

Newport City Council

Consultation report

Proposal to establish a new special school in Newport to accommodate pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), on the current infant site of Gaer Primary School, with effect from January 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter, that is to say April 2017.

Formal Consultation period:
11th April 2016 to 22nd May 2016

Purpose

This report is published in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code, July 2013.

This consultation report includes the following sections:

- The Proposal
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Everyday Summary Version – Children & Young People
- Consultation Responses
- Estyn
- Learner Voice
- Frequently Asked Questions

The Proposal

To establish a new special school in Newport to accommodate pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), on the current infant site of the Gaer Primary School, with effect from January 2017, or as soon as possible thereafter, that is to say April 2017.

Stakeholder Engagement

An invitation to take part in the statutory consultation was issued to the following stakeholders, with a link to the consultation pack on the Council's website sent by e-mail, or hard copies being made available through the schools.

- Teachers, staff and the governing body of Maes Ebbw School;
- Parents, carers and guardians of pupils attending Maes Ebbw School;
- Pupils at Maes Ebbw School;
- Parents, carers and guardians of pupils living in Newport with a diagnosis of ASD;
- Pupils living in Newport with a diagnosis of ASD;
- The Newport ASD Steering Group;
- The Chief Education Officers / Directors of Education of all bordering and consortium LAs – Monmouthshire County Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Cardiff City Council;
- The Church in Wales, Diocese of Monmouth;
- Roman Catholic Archdiocese;
- The Headteacher and Governing Body of all Newport schools;
- All Newport City Council elected members;
- Newport City Council Scrutiny Committee;
- The Welsh Ministers;
- Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) representing the area served by any school which is subject to the proposals;
- Welsh Government;
- Estyn;
- Teaching and staff trade unions representing teachers and staff at Maes Ebbw School;
- The South East Wales Education Achievement Service;
- Local Authority Transport departments;
- The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent;
- All Newport Community Councils;
- The local Communities First partnership (or equivalent);
- SNAP Cymru.

The following consultation events were arranged. These were publicised via a letter to stakeholders, on the Council website and through the consultation document.

Venue	Date and Time	Event type
Civic Centre, Newport NP20 4UR	18 April 2016 4.00pm – 6.00pm	Drop-in event
Civic Centre, Newport NP20 4UR	15 April 2016 10.00am – 12 noon	Drop-in event

Officers from the Council also attended a support group for parents of children with ASD to discuss the proposal.

Everyday Summary Version – Children & Young People

An Everyday Summary Version of the main consultation document was published and this is also targeted at children and young people.

In addition a children's questionnaire was created and distributed to all pupils attending Maes Ebbw School and Learning Resources Bases in Newport with a diagnoses of ASD, along with those pupils resident in Newport with a diagnosis of ASD who are currently placed in out-of-county day provision. An officer from the Council also met with a group of pupils from Maes Ebbw School to listen to the Learner Voice. A summary of the responses received is outlined in the Learner Voice section.

Consultation Responses

9 consultation responses were received, providing the following responses:

- 7 respondents supported the proposal (78%)
- 1 respondent did not support the proposal (11%)
- 1 respondent did not confirm whether or not they supported the proposal (11%).

Three additional sets of comments were received offering comments and seeking clarification on the consultation subject. These have been addressed via Frequently Asked Questions, and have been included within this report.

Estyn

The formal response from Estyn includes the following summary:

“The proposer has clearly defined the benefits of establishing a school for pupils who have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. However it is difficult to make a judgement on the impact of the proposal as it will be a new school with new staff and so has no performance data available. In addition, performance data from Maes Ebbw School has not been provided or analysed although the most recent Estyn inspection monitoring report would appear to indicate that standards should at least be maintained should the proposal go ahead.”

Learner Voice

Twenty-two completed questionnaires were returned and have assisted in determining the Learner Voice. The responses are outlined below, but in summary 91% of respondents felt that the proposal was a good one, and overall would benefit pupils living in Newport.

Question 1

Do you think having a new ASD school in Newport is a good idea?

- Yes (20)
- No (1)
- No clear answer (1)

Question 2

Do you think having an ASD school in Newport will be better than travelling to schools in other areas?

- Yes (17)
- No (2)
- Don't know (2)
- No clear answer (1)

Question 3

What do you think will be good about having an ASD school in Newport?

- To meet demand;
- To help and support for children with ASD;
- Dedicated base with long term stability for children with ASD;
- More tailored approach to teaching children with ASD;
- Better transition;
- Good for children with other difficulties to have another school more dedicated to their needs;
- Less reliance on taxis and reduced travel time;
- Familiar local environment;
- Better choices and supporting families within Newport;
- Enables parents to help out at the school;
- More space;
- Good practice at Maes Ebbw can be shared;
- Specialist staff;
- Children are content with existing arrangements;
- Competition.

Question 4

Are there any reasons you can think of why we shouldn't open an ASD school in Newport?

- Increased traffic;
- Not enough space;
- Opportunities for children needing special education;
- Proposed facilities are not as good as those on offer at other schools;
- May adversely affect children who are currently attending alternative provision.

Question 5

Are you excited about having an ASD school in Newport?

- Yes (17)
- No (1)
- Don't know (3)
- No clear answer (1)

Question 6

Do you have anything else you would like to tell us?

- Please proceed without delay;
- Keep up the good work;
- Positive that there is recognition that new school is needed but need to consider where children currently go to school;
- Improve range of help available;
- No child or family wants to go to other areas for schooling;
- Increasing demand makes it sensible to have a school locally;
- Local school beneficial to reduce travel time;
- Better transition;
- Parents become anxious when children have to travel longer distances to get to school;
- Hopefully staff will be specialised to cope with challenging pupils;
- Children are content in existing provision;
- Where are families going?

Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions received about the proposal have been published on the Council web site and are included for information below:

My child is currently attending an out-of-county placement where he / she is very happy and settled. Will they be forced to move to this school when it opens?

If following the formal consultation a decision is taken by the Cabinet Member for Education to proceed with the proposal, all pupils and parents of pupils attending specialist ASD day placements will be contacted formally to explore whether or not they wish to consider placement at the new ASD School in Newport.

For pupils and parents of pupils who wish to consider this, a meeting will be arranged in order to discuss possible transition into the new ASD School from their existing educational provider. If following initial contact, the pupil and parent of the pupil do not wish to explore this option and would prefer to remain attending their existing placement, this will be respected and no further discussions will take place regarding transition into the new ASD School within Newport.

Will a child require a statement of Special Educational Needs to be considered for admission to the new school?

Yes. All pupils who attend the new ASD School will have a Statement of SEN detailing a formal diagnosis of ASD, confirmed in writing by a medical practitioner. Whilst this may be subject to change in the future pending Welsh Governments proposal to replace Statements of SEN with Individual Development Plans (IDP's), the current SEN Code of Practice includes a requirement for a pupil to have a Statement of SEN in order to access the ASD School.

However, not all pupils with a Statement of SEN and a formal diagnosis of ASD will be appropriate for placement within the new school, as it will cater for the needs of those pupils whose needs cannot be met within mainstream and / or Learning Resource Base placement.

Admission to the new ASD School will be determined by the SEN Panel in liaison with the appointed Headteacher following formal recommendation of a pupil review meeting. It will not be possible to apply for placement at the new ASD School via the Schools Admissions Team.

How much autonomy will the Headteacher have over admissions to the new school and to what extent will this be in consultation with the Council? Will there be representation on the Managed Moves Panel?

Admission to the new ASD School will be determined by the SEN Panel in liaison with the appointed Headteacher following formal recommendation of a pupil review meeting. It will not be possible to apply for placement at the new ASD School via the Schools Admissions Team.

All pupils who attend the new ASD School will have a Statement of SEN and therefore all referrals will be considered by the SEN Panel, not the Managed Move Panel. If a pupil is identified by the Managed Move Panel as possibly being appropriate for placement, a referral can be made to the SEN Panel for consideration.

Will the school be able to provide support to pupils with PDA along with training on ASD strategies and good practice?

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is now considered to be part of the autism spectrum. Individuals with PDA share difficulties with others on the autism spectrum in social aspects of interaction, communication and imagination. However, the central difficulty for people with PDA is the way they are driven to avoid demands and expectations. This is because they have an anxiety based need to be in control. People with PDA seem to have a better social understanding and communication skills than others on the spectrum and are able to use this to their advantage.

It will be important to ensure that the new ASD School is able to identify pupils presenting with PDA and provide support and strategies to help them within the school setting.

Will the ASD School be attached to Gaer Primary School and Maes Ebbw and if so, could pupils in the ASD School also attend these provisions?

The proposed ASD School will be a stand-alone school with no formal association with another. Whilst it will be in close geographical location to Gaer Primary School, it is not attached to and will not form part of this school. Likewise, there are no formal links with Maes Ebbw School.

In order to maximise opportunities for pupils who attend the new ASD School to integrate where appropriate with mainstream peers, links will be established with the a pupil's catchment school in order to facilitate this. This may include joining the catchment school for a variety of activities include assemblies, prescribed lessons and PE sessions, as well as whole school activities and excursions. Any opportunities for integration will be tailored to meet the individual pupil's needs and interests.

Will pupils who attend the proposed ASD School have access to therapies?

A range of therapies to meet the individual pupils needs, including Speech and Language, Occupational and Physiotherapy amongst others, will be available as prescribed by the pupils Statement of SEN. These will be provided within the school environment and reinforced throughout the child's individualised curriculum, as deemed appropriate by the relevant professional.

Will transport be available to pupils who attend the ASD School?

Transport will be provided by the Local Authority to / from the ASD School for those pupils identified as requiring it within their individual Statement of SEN. This will be in line with the Council's Transport Policy.

Will Roman Catholic Schools be able to access this school for pupils that require this type of education?

The proposed ASD School will be available to pupils, regardless of faith, who meet the criteria for a placement. This will be devised if the proposal is confirmed and when legal consultation is completed by the Local Authority in conjunction with the appointed Head teacher and governing Body.

Will the proposed ASD School be able to provide support and advice to primary schools for pupils with ASD?

The proposed ASD School will be the central 'hub' for ASD practice within Newport. There will be a wealth of experience and expertise available within the School that will benefit both pupils placed as well as all other schools within Newport through outreach support.

Therefore, all schools within Newport will be able to access specialist knowledge and resources, as appropriate, to support pupils within mainstream, learning resource bases and specialist placements, with ASD.

The proposal states that supportive therapies – speech, physiotherapy and occupational therapy – will be available on site. Where will this resource come from?

If a pupil has been assessed as requiring individual therapies as part of their educational provision, this will be detailed within Part 3 of the pupils Statement of SEN. Where interventions have been assessed and agreed by the Local Health Board (Aneurin Bevan Health Board), practitioners will visit the proposed ASD School in order to deliver this. This will also be applicable to any private therapists that are procured by the LA. Interventions such as these are currently delivered by professionals from a range of ABHB teams at all schools within Newport, including mainstream and specialist settings, in order to support individual pupil development.

Where is the evidence that outcomes for children would be improved by this principle in a cost effective way?

The development of an ASD specific school within Newport would enable the Council to educate some of the city's most vulnerable children within their local area, enable both the Pupil and Parents to build effective relationships with peers in their local community and enable the LA to effectively support pupils and Parents with in-house advisory teams and support services. This is in line with the efficient and effective use of public resources.

At present, the average cost of an ASD day placement outside of Newport is approximately £45 k per annum. This does not include transportation costs to / from school which if on an individual basis is approximately an additional £15 k per annum. The proposed provision within Newport would cost approximately £30 k per pupil with transport costs variable depending on the pupil's home address within the city. This is a significant saving for Newport of approximately £15 k per annum on the school placement with transportation savings being an additional saving to this.

In accordance with the School Organisation Code (2013) this report is published electronically on Newport City Council's website at www.newport.gov.uk

To request a hard (paper) copy of this document please contact Newport City Council's Education Service Development Manager on 01633 656656 or email school.reorg@newport.gov.uk