

**Consultation Report on the proposed increase in school capacity from
200 to 260 at Ysgol y Gogarth Special School, Craig y Don**

Conwy

September, 2019

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1. Introduction

Conwy County Borough Council has recently completed a period of Consultation in relation to the proposal to increase the statutory capacity of Ysgol y Gogarth from 200 to 260 pupils. The consultation period began on the 11th June and ended on the 24th July, 2019.

The Consultation has been carried out in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 which requires the School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government Document 011/2018) to be issued to and give guidance to relevant bodies (Welsh Ministers, Local Authorities, Governing Bodies).

This document will set out the steps taken during the formal Consultation Period, will refer to findings obtained during the Consultation and will aim to answer and tackle queries that have been put to the Authority.

2. Consultation

2.1 Publication of the Consultation

The Consultation Document was published on Conwy County Borough Council's website on 1st June, 2019. Simultaneously, an E-Mail was sent out to 204 recipients via hardcopy and by email link. The Consultation Document was also 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.

Requirements of the Organisation Code 006/2013	Distributed to:
The maintaining or proposed maintaining authority for any school likely to be affected by the proposals.	Conwy County Borough Council is presenting the proposal
Any other local authority likely to be affected – including in the case of dedicated SEN provision any authority placing or likely to place statemented pupils in it.	Denbighshire Council, Gwynedd Council, Ynys Môn Council
The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located.	Church in Wales St Asaph and Bangor Diocesan Authority Roman Catholic Diocese of Wrexham
The governing body of any school which is the subject of the proposal and any other schools likely to be affected by the proposals.	Governing Bodies of all Conwy Primary and Secondary Schools
Parents (and where possible prospective parents) carers and guardians.	Parents, carers and guardians of the children attending Ysgol Y Gogarth.
Welsh Ministers	Kirsty Williams (AM).
Assembly Members and Members of Parliament representing the area.	All

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Estyn	Anne Keane – Education and Training in Wales Chief Inspector
Teaching and teaching staff trade unions representing teachers and other staff at any school which is the subject of the proposals.	Unions
Regional Education Consortium	Arwyn Thomas – Chief Officer GwE
Police and Crime Commissioner	Arfon Jones – North Wales Police Commissioner
Any community or town council for the area served by the school which is the subject of this proposal.	Llandudno Town Council
Local Communities First Partnership	Marianne Jackson, Head of Community Development Service (HoS)
Relevant Health Bodies with an interest	Dr Hamilton Grantham – Consultant Community Paediatrician, Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board
Other	All Additional Learning Needs staff All Education staff

2.2 Consultation Meeting

As part of the Consultation process a meeting was held by Education Officers with stakeholders of Ysgol y Gogarth. All of the above recipients of the Consultation Document were invited to attend the meeting on the 11th June at Ysgol y Gogarth. The meeting was also publicised by means of a leaflet drop to houses in the area surrounding the school. The meeting was attended by approximately 30-40 persons.

The Statutory Proposal process was explained to attendees to ensure clarity and to explain that consultation responses should be made in writing. Consultation feedback forms were distributed to any stakeholders who wished to make a response.

2.3 Consultation with Children

The School Council of Ysgol y Gogarth gave their views on the proposed changes on behalf of the pupils in the school. They expressed concern with regards to the impact that increased pupil numbers would have on class sizes and how busy the school yard/play areas might feel. Further discussion will now be had with the School Council to firstly reassure pupils that class sizes would not increase, only the number of classes; and secondly to consider how the outside space can be most effectively utilised to ensure that these concerns can be responded to.

3. Consultation Feedback

During the course of the Consultation Period Conwy Education Services received seven responses to the Consultation Document. The table below demonstrates the format of response used by stakeholders.

Format of Response	Number of Responses Received
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Consultation Response Form	3
Letter / Email	3
Total Received	6

The description of the types of consultees who responded is as below.

Description of consultee	Number received
Local resident	3
Parent/Local resident	1
ESTYN	1
BCUHB	1
Local AM/MP	1
Total received	6

3.1 Summary of feedback responses

The table below summarises the responses to the specific question “Are you in favour of the proposal to increase school capacity to 260?”

Response to the above question	Number of responses
Yes	5
No	1
Total received	6

3.2 Detailed response to feedback

Detailed responses to consultation feedback is given in the Appendix 2 to this document.

3.3 ESTYN Feedback

The feedback provided by ESTYN is prepared by answering set questions to ensure that the Local Authority have taken into account all educational requirements within their proposals. In answer to the question ‘**Are the Proposals likely to Maintain or Improve the Standard of Education Provision in the Area?**’ ESTYN have commented as such:-

“The proposal has been developed in line with the local authority’s programme to improve its educational provision and satisfy the increasing demand for places for pupils with complex and specific additional learning needs.

It is Estyn’s opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of special educational provision in the area

ESTYN also made the following comment on the proposals:-

“The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal. The proposer states that it believes that the additional 60 places are necessary due to the increasing demand and the desire nationally to accommodate young people as near to home as possible. It gives a sound rationale as to why the additional places are needed. Currently Ysgol Gogarth is the only school in Conwy that caters for pupils with a broad spectrum of complex special educational needs”

Estyn’s full response is in Appendix 1 to this report.

4. Cabinet – This is a proposed draft wording for a Cabinet decision on the continuation of the Statutory Process. Should Cabinet not agree with the recommendation, this paragraph will be amended to reflect Cabinet’s views.

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“Conwy County Borough Council Cabinet Members met on the 8th October 2019 to discuss the Consultation for the proposed increase in pupil capacity in Ysgol y Gogarth from 200 to 260.

Having been provided with the information gathered through the Consultation, the decision was taken by Cabinet was to continue to the Statutory Notice for determining the increase in pupil numbers at Ysgol y Gogarth.

This consists of a 28 day formal Objection Period whereby any objections to the proposal must be made in writing. Following this the Local Authority will return to Cabinet to determine the final decision.”

Appendix 1 – Estyn response to the proposal from Conwy County Borough Council to increase the pupil capacity at Ysgol y Gogarth from 200 to 260 from 1 January 2020

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.

This consultation proposal is from Conwy County Borough Council. The proposal is to increase the pupil capacity at Ysgol y Gogarth from 200 to 260 from 1 January 2020.

Summary/ Conclusion

The proposal has been developed in line with the local authority's programme to improve its educational provision and satisfy the increasing demand for places for pupils with complex and specific additional learning needs.

It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of special educational provision in the area.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal. The proposer states that it believes that the additional 60 places are necessary due to the increasing demand and the desire nationally to accommodate young people as near to home as possible. It gives a sound rationale as to why the additional places are needed.

Currently Ysgol Gogarth is the only school in Conwy that caters for pupils with a broad spectrum of complex special educational needs.

The proposer has considered the disadvantages of the proposal. It states, reasonably, that if the provision is not increased, pupils with complex additional learning needs may have to travel out of the County. This could be disruptive for both the pupil and family and be costly for the Council.

The proposal appropriately considers the advantages and disadvantages associated with the expansion of the school, including consulting special schools in neighbouring authorities. The proposal demonstrates that the Council has considered two alternative proposals. These are maintaining current numbers, and increasing capacity to 230. However, as the number of pupils in January 2019 was 234, neither of these appear to offer a sustainable long-term solution.

The proposal clearly sets out the local authority's assessment of current capacity for expansion, taking into account that there is a risk that the demand for special school

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places may continue to grow beyond the new proposed capacity. Should this be the case, the authority acknowledges that there will be a need for further developments to take place in the next few years.

As Ysgol Gogarth has the capacity to increase the size of its building in order to increase pupil numbers, the authority has set out proposals to make additional classroom provision available at the school by means of a 4-classroom extension. The Welsh Government have in principle, approved capital finance for such an extension and initial project work has commenced. In the interim from September 2019, the authority is working with the school to seek other options for accommodating the additional demand on a temporary basis.

The proposal reasonably suggests that there will not be a detrimental impact on home to school transport. Transport arrangements will remain unaltered, with all pupils continuing to be transported by taxi. It is anticipated that taxi numbers would not increase significantly, as most are currently multi-seater vehicles and would be able to accommodate the increased pupil numbers.

The proposal identifies the impact the expansion of the school will have on staffing levels. The authority has secured funding for the staffing capacity required to meet the current pupil numbers through a revenue business case.

The proposal suggests the increase in staffing and accommodation for the school could be utilised to support the school's strategic vision in respect of developing Welsh medium provision within the school. In addition, it would be beneficial in supporting the authority's Welsh in Education Strategy, which includes the objective to ensure that all ALN provision is equitable and fair for all learners whether their first language is Welsh or English.

The proposal includes suitable arrangements for consultation. It explains appropriately that objections can only be registered following publication of the statutory notice.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposal suitably considers the likely impact of the new school on standards, provision and leadership. The most recent inspection of the school by Estyn in October 2017, evaluated the school's current performance to be excellent in all inspection areas.

Appendix 2 – Details of comments and consultation responses made and observations and clarifications made by the Authority

Comment or consultation response	Clarification and observations by the Authority
<p>You will have problems in putting this and any alterations to planning until the problems with staff and taxis parking on the pavement in Nant y Gamar Road and the junction of St Margaret's Drive and Nant y Gamar Road is properly resolved many residents will object to any of your proposed plans.</p>	<p>The consultation is about increasing the statutory school capacity for Ysgol y Gogarth. At this stage, there are no firm plans for expansion of the building beyond the current temporary additional building that was constructed over the Summer holiday.</p>
<p>Although the consultation is not about the building works at this stage the impact of the traffic management in and around the school needs to be taken into account for the safety of the pupils, staff and local residents. There are already concerns about the traffic capacity and inappropriate parking and queueing on local roads. This is surely an opportunity to plan improvements that are needed for the current school numbers, regardless of increases. If this is not addressed, I'm sure there will be objections in the future consultation process.</p>	<p>As a result of consultation feedback and as a result of a review of the sustainability of continuing to build additional capacity at the site, the Authority is in the early stages of exploring other options if demand for Special School places continues to rise.</p>
<p>We object to Ysgol y Gogarth increasing the number of pupils attending the school on Nant y Gamar Road in Craig y Don, Llandudno.</p> <p>When the school was rebuilt we brought to the attention of the planning committee the need for ample parking within the school grounds and a system for the school transport to queue off the street at Nant y Gamar. There is not sufficient parking for the school at present. Staff park on the pavement in Nant y Gamar Road blocking the pavement for pedestrians. Anyone with a wheelchair or pram would have to walk in the road.</p> <p>Buses and taxis are queueing for at least half an hour before entering the school ground. There are also cars parked on the other side of the road too reducing the width of the road to a single lane. Emergency vehicles would find it very difficult to pass through.</p> <p>Following the development we had a list of questions and answers from Conwy council. One was</p> <p><i>Is the traffic going to get worse as a result of the development?</i></p> <p>The answer given by the Council was</p> <p><i>No, the new two way entrance road will accommodate the school transport vehicles, so they do not need to queue on Nant y Gamar Road.</i></p> <p>Although a twenty mile an hour zone has been placed outside the school entrance it has been</p>	

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<p>ignored by many motorists who exceed the speed limit.</p> <p>We feel that until the parking facilities on the school are vastly improved to prevent parking on Nant y Gamar road and a better system for the collection of pupils from the school by the taxis and mini buses to stop them from causing congestion in the street we cannot support this application for the extra classroom as this will in turn increase the traffic problem.</p>	
<p>Many thanks for consulting me on this proposal. Please not my full support for the proposed increase.</p>	Support noted
<p>I am in full support of the plan to increase pupil numbers in Ysgol y Gogarth: educational provision at the school has positive effects on children with complex and profound learning needs and it is my privilege to work in partnership with the school. The school's success is reflected in the numbers of children wishing to access the school's facilities.</p> <p>I am also delighted that Conwy is developing Welsh medium special educational facilities. It is much needed. I would like to express my full support for this plan and I am happy to do everything I can to ensure that children with special needs in this county have access at last to linguistically appropriate specialist educational provision.</p>	Support noted
<p>My views are those of both a local resident and a parent. I wish to register my unreserved support for the school and for every child in the county to receive an education appropriate to their needs.</p> <p>There are some extremely ignorant and, frankly, alarming views being expressed on social media. There appears to be the view that Gogarth's expansion will prompt an influx of families to the area. The reality will be that the additional spaces have been filled before their creation and are a response to need.</p> <p>The local authority has a legal obligation to educate every one of its children even, and including, those who are a bit expensive. The level of nimbyism being expressed on social media is astounding. Concerns about parking when most children arrive and leave in mini buses, the fear of families moving to the area when the reality is that students are bused in from all over county. The reality is that the increase in traffic is between 8.45am to 9.15am and 3.10pm to 3.40pm Monday to Friday for no more than 39 weeks of the year. One hour per day of mild inconvenience in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Gogarth is the only school of its kind serving the entire county. These are society's most</p>	Support noted

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<p>vulnerable children. Some of the views being expressed on social media are morally repugnant and have been reported. I sincerely wish I were able to attend tomorrow evening. If my plans change I will be there.</p>	
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