



ARCHDIOCESE
of CARDIFF
ARCHESGOBAETH
CAERDYDD



BISHOP HEDLEY
Catholic High



OBJECTION REPORT

PROPOSAL: TO CREATE A SINGLE 3-16 CATHOLIC SCHOOL WITHIN MERTHYR TYDFIL BY DISCONTINUING ST ALOYSIUS RC, THE FEDERATION OF ST ILLTYD'S RC, ST MARY'S RC AND ALSO BISHOP HEDLEY RC SCHOOLS AND CREATING A SINGLE ALL-THROUGH 3-16 CATHOLIC EDUCATION SCHOOL

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE OBJECTION REPORT

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018. Its purpose is to:

- inform the outcome of the publication of the Statutory Notice for the proposal to create a single, 3-16 Catholic School within Merthyr Tydfil, which was published on 14th October 2019 for a period of 28 days; and
- provide details of objections received and the local authority's response to them.

2.0 THE STATUTORY NOTICE

The Statutory Notice to progress this proposal, which was published on 14th October 2019 is provided below:-

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Notice is given in accordance with section 43 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, having consulted such persons as required, proposes to discontinue the following voluntary aided schools:

- St Aloysius RC Primary School, Cedar Way, Gurnos Estate, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 9PA
- St Illtyd's RC Primary School, Rocky Road, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 3BT
- St Mary's RC Primary School, Caedraw Road, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8HA; and
- Bishop Hedley High School, Gwaunfarren Road, Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 9AN

Notice is given in accordance with sections 41 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, having consulted such persons as required, proposes to establish a new Catholic School for young people aged 3 to 16 and would be classified as English Medium, Voluntary Aided. The new school site is yet to be agreed. 'Voluntary Aided' category schools are church schools and the Archdiocese contributes to the building costs and has a substantial influence on the running of the school. The Governing Body employs the staff and sets the admissions criteria.

If the current proposal is agreed and implemented the current schools will close on 31st August 2022. The governance structure of the new all through school will start as of 1st September 2022. In effect, the 3-16 school will be established in the existing schools and will transfer to the new building when ready.

The primary section of the school will be for 525 pupils, therefore a 2.5 form entry with an admission number of 75 pupils. The secondary section of the school will be for 600 pupils therefore a 4-form entry with an admission number of 120 pupils. Initially, there will be no impact on pupils' journeys as a result of the Proposal and available walking routes to school will remain the same. When the site of the new build is decided parents will be informed about the walking routes.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A Consultation Report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and Estyn's full response is available to view on Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's website at the following address: <https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/council/have-your-say/3-16-report/?lang=en-GB&>

It is proposed to implement the proposal on 1st September 2022.

Within a period of one 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published, that is to say by 10th November 2019, any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to:- Chief Officer (Learning), Learning Department, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Unit 5 Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4TQ.

Signed:  (SUE WALKER, CHIEF OFFICER (LEARNING))

For the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Date: 14th October 2019

EXPLANATORY NOTE OF THE PROPOSALS (not part of the Statutory Notice)- The Council proposes to discontinue St Aloysius RC, the Federation of St Illtyd's RC and St Mary's RC primary schools and also Bishop Hedley High schools to create an 'all through' 3 to 16 school based across the existing sites of the schools. If the current proposal is agreed and implemented the current schools would close on 31st August 2022. The governance structure of the new all through school would start as of 1st September 2022 In effect the 3-16 school will be established in the existing schools and will transfer to the new building when it is ready. Following consultation with the Engineering, Planning, Highways and Road Safety departments, the two sites that will be considered are a new build on land on the west side of the Galon Uchaf road, south of the playing fields or a re-build on one of the Bishop Hedley High School sites. It is estimated that the new school building will be ready by 2023/2024. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is permitted to publish proposals to discontinue a voluntary aided school or foundation school; as are the Governors. As such the formal publication of the closure of the four existing schools may be carried out by the Council following the correct statutory procedure. The proposal to establish a new voluntary aided school has been published by the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff in partnership with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

3.0 DETAILS OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

Anyone wishing to make an objection to this proposal was able to do so. To be considered as a statutory objection, objections had to be made in writing or by email, and sent to the Council within 28 days of the date on which the proposals were published. This is referred to as the objection period.

One statutory objection was received by the published closing time and date.

4.0 THE OBJECTION AND OUR RESPONSE

Reason for the objection

"I am objecting based on the grounds that we do not what the site will be – how are people supposed to come to a decision if they do not know all the facts. Saying its either the "existing site(s?)" or the "greeny" site is not good enough. Even if were told it was to be one of the existing sites(phase 1 or phase 2), again we do not know which site it would be. There are far too many "vague" and "open to change" variables that are not detailed in the proposal. There are a lot of parents who are not happy with the idea of a single school site, and see the obvious solution being to reuse both the existing separate buildings (ie BHHS phase2 for the younger pupils, and phase 1 for the older pupils) and do what has happened at Afon Taf school which has been modernised etc."

Local Authority Response

We have been clear that no firm site has been secured, as this is the consultation stage in respect of proposals that have not yet been agreed; to have presented firm, definite plans at such an early stage of the process would have given the impression that we are pre-empting the decision. In addition, to have presented finalised plans at this stage would have incurred considerable expenditure which may be wasted should the proposal be rejected.

Prior to any build the appropriate feasibility studies would be carried out in respect of the suitability of each site for a school building and traffic management. The new school will be designed to meet all the current health and safety guidance and there will be huge consideration to the safeguarding of all learners within the new build.

3-16 schools are a relatively new concept across Wales and it is understandable that parents will have concerns over how their children will be supported within this structure.

Further consideration over the two sites currently proposed will take place over the next twelve months. It has been agreed to take the final decision back to council before the end of the current academic year.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Following consideration of the report Cabinet resolved to implement the proposal. The conclusion reached by Cabinet when considering the objection and making their final decision is that the benefits that can be achieved in respect of improved educational outcomes and provision for school pupils in this area are the prime reasons for determining these proposals.