

NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



# **Formal Consultation to establish a new special school for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Newport**

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11th April 2016 – 22nd May 2016

Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif  
21st Century Schools

Information can also be arranged in other community languages if needed. Please contact us on 01633 656656 to arrange.

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of the consultation is to seek views on the following 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 April 2017.”**

It is your chance to ask questions and make comments that will be considered when the council decides how to proceed.

### **This formal consultation period:**

- **Begins on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016**
- **Ends at midnight on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016**

This proposal will enable a specialist resource provision to be established in Newport for pupils aged between 3 years and 19 years who have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) that requires structured teaching and discrete provision. This provision will be able to accommodate 48 pupils, specifically 24 pupils of primary school age and 24 pupils of secondary school age.

Primarily, the new school will accommodate the needs of pupils who are resident in Newport, enabling them to be educated near their home. This will have the benefit of reducing the number of out-of-county placements and the sometimes long journeys that pupils are faced with in accessing their nominated school.

The school will be created by adapting and re-modelling the current Gaer Primary School infant building. It is proposed that the new community-maintained special school will be established and available for education from April 2017.

Once the Council receives legal permission to establish the new school, the LA will make arrangements to elect a temporary Governing Body. The temporary Governing Body will appoint a Headteacher and decide on how the new school should be organised, including the school name.

## **The Consultation Process**

The consultation process represents an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments that will be recorded and summarised in a consultation report. This report will be published on the Council’s website and will be considered when the Council decides on the way forward.

The consultation will involve two drop-in sessions with those most directly affected by the proposal, where Council officers will be on hand to explain the proposals in more details and answer any questions.

Location	Date & Time	Session
Civic Centre, Newport, NP20 4UR	Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2016, 4pm – 6pm	Drop-in event
Civic Centre, Newport, NP20 4UR	Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2016, 10am – 12 noon	Drop-in event

Comments and questions can be submitted using the enclosed response pro-forma. This pro-forma will also be available at the drop-in sessions or can be downloaded from [www.newport.gov.uk/schoolreorg](http://www.newport.gov.uk/schoolreorg)

These responses should be returned to the Education Service Development Manager, Room 425w, Newport City Council, Civic Centre, Newport NP20 4UR. Alternatively comments and completed pro-formas can be returned by email to [school.reorg@newport.gov.uk](mailto:school.reorg@newport.gov.uk)

Social media facilities such as Twitter and Facebook will also be available.

Please note that responses made to this consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal, they will be counted as adverse comments. Objections to a proposal can only be registered following the publication of a statutory notice. **The deadline for all responses is midnight on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016.**

Following consultation, Newport City Council's Cabinet Member for Education & Young People will consider the views expressed and then decide whether to proceed with the proposal. If the decision is taken to proceed, a statutory notice will be published in the local press and at the school. The statutory notice period will last for 28 days from the date of publication and enables people to express their views in the form of supporting or objecting to the proposals.

If no objections are received following the publication of the statutory notice, Newport City Council's Cabinet Member for Education & Young People will make the final decision as to whether to proceed.

#### **Arrangements for the participation of children and young people**

A Children and Young People's Everyday Summary Version of this consultation has been produced and is available from Maes Ebbw School or from Newport City Council. The council will consult with pupils at Maes Ebbw School through the Headteacher in conjunction with SNAP Cymru which is an organisation that offers free independent advice and support, and is totally independent of the Local Authority. If you would like to receive independent advice via SNAP Cymru, please contact them as follows:

SNAP Cymru  
1 South Road  
Penallta Industrial Estate  
Hengoed  
CF82 7ST

Tel: 0845 120 3730

Copies of this document and the Children and Young People's Everyday Summary Version are available on the Council's website at [www.newport.gov.uk/schoolreorg](http://www.newport.gov.uk/schoolreorg) or can be requested by emailing [school.reorg@newport.gov.uk](mailto:school.reorg@newport.gov.uk) or by telephoning 01633 656656.

### **Who will we consult with?**

- 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 elected members;
- All Newport community councils;
- 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.

### **What do you have to consider?**

The remainder of this document sets out the rationale for the proposal. We would like you to consider the information contained within the document and to hear your views as to whether or not you support the proposal.

## **The Proposal**

The proposal concerns the establishment of a new community-maintained special school to support the provision of education for children aged from 3 years to 19 years who have been diagnosed with ASD. The new school will provide for 48 school places and will be established on the site of the current Gaer Primary School infant building.

Following the amalgamation of Gaer Junior School and Gaer Infant School in September 2014, a considerable level of investment is taking place to provide for a consolidated Gaer Primary School with effect from September 2016. This will render the infant building vacant on an appropriate education setting which also hosts the Gaer Annexe.

The school will aim to provide the highest possible standards of education and support for all its pupils regardless of their level of educational need. Pupils learn best in a safe, supportive and positive environment. The positive management of behaviour and the fostering of self-esteem and self-discipline are essential first steps in creating a successful learning and teaching environment. Working in close partnership with parents and carers will be essential to the successful education of their children

All pupils have a right to an education, which is broad, balanced, progressive and appropriate to their individual needs. This will include full access to the national curriculum and will provide the pupil opportunities to access mainstream schooling for inclusion, as deemed appropriate by the pupil, parent(s) and professionals involved in the individual pupils care.

Education extends beyond school and into the wider community. Pupils will have opportunities to work and learn within the community in preparation for their future role as valued members of society.

Pupils with ASD generally need more space to move around in with favourable acoustics to minimise sensory overload. It can be disturbing to pupils with ASD if they are in an environment with lots of other people where there is little space and a high degree of stimuli. Planning the layout of the new school will prioritise this need, particularly in circulation areas. If pupils are able to move freely in an enjoyable well-lit space with appropriate regard for the potential of over-stimulation, their sense of freedom and well-being will become immediately apparent.

## **Current Provision and Future Demand**

### **Maes Ebbw**

The school currently provides education for 156 children aged between 3 and 19 years across three sites (as per the September 2015 Class Count census). Annexe facilities from the main school are provided at Maes Ebbw Bach in Eveswell and at a specialist ASD provision on the site of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Teyrnnon. The building at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Teyrnnon is able to accommodate a maximum of 12 pupils at any time.

Maes Ebbw School was originally built with capacity for 103 pupils. Additional provision was later added through the creation of Maes Ebbw Bach (12 places) and Maes Ebbw ASD – Brynglas (12 places). There has however been an increasing need for specialist provision within Newport, and thus the main site has been subject of re-modelling to accommodate the growing demand. The historical pupil numbers for Maes Ebbw School across the current three sites are outlined below:

<b>Newport Special School Pupil Numbers 2011-2015 (all year groups)</b>							
School	Capacity (Total)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Surplus places 2015
Maes Ebbw	127	112	117	129	143	156	-29

If this proposal is successful, there will be an initial admission of pupils requiring specialist placement in a specialist ASD environment. Following this, it is anticipated that there will be an on-going demand for placements, from within Newport and our neighbouring Local Authorities. All requests for placements at the ASD School will be considered by the SEN Panel, which consists of a range of education professionals from across the LA and schools, as well as wider inclusion representatives and SNAP Cymru. The Panel will consider requests on an individual basis in line with a criteria for admission that will be established in conjunction with the appointed Headteacher. All decisions taken by the SEN Panel are conveyed in writing to the applicant with a clear rationale provided for the decision taken.

The uptake of placements will be robustly monitored by the LA and Head teacher as well as the SEN Panel, with opportunities for re-integration into alternative education establishments for pupils as deemed appropriate. This will enable placements to be allocated to pupils who require a specialist placement, with on-going review of suitability as per the pupils Statement of SEN.

### **Out of County Provision**

There are currently 34 pupils with a formal diagnosis of ASD attending educational provision outside of Newport, at a cost of approximately £1.25 million per annum. These placements are across 19 providers with a mixture of Local Authority maintained and Independent placements, located across England and Wales. Five of these placements are on a 52-week residential basis with the one remaining residential placement being a 38-week placement. The six residential placements are funded on a tri-partied basis between Education, Health and Social Services due to the complex needs of the pupils placed. Based on the current placements, it is anticipated that the proposed special school will be appropriate to meet the needs of approximately 21 of these pupils should pupil and / or parental preference be to explore this option.

### Quality and Standards

Quality and standards in schools in Newport are monitored by Estyn and the Local Authority (LA). Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is a Crown body, established under the Education Act 1992. Estyn is independent of the National Assembly for Wales but receives its funding from the Welsh Government under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. Estyn inspects quality and standards in education and training providers in Wales. The outcome of the most recent inspection for Maes Ebbw School is shown below:

School	Inspection Date	Outcomes	Provision	Leadership & Management	Overall Summary	
					Performance	Prospects for improvement
Maes Ebbw	February 2010	Good	Good	Adequate	Good	Adequate

The Council believes that this proposal will have a positive impact on the quality of educational outcomes and provision in the special school sector.

### What Will The Proposal Provide?

The proposal is to re-model the existing Gaer Primary School infant building and grounds to create a suitable special school which will provide 48 full-time school places for children with ASD. The former Gaer Infant School premises has the capacity for 180 mainstream pupils, in addition has capacity for 30 full time nursery places. The school has been assessed as suitable for the delivery of special education needs for pupils with the Autistic Spectrum Disorder and the delivery of education for up to 48 pupils. A stand-alone building adjacent to the former Infant School – currently known as the Gaer Annexe - hosts the Inclusion Advisory Team for Additional Education Needs, including Behaviour and Autism. This specialist team will be in a position to provide additional peer support to the staff working within this special education setting.

The Gaer Primary School infant building was inspected as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools surveys in 2010. The school was judged to be in condition C overall, on a scale of A (excellent) to D (poor). Under this proposal, there will be significant investment on this site to re-model the existing provision and ensure that this is appropriate to deliver suitable and sufficient education to this client group of pupils.

The Maes Ebbw main school building was also inspected as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools surveys in 2010. As recently as 2014 however the school was reported to be in condition B overall, on the A to D scale. Under this proposal, Maes Ebbw Special School will continue at full capacity due to an escalating pressure on places in the special school sector.

The site is a suitable and sufficient indoor and outdoor education environment for children of all ages. The new school will be fully accessible, including appropriate toilet facilities, and will be DDA compliant, ensuring improved accessibility and an enriched environment for teaching and learning within the City. There will be sufficient teaching bases and withdrawal areas along with a staff room, kitchen facilities, a parent's room, dedicated areas for the delivery of therapies, storage facilities, a sensory room along with an area specific to the development of independence / life skills for age appropriate pupils.

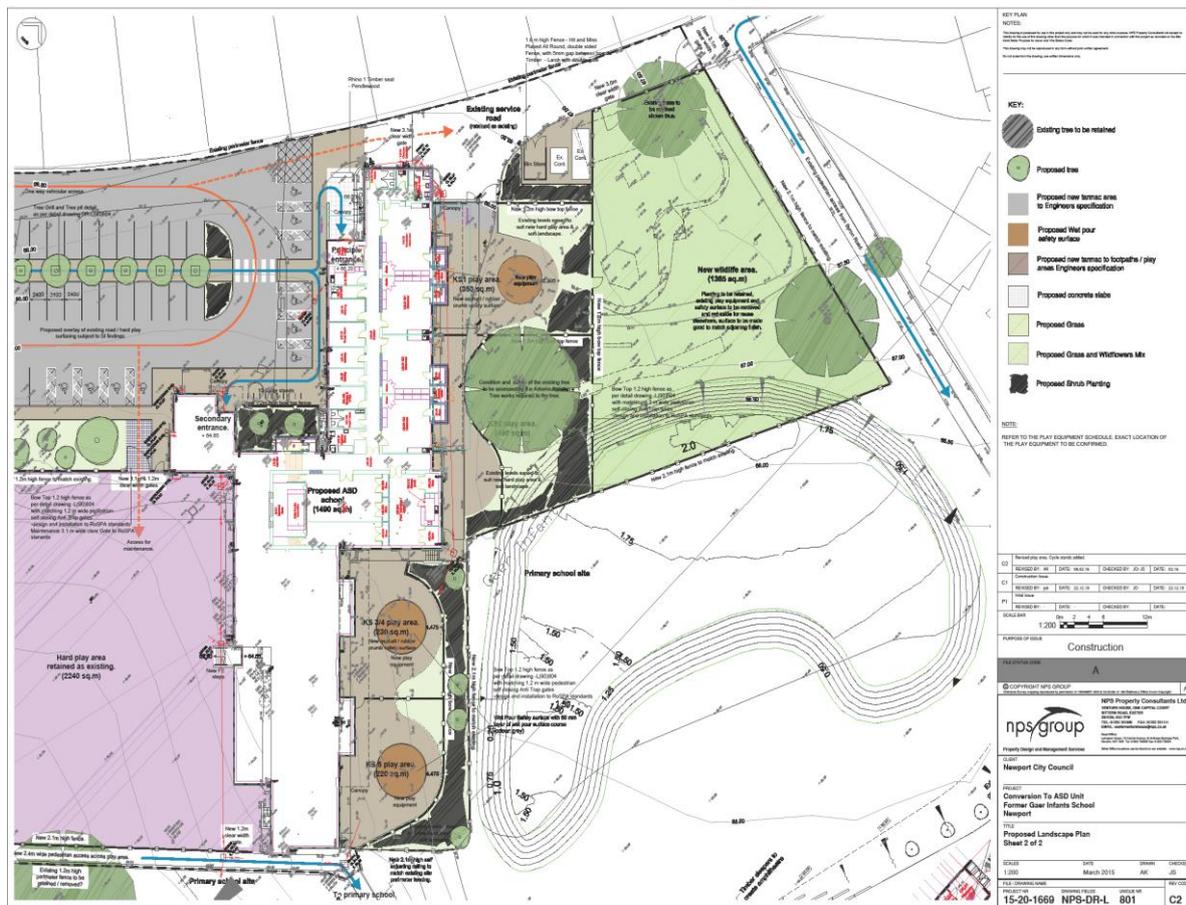
Schools are usually places with lots of different rooms for a variety of activities. Children with ASD however need a simple and easily understood route for getting from one place to another. Long corridors with changes in direction, differing levels and unclear signs will add up to confusion in the mind of an autistic child and cause frustrations which may result in difficult or challenging behaviour within the school and / or home environment, or in some cases the internalising of these emotions which may adversely affect the pupil's mental health and well-being.

The actual size of a classroom suitable for pupils with ASD is difficult to determine as this can depend significantly on where a pupil is on the autistic spectrum. Each year, the number of pupils the school admits will vary and therefore a solution is to have classrooms divisible by folding doors or partitions, or have a variety of different sized classrooms so that some are suitable for very small groups. There should be quiet areas designated within each classroom.

The school grounds will be attractive and well appointed, with access to a safe and secure playing field. There will also be a hard surface area to offer alternative play facilities and an identified community space that can be used for collective worship, PE, performing arts and school meals. Grounds will be laid out in such a way that prevents pupils being able to leave the site and finding themselves at risk. The body of the building will provide an enclosed area linked to discreet side fencing. The grounds of the new school will be laid out to provide fine and wet weather surfaces for recreation and the development of a private garden area to enable pupils to choose privacy from observation by others while safely remaining within the grounds. There will also be recreational and hobby based skill opportunities for the pupils. There will be a vehicle turning bay away from the main entrance, thus avoiding the need for vehicles to reverse within the grounds of the building.

The well-qualified and experienced staff that will be employed will be able to meet the wide range of pupils' personal, educational and social needs. There will be spacious well-equipped class rooms with specialist teaching in science, ICT, art, music, expressive arts and food and design technology. An additional room will be available to be used regularly by parents, staff and visiting professionals. Supportive therapies, such as speech, physical and occupational therapy, will be available on site appropriate to pupil needs identified in their statement of Special Educational Needs.

An indicative site plan is outlined below:



## Curriculum Delivery

Pupils at the new special school will follow the national curriculum with appropriate differentiation to reflect individual ability, needs and learning styles. There will be a strong complementary curriculum which recognises the personal and social needs of the pupils and which will offer a wide range of practical experience throughout their time in school. A range of before and after school activities will be available to all pupils. Throughout their school career, pupils in the secondary phase will be offered access to appropriate accredited courses including GCSE, OCR, ALL, and ASDAN,

Pupils will be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by supporting them as appropriate based on their needs to manage routines and change, comply with expectations and develop a positive attitude to education. There will be a strong emphasis on developing collaborative working and being part of a team. Learning will be taught through practical approaches and real experiences both within school and the wider community. Appropriate opportunities for inclusion will be actively encouraged in local mainstream schools.

Pupils will use the principles of structured teaching (TEACCH) to support the delivery of the curriculum. The provision will offer a highly structured environment enabling pupils to access all areas of the curriculum. The pupils will take part in the broader aspects of school through carefully structured planning. All Pupils at Key Stage 4 will participate in a work experience programme appropriate to their needs and ability with a focus on developing independence and life-skills as appropriate.

The school will be organised into age appropriate class bases. Pupils in the primary phase will be taught by a key teacher and pupils in the secondary phase will have the opportunity to access a more flexible provision as identified by their individual needs.

Providing all pupils with integration opportunities with other schools and the local community will be a key component of the provision. There will be good links with neighbouring schools, offering integration experiences for both pupils from the setting, Learning Resource Bases, Maes Ebbw School and potentially mainstream pupils as deemed appropriate.

### **When Will This Work Be Completed?**

It is proposed that the work required to facilitate establishment of the new school will be completed in December 2016. The new community-maintained special school will therefore open in April 2017 for 48 pupils aged between 3 years and 19 years, broken down to 24 pupils of primary age and 24 pupils of secondary age.

### **Cost**

The funding arrangements to support a new special school therefore will be from two sources:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme - £1m
- Invest to Save - £2.8m
- Total Capital Spend - £3.8m

This can be presented as a cost of approximately £79,000 per pupil place.

There will be an increase in whole authority staff costs through the creation of a new school. There would be a requirement to set up the staffing team in advance of the open date for the school. These costs will be over and above those associated with normal running costs for a school.

Newport City Council has a policy of awarding a sum of £35,000 start-up costs to any newly established school, and this would support organisational development issues as part of the implementation programme.

The proposal to establish a new Special School for pupils with ASD will enable the 12 pupils currently receiving education at Maes Ebbw – Brynglas ASD unit to transfer to a new school environment. It will also enable provision for other pupils currently educated at Maes Ebbw School and at various Learning Resource Base provisions across the City and potentially for pupils currently receiving education at special schools outside of Newport where appropriate and depending on the severity of need.

## **Alternative Options considered**

**Do nothing** – Maintain the provision that currently exists across the City and continue to accommodate children in out-of-county placements where there is a shortfall of supply and demand.

**Do medium** – Transfer the specialist ASD provision to the vacant Gaer Primary School infant building without any re-modelling works. This option would enable the establishment of a new special school but would provide the enabling works to facilitate delivery of suitable education on this site for this specific client group.

**Do major** – Establish a new special school for children with ASD on the site of the vacant Gaer Primary School infant building after extensive re-modelling work to ensure that the layout of the new school is appropriate to delivery suitable and sufficient education to these pupils. This would provide a permanent modern learning environment and facilities, and would assist in ensuring that the Council is able to meet the educational needs of all pupils living within the Local Authority area.

### **What will the preferred proposal achieve?**

The preferred proposal will provide for a modern school adapted to provide and achieve an improved learning environment for pupils with ASD. It will also reduce the number of out-of-county placements and associated high transport costs.

## **Access and Organisation**

### **Catchment area**

The new school will not have a catchment area. It will however primarily be used to accommodate pupils residing within Newport, although if spaces exist, there may be a facility to allow neighbouring LAs to purchase vacant places for their pupils.

### **Admissions**

Pupils will not be able to apply for a place at this new school via the Council's normal admission arrangements. Instead, admission will be based on need following an assessment undertaken by the Education Inclusion Team, and all pupils will have a statement of Special Educational Needs. The Council will determine admission taking parental preference into consideration and following consultation with the Headteacher and Governing Body as to the appropriateness of the placement.

Whilst it is anticipated that the majority of admissions to the school will take place at the start of each academic year, in-year admissions can take place if places are available at the school.

### **Transport**

Where appropriate, transport will be provided in accordance with the Council's policy. As and when appropriate however, independent travel may be undertaken by pupils / students as part of their learning. There will be an identified safe area for the drop-off and collection of pupils.

## **Staffing**

There would be a number of staffing-related implications arising from the proposal to establish the new special school. The school will open in April 2017. Staff will be appointed by the Temporary Governing Body following the appointment of a Headteacher. The Temporary Governing Body would need to consider the timescales for the appointment of a Headteacher in order that an appropriate staffing structure of teachers, support staff and practitioners can be created and recruitment to take place in readiness for meeting the identified needs of all pupils when the school opens in April 2017. There will be a need to ensure experience and skills in teaching and care of pupils with autism and significant learning difficulties. All staff will receive training in positive handling (Team Teach) and TEACCH, plus additional communication packages such as Picture Exchange Communication (PECS) and Therapies (Touch, Trust and Rebound).

The Headteacher and the temporary Governing Body would also need to consider Human Resources policies and procedures that it would need to adopt in relation to recruitment and once the school is established, in relation to the management of staff. The Council would advocate the adoption of Newport City Council's Human Resource policies as these have been subject to consultation with trade union representatives.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages**

The advantages of this proposal are as follows:

- Provision of a specialist dedicated school within the City to meet the needs of pupils with a diagnosis of ASD where supported mainstream provision is not deemed appropriate;
- All-through facility will enable ASD pupils to undertake their whole education on one single school site if their needs are such that integration into a mainstream school is not appropriate;
- Re-development of an existing surplus school site to meet the specific needs of pupils with ASD;
- Extensive school grounds to provide access to outdoor learning and favourable sensory surroundings;
- Close proximity to AEN Advisory Teacher team to access additional advice and expertise
- Reduction in current and / or future out-of-county placements;
- Opportunity for pupils who are currently attending out-of-county provision to re-integrate back into their local area to continue their education;
- Reduced travel time for pupils who are attending out-of-county placements.

The disadvantages of this proposal are as follows:

- There could be some transition issues in moving pupils from their current provision to the new school;
- Parents of pupils already in alternative provision could be reluctant to move them to this new school.

## Risks

The risks associated with this proposal, and mitigating factors are listed below:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating factor</b>
Demand for provision diminishes	This is unlikely, although the school could be adapted to accommodate pupils with other additional learning needs from within the special school sector.
Demand for provision increases	The Assistant Head of Education (Inclusion) will continue to plan for future provision across the City.

## Impact assessments

A fairness and equalities impact assessment has been conducted for this proposal and is available on the council website.

## Consultation Response Pro-forma

### Establishment of a new special school in Newport to make provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Your views matter. Please tell us what you think about the proposal by completing this questionnaire and returning it to the Education Service Development Manager, Newport City Council, Room 425W, Civic Centre, Newport NP20 4UR. Alternatively you can email your response to [school.reorg@newport.gov.uk](mailto:school.reorg@newport.gov.uk)

**The closing date for the submission of responses to this consultation is midnight on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016.**

Please note that negative responses made to this consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal, they will be recorded as adverse comments. Objections can only be registered following the publication of a statutory notice.

**Do you support the proposal to establish a new community-maintained special school in Newport for pupils aged between 3 years and 19 years and diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder?**

Yes  No

**Please use the box below to give any reasons or comments (including alternative options).**

Please indicate who you are (e.g. parent/carer of a child attending a local nursery)

\_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report, please supply your contact details:

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_