

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET EXECUTIVE

26th September 2023

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

REPORT TITLE: Ysgol Bro Caereinion Language Category

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 This report requests Cabinet approval to commence the statutory process on the following proposal to move Ysgol Bro Caereinion along the language continuum:

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

1.2 This would mean that:

- English-medium provision at the school would be phased out gradually year by year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025 – pupils would be taught in Welsh-medium classes and would become fully bilingual i.e. fluent in both Welsh and English
- Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents

1.3 The report is supported by the following appendices:

Appendix A – Options Appraisal

Appendix B – Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Comments from the Welsh-medium Education Forum

2. Background

Ysgol Bro Caereinion

2.1 Ysgol Bro Caereinion is an all-age school located in Llanfair Caereinion in North Powys. It was established in September 2022 following the

amalgamation of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School.

- 2.2 The school’s primary phase primarily serves the town of Llanfair Caerinion, whilst the secondary phase serves a wider catchment area. In particular, the Welsh-medium secondary provision at the school has historically been the main Welsh-medium provision in this part of North Powys, serving the towns of Newtown and Welshpool as well as the traditional Llanfair Caereinion catchment.
- 2.3 Ysgol Bro Caereinion was established as a dual stream all-age school, reflecting the language categories of the previous primary and secondary school in Llanfair Caereinion. However, the strength of Welsh-medium provision in this area was recognised throughout the proposal. In particular, it was acknowledged that the secondary Welsh-medium provision in Llanfair Caereinion was central to the Council’s aspiration to provide access to enhanced Welsh-medium secondary provision for pupils in the area.
- 2.4 Current Welsh-medium and English-medium pupil numbers at the school are as follows¹:

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

The Case for Change

- 2.5 Conversations about the school’s language provision going forward have taken place recently, linked to the introduction of new Welsh language categories by the Welsh Government. As part of these conversations, representatives from the school have explained that the current dual stream model is causing some challenges, and it has become apparent that there is a need to review the school’s language category.
- 2.6 The reasons why there is a need to consider the future language category of Ysgol Bro Caereinion are as follows:
- 2.7 **Changes in English-medium pupil numbers**

¹ Data provided by the school 060923

There have been significant changes in English-medium primary pupil numbers in the Caereinion catchment in recent years, which would potentially result in a reduction in the number of pupils accessing English-medium secondary provision at Ysgol Bro Caereinion in the future. These include the following:

- Ysgol Meifod, an English-medium primary school which was previously part of the Caereinion catchment, has recently moved to the Llanfyllin catchment;
- Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, an English-medium primary school which was previously part of the Caereinion catchment, closed in August 2022;
- Both of the dual stream primary providers in the catchment (Ysgol Bro Caereinion and Ysgol Rhiw Bechan) have seen an increase in pupils choosing Welsh-medium provision, and as a result, a decrease in pupils choosing English-medium provision.

These changes mean that the only English-medium pupils that would now be expected to transfer to Ysgol Bro Caereinion's English-medium secondary provision are those attending Ysgol Rhiw Bechan and Ysgol Bro Caereinion, however the number of English-medium pupils at both these schools has decreased, as shown in the data provided in section 3.1 of Appendix A.

2.8 Financial challenges

Ysgol Bro Caereinion is funded as two separate streams in the funding formula. Both streams are small, which presents challenges in terms of the curriculum offer the school is able to provide. As with all small secondary phase schools / streams, there is a tension between the funding provided for curriculum delivery (based on pupil numbers) and the breadth of curriculum that the school would like to offer.

The current projections for the school show that the school is projected to be in a deficit position by 31 March 2027.

2.9 No access to designated Welsh-medium secondary provision

In contrast to the rest of Wales, pupils in this part of North Powys are currently unable to access designated Welsh-medium secondary provision. This situation does not meet the Council's aspirations as outlined in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), nor does it meet the aspirations of the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys. For many years, the Council has aspired to provide access to designated Welsh-medium secondary provision for pupils in this area, however this has not yet been realised.

2.10 Impact on pupil numbers transferring to secondary Welsh-medium provision

The lack of designated Welsh-medium secondary provision in the area has had a notable impact on pupil numbers transferring to Welsh-medium secondary provision in recent years.

Whilst historically, the Welsh-medium secondary provision in Llanfair Caereinion has served a wide catchment area, including the towns of Newtown and Welshpool as well as the traditional Llanfair Caereinion catchment, the proportion of pupils from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd in Newtown and Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng in Welshpool transferring to Welsh-medium secondary provision in Llanfair Caereinion has been relatively low in recent years, with pupils choosing to transfer to other schools instead or choosing to transfer to English-medium secondary provision.

The decrease in pupils transferring to the school's Welsh-medium secondary provision has impacted on Ysgol Bro Caereinion's ability to maximise its Welsh-medium offer, and on the Council's ability to offer access to comprehensive Welsh-medium secondary provision to pupils.

Options Appraisal

- 2.11 Correspondence was recently received from Ysgol Bro Caereinion to advise that the school's aspiration is for it to move along the language continuum, to become a Welsh-medium school in the future, with the intention that this would be implemented on a phased basis.
- 2.12 The Council has carried out an options appraisal to consider options for the future language category of the school, and possible implementation options. This is attached to this paper as Appendix A.
- 2.13 The options appraisal includes the following:
- Consideration of key data relating to the school
 - Identification of options
 - SWOT analysis of each option
 - Assessment of each option against a number of critical success factors
 - Identification of possible implementation options
 - SWOT analysis of implementation options
 - Assessment of implementation options against a number of critical success factors
 - Identification of an emerging preferred option
 - Further consideration of the emerging preferred option against factors listed in the School Organisation Code (2018) as factors to be taken into account when developing school organisation proposals.
- 2.14 The options appraisal document concludes that the preferred option is as follows:

- To change the language of provision across the whole school to Welsh-medium
- To introduce the change in language provision on a phased basis, year by year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025
- This would mean that eventually, all pupils at the school would attend Welsh-medium provision, ensuring that they would all be fluent in Welsh and English.
- Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents

2.15 The reasons for this are as follows:

- Would enable the school to operate more efficiently
- More opportunities could be offered through the medium of Welsh
- Increase in pupils studying through the medium of Welsh in the longer term
- Would provide access to designated Welsh-medium secondary provision
- Opportunity to attract more pupils from Welsh-medium primary schools in the area
- Meets the aspirations of the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys
- Would meet the aspirations of the Council's WESP
- Potential financial saving to the authority
- Would shorten the transition period to a new delivery model compared with some other options
- Limited impact on pupils currently accessing English-medium education at the school – current pupils would be able to continue to access this provision throughout the primary or secondary phase, depending on which year group they are in.
- Would enable the school to operate more efficiently more quickly
- Would allow time for any necessary staff development and professional learning to take place to support the change
- Would ensure that designated Welsh-medium provision is available more quickly, thus meeting the aspiration on the Council's WESP

2.16 The options appraisal document also considers the impact of the preferred option on the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code as factors to be considered when developing school organisation proposals. This is included in 'Part C' of Appendix A.

2.17 The preferred option aligns with the vision and guiding principles as set out in the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, which

includes a Strategic Objective to ‘improve access to Welsh-medium provision across all key stages, and a Strategic Aim to ‘move schools along the language continuum’.

- 2.18 Implementation of the preferred option would also contribute to the Council achieving the commitment in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for 2022-32 to ‘Establish Welsh-medium secondary provision in at least 3 localities in Powys’.
- 2.19 Implementation of the preferred option is subject to the statutory process outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).

Statutory Process for School Organisation Proposals

- 2.20 The process for school organisation proposals is set out by the Welsh Government in the School Organisation Code (2018). The process is summarised below:

- i) Consultation

Consultation would be carried out with stakeholders as required by the Code. This includes consultation with the pupils at both schools, to ensure that their views are considered, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Feedback from the consultation would be collated and summarised, and a report would be presented to the Cabinet. Cabinet will consider the report and the feedback received during the consultation period, and will decide whether to proceed with the proposal, to make changes to the proposal or to not proceed with the proposal.

If Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal.

- ii) Statutory Notice

If Cabinet decides to proceed, a Statutory Notice would be published, which would give a period of 28 days for people to submit written objections.

If there were objections, the authority would publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and the authority’s response to them. A further report would be presented to the Cabinet, which they would consider alongside the objection report, in order to decide whether or not to approve the proposal.

- iii) Implementation

If Cabinet approves the proposal, it would be implemented in accordance with the date given in the Statutory Notice or any subsequently modified date.

3. Advice

3.1 Based on the findings of the options appraisal exercise which has been carried out, the advice of officers is that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal:

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

This would mean that:

- English-medium provision would be phased out gradually year by year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025 – pupils would be taught in Welsh-medium classes and become fully bilingual i.e. fluent in both Welsh and English
- Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents

3.2 The reasons for this are set out in 2.15 above.

3.3 Should the recommendation to commence the statutory process be approved, it is anticipated that consultation would commence in October 2023.

3.4 It must also be noted that implementation of this proposal does not preclude that school from being a part of future reorganisation proposals.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 The amount of delegated funding provided to schools is driven by the funding formula. Any change to the formula funding provided will impact on the Council's revenue budget. Based on the current formula, the formula funding requirement will reduce as a result of these proposals and savings falling to the Council's revenue budget are estimated to be £383k by the time the school becomes a single-stream school by 2032.

4.2 It is anticipated that there will be a revenue saving of £34.8k in the first year of implementation based on current pupil projections. As the new single-stream model is phased in over time, there will be further savings, dependent on pupil numbers, of between £40k and £95k in most years, building up over time to the overall estimated saving of £383k. This

figure does not include any redundancy costs that could potentially arise should the proposal be implemented.

- 4.3 Based on current pupil number projections, there is a single year when the primary phase numbers indicate a potential temporarily reduction in the number of classes by 1 class which would then need to be reinstated the following year. As this is partially due to the phased approach to implementation, it is suggested that transformation funding be provided as a one-off adjustment to support the school with maintaining their class structure, if pupil numbers reflect current projections at that time. This would need to be reviewed closer to the time to assess whether that additional support would still be required.
- 4.4 The Council will continue to work with the school to ensure that the school budget complies with the scheme for financing schools and is within the funding envelope available.
- 4.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report and supports the recommendation.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view provided the statutory process for school organisation proposals in the School Organisation Code (2018) are followed.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: " I note the legal comment and support the recommendations."

6. Data Protection

- 6.1 N/A

7. Comment from local member(s)

Cllr Bryn Davies (Banwy, Llanfihangel and Llanwddyn):

I cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

It is with great reluctance and trepidation that I support this proposal.

On behalf of the residents of dyffryn Banwy and Dolanog and the parents and children of Ysgolion Cwm Banwy and Ponrobert who have had the courage and foresight to embark on this bilingual journey, I truly welcome this development. It is decades overdue and I congratulate the current governing body at Ysgol Bro Caereinion for coming to this decision. Whilst some have campaigned over decades for progress in bilingual outcome Welsh medium (BOWM) Education, others have thrown up every obstacle possible and held up the process

for all those decades, pretending that English medium monolingual outcome (EMMO) education is in some way equivalent. The relative cultural power of our English and Welsh languages (English is my language too) means that BOWM Education is the only means of producing bilingual fluency, and will be for some decades to come. It is so sad that it takes the threat of imminent closure to persuade some that bilingual outcome Welsh medium education is something they can accept. We see this occurring in other Maldwyn schools as well and this brings me to raise my fears about this proposal. In many ways the creation of this BOWM School can only be seen as using the Welsh language to prop up one school rather than using the Education system to expand, enhance and restore bilingualism to our communities. Sustainability is quite rightly a key word in local government services right now. Excepting the outlying Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Ysgol Bro Caereinion is the smallest of Maldwyn's secondary education providers, this despite importing a very significant fraction of their Welsh medium pupils from Newtown and Welshpool. For how long can this be sustained? It would be entirely immoral to prevent massive improvements in BOWM Education in the Llanfyllin and upper Hafren Valley areas which are also long overdue. Bilingualism cannot be normalised if access to BOWM education is always more difficult than EMMO education and Ysgol Bro Caereinion (as would any other single BOWM School in the county) will always be further away for the majority of learners than their local EMMO school. So the creation of Ysgol Bro Caereinion as a BOWM school whilst to be welcomed locally, is simultaneously a threat to the creation of bilingual learners further afield who will have to continue to endure struggling within dual stream schools. Dual streaming means double standards within Schools – higher expectations of some pupils than others, often higher expectations of pupils than of some staff and nightmare managerial problems.

I call on the cabinet and the wider Council to recognise this problem. Upon the creation of Ysgol Bro Caereinion as a BOWM School, the Council must not rest on its laurels as if a solution has been found. Rather, the cabinet and the council must wake up to the numerous problems that have in no way been resolved with respect to overturning a century and a half of anti Welsh prejudice within the education system in Powys.

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

Following Ysgol Bro Caereinion governors' letter in early July requesting to "move along the language continuum in the near future" the pace may have taken us by surprise but the ambition to make Ysgol Bro Caereinion a school that offers Welsh language education equally to all its learners has not.

This decision if approved although welcomed by many is also going to cause a great deal of concern to many learners and parents within the catchment area.

More detail is needed from Powys on the support that will be provided both financially and in officer time to give this exciting proposal every opportunity of success.

More detail is needed surrounding immersion: when will this start? It needs to be immediately to give learners that wish to remain a pupil of Ysgol Bro Caereinion every opportunity, this also applies to teachers who may wish to take a sabbatical to enhance their Welsh language skills.

It frustrates me the number of learners who having enjoyed a primary school education through the medium of Welsh, enter year 7 in the Welsh language stream and very soon, for various reasons decide to switch to the English stream. Revisiting the catchment areas and aligning the transport policy will give learners entering the secondary phase every opportunity of fulfilling their full potential through the Welsh language in Ysgol Bro Caereinion.

Are the Cabinet going to apply without delay to the Welsh Government sustainable communities for learning programme to bid for capital funding for a new build? To give this every opportunity of success in attracting and retaining learners the facilities at YBC need to be modern and appealing? Any such application should include a new 2G pitch that is long overdue.

In conclusion, the communication around this is crucial and needs to be clear, comprehensive, and timely.

8. Integrated Impact Assessment

8.1 An initial impact assessment in respect of the recommendation is attached. The impact assessment considers the proposal's impact on the Welsh Government's well-being goals, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

8.2 The summary of the impact assessment is as follows:

'The draft impact assessment indicates that the impact of the proposal is positive overall. The proposal would eventually provide a more sustainable model for delivering education in Ysgol Bro Caereinion, ensuring that all pupils are fully bilingual in Welsh and English when they leave the school. The proposal is to change the school's language category over time, which would minimise the impact on pupils currently attending Ysgol Bro Caereinion, but would also ensure that, eventually, all pupils would be taught through the medium of Welsh, and would become fully bilingual in Welsh and English. This would lead

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

- 8.3 Should Cabinet approve the commencement of the statutory process in respect of the recommendation, the impact assessment would be updated throughout the process, to take account of feedback received.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves commencing the statutory process on the following proposal in order to move Ysgol Bro Caereinion along the language continuum:

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

This would mean that:

- English-medium provision would be phased out gradually year by year, starting with Reception and Year 7 in September 2025 – pupils would be taught in Welsh-medium classes and become fully bilingual i.e. fluent in both Welsh and English.
- Additional Welsh language support would be provided alongside the change e.g. Trochi provision, Welsh language training for staff / parents.

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