



Schools Programme
Record of Cardiff Influencers Engagement
City Hall
01 June 2023



Present: Cardiff Influencers (12), Michele Duddridge Friedl (SOP), Ceri Tanti (SOP), Rhian Carbis (SOP), Cai Maxwell (SOP)

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

Cardiff Influencers Group Session

The Cardiff Influencers are a secondary age stakeholder group of learners from Cardiff schools who inform decision-making on school organisation planning.

Twelve members of the group met on 01 June 2023 to discuss the proposed changes to primary school provision serving Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd.

The session included a presentation of the proposed options, a community walk (beginning at the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site, walking to the Allensbank Primary School site and walking from there to the Gladstone Primary School/St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School site before returning to City Hall).

This was followed by a discussion on who would be affected by the proposed changes and the pros and cons of each option. The Influencers then worked in groups to prepare statements setting out details of their views on the proposed changes.

Cardiff Influencers feedback on proposed changes

The information below is a summary of the feedback from the group. Copies of the Cardiff Influencers feedback statements are included at the end of the summary.

Nine of the twelve Influencers preferred Option 1.

The comments made included:

- All the schools would have nursery provision which is beneficial to the community.
- Establishing nursery provision at St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School may increase the likelihood of parents sending their children to the school.
- The budget deficit positions of the two English-medium primary schools (Allensbank Primary School and Gladstone Primary School) would be addressed.
- Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would grow to two forms of entry allowing for more children to access Welsh-medium education.
- The expansion of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would support the aims of Cymraeg 2050.



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- It was appreciated that there was an emotional attachment to both Allensbank Primary School and Gladstone Primary School, however amalgamating the two schools would allow for the sustainable provision of English-medium primary places to serve the area and an opportunity to blend the cultures of both schools, strengthening connections within the local community.
- Larger schools can attract quality and experienced headteachers however it is understood that the existing headteachers could potentially be made redundant.
- Larger school can offer more specialisms as there are more staff available and a greater range of extracurricular activities available.
- Larger schools would provide greater value for money, money can be spent toward effective equipment, teachers etc.
- Closing Allensbank Primary School and Gladstone would result in staff being made redundant losing their experience and teaching ability however redeployment offered by the Council is an opportunity that staff with interviews at the newly formed English-medium school or for other available position within the city.
- Closing Allensbank Primary School and Gladstone Primary School places the Headteachers at risk of redundancy.
- There may be a lack of continuity for some of the children as a new school would organise staff differently which may be unsettling.

Option 2 was not supported by any of the Influencers, and they thought there were few benefits to maintaining the cost of running two schools on one site; additionally, the deficit position of Allensbank Primary School and Gladstone Primary School would remain with no clear way to recover.

Option 3 was supported by three of the twelve Influencers.

The comments made included:

Pros:

- Allows Allensbank Primary School to become a one form of entry school (currently two forms of entry with more supply than demand) meaning they would stop losing money. Allensbank primary school is losing money is because they are paying for the facilities of a 2 form of entry building whilst only having students for 1 form of entry each year.
- Option three causes less disruption than option one whilst still having benefits for both schools including:
 - No teachers would lose their jobs.



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- Allensbank Primary School and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan are the closest to each other between the four schools. (Today we walked from Allensbank to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and it took us two minutes).
- There would be no negative changes in pay for any staff and the head teacher in Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would gain a significant increase in pay. Furthermore, there would be new job opportunities which also require Welsh with this option.
- Finally, some parents, students and the community members around the four schools may not want them to shut down and make a new school. Community members may hold those schools very close to them and would fight against the schools being closed as proposed in option one

Cons:

- The debt of Allensbank Primary School will remain. However, the smaller building will allow them to recover eventually, although this may take some time.
- Additionally, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan will face some difficulties at the start due to the lower number of students compared to the space available. However due to demand for spaces in Ysgol Mynydd Bychan the learner deficit would fill.

The proposed changes aim to increase the number of Welsh-medium primary school places serving the area. The changes also reflect the budget challenges faced by Allensbank Primary School and Gladstone Primary School. Whilst there could be challenges for Ysgol Mynydd Bychan in the short term in having to maintain a larger building whilst number grow, the school is in a good financial position.

Cardiff Influencers Feedback Statements

Group 1

Proposal for Cathays and Gabalfa Primary schools' reorganisation

We're members of the Cardiff Young Influencers (CIs) Programme formed by the Cardiff Council who are shaping the future of education places and facilities for the next generations of Cardiff.

The CIs were introduced to the Cathays and Gabalfa Primaries Proposal by the School Organisation and Planning Team. The CIs were asked to consider the proposals for these schools whilst walking around the area. The schools, such as Allensbank Primary and Gladstone Primary, are being considered for changes that



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will greatly affect the community and will possibly, cause much controversy within society.

The vast majority of the CIs (9 of the 12 present) firmly believe that we should choose Option 1 because it is a more solid choice as it is more suitable and fitting for the community and for the Cathays and Gabalfa area than Options 2 & 3.

Firstly, all the schools would have a nursery which is beneficial to the community. Secondly, by pushing the most financially vulnerable primary schools together it would solve all of the mainstream issues as their deficit would be wiped out. The proposal the CIs are making is that Allensbank and Gladstone primary schools will be merged into a bigger public school. As their current revenue is quite low we'd pay off all the debts the school has fallen into due to covid and inflation.

As a part of this Option, St. Monica's School would relocate to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would relocate to the Allensbank site. By doing this, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would become a 2 form of entry school and will hopefully attract more students to a Welsh speaking school. This will prevent parents from being rejected by their first-choice school and support the Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy that is aiming to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The CIs understand that this option is a rather unpopular one, due to how it removes the identities of Gladstone and Allensbank. Something that many in the community have an emotional attachment to but this is what is necessary to ensure that the schools being considered for merging have some kind of legacy that'll survive instead of having to constantly deal with the pressure of being +£30,000 in debt and having to pay it off. Something that will definitely take over a decade.

In addition to this, bigger schools will attract quality and experienced head teachers because they will pay them a larger salary. This results in more money being paid into the school to prevent overdraft. The government body would be supportive as the council will invest more money into the school which will be beneficial in the long run. I understand there will be negative effects as the two head teachers of the two schools would be fired, so they'd lose their jobs, but a more experienced headteacher would save and support both eventually.

To conclude, the CIs hope that their opinion will contribute to your final decision.

Group 2

Proposal for Cathays and Gabalfa Primary schools' reorganisation

Twelve Cardiff Influencers considered the Cathays and Gabalfa Primaries Proposals.

Of these 9 favoured Option 1.



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It is worth noting that option 2 was not supported by any of the Young Influencers. We agreed that there were little to none benefits as the costs of running 2 schools in one site. Additionally, the debt [deficit] of Allensbank and Gladstone would remain with no clear way to recover.

After close examination, our group (3 out of the 12 Cardiff Influencers present) favoured Option 3 of the Cathays and Gabalfa Primaries Proposals instead of the other two options.

Option three being Allensbank Primary School moving to the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan site and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan moving to the Allensbank Primary School site. In this option, Allensbank Primary School would have a building suitable for their demand and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would be able to reach a potential number of pupils by moving to a building that can be a two forms of entry school. No changes would be made to St Monica's Primary School or Gladstone Primary School.

Pros of option 3:

- Allows Allensbank Primary school to become a one form of entry school (currently two forms of entry with more supply than demand) meaning they would stop losing money. The largest reason that Allensbank primary school is losing money is because they are paying for the facilities of a 2 form of entry building whilst only having students for 1 form of entry each year.
- Option three causes less disruption than option one whilst still having massive benefits for both schools including:
 - No teachers will lose their jobs.
 - Allensbank and YMB are the closest to each other between the four schools. (Today we walked from Allensbank to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and it took us two minutes).
 - There would be no negative changes in pay for any staff and the head teacher in YMB would gain a significant increase in pay. Furthermore, there would be new job opportunities which also require Welsh with this option.
 - Finally, some parents, students, and the community members around the four schools may not want them to shut down and make a new school. It may seem surprising, but community members may hold those schools very close to them and would fight against the schools getting shut down like what is proposed in option one.



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Cons:

- The debt of Allensbank will remain. However, the smaller building will allow them to recover eventually, although this may take some time.
- Additionally, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan will face some difficulties at the start due to the lower number of students compared to space. However due to demand for spaces in YMB students the student deficit would fill.

Considering all the options, pros and cons can be formed. All options wish to bring priority to the learners by increasing the amount of space within Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and turning them from a one form of entry school to a two form of entry school, thus increasing the total amount of spaces within the school.

The hope of this proposal is to increase the supply as the demand for a Welsh Medium School in this area is high and many who apply to get into the school are unable to. This may also have a ripple effect in which Welsh Medium schools will become abundant within Cardiff. This also helps the national aim of Wales, being Cymraeg 2050, where Wales wishes to have a million Welsh speakers. Increasing the school capacity would be the first step in the right direction.

All the options also recognise that Allensbank Primary School cannot continue running as it currently is. It must either shut down, or reform to continue running to be able to clear its current debt. Any of the options of the proposal will help this school to shut down and clearing the debt or moving the school to a building which can facilitate its demand.

The same can be said for Gladstone Primary School as they are in overdraft as of June 2023. Remaining as the status quo is not a viable option in our opinion.

However, we have noticed that a potential con could be the risk of increasing the supply for Ysgol Mynydd Bychan will have fewer students than places for a short while. This however should not be concerning as Ysgol Mynydd Bychan are the most prepared as they have a lot of money [surplus balance retained].

Group 3

Proposal for Cathays and Gabalfa Primary schools' reorganisation

The majority of Cardiff Young Influencers programme members present (of the 12 influencers, 9 individuals) were in favour of Option 1.

This involved the move to close Allensbank and Gladstone primaries and creating a new school in its place, whilst also redirecting the St. Monica students to Mynydd Bychan site and vice versa.



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The proposed changes would increase the form of entry for Welsh mediums (Ysgol Mynydd Bychan) in addition to St Monica's receiving a nursery. The nursery will create a bond between the community and the school, increasing the likelihood of parents choosing to send their children to St Monica's for primary education.

Evidently Mynydd Bychan is a popular school. Due to its long-standing reputation, it faces a demand in excess of supply. Moving the school to the Allensbank site (which has a larger ground) will allow Mynydd Bychan to expand. The expansion of a Welsh medium primary school would fall in line with the national mission announced by the education minister for Wales, Jeremy Miles; it aims to promote the Welsh language in our country, stating that 'Cymraeg belongs to all of us'.

Furthermore, closing both Allensbank and Gladstone in order to form a new school would clear all previous debts [deficits] attached to the institutions. Funds could also be used sensibly and more economically by all schools involved in the move. At present the Cathays and Gabalfa area have four primary schools with one form of entry or less. By implementing Option 1 three schools would be formed, two of which would be two forms of entry. More specialisms in the school as there are more staff available and a greater range of extracurricular activities are available.

We would expect them to provide better value for money, money can be spent towards effective equipment, teachers etc.

The schools would have the capacity for 60 students rather than the current 30.

Closing of both Allensbank and Gladstone would be a disadvantage for those who have teaching roles as staff. They would be made redundant potentially losing their experience and teaching ability. However, redeployment offered by the Council is an opportunity that provides teachers with interviews at the newly formed English medium school or for other available positions within the city.

Essentially, option one could erase the communities and the histories of these two schools. There will be time to mourn this loss however the opening of the new school is an opportunity to blend the cultures of both schools, strengthening the connection within the local community.

Group 4

Proposal for Cathays primary schools' reorganisation

The Cardiff Influencers considered the proposals for the provision of primary school places to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa.



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There were three options proposed and set out in the consultation document. Of the 12 Cardiff Influencers that met to consider these proposals the majority (9) preferred Option 1.

This is because it meets more of the objectives and after walking the area and considering all of the information available, we felt it was the better one for the children and families across the area. Our more detailed views are set out below.

Allensbank and Gladstone are both in a [deficit] and have lot of debt which makes it difficult to make spending decisions. If the two schools were closed and a new 2FE opened instead the English-medium school would be relieved of debt so in future, they can start again and spend money on the quality education and staff without worrying about how to pay back the borrowed money.

Furthermore, the Welsh medium primary school Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would transfer to the Allensbank site which would allow Mynydd Bychan to become a 2-form entry Welsh medium school which would allow a greater number of local children to go to their local school.

Additionally, 2 FE schools have a higher number of teachers which can lead to more opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and can help new teachers as they start.

Finally, the St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School would have more space if they transferred to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan's site and this would mean they would be able to open a nursery class.

However, there were still some downsides to option 1. For example, the two headteachers of Allensbank and Gladstone will lose their jobs as the two schools will be closing and there will only be space for one headteacher.

Also there may be a lack of continuity for some of the children as the school will organise staff differently which might be unsettling.

Additionally, Allensbank and Gladstone will lose their identities as schools, and it may take time to build relations between new staff and parents/pupils.

Overall, there are pros and cons of option 1 but the majority of the Cardiff Influencers [present today] believe that overall, the pros outweigh the cons.

For this reason, most of the Influencers opted for Option 1.