



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

# Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

## **Proposal: To establish a New Welsh-medium Primary School in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley via a Seedling/Growth Model**

**The consultation will run as follows:**

**Commencing on: Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Concluding on: Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021**



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ysgolion a Cholegau yr 21ain Ganrif  
21st Century Schools and Colleges

CYMRÆG

This consultation document complies with Welsh Governments, School Organisation Code 2018 (V2) guidance

## What is the Purpose of this Booklet?

This booklet has been prepared for parents/carers, school staff, school governors and the wider community of Blaenau Gwent. The booklet provides an overview of the consultation process associated with the Council's proposal to develop a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school within the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. It will be of particular interest to parents/carers who are considering Welsh-medium education for their child/children.

If you would like this information in any other format, please contact the Education Transformation team either via email or telephone, as follows:

- Email us: [21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) or,
- Call us on: (01495) 355470



**Explanatory Notes** - please note the following terms used throughout this document:

<b>Admission Number</b>	All maintained schools admit pupils up to their Published Admission Number (PAN). The admission number is the number of pupil places available in each year group.
<b>Local Development Plan (LDP)</b>	Sets out each <b>local planning</b> authority's proposals for future <b>development</b> and use of land in their area.
<b>Mitigation</b>	The action of reducing the severity or seriousness of something.
<b>Numbers on Roll</b>	The number of pupils at a school (not including nursery pupils).
<b>PLASC</b>	Pupil Level Annual School Census. In January of every year, the Welsh Government collects information from schools. This includes the number of pupils at each school, their age group, home address, ethnicity, data on Welsh language, Special Educational Need (SEN), first language and pupils free school meal entitlement.
<b>Seedling Growth Model</b>	Model used in the development of new schools, where the year groups are added year on year.
<b>Surplus Places</b>	Empty or unfilled places in a school.
<b>Statutory Notice</b>	A statutory notice is the formal publication of a finalised proposal. This will only be undertaken if a decision is made by the Council to proceed with a proposal following consideration of all responses from the consultation process. This is a legal requirement as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).
<b>Welsh-medium School</b>	A school where the first language taught is Welsh.

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## Section 1: Introduction



As part of the Welsh Government's commitment to the goal of one million Welsh speakers by 2050, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance announced on 16 January 2018 that £30 million (100% funded, with no match funding requirement from Councils), would be allocated to support capital projects dedicated to creating additional Welsh-medium education provision.

The Welsh Government approved the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-20 in March 2018 (please refer to the following link for more information:

[https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies\\_Strategies\\_Plans/Blaenau\\_Gwent\\_WESP\\_2017-20\\_Nov\\_2017\\_24th\\_English.pdf](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Blaenau_Gwent_WESP_2017-20_Nov_2017_24th_English.pdf)).

The Blaenau Gwent advocates and sets out key targets and outcomes aligned to the growth and development of Welsh-medium education, childcare, and ultimately the Welsh language locally.

Blaenau Gwent is the only Council in Wales with only one Welsh-medium primary school. Therefore, an ambitious business case was developed seeking to secure additionality at primary level, aligned to latent demand for Welsh-medium primary school places, particularly within the Tredegar/ Sirhowy valley. In October 2018 the Council received confirmation that £6million had been allocated to provide additional Welsh-medium primary provision. Blaenau Gwent secured with £200,000 via the Welsh Government Childcare Capital Grant, to create additional Welsh-medium education and childcare provision within the area.

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg is a 215 place Welsh-medium Primary school situated in the town of Blaenau which is situated in the northern part Ebbw Fach Valley. The school services the whole of Blaenau Gwent in terms of catchment, and caters for pupils aged 3-11 years. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council proposes to respond to the latent demand for increased Welsh-medium childcare and school places for pupils who reside within the Tredegar/Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr (north) Valleys. Through the funding allocated as detailed above, the Council proposes to increase Welsh-medium primary provision via seedling/growth model, in addressing the latent demand described above.

The Council is committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education, which is tailored to meet their needs, develop their potential, extend aspirations, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Creation of a Welsh-medium primary school within the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley, would allow the Council to meet increased demand for Welsh-medium childcare and education places.

## Section 2: Consultation Process

The consultation document and associated process, will provide consultees and interested parties with the opportunity to learn more about, understand and express their views on the Council's proposal, which will inform the final decision on how the proposal is taken forward. The feedback and comments captured throughout the process will be collated, analysed and reported via the Council's political processes. The Council's Executive Committee will then make the final decision based on the outcome of and feedback associated with the consultation.

### Who will we Consult?

This Consultation Document will be distributed, in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code Version 2 (November 2018). **Figure 1** below details the consultees who will be targeted during the statutory consultation period:

<b>Figure 1: Groups the Council will engage with throughout the consultation period</b>	
Children and young people	Welsh Ministers
Parents/carers	Police & Crime Commissioner
Schozol staff	South East Wales Consortium Joint Education Service (SEWC)
School Governing Bodies	Welsh Language Commissioner
Local residents	Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg (RHaG)
Diocesan Directors for Education	Trade Unions
SEN Partners	Family Information Services
LA Inclusion team	Flying Start
Estyn	National Day Nurseries Association
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	Future Generations Commissioner
Community Councils affected by proposal	Members of the public and other interested parties

### Consultation Period and how to get Involved

The consultation period for this proposal will commence on **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020** and conclude on **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021**. Consultees can submit their views on the proposal, however, it should be noted that responses received during this period will not be logged as objection. Should the proposal proceed, and a consultee wish to make an objection, they will need to do so in writing during the statutory notice period outlined on page 18.

The Council would like you to consider the information set out in the following pages and provide your views on the proposal. If you have any questions or queries on the information contained within this document, please contact us either by using the email address below, or by calling us on (01495) 355470.



[21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)



You are also welcome to complete the on line survey using the following link: \*\*\*

All consultation responses should be received by **5pm on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at the latest.**

The Education Transformation team has planned virtual meetings with school staff, governors, Trade Union representatives, pupils and other interested parties. A frequently asked questions page will be developed and updated weekly throughout the consultation period.

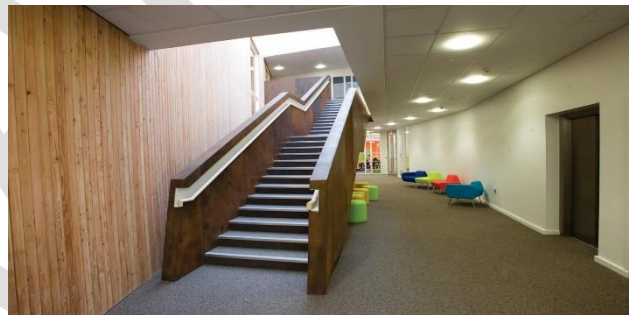
Due to the ongoing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council will not be offering drop in sessions. Should you feel the need to and/or feel strongly about discussing the proposal in person, please contact us via the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools email address as follows: [21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) and a virtual meeting can be arranged.

## Consultation with Children and Young People

There will be an opportunity for pupils of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, along with other children and young people to participate in the consultation process. A children and young person friendly version of this document has been developed, which can be accessed via the website and will be shared with pupils throughout Blaenau Gwent, along with School Councils and the Youth Forum. All information gathered from the consultation will form part of the consultation out-turn report.

## Section 3: Description of the Proposal and Benefits

### Why Change is Necessary



Blaenau Gwent has a low percentage of Welsh speakers, with only 7.8% of the population able to speak Welsh (Census, 2011), the area is the 2nd lowest out of the 22 Councils in Wales. The Blaenau Gwent average is well under the national average of 19%.

As detailed in Section 1 of this document, Blaenau Gwent is the only authority in Wales with one Welsh-medium Primary school. Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg (for pupils aged 3-11), is based in the Ebbw Fach Valley. Blaenau Gwent does not have a Welsh-medium Secondary school. The Council currently work in partnership with Torfaen County Borough Council, in order to secure secondary school places for Blaenau Gwent pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw. There are currently 155 Blaenau Gwent pupils aged 11-19 who attend Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw. Transition rates between primary and secondary are 100%, with all pupils who chose Welsh-medium primary education, opting for Welsh-medium secondary education. Transfer rates have continued to be high (between 95% and 100%), since the school was established.

When Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg opened in September 2010, there were 36 pupils (across all year groups) attending from the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. Numbers have fluctuated since then, with highest being 42 in 2011/12. Numbers began to fall to 22 and under between 2015 and 2017. Over the last 2 academic sessions numbers have stabilised. Learners are taught in 10 class groups and



a typical class would have 1 teacher and 1 teaching assistants in Foundation Phase, and between for 25-30 pupils; however, the school has to be very flexible to meet the needs of the children. Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg forms part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Band B Programme, as such the school is programme for remodelling and refurbishment, ensuring parity of provision throughout the school estate, whilst also addressing suitability issues which will improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The Headteacher and Council are committed to working together to raise the school's profile in line with the school's improvement journey. With the offer of both full-time nursery and free home to school transport for non-statutory nursery pupils, overall pupil numbers have again begun to increase. However, the numbers from the Tredegar/Sirhowy and the northern part of the Ebbw Fawr Valleys remain relatively low in comparison to former years. In 2020, approximately 10 pupils from the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley, along with 10 pupils from Ebbw Fawr Valley (North), were admitted to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg at nursery and Reception.

During consultation and engagement sessions and events aimed at gathering the view of parents whose children access early years' provision, the length of the home to school transport journey from the Tredegar Sirhowy Valley, has a negative impact upon parental choice when consideration education options for their child/children. In addition, public transport links between valleys have been described as 'poor' and are limited, which restrict parent's ability to access to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, if and when they do not have access to their own and or family vehicles.

#### **Demand for Welsh-medium Childcare and Education:**

There are 3 currently Cylchoedd Meithrin (CM) in Blaenau Gwent, who have seen an increase in numbers of children accessing Welsh-medium provision over the last few years. Transfer rates have fluctuated over the last few years, with an increase noted in line with full-time nursery provision.

Welsh-medium childcare provision throughout Blaenau Gwent is on the increase in line with demand. Mudiad Meithrin have been working closely with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council over the last 4 years, in line with the development of both a Ti a Fi and Meithrin in the Tredegar/Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr areas. As result a Ti a Fi was established in May 2018. A new Cylch Meithrin at Tredegar has opened and is registered with Care Inspectorate Wales. The Management Committee are now looking to recruit staff to open for children in early 2021. Mudiad Meithrin has also registered an interest with the Flying Start team at Blaenau Gwent, to provide Welsh Medium places for children in the area.

A local Nursery setting Buds to Blossoms, which is situated in Beaufort, has registered with Mudiad Meithrin and will be providing a Cylch Meithrin session for children in their care. This is a pilot through Mudiad Meithrin's SAS (Setup and Succeed) project, using Croesi'r Bont which is Mudiad Meithrin's Official Language Immersion Scheme. The scheme was established to help develop Welsh language skills for Cylch staff, by ensuring they present standard and consistent language patterns to the children in their care. There has been an excellent response to the scheme across the region. The Scheme has been approved and recognised by ESTYN in several Cylch Meithrin reports following inspections at settings.

Cylch Meithrin Gwdihŵ (Brynithel) are extending their services and are now able to provide an all-day session 9am – 3pm. They have also started the process of becoming an Education provider, this would mean that children are able to stay at Cylch Meithrin Gwdihŵ (Brynithel) for their nursery education, meaning that the transition rate into Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg is likely to increase at Foundation Phase, with entry into the reception year group. Parents accessing this setting have

commented that they would be much more comfortable with their child/children accessing transport at reception age, than they would at nursery age.

Finally, the Early Years Child Care and Play team have secured a Welsh Government Capital Childcare Grant of £1.5 million, to increase childcare within the Ebbw Vale (North) area. Therefore, the Council are seeking to create a new build facility with up to 52 places within the Badminton ward, which is currently planned as a Welsh-medium childcare facility.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) undertaken with parents, indicated that 1% of children come from predominantly Welsh speaking homes, with a further 6% stating they are from bilingual homes. There is a high level of parental support for bilingualism with 55% of parents wanting their children to become bilingual, however, only 8% of parents intended on sending their child to Welsh medium school.

When asked 'Are there any barriers affecting your ability to benefit from Welsh Medium childcare provision?' 394 parents responded as below;

- No – 68% (269)
- Not available locally – 7.8% (31)
- Not available for the hours required – 1.2% (5)
- Age range not appropriate – 0.5% (2)
- Cost – 2% (8)
- Other – 4.3% (17) Comments were asked for and included;
  - 'Not speaking language myself'
  - 'Estyn inspection very poor'
  - 'Concerned as I don't speak Welsh.'
  - 'Yes - Child in a Special Needs School'
  - 'the only provision in the LA area is severely underperforming and I would not choose to send my child into that learning establishment'
  - 'Don't want S.... to have to travel'
  - 'No local Welsh comprehensive. My oldest daughter had to travel from Brynmawr to Pontypool and my 6-year-old will have to do the same'
  - 'Not many places - but haven't looked into it properly.'
  - 'Difficulty in transport'
  - 'Trouble in welsh school, just moved to English school'

Of the 31 parents stating there is no childcare available locally, the geographical spread is as follows; Sirhowy – 8, Ebbw Fawr – 11, North Ebbw Fach – 3, South Ebbw Fach – 9. The survey showed a split in opinion over whether there was enough Welsh medium childcare with 29 parents agreeing there was and 17 disagreeing. 51 parents felt that childcare was available in the language of their choice, but 10 did not. The parental demand measured showed that 2 parents would be looking for Welsh medium childcare in future and 21 would be looking for Welsh and English medium”.

In 2018 the Council undertook a Welsh-medium Demand Survey during the autumn-term. The survey was distributed to 1,460 parents of 0-2 year olds. 72 surveys were completed, which equates to a 4.93% return rate. Out of the 72, 21 were from the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley, 23 from Ebbw Fawr, and 28 from the Ebbw Fach Valley. The results relevant to this consultation are as follows:

- 52% (38) of participants said that they did not feel they have enough information about Welsh-medium education.
- 35% (25) said they had considered Welsh-medium education or childcare.

- 28% (20) of participants would like their child to go to a Welsh-school.
- 82% (59) of participants said that they would send their child to a Welsh-medium school if it was within 2 miles from their home.

The local Welsh Education Forum created a 'Bi-lingual Children' events programme which run from 2017 onwards. The aim of the programme was to promote and ensure that parents were fully aware of both English and Welsh-medium education and childcare options available to them. The events also served to establish the barriers parents perceive that they face with regards Welsh-medium childcare and education. A questionnaire was developed along with comment sheets and 2 events were held in the Tredegar/Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr valley's. There was also an online questionnaire promoted by the Family Information Service, Cymraeg Y Blant and Mudiad Meithrin. Feedback has been extremely positive, with Mudiad Meithrin commenting that Blaenau Gwent are leading the way in terms of family and parent engagement. Parent feedback indicated the following:

- Welsh-medium childcare within the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley decreased between 2016 and 2017, which influenced parents decision in opting for Welsh-medium childcare. However, Mudiad Meithrin have recently increased the childcare options available as detailed above.
- Public transport links do not support effective access to and engagement between parents and the existing Welsh-medium primary school – particularly for parents from the Tredegar/Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr areas who do not drive. Therefore, parents expressed concerns regarding getting to their child in an emergency.
- Parents were concerned about the length of time that their children are on transport to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from the Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar/ Sirhowy areas, particularly at nursery and foundation phase.
- Parents were concerned about their child(ren) attending a Welsh-medium primary school outside of the area in which they live, in terms of how this could negatively influence their child's social network and interaction with friends/peers.
- English speaking parents felt they needed more information on how to support their children in Welsh-medium education.
- Parents felt that the placement of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg was a disadvantage and that there should be Welsh-medium provision located closer to them.

At the Tredegar/Sirhowy event, the questionnaires completed revealed the following:

- 70% (19) of respondents felt that they had enough information about educational provision.
- 67% (18) of respondents felt their child would benefit from being bilingual.
- 59% (16) of respondents stated that they would consider Welsh-medium education and or childcare.
- 92% (25) of respondents only speak English at home, where as there is only 8% (2) which speak Welsh
- 74% (20) of respondents from Tredegar/Sirhowy stated that distance from home influences their choice of school
- 67% (18) of respondents stated that transport options and ease of access influences their choice of school
- 55% (15) a high proportion of respondents stated that others feedback about the school of choice is important factor
- 48% (13) of respondents stated that their decision on education for their child happens when they are pregnant or before being pregnant

Blaenau Gwent Council has secured significant capital funding in order to increase the provision of Welsh-medium education. Welsh-medium childcare developments are also on the increase,

which will create additional demand for education in the long-term and so the school estate will need to develop in order to accommodate this. If Blaenau Gwent does not look to grow our Welsh education options, there is limited scope for growth and development of the Welsh language locally in line with the Welsh Government aspiration for 1 million Welsh Speakers by 2050. Finally, with the national drive to increase Welsh speakers, associated employment opportunities etc. there is a risk that parents will move out of borough to access Welsh-medium education, should we not create a suitable, sustainable local solution.

## Description of the Proposal and Benefits

### The Proposal

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council proposes to develop a new 210 place Welsh-medium Primary School in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. The proposal seeks to develop the school building on the preferred Chartist Way site (see below) as a seedling/growth model, whereby the childcare facility, nursery and reception year groups would come in effect from September 2023, with approximately 28 childcare places, 24 nursery and 24 reception places. The school would grow thereafter year on year. By 2029 the school will be fully established, with all year groups from Nursery to Year 6 operational. It is also proposed that the school will have co-located childcare provision.



The new seedling school would be designed and purpose built in line with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools standards. It is proposed that the school governance and leadership structure is an extension of

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. This would mean that there would be one Governing Body and amendments to the staffing structure, i.e. the creation of a Head of Campus/Leadership Role, which would secure long-term leadership of the seedling school whilst it grows.

There are 4 core components of the proposal as follows:

- I. To create a new 210 place Welsh-medium Primary School in the Tredegar Sirhowy Valley.
- II. To develop the new Welsh-medium Primary School as seedling/growth model where the childcare facility and the nursery and reception year groups come into effect in September 2023, with additional year groups opening for pupil progression each year thereafter. The school would be fully functional with all year groups in operation by September 2029.
- III. To secure a suitable location. Based upon initial site review and investigation, the preferred option is Chartist Way in the Sirhowy area.
- IV. To develop a leadership and management structure aligned to that of the existing primary school.

The proposal is indirectly linked to the Blaenau Gwent 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme which seeks to:

- Address growth in demand for Welsh-medium education
- Reduce surplus capacity and inefficiency in the system
- Expansion of schools and colleges in areas of increased demand
- Address condition and suitability of schools
- Make education assets available for community use where demand exists, to optimise the infrastructure and resources for public services.

The Council's Education Transformation Service has a proven track record of delivering complex school organisation proposals, along with successful delivery of the Band A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, which concluded in March 2019, when Band B came into effect.

Should nothing be change, the Council will be unable to meet latent demand from parents for Welsh-medium schooling the Tredegar Sirhowy area.

## Seedling Model

### What is a seedling school?

A seedling school is a model that can be used when establishing a new school, to allow the facilities and staff to be used efficiently whilst the school grows to its full potential. The school opens initially for childcare, nursery and reception classes, with a year group then added each academic year until the first reception cohort reaches Year 6.

### Welsh-medium Primary School Class Size

During the first year of the seedling school opening, two mainstream classes will be in operation as follows:

- A **nursery class** where up to **24 full-time** places will be offered
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **24** places;

In the second year, the seedling school will consist of:

- A **nursery class** where up to **24 full-time** places will be offered
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **24** places;
- A **Year 1** class with a maximum of **24** places;

In the third year, will consist of:

- A **nursery class** where up to **24 part-time** places will be offered
- A **reception class** with a maximum of **24** places;
- A **Year 1** class with a maximum of **24** places;
- A **Year 2** class with a maximum of **24** places;

In the years following, each new reception year group will have a maximum of 24 places. Full capacity of the school will be realised in September 2028 when all year groups will operate under a two-form entry arrangement.

The table below shows an example of the seedling model of growth for a single form-entry school. The seedling model is considered the most appropriate solution for new Welsh-medium schools and has been tried and tested throughout Wales. Whilst demand is growing for Welsh-medium education, opening a new Welsh-medium school immediately to all year groups could potentially affect and destabilise other schools across the County Borough. However, the proposed model being seedling, would largely mitigate any potential impact.

	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>	<b>Yr 2</b>	<b>Yr 3</b>	<b>Yr 4</b>	<b>Yr 5</b>	<b>Yr 6</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	24	24						
<b>2024/25</b>	24	24	24					
<b>2025/26</b>	24	24	24	24				
<b>2026/27</b>	24	24	24	24	24			
<b>2027/28</b>	24	24	24	24	24	24		
<b>2028/29</b>	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	
<b>2029/30</b>	30	30	24	24	24	24	24	24
<b>2030/31</b>	30	30	30	24	24	24	24	24

### Benefits and Disadvantages of the Seedling Model

<b>What are the benefits of a seedling school?</b>	<b>What are the disadvantages of a seedling school?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school capacity would grow as demand increases;</li> <li>• Stable growth to support existing schools;</li> <li>• Reduces the possibility of mass movement of pupils from other schools;</li> <li>• Effectively manages class sizes to support staffing and the school budget; and,</li> <li>• Pupils living outside the school catchment area can still apply for a place at the school and may be successful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes a number of years to deliver growth;</li> <li>• Possible implications for siblings with changes to catchment areas; and,</li> <li>• Possible implications for families moving to Tredegar area with children of different ages.</li> </ul>

### Benefits and Disadvantages of the Proposal when Compared with the Status Quo

This proposal will provide equality of opportunity for pupils to be educated via the medium of Welsh. There is already an array of English-medium and Faith-based primary school options available to families within Blaenau Gwent. The proposal would also support the Council to address the barriers parents perceive in accessing Welsh-medium education, and support families to recognise the benefits of being bi-lingual.

Expected benefits of this proposal when compared with the status quo (do nothing) are as follows:

- Equality of opportunity and choice for families in accessing and considering the option of Welsh-medium education and childcare.
- The Growth of Welsh language and Welsh-medium education, in line with the Welsh Government vision for 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- £6.2 million capital investment into the Blaenau Gwent school estate, improving the condition, suitability and access to education options locally.
- Increase childcare provision for families.
- Creation of a local solution which can address the latent demand for Welsh-medium primary places in Tredegar/Sirhowy and North Ebbw Fawr areas.
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of the education options for pupils transitioning from Welsh-medium pre-school settings into statutory education.
- Creation of an innovative, flexible education facility which is able to contribute to improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being within Blaenau Gwent and across the region.
- Secure and additional fit for purpose 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment for Welsh-medium pupils and staff.
- Reduce class sizes and raise standards of education, facilitating improved outcomes for pupils.
- Create opportunities for pupils to be taught through the medium of Welsh closer to their home.
- Increase the number of Welsh-medium primary places available in the local area, supporting the sustainability of Welsh-medium education and the Welsh language.
- The seedling/growth model will ensure that there is minimal disruption to the existing school estate and allow sufficient time for the school to grow.

Disadvantages of this proposal when compared with the status quo (do nothing) are as follows:

- It is estimated that there could be variance of approximately 2-5% within the overall primary pupil population for schools and in turn the secondary school within the Tredegar/Sirhowy valley dependent on take-up. However, with stable and positive variations in the birth rates, inward migration and expected housing developments, the variance is limited and the impact upon the school estate is likely to be minimal.
- The Welsh-medium school will be developed via a seedling/growth model, which means that pupils will be admitted only to the available year groups from its inception. Therefore, in-year transfer opportunities will be limited until such time that the school is fully developed.

### Risks and Mitigation

The Council has a proven track record of managing both school build and school organisation projects. These risks can be managed by the Council and schools working together.

Risk	Mitigation
<b>Destabilisation of the existing school estate.</b>	The proposal seeks to develop the school via a seedling/growth model, whereby childcare provision, nursery and reception year groups would come in effect from September 2023, with approximately 28 childcare, 24 nursery and 24 reception places available. The school would grow thereafter year on year. By 2029 the school will be fully established, with all year groups from Nursery to Year 6 operational. The growth model will ensure that there is minimal disruption in terms of pupil numbers, and allow the school and Council to determine and manage the demand for places.

	<p>Birth rates, migration into Blaenau Gwent, pupil projections and housing developments have all been considered in line with the admission number and capacity of the new school. The data is telling us the current school estate in terms of the number of schools, pupil places etc. is sustainable in the medium - long term, with the creation of an additional Welsh-medium Primary School.</p> <p>The proposal is to align the management and governance structure to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Heylg. This would ensure that staffing, pupil place allocation etc. is managed to ensure minimum disruption to the existing Welsh-medium Primary School.</p> <p>Pupils currently access Welsh-medium secondary education at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw. Places have been secured for Blaenau Gwent pupils until at least 2029. Neighbouring Councils including Blaenau Gwent, are currently working together in line with the proposal to extend the age range at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, to secure future Welsh-medium secondary places 2029 and beyond.</p>
<b>The consultation process does not address stakeholder perspective and understanding of the project. Therefore the project is not supported and does not progress.</b>	The consultation document has been written with a detailed summary of how the proposal will work and why it is needed. An engagement plan has been developed to ensure continued engagement with pupils, parents, staff, other stakeholders and the wider community; throughout the consultation process.
<b>The project is delivered late and/or over budget.</b>	The Council is experienced in the delivery of new build projects. Should the proposal proceed the Council will develop: a detailed timeline including key milestones (which are already known), a dedicated project group comprised of all relevant officers, and a detailed financial profile. The project development and delivery would be monitored weekly and reported to senior leaders.
<b>Planning approval is denied and so a site is not secured.</b>	A detailed site appraisal has taken place in order to identify suitable locations for the new school. The most suitable location has been identified and will be subject to further site investigation, along with planning. Early engagement with Planning has taken place and will continue post consultation should the proposal be approved.
<b>Opposition to the proposal, meaning that the proposal will not be delivered.</b>	<p>Positive engagement with key stakeholders i.e. the schools directly affected and those indirectly affected in Tredegar/Sirhowy has already taken place. The formal consultation process will offer the opportunity for schools, parents, pupils and the wider community to gain a full appreciation of the positive opportunity that this proposal presents within Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>A number of options have been considered in line with the proposal and this document details why change is needed, and why the proposal that has been brought forward for consultation is the Councils preferred option.</p>

## Alternatives Considered and Discounted

Aside from the proposal detailed above, the following options were considered in line with the development of a new Welsh-medium primary provision (broken down by type of provision, governance models and site/ location):



### **Type of Provision Considered:**

- Co-location of the Welsh-medium seedling school in an existing English-medium school with internal surplus capacity to accommodate a seedling and or school build.
- Co-location of the Welsh-medium seedling school in an existing English-medium school with enough external capacity to accommodate the seedling and school build.

The above options were discounted as they would potentially:

- Cause disruption to the existing school estate i.e. developing a seedling on a live site, affecting school capacity and admission numbers.
- Not be sustainable as the provision grows.
- Negatively affect immersion from a Welsh-language perspective, as co-location options in the area where latent demand has been evidenced would be on existing English-medium school sites, i.e. at play times and in-between school sessions English language would be the 'norm'.
- Incur higher capital build costs in the long-term, as double the work would be required to remodel an internal or external area of an existing school and then potential build a new one as the numbers/ year groups grow.

### **Governance Models Considered:**

- Treat this as a new School with a new Headteacher and Governing Body, obviously under regular review of pay range as the pupil numbers increase.
- Treat this as a new school, but consider a Federation with the existing Welsh-medium Primary.

The above options were discounted as they would potentially:

- Have a negative effect on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, with limited alignment.
- Have a negative financial impact from a revenue perspective.

### **Site/Locations Considered:**

Education, Planning, Technical Services and Estates have carried out an appraisal of Council owned sites within the locality to identify sites that could accommodate a single form entry school based on Building Bulletin guidance. This resulted in the preferred site being identified at Chartist Way (Page 12). The feasibility study shows how the school could fit on the curtilage of this plot of land. An outline plan is included on the next page circling the proposed location. Please note that the details of this may be subject to change.

The Council have considered a number of sites to accommodate the development and have narrowed the search down to the below sites:

- Deighton Playing Field – least favourite option as it would take away from the existing school, is a green area and may cause more traffic congestion.
- Land adjacent to the Vitec Building in Tredegar – this option was ruled out due to the fact that the land is a high flood risk area and that the land is also identified as
- Tredegar Comprehensive playing fields.

## **Learner Travel Arrangements**

The Council's Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy states that free home to school transport will be provided for all statutory school age pupils who attend their designated school and who qualify under the Council's distance limits. Within Blaenau Gwent the distance limits are as follows:

- Under 8 years of age – living more than 1.5 miles from the school.
- 8 – 11 years of age, living more than 2 miles from the school.
- 11 – 16 years of age, living more than 2 miles from the school.

## **Post 16 Transport Provision**

Blaenau Gwent's current policy is to provide all post 16 pupils/students who qualify on the grounds of distance a travel grant of £150. In respect of student attending a Coleg Gwent campus site the £150 can either be received by students in monetary form or paid directly to Coleg Gwent in order to subsidise a season ticket. The season ticket allows students to travel to Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone or any other Coleg Gwent campus at a reduced cost to them, currently set at £1.00 per single journey.

Students, who travel to the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Unit at the Learning Zone, are able to do so free of charge via an approved transport provider contracted by the Council. The use of this transport must be approved by the Council's ALN section. The travel policy also provides for pupils accessing post 16 education at either a Welsh medium or faith secondary provision, by allowing free travel on existing transport in lieu of the travel grant.

## **Section 4: Consultation Details**

### **Consultation Outcome and Next Steps**

#### **Consultation Report**

Feedback from the consultation will be collated, analysed and presented in a Consultation Out-turn Report to the Council's Executive Committee in February 2021. The report will be available 2 weeks before a decision is made via the Council's website before the decision is made to or not to proceed to publish a statutory notice. Hard copies can be obtained on request from the email address detailed above.

#### **Statutory Notice**

Should this proposal be approved at Executive Committee, the Council will then go out to statutory notice in March 2021. This will run for 28 days, during this period, you will be able to object via the email address provided in this consultation booklet. Any issues raised by interested parties will then summarised and presented back to the Executive Committee for a final decision to be made.

Should the proposal proceed, a copy of the Statutory Notice will be displayed on the Council's website and at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. Hard copies of the statutory notice will be available on request.

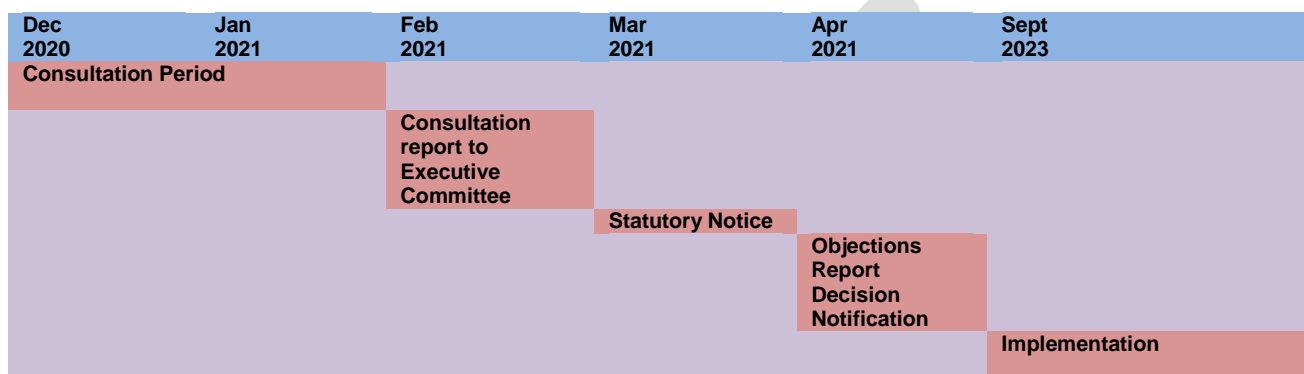
## Determination of Proposal

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will determine the proposal based upon the objections that will be collated post Statutory Notice Period in April 2021. This may lead to the approval, rejection or approval for the proposal with modifications.

## Decision Notification

Once the decision has been approved, an electronic copy of determination will be sent out to all interested parties and published on Blaenau Gwent's County Borough Council's website within 7 days of the decision April 2021.

## The Statutory Process Timeline



## Section 5: Details of Affected Schools

### School numbers on roll and pupil projections

As previously discussed, Blaenau Gwent only has one Welsh-medium primary school and all secondary pupils are educated in Torfaen; therefore, there is only one school in Blaenau Gwent that is primarily affected by the proposal Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, the school has a condition rating B and suitability rating C, and the School Categorisation is Yellow. The Secondary school that they feed into is situated in Torfaen. The table below provides further details on both the primary and secondary schools:

Name of School and location	Category	Language	Age Range
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, Abertillery, NP13 3DQ	Maintained	Welsh-medium	3-11
Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, Folly Road, Trevethin, Pontypool NP4 8JD	Maintained	Welsh-medium	11-18

### Primary School Pupil Place and Projection Data

The school's capacity is 258, along with a nursery capacity of 60. The numbers on role (actual as at September each year) are as follows:

Table 1: School (current capacity)	Actual Numbers on Roll (ANoR) September 2016	ANoR September 2017	ANoR September 2018	ANoR September 2019	ANoR September 2020
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg (258)	232	225	231	209	215

The following table provides projections for the school over the next five years (projections for September each year):

Table 2: School Capacity	Projected September 2021	Projected September 2022	Projected September 2023	Projected September 2024	Projected September 2025
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	266	258	253	259	263
Welsh-medium Seedling School	-	-	48	72	94

### Secondary School Pupil Place and Projection Data

Torfaen County Borough Council has consultation on a proposal to extend the age range of Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw to 3-18, please refer to the following link for more information:

The numbers on role (actual as at September each year) are as follows:

Table 3: School (current capacity)	Actual Numbers on Roll September 2016	ANoR September 2017	ANoR September 2018	ANoR September 2019	ANoR September 2020
Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw (1107)	939	888	860	819	762

The following table provides projections for the school over the next five years (projections for September each year):

Table 4: School (current capacity)	Projected September 2021	Projected September 2022	Projected September 2023	Projected September 2024	Projected September 2025
Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw (1107)	778	820	862	875	912

There is also an assumption that should this proposal be established Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg would be impacted indirectly, as the pupils entering the school from the Tredegar Sirhowy area at the moment will choose to attend the satellite school in Tredegar Sirhowy.

### Indirectly affected

Although, not directly affected, there will potentially be an impact upon English-medium and Faith schools within the school development area (detailed below) in terms of pupil numbers:

#### Tredegar/ Sirhowy

- Bryn Bach Primary School, Merthyr Road, Tredegar NP22 3RX
- Deighton Primary School, Stockton Way, Tredegar NP22 3ES
- Georgetown Primary School, Oakfield Road, Tredegar, NP22 4LP
- Glanhwy Primary School, Coach Bach, Tredegar, NP22 4RW
- St Joseph's R.C. Primary School, Ashvale, Dukestown, Tredegar, NP22 4AQ
- Tredegar Comprehensive School, Stable Lane, Tredegar, NP22 4BH

#### Ebbw Fawr (North)

- Glyncoed Primary School, Badminton Grove, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5UL
- Rhos-Y-Fedwen Primary School, Honeyfield Road, Rassau, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5TA
- Willowtown Primary School, Brynheulog Street, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6NJ
- All Saints R.C. Primary School, Heol-yr-Ysgol, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6QP

## Section 6: Other Considerations

### Impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language

This proposal would increase pupil numbers of Welsh-medium school places available in the area. The Council does not expect any negative impact on the Welsh Language from this proposal. Welsh is taught in English-medium and Special Schools in line with the National Curriculum. The Council works closely and constructively with partners on its Welsh Education Forum (WEF).

The Council monitors birth rates, the number of extra pupils that may come from new housing and the patterns of how many pupils are in English/Welsh-medium schools. This allows the Council to bring forward suitable plans to deal with any increase in demand. This will be at an appropriate time to ensure there are enough places available.

Section 84 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, requires each Council to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 (please refer to **link below** for more information), is directly aligned to both the Welsh Government's and the Council's Welsh Language strategic frameworks. The strategic priorities highlighted in the draft WESP document for the next three years can be summarised as follows:

- Raise the profile and levels of participation for Welsh-medium education across the County Borough by 2020, to contribute to the vision for one million speakers by 2050.
- Increase the early year's provision offer to stimulate parental demand to enable growth across the County Borough.
- Increase transition rates from Welsh-medium nursery provision to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg by 50% in 2020.
- Work regionally with South East Wales Local Authorities to secure places for Blaenau Gwent learners in Welsh-medium secondary provision between 2017-2020 and beyond.
- Improving Welsh medium learner outcomes by 2020 so that learners raise aspirations and improve their life chances.

The Welsh-medium proposal is timely in that Welsh Government approved the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-20 in March 2018 (please refer to the following link for more information:

[https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies\\_Strategies\\_Plans/Blaenau\\_Gwent\\_WESP\\_2017-20\\_Nov\\_2017\\_24th\\_English.pdf](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Blaenau_Gwent_WESP_2017-20_Nov_2017_24th_English.pdf));

Which advocates increasing Welsh education opportunities across the County Borough. The proposal will also support Welsh Governments Welsh language strategy: 2050. <https://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170711-welsh-language-strategy-eng.pdf>

Welsh Government plans to undertake curriculum reform, investing significantly in Welsh language developments, which could see the subject of second language Welsh being abolished, with all pupils in Wales studying first language Welsh.

### Finance

Blaenau Gwent has secured capital funding via Welsh Government to the value of £6.2 million, to develop a Welsh-medium 210 place primary inclusive of nursery and childcare provision, via seedling/growth model.

There will however, be revenue costs associated with this proposal. The below figure has been calculated based on the gross internal floor area of proposed school, a maximum projected pupil population of 48 in its first year. It is estimated that there will be revenue expenditure in the region of £232,000 in 2023/24 (incorporating building maintenance, caretaking, cleaning, grounds maintenance, energy and rates etc.), along with leadership and administration costs. These figures are based on the 2020/21 price base. The costs would be funded from the Individual School Budget.

Transport costs will be funded via the Council's Home to School Transport Budget. It is anticipated that transport costs would not significantly increase, with reduction in transport costs to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg off setting any additional costs created by the new school development.

### **Admission Arrangements**

Should the proposal proceed, Blaenau Gwent Council will act as the Admissions Authority for the new school. The new school is proposed to have 210 primary school places, plus nursery provision for 24 full-time places (48-part time equivalent). It is proposed that the school will start as a "seedling school" with pupils initially admitted into the reception and nursery classes who will apply as part of the normal admissions round. The school will have an admission number of 24 per year group which can grow as the school grows.

Blaenau Gwent Council as the admission authority, is not able to offer a guaranteed places policy particularly given the requirements of the Government Infant class legislation which restricts the size of Foundation Phase classes to no more than 30 pupils per class. Although not statutory, the "target" size for Key Stage 2 classes is also 30. If applications for admission to a school exceed the number of places available, the council's published over subscription criteria will apply.

### **Equality Impact Screening**

A detailed Equality impact assessment has been undertaken, in order to assess the impact of the proposal and decisions upon the protected characteristics. A summary of the impact is detailed within the Equal screening assessment which can be found in **Appendix 1**.

### **Community and Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

A community impact assessment has been undertaken in order to assess the impact of the proposal upon stakeholders and the wider community. Please refer to **Appendix 2** for the summary document.

The proposal involves the development of additional Welsh-medium education and childcare provision; therefore, it is expected to have a positive impact on Welsh language, access to and the provision of Welsh-medium education and childcare, along with parent and community engagement opportunities.

### **United Nation Rights of the Child (UNCRC):**

The Council in all its corporate responsibilities ensure that they will always engage positively with children and young people. If this proposal is implemented, the seven core aims of the UNCRC will be maintained.

With particular reference to:

- **Article 28** You have the right to education.
- **Article 29** You have the right to education which tries to develop your personality and abilities as much as possible and encourages you to respect other people's rights and values and to respect the environment.

## **Engagement of Children and Young People in this Consultation**

As part of this consultation process, the Education Transformation team in partnership with schools, the Inclusion team and Youth Service; will consult with pupils that are affected by the proposal, as well as engaging with both the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum and Schools Grand Council.

## **Need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools**

Blaenau Gwent Council regularly consider the sufficiency of places to meet local demand currently and in the future.

## **Surplus places/Capacity Issues**

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg has a capacity for 215. To meet current and future demand an increase in capacity is required for the School medium to long term plan. Should the proposal to build a new Welsh-medium primary school proceed this will all more places to be offered in Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg in line with development of childcare facilities offered.

Short-medium term there will be relatively little impact on the primary provision (this is an assumption that approximately 1/3 children from each of the school's catchment areas will apply to attend) in the Tredegar/Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr North areas. However, in the long term with numbers increasing year on year to attend the Welsh-medium seedling primary provision will experience an impact based on current projects.

Tredegar Comprehensive school is assumed to the biggest impact if 24 pupils opt for Welsh-medium secondary as a result of them attending the Welsh-medium seedling.

## **Capital Costs / Capital Receipts**

The estimated capital costs of the project are to be fully funded by Welsh Government and are in the region £6.2m. There are no anticipated capital receipts associated with the scheme, the council would forgo a capital receipt in relation to the land it will be utilising for the build.

## **Housing Developments**

On average, in the past 5 years, 90 houses have been built in Blaenau Gwent each year. This level of growth is expected to continue. These potential homes either already have planning permission, are seeking legal agreement or are included in the LDP. There will be more children living in new housing as well as more children living in existing housing. Therefore, extra school places in general in existing schools will grow. **Figure 2** - illustrates the number of housing Developments which are currently in the Local Development Plan (LDP)

	According the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for <b>Tredegar Valley</b> .					According the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for <b>Ebbw Fawr Valley</b> .					According the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for <b>Ebbw Fach Valley</b> .				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Housing Associations:	23	18	0	0		13	13	33	0		0	16	20	0	0
Private Sector Housing:	8	7	6	6		34	104	92	32		3	53	40	17	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>32</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

For more information please visit the following Blaenau Gwent webpage: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/planning/local-development-plan/ldp-allocations/>

The above data tells us that there are over 472 houses being planned between 2020 – 2024 reflecting or planning for the number of pupils in each year group in existing housing will increase. The population however, would be subsumed within the existing mainstream primary and secondary settings. With little or no effect on the special schools.

## Human Resources

The opening of a new provision would generate opportunities to increase the staff cohort and it would provide opportunities for Welsh-medium speaking staff. There are professional learning opportunities for staff to access welsh-language training through various routes. Should the proposal be agreed a group will be set up to look at the staffing requirements and the governance model in more depth.

## Partnerships

The 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' engagement programme is about local people, businesses and organisations having a say on how we can improve Blaenau Gwent for our future generations.

In its 1<sup>st</sup> year the group have already engaged with over 1,500 people from throughout Blaenau Gwent to find out what they would like the area to be like in the future. Their feedback has been used to help us put together a number of priorities that we will work on over the next few years to help us create the Blaenau Gwent that we all want.

Our Well-Being Plan outlines our objectives for improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent and meeting our duties under the Future Generations Act (2015). The 5 objectives in the plan have been developed to reflect that Blaenau Gwent Wants.

- **The best start in life for everyone**
- **Safe and friendly communities**
- **To look after and protect the natural environment**
- **To forge new pathways to prosperity**
- **To encourage healthy lifestyles**



These well-being objectives are ones we consider to have real power to bring about change, that are the most urgent and that the evidence tells us need the combined force of the Public Services Board partners to deliver and improve well-being.

## Section 7: Evaluation of Present Arrangements

### Current Estyn Results

Schools are inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of an inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise standards achieved by their pupils (Estyn).

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg last Estyn inspection was undertaken in 2020. The results of which are tabled below:

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

If a school is judged as adequate or unsatisfactory, they will be subject to monitoring by Estyn or the Local Authority until such time as they are judged to have made sufficient progress to be removed from the list of schools requiring improvement. Overall, this assessment is a good result for the school, only having 4 recommendations for improvements.

- **R1** Ensure that teaching and learning experiences develop the independence of all pupils in the foundation phase consistently
- **R2** Improve provision to develop pupils' ICT skills across the school
- **R3** Strengthen self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures in order to prioritise and address the most important areas

A sample of comments from the latest inspection are detailed below:

- Very few are able to speak Welsh before entry. However, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress during their time at the school.
- The working relationship between pupils and staff at the school is sound and provides an effective foundation to maintain a caring and supportive ethos. Nearly all pupils talk about their school with pride.
- Pupils play a leading role in the school's strategic work. Members of the wide range of children's committees have a purposeful influence on different aspects of the school.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of continuous self-evaluation.

## Quality and Standards in Education

The quality and standards of schools in Blaenau Gwent are monitored by the Council, in line with the national system of school categorisation and guidance in respect of schools causing concern. Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales and is established under the 1992 Education Act. Standards and the quality of provision are also monitored periodically through the Estyn Inspection Framework for the inspection of schools.

Since 2012, the Council has commissioned the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support school improvement in Blaenau Gwent's schools. The EAS provide school improvement support to the following Councils: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. As part of this proposal, the Council will work in partnership with the EAS to secure increased levels of support for the schools. This will ensure appropriate support is in place during the period of transition.

**Standards:** The proposal will not affect the standards in the Welsh-medium school affected. The new Welsh-medium primary school building will receive the appropriate level of challenge and support, as per the arrangements at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.

**Wellbeing and attitudes to learning:** The provision of additional pupil places at the proposed Welsh-medium seedling primary school is expected to enable more children to attend school in their local community. The creation of a new Welsh-medium primary school will increase parental choice and provide Welsh-medium education closer to home for children living Tredegar, Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr (North) Valleys. Pupil wellbeing is a priority for Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg which is monitored and reported. The proposal will not impact wellbeing and attitudes towards learning at the other affected schools.

**Teaching and learning experiences:** The teaching at the new Welsh-medium Primary school will follow the national curriculum with Welsh as the language of teaching and learning. The proposal will not impact the teaching and learning experiences at the other affected school.

**Care, support and guidance:** Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg is a caring and inclusive community that provides high quality care and support for all pupils, this will be continued within the new school. All staff are committed to identifying pupils' needs at an early stage and providing them with valuable support. The new Welsh-medium primary building in Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley will be supported by Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, the Council and the Education Achievement Service; to provide high quality care, support and guidance. There will be no change in care support and guidance at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.

**Leadership and management:** The headteacher and leaders have a clear and robust vision to develop the school as a successful learning community by providing high quality education and care for all pupils, this will continue into the new school setting. This vision is based soundly on raising standards, developing pride towards the Welsh language, and pupils' wellbeing. There is an effective leadership team to support the work of setting a decisive strategic direction for all of the school's work. There will be no change to how the quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers will perform. At the proposed Welsh-medium seedling primary school site, the school leadership team will receive support and guidance from the Council and the Education Achievement Service to ensure best practice in leadership and management are continued and adopted.

## Impact of the proposal

Should the proposal be approved, the impact on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg will be largely mitigated, as it is planned to establish a shared governance model across the two schools. It will continue to provide a high quality learning environment in support of enhanced outcomes for all learners. The proposal will ensure that the already excellent standards will be transferred and further developed.

As mentioned previously (Page 13) the growth of the school has the potential to impact on English-medium community primary and secondary provision, along with faith-based primary schools. The biggest impact on primary being in 2029/30, with maximum loss of pupil numbers - if solely from within the exiting/projected pupil population, would be in the region of 24 – 30 pupils across the primary schools detailed on Page 20. There is also a potential impact for secondary provision going forward, with the same maximum level of loss.

## Section 8: Overview of the New School Proposal

The table below details the category, language and age range of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg

<b>New School Proposal Overview</b>	
<b>Admission no and arrangements</b>	<p>Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will act as the Admissions Authority for the admission of pupils to the new school.</p> <p>The admission numbers from 2023 will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursery:24</li> <li>• Reception:24</li> </ul> <p>Admission would be managed in accordance with the Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2022/23).</p>
<b>Age range</b>	3-11 years
<b>Pupil places</b>	<p>The admission will be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Blaina numbers from June 2020 will be: 150</li> <li>• Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Sirhowy numbers from September 2023 will be: 48</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity of the new school</b>	Seedling provision Tredegar 210 places
<b>Location</b>	Preferred option: Chartist Way, Sirhowy, Tredegar.
<b>Category school and language</b>	Maintained Welsh-medium Primary
<b>Schedule of accommodation</b>	To be determined post consultation
<b>Transport arrangements and policy</b>	Transport will be delivered in accordance with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2019. Please refer to Section 1 for more information.
<b>School Categorisation (2019)</b>	Not applicable

<b>Estyn Inspection Results</b>	<a href="https://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6772307">https://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6772307</a> February 2020
<b>Building Condition Categorisation</b>	B
<b>Building Suitability Categorisation</b>	C

### List of facilities provided under the proposal

- Nursery and associated hygiene rooms and calming room
- 5 standard Foundation Phase classrooms
- 2 Key Stage 2 Classrooms
- Flexible teaching spaces
- Dining/assembly hall and kitchen/serverly
- Headteacher and admin offices
- Staffroom
- Teaching streets
- Calming room
- Covered play/learning areas
- Playground and soft social (grass) area

A Co-located Welsh-medium Childcare provision for 28 children

### School Catchment Area

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and the proposed seedling school will still serve the whole of Blaenau Gwent, with the focus of the latter being pupils from the Tredegar Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr North area.

### Transition Arrangements

There will be no change for pupils already attending Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. The proposal will affect pupils who apply for a school place in the 2023/24 academic session. The Council will work with Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and Early Years, Childcare partners to ensure effective planning and transition processes are in place.

## Section 9: Consultation Pro-forma



### Consultation Questionnaire

Please provide your comment on the proposal to establish a new Welsh-medium Primary School in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley via a Seedling/Growth Model.

You may also wish to indicate which of the following reflects your views:

I fully support the proposal	
I support some of the proposal	
I do not support the proposal	

Your comments:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate if you are:**

**Primary:** Teacher/Non-Teaching School Staff / Governor / Parent / Pupil /Local Resident / Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

**Secondary:** Teacher/Non-Teaching School Staff / Governor / Parent / Pupil /Local Resident / Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your time and contribution to the consultation. Your views, comments and responses will be recorded and reported to the Council's Executive Committee in the Consultation Outcome Report.**

**Please detach this form and return by Emailing: [21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)**

**All comments to be received no later than 5:00pm on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

# Appendix 1– Equality Impact Screening



## Screening Form



Service Area Contact Information: <i>(Please complete all fields)</i>				
<b>Name of Person Completing Form:</b> Sharon Northall	<b>Department/Service Area:</b> Education Directorate		<b>Service Manager:</b> Claire Gardner	<b>Date:</b> 30/11/2020
<b>Contact Details:</b> sharon.northall@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk			<b>Name of Proposed Policy:</b> N/A	
Policy Information				
<b>Are you screening for the Equality Impact on a new policy, or an existing policy:</b> N/A Choose an item.			<b>Comments:</b> This EIA screening is in connection with the development of a new 210 Place Primary School in Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley.	
<b>What are the aims and objectives of the policy:</b> <i>There are no associated policy developments, however, the Council is consulting upon a proposal to increase Welsh-medium Education and Childcare provision within the borough.</i>				
Assessment of Impact of the Policy / Practice on Protected Characteristics				
Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Provide reasons and any mitigation required
Age (children, young people, the elderly)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal will have a positive impact upon all ages, by offering them more opportunities to be educated, learn and access provision via the medium of Welsh.
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy and Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Religion and Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sex (male, female)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
<b><u>Additional Indicators of Equality Risk</u></b>				
<i>Please indicate if you believe this policy / practice has a high, medium or low risk as follows (1 = No Impact; 2 = Minimal Impact; 3 = Potential Impact; 4 = Likely Impact; 5 = Inequality Impact)</i>				
Children and / or young people up to the age of 18		1	<i>Please indicate any planned methods aimed at mitigating these risks</i> Click here to enter text.	
The dynamics of a given community		1	<i>Please indicate any planned methods aimed at mitigating these risks</i> There will be more options for parents to consider based on their child's schooling. English medium, Faith Based and Welsh-medium.	
<b><u>Meeting the Equality Objectives</u></b>				
<i>Please indicate below if / how your proposal will contribute to the Equality Objectives</i>				
Objective 1 – Making equality vital in decision making and service provision	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Objective 2 – Be an equal opportunity employer, with a workforce that is aware of and understands the equality agenda	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.	
Objective 3 – Do our best to engage, protect and support those people in our community that need it the most	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.	
Objective 4 – Promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within our communities	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b><u>Evidence and Consultation</u></b>				

Have you undertaken any consultation and engagement activities with protected groups in order to mitigate any risks of discrimination	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Please describe the engagement activities undertaken as part of this process</i> Consultation will be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders in order to gather their views.
<i>Please highlight any additional evidence which might demonstrate consideration of the needs to protected groups in relation to this particular proposal</i>			

DRAFT





# Community and Welsh Language Impact Assessment

## Proposal to establish a Welsh-medium Primary School in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley

November 2020

DRAFT

## **1. Introduction**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) is carrying out a formal consultation on a proposal to establish a Welsh-medium Primary School in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. Should Blaenau Gwent Borough Council wish to implement the proposal following conclusion of the formal consultation, such implementation will be subject to Welsh Language and Community Impact Assessments.

## **2. National Context**

Welsh Government School Organisation Code November 2018 (V2) requires local authorities to conduct a Community Impact Assessment and a Welsh Language Impact Assessment when proposing changes to school organisation. The School Organisation Code stipulates that local authorities need to consider the impact that proposals may have on local families and the local community, by undertaking a community impact assessment, and the impact upon Welsh language via a language impact assessment, if any school affected provides teaching through the medium of Welsh.

## **3. Local Context**

Blaenau Gwent is committed to modernising education, ensuring children and young people receive a first class education, The Council also recognises the importance of having modern and fit for purpose buildings that meet the needs of modern day education. In March 2017, the education directorate published the 'Vision for Education' to Secure excellent achievement and wellbeing for all learners through a partnership, school-led, self-improving system. There are five priorities that the Council aims to deliver. The fifth priority refers to improving the quality of our school estate.

## **Community Impact**

As part of the consultation document development, the Education Transformation team have undertaken a Community Impact assessment which is detailed below, in consideration of the proposal to build a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley.

### **a. Number of Pupils in the area of Tredegar Sirhowy Valley**

There are 1,913 pupils of statutory school age attending schools in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. Of these, 1,247 are primary pupils and 666 secondary pupils. 58% (724) of the primary school age population attend their catchment area school, within Tredegar Comprehensive School this is slightly higher, with 94% (622) of pupils in catchment. The remaining 6% (44) of pupils reside outside of Tredegar/ Sirhowy Valley.

As this proposal seeks to develop the school via a seedling/growth model, calculations have been carried out using existing nursery, reception and Year 1 data.

#### Nursery Data

Out of the 148 nursery age pupils, 62% (92) of pupils attend their catchment area school, 32% (48) of pupils attend a school in Tredegar which isn't their catchment

school, with the remaining 6% (8) residing outside of Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley (predominantly Ebbw Vale and/or out of borough).

#### Reception Data

Out of 166 reception age pupils, 59% (99) of pupils attend their catchment area school, 35% (57) of pupils attend a school in Tredegar which isn't their catchment school, with the remaining 6% (10) of pupils residing outside of Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley (predominantly Ebbw Vale and/or out of borough).

#### Year 1 Data

Out of 176 Year 1 pupils, 56.5% (101) of pupils attend their catchment area school within Tredegar/Sirhowy, 38% (68) of pupils attend a school in Tredegar which isn't their catchment school, and the remainder of pupils 5.5% (7) reside outside of Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley (predominantly Ebbw Vale and/or out of borough).

### **b. Which schools are likely to be affected by this proposal**

An initial appraisal was undertaken to assess which primary schools would be directly affected, and which would be indirectly affected by this proposal in the Tredegar/Sirhowy and North Ebbw Fawr Valleys, should the new school proposal be developed. There is an assumption that the affected schools would be:

**Directly affected** – as this is currently the only Welsh-medium Primary School:  
**Ebbw Fach (North)**

- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Rising Sun Industrial Site, Blaina NP13 1YL

**Indirectly affected** - with possible pupil displacement as a result of parental choice:  
**English and Faith based Primary Schools in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley**

- Bryn Bach Primary School, Merthyr Road, Tredegar NP22 3RX
- Deighton Primary School, Stockton Way, Tredegar NP22 3ES
- Georgetown Primary School, Oakfield Road, Tredegar, NP22 4LP
- Glanhowy Primary School, Coach Bach, Tredegar, NP22 4RW
- St Joseph's R.C. Primary School, Ashvale, Dukestown, Tredegar, NP22 4AQ

#### **Ebbw Fawr (North)**

- Glyncoed Primary School, Badminton Grove, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5UL
- Willoughton Primary School, Brynheulog Street, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6NJ
- All Saints R.C. Primary School, Heol-yr-Ysgol, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6QP

#### **Welsh-medium Secondary**

- Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, Folly Road, Trevechin, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 8JD

Other considerations include:

- Pupil migration into the area from neighbouring authorities which border the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley.
- New pupils resulting from housing developments and in-year transfers.

**c. Information about the distance and travelling time involved in attending an alternative school of the same language category**

Should this proposal not proceed, for the children of families whose first choice is Welsh-medium education, the travel time for pupils via home to school transport would likely be in excess of 50 minutes.

For pupils who wish to partake in after school activity, there are additional transport and access considerations for parents, should parents not have access to their own vehicle. In this instance, parents would need to use either public transport and/or taxi services. There is no direct public transport link to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg via either Tredegar or Ebbw Vale. Therefore, parents would need to make 3 changes as follows from Tredegar and 2 from Ebbw Vale:

- Tredegar to Ebbw Vale
- Ebbw Vale to Brynmawr
- Brynmawr to Nantyglo

Parents and pupils would then be required to walk for at least 15 minutes to safely access the school from the nearest bus stop. Both journeys are likely to take in excess of 1 hour each way, with transport times varying and not consistently passing through.

Therefore, access and engagement with out of hours’ school-based activity is likely to be more difficult should the proposal not proceed. Walking and cycling routes from a number of areas throughout the borough are restricted.

The preferred site, Chartist Way, is on an existing bus route and would make it more accessible for parents on public transport.

**Welsh Language Impact**

The language category of the proposed seedling primary school would be Welsh-medium, the only other Welsh-medium primary in Blaenau Gwent is Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. The proposal would positively impact upon the Welsh language in creating additional childcare, education and community provision.

School	School activities which provide additional opportunities to use Welsh in the school and any alternative school	Does the school provides facilities for members of the community to learn Welsh
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Welsh-medium primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School: clubs after school for KS2 pupils on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays – Art, Sports, Drama, Music, ICT</li> <li>• Urdd run a club on a Monday – various activities.</li> <li>• Menter Iaith run a lunch-time club on a Friday – various activities and we compete in Urdd Eisteddfod, Urdd Sports and take children to Llangrannog Urdd Activity centre twice a year.</li> <li>• The school runs lunch-time Welsh pop music clubs and holds various events during the year promoting Welsh language and culture e.g. Welsh Music Day in February, St. David’s Day March, Caffi Cymraeg</li> </ul>	The school hold community engage activities and sessions for parents, families and residents, which could be expanded upon and further developed school the proposal go ahead.

	<p>termly where parents and the community are invited to coffee morning. TED sessions are also held, where new parents learn Welsh songs and vocabulary that will help them support their children with the language e.g. the school has held cookery sessions, reading sessions, and other various themed sessions during the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During Caffi Cymraeg and TED sessions, the Criw Cymraeg (pupils who lead on the Siarter Iaith/Welsh Charter) lead the learning.</li> <li>• The school has good links with both Tai Calon Welsh learners and BGfm radio station.</li> <li>• The latest development is that the school has established links with the Criw Cymraeg from local English-medium primary schools (Ystruth, Coed-y-Garn and Blaen-y-Cwm), who visit to plan activities such as Welsh Music day disco and seeing how our Caffi Cymraeg works. Other schools such as Deighton Primary School have visited for support and activities to improve Welsh language acquisition.</li> </ul>	<p>Coleg Gwent act as a partner agency delivering courses to young people and adults. Should the proposal proceed, this would offer the opportunity to increase community provision and engagement via the College.</p>
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**d. Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 (WESP) and its delivery agent Blaenau Gwent’s Welsh in Education Forum (WEF)**

Blaenau Gwent, through its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 (WESP) along with Blaenau Gwent’s Welsh in Education Forum (WEF), is committed to expanding the provision of Welsh medium education throughout the County Borough. This proposal would increase opportunities for learning via the medium of Welsh.

All schools in Blaenau Gwent teach and promote the Welsh language. The proposal would increase opportunities to learn and enhance Welsh language and culture within the area.