

**Formal Consultation Document proposal  
to extend the capacity in Pen Y Cwm Special  
School  
(Children and Young Persons version)**



**The Consultation Commences Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025 and  
Concludes at 5:00pm on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

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

- Email us: [21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) or,
- Call us on: (01495) 355116

## **Drop in Session**

The council are holding a drop-in session at Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre (LAC) on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025, from 3:00pm – 6:30pm.

### **Introduction:**

As a council we would like to see, all children and young people have access to high quality education and training tailored to meet their needs in order to reach their full potential, extend aspirations and promote social inclusion.

### **Why we want to do this:**

Pen y Cwm Special School caters for pupils (aged between 3-19 years) with a broad spectrum of complex special educational and medical needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school currently caters for Blaenau Gwent pupils, along with some pupils from Out of County (OOC).

Over the last 5 years pupil numbers and demand for places have increased significantly. Therefore, we want to increase the pupil numbers for the school.

## **Pen y Cwm Special School**

The school currently has a capacity of 175 places, which was increased in 2021 from 120 pupils. The school currently has 189 pupils on roll, which is now over their capacity. We predict this number will continue to grow, therefore the council is seeking again to increase the number of places to 205 pupils in 2026/27 and from 205 to 250 in 2030/31.

Pen y Cwm have a waiting list (this is through the ALN Panel) which as of August 2025, has 2 children and young people awaiting placement. This is expected to grow through the academic year. There are a number of factors relating to this increase, including higher survival rates for children with complex disabilities, more cases and/improved diagnosis and an increase in complex medical conditions. There are also 19 pupils from Blaenau Gwent with additional learning needs being educated outside the County Borough.

## **The Proposal and what it will look like**

The Council are proposing to Expand the capacity of the existing Pen y Cwm School in two parts.

- **Part 1**, increase the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 175 to 205 places in preparation for 2026/27 academic year, this will also involve:
  - Retrospectively acknowledging the Post 16 provision at Unit 4 Festival Site in Ebbw Vale (including 3 classrooms, sensory room, common room, life skills room, meeting room, catering/dining area, toilets and hygiene facilities)
  - Retrospective acknowledgement of additional classrooms developed in the main school building.
- **Part 2**, further increase the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 205 to 250 places in preparation for the 2030/31 academic year. This will include either a new build provision on the land adjacent to the school or remodelling the existing school building to accommodate the increased capacity.

## **What options did the council consider?**

In line with Government guidelines and the Schools Organisational code (2018) Version 2, when we look at carrying out any changes to schools, we have to have a number of options that could work for the benefit of learners. In this instance the council started with a long list of 7 options:

**Option 1:** Do nothing

**Option 2:** More internal refurbishing of existing school building

**Option 3:** Utilise Industrial Space at Unit 4 Gwent Court (this was counted and implemented retrospectively)

**Option 4:** Extension of the Pen y Cwm Special school into an existing building within the school estate

**Option 5:** Build a new small extension to the existing Pen y Cwm Special School

**Option 6:** New build on the land adjacent with the specialist provision to support learners

**Option 7:** New build of Pen y Cwm Special School (similar to option 6). with the additionality of a residential setting for the school to accommodate up to 10 pupils.

### Summary

Options 3 has been implemented as the solution to address the immediate capacity issues for the 2026/27 academic year and to increase the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 175 to 205 places as a short term solution.

Options 4, 5 & 6 are more favourable to the Council for part 2 of the proposal.

**Who will it affect?** This proposal will affect Pen y Cwm pupils and any pupils requesting places through the ALN Panel.

**Benefits of the Proposal:** This proposal would ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils - particularly those with the greatest level of need, to be educated locally. Should nothing change, the Council will be unable to meet the needs of all learners particularly those with profound and multiple learning difficulties within Blaenau Gwent.

### Expected Benefits and Advantages (when compared with the status quo):

- Creation of a local solution which will address the increased demand for special education provision
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of local education for learners with specialist and medical needs
- Easier transition arrangements for pupils transitioning from mainstream school, and resources bases in Blaenau Gwent
- Reduce the costs of out of county placements for learners, whilst securing local investment within the Blaenau Gwent school estate
- Improve access to and facilities for learners who meet the criteria for the specialist provision which Pen y Cwm offers
- Increased capacity and sustainability of placement
- Reduced travel time and carbon footprint for a local solution.

**Disadvantages:** There are no disadvantages associated with this proposal.

**How you can have your say on the Consultation:** You can provide your comments on the proposal to extend the Capacity for pupils in Pen y Cwm Special School **Via the link provided:**

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/dxns7v>