



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 12TH SEPTEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - PROPOSAL FOR
THE CLOSURE OF CWM GLAS INFANT SCHOOL**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Members endorsement on the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation in respect of the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024.
- 1.2 To ensure Members are apprised of the rationale for the proposal and relay the views of the Head Teacher and School Governing Body.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further in future years, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school.
- 2.2 The conclusion of the meeting as outlined in 2.1, agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made by the Head Teacher and Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.
- 2.3 Currently Cwm Glas Infant School shares a catchment area with Coed Y Brain Primary School where pupils transition to at Key Stage 2 subject to parental preference.
- 2.4 This proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver an inclusive all-through primary school provision. Subject to Cabinet approval, this will result in the proposed closure of Cwm Glas Infants School with effect from July 2024.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, Scrutiny Members are asked to: -
- a) Note the contents of this report
 - b) Endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation on the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To seek Scrutiny Member endorsement to Cabinet to proceed to consultation stage in respect of the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infants School with effect from July 2024
- 4.2 To assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 where this statutory legislation applies.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Cwm Glas Infants School

- 5.1.1 Cwm Glas Infants School provides education to pupils between the ages of 3 and 7 and has a published capacity figure of 57 places with a published admission number of 19.
- 5.1.2 The current pupil roll is 33 pupils (Full Time Equivalent) with over 50% of these pupils residing outside of the catchment area of the school
- 5.1.3 Surplus places are currently at 47.37% rising to 56.14% in September 2024 and projected to increase in future years as the number of pupils predicted to attend the school is anticipated to decline linked to a reduction in live birth rates in the area and parental preference.
- 5.1.4 The projected pupil numbers and resultant financial outlook for the school provides a significant challenge to the ability of the Head and School Governors to agree a balanced budget to maintain the school and an appropriate staffing level which has led to a request to the local authority to consider closing the school from July 2024.
- 5.1.5 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led. Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget. However, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward.
- 5.1.6 Reasonable alternatives to closure, such as reduction in the number of classes, collaboration, federation and colocation were considered by the Head Teacher and Governing Body in partnership with the Local Authority, but deemed not viable or sustainable.

- 5.1.7 Cwm Glas Infants School is a feeder school for Coed Y Brain Primary at Key Stage 2. Both schools share the same catchment area and are both located in Llanbradach within circa 1 mile of each other. Should the decision be taken to close Cwm Glas Infants School, based on current and future projections for both schools, all pupils could be accommodated within Coed Y Brain Primary School.
- 5.1.8 In order to progress the proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants by July 2024, a consultation exercise is required in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.
- 5.1.9 Subject to Cabinet approval, a prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the code will be written to. A consultation document will be published in both hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website based on the recommendation for closure. Reasonable access to information will be promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats will be made available on request.
- 5.1.10 The consultation period will be for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for consideration and response and conscientious consideration will be given to any responses received.
- 5.1.11 The principles of engagement outlined in the Local Authority's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020 will also be acknowledged and the team will engage with any additional 'interested parties' as required, through appropriate channels to ensure the dissemination of information and provision of a suitable platform for the consultees to make their views known is made available.
- 5.1.12 Following the consultation period, a consultation report along with any responses received will be collated and reported back to Members, where a decision will be made as to whether to proceed with the proposal as outlined and publish a Statutory Notice.

5.2 **Conclusion**

Members are asked to note the information provided and give endorsement to Cabinet to proceed to consultation stage in respect of the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infants School with effect from July 2024.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to each proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010 that came into force on the 1st April 2021.

Link to IIA

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led.
- 8.2 Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget.
- 8.3 The Council's Education Finance Team have been working closely with the school for a number of years, however, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward and are unable to demonstrate via a financial action plan their ability to reverse the deficit.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the consultation process.
- 9.2 The Council's Human Resources Team will work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that processes are adhered to, and support is provided as required.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

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Background Papers:

None