



## **CABINET - 21<sup>st</sup> MAY 2025**

**SUBJECT:           DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIST ADDITIONAL LEARNING  
PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING  
NEEDS**

**REPORT BY:       CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **1.     PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1     The purpose of the report is to seek endorsement from Cabinet to proceed to consultation on the expansion of specialist resource bases (SRBs) for children with additional learning needs across the County Borough.

### **2.     SUMMARY**

- 2.1     In line with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) the Local Authority (LA) has a statutory responsibility to keep provision for additional learning needs (ALN) under review.
- 2.2     The LA has developed appropriate criteria to support the entry into specialist provision, but the current demand for specialist placements within SRBs outweighs the capacity, particularly for children with complex needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- 2.3     Without additional provision there is a risk that vulnerable children will not have their needs met locally and out of county provision would be required. There is also a risk that placements may be directed by the Education Tribunal for children within or outside the locality.
- 2.4     Whilst it is recognised that the majority of children will have their needs met in mainstream settings, the demand for specialist provision for a few children is increasing at a faster rate than predicted.
- 2.5     A consultation (in line with the Schools Organisation Code 2018) will focus on increasing capacity for specialist provision for children with ALN, thus

supporting the LA to meet the increased demand and best meet the needs of our most vulnerable learners.

- 2.6 The report identifies the Schools and Governing Bodies who wish to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with the Local Authority (LA).

### **3. RECOMMENATIONS**

- 3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to:

- a) consider the information contained in the report
- b) endorse the recommendation to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with each Governing Body in respect of the development of specialist resources base provision across the Borough as need determines.
- c) consider the significant ongoing financial implications of the report.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Members are asked to endorse the approach of the LA to engage in a formal consultation in order that consideration can be given to expanding the provision for children with additional learning needs in the County Borough.
- 4.2 To support working in partnership with the identified schools.
- 4.3 To assist the Council in discharging its statutory duties in line with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the School Organisation Code 2018.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The Council recognises the need to continually review provision for children with ALN, whether this is within schools, support and intervention delivered by services, or the development of specialist provision.
- 5.2 The Council is committed to supporting inclusion however recognises the need for a few children to access provision through specialist settings in line with their needs identified in their individual development plan (IDP).
- 5.3 The current demand as identified through panel process, consultation with schools and LA staff, scrutiny of IDP's and scrutiny of data shows that there is a need for an increased number of specialist resource bases (SRB's) attached to mainstream schools across the County Borough, and therefore the number of places for children with ALN within specialist provision.

- 5.4 Proposal - establishing new specialist resources bases at:
- Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (2 classes)
  - Idris Davies 3-18 (3 classes over 2 years with capacity for maximum 30 in total)
  - Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary (1 class with capacity of 8 -10)
  - St Helens RC Primary (1 class with capacity of 8 - 10)
  - One other primary school to be determined (1 class with capacity of 8-10)
- 5.5 All the provisions would be managed by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the schools on behalf of the Local Authority (LA).
- 5.6 Admission for children whose needs require such additional learning provision (ALP) is the responsibility of the LA who is the decision maker. This will be facilitated through the LAALN panel.
- 5.7 Provisions will focus on complex needs and autistic spectrum disorder.
- 5.8 Where appropriate to needs, pupils within the bases would be supported to access mainstream integration opportunities. Support would be targeted to meet the individual needs of pupils within the base.
- 5.9 The main benefits of this proposal are:
- Making provision within Caerphilly for larger numbers of our pupils with complex needs and ASD, thus ensuring needs are met closer to home and avoiding reliance on costly out of county provision.
  - The provision of targeted support for pupils with complex needs and ASD with access to a mainstream primary / secondary school environment, ensuring pupils are supported to reach their full potential.
  - Ensuring the development of provision through the Welsh Medium for pupils of secondary age.
  - Supporting and influencing practice through the wider school, benefiting pupils and staff.
  - Continuing the development of effective partnership across provisions and with the special school.
- 5.10 Should the proposal to consult be supported the Statutory Process as set out in the School Organisation Code (2018) as determined by the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 will be followed. A consultation document will be published and provided to prescribed consultees (including Scrutiny Members) and will be given at least 42 days to respond to the document, with at least 20 of these being school days.
- 5.11 The principles of engagement outlined in the Local Authority's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 will also be acknowledged and the

team will engage with any additional 'interested parties' as required, through appropriate channels to ensure the dissemination of information and provision of a suitable platform for the consultees to make their views known is made available.

5.12 Following the consultation period, a consultation report along with any responses received will be collated and reported back to Members, where a decision will be made as to whether to proceed with the proposal as outlined and publish a Statutory Notice.

5.13 If objections are received, an objection report must be published with a summary of the objections and the Council's response.

#### 5.14 **Conclusion**

5.15 Members are asked to consider the contents of this report and to endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation to develop specialist provision across the County Borough.

### **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 That the development of provision is deliverable within the allocated budget.

6.2 That the developments will meet the additional learning needs of the children and young people in the County Borough.

### **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 An integrated Impact Assessment is not required at this stage in the process. A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be completed at the relevant stage in the process.

### **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Capital funding has been secured from within the core capital maintenance budget up to £777k.

8.2 The current estimated revenue cost for the additional SRB class in Primary Phase is circa £164k for a full year. On the basis that the consultation will include 4 classes at Primary Phase this would equate to £656k for a full financial year, should this capacity be required.

8.3 The estimated revenue cost of an additional SRB class in Secondary Phase is circa £178k. Should 2 additional classes be required at Idris Davies 3-18 that would equate to £356k for a full year.

- 8.4 Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni currently supports a level of provision for Welsh medium pupils. The financial support required going forwards to support 2 SRB classes would require additional funding of circa £232k for a full year.
- 8.5 In total this is an estimated additional cost of £1.244m (largely a pressure in financial year 2026/27). Discussion around how these costs could be funded will need to be considered as part of medium term financial planning, alongside the cost implication of not being able to meet pupil needs within the County Borough.
- 8.6 There are also likely to be significant implications in relation to pupil transport costs linked to those children attending specialist provision.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the process.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The “Development of Specialist Additional Learning Provision for Children with Additional Learning Needs” report was considered by the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2025.
- 10.2 One Member enquired if there was sufficient support staff for Welsh medium provision at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and if the thirty extra pupils at Idris Davies School would be too big a burden. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN gave assurances that staff were in situ at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and that discussions prior to the proposals had been with schools with surplus places. The Headteacher and governing body at Idris Davies School were confident that they had the capacity to support CCBC with this development.
- 10.3 A Member sought assurances that the proposed new specialist resource bases (SRBs) met the requirements of children with complex needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorders, particularly in terms of staffing, training and resources. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN gave details on the comprehensive learning offer that was available to ensure schools met their statutory obligations around ALN. Members heard how this support which helped to ensure that schools and staff had the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children would continue.
- 10.4 The Member asked what criteria had been used to select schools for the proposed SRBs, and if geographical equity across the County Borough had been considered. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN outlined the discussions that had taken place with the existing cohort of schools that had specialist

resource bases and with schools with existing surplus places. This process allowed CCBC to map out provision across the Local Authority area.

- 10.5 The Member highlighted the increase in demand for specialist provision and wished to know what long term strategy the Council had beyond the current proposal to future proof ALN capacity. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised that provision was constantly under review. As part of this ongoing process existing trends such as birth rates were considered as part of the planning process.
- 10.6 The Member enquired how the Council would measure the effectiveness of the new SRBs in meeting the needs of children and improving outcomes. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN outlined how this was multifaceted and highlighted the support from the School Improvement Service. Members also heard how children with ALN receiving specialist provision had individual development plans which were reviewed on an annual basis as a minimum requirement.
- 10.7 The Member then asked how the Local Authority would ensure that the transition process to SRBs would be smooth and supportive for children and their families. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN gave details on the transition between mainstream and specialist provision which was a person-centred approach and would only happen following discussions and with the support of the pupil and their families. Individual need and what was important to the family were key factors.
- 10.8 One Member wished to know if many pupils would be moved to new locations as a result of the proposal. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised that there would be 8-10 children maximum at each SRB class and reiterated the consultation with families before any decision was reached. Details were also outlined on the support available for transporting children from their home to the SRB provision.
- 10.9 Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting that there were 12 votes For, 0 Against, and 0 Abstentions) this was unanimously agreed

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)  
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013  
ALN and Tribunal Act (2018)

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### **Consultees:**

Richard Edmunds, Chief Executive

Mark S Williams, Executive Director Corporate and Regeneration  
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities  
Councillor Donna Cushing, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee  
Sue Richards, Director of Customer, Economy and Regeneration Services  
Steve Harris, Director of Financial Services and S151 Officer  
Keri Cole, Director of Education  
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager  
Dr Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement  
Andrea West, Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager  
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager  
Lynne Donovan, Director of People Services  
Rob Tranter, Director of Democratic, Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager  
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities and Welsh Language and Consultation)  
Matthew Webb, Head Teacher Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni  
Ceri Owen, Head Teacher Idris Davies High School  
Craig George, Head Teacher Rhiw Sir Dafydd Primary  
Sophie Sanchez, Head Teacher St Helens RC Primary  
Anne Robertson, Director of Archdiocese of Cardiff