

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
19th March 2024**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Pete Roberts
Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys**

**REPORT TITLE: Ysgol Bro Caereinion Language Category –
Consultation Report**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 Further to the decision made by Cabinet on the 26th September 2023, the Council has carried out consultation on the following proposal:

- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual-stream to Welsh-medium
- This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of the responses received to the consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed with the statutory process to change the school's language category.

1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Consultation Document
- Appendix B – Consultation Report
- Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Staff, Governors and Pupils
- Appendix D – Updated Impact Assessments

2. Background

Ysgol Bro Caereinion

2.1 Ysgol Bro Caereinion is an all-age school located in Llanfair Caereinion in North Powys. It was established in September 2022 following the amalgamation of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School.

2.2 The school's primary phase primarily serves the town of Llanfair Caerinion, whilst the secondary phase serves a wider catchment area. In particular, the Welsh-medium secondary provision at the school has historically been the main Welsh-medium provision in this part of North Powys, serving the towns of Newtown and Welshpool as well as the traditional Llanfair Caereinion catchment.

2.3 Ysgol Bro Caereinion was established as a dual stream all-age school, reflecting the language categories of the previous primary and secondary school in Llanfair Caereinion. However, the strength of Welsh-medium provision in this area was recognised throughout the proposal. In particular, it was acknowledged that the secondary Welsh-medium provision in Llanfair Caereinion was central to the Council's aspiration to provide access to enhanced Welsh-medium secondary provision for pupils in the area.

2.4 Welsh-medium and English-medium pupil numbers at the school are as follows¹:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
Welsh-medium	12	7	11	7	14	11	12	42	35	30	36	40	14	21	292
English-medium	0	7	6	8	5	8	16	25	43	45	35	38	13	8	257
Total	12	14	17	15	19	19	28	67	78	75	71	78	27	29	549

2.5 In the summer of 2023, conversations about the school's language provision going forward took place, linked to the introduction of new Welsh language categories by the Welsh Government. As part of these conversations, representatives from the school explained to the Council that the current dual stream model is causing challenges, and that it has become apparent that there is a need to review the school's language category.

2.6 The Council subsequently carried out an options appraisal to consider options for the school's future language category. This identified the following preferred option:

- To change the language of provision across the whole school to Welsh-medium
- To introduce the change in language provision on a phased basis, year by year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025

¹ Data provided by the school 060923

- This would mean that eventually, all pupils at the school would attend Welsh-medium provision, ensuring that they would all be fluent in Welsh and English.
 - Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents
- 2.7 On the 26th September 2023, Cabinet considered a proposal paper in respect of Ysgol Bro Caereinion's language category, and agreed to commence consultation on the following:
- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual stream to Welsh-medium.
 - This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025.
- 2.8 Consultation has subsequently been carried out, as agreed by Cabinet.

The Consultation Period

- 2.9 Consultation on the proposal to change Ysgol Bro Caereinion's language category commenced on the 19th October 2023 and ended on the 7th of December 2023.
- 2.10 The consultation document was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period. The document was also distributed to stakeholders as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). The consultation document that was issued is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.11 Consultees were asked to respond to the consultation by either completing the online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the Transforming Education Team, or by writing to the Transforming Education Team.
- 2.12 During the consultation period, meetings were held with staff, governors and pupils of Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan. The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C, and the issues raised in the meetings are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

Consultation Responses

- 2.13 493 respondents completed the consultation response form which was included in the consultation document. This includes paper copies as well as responses submitted using the online response form.
- 2.14 In addition, 30 written responses by e-mail or post were received from respondents, including Estyn. Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 33 of the Consultation Report (Appendix B).

- 2.15 336 written responses were also received from pupils at Ysgol Bro Caereinion.
- 2.16 205 postcards were also received which contained the following statement:

Hoffwn ddatgan fy nghefnogaeth i'r cynnig i newid categori iaith Ysgol Bro Caereinion / I wish to declare my support for the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion

- 2.17 The written responses also included the findings of an online questionnaire, which asked respondents to state whether or not they agree with the statement included on the postcards which is provided in 2.16 above. 273 respondents (90.7%) stated that they disagreed with the statement, whilst 28 respondents (9.3%) stated that they agreed with the statement.

Consultation Findings

- 2.18 The findings of the consultation are provided in full in the Consultation Report (Appendix B).
- 2.19 The issues raised in the written responses to the consultation and those raised in the consultation meetings are listed in the Consultation Report (Appendix B), from page 37 onwards, along with the Council's response to those issues.
- 2.20 The issues raised relate to the following headings:

Comments in support of the proposal

- The proposal is overdue
- The proposal will lead to improved provision at the school
- The proposal will lead to a stronger Welsh ethos at the school
- Positive impact on pupils
 - Pupils would have better opportunities to become fully bilingual
 - Improved Welsh language skills would have a positive impact on the opportunities available to pupils in the future
- The proposal will safeguard secondary provision in Llanfair Caereinion
- Llanfair Caereinion is the right location for designated Welsh-medium secondary provision
- Support for the proposal to implement in Reception and Year 7 at the same time
- The proposal would provide continuity for Welsh-medium pupils
- The proposal would provide equity for Welsh-medium pupils

- The proposal reflects the increase in Welsh-medium pupil numbers in the area
- The proposal will have a positive impact on the Welsh language in the area
- Comments about Welsh-medium delivery models
 - Concerns about the dual stream model
 - Positive comments about Welsh-medium schools
- Comments about staffing
 - Positive impact on current staff
 - It would be easier to attract staff
 - Other comments
- Comments about impact on the community
- The proposal supports the implementation of various strategies
- Other comments

Comments not in support of the proposal

- Comments about the impact on pupils
 - Impact on pupil well-being
 - Impact on pupil achievement
 - Concern about the impact on English-medium pupils during the transition
 - Pupils wouldn't be able to move from one stream to another
 - English-medium pupils would have less exposure to the Welsh language
 - Pupils need English language skills not Welsh language skills
 - Concern about the impact on pupils ability to access further / higher education
 - Other comments
- Comments relating to implementation arrangements
 - Concern about the proposed timeline
 - Concern about the proposed change to provision in year 7
 - Comments about transport arrangements
 - Concern about Trochi provision
- Comments about the impact on parents / families
 - Parents / families wouldn't be able to support their children
 - Parents / families could have children in more than one school
- Comments about staffing
 - Concern about the impact on staff
 - Concern about the ability to recruit Welsh speaking staff
 - Concern about the quality of staff in the future
- Concern about impact on the community

- The proposal will cause division in the area
- Concern that people wouldn't want to live in the area
- A Welsh-medium school would not reflect the bilingual community in Llanfair Caereinion
- Concern about the impact on sports teams and other events in the area
- Other comments about impact on the community
- Concern about the impact on pupil numbers at Ysgol Bro Caereinion
- Comments about the need for choice
- Comments about discrimination / segregation
- Concern about impact on the Welsh language
- Llanfair Caereinion is not the right location for a Welsh-medium school
- Other comments

Other comments

- Comments about Ysgol Bro Caereinion
 - Comments about the current provision at the school
 - Comments about building and facilities at the school
 - Welsh-medium and English-medium pupils are treated differently
 - English-medium pupils at the school benefit from more exposure to the Welsh-language
 - Comments about the governors at Ysgol Bro Caereinion
- Comments / queries about other schools
 - Ysgol Rhiw Bechan
 - Other primary providers
 - Other secondary providers
- Comments about impact on staff
- Comments about additional support that would be needed to support the change
 - Trochi provision
 - Additional support for pupils
 - ALN Provision
 - Support for staff
 - Support for parents
 - Transport arrangements
 - Promote transition to Ysgol Bro Caereinion for Welsh-medium pupils in the area
 - Additional funding
 - Capital investment
 - Raising awareness
 - Other comments / queries
- Financial queries

- Comments about the financial impact of the proposal
 - Comments about Ysgol Bro Caereinion's financial position
 - Comments about the Council's funding arrangements
 - Other comments
- Comments about Welsh Government
- Alternative Options
 - Retain a dual stream school in Llanfair Caereinion
 - Phase in from Reception only
 - Change the timeline
 - Implement the change in the primary but not the secondary
 - Increase the Welsh-medium provision for English-medium learners at Ysgol Bro Caereinion
 - Open a Welsh-medium school elsewhere
 - Introduce Welsh-medium provision elsewhere
 - Review other schools
 - Close the school
 - Investment in the school
 - Develop the provision at Ysgol Bro Caereinion
 - Other suggestions
- Criticism of the Council
- Comments about the consultation process
 - Comments about meetings / engagement with the community
 - Comments about consultation with pupils
 - Comments about informal engagement
 - Comments about the timing of the proposal
 - The consultation is not lawful
 - The consultation is biased
 - More information should have been shared to support the consultation
 - Comments about communication
 - Concern about people from outside the area influencing the decision
 - Other comments
- Comments about the consultation documentation
 - General comments about the documentation
 - Comments / queries about specific parts of the documentation
 - Comments / queries about data
 - Comments about the consultation response form
 - Requests for additional information
 - Other comments / queries
- Requests for additional information
- Other comments / queries

3. Advice

- 3.1 Based on the findings of the consultation, the advice of officers is that the Council should proceed with the proposal to change Ysgol Bro Caereinion's language category by publishing a Statutory Notice.
- 3.2 However, the concerns raised during the consultation period about the impact of introducing the change in the secondary phase in September 2025 on pupils currently accessing English-medium primary provision are acknowledged, as well as the concerns raised in respect of home to school transport arrangements for pupils wishing to access English-medium secondary provision elsewhere instead of accessing Welsh-medium provision at Ysgol Bro Caereinion.
- 3.3 To address the concerns about the proposed implementation in the secondary phase, it is recommended that an amendment is made to the date that the secondary transition will start, from September 2025 to September 2026. This would provide a further year for arrangements to be made for pupils to access 'Trochi' provision, and it will also provide a further year for pupils and their families to consider their choices. This would mean that pupils currently in years 5 and 6 would not be affected by the change of language category and the first cohort that would be affected would be the current year 4.
- 3.4 The current home to school transport policy provides free home to school transport for eligible pupils to their closest suitable school. However it would not currently provide transport to English-medium provision where a pupil's closest provision is Welsh-medium. This was an issue which caused concern in the consultation responses received. To further address the concerns about impact on pupils currently accessing English-medium primary provision in the area, it is recommended that, **as a temporary measure**, additional transport is offered to pupils affected by the proposed change. It is advised that free home-to-school transport to their nearest English-medium secondary school is offered to those pupils who are (a) currently in years 4 and below at Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan and (b) who currently access English-medium primary provision at those schools, when they transfer from primary to secondary education from September 2026 onwards. There are currently 57 pupils in these year groups at both schools, and whilst the intention is to offer these pupils Trochi Pontio to enable them to move into the Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol Bro Caereinion should this proposal be approved, there is also a recognition that not all parents/pupils would want to do this, and some may choose alternative English-medium secondary education instead.
- 3.5 The transport provision outlined above would only be available for pupils currently accessing English-medium provision at Ysgol Bro Caereinion or Ysgol Rhiw Bechan, and would not be available to any new Reception aged pupils joining Ysgol Bro Caereinion or Ysgol Rhiw Bechan in the

future. Transport would be provided for these pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

3.6 Should the Council decide to proceed with publishing a Statutory Notice, and eventually agree to proceed with implementation of the proposal, there may in future be a need to explore the possibility of revising the Council's Home to School Transport Policy to differentiate between a Welsh-medium secondary provider and a dual stream secondary provider, to ensure that pupils wishing to access designated Welsh-medium secondary provision are able to do so. This would be subject to a separate consultation in accordance with the Learner (Wales) Travel Measure.

3.7 Based on the advice above, it is proposed that the Council publishes a Statutory Notice proposing the following:

- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual stream to Welsh-medium.
- This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2025 and Year 7 in September 2026.

3.8 The reasons for this are as follows:

- Would enable the school to operate more efficiently
- More opportunities could be offered through the medium of Welsh
- Would lead to an increase in pupils studying through the medium of Welsh in the longer term
- Would eventually provide access to designated Welsh-medium secondary provision
- Opportunity to attract more pupils from Welsh-medium primary schools in the area in the longer term
- Meets the aspirations of the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys
- Meets the aspirations of the Council's WESP
- Potential financial saving to the authority
- Current English-medium pupils would be able to continue to access this provision throughout the primary or secondary phase, depending on which year group they are in.
- Would allow time for additional support to be provided to pupils to support the change.
- Would allow time for any necessary staff development and professional learning to take place to support the change.
- Opportunity to strengthen Welsh-medium post-16 provision in the longer term.

- 3.9 It is anticipated that the Statutory Notice would be published in April 2024, and that a further report, summarising any objections received, would be considered by Cabinet in July 2024.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 The amount of delegated funding provided to individual schools is driven by the funding formula, which distributes the schools delegated budget agreed by Council. Any change to the formula funding provided will impact on the Council's revenue budget. Based on the new formula in place from 1st April 2024, the overall formula funding requirement will reduce as a result of these proposals. The degree of saving depends on what assumptions are made about whether learners in the English stream currently transfer to alternative English medium secondary provision at alternative schools or continue their education through the medium of Welsh and continue to attend Ysgol Bro Caereinion
- 4.2 The estimated financial saving for the Council from this proposal has been recalculated using the new funding formula and taking into account the change in implementation timescales. The revised estimated financial saving is £316k when fully implemented. The previous estimated saving published in the Consultation Document was £383k.
- 4.3 If those pupils currently in the primary English streams at Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan, who are due to start Year 7 in or after September 2026 (i.e. current reception to year 4) were to choose to move to another English-medium secondary provider rather than accessing Welsh medium education at Ysgol Bro Caereinion, then the estimated saving for the Council reduces to £106k when the change is fully implemented.
- 4.4 Currently, pupils are eligible for free home-to-school transport to their nearest or catchment school. If it is decided to provide free home-to-school transport for pupils currently in Year 4 and below in Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiwbechan to their nearest English-medium secondary school, then the maximum estimated transports costs would be approximately £80k per annum but this would then reduce over the period of this arrangement. This is also subject to change dependent on parental choice. The overall savings above do not include these additional transports costs, so this would reduce the total saving.
- 4.5 The Council will continue to work with the school to ensure that the school budget complies with the scheme for financing schools and is within the funding envelope available.
- 4.6 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report and can support the recommendations.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be approved from a legal point of view
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and support the recommendations".

6. Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 6.1 Whilst the aspiration is for all pupils currently attending Ysgol Bro Caereinion to continue to access the school, it is acknowledged that some English-medium pupils may choose to access English-medium secondary provision at alternative schools, particularly as the Council is proposing to provide home to school transport for affected pupils. This could have a negative environmental impact in the short term, as additional home to school transport would need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school. In the longer term, the expectation is that all pupils in Llanfair Caereinion area would access Welsh-medium provision, and would therefore access secondary provision in Llanfair Caereinion.

7. Data Protection

- 7.1 N/A

8. Comment from local member(s)

Cllr Gareth D. Jones (Llanfair Caereinion and Llanerfyl):

'The decision to change the language categorisation in Ysgol Bro Caereinion although welcomed by many is also a concern to a large number of residents within the catchment of Caereinion. Figures currently show that many parents are keen to have their children educated through the Welsh language, especially within the primary phase, but some have reservations when it comes to secondary phase education (driven from the perspective that they may not be able to support their children if they are not themselves Welsh speakers). For this proposal to be given every opportunity of success a 10-year graduated funding package must be made available over and above the current school funding formula. Additional funding would be required for:-

1. **Communication.** *On going communications and PR plan - to dispel any misconceptions that may exist, but also to provide objective information about a bilingual education.*
2. **Trochi.** *Learners, staff, and parents will need to be given every opportunity of accessing Welsh language immersion.*
3. **Funding Formula.** *It is highly likely that numbers within the school will drop in the coming years. With the current funding formula, it will be difficult initially for the school to present a balanced budget*

and offer a wide range of subjects. Without additional funding it will be challenging for the school to achieve its ambitions of attaining high standards of education and building a strong platform for the future, in turn attracting more learners.

- 4. Capital investment** Significant capital investment is needed in the infrastructure of the school including the long overdue 2G pitch.

Transport is a subject that still needs looking at. There are several parents within the community who will not want to put their children through a Welsh education, to not offer transport to another school is unacceptable.

The establishment of Ysgol Bo Caereinion as a Welsh medium School must be seen in the wider context than just the traditional catchment of Caereinion if the decision by cabinet is to proceed the catchment areas will as a matter of urgency need revisiting, as this is a strategic decision impacting on education provision across the north of the County.

Handled poorly this could split a strong community, handled correctly with a 10 year financial commitment coupled with better communication, it has the potential to be something we can be proud of.'

9. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An initial impact assessment was considered by Cabinet on the 26th September 2023.
- 9.2 In addition, a range of draft impact assessments were produced as part of the consultation documentation. These included an Integrated Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment and a Community Impact Assessment.
- 9.3 These draft impact assessments have been updated to reflect issues raised during the consultation period, and are attached in Appendix D.
- 9.2 The summary of the impact assessment is as follows:

'The draft impact assessment indicates that the impact of the proposal is positive overall. The proposal would eventually provide a more sustainable model for delivering education in Ysgol Bro Caereinion, ensuring that all pupils are fully bilingual in Welsh and English when they leave the school.

The proposal is to change the school's language category over time, which would minimise the impact on pupils currently attending Ysgol Bro Caereinion, but would also ensure that, eventually, all pupils would be taught through the medium of Welsh, and would become fully bilingual in Welsh and English. This would lead to enhanced

opportunities to promote the Welsh language within the school and within the community and would provide those pupils with bilingual skills to take into the workplace.

However it is acknowledged that there would be an impact on pupils currently accessing English-medium primary provision in the Ysgol Bro Caereinion catchment as they would no longer be able to access English-medium secondary provision at Ysgol Bro Caereinion. Concerns about the impact on these pupils were raised during the consultation period. Additional support such as Trochi Pontio (immersive language support) would be available for pupils who would be impacted should they wish to continue their education at Ysgol Bro Caereinion, however the impact on these pupils in particular will need to be considered when determining whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.'

9. Recommendation

- i) To receive the Consultation Report in respect of the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion.
- ii) To approve the publication of a statutory notice proposing the following:
 - To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Caereinion from dual stream to Welsh-medium.
 - This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2025 and Year 7 in September 2026.

This would mean that:

- English-medium provision would be phased out gradually year by year, starting with Reception in September 2025 and Year 7 in September 2026 – after which dates pupils would be taught in Welsh-medium classes and become fully bilingual i.e. fluent in both Welsh and English.
 - Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents.
- iii) To approve on a discretionary basis only as allowed by the Council's Home to School Transport Policy to offer free home to school transport to English-medium pupils currently in years 4 and below at Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan to their nearest English-medium secondary provider when they transfer from primary to secondary.

Contact Officer:	Sarah Astley / Marianne Evans
Tel:	01597 826265 / 01597 826155
Email:	sarah.astley@powys.gov.uk / marianne.evans@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Georgie Bevan
Corporate Director:	Lynette Lovell

CABINET REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION X