

## APPENDIX 10

## Pen y Cwm Consultation Thematic Analysis and Council Responses

The primary emergent themes arising from the analysis of written responses including – emails and surveys, along with the frequency of each of the aforementioned themes is detailed below (from the most to the least prevalent issues noted) 31 themes in total:

Theme	Frequency	Council Responses
<b>Top 6 Themes</b>		
<b>No more space in existing school building</b> with loss and or lack of specialist areas, classroom areas and other areas such as office space, DT area, Immersion, Thrive, PPA, shared resources, library, common room, meeting spaces, break out areas, overcrowded corridors, Hoists in areas, therapy areas removal of doors and broken facilities that have not be repaired or relaced	50	The Council acknowledges that increasing the capacity at Pen y Cwm will require the replacement of all spaces lost over the past five years. This will need to be addressed through the development of a new building, an extension, or an alternative school organisation proposal.
<b>Proposal will be a positive impact on learners which will make provision purposeful.</b> Pupils in mainstream resources bases cannot be supported without expanding the capacity for Pen y Cwm, the proposal will be very well received providing more support for Pen y Cwm learners with more space, facilities and a thrive area. And the wider ALN provision	37	The Council is encouraged to note that this proposal will have a positive impact on existing and new learners to come. This will create a purposeful environment for pupils and will support the County Boroughs wider ALN provision.
<b>Learners needs are not being met</b> , currently difficult to deliver ALP's, SALT. Eps, pupils are waiting for the toilet and shower facility. Missing intervention areas, calming spaces and in vision house nurses drop in.	34	The Council acknowledge this comment and are working to provide the additionality that special school requires in terms of meeting learner needs.
<b>The need for a new building/school/extension</b> to address the schools needs and loss of facilities. Planning this should take into account the structure of PYC sufficiency for existing learners and new learners, replacing areas lost to meet the needs to expand and future proof the schools this includes physical space for learners to play, larger post 16 provision. Consideration should give to Nursery site and Council staff being proactive in their plans	27	The Councils has submitted its Strategic Outline Programme for the Sustainable Communities for Learning – Rolling programme of which Pen y Cwm option features in year 1-3. The Resource and Planning team will work with the headteacher to ensure that all requirements are met in terms of provision offered.

<b>Staff are stretched to capacity</b> , putting additional pressure on staff, with a negative impact on wellbeing. Staff uncertainty around building capacity, splitting classes etc	27	Staff wellbeing is paramount to the school and the Council's Organisation Development team. There is a commitment to work together to reduce issues that present themselves.
<b>Are the consultation plans big enough?</b> Something needs to be undertaken for this September 2026 not only within Vision House but Pen y Cwm as well. The school is already at 193 capacity and with the 10% of 205 learners it could mean that there will be 225 learners. They need future plans for land and sports facilities, long term solutions as it cannot wait until the demand is saturated in 2030/31.	21	It is not intended to increase the capacity beyond the 205 level until the capacity is formally increased to 250 as part of the future developments i.e new building/extension. Discussions are ongoing with the school to further develop the existing Pen y Cwm building in line with need.
<b>Themes continued</b>		
<b>Shared Access to facilities in current location</b> , having 2 schools on the same site with shared facilities does not work, there is conflicting timetabling for areas of the building such as the hall, MUGA etc. the school is constantly busy and, on some instance, this also includes the Leisure Centre and 5G classroom as they are County wide.	19	This will be considered as part of the options appraisal following the consultation.  The Ebbw Fawr Leisure Centre and 5G Classroom will continue to offer its facilities to all schools within the County Borough.
<b>Pen y Cwm are successful in learners' achievements;</b> specialist rooms are required to make this proposal work. Learners at both Pen Y Cwm and Vision House are Thriving. How does the sustainability of specialist provision remain top priority	14	It is recognised that Pen y Cwm are working excellently with their learners and acknowledged within the recent Estyn report (2025). This is due to the incredible hard work of staff at both sites; the Council want to ensure that the efforts and achievements of the school are sustainable by creating a future proof model for Special School Placements.
<b>What is going to happen September 2026 for Post 16 at Vision House</b> , this is a crucial provision for learners however, there is no room for additional learners come this September 2026, it doesn't have a lift and there is no room for Nurses to visit learners.  What are the Council going to do with the increase of learners entering Post 16 in September 2026 as 3 are leaving and 17 are due to move up to post 16.	14	Discussions are ongoing with the school to configure and accommodate learners in Vision House based on suitability and to further develop the existing Pen y Cwm building in line with need

<p><b>What will the new long-term plan be?</b> It needs plans, support from the school, space and deliverability</p>	13	<p>Following the consultation, a full options appraisal will be undertaken, and the feedback received will inform that process. Ongoing discussions will continue with the school, and the Council will also visit other authorities to review different models to help shape the final recommendations.</p>
<p><b>Health and Safety concerns, along with Accidents and Incidents</b>, it was noted that there are concerns around overcrowding for pupils, accessibility for all pupils and the number of safe spaces for pupils. One respondent would like to see how many incidents have taken place since September 2025, and another stated has there been a rise in number of incidents.</p>	11	<p>The Council has a health &amp; Safety officer who works with the school and the council's Resources and Planning – Operation teams. Comments from respondents reading how many incidents cannot be released to the public without a Freedom of Information request.</p>
<p><b>Pupil Wellbeing</b>, it has been noted that there is a negative impact on wellbeing. Which needs to be addressed via this proposal, such as rehabilitation, therapy, toilet ratio and opportunities for training with parents.</p>	10	<p>Comment acknowledged and recorded as part of the consultation period. The impact on pupil wellbeing will form a key part of the consultation proposal, ensuring that the identified challenges are fully considered and effectively addressed through the proposed measures.</p>
<p><b>Financial constraints</b>, there are areas within the budget for both revenue and Capital considerations, with more staff and pupils there will be more revenue costs, also there is concern that £3 -15m will not be enough to do everything</p>	10	<p>Revenue Costs are allocated on WG funding formulas, there is more financial costs associated within a special school and there is a formula that calculates the annual budget. On top of this WG have ALN funding. There is reference to capital funding for the £15m not being enough, this was an indicative cost to cover the lower amount and the higher amount for alternative options under the Sustainable Communities for Learning funding programme. Any draw down of funding will be subject to a full business case to Welsh Government and actual costs will be considered in line with a preferred option.</p>
<p><b>Waiting List</b>, the length of time waiting for an admission to Pen y Cwm is too long; by having more places it will address the capacity and reduce waiting times.</p>	9	<p>Comment positively acknowledged. The ALN panel, admit learners to Pen y Cwm and other Resource Bases, individual needs are discussed and appropriate placements follow even when there are additional capacity for learners.</p>

<p><b>Mainstream ALN</b>, more planning around Resource bases and mainstream schools require development as they are needed, it would support learners going into Pen y Cwm and staying in mainstream education settings.</p>	9	<p>In line with the ALN Code for Wales the Council conducts an ALN provision review annually to ensure that it meets its statutory duty and addresses the support needs of all learners across Blaenau Gwent. The Council has increased Resource Base provision across BG year on year since 2022 and this has created additional capacity in specialist provision for children presenting with ASD (autism spectrum disorder)/Social Communication Difficulties across both primary and secondary settings. The Council has also accommodated increase in Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties and for those children with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD – PYC School).</p>
<p><b>Retention of Staff</b>, consultees commented about losing staff and recruitment difficulties. More staff need to be recruited with experience so that the school needs are met as a matter of urgency.</p>	7	<p>Comment acknowledged and recorded as part of the consultation period.</p>
<p><b>Changes in Behaviours of Pupils</b>, staff have commented that the children attending Pen y Cwm are developing negative behaviours in school and on the buses, issues regulating their emotions and the environment is too busy.</p>	7	<p>Comment acknowledged and recorded as part of the consultation period.</p>
<p><b>Part 1 of the proposal</b>, seems like there is no quick fix, there are timeslot clashes in school currently, as well as the leisure Centre</p>	6	<p>Comment acknowledged and recorded as part of the consultation period.</p>
<p><b>Vision House</b>, respondents commented that even though Vision House is a temporary solution, some would like it to remain even if additional space can be found in new building.</p>	6	<p>Comment acknowledged and recorded as part of the consultation period.</p>
<p><b>Buildings need to be fit for purpose</b>, currently there are concerns that both Pen y Cwm main school and Vision House is not fit for purpose, i.e. lifts, toilet, glass pains, area accessibility</p>	6	<p>Current buildings are being managed, the Council is aware that there needs a review of provision. Visits have already been organised via the Resource and Planning – Operations team and discussions are ongoing to further develop the existing Pen y Cwm building in line with need.</p>

<b>Curriculum</b> , concerns around the Curriculum tailored for special schools is not being met.	4	The Councils Inclusion Service Area provides a vast range of ongoing Professional Learning in regard to ALN and Inclusion to all schools across BG, both internally and externally and supports this through local authority funding. All schools are also supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Service in terms of delivering high quality teaching and learning to all learners, including in the Resource Bases and Special Schools.
<b>Inaccuracies in the document</b> , comments that the data presented was inaccurate	4	The data presented in the consultation document was correct as at a certain date i.e. Pupil Count as of September 2024 and PLASC January 2025.
<b>Parking Arrangements</b> , referring to insufficient existing parking arrangements and the increase in cars/buses/taxis bring pupils to school. This needs to be managed carefully due learners need	4	The School has a traffic management plan as do all schools in Blaenau Gwent. Staff are on duty to accompany learners to their mode of transport.
<b>What is the plan for Vision House</b> and can it be made Accessible for long term?	4	It is positive to note that Vision House is working for Pen y Cwm, this is noted for a temporary post 16 provision. This can be discussed as part of the wider options in the future.
<b>Estyn Recommendations</b> , that no primary class is no bigger than 8 pupils in special schools, in some instances there 9 or 10 pupils	2	The Council can accept this feedback.
<b>Family</b> , the learning environments can cause stress on families as their children are not receiving the additional layers of support nor can parents be provided training on how to manage behaviours at the school. There is also the travel time to and from school for parents/learners	4	The council recognises that behaviours must be managed by the school during the school day, and we fully acknowledge the pressures that this can place on staff, pupils, and families. The consultation process presents a valuable opportunity to work collaboratively with the school to develop effective, sustainable solutions for all.
<b>Out of County</b> , without this proposal there could be more expense for the Council in providing pupils education Out of County.	1	The Council positively acknowledges this comment. The Inclusion Team will continue to manage the placement of pupils, whether within the county or out of county, ensuring that each learner is supported in the most appropriate educational environment.

<b>Health Board engagement</b> , wider consideration in planning this requires more involvement with Health board and services	1	The Health Board is a statutory consultee for this proposal. In addition, the Council identified relevant sections within the Health Authority to enable appropriate colleagues to provide their comments as part of the consultation process.
<b>Safeguarding</b> , concerns around safeguarding of pupils in the current buildings. i.e. shared facilities	1	The Schools and Council Safeguarding policy is in place for both locations and are managed via the staff.
<b>Age 19-25</b> , why doesn't the Special school cater for this age group.	1	Blaenau Gwent model for post 16 learning is via Coleg Gwent. Pen y Cwm retained its post 16 to the age of 19 as there was no other alternative for learners, Coleg Gwent have opportunities for learners over the age of 19 to create independent learning.
<b>Storage in current buildings</b> , due to adaptations there has been a lot of storage areas lost for the school.	1	The Council acknowledge this statement.