

CABINET REPORT

Date Written	13 th January 2025
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Service Area	Learning
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	5 th February 2025

Organisation of New LRB Classes

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides the outcome of the statutory consultation for the formalisation of a Foundation Learning ASD LRB at Dowlais Primary School and a Key Stage 3 / 4 Complex ASD LRB at Cyfarthfa High School. This is to cater for increasing numbers of pupils with ASD.
- 1.2 92.7% of responses to the consultation are in favour of formalising a Foundation Learning ASD LRB at Dowlais Primary School and 92.3% in favour of formalising a Key Stage 3 / 4 Complex ASD LRB at Cyfarthfa High School.
- 1.3 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 the position in relation to these provisions with effect from April 2025.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the formal establishment of the ASD LRB provision at Dowlais Primary School and Key Stage 3 / 4 Complex ASD LRB at Cyfarthfa High School, be approved.
- 2.2 That 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 In line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and 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 requiring access to specialist mainstream provision that caters for their Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

- 3.2 There are currently 11 Learning Resource Base's (LRBs) in mainstream primary schools across the County Borough, providing places for up to 118 pupils with a range of needs and one LRB in a mainstream secondary school, providing places for up to 25 pupils with ASD needs that require more specialist provision than can be provided in mainstream.
- 3.3 The capacity of primary age LRB provision has increased over the last three years due to an increase in the number of pupils with needs that require a more specialist provision. There has been a specific increase in the number of younger pupils, in Foundation Phase, with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) related to ASD and it is for this reason that a pilot provision was set up in Dowlais Primary School from September 2023.
- 3.4 Dowlais Primary School is currently a single-form entry primary school with capacity for 158 pupils of statutory school age with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 22 and a nursery class able to accommodate 28 full-time equivalent pupils. The school has an existing ASD provision at KS2 which meant that establishing a Foundation Learning ASD class would provide continuity of provision and available space to use as an LRB class.
- 3.5 Whilst provision at primary has increased, we have not seen a similar increase in provision at secondary. However, there has been a specific increase in the number of pupils with complex ASD needs requiring more bespoke specialist provision, within a smaller setting and a higher staffing ratio than our existing provision can provide or accommodate. It is for this reason that a pilot provision was set up in Cyfarthfa High School from September 2023.
- 3.6 Cyfarthfa High School currently has a capacity of 890 pupils of statutory school age and has a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 178. The school had available space within the school's overall capacity that could be repurposed for use as an LRB provision.
- 3.7 With the support of both schools, suitable areas were identified to accommodate the LRB provisions within each school and arrangements were agreed to commence both pilots in September 2023.
- 3.8 Following close liaison between the schools and the ALN team during the academic year 2023/24, the pilot has been considered successful leading to the conclusion that the provisions are effective, correctly sited and staffed.
- 3.9 To make these arrangements permanent the Council is required to formally consult on the establishment of both provisions in line with the School Organisation Code 011/2018.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Council proposes to establish a 10-place Foundation Learning Resource Base for pupils with ASD at Dowlais Primary School. The LRB will accommodate pupils

with ALN requiring a specialist class placement and cater for pupils with a primary need of ASD.

- 4.2 The Council also proposes to establish an 8-place Key Stage 3 /4 Learning Resource Base for pupils between Years 7 and 11 with Complex ASD, at Cyfarthfa High School. The LRB will accommodate pupils with ALN requiring a specialist class placement and cater for pupils with complex ASD.
- 4.3 Places In both LRBs will be available to pupils across Merthyr Tydfil and will not be limited to catchment pupils alone. Pupil admission to both LRB classes will be based on an assessment of need by the Local Authority's ALN Panel.
- 4.4 The ethos of the LRB provisions is to provide specialist support to the individual pupil based on their level of need, with the intention, in some instances, of reintegrating the individual back into a mainstream class where appropriate.
- 4.5 Entry and exit to the LRBs will be determined through Local Authority criteria supported by the Local Authority's ALN panel, who meet frequently to discuss individual pupils referred in for specialist provision.
- 4.6 The benefits and risks of the proposal are set out below

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSALS

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.

The LRB will provide pupils with opportunities for integration into mainstream classes where possible and will provide a supportive environment where integration is not appropriate.

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 PROPOSALS

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

Risk	Mitigating factor
There is high demand for places	The Local Authority will review demand and assess other opportunities to increase provision where appropriate.

- 4.7 Each LRB will aim to 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 11th November 2024 to Sunday 22nd December 2024. (See Appendix 1)
- 5.3 Two consultation sessions were held, one at Dowlais Primary School and one at Cyfarthfa High School.

Date	Time	Venue
20 th November 2024	15:30pm - 17:00pm	Dowlais Primary School High Street Merthyr Tydfil CF48 3HB
18 th December 2024	15:30pm – 17:00pm	Cyfarthfa High School Cae Mari Dwn Queens Road Merthyr Tydfil CF47 0LS

The Council was represented at both sessions with officers from Planning of School Places and ALN being in attendance.

- 5.4 Consultation workshops were held with pupils to gather the children's views about the proposals.
- 5.5 An online social media and web promotion has also been utilised.
- 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
 - CSSIW
 - 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
 - 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 Dowlais Primary School in total received **82** responses.
- All responses were made via the online questionnaire.
- 6.3 Respondents were asked to agree or disagree to the proposal and out of the **82** responses received, the following breakdown has been provided:
- **In favour of the proposal - 76**
 - **Against the proposal – 6**
- 6.4 The consultation has resulted in 92.7% of respondents being in favour of the proposal to formalise the provision.
- 6.5 Cyfarthfa High School in total received **52** responses
- All responses were made via the online questionnaire.
- 6.6 Respondents were asked to agree or disagree to the proposal and out of the **52** responses received, the following breakdown has been provided:
- **In favour of the proposal - 48**
 - **Against the proposal – 4**
- 6.7 The consultation has resulted in 92.3% of respondents being in favour of the proposal to formalise the provision.
- 6.8 Further detail regarding the feedback from the public consultation exercise, pupil voice and the response from Estyn regarding both proposals, can be found in the Consultation Report, see Appendix 2.
- 6.9 The overwhelming majority of responses are in favour of both proposals.
- 6.10 Estyn's response concludes that the proposals are likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.

7.0 STATUTORY PROCESS

- 7.1 A Statutory Notice is required to be published for each proposal.
- 7.2 In relation to Dowlais Primary school, the Statutory Notice for the proposal will be to “formally establish a ten place Foundation Learning ASD LRB for pupils from Reception to Year 2, at Dowlais Primary School from 28th April 2025.”
- 7.3 In relation to Cyfarthfa High School, the Statutory Notice for the proposal will be to “formally establish an eight place Key Stage 3 / 4 Complex ASD LRB for pupils between Years 7 - 11 at Cyfarthfa High School from 28th April 2025.”
- 7.4 The Statutory Notice will, subject to Cabinet approval, be published on 13th February 2025 and will allow for a 28-day Objection Period, ending on 12th March 2025.

- 7.5 A final report to determine the proposal, either in favour or against, will be brought to Cabinet on 02nd April 2025. This will include due consideration of any objections received, in accordance with the Statutory Code.
- 7.6 If any objections are received, then an Objections Report will be required to be published within seven days of any final determination by Cabinet.
- 7.7 Following the completion of the statutory processes above, if approved, will become formally recognised as established LRB provisions from the start of the Summer Term 2025.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The required budget to fund both provisions has already been secured within the Council's revenue budget.

9.0 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)		2 of 10	0 of 10	8 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 proposals formally establish additional LRB provision in both the primary and secondary school sectors. This will have a positive contribution towards the Council’s Aspirational and Healthier Wellbeing objectives and a positive impact on services available to children and young people, and pupils with a disability.			

The main negative impacts are:	No negative impacts have been identified.

SUE WALKER
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

COUNCILLOR GARETH LEWIS
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR EDUCATION

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