

Estyn response to the proposal to reduce the capacity at Abertillery Learning Community Primary Phase

Introduction

This report has been prepared by His 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

The proposal to reduce the physical capacity of Abertillery learning Community by closing Roseheyworth Road Campus and moving pupils to the remaining campuses (Six Bells Campus and Tillery Street Campus) is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the school.

Description and benefits

The local authority has provided a clear rationale for the proposal and provided detailed descriptions of their aims and timetables for statutory procedures.

The proposal outlines associated benefits and disadvantages clearly. The local authority have considered suitable alternatives and provided reasons why these have been discounted. These appear to be reasonable and equitable.

The proposal identifies and considers associated risks suitably. The local authority have considered the impact that changes will have on learner travel and pledge to continue to provide free transport for children attending their nearest suitable school in line with existing policy arrangements.

The consultation outlines how the preferred option will reduce the number of surplus places appropriately.

The consultation has taken sufficient account of the impact of the proposals on Welsh medium provision within the local authority, stating that the proposal will not have an impact on the availability of Welsh-medium school places. This appears reasonable.

The proposal considers the financial costs of the proposal suitably noting that Abertillery Learning Community is facing a significant deficit projection for the 2025/26 financial year. The proposal considers that if no action is taken, the deficit is expected to increase significantly over the next five years, placing the school in an unsustainable financial position. Taking into account the figures provided, this appears to be a reasonable consideration.

The proposal notes that an estimated cost of £100,000 will be required to increase the accommodation at the remaining two campuses. This will be financed from existing maintenance budgets.

The local authority has provided a Welsh Language Impact Assessment as part of this proposal.

The local authority has provided a Community Impact Assessment as part of this proposal.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority appears to have considered the educational aspects of the proposal appropriately. The proposal includes sufficient commentary regarding the expected impact of the proposal on pupil outcomes, wellbeing and attitudes to learning, teaching and learning experiences, care, support and guidance and leadership and management. The local authority considers that reducing provision from three campuses to two would allow resources to be used more efficiently via professional collaboration and practitioner-to-practitioner working. This appears to be reasonable.

The proposal includes a link to the most recent Estyn inspection report along with relevant text from the report. Following inspection, Estyn placed Abertillery Learning Community in the statutory follow up category of requiring special measures. This does not appear to have been highlighted.

The proposal considers that the proposal will not negatively impact provision for ALN pupils. This also appears to be reasonable.