

Objection: Governing Body, Ysgol Glan Ceubal

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing on behalf of the Full Governing Body of Ysgol Glan Ceubal (CF14 2QQ), which is located on a shared site adjacent to English-medium Gabalfa Primary School.

Our school is a single-form entry Welsh-medium Primary school, which moved into a new purpose-built building in September 2018.

We have been monitoring local school reorganisation proposals closely and wish to enter a formal objection and raise concerns with the recommendation in the Cabinet report dated 19th October 2023 to progress with Option 1, as stated.

We draw attention to paragraphs within the report that are particularly salient from an Ysgol Glan Ceubal perspective. These are provided in Appendix 1 for ease of reference.

I set out below some specific concerns for the attention of Cabinet:

1. Ysgol Glan Ceubal has grown over its lifespan to be the well-respected, successful school that it is today. Our recent Estyn Inspection was very favourable and we were delighted by the positive media attention and interest this brought to our school. We have worked hard on delivering an upwards trajectory of intake across our classes and are concerned that a more than doubling of places at Mynydd Bychan could set us back significantly.
2. Fixed costs are spread over fewer pupils in our single-form entry school so any reduction in pupil numbers is more impactful when compared to a multi-form entry school. We are concerned that the report dated 19th October 2023 acknowledges that the numbers of pupils taking up places at schools adjacent to Mynydd Bychan will likely reduce as a result of the change but that there is no reassurance that such a consequence will be offset financially, e.g. by a repeating lump sum allocation to any such impacted schools.
3. The report appears to commit to a review of catchment areas (para 164) in order to balance the number of places available and the projected demand for places and progress against the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan targets. However, it does not state when this exercise will start or is expected to finish. We are concerned that there will be a lag between the increase in capacity at Mynydd Bychan and the conclusion of that exercise and that Ysgol Glan Ceubal will be disadvantaged in the meantime owing to a significant reduction in funding linked to a foreseeable drop in the number of pupils on roll.
4. Ysgol Glan Ceubal hosts pupils from within the Mynydd Bychan catchment area. We foresee that families will make the natural choice to state a first preference to attend the Welsh-medium primary school closest to them geographically and from September 2025 will secure that preference. We are concerned that the likely impact on pupil

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numbers at Ysgol Glan Ceubal has not been quantified in the report so could not be fully considered by the decision-makers.

5. We have long-standing concerns that Ysgol Glan Ceubal has a relatively small catchment area plus that a significant part of it comprises public open space, not residential area (see Appendix 2). This means Ysgol Glan Ceubal has always had to rely on a significant number of out-of-catchment pupils to make up full class numbers and therefore may be disproportionately impacted by the proposed changes.

In conclusion, we would like to ask what reassurance Cabinet can give that Ysgol Glan Ceubal is a valued school and disadvantage linked to an expansion of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan (pending conclusion of a catchment area review) is fully understood from our perspective.

What reassurance can Cabinet give that we will not suffer a foreseeable (para 151, 152), quantifiable and unsustainable (para 208) reduction to our allocated budget linked to a drop off in pupil numbers attending from within the Mynydd Bychan catchment area?

We look forward to receiving a formal response to our specific numbered concerns and questions.

Kind regards,

Tanya Gallivan
Chair

On behalf of the full Ysgol Glan Ceubal Governing Body

Appendix 1 – Extracts from Cabinet report dated 19th October (agenda item 2)

Appendix 2 – Welsh Medium Catchment Area Map

APPENDIX 1: Extracts of Cabinet report dated 19th October 2023 relevant to objection submitted by governing body of Ysgol Glan Ceubal on 6th December 2023

28. Concerns raised during the consultation included:

The potential for the expansion of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan to impact negatively on Ysgol Glan Ceubal; increasing places at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would directly impact Ysgol Glan Ceubal.

Response to views expressed during the consultation

76. To achieve this, the Council must ensure that there is an appropriate balance in the number and different types of school places serving each area, with a sustainable level of surplus places.
78. Intakes to Reception classes in primary schools city-wide peaked at approximately 4,370 pupils in 2015/16 and 2016/17. This corresponds with peak birth rates recorded five years earlier. At the time of the peak intakes, Cardiff retained approximately 8% surplus places.

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81. Schools receive most of their funding based on the number of pupils on roll at the school. Falling pupil numbers will greatly impact on some schools' budgets. This affects the teaching and learning opportunities those schools can offer.
82. The funding formula for schools is driven by per pupil funding and a number of lump sum allocations per school. Funding per pupil is generally higher in smaller schools due to the costs of the headteacher and other fixed costs absorbed over a low number of pupils.
89. Proposals brought forward must ensure that the growth of schools is sustainable whilst the potential negative impact on other schools is minimised.
90. Concerns have been expressed regarding the potential impact on Ysgol Glan Ceubal from the proposed expansion of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan.
97. The outcome of the consultation showed that there was support overall for the expansion of Welsh medium education however the majority of respondents did not support the interim expansion of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan as proposed.

Funding of proposals

140. There is no additional or ring-fenced revenue or capital funding to support the process of organisational change.

Financial appraisal of proposals

142. The funding formula for schools is driven by per pupil funding and a number of lump sum allocations per school. Funding per pupil is generally higher in smaller schools due to the costs of the headteacher and other fixed costs absorbed over a low number of pupils.
143. A reduction in the number of schools in Cardiff would therefore allow for a reduction in the number of lump sum allocations to schools, and these funds would be redistributed to schools through the funding formula.
151. In a period of falling intakes city-wide, the expected increased intakes to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan would likely reduce the take up of places at other schools in the local area or in neighbouring areas for a number of years.
152. Almost all applicants who have failed to gain admission to Ysgol Mynydd Bychan in recent years have taken up places at other Welsh-medium primary schools. The number of pupils taking up places at these schools may reduce as a consequence of the proposals;

Admission Arrangements

164. A review of community primary school catchment areas would be undertaken to consider the balance the number of places available and the projected demand for places and progress against the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan targets. Any

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proposed changes to school catchment areas would be subject to consultation at the appropriate time.

Impact of the proposals on the Welsh Language

202. The Council must ensure that the expansion of school provision is brought forward in a strategic and timely manner, which does not compromise existing provision. Significantly or rapidly expanding Welsh-medium primary school provision would, inevitably, have an impact on the take-up of places in other schools, and in turn on the ability of schools to balance budgets and to attract or retain staff.
204. This proposal seeks to increase the number of Welsh-medium primary school places available in the area and seeks to implement the change in such a way that the potential for negative impact on existing schools is limited.
205. There is a risk that provision of additional Welsh-medium primary school places may inhibit the growth at other local schools; however, Cardiff's WESP sets out a commitment to develop and implement targeted promotion in conjunction with Bilingual Cardiff to increase take up of Welsh-medium places in areas with low demand.

Financial Implications

208. In addition the decision maker needs to be assured that the proposals going forward enable each school that will continue has the best chance possible to be financially viable.
211. Paragraph 148 states increased number of pupils at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan will increase the budget in order to allow all additional costs to be covered. As stated in paragraph 148, it is the case that a school with increased numbers will get an increase from the formula but it will be relative to the pupil number of changes in each Cardiff primary School rather than looking at the increase in Ysgol Mynydd Bychan in isolation. In addition, individual increases in school budgets will be subject to the level of increase in overall delegated school budgets which at this time can not guarantee that overall school budgets will increase at a rate that covers all cost inflation / demand pressures.
226. Following publication of the statutory notice there would be a period for objections of at least 28 days following which a further Report (an Objection Report) would need to be made to the Cabinet summarising the statutory objections and giving responses to those objections. It would then be for the Cabinet to review those objections and determine whether to implement the proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

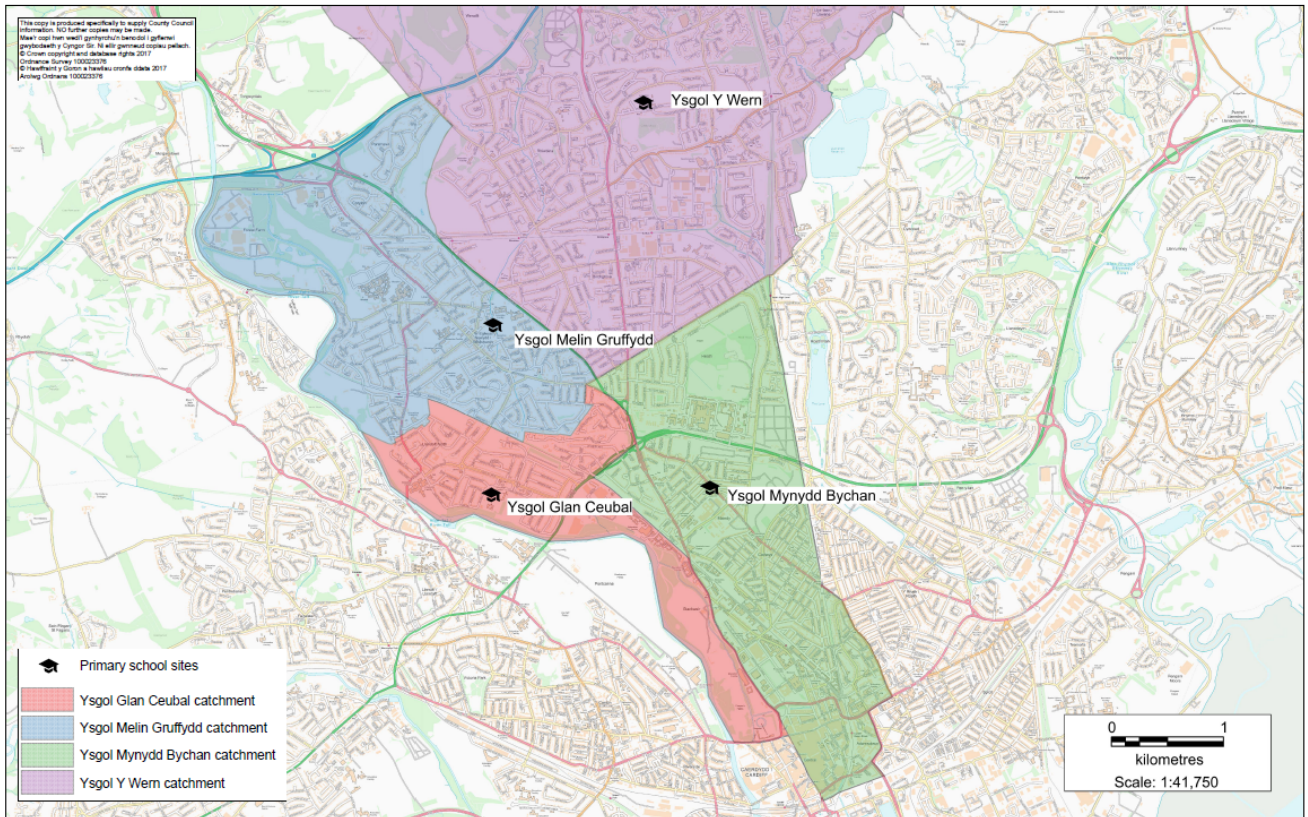
4. Note that, prior to implementation of the proposals, a further report will be provided to the Cabinet providing details of any objections received, the proposed responses to those objections and recommendations for implementation or otherwise of the proposals, and sources of funding for the full set of proposals.

School Organisation Planning: Primary School Places to Serve Cathays and Parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd

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Appendix 2

Map showing Welsh-medium primary school catchments and sites for Ysgol Glan Ceubal, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, Ysgol Melin Gruffydd & Ysgol Y Wern



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Objection: Governing Body and staff, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan

Tuesday 5th December 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Primary School Places to serve Cathays and parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd

As a community of governors and staff at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, we continue to welcome and support the Council's ambition to expand the provision of Welsh-medium education both within our school and in Cardiff more broadly.

However, following receipt of the Statutory Notice for the above reorganisation which was issued on 9 November 2023, I write, on behalf of the governors and staff of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, to register our objections on the following two issues:

Companies House Site

As we said in our response to the consultation, we believe that the Council should consider the option of using the Companies House site as part of this proposed school reorganisation/expansion in the north of Cardiff.

During the whole consultation process, we have been repeatedly told by officers from Cardiff Council that there are no available sites within the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan catchment area that an expanded school could utilise.

This is obviously not the case as knowledge that the Companies House site is going to be put up for sale was revealed during the consultation period yet the possible impact of this site on the reorganisation proposals has been ignored by Cardiff Council.

They continue to pursue the use of outdated and old buildings which are difficult and costly to run and maintain as they are not energy efficient. This has serious impact on the school's budget at a time when all school budgets are under considerable pressure.

A new building on the Companies House site would allow the school to have expanded playing areas including grassed areas, which are not available at any of the three school sites (namely Allensbank, Gladstone and Mynydd Bychan). The green external space would be a tremendous asset to the school and stop the need to walk children to Maindy Centre or Cardiff University Talybont site to use their facilities.

The Governors and staff feel that there is the opportunity to create a wonderful new school building on the Companies House site that would meet the needs of the current and future pupils. It would enable the school to deliver high-quality and enriching learning experiences to pupils within the remit of the Curriculum for Wales and the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme.

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Without the Council even being willing to explore this possibility, we cannot be assured that it is not, in fact, the best option for our school.

The Council must properly consider this site as part of these proposals before proceeding any further.

Allensbank School Building

The Governors and Staff have grave concerns about whether these old listed school buildings will be able to be adapted and altered to provide the same kind of provision that the pupils currently enjoy in the Ysgol Mynydd Bychan building.

In the reorganisation consultation, Cardiff Council clearly stated that Ysgol Mynydd Bychan will be provided with a building that has equal and/or similar facilities to those which are enjoyed at present such as the external teaching areas with direct links to the classrooms which are regularly used by Progress Step 2 learners.

Officers have told us that CADW is not willing to discuss such matters even on an in principle basis. This lack of opportunity to liaise with CADW means that we are being asked to make a decision without the full facts, given that so many of the alterations to the school depend on their approval.

Further, we feel that the Council is pursuing a decision without all the available information as to whether the buildings can be altered to suit our needs and meet requirements of the 21st Century School Programme.

Cardiff Council has also not provided the information we requested regarding the running and utility costs of the building which is important as the school will be growing for a number of years with surplus spaces but larger overheads.

In light of these two critical issues, and in light of the fact that we are asked for our support without the full information, we regret that we are presently unable to give our full support. We urge the Council to give serious consideration to the use of the Companies House site and to seek to provide answers to our concerns relating to the Allensbank building before proceeding.

Yours faithfully,

Jenny Williams
Chair of the Governing Body, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan