



OBJECTION REPORT

Proposals to close Mounton House Special School

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1. Introduction

Monmouthshire County Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient and suitable school places for children within its County, and in doing so ensure that resources and facilities are efficiently utilised to deliver the education opportunities that our children deserve.

The Council has a responsibility under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 to consult with appropriate stakeholders when giving consideration to any significant school reorganisation proposals.

The Council recently engaged in a statutory consultation process relating to the delivery of provision for children with Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), in particular, the current provision offered at Mounton House Special School.

The purpose of undertaking the statutory consultation was to seek the views of our community, key stakeholders and partners on proposals to close Mounton House Special School.

A consultation report was produced to inform interest parties of the outcome of the consultation undertaken, and included the Council's response to comments and concerns raised during this consultation.

The Consultation report was considered by the Council's Cabinet on 18th September 2019, who agreed to proceed with next stages of the statutory process through means of the publication of Statutory Notices.

This Objection Report now represents the council's responsibilities in line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 to produce a report that summarises any statutory objections received together with the Council's response to these objections.

2. Distribution of the Consultation Report

This Objection Report has been published on the Monmouthshire County Council Website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation. The following consultees and interested parties will be contacted directly to inform them of the publication of this document.

- Parents, Guardians and carers of all pupils at schools directly affected by the proposal
- Headteacher, staff and governors of schools directly affected by the proposal.
- Out of county Schools affected by the proposal.
- Pupils/Pupil Councils of schools directly affected by the proposal
- Headteachers of all schools in MCC area
- All MCC Members
- Welsh Ministers
- All MCC Town and Community Councils
- All MCC Assembly Members representing the area served by the school
- All Members of Parliament representing MCC area
- Directors of Education of all bordering LAs – Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Powys, Torfaen, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire
- Directors of Education of affected LA's – Caerphilly, South Gloucestershire, Merthyr, Bristol, Rhodda Cynon Taff, North Somerset, Somerset, Swindon, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff
- Principals of Coleg Gwent
- MCC Youth Service
- GAVO
- Monmouthshire Governors Association
- Teaching Associations
- Support Staff Associations
- Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
- Welsh Government
- ESTYN
- Church in Wales Diocesan Trust, Director of Education
- Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust, Director of Education
- South East Wales Education Achievement Service
- Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner
- SNAP Cymru Parent Partnership Service
- Local Health Board
- All interested parties responding to this consultation leaving relevant electronic contact details

3. A reminder of our proposal

The Local Authority consulted on proposals to close Mounton House Special School. The proposed closure date was initially 31st December 2019 and then later amended to 31st August 2020 to minimise the disruption to pupils of closing mid-year.

Should the outcome of statutory processes determine that Mounton House Special School should close; the Council will consider the opportunities to invest in a new delivery model that meets the full range of needs of children and young people residing within the county who have Social and Emotional Behavioural difficulties.

4. Background to the Consultation arrangements

The Consultation Period

On 6th March 2019, the Councils' Cabinet approved the proposals to commence statutory consultation allowing the Council to engage with key stakeholders on the proposed closure of Mounton House Special School.

The Council has a responsibility under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to consult with appropriate stakeholders when giving consideration to any significant school reorganisation proposals.

The Council engaged in a statutory consultation process relating to these proposals, the purpose being to seek the views of our community, key stakeholders and partners on proposals to close Mounton House Special School.

The formal consultation period lasted for a period of 6 weeks (including 20 school days) concluding on 29th April 2019. Consultees were advised of the multiple opportunities available to respond / contribute to the consultation proposals.

The Council raised awareness of the consultation through a marketing campaign, which included publications via the Councils' social media networks.

The Consultation Report

The Council has a responsibility in line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to produce a report seeking to inform interested parties of the outcome to the consultation by means of:

- Summarising each of the issues raised by consultees
- Responding to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal, or rejection to the concerns with supporting reasons
- Setting out Estyn's view (as provided in its consultation response) of the overall merits of the proposal

The Council's consultation report relating to these proposals was published on 11th September 2019, and all Statutory consultees and interest parties were directly informed of its publication. The consultation report was also published on the Council's website at www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation.

On 18th September 2019, the Council's Cabinet considered the consultation report and agreed to proceed with the next stages of the statutory process through means of publication of Statutory notices that proposed to close Mounton House Special School with effect from 31st August 2020.

5. Statutory Objection Period

Methodology

On 7th October 2019, The Council entered into the Statutory Objection period through the publication of Statutory Notices, found under appendix 1 of this report.

The Statutory Notices were published through the following means:

- On the council website at www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation
- On or near the main entrance of Mounton House Special School
- By distribution to all statutory consultees, including pupils, parents/carers, and staff of Mounton House Special School. The notice may be distributed to consultees by email.

Consultees and interested parties were advised that, should they wish to submit a statutory objection against the proposals to close Mounton House Special School, they must do so in writing or by email within the 28 day Statutory Objection period, which would conclude on 5th November 2019.

Consultees and interested parties were reminded that concerns raised during the consultation stage of this process would not automatically be carried into the Objection Period and considered as a Statutory Objection unless advised to do so within the Statutory Objection Period.

Statutory Objections

The Statutory Objection period opened on Monday 7th October 2019 for a period of 28 days, concluding on Tuesday 5th November 2019. During this time, five statutory objections were received. Details of these statutory objections together with the Council's response can be found in the table below:

Objection Number	Details of Objection	LA Response
1	<p>To the County Council I would like to publicly declare that I am opposed to the closure of Mounton House School.</p> <p>It would be an absolute travesty to do this, and would be detrimental to current and future pupils and of course staff. There is an increased need for specialist behavioural units and education for the pupils who are designated to attend there, and the closure of the school would result in devastating consequences.</p>	<p>There are currently only 15 pupils on roll at Mounton House Special School. Many Local Authorities have developed their own behaviour support strategies and interventions and consequently the number of pupils who are presenting solely with behaviour issues referred to Mounton House has decreased. There are only seven pupils living in Monmouthshire attending Mounton House.</p> <p>As of September 2020 there would be 4 pupils living in Monmouthshire who attend Mounton House</p> <p>Monmouthshire has invested a substantial amount of funding in its secondary schools to provide specialist in-reach intervention from the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) to support pupils presenting with challenging behaviour.</p>
2	<p>I am the legal guardian of my grandson who is a pupil at Mounton House. He has been with me since 15th December 2015 and has had a tough time adjusting to the situation. He used to kick punch and scream for hours on end, sometimes lasting all night, which was a struggle for me and his younger brother. His primary expelled him at the end of year 6 because he was struggling to cope with school and home life and was bullied by pupils but nothing was done to help him. He was then sent from place to place but wasn't</p>	<p>The Local Authority consulted all stakeholders on the proposal to close Mounton House. The Local Authority are committed to providing earlier intervention into schools and the closure of Mounton House will allow resources to be redistributed to provide earlier intervention to a wider cohort of children and young people.</p> <p>The land is not being sold for housing development.</p>

	<p>given a chance. He was then stated as having SEBD and needing a one to one which was never given. At the beginning of 2018 he started at Mounton house and has come on from strength to strength and has slowly learned how to manage his anger, but since he learned about the school closing parts of it has returned. This has made life very hard and unsettling again for all of us. I wish that you had really considered everyone when you decided to close the school and finding out that the land is to be sold to build houses is the worse feeling. Gutted</p>	
3	<p>From the Ordinary Meeting of Chepstow Town Council on Wednesday 25th September 2019, the members would like to make MCC aware of their concerns.</p> <p>Monmouthshire County Council – Proposed closure of Mounton House Special School</p> <p>Members received and considered correspondence from Monmouthshire County Council on the proposed closure of Mounton House Special School. Members were disappointed that although 88% of comments received in the consultation that the County Council were proceeding with the closure. Concerns were raised as to the future provision of services for those that require</p>	<p>Mounton House Special School are holding annual reviews for all children and young people attending the school to determine educational provision for academic year 2020-2021. This is a key area of focus for the school and the Local Authority.</p> <p>For those pupils who will be in years eight and nine at this time it is envisaged that they would be transferred to another SEBD Special School. There are six pupils in this category. The cost for 6 Special School Placements could range from £270,000 to £390,000 with costs attributable to Monmouthshire being £90,000 to £130,000 as the remaining costs would be recouped from other Local Authorities.</p> <p>For the four pupils in key stage 4, (one of which is the responsibility of Monmouthshire) it is envisaged that bespoke learning pathways will be developed akin to the bespoke learning packages being run at the school at present. The cost would be</p>

	<p>RESOLVED: To write to Monmouthshire County Council with the following: “Chepstow Town Council is very concerned that Monmouthshire County Council has decided to close the Mounton House School in August 2020 – a mere 11 months away without any plans to provide services within the County for the vulnerable children who attend the school.</p> <p>We call upon Monmouthshire County Council to urgently publish their plans to make in county provision for all learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in the county of Monmouthshire which will fulfil the requirements of the ‘Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (2018)’”</p>	<p>£177,621 with £133,216 being recouped from other Local Authorities. The net cost to Monmouthshire is £44,405.</p> <p>To support all the Monmouthshire pupils, in key stage 3 and 4, dependent on nature of the provision required the costs would be between £134,405 and £174,405.</p>
4	<p>I object to the Mounon House special school being closed.</p> <p>I believe these schools are very important and worry about the children that would be effected by the closure.</p>	<p>Mounon House Special school are holding annual reviews for all children and young people attending Mounon House to determine educational provision for academic year 2020-2021.</p> <p>For those pupils who would be in years 8 and 9 at this time it is envisaged that they would be transferred to another SEBD Special School.</p> <p>For the small number of young people (4) who would be in Key Stage 4 in 2020/21 it is envisaged that bespoke learning pathways would be developed which would be akin to the bespoke learning packages being run at the school at present.</p>

		Local Authority Officers are working closely with school staff and other Local Authorities to secure appropriate provision for the children affected by closure.
5	<p>Dear Sirs</p> <p>I write in behalf of Mathern Community Council to object against the decision to close Mounon House school. The basis of our objections are:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the basis of the information published as part of the consultation there is no costed plan identifying what the cost of any alternative provision to accommodate the children that currently attend the school would be. The cost of adapting the current facility is noted but we cannot see how a decision can be made by the Council in the absence of a costed alternative plan. A clear spread sheet identifying the respective costs of 'staying as is', 'developing the school' and 'closing the school in line with an alternative plan' should be produced. Until such time as this is available no decision to close should be made. 2. Estyn note the arguments for closing the school but do not support the closing of the school without details of 	<p>The Local Authority have costed plans for the provision of alternative provision for the small number of Monmouthshire pupils affected by the closure.</p> <p>For those pupils who would be in years 8 and 9 at this time it is envisaged that they would be transferred to another SEBD Special School. There are 6 pupils in this category. The cost for 6 Special School Placements would range from £270,000 to £390,000 with Monmouthshire's costs being £90,000 to £130,000 as the remaining costs would be recouped from other Local Authorities.</p> <p>For the small number of young people (4) who would be in Key Stage 4 (2020/21) it is envisaged that bespoke learning pathways would be developed which would be akin to the bespoke learning packages being run at the school at present. The cost would be £177,621 with £133,216 being recouped from other Local Authorities.</p> <p>Hence the cost to Monmouthshire would be between £134,405 and £174, 405.</p> <p>Monmouthshire has invested a substantial amount of funding in its secondary schools to provide specialist in reach intervention from the PRU to address presenting behaviours.</p>

	<p>what the alternative provisions for the children will be.</p> <p>3. In the survey carried out as part of the consultation, 88% of responses did not support the closing of the school.</p> <p>On the basis of the above we believe the decision to close the school should be suspended until the alternative proposals for accommodating the children who attend this school are produced and costed.</p>	
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6. General overview and consensus

The consultation process undertaken proved to be without doubt a useful exercise, providing a full and open opportunity to test and critic the proposal concerning the future of Mounton House Special School.

The summary of responses received during the consultation stage of these proposals alongside the five statutory objections received and outlined in this report show clear opposition to the Councils' proposals to close Mounton House Special School.

However, the Council continues to draw some clear recognition that the provision offered at Mounton House Special school in its current form is only meeting the needs of a small number of Monmouthshire learners and is therefore unsustainable without redevelopment on the site.

In recognition of the significant investment required to develop the Mounton House site / building to provide a provision that meets the growing needs of learners across the county, the recommendation is to implement the proposals to close Mounton House Special School with effect from 31st August 2020. The recommendations will allow the Council to reinvest the funds into alternative model that meets a wider range of need, including provision ASD and SEBD for both boys and girls of Primary and Secondary age.



MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY HALL, RHADYR, USK, MONMOUTHSHIRE NP15 1GA
SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ORGANISATION (WALES) ACT 2018
Proposal to discontinue Mounton House Special School

Notice is given in accordance with section 43 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Monmouthshire County Council, having consulted such persons as required, proposes to discontinue Mounton House Special School, Pwllmeyric, Chepstow. The school is currently maintained by Monmouthshire County Council.

Monmouthshire County 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 on www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation.

It is proposed to implement the proposal on 31st August 2020.

As at September 2019, there were 15 pupils on roll at Mounton House Special School. Should Mounton House Special School proceed to closure on 31st August 2020, it is expected that 10 children will be affected by these proposals. Through the process of a review of Special Educational Needs together with close consultation with the home Local Authority (where applicable) appropriate alternative provision will be identified for these pupils. Free home to school transport will be provided to suitable provision in line with the current policy, which is available at www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/school-transport-home-to-school.

Within a period of 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published, that is to say by 5th November 2019 any person may object to the proposals.

Objections should be sent to Matthew Jones, Access Unit Manager, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall, PO Box 106, Caldicot, NP26 9AN or email strategicreview@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Signed:

Paul Matthews, Chief Executive
For Monmouthshire County Council
7th October 2019

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This explanatory note does not form part of the notice but is offered by way of explanation)

Mounton House Special School has a capacity for 58 boys aged 11-16 and includes residential provision with a primary need of social and emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It is becoming increasingly evident the type of provision currently offered at the school does not fully meet our county need. For example, the offer available is limited to key stages 3 and 4 and does not include girls. In addition, the current provision does not meet a broader range of additional needs, which have associated behavioural difficulties.

The number on roll at the school has reduced significantly over the last 5 years and the anticipated position going forward shows a continuation of falling numbers on roll. This is a clear reflection that the current provision offered at Mounton House Special School is not meeting our in county needs in an effective and efficient way. Should the proposal to close Mounton House Special School proceed the Council will consider the opportunities to invest in a new delivery model. Ensuring it meets the full range of needs of children and young people residing within the county who have SEBD.