 210 places.

Welsh Government target to increase from 18% in Cardiff, to 25-29% by 2031. Cardiff doesn't have sufficient places to reach that target without expanding provision. Ysgol Melin Gruffydd, in Whitchurch, and Ysgol Glan Ceubal are each fully subscribed in Nursery and Reception in September 2023.

Plan to force people into Welsh-medium.

Looking at percentage increase, not necessarily numbers of pupils. The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was consulted on and looking at Nursery/Reception targets, retaining children in Welsh-medium, Additional Learning Needs, staffing and promotion of Welsh-medium education.

This is a policy driven proposal rather than data driven.

There is a policy aspect to the proposed changes but we need to be able to meet local demand for Ysgol Mynydd Bychan children who cannot gain admission. The school has been oversubscribed for a number of years.

Welsh-medium schools are not oversubscribed. English-medium places are being reduced.

The number of English medium places would not be reduced under Option 1 or Option 2 with only a marginal reduction under Option 3.

Will there be a key performance indicator for Ysgol Mynydd Bychan to meet targets?

Targets are included for the Council to increase the take up of Welsh-medium places in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Smaller schools have fewer pupils and greater budget pressures. Proposing a 420 place Ysgol Mynydd Bychan; surplus in the Allensbank buildings has been managed previously by accommodating other services; there is a cost to schools of maintaining surplus places.

Access to £1.8m funding for Welsh-medium and also a large surplus at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan. What will happen if numbers at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan don't grow, will the school be propped up?

School funding is mainly based on the number of pupils and the expectation is that the school will grow over time. £1.8m capital grant focused on expansion of Welsh-medium education; queried whether monies could be spent on English-medium but advised that this was not possible.

What will be done in order to increase pupil numbers at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan? What will happen when Ysgol Mynydd Bychan don't meet capacity?

We would expect the numbers at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan to grow incrementally. They will also be able to take steps to encourage applications more widely in the catchment, as they would have space for a larger number of children to be admitted to the school.

A local Member's children go to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan. Equitable treatment for English-medium and Welsh-medium under the Welsh Language Act. Ysgol Mynydd Bychan is in a positive position, 99% White British, this does not look good and feels like racism: causing division within the community. The consultation document is full of white children.

It was explained that images within the consultation document are not solely white children.

There are still issues around parts of the community being able to engage and it is not enough to translate information; nothing has changed and need to ask each community what would help not someone who is not from these communities.

We have agreed with the schools that information could be shared via Class Dojo and Schoop. Drop-in sessions such as this one were being held at each school.

What are the proposed educational benefits for any of the children; they are all affected.

The benefits would differ according to the option.

What about children who would go from a 1FE to a 2FE school overnight?

The management of the school budget is a matter for the governing body however the school may choose to provide extra support for classes for instance.

The process post-consultation was outlined. Subject to one of the options being agreed to be progressed, a statutory notice would be published which would allow 28 days for objections to be made with determination likely in January 2024.

Would the notice be translated into community languages?

Yes, the Council would arrange for the notice to be translated.

There has been scaffolding at the school for five years.

This is due to be taken down November/December 2023.

All options favour Ysgol Mynydd Bychan. Why is there no option for Welsh-medium at the Gladstone Primary/St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School site?

All options expand Ysgol Mynydd Bychan. Cabinet has agreed the options being consulted on; there are three school sites with five buildings and a range of possible options; looked at where pupils live/preferences; English-medium spread consistent across the area with very few choosing to come south, centred largely around schools. Welsh-medium demand is currently greater in the northern part of the catchment with the Allensbank site being the least disruptive for current parents/support future intakes. Recognise that the schools are not far apart and could be asked to reconsult on a different option.

The Gladstone option should have been included for Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, we feel that it is inequitable that it was not part of the consultation.

How do we choose an option when all three involve Allensbank moving?

All responses are welcome even if it's to say that you don't like any of the options. Tell us why. It's not a referendum where the option with the most votes will be taken forward. Other considerations will also be taken into account when a decision is made.

Why was moving Ysgol Mynydd Bychan to the Albany Primary site not an option? It is right in the middle of the Mynydd Bychan catchment.

Albany Primary School was not included in the options as the size of the school broadly matches the demand for places at the school. Most pupils attending Mynydd Bychan live in the north of the catchment, there is not much demand from the southern part of the catchment.

Is the low demand from the south of the catchment because the school is in the north of the catchment? If the school moved to Albany more pupils from the south of the catchment might attend.

Some pupils in the south of the catchment live closer to Ysgol Glan Morfa, which is undersubscribed.

If the school moves to another site, I wouldn't be able to use the same wraparound care and would potentially have to stop working. There are other considerations for parents.

Understand the difficulties parents may face if the school moves site and any concerns can be included in responses to the consultation. If one of the proposals does go ahead, then consideration can be given to how wraparound care is set up going forward.

Population changes mean that there will be fewer pupils needing school places so Mynydd Bychan might not have enough pupils for a bigger school.

There is a risk that the number of pupils at the school won't increase, but the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is in place to grow take up of Welsh-medium within Cardiff.

The meeting ended at 3pm



**Schools Programme
Record of Drop in Sessions
Gladstone Primary School
14 June 2023 (AM and PM)**



Present: Brett Andrewartha (BA), Shirley Karseras (SK), Ian Warburton (IW), Ceri Tanti (CT), Rosalie Phillips (RP)

Please note: The following is not a transcript but a contemporaneous note of the meeting.

Morning session

Approximately 20 parents attended and stayed for the whole session. The following viewpoints were recorded:

- Parents would like Gladstone to be left alone. It is a good school, the staff are great, the pupils are happy, and they did not want to see the children upset by any change.
- The school has been attended by several generations of families in the area and they do not feel that it should change. Option 3 would be for the best.
- The school has an intimacy with its families, and they would not want this to change.
- Some parents were worried that class sizes would be too big under the merger set out in Option 1, as they had not realised that there would be additional staff and were relieved when details of staffing were explained.
- Option 2 would be best as this would mean no changes to teaching staff.
- All options would be fine as children would still have a good education.
- They understood that there was a need to expand WM in the area and supported this element of the proposal.
- English-medium provision is important for many families who have come from overseas to study or work in Cardiff. They liked that this would still be offered on the existing site under any of the 3 options.
- They felt that the reduction of EM places would negatively impact these parents who want their children's second language to be English, not Welsh.
- Some felt that it was important that the staff not change so their children would not become unsettled.
- Some felt that the location of the school was important for their home-to-school commute. They liked that their children would attend the same geographical site under any of the 3 options.
- Some parents felt that 420 pupils on the current shared site would be very difficult to facilitate at drop-off and pick-up times.
- One parent stated that there could be a potential for further incidents between pupils if the school expanded from 1FE to 2FE.
- They felt that the continuity of the staff and Headteacher was very important for the emotional well-being for some pupils who have experienced war before moving to Wales.

- The school was working well; the headteacher and staff are great and don't see the need to change.
- Is there a no change option?
- Constant change in school and adding additional challenges is not helpful.
- Why was there no option for Gladstone to move to the Allensbank site?

Afternoon Session

Approximately 20 parents attended and stayed for most of the session. The following viewpoints were recorded:

- They asked if Allensbank would simply utilise the St Monica's building under Option 2. They had slight reservations on how this might practically work when it was explained that the St Monica's building would be too small to accommodate all the Allensbank pupils.
- One parent felt Option 1 was the best solution.
- Another parent said that Option 1 seems sensible long term, but felt it was the most disruptive option.
- Parents have chosen Gladstone over other schools due to how accessible and supportive the staff are. They were concerned that under Option 1, the school would lose this quality.
- Another parent did not have any opinion on the Options but wanted to ensure that his three children would remain at the same school as each other.
- A non-teaching staff member also attended and was concerned that a bigger school would simply inherit more children who would have additional learning needs, putting more pressure on teaching staff. She stated that the needs for pupils who do not speak English can be challenging and the high mobility rate makes this even harder. She thinks that more staff would be needed in supporting roles for a bigger school. She stated that there is also a greater need for pupils' emotional support at the school and extra staff would be needed for this too.
- A parent noted that familiarity is important. Their child feels safe now, and they wouldn't want to endanger that. Their concern with Option 1 is that it will be extremely disruptive to pupils and those who struggle with change will find it very difficult.
- There was concern raised regarding classes mixing and new teachers under Option 1, particularly for children with ALN.
- The parents were very positive about Gladstone school and the quality of education that pupils receive and felt that all options would need to preserve this.
- Some parents felt that Option 3 was disruptive to the least number of children.
- One parent said that it was a pity that an option hadn't been put forward to form a new school for the youngest children, while allowing for current Gladstone/Allensbank pupils to remain separate.
- A parent said it would be a shame to close the school and lose the history – they attended the school themselves as a child.
- Student parents from outside of the UK specifically choose Gladstone because of its good reputation with other families whose children have attended.



Schools Programme
Record of Drop in Session
St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School
13 June 2023



Present: Rosalie Phillips (RP), Shirley Karseras (SK), Ian Warburton (IW), St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School parents

Please note: The following is not a transcript but a contemporaneous note of the meeting.

Several parents of children attending St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School met with officers regarding the proposed changes serving the area with the following points raised:

- Overall, the changes proposed under Option 1 and Option 2 were an exciting opportunity for their school which is oversubscribed.
- The offering of a Faith school is very special and something parents actively look for rather than attending a non-faith English-medium school.
- Families choose to attend St Monica's although they may not live that close to the school.
- A shared site has challenges and the option of having their own, larger site would be advantageous.
- Felt that they didn't really have the right to speak on behalf of the other schools but that the financial benefits arising from Option 1 were worthy for consideration.
- Many pupils at St Monica's attend the nursery provision at Gladstone Primary School; having nursery provision at the school would allow for children to start benefiting from the good work of the school at an earlier stage.
- Moving to the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site would allow the school to grow, which would help families that have been refused admission due to being oversubscribed, but that as the new site was also contained, the small school ethos of St Monica's could continue.
- It would make sense for the two English-medium schools to merge as it would help the new school to create its own identity as the English-medium school for the local community.
- Option 1 could feel like Gladstone Primary School was taking over Allensbank Primary School and would need to ensure that this was not the case.
- Concern that the proposed changes for St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School won't go ahead.
- Would want to ensure that children fully understood what was being proposed.



**Schools Programme
Record of Drop in Session
Ysgol Mynydd Bychan
09 June 2023**



Present: Rosalie Phillips (RP), Ceri Tanti (CT), Rhian Carbis (RC), Ysgol Mynydd Bychan parents

Please note: The following is not a transcript but a contemporaneous note of the meeting.

Four parents of children attending Ysgol Mynydd Bychan met with officers regarding the proposed changes to primary school provision serving the area with the following points raised:

- In favour of the expansion of school as it has been historically over-subscribed. Although this year the school is not oversubscribed, some people may have been put off applying by thinking that they won't get in, and also some parents with older children who hadn't been able to get a place at the school were likely to apply to the same school for any younger children.
- A new build would be preferable. There are sites like Companies House which have so much room, and having part of that site for a new school would allow for better outside space.
- Outside space is so important now, with changes in the curriculum. Whilst none of the schools involved in the consultation have a good amount of outside space, the space at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan is very pleasant for the children and is used extensively.
- Why was the option of having Welsh-medium at the Gladstone Primary School/St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School site not consulted on?
- The Gladstone site would be harder for drop off and pick up; busier location as on a junction, with traffic coming from multiple directions. Feel Gladstone in general would-be worse location from point of view of pick up and drop off, whichever type of school is located there. Appreciate it is more central to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan catchment.
- Why is there only one option for Ysgol Mynydd Bychan; hard to select a preferred option, as they have differing effects on other schools.
- The outdoor learning provision at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan includes covered areas so that children can use outside space for learning even in rainy weather. Don't believe that this is the case at Allensbank – is there a fundamental issue which stopped this happening, could the building not be adapted to provide this?
- Concerns regarding the listed status of the Allensbank building and whether this would limit what the school could do, and whether running and maintenance costs would be higher.
- Would the £1.8m funding available be sufficient to ensure that the facilities available at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan could be replicated at the Allensbank site.