

Emerging Themes from the consultation on proposals to establish a new 4-19 school with a specialist centre for pupils with complex neurodevelopmental needs on the King Henry VIII School Site

Children and Young People's Select Committee

8th September 2021



Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Children and Young People's Select Committee with an update of the key themes that emerged during the recently concluded consultation exercise (26th April – 25th June) into the creation of a new all-through school in Abergavenny to be provided on the site of the current King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

It is recommended that members of the select committee review the full consultation report (found at appendix A) and take the opportunity to consider:

- the responses from the two schools, their Governing Bodies, staff and pupils;
- the responses from the wider community; and
- the responses from officers



The need for change

- Monmouthshire County Council's purpose is to create sustainable and resilient communities and within that **to provide every child with the best possible start in life.**
 - *We will commit to beginning the work necessary to ensure that children and young people choose to attend school in the county.*
 - *We will invest in all our children's learning and development, ensuring they have the environments, skills and support to flourish and be prepared for work of the future. We want our children and young people to be industry ready, able to contribute locally and globally and meet the demands of a rapidly changing world environment*

The Strategic Outline Programme (updated in October 2017) identified the following drivers for change:

- An identified trend of regression in pupil progress because of transition between Years 6 & 7
- A stated desire to support communities experiencing greater levels of deprivation
- The current condition of King Henry VIII's existing buildings is not suitable for a 21st Century learning environment
- An increased demand for Welsh Medium education in the north of the county

More recently the Authority has declared a Climate Emergency (May 2019)

- The desire (and need) to invest in a modern sustainable and environmentally sound teaching and learning facility



Where are we now?



- In 2017 MCC's Cabinet agreed the proposal within the Strategic Outline Programme
 - They considered six different options ranging from 'do nothing' through to a consolidated bi-lingual 3-19 school
- This was submitted to Welsh Government for their consideration and agreement
- Welsh Government have agreed the proposal and the funding at 2017 levels
- We are now implementing those decisions. There has been a delay:
 - The delivery of Band A projects (renewal of Caldicot School and Monmouth Comprehensive School)
 - COVID-19 has had a clear impact on educational operations
- Alongside this governance consultation we are working on conceptual designs, planning requirements and funding plans.



School Governance: Options Appraisal – What did we consider?

- 1. Do nothing and maintain status quo – *two independent schools on one site*
- 2. Establish an all through school with suitable ALN provision on the King Henry VIII site and cease to maintain King Henry VIII and Deri View Schools
- 3. Establish an all through school with suitable ALN provision and Welsh Medium stream at key stage 3,4 & 5 on the King Henry VIII site and cease to maintain King Henry VIII and Deri View Schools
- 4. Extend the age range of King Henry VIII and incorporate Deri View School
- 5. Extend the age range of Deri View School and incorporate King Henry VIII School



The preferred option and why

- At this stage, option 2 is the preferred option
 - Closing both schools and establishing a new school is the fairest and most equitable approach
 - If the age range of one school is extended and one school closes (options 4 or 5) it could be perceived as a takeover
 - In early engagement the Welsh Medium Education Forum were not supportive of establishing a Welsh Medium stream – their preference is for a fully immersive experience for pupils maintaining their experience in primary school
 - Do nothing was not an option for the administration



3-19 or 4-19?

- There is an absolute intention within this programme to create a provision that supports children from the age of three
- This is vital to support their early years education, socialisation and development
- The references to 3-19 reflect the provision and 4-19 reflect the consideration of this consultation that the maintained 'school' will be for children from the age of 4
- The provision for three and four year olds, in this consultation, will be in a non-maintained childcare setting

Why have we done this?

- More flexible in relation to opening hours & session length
- Seamless transition for children requiring early education and wrap around childcare, as both are available in one setting.
- No transition at age 3 for Flying Start children.
- Staff in non-maintained settings are required to have a relevant childcare qualification, so they tend to have a better understanding of child development.
- Lower ratio of staff to children in a non-maintained setting (1 to 8 rather than 1 to 10).



The proposal in detail

- The proposal we consulted on was to establish a new 4-19 school with specialist centre for pupils with complex neuro-developmental needs from September 2023
- We will close Deri View Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive school in August 2023
- Relocate the all through school to a new building on the current King Henry VIII site in September 2024
- Increase the size of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and relocate to the Deri View site in September 2024 – this will be subject to a separate Statutory consultation



The proposal in detail

- The proposed School will include facilities for:
 - 20 Flying Start places;
 - 30 FTE Nursery pupils;
 - 420 primary pupils;
 - 1200 pupils (aged 11-16); and
 - 200 6th form.
- Within the above figures there will be accommodation for 71(16 primary and 55 secondary) pupils with complex neurodevelopmental and learning needs within the school.
- The proposal allows for a non maintained provider to provide nursery education. This will be tested as part of the consultation exercise
- Flying Start provision is included and is proposed to relocate to the new site in 2024



What is an all through school?

- An all-through school is a school which provides both primary and secondary education.
- The school is led and managed by one Headteacher, a single governing body, and funded as one school
- Primary and secondary aged pupils belong to the same educational establishment, there is an opportunity for sharing facilities and resources
- All through schools provide separate and age specific teaching accommodation, different start and finish times as well as separate recreational areas



Why an all through school?

Improve educational outcomes:

- Provide teaching and support staff with more opportunity to develop professionally;
- Enable greater opportunities for staff to move between key stages and further develop expertise;
- Provide a more appropriate curriculum and wider extra-curricular opportunities which will improve attendance and educational outcomes;

Improve educational provision:

- Provide the conditions that will enable a broader and more diverse curriculum to be developed to better meet the needs of the school's young people and in ways that will be viable and sustainable over the longer term;
- Improve the range and quality of facilities and learning resources available to the benefit of all pupils;
- Enable greater continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils; Allow for the potential for financial savings in terms of staffing structures and purchase of services, which accrue to a larger school;
- Broaden the range of extra-curricular and out-of-school activities and develop them in ways that are sustainable over the longer term

Improve leadership and management:

- Provide the opportunity for the headteacher to distribute key leadership in a creative and innovative way
- Create leadership opportunities for other staff, and for others to specialise in key areas, which will enhance educational provision and outcomes;

Allow teaching and support staff access to a wider range of responsibilities:

- Improved career prospects;
- Improved curriculum co-ordination;
- The opportunity to teach across a wider age range and across different phases;
- An increased range of expertise;
- Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination.



Quantitative Analysis of Written Feedback

Respondent category	Number in Favour	Number not in Favour	Agree with some aspects	Total
Parent / Carer	19	47	17	83
Governor*	3	0	0	3
Pupil	0	2	0	2
Staff	1	6	12	19
Other schools / staff/parent	7	38	20	65
Community	4	22	5	31
Union	0	0	0	0
Town/Community Council	1	2	1	4
Other Organisations	0	0	0	0
Total	35	117	55	207

* - Both school's Governing Bodies submitted responses



Emerging Themes

	Theme
1.	Concerns regarding the nursery provision being a non-maintained setting
2.	Impact that the proposal will have on Pupils with Additional Learning Needs
3.	Views received in relation to the Logistics and the new school building
4.	Impact on Leisure Facilities
5.	Impact on staff
6.	Safeguarding Concerns
7.	Impact on pupils
8.	Views received in relation to the structure & governance



Emerging Themes

	Theme
9.	Views received in relation to the proposal
10.	Views received in relation the name of the new school
11.	Views received in relation to the Consultation process
12.	Impact on Post-16 provision
13.	Impact on Welsh Medium provision
14.	Financial Impact



Views of the two schools: Deri View

The response received from the Governing Body of Deri View Primary School confirmed their support towards the following aspects of the proposals to establish an all through school:

- The need to enhance the educational provision in Abergavenny through means of improving the learning environment for secondary age learners
- The desire to increase the availability of provision for Welsh Medium through utilising the facilities of Deri View Primary School.
- To increase the number of Monmouthshire young people remaining within the county for their education experiences.

However, the governing body throughout the consultation process have shared the following concerns:

- The governing body held strong beliefs that the provision for early years' children should form part of the all through school proposals, and therefore enable responsibility for the children's education and wellbeing to be full managed by the new school and its governing body, rather than a private provider. There were concerns that no evidence has been presented to suggest children and their families would benefit more from the experiences of a private provider, but do feel that children would be disadvantaged by current proposals.
- A concern that the consultation proposals can be interpreted by some members of the community that Deri View Primary school is a failing school. The building itself has been perceived as not being fit for purpose, however, it was felt that this is not a reflection of the school's performance and a request has been made that many of the support, outcomes and provision at Deri View must be replicated in any new provision.
- The governing body felt unsure as to what the educational benefits of the all through school would bring for their pupils, given that the results at Deri View Primary are good and on an upward trend.
- A concern that the location of the new school is not in the centre of the Deri View Community, where the majority of children walk to school, and governors felt concerned that families will have further to go to access the new school.
- Governors felt concerned around the transitional arrangements associated with the proposals, in particular, through an establishment of a middle school, which would mean children from other schools joining the provision at later stages.
- Governors felt staff need to be supported through early publication of a process for how they would transfer to the new school.
- Governors felt concerned that the name of the new school has not been discussed in any great detail and felt concerned that the proposals to establish a "new" school will be lost if the name of King Henry is kept.



Views of the two schools: King Henry

The response received from the Governing Body of King Henry VIII comprehensive School on the whole confirmed their support towards proposals to establish a new all through school, through means of merging King Henry VIII Comprehensive and Deri View Primary Schools. The governing body felt excited that proposals would provide the community with outstanding facilities.

However, there were two specific concerns that the governing body raised during the consultation:

- A very strong view that the name of the new school will need to remain as King Henry VIII on the basis of its historical context and the links it has with Abergavenny town.
- A request that the local authority revisits the proposals to establish a non-maintained nursery, and provides more information on the pros and cons of each option, taking into consideration the important input from the parents and staff of Deri View Primary before presenting an option for implementation



Views of Estyn

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 requires the Council to consult with ESTYN on statutory School Organisational matters. Below is a summary of the response received from ESTYN in relation to this proposal.

- It is Estyn's opinion that this proposal is likely to maintain at least the present standards of education in the area.
- The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal.
- The consultation report gives valid advantages and disadvantages of an all-through school model.
- The report gives details of how a new building will accommodate pupils of all ages as well as a specialist resource base for up to seventy pupils with complex neurodevelopmental and learning needs.
- The proposer has provided a detailed description of the proposal.
- The timetable for consultation is clear and within the Code guidelines. Arrangements for consultation are well documented.
- Five options are considered, the proposer considers the advantages and disadvantages of each option and compares the options to the current situation clearly.
- Its preferred option is the establishment of an all-through school with ALN provision. It gives due consideration to all the options and good reasons why they have been discounted.
- The proposer appears to mitigate appropriately against the risks of the preferred option and explains suitably how they would counter any perceived problems.



Views of Estyn

Contd.

- The proposal could affect pupils who will be transferred to the special provision and do not currently attend either Deri View or King Henry VIII schools. The local authority does not explore this sufficiently.
- The effect on surplus places is demonstrated effectively and appears to be based on information regarding projected numbers and local housing developments.
- The proposer has considered the impact of the proposal on Welsh medium education in the area. It notes that the proposal supports a vision to build sustainable and resilient bilingual communities across the county, and to educate more children through the medium of Welsh as outlined in the current Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
- The proposer has considered the outcomes of recent Estyn inspection reports of each school affected.
- The local authority does not consider the impact on standards, teaching, curriculum, wellbeing and leadership in sufficient detail. The basis of the proposer's consideration of the impact on the quality and standards in education are based on the potential benefits that an all-through school may bring. These includes valid suggestions that there will be more efficient transition between phases and more opportunities to develop teaching and provision across the whole age range.
- The proposer has considered the latest inspection outcomes for other primary schools in the area that might be affected by the opening of a new all-through school.
- The proposer considers the impact of the proposals on vulnerable groups suitably. The proposal notes that the level of support for pupils with special educational needs will continue. Pupils attending the proposed learning support resource within the new school will benefit from continuity of support and from being in a new purpose-built facility.
- The proposal pays due attention to specific factors in the school organisation code regarding school closures. It intends to carry out community impact assessments to fully understand the implications of its decisions.



Key themes and considerations

Through the consultation process there were four key themes that continued to emerge and that have had significant impact on the outcomes:

- i. The name of the new school and the historic links to King Henry VIII
- ii. The nature of the nursery provision on site: maintained or non-maintained
- iii. The strategic rationale behind an all-through school
- iv. How will other schools transition to the new school?



Next Steps

The statutory code gives us a range of potential actions at this point: to publish the proposals as consulted on; to publish the proposals with any appropriate modifications; to abandon the proposals and retain the status quo or to significantly recast the proposals and re-consult.

It is currently our intention to proceed at this point to Cabinet on the 6th October. The feedback that we receive from this committee will help us determine the form of that recommendation.

The final version of the Consultation Report will be prepared for the 6th October and considered by Cabinet, it will also be made available to everyone who responded to the consultation.

