

# **REPORT ON SURVEY OF PARENTS/CARERS OF PUPILS ATTENDING YSGOL DYFFRYN BANW, YSGOL LLANERFYL AND CYLCH MEITHRIN DYFFRYN BANW**

**MARCH 2018**

## **1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

Council officers have been meeting with the governing bodies of Ysgol Dyffryn Banw and Ysgol Llanerfyl over the last few months. Separate meetings with the two governing bodies have been held, as well as two joint meetings with both governing bodies. At the meetings, the two governing bodies agreed that there was a need for the two schools in the Dyffryn Banw area to merge, due to the small number of pupils attending both schools, however the governing bodies had asked the Council to make a recommendation in terms of where the new school should be located.

Having assessed the two current sites in terms of their ability to accommodate all pupils currently attending the two schools, the Council had identified strengths and weaknesses associated with both current locations. The Council's conclusion was that initial engagement with parents of pupils currently attending the two schools and the local Cylch Meithrin was needed in order to determine a preferred option for the future delivery of education in the Dyffryn Banw area.

To facilitate this, a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to current parents. This report outlines the findings of the questionnaire.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

A written questionnaire was prepared and distributed to current parents at a drop-in session for parents held on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018. A record was kept of the parents that received copies of the questionnaire at the session, and copies were posted to any parents who did not receive a copy at the session. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix A at the end of this report.

A pre-paid envelope was provided with the questionnaire, and respondents were asked to return the questionnaires by Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2018.

## **3. RESPONSES RECEIVED**

Questionnaires were distributed to 35 families whose children currently attend Ysgol Dyffryn Banw or Ysgol Llanerfyl, and 6 families whose children currently attend Cylch Meithrin Dyffryn Banw but do not currently attend Ysgol Dyffryn Banw or Ysgol Llanerfyl. In addition, a number of copies were provided to Cylch Meithrin Dyffryn Banw for distribution to parents of pupils attending the Cylch's Ti a Fi session.

28 completed questionnaires were returned.

#### 4. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

The following section summarises the responses received to the questionnaire.

##### 4.1 Part 1 – About You

- 4.1.1 Respondents were asked to indicate which of the current providers in the area their children currently attended.

The provider/s currently attended were as follows:

Provider/s	Number of questionnaires
Ysgol Llanerfyl only	12
Ysgol Dyffryn Banw only	6
Ysgol Llanerfyl and Cylch Meithrin Dyffryn Banw	4
Ysgol Dyffryn Banw and Cylch Meithrin Dyffryn Banw	2
Cylch Meithrin Dyffryn Banw only	1
Not currently attending any of the above	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Responses were received from parents representing the following number of primary / pre-school aged children currently attending each provider:

Provider	Number of pupils
Ysgol Llanerfyl	24
Ysgol Dyffryn Banw	13
Cylch Meithrin Dyffryn Banw	7
Other pre-school aged pupils	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

- 4.1.2 Parents of pre-school aged children were asked to indicate which of the current schools in the local area they expected their children to attend. The following responses were received:

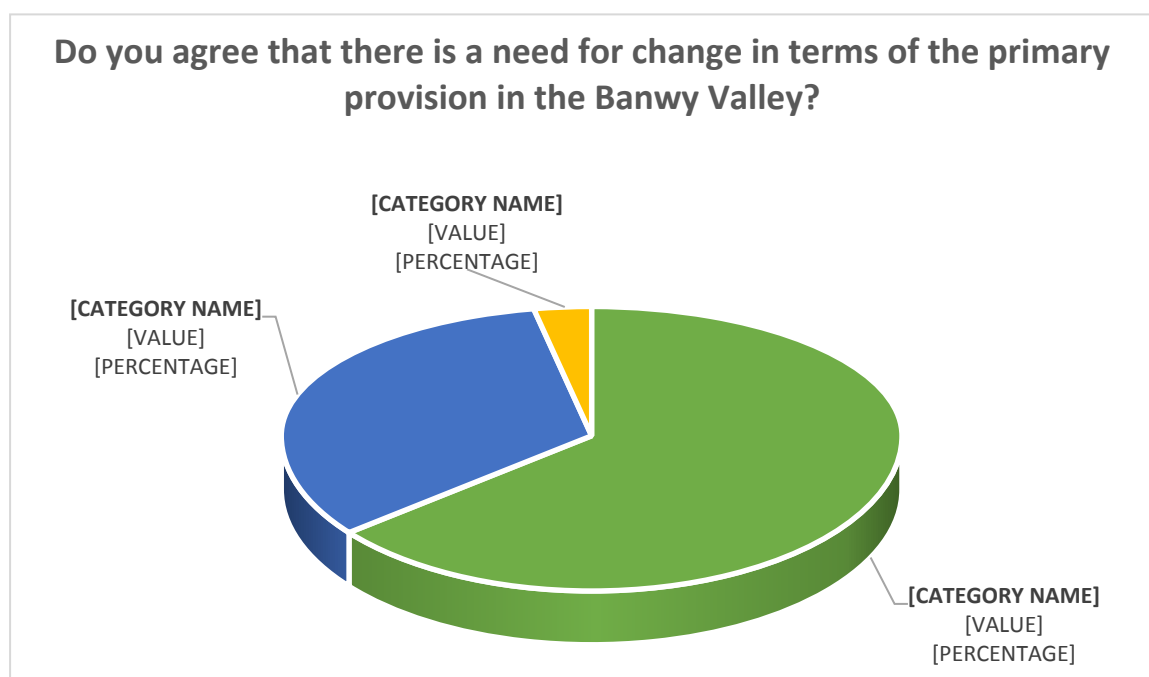
Provider	Number of responses	Number of pupils
Ysgol Dyffryn Banw	7	9
Ysgol Llanerfyl	6	6
Don't Know	1	1
Other	0	0

##### 4.2 Part 2 – Future Options for Primary Provision in the Banwy Valley

- 4.2.1 Respondents were asked to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the following question:

'Given the number of pupils currently attending the two primary schools in the area, do you agree that there is a need for change in terms of the primary provision in the Banwy Valley?'

The following chart summarises the responses received:



Respondents who answered 'No' were asked to explain why. The following issues were raised in the responses received:

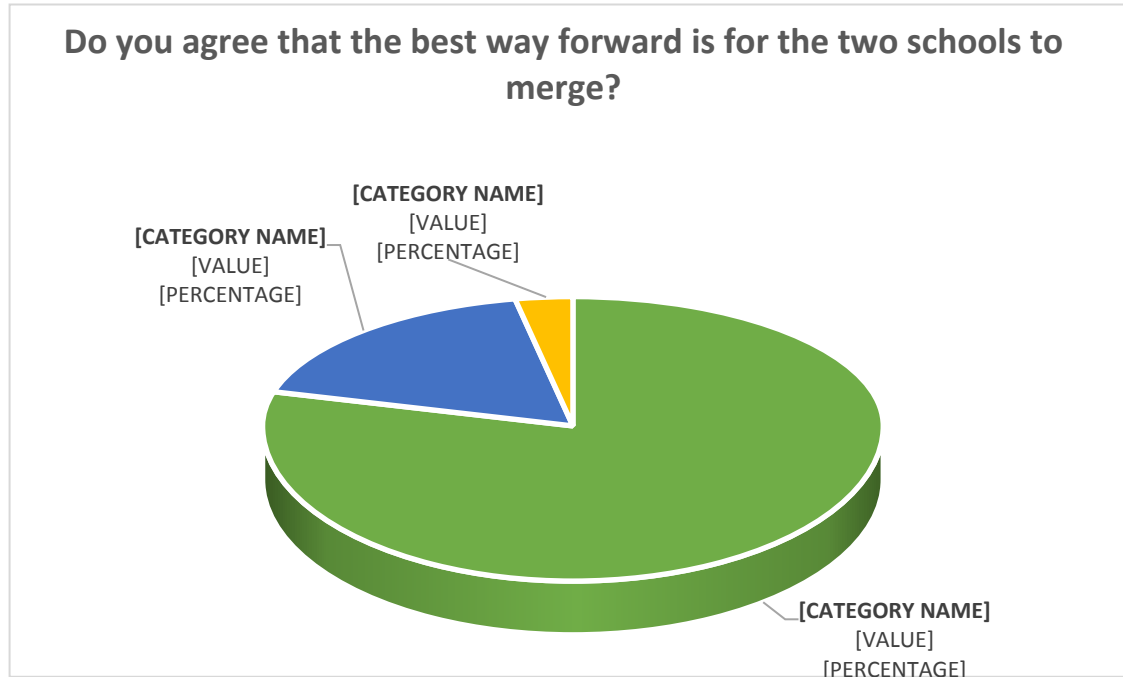
<p><b>i) There is no need for anything to change in Ysgol Llanerfyl</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers in Llanerfyl are healthy whilst Banw are struggling</li> <li>- The fact that Ysgol Dyffryn Banw is unable to attract pupils is not a problem for Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Young people move back to the area so that their children can attend Ysgol Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Only one school has a problem, there is no need to change anything in Llanerfyl. However Banw pupils would be welcome to attend Ysgol Llanerfyl</li> </ul>
<p><b>ii) Concern about the impact on the Welsh language</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Llanerfyl is a rural, friendly school where the Welsh language is heard naturally on the yard</li> <li>- Llanerfyl is a natural Welsh-medium school where most pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes</li> <li>- Any decision to close Ysgol Llanerfyl will impact on Welsh culture and the Welsh language in the area and will go against the aim to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050</li> </ul>
<p><b>iii) Pupil numbers in the area could increase</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupil numbers have been low before in the area but have bounced back – the same could happen again</li> <li>- Would be better to attract families to the area to increase numbers than to change the schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>iv) Like the current low pupil numbers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Like the fact that children are benefitting from a very low teacher: pupil ratio</li> </ul>

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4.2.2 Respondents were asked to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to the following question:

‘The governing bodies of Ysgol Dyffryn Banw and Ysgol Llanerfyl have agreed in principle that there is a need for the two schools to merge to become one school. Do you agree that this is the best way forward?’

The following chart summarises the responses received:



Respondents who answered ‘No’ were asked to explain why. The following issues were raised in the responses received:

<b>i) Concern about how successful merging the two schools would be</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any forced change would result in a dysfunctional school</li> <li>- Concern about the two schools merging due to comments made about one school community by the other school community</li> </ul>
<b>ii) Ysgol Llanerfyl should not close</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not true that the governing body of Llanerfyl agreed to this</li> <li>- Closing Ysgol Llanerfyl would be the end of Welsh-medium primary education in the Banwy Valley</li> <li>- Ysgol Llanerfyl should continue as it is and Ysgol Dyffryn Banw should close</li> </ul>

4.2.3 Should the two schools merge, four options were described in terms of where the school should be located. Respondents were asked to rank the options in terms of which would be the best option for the area for the future, where 1 was the preferred option and 4 was the least preferred option.

The number of rankings received for each option and the average ranking is summarised in the following table. Some respondents did not rank all options.

Option	Number of rankings received	Total rankings				Average ranking
		1	2	3	4	
A new dual sited school operating across the two current buildings	25	2	5	10	8	<b>2.96</b>
A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building	25	12	3	5	5	<b>2.12</b>
A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building	25	11	11	0	3	<b>1.8</b>
A new school built on a new site in the area	25	2	6	9	8	<b>2.92</b>

4.2.4 Respondents were asked to outline any other options they thought the Council should consider. The following suggestions were received:

<b>i) Increase pupil numbers at both schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide backing to both schools to keep their numbers buoyant</li> <li>- Stop providing free transport to nearest English-medium school – should be promoting access to Welsh-medium school</li> <li>- Attract new families to the area</li> </ul>
<b>ii) Only close one of the schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close Banw and all children to come to Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Llanerfyl building as it is can provide education for all children in the area. The cost of a new building would be a waste of tax payers money</li> </ul>
<b>iii) Alternative dual sited model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dual sites school with infants on one site and juniors on the other</li> </ul>
<b>iv) Leave the schools as they are</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep the schools as they are as there are two separate communities who will never agree</li> </ul>
<b>v) Alternative new build suggestions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build a new Welsh-medium primary in Llanfair Caereinion</li> <li>- One new school for Llanfair and Dyffryn Banw pupils</li> </ul>
<b>vi) Other comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would like the opportunity to go around both schools to compare them. Lack of a hall in Llanerfyl is a concern</li> </ul>

	- Banw is a better site as there are facilities for more pupils and a hall on the site, plus room for 4 classes or more, and a room to serve food
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4.2.5 If any of the options was taken forward, respondents were asked to indicate how likely they are to choose that option for their child/children. The number of responses received for each is summarised in the following table:

	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know	Did not answer
A new dual sited school operating across the two current buildings	12	3	2	7	1	3
A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building	14	3	2	8	0	1
A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building	19	5	0	2	0	2
A new school built on a new site in the area	11	5	1	3	3	5

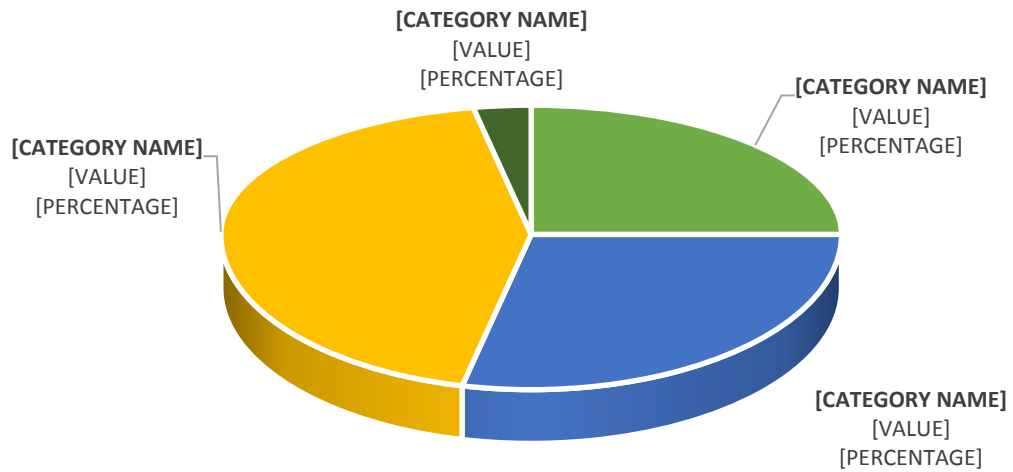
4.2.6 Respondents who answered 'Unlikely' or 'Very Unlikely' for any of the options in the previous table were asked to indicate which alternative schools they would choose for their children to attend.

The following table indicates the alternative schools that were named, and the number of times they were named:

School	Number
Llanfair Caereinion CP School	9
Ysgol Pontrobert	4
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng	2
Meifod	1
Ysgol Rhiw Bechan	1

4.2.7 If there were a new primary school in the area, respondents were asked to indicate their preference in terms of the denominational status of this school. The following chart summarises the responses received:

**If there were a new primary school in the area, would you prefer the school to be a community primary school or a Church in Wales primary school?**



4.2.8 Respondents were invited to provide any other comments about the matters covered by this questionnaire. The comments received are summarised below:

<p><b>i) Positives about Ysgol Dyffryn Banw</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dyffryn Banw can accommodate all children in the area</li> <li>- Dyffryn Banw has a canteen where there is plenty of room to sit and eat</li> <li>- Dyffryn Banw has plenty of safe parking available</li> <li>- Community centre is on site</li> <li>- Large playing field at Dyffryn Banw</li> <li>- Sufficient classrooms which can be adapted to suit teaching requirements</li> <li>- Banw has a hall attached to the school, so no need to walk to the community centre which ensures pupil safety</li> <li>- Area sports held at Banw – there is a large grassed area, which is available for all sports activities</li> <li>- More room in Banw – e.g. play areas, parking, classrooms</li> <li>- No need to waste money on a new building as there is a building in Dyffryn Banw which has everything that is needed</li> <li>- Plenty of space in Dyffryn Banw to accommodate any growth in pupils numbers</li> <li>- Common sense would say that the current Dyffryn Banw building meets the requirements – there is a hall attached, plenty of space to play and a safe area to drop off and pick up the children, as well as a canteen and kitchen</li> <li>- Dyffryn Banw is the better site as there are facilities for all pupils and a hall attached. Room for 4 classes or more and a room for serving food whereas this happens in a classroom in Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Dyffryn Banw building is used by Dyffryn Banw football club</li> <li>- Llangadfan isn't too far for Llanerfyl pupils – children will come to the school if it's a good school – and it will be</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No need to spend millions on land in Llanerfyl to build an extension when there is an ideal school / location up the road in Banw</li> </ul>
<b>ii) Negatives about Ysgol Dyffryn Banw</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Banw building is too large to run and heat for a small number of pupils</li> <li>- Poor bullying policy at Banw School – children have moved from Banw to Llanerfyl due to bullying</li> <li>- £1500 more expensive per pupil to run Ysgol Dyffryn Banw, therefore moving all pupils to Llanerfyl would result in more savings</li> <li>- Dyffryn Banw Estyn report 2016 – only 94% of children felt that bullying was taken seriously vs 100% of children at Ysgol Llanerfyl</li> <li>- If the two schools joined at Banw, the number of surplus places would be nearly 60% - School Organisation Code states that significant surplus places is considered to be 25% or above</li> <li>- Dyffryn Banw is inconvenient for parents to travel to work in Welshpool direction</li> <li>- Llanerfyl pupils would have to travel further to attend after school activities</li> <li>- There are no safe walking and cycling routes to Dyffryn Banw as per the requirements of Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013</li> <li>- The location of Banw school is inconvenient and unlikely to attract children from other areas</li> <li>- Banw school is much too big – and it will be too big if all children from the 2 schools attend it</li> <li>- Have no confidence that Dyffryn Banw would attract enough pupils to keep it open</li> <li>- Only a small minority of Llanerfyl children would go to Banw school</li> <li>- It's Banw that has stirred things up so Banw School should close</li> </ul>
<b>iii) Impact on Banw community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- YFC, football club and Ysgol Theatr Maldwyn all depend on the Banw Hall</li> </ul>
<b>iv) Positives about Ysgol Llanerfyl</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Llanerfyl can accommodate all the children</li> <li>- Llanerfyl has funding support from parents and locals who are happy to help if work needs doing</li> <li>- Most children can walk or cycle to school at Llanerfyl. This reduces the council's transport costs</li> <li>- Llanerfyl School has had regular sporting achievements over the years</li> <li>- Ysgol Llanerfyl is unique in Powys in terms of its Welsh ethos, links with the community, and it has been providing education in the same place for nearly 300 years</li> <li>- NICE, the WHO and the BMA emphasise the importance of physical activity; Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 promotes walking and cycling to school. Research shows that children who walk or cycle to school have better physical and mental health, learn</li> </ul>



	<p>better in school and are better behaved. It would be a shame for Llanerfyl children to lose these benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 80% of Llanerfyl pupils come from homes where at least 1 parent speaks Welsh</li> <li>- Llanerfyl has more pupils – it would be immoral to close the school with the most pupils to save a school with less children</li> <li>- It costs less to run a school which is nearly full in Llanerfyl than an school that is quarter full in Banw</li> <li>- The Llanerfyl community is very supportive to the school and will seek a judicial review if the council insists on closing this school</li> <li>- The Church of Wales owns the site at Ysgol Llanerfyl – PCC could look at selling the site of Ysgol Dyffryn Banw and investing the money in Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Llanerfyl is fine as it is, Banw children would be welcome to join us</li> <li>- Current Cylch Meithrin pupils – 7 due to start in Llanerfyl by Sept 2019, only 4 due to start in Dyffryn Banw. Why move the majority of learners for the benefit of the minority?</li> </ul>
<b>v) Negatives about Ysgol Llanerfyl</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern about parking at Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Query re safe transport to school if the schools merge at Llanerfyl – coming out of the junction onto the main road is a hazard</li> <li>- No parking at Llanerfyl – would parents be expected to park at the village hall and walk down to the school?</li> <li>- Village hall is quite a distance from Llanerfyl school – concern about having to walk in the rain on a hazardous road</li> <li>- In Llanerfyl, children have to eat in the classroom, and the smell of the food hangs around all afternoon</li> </ul>
<b>vi) Impact on Llanerfyl community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The village of Llanerfyl would be fine if there was no school – the hall, chapel, church etc will still operate</li> <li>- Closing Llanerfyl School would have a negative impact on the Welsh language and the community</li> </ul>
<b>vii) Comments regarding community split</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a lot of historical bias and feuds which mainly stem from Llanerfyl. As someone from outside the area I don't understand what the issues are</li> <li>- Decision needs to be made soon as it's dividing the community and putting new parents off sending their children to either school</li> <li>- The Banwy Valley is one community, any split based on schools would be ridiculous</li> </ul>
<b>viii) General support for the need to change in the area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is not only Banw's problem, although Llanerfyl people want to believe that. We have to be realistic and sensible. It's the children that are important, we must think with our heads not our hearts</li> <li>- The community needs to come together to merge 2 wonderful schools to create 1 amazing school</li> <li>- The best way forward is one successful school in the Valley and to bring the two schools together</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Both schools are excellent providers of Welsh-medium education and a critical part of the valley, but it would be better to have one school</li> <li>- Hope everyone will come to the conclusion of merging the two school to ensure the future of the Welsh language and to ensure the best education for our children and future children in Dyffryn Banw</li> <li>- Something needs to be done – hope the Council decide quickly and follow through with the transition fairly and openly</li> <li>- The council needs to ensure a future for education for children in the Valley</li> <li>- There is room to strengthen the current provision to attract parents to send their children to the school</li> <li>- Concern that the Council will choose Llanerfyl site in order to avoid too much fuss. Need to look further to the future – there may be some difficult years ahead but it will be worth it to have an excellent school for the whole valley</li> </ul>
<b>ix) Need to consider what's best for the children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The welfare of the children should be the most important consideration</li> <li>- Need to consider where the best facilities are for the pupils</li> <li>- The education provided to the children is what's important, not the location of individuals</li> <li>- A school with at least 40 children is better for them to learn and interact</li> <li>- Children in both schools are missing out on activities in and out of school</li> <li>- The current situation is not sustainable or healthy for the children</li> <li>- Teaching years 3-6 in one class is challenging. There are many advantages in having year 3-4 and year 5-6 separate</li> </ul>
<b>x) Possible growth in pupil numbers in the future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Should be wary of providing a long term solution to a short term issue – has there been any consultation with major employers who may have plans in the area that could bring more families to the area? Whilst there could be a further fall in pupil numbers, an increase is more likely</li> </ul>
<b>xi) Need to ensure Welsh-medium education in the area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Main interest is high quality Welsh-medium education with a Welsh ethos</li> <li>- The important thing for us as parents is to have Welsh-medium education in the valley.</li> <li>- The council's priority should be to ensure a Welsh-medium school in the area – whether that is in Llanerfyl or Llangadfan</li> </ul>
<b>xii) Comments relating to the drop-in session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern about derogatory comments by Dyffryn Banw community about Llanerfyl</li> <li>- Felt intimidated at the session in Llanerfyl Hall by members of the Llanerfyl community who don't have children in the schools</li> </ul>
<b>xiii) Other queries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will the two schools close if they don't merge?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the two schools merged to create one body of staff, would these positions be filled from the current staff, or would the positions be advertised, which could mean that the staff at the new school could not include any of the current staff at the two schools?</li> <li>- Is there any evidence that Church status makes any difference?</li> </ul>
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## 5. MAIN FINDINGS

### 5.1 Respondents

- 16 questionnaires were received from families that currently have children attending Ysgol Llanerfyl, whilst 8 were received from families that currently have children attending Ysgol Dyffryn Banw.
- Parents of pre-school aged pupils were asked to indicate which of the 2 current schools they expected their children to attend. Of these responses, 9 prospective pupils were identified for Ysgol Dyffryn Banw, and 6 prospective pupils were identified for Ysgol Llanerfyl, with 1 pupil unsure.

### 5.2 The need for change in the Banwy Valley area

- 18 respondents (64%) agreed that there was a need for change in terms of the primary provision in the Banwy Valley
- 22 respondents (78%) agreed that the best way forward is for the two schools to merge.

### 5.3 Preferred options

- Respondents were asked to rank 4 options for the future of provision in the area. An average of all rankings received for each option was calculated, and on this basis, the lowest average ranking was for 'A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building', which received an average ranking of 1.8. In terms of the average ranking, the options were scored as follows:
  - 1 A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building – 1.8
  - 2 A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building – 2.12
  - 3 A new school built on a new site in the area – 2.92
  - 4 A new dual sited school operating across the two current buildings – 2.96
- However, the order is different if we consider the number of times each option was ranked '1', the preferred option. On this basis, the order in terms of preference is as follows:
  - 1 A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building – 12
  - 2 A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building – 11
  - =3 A new school dual sited school operating across the two current buildings – 2

- =3 A new school built on a new site in the area – 2
- Whilst 16 questionnaires were received from families that currently have children attending Ysgol Llanerfyl, only 11 questionnaires ranked the option of ‘A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building’ as their preferred option. In contrast, only 8 questionnaires were received from families that currently have children attending Ysgol Dyffryn Banw, however 12 questionnaires ranked ‘A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building’ as the preferred option.
- There is a significant difference, however in the 2<sup>nd</sup> preference figures. Whilst 11 respondents indicated ‘A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building’ as their 2<sup>nd</sup> preferred option, only 3 respondents indicated ‘A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building’ as their 2<sup>nd</sup> preferred option.
- Further analysis of the responses received reveals that the vast majority of respondents who ranked ‘A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building’ as their preferred option ranked ‘A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building’ as their 2<sup>nd</sup> preferred option. This is not the case for those that selected ‘A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building’ as their preferred option – the majority of these respondents ranked ‘A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building’ as either their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> preference

#### **5.4 Likelihood of attending**

- Respondents were asked to state how likely it is that they would attend each of the options if that option were to be taken forward.
- The option respondents were most likely to attend was ‘A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building’, with 24 out of 28 respondents stating that they would be Very Likely or Likely to choose that option for their child/children.
- The option which respondents were second most likely to choose for their child/children to attend was ‘A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building’, with 17 out of 28 respondents indicating that they would be Very Likely or Likely to choose that option for their child/children.
- However, ‘A new school operating in the current Dyffryn Banw building’ was the option that the highest number of respondents indicated they would be less likely to choose for their child/children, with 10 out of 28 respondents indicating that they would be Unlikely or Very Unlikely to choose that option for their child/children.
- In contrast, only 2 respondents indicated that they were Unlikely or Very Unlikely to attend ‘A new school operating in the current Llanerfyl building’ if that option was taken forward.

#### **5.5 Denominational status**

- Whilst 8 respondents (29%) indicated that they would prefer any new school in the area to be a Church in Wales school and 7 respondents (25%) indicated that they would prefer any new school to be a Community Primary school, 12 respondents (43%) indicated that they had no preference.