



CABINET REPORT

Date Written	18 th July 2024 **
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Service Area	Learning
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	18 th September 2024

Establishment of a Welsh Medium Learning Resource Base at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides the outcome of the statutory consultation for the establishment of a Welsh Medium (WM) Learning Resource Base (LRB) for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug.
- 1.2 91% of responses to the consultation are in favour of establishing a WM LRB at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug.
- 1.3 In order to progress this to the next stage, a Statutory Notice detailing the proposal needs to be published followed by a 28-day Objection Period.
- 1.4 Following this a final report will be brought to Cabinet to determine whether or not to establish the WM LRB at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug from September 2025.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(s) that

- 2.1 The information contained within the Consultation Report (Appendix 2), be noted.
- 2.2 The establishment of a Welsh Medium Learning Resources Base at Ysgol Rhyd y Grug be approved.
- 2.3 The issuing of the appropriate Statutory Notice, in accordance with the School Organisation Code 011/2018, be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under section 2.3 of the Statutory School Organisation Code 011/2018, the Council is under a duty to plan and develop effective school organisation proposals to meet the demand of school places for those pupils living across the county borough wanting to access Welsh Medium (WM) education but also requiring access to specialist mainstream provision that caters for their Additional Learning Needs (ALN).
- 3.2 There is currently no WM Learning Resource Base (LRB) provision in the county borough, and establishing specialist ALN provision through the medium of Welsh is a priority for the Council, as reflected in the current 10-year WESP 2022-2032.
- 3.3 Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug is a Welsh medium 3-11 school maintained by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The school serves the whole of the South of the County Borough.
- 3.4 Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug is currently a single-form entry primary school with capacity for 288 pupils of statutory school age with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 40. There is also a nursery class able to accommodate 49 full-time equivalent pupils. The nursery class numbers include pre-nursery age children who are admitted in January and April on a part-time basis dependent on space.
- 3.5 WM Capital grant funding has been secured from Welsh Government (WG) to expand the school's capacity to 329, increasing the Pupil Admission Number to 47, and making the school 1.5 form entry. This will also allow the school to accommodate 63 full-time equivalent nursery education places, ensuring sufficient space for part-time pre-nursery pupils each January / April.
- 3.6 As part of the WM Capital grant project LA has secured funding to develop a Learning Resource Base (LRB) class within the school. The proposed LRB will be able to accommodate pupils with ALN for whom a full-time mainstream placement is not deemed suitable.
- 3.7 Capital grant funding has also been secured from WG to develop a community room facility and to co-locate a Cylch Meithrin childcare provision on the site of the school. The capital project to increase the capacity of the school, develop an LRB class, provide a community room and a new Cylch Meithrin childcare facility will be taken forward as a single project using WG funding.

4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Council proposes to establish a generic 12-place WM LRB for pupils aged between Reception and Year 6 with ALN, to be located at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug from September 2025.
- 4.2 The LRB will accommodate pupils with ALN requiring a specialist class placement and cater for a range of different needs including but not limited to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Complex Needs. The class will offer both short and long-term placement options in accordance with the pupils' needs.

- 4.3 Places in the LRB will be available to pupils across Merthyr Tydfil in WM schools and will not be limited to the catchment of Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug. Pupil admission to the LRB will be managed by the local authority's ALN Panel based on evidence and assessment of need following appropriate referral to the ALN Team.
- 4.4 The LRB will be located within the mainstream school, housed within its own designated area, but fully integrated as part of the school. The ethos of the LRB is to provide specialist support and provision to the individual pupil based on their level of need, with the intention, in some instances, of reintegrating the individual pupil back into a mainstream class where appropriate.
- 4.5 Entry and exit to the LRB will be determined by the local authority's ALN Panel, who meet frequently to discuss individual pupils referred for specialist provision.
- 4.6 The benefits and risks of the proposal are set out below

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

The LRB will provide pupils with a small class environment with a high adult to pupil ratio that provides a more flexible and responsive provision to meet their needs through the Welsh Language.

The LRB will provide pupils with opportunities for integration into mainstream classes as and when possible.

The quality of education in the LRB will be enhanced due to the expertise of the specialist staff working within the provision, which should improve outcomes for pupils through differentiation and modification of the curriculum.

RISKS OF THE PROPOSAL

The risks associated with this proposal, and mitigating factors are listed below:

Risk	Mitigating factor
There is low demand for places	Work is ongoing with WM schools to identify potential pupils who may have ALN and would benefit from consideration of accessing an LRB place from September 2025 It will take time for a baseline level of demand to be established allowing for families who may not have previously considered WM education due to the lack of ALN provision
There is high demand for places	The LA will review demand and assess other opportunities to increase the provision of WM LRB places where appropriate.

- 4.7 The LRB will be fully integrated with the mainstream provision at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug, providing an appropriate environment in which pupils can develop and thrive among their peers and have increased access to the mainstream curriculum, where appropriate.

4.8 The LRB will provide learners with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, whilst also having their additional needs met in as inclusive a way as possible.

5.0 STATUTORY CONSULTATION

5.1 The statutory consultation process in respect of this proposal has been administered using the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, 011/2018.

5.2 A Consultation Document was prepared to inform all consultees of the proposal as part of a six-week public consultation from Monday 22nd April 2024 to 2nd June 2024. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the Consultation Document.

5.3 Three consultation sessions were held, two at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug and one at Ysgol Gymraeg Santes Tudful.

Date	Time	Venue
23rd April 2024	15:30pm - 17:00pm	Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd-Y-Grug Aberfan Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4NT
25th April 2024	15:10pm - 16:45pm	Ysgol Santes Tudful Heol Pantyffyn Mountain Hare Twynyrodyn Merthyr Tydfil CF47 0HU
02nd May 2024	15:30pm - 17:00pm	Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd-Y-Grug Aberfan Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4NT

The Council was represented at all sessions with officers from Planning of School Places, ALN and Property Services being in attendance.

5.4 A consultation workshop was held with the school councils of Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug and Ysgol Gymraeg Santes Tudful to gather the children's views about the proposal.

5.5 Social media platforms were also used to promote this Consultation.

5.6 The Council has also consulted with a wide range of partners to give opportunity for individuals and interested groups to make their views and opinions known on the proposal. The Consultation details were sent to the following stakeholders: -

- Parents, carers, staff members and governors
- CSIW
- Menter Iaith
- Welsh in Education Forum
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Services
- Estyn

- Neighbouring Schools
- Schools within the LA already hosting LRB's
- Welsh Government Ministers
- Assembly Members / members of Parliament / Regional Assembly Members
- Local Councillors
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG)
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Ysgol Gymraeg Santes Tudful
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Rhydywaun
- Trade Unions
- Diocesan Director of Education
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Transport Department
- National Autistic Society

6.0 CONSULTATION OUTCOME

- 6.1 Responses received via the Online Survey have been analysed and are summarised below.
- 6.2 In total **69** responses were received.
- All responses were made via the online questionnaire.
- 6.3 Respondents were asked to agree or disagree to the proposal and out of the **69** responses received, the following breakdown has been provided:
- **In favour of the proposal - 63**
 - **Against the proposal – 6**
- 6.4 The consultation has resulted in 91% of respondents being in favour of the proposal.
- 6.5 Further detail regarding the feedback from the public consultation exercise and the response from Estyn regarding the proposals, can be found in the Consultation Report, see Appendix 2.
- 6.6 The overwhelming majority of responses are in favour of the Welsh Medium LRB provision being established at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd-Y-Grug.
- 6.7 Estyn's response concludes that the proposal is likely to improve the standard of education provision in the area.
- 6.8 The Consultation Report also includes the local authority's response to any points raised regarding the proposals which required further clarification.

7.0 STATUTORY PROCESS

- 7.1 The Statutory Notice for this Proposal will be to "establish a generic 12-place Welsh-Medium Learning Resource Base for pupils aged between Reception and Year 6 with Additional Learning Needs, to be located at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug from September 2025."

- 7.2 The Statutory Notice will, subject to Cabinet approval, be published on 20th September 2024 and will allow for a 28-day Objection Period, ending on 17th October 2024.
- 7.3 A final report to determine the proposal, either in favour or against, will be brought to Cabinet on 6th November. This will include due consideration of any objections received, in accordance with the Statutory Code.
- 7.4 If any objections are received, then an Objections Report will be required to be published within seven days of any final determination by Cabinet.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Following the completion of the statutory processes above the design for the capital project at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug will be finalised and a contractor will be appointed to commence construction by January 2025, with works scheduled to be completed in readiness for September 2025.
- 8.2 Establishing an LRB class at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug will require the school to employ an LRB class teacher and two Learning Support Assistants. The local authority will support the school to recruit appropriate teaching and support staff in readiness for September 2025 and will also ensure that any pupil transitions can be effectively facilitated.
- 8.3 The local authority will continue working with Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug and Ysgol Gymraeg Santes Tudful to identify potential pupils who might be appropriately placed in the LRB when the LRB class formally opens in September 2025.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The required budget to fund the WM LRB class at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug has already been secured within the Council's revenue budget from September 2025.
- 9.2 This budget will be delegated to Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd Y Grug in 2025/26 as part of the school's Formula Funding Allocation.
- 9.3 The capital budget required to develop the LRB class within the school has been secured from WG using Welsh Medium Capital Grant.

10.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	2 of 4	0 of 4	2 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	3 of 10	0 of 10	7 of 10
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6
5. Decarbonisation	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6
6. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
7. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
8. Data and Evidence	Yes		No
	1 of 1		0 of 1
Summary			
The main positive impacts are:	The proposal establishes a first WM LRB in the county borough increasing the equity of provision for families seeking a WM education. This has a positive contribution towards the Council's Aspirational and Healthier Wellbeing objectives and a positive impact on services available to children and young people, pupils with a disability and with respect to the Welsh Language and achieving the aims of the Council's WESP.		
The main negative impacts are:	No negative impacts have been identified.		

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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Learning Resource Base Capacity, Cabinet Report	March 2024	INTRANET
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No