



COUNCIL - 26TH JANUARY 2016

SUBJECT: ANSWER TO QUESTION RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(9)

WELSH MEDIUM EDUCATION - to the Cabinet Member for Education from Councillor P.J. Bevan.

The growth of Welsh Medium education is the result of parental demand, and to date authorities have merely responded to existing demand. In doing so, they have only made additional provision as and when existing schools have reached capacity.

The Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 however, requires local authorities to “promote” Welsh medium education. But while there is sufficient short term capacity in most of our Welsh medium schools in Caerffili County, the authority is satisfied that it meets demand. The definition of “promote” however, is to “encourage further advance” and this requires the authority to create demand if it is to satisfy the requirements of the 2013 Act.

Will the Cabinet Member for Education say what steps the authority is taking to achieve the legal demands of the Act, which is to “promote” Welsh medium education i.e. opening new schools in areas where demand has been identified.

RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING - COUNCILLOR R. PASSMORE

Shortly after Local Government Reorganisation in 1996, CCBC had 7 Welsh Medium Primary schools and 1 Welsh Medium Secondary with the following numbers of students attending those schools, as follows:

School	Capacity	Number on roll
Y.G.G. Cwm Gwyddon	188	146
Ysgol Gymraeg Trelyn	171	164
Y.G.G. Bargod	256	190
Y.G.G. Caerffili	360	324
Y.G.G. Y Castell	300	134
Ysgol Ifor Bach	314	291
Ysgol Y Lawnt	169	148
Primary Total	1758	1397
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhywni	908	897

Since that time, CCBC has established 4 additional Welsh medium Primary schools and increased capacity at all bar one with improved teaching and learning facilities. Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni's capacity has significantly more than doubled and is now located on 2 sites with facilities of the very highest standard.

The current analysis is as follows :

School	Capacity	Number on Roll
Y.G. Bro Allta	303	268
Y.G. Cwm Derwen	210	191
Y.G. Cwm Gwyddon	222	216
Y.G. Gilfach Fargoed	210	172
Y.G.G. Caerffili	385	314
Y.G.G. Y Castell	456	378
Ysgol Bro Sannan	206	190
Ysgol Gymraeg Trelyn	195	168
Ysgol Ifor Bach	240	231
Ysgol Penalltau	210	157
Ysgol Y Lawnt	231	185
Primary Total	2868	2470
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni	2348	1500

You will note from the above that the capacity exceeds the present number on roll at each school.

Annual pupil projections are undertaken having regard to live birth data and projected demand. The projections to 2021 forecast an increase to 2622 Welsh medium Primary pupils which is still considerably below the overall capacity of 2868. Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni's capacity is forecast to be sufficient at least until 2023.

The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 makes provision to carry out an assessment of the demand among parents in its area for Welsh medium education for their children. CCBC has done this annually in recent years and this information is used to forecast future demand.

The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan summarises this information on current and future demand.

The above clearly evidences that the Council is fulfilling its duty to provide sufficient Welsh medium school places. To create additional schools/places would not be prudent and would increase further surplus school places at a time when the Welsh Government is understandably seeking reductions. Such proposals would also be unlikely to be supported in the context of the 21st century schools initiative.