

Consultation Report on the Proposed Amalgamation of

Ysgol Glan Gele & Ysgol Sant Elfod

Conwy



February 2025



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd.

		Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Consultation	3
2.1	Publication of the Consultation	3
2.2	Information for Children	3
3	Consultation Feedback	6
3.1	Stakeholder & Community Feedback	7
3.2	ESTYN Feedback	8
4	Assessment of the Consultation	9

1. Introduction

Conwy County Borough Council has recently completed a period of Consultation in relation to the proposal to amalgamate Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol y Foryd. The consultation period commenced on the 21st of October 2024 and ended on the 2nd of December 2024.

The Consultation has been conducted in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 which requires the School Organisation Code to be issued to and give guidance to relevant bodies (Welsh Ministers, Local Authorities, Governing Bodies).

This document sets out the steps undertaken throughout the consultation period, refers to findings obtained during the consultation and aims to respond to queries.

2. Consultation

2.1 Publication of the Consultation

The consultation document was published on the Conwy County Borough Council webpages bilingually along with all other documentation regarding the Proposal. The table below sets out the list of recipients who received a copy of the Consultation Document, in accordance with the School Organisation Code.

Name/Organisation
Parents, carers and guardians, teachers & staff of Ysgol Glan Gele & Ysgol Sant Elfod
Governors of Ysgol Glan Gele & Ysgol Sant Elfod
Headteacher & Governors of Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan, Ysgol St George and Ysgol Glan Morfa
Church in Wales Diocese of St Asaph & Roman Catholic Diocese of Wrexham
Denbighshire County Council Education Services
Gwynedd County Council Education Services
Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
Welsh Government Schools Management and Effectiveness Division
Assembly Member & Member of Parliament representing area subject to proposals
Local Conwy Councillor for Abergele
Abergele Community Council
Estyn
Teaching & Staff Trade Unions
GWE
Police & Crime Commissioner for North Wales
Conwy CYPP
Conwy Community First
Flying Start Conwy

2.2 Information for Children

A children's Consultation Document was prepared so that children could have an opportunity to share their views about the proposal to amalgamate Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol y Foryd.

The Children's Consultation was shared with pupils by the Headteacher and Teachers.

Feedback received from the pupils showed that they were aware of the proposal to amalgamate the two schools and their responses are outlined in appendix 1.



Ysgol Glan Gele

and

Ysgol Sant Elfod



There is a plan to change your school....

and we would like to know what you think about it...



What is the plan?.....

The plan is for Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol Sant Elfod to become one school.



Why?.....

We want to make it easier for you to move from one stage of the school to the next. By merging the schools, we can have one headteacher and a smoother learning journey for everyone.

How will this help?

Merging the school will bring lots of positives:

Smother Learning: It will be easier for you to move from one year to the next without any big changes.

More Opportunities: There will be more chances to learn new things.

Better Learning: We can use the best ideas from both schools to help you do your best.

Stronger Relationships: Teachers will know you for longer, which helps them understand how to support you better



What will change?.....



One School, Two Buildings: Instead of two separate schools, there will be one big school that uses both buildings



One Headteacher: There will be one headteacher in charge of the new school. This headteacher will help make sure everything runs smoothly.



New School Name and Uniform: The new school will have a new name, a new logo, and a new uniform. Everyone will wear the same uniform and follow the same rules.



Shared Activities: There will be more chances to do activities with children from both buildings. This means you can make new friends and learn together.



What will stay the same?.....



Your Teachers: Many of the teachers you know will still be there. They will continue to help you learn and grow.



Your Friends: You will still see your friends. You might even make new friends from the other building!



School Location: The buildings you go to school in will stay the same. You will still have classes in the same places you are used to.



Learning and Fun: You will still have the same subjects and fun activities.



Next steps....

Do you have any questions?

You can speak to your teachers to share your thoughts and ask questions and they will pass these on to the Councillors who will decide what happens next.

Diolch / Thank You....



3. Consultation Feedback

During the consultation period Conwy Education Services received 18 responses. The tables below provide a breakdown of responses received. Please note that the consultation details can be found here [\(link\)](#)

Format of Response	Number of Responses Received
Consultation Response Form	16
Letter / Email	2
Total Received	18

Responses Provided By	Number of Responses Received
Parent of child currently at one of schools	15
Staff at one of schools	1
A community member	1
A school Governor	1
Total	18



Of the 18 responses received 7 were not in favour of the proposed amalgamation and have been broken down in to groups in the table below. Those not in agreement with the proposal raised concerns about potential staffing and budget cuts as a result of the amalgamation along with the need to ensure effective leadership.

Responses Provided By	Number of Responses Received
Parent of child currently at one of schools	5
A member of staff at one of the mentioned schools	1
A community member.	1
Total	7

3.1 Stakeholder & Community Feedback

Feedback received from parents, governors, and members of the wider community in the main agreed with the proposal to amalgamate. Broad themes from the feedback are outlined below

Comments In Favour of Proposal	Comments Not In Favour of Proposal
Consistency and Progression Broader range of opportunities and cohesion of planning Improve and enhance teaching and learning Improved Resources	A very large school Unclear about benefits; specifically linked to staffing and leadership (including ongoing redundancies) Financial concerns Concerns about current sites

Examples of some of the positive comments are shown below:

- *“Brilliant for the flow of education for learners in the infant school. More consistency for learners. Less change for learners at what may be a challenging time anyway.”*
- *“I support the amalgamation of the schools and the modest savings being proposed. My hope is that the amalgamation can take place in a way that is least disruptive to learners and staff. I accept that some significant change will be required to maximise effective teaching and learning.”*
- *“I think merging the two schools will be very beneficial for both students and staff. The benefits of everyone being on the same page and the sharing of information and resources to help the children transition will be great. I think Elfod could take a lot from Glan Gele especially looking at the way they build in independence etc over the years to soften the jump to year 3. It would be nice for them to take on some of the passion about outdoor learning and learning through enrichment.”*
- *“I agree that the transition would be much smoother going through the primary education system. As it stands I would suggest that leaving school in year 2 and moving over to Elfod year 3 is quite overwhelming and worrying for some children.”*

Examples of some of the comments expressing concern with high level initial responses are shown below:

<i>“Personal I don’t see how this will be in the best interest for both schools. as its not gonna save jobs as we have been told to expect redundancies again this coming financial year. Not that anyone opinion will count as its a done deal.”</i>	The purpose of the proposed amalgamation is not to ‘save jobs’. There are, however, potential medium and long-term efficiencies in running one larger school with one leadership structure.
<i>“I don’t really see the point of combining the schools together. They seem to work well as they are. If the problem is that the teachers are not working well with each other from each of the schools, then just implement a system of paperwork that can be transferred between both schools. Both schools are short staffed as it is and if any of the teachers are off sick then there’s sometimes not enough of them to go round. The one on one staff end up with 3 or 4 to look after and can’t spend the times with the ones that run away.”</i>	The Curriculum for Wales is designed around the progression of every individual child. The transition point of moving from infant to junior provision goes against this is some way and means that there is a need to provide summative assessment judgements on a learner as they move. There is no indication that a lack of communication is impacting negatively and this is not noted within the consultation documentation. There would be potential for more fluid movement of staff to provide cover for absence in a larger school.

<p><i>“Concerns that the amalgamation may weaken the managerial position of the schools. St Elfod isn’t as strong as Glen Gele and would benefit from its processes and excellent operation. The worry is that glan gele would be weakened to reflect Elfod. Needs adequate fund and refunds to support staff and pupils.”</i></p>	<p>This is an opinion and not borne out in evidence from Estyn inspections of both schools.</p>
<p><i>“I have a child in each. I’m nervous as my kids like small schools but equality it would of been nice for my children to have gone to the same school, with same activities happening on the same dates. I worry that the quality of education might reduce. I feel Glan Gele are exceptionally good at arranging forest school, cultural activities and additional opportunities to engage with a range of fun activities. I feel this could be a good step. Change is always difficult and people will be worried about changes to name and uniform. Thanks.”</i></p>	<p>Education Services will continue to work closely with both schools prior to amalgamation and with the new school to ensure and quality assure the quality of education as part of their School Improvement Service.</p>
<p><i>“As a parent of children currently attending both schools, I fail to see how the amalgamation would benefit the children.”</i></p>	<p>Information on the curricular and extra-curricular benefits are outlined within the consultation documentation.</p>
<p><i>“My major concern is the present state of both school buildings including the many ‘huts’. I want some reassurance that the asbestos removal will be addressed, a live issue during the whole 35 years I have lived in Abergele, I would also like to see an upgrade in staff facilities including toilets. I would also strongly suggest the traffic management issues on site and in the immediate streets around the school is further investigated to see whether there are any improvements that can be made to further safeguard children and staff. I would also value a re-visit of day to day working relationships with Ysgol Glan Morfa to ensure all resources on site are used effectively and efficiently.”</i></p>	<p>Conwy monitors asbestos and any required works regularly and will also consider any required works or upgrades to the schools as part of the ongoing site management processes and Repair and Maintenance programme.</p> <p>Traffic management plans and risk assessments are available to schools to identify and manage traffic and pedestrians safely on their school site. Schools are not responsible for the management of traffic or pedestrians outside of their site but attendance can be requested from the ERF Traffic and Network Management Team or from North Wales Police.</p>

In summary, information regarding staffing and budgets have been addressed in the consultation document. Conwy are committed to working closely with the schools, staff, and the community to ensure a smooth transition and to maintain the high standards of education and support for all pupils if this proposal is taken forward.

3.2 ESTYN Feedback

The feedback provided shows that *“Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision in the area.”*

Other notable comments within the response include:

“The Council has proposed an appropriate rationale for the consultation. It has reviewed the current pupil numbers, funding and suitability of the school buildings. The Council has provided a valid description of the proposal. It has presented effective background information with an approximate timetable for completing statutory procedures.”

“The Council has identified the main advantages and disadvantages of the proposal effectively in comparison with the status quo. The advantages ensure more effective continuity in providing Curriculum for Wales, financial savings and more opportunities for staff’s professional development. The Council has acknowledged the disadvantages of the proposal, namely the effect on staffing levels and operational challenges, such as a new school uniform. There are no specific risks arising from the proposal as both schools already share a site.”

“The Council has given appropriate consideration to specific factors when considering closing schools and the presumption against closing rural schools. The proposal gives due attention to the guide which includes a community impact assessment. The Council has given appropriate consideration to alternative options within the code.”

Conwy welcomes Estyn’s response on the consultation regarding the proposed amalgamation of Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol Sant Elfod. We appreciate Estyn’s thorough review and their opinion that the proposal is likely to maintain the standard of education provision and standards for pupils in the area.

In response to the comment outlined below, Conwy’s response is shared:

ESTYN	CCBC Clarification
Education	
<p><i>“As the proposal involves amalgamating two schools, there is no change in the way in which the schools provide education, so very little consideration has been given to standards and progress, well-being and attitudes to learning, including vulnerable groups, additional learning needs and the teaching and learning experience.”</i></p>	<p>As per the note, the two schools proposed for amalgamation have strong Estyn profiles and recent positive inspection reports. As noted, there is no change in the way in which the schools provide education and therefore Conwy have not undertaken a detailed analysis of wider impact at this stage. This work will be undertaken as part of the regular cycle of support and challenge through the statutory and non-statutory aspects of School Improvement.</p>

The full response received from ESTYN can be seen in Appendix 2 of this report.

4. Assessment of the Consultation

After considering the responses and comments received during the consultation period, the proposal to amalgamate remains to be the most appropriate solution for Abergele. The alternative identified is to maintain the current arrangements of having two separate schools.

No information has been presented during the consultation period that was deemed to necessitate a change to the consultation document.

The recommendation of this report is that a statutory notice should be published, as consulted upon with no modifications, to progress this proposal.

Appendix 1 – Pupil Responses (*Pupil names have been redacted*).**1. Positive Feedback**

- *“I love school!”*
- *“It’s good because we can go in different classes.”*
- *“It’s good because we can play with new toys.”*
- *“It’s good because if you miss your teacher you can go and see them.”*

2. Concerns and Suggestions

- *“There may be too many children playing outside.”*
- *“I don’t like having a new school.”*
- *“They were worried because they didn’t want anything to change.”*
- *“You need to follow the rules.”*

3. Questions about the Merger

- *“Why are we merging?”*
- *“Why are we making our school different?”*
- *“Why will the uniform be a different colour?”*
- *“What will the new name be?”*
- *“Are we still going to have the same ‘safe, ready, respect’?”*
- *“How are we going to put the schools together?”*
- *“Are we going to build a new bit?”*
- *“What will the school be called?”*
- *“What will new uniform look like?”*
- *“What colour will it be?”*
- *“What is the school going to be like in the class?”*
- *“Will the dinners be the same?”*
- *“Are the lunch ladies going to be the same?”*
- *“Will the teachers be the same?”*
- *“How will you put the schools together?”*
- *“What would the yard be like?”*
- *“Would we have a new yard?”*
- *“Is it going to be attached?”*
- *“It will be one school, but how will it be one school?”*
- *“If we had two headteachers in the split schools, but then we join the schools, how is there going to be two?”*
- *“When we go home, will the gates be attached?”*
- *“What will the logo be?”*
- *“What colour is the uniform?”*
- *“When will it happen?”*
- *“Why?”*

4. Excitement about Changes

- *“We get a new school uniform.”*
- *“We can have a door to each school so the big kids can play in our school and we can play in their school.”*

Appendix 2 – ESTYN Response

Estyn's response on the consultation on the proposed amalgamation of Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol Sant Elfod

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/Conclusion

Conwy County Borough Council is consulting on the proposal to amalgamate Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol Sant Elfod. The proposal means the formal closure of both schools and re-opening of a new school. As a result of this proposal, the Council has stated that it is possible that it could decide not to continue with the current arrangements or make adaptations to the plan. Should the Council continue with the arrangements identified in the proposal, it is anticipated that the new school will open in September 2026.

Estyn is of the opinion that this proposal is likely to maintain the standard of education provision and standards for pupils in the area.

Descriptions and benefits

The Council has proposed an appropriate rationale for the consultation. It has reviewed the current pupil numbers, funding and suitability of the school buildings. The Council has provided a valid description of the proposal. It has presented effective background information with an approximate timetable for completing statutory procedures.

The Council has identified the main advantages and disadvantages of the proposal effectively in comparison with the status quo. The advantages ensure more effective continuity in providing Curriculum for Wales, financial savings and more opportunities for staff's professional development. The Council has acknowledged the disadvantages of the proposal, namely the effect on staffing levels and operational challenges, such as a new school uniform. There are no specific risks arising from the proposal as both schools already share a site.

The Council has considered two alternative options which include amalgamating the two schools and building a new school. It has explained that building a new school is unaffordable.

Should the proposal be approved, there will be no changes to the existing transport provision. The Council's transport policy states that free transport will be provided to pupils who live more than two miles from their nearest appropriate school.

The proposal will not affect surplus places. Ysgol Glan Gele currently has 11% surplus places and Ysgol Sant Elfod has 10%.

The Council has conducted a Welsh language impact assessment as a result of the proposal. It states that the proposal will not have a negative effect on the Welsh language as the two existing schools are English-medium schools. The Council states that both schools have a predominantly English ethos, with staff meetings, governors' meetings and less than 25% of the curriculum being delivered through the medium of Welsh.

The Council has identified potential savings from the proposal suitably. It estimates a saving of £50,931 per annum. The Council has approved effective transitional funding steps to ensure that the new school will not be at a financial disadvantage in the early years.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The Council has considered the impact of the proposal on quality and standards in learning. It refers to information from Estyn's most recent reports where robust inspections were noted for both schools. The Council has noted that amalgamating the schools will ensure easy co-operation in tracking pupils' progress, sharing best practices in promoting the Welsh language and enabling pupils and staff to have easier access to specialists, resources and facilities across the school.

As the proposal involves amalgamating two schools, there is no change in the way in which the school's provide education, so very little consideration has been given to standards and progress, well-being and attitudes to learning, including vulnerable groups, additional learning needs and teaching and learning experiences. The Council has considered the likely impact of the proposal in ensuring that the full curriculum is delivered.

The Council has given appropriate consideration to specific factors when considering closing schools and the presumption against closing rural schools. The proposal gives due attention to the guide which includes a community impact assessment. The Council has given appropriate consideration to alternative options within the code.