

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN

CONSULTATION REPORT

For the proposal to increase the capacity of

Gorslas Primary School from 110 to 210

Our Vision.....Carmarthenshire is a community where children are safe and nurtured and learners of all ages are supported to achieve their full educational potential

January 2018

Gareth Morgans

Director of Education and Children's Services



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Modernisation Services Section

Simon Davies, Modernisation Services Manager

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1. Executive Summary

The Consultation Period

On the 6th November 2017 Carmarthenshire County Council published proposals to change primary school provision within the community of Gorslas. The County Council's proposal is to:

- increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School from 110 to 210 from 1st September 2019 when occupation at the new building is proposed.

The consultation period commenced on the 6th November 2017 in line with the publication of the proposals and closed on 17th December 2017 with a total of 5 observations received (excluding the responses received from Estyn and the pupils' consultation) in response to the formal consultation.

It must be noted that of the 5 observations received, 4 were received prior to the end of the consultation period whilst 1 observation was received following the end of the consultation period. However, all responses received have been included for the purposes of this report.

Observations Received

The proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School from 110 to 210 is the formal statutory procedure that must be undertaken and completed to legally increase the number of Welsh medium places available at Gorslas Primary School and must be undertaken regardless of the method of implementation. As part of the wider scheme to provide an increased number of places, it is the Local Authority's intention to provide a new, replacement school building which will also provide space to accommodate an external nursery provider.

Whilst the consultation document focused primarily on the formal proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School from 110 to 210, observations were also received with regards to other elements of the wider scheme. For completeness, these observations have also been included within this report and the themes of all comments received are as follows:

- Safeguarding of Jobs;
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan;
- Capacity;
- Loss of Green Space; and
- School Nursing Service.

Carmarthenshire County Council acknowledges that there are concerns in relation to the wider scheme, in particular to the location of the proposed new school building and the implications that accommodating an external nursery may cause. These issues are being addressed separately to this proposal.

Observations were received from the following:

- NASUWT
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- Gorslas Community Council
- Children's Public Health – Hywel Dda University Health Board

One anonymous observation was also received.

A complete summary of all of the observations received to the consultation document together with the response of the County Council's professional officers can be found in section 2 on the next page.

Next Steps

The Consultation Report will be presented to the Education & Children's Scrutiny Committee for comments and a recommendation and then ultimately to the Executive Board for determination on whether or not to proceed with the proposal and publish a statutory notice. Should the Executive Board decide to proceed to the next stage, a Statutory Notice will be published during the Spring Term 2018.

2. Summary of Observations received and Local Authority Responses

| Point Number | Point Raised | Local Authority Response |
|--------------|---|--|
| 1. | <p><u>Safeguarding of Jobs</u></p> <p>It is expected that consideration is be given to safeguard the jobs of staff.</p> | <p>The Authority has staffing policies and procedures in respect of school reorganisation and these can be recommended for implementation if needed. However, it is expected that should this proposal be implemented there is potential for further job opportunities.</p> |
| 2. | <p><u>Welsh in Education Strategic Plan</u></p> <p>The scheme shows positive ambition in developing Welsh medium education within the county and falls in line with the strategic plan.</p> | <p>Carmarthenshire County Council welcomes the comments in recognition of the development of Welsh medium education within the county. During the last few years the demand for Welsh medium education within the Gorslas catchment area has been steadily increasing and Carmarthenshire County Council recognises the need for an increased capacity in order to support the current and future demand for Welsh medium education.</p> |
| 3. | <p><u>Capacity</u></p> <p>Observations were received enquiring as to how the figure of 210 was calculated as the proposed capacity and whether this was restricted to the Gorslas catchment only. Enquiries were also made regarding whether the loss of pupils from the Cwmgwili area to other closer schools had been taken into</p> | <p>A range of elements were analysed when considering the increase in capacity for Gorslas Primary School namely: annual PLASC data; pupil yield expected from dwellings and pupil projections – these were based on the Gorslas catchment area. Consideration was also given to the fact that a mobile classroom was installed in September 2015 and that a further one was required for the 2017/2018 academic year along with a conservative estimate for a new school building factor.</p> |

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| | <p>account and whether there is any potential revision to the current catchment area.</p> | <p>When analysing the annual PLASC data, information is provided on how many pupils attend each school from within the catchment area, outside of the catchment area and how many pupils live within specific catchment areas but attend other schools. January 2017 PLASC data indicated that 218 pupils live within the catchment area of Gorslas (78 attending Gorslas Primary School and 140 attending other schools). Whilst it is accepted that not all pupils living within the catchment area attend/or will attend Gorslas Primary School in the future, consideration must be given to pupils living within the catchment area.</p> <p>As part of the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School, it is proposed that there will be no change to the current school catchment area.</p> |
| <p>4.</p> | <p><u>Loss of Green Space</u></p> <p>Whilst there is support for the proposals, there are concerns regarding the loss of green space as a result of the new school building development at Gorslas Park. The area is regularly used by children for a variety of outdoor activities and is situated away from traffic. Although part of the school grounds could be openly available to the public, the increased traffic density and the construction involved would alter the character of the area. Therefore, consideration should be given to converting the current school site into a publicly accessible green space to serve as an alternative to the current park.</p> | <p>Carmarthenshire County Council accepts that there are concerns with regards to the loss of green space as a result of the intention to build the new school building on land at the site of Gorslas Park. However, it must be noted that whilst the school building will be built on part of the land, the intention is to provide a multi-use games area and sports pitch which will be available for community use along with the use of the school hall, outside of school hours. It is intended that the use of these facilities and the expansion of opportunities that will be available to the community as a result of these facilities will help strengthen the community relationships that already exist in the area.</p> |

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| | | <p>Whilst it is accepted that the increased traffic density and construction involved could alter the character of the area, it is hoped that the additional facilities available for community use afforded through the scheme would provide further advantages and opportunities to the wider community.</p> <p>With regards to the current school site no longer being used then the County Council Policy, approved on the 12th April 2006, in relation to buildings not being required for educational purposes will apply. In essence this allows the community to make a case to the council for the retention of the building as a community resource. If there is no viable community interest the premises will be offered to the market.</p> |
| 5. | <p><u>School Nursing Service</u></p> <p>The only impact this will have on the School Nursing service is possibly some increase in caseload numbers for the School Nurses who are assigned to the school in question. Caseload numbers for School Nurses are regularly monitored by the Senior Nurse/Quality Assurance Manager for School Nursing and are managed through workforce planning.</p> | <p>Carmarthenshire County Council accepts that the increase in capacity may have an effect on caseload numbers for the School Nurses who are assigned to the school, however agree that any effect can be monitored and managed by workforce planning and communication between organisations.</p> |

3. Estyn's Observations regarding the Proposal

Estyn's response to the proposal to extend Ysgol Gorslas, Carmarthenshire

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales have prepared this report.

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 that 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 Consortium, which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

Introduction

This is a consultation proposal by Carmarthenshire County Council.

The consultation to increase the pupil capacity of Ysgol Gorslas from 110 to 210 is to be conducted between 6th November 2017 and 17th December 2017.

Summary/Conclusion

The proposal identifies clearly the local authority's reasons for increasing the capacity of Ysgol Gorslas and responds to the increasing demand for Welsh-medium education in the village of Gorslas and the surrounding area. It takes into consideration the increase in the number of pupils who apply to attend the school. The consultation identifies the community schools in the area that this proposal may affect. The authority identifies clearly that there are more children at Ysgol Gorslas than there are places available, and this has been the case for a number of years. However, it appears that there are a number of surplus places in the Welsh community primary schools in the catchment area. Estyn is of the opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain provision and standards for pupils in the Gorslas area.

Description and benefits

The consultation provides a clear rationale for the expected advantages and disadvantages for Ysgol Gorslas.

The proposal outlines clearly the plans to construct a new building on land that is around 0.1 miles from the school's current site. The local authority claims that the current building has deteriorated and is in poor condition, and that there is not enough land on the school's site to add to the two mobile buildings that are already on the school grounds.

It appears that the Council has discussed a variety of relevant models as part of its strategic objectives in its modernising education programme. It takes into consideration the negative effect that another mobile building on the school grounds will have on the school's ability to provide foundation phase education in full. It appears that the proposal to build a new school ensures more space to improve learning environments for children. The proposal gives reasonable consideration to the parking problems that already exist. By building a new school on a different site, it appears that the arrangements will reduce the possible disruption for pupils, teachers and parents, and will allow the school to continue with the curriculum on the current site during the construction period.

The proposer lists the schools that may be affected by the proposal and identifies that approximately 140 pupils who live the Gorslas catchment area currently attend other schools. There is not enough information in the proposal about the possible effect on those schools.

The proposal is unlikely to have an undue effect on the current travel arrangements, except for the possibility that more pupils may attend the school.

The proposal appears to have given reasonable consideration to the effect on the local community. Estyn is of the opinion that this consultation provides more opportunities for the community to use the facilities for a number of activities, which would strengthen the community element that already exists. It appears that the new building will improve the learning environment for all of the school's pupils, and improve access for pupils with additional learning needs.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority has provided an appropriate analysis of the school's current performance. It identifies that the school is in group 1 for standards and in the yellow category, which shows that Ysgol Gorslas is an effective school that is already doing well and knows which areas need to be improved. The authority has included the findings of the most recent Estyn inspection in the proposal.

The consultation does not include the proposal's effect on the quality of outcomes, provision, and leadership and management clearly enough, other than to identify that the proposal would 'provide all pupils currently educated at Gorslas School with access to an enhanced school environment. This will facilitate further improvement upon the existing good standards, provision and leadership'.

The proposal has not considered robustly enough the effect on provision in other schools in the catchment area. It appears that the proposal will not have an effect on provision for learners with additional learning needs nor have a negative effect on the Church in Wales's provision.

3.1 Local Authority Response to Estyn's Observations

Effect on other schools

The authority identifies clearly that there are more children at Ysgol Gorslas than there are places available, and this has been the case for a number of years. However, it appears that there are a number of surplus places in the Welsh community primary schools in the catchment area.

Carmarthenshire County Council accepts that whilst Gorslas Primary School is currently oversubscribed, there are some surplus places in neighbouring catchment schools. There is a clear increasing demand for Welsh medium education within the Gorslas area and whilst 140 pupils living within the Gorslas area currently attend other schools, the school is still over capacity. Whilst it is accepted that not all pupils living within the catchment area attend/or will attend Gorslas Primary School, consideration must be given to all pupils within the catchment area and the current school capacity proves insufficient in being able to accommodate this.

Pupil places within all of the county's schools are monitored and surplus and oversubscription issues are reviewed on a regular basis. Where required, appropriate and strategic action is implemented as and when necessary.

The proposer lists the schools that may be affected by the proposal and identifies that approximately 140 pupils who live in the Gorslas catchment area currently attend other schools. There is not enough information in the proposal about the possible effect on those schools.

The proposal under consultation refers to the need to increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School from 110 to 210 places due to the increasing demand for Welsh medium education places. Whilst Carmarthenshire County Council has considered the neighbouring catchment schools that may be affected by the proposal, the proposal does not and nor is it Carmarthenshire County Council's intention to directly affect these schools through this reorganisation.

Carmarthenshire County Council accepts that as a result of this proposal some neighbouring schools may be indirectly affected. It is accepted that pupils who live within the Gorslas catchment area that currently attend other schools may want to attend the new Gorslas Primary School. As is the case with all community primary schools within the county, admission to the school will be controlled and managed through the admissions process should this situation occur. Whilst Carmarthenshire County Council accepts that some neighbouring schools may be indirectly affected as a result of this proposal, it is very difficult to estimate the result and impact that this may have. Nevertheless, Carmarthenshire County Council will monitor the effect

of the proposal on neighbouring schools and will consider whether appropriate action is required as and when necessary.

The proposal has not considered robustly enough the effect on provision in other schools in the catchment area.

As mentioned previously, whilst Carmarthenshire County Council accepts that the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School may have an indirect effect on neighbouring catchment schools, the proposal does not nor is it Carmarthenshire County Council's intention to directly affect provision in other schools as part of this reorganisation. However, Carmarthenshire County Council will monitor the effects of the proposal on neighbouring schools and should the proposal have any detrimental effects on provision, then appropriate action will be considered.

Effect on quality of outcomes, provision, and leadership and management

The consultation does not include the proposal's effect on the quality of outcomes, provision, and leadership and management clearly enough, other than to identify that the proposal would 'provide all pupils currently educated at Gorslas School with access to an enhanced school environment. This will facilitate further improvement upon the existing good standards, provision and leadership'.

It is expected that the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Primary School through the provision of a new school building will positively affect the outcomes, provision, and leadership and management at the school.

The provision of a greater capacity will firstly enable all pupils and staff to be situated in one building, rather than having to move and operate between the main school building and additional cabins. This will provide a secure, safer and more manageable environment for pupils as well as staff and will enable across school teaching, learning and events to take place more efficiently and effectively.

The provision of greater space, both indoors and outdoors will allow for curriculum expansion and will provide opportunities for a broader and more varied learning environment for all pupils, in particular the Foundation Phase, which in turn is expected to have a positive effect on the outcomes and development of all pupils. The provision of a multi-use games area and sports pitch will provide exciting opportunities for a varied physical education curriculum and will allow all learning and sporting events to take place at one location. Currently, the school sports take place at Gorslas Park due to limited facilities at the current school site and therefore the provision of these facilities will help the management of school events. The provision of the large school hall, provides further opportunities for school events to take place

ensuring that the whole school can work together at the same time efficiently. The hall also provides opportunities for the physical education curriculum etc. to still be fulfilled in times of bad weather when events cannot take place outside.

The accessibility of facilities will ensure that the community has use of the school hall, multi-use games area and sports pitch, demonstrating how the school and community can work together to strengthen relationships and maximise potential opportunities for all. The increased capacity and intended new building will provide the community with facilities suitable for teaching and learning in the 21st century in which provision and outcomes can be enhanced.

Statements of support for this proposal by Estyn

The proposal identifies clearly the local authority's reasons for increasing the capacity of Ysgol Gorflas and responds to the increasing demand for Welsh-medium education in the village of Gorflas and the surrounding area.

Estyn is of the opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain provision and standards for pupils in the Gorflas area.

The consultation provides a clear rationale for the expected advantages and disadvantages for Ysgol Gorflas.

Estyn is of the opinion that this consultation provides more opportunities for the community to use the facilities for a number of activities, which would strengthen the community element that already exists.

It appears that the new building will improve the learning environment for all of the school's pupils, and improve access for pupils with additional learning needs.

4. Consultation with the Pupils

School: Gorslas Primary School

Date: 11th December 2017

Consultation undertaken by: Mrs Catrin Griffiths – Challenge Adviser

Interviewed: School Council

Summary

The School Council were interviewed regarding the proposal to increase the capacity of school and the intention to provide the school with a new, replacement school building. Informative discussions were had and were based on the questions below:

- Have you seen plans for the new school building?
- Are you happy to move to a new building and why?
- What do you think will be advantageous in being in a new building?
- Will it be easier for you to learn in a new building?
- What about Foundation Phase pupils? What effect will moving have on the younger pupils?

School Council Feedback

The pupils had the opportunity to look and browse through the plans of the new school and the word “exciting” was often used in describing the new building.

Without exception, all of the pupils were looking forward to having a large, safe and spacious school yard with plenty of space to play a variety of sports including football, rugby and hockey at the same time. Pupils were also looking forward to having a less dangerous yard, especially with the bad weather in the winter.

Pupils noted that the hall was important in ensuring a place to play football and hockey when the weather was poor and to hold concerts and services as a whole school.

Pupils were also looking forward to having space to move around the school. The importance of broad corridors and wide doors was mentioned to save pushing and to feel safer when walking around. The importance of no cabins was also mentioned so that all the pupils were in the same building.

They liked the fact that there would be enough room to hang coats and so they would be less likely to lose or dirty them as they walk on the floor.

The location in the village was important to them because it is said that it will mean more families can walk to school and therefore less cars will be needed. There will also be a car park and so the site will be a much safer site.

The lift was mentioned as an important factor in being able to accommodate and help disabled children and children who have been treated to reach the upper floor without walking the stairs.

In terms of clubs the pupils mentioned that there will be a lot more space for after-school clubs as well as a breakfast club and so it will help facilitate arrangements for parents. The garden was also mentioned and therefore there would be opportunities to grow vegetables and plants and sell them to raise money for the school. The fact that there would be a library in the new school was very important to them in order to save reading in the corridor.

It was mentioned that the carnival could be held in the new school and not in the cold tent because there will be enough room in the school for the community to join the pupils. The carnival is the highlight of the year for the pupils.

The area for Foundation Phase pupils will be safe and will enable them to receive more opportunities especially when learning in the outside area.

The pupils were unanimous in agreeing that a brand new, larger building will offer additional, quality opportunities towards their education.

The only negative comments were about feeling sad when leaving the old building and moving to a new building and year 5 and 6 pupils were sad in losing the opportunity to be educated at the new school because of their age.