

Consultation Report - Proposal to establish a School Federation incorporating Gaer and Maesglas Primary Schools

Formal Consultation Period:
21st June 2021 – 1st August 2021



Purpose

This report has been prepared following conclusion of a period of stakeholder consultation on a joint proposal by Newport City Council and the governing bodies of Gaer Primary School and Maesglas Primary School to formally establish a federation between Gaer Primary School and Maesglas Primary School.

This report will be considered separately by the governing bodies of Gaer Primary School and Maesglas Primary School, with each having powers under the **Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014** to decide whether or not they wish for this federation proposal to be taken forward for determination by Newport City Council's Cabinet Member for Education.

This consultation report specifically refers to the following:

- The Proposal
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Learner Voice
- Feedback from Staff
- Consultation Responses
- Estyn
- Recommendations

The Proposal

The governing bodies of Gaer Primary School and Maesglas Primary School (the governing bodies), together with Newport City Council (the LA), proposed to use the powers granted under the **Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014** to establish **The Gaer and Maesglas Primary School Partnership** (the Federation) with effect from 1st January 2022.

The aim of the Federation is for the two schools to work in partnership to:

- Develop the excellent shared practice that guarantees outstanding experiences and increased opportunities for pupils and staff,
- Develop the common goals and reflective approaches to teaching and learning that will ensure that both communities benefit from a quality education, and
- Ensure significant positive outcomes and improved standards for both school communities.

Stakeholder Engagement

An invitation to take part in the statutory consultation was issued to the stakeholders outlined below, with either a link to the consultation pack on the Council's website and an electronic version of the pack sent by e-mail, or alternatively by hard copies of the consultation material being issued:

- The staff of both schools;
- The parents, carers and guardians of pupils attending both schools;
- The pupils attending both schools (exercised via the two School Councils);
- Teaching and support staff unions representing teachers and staff at both schools;
- Local Ward Members for both schools;
- The Headteachers of all schools within The John Frost School cluster area;
- The Education Achievement Service for South East Wales;
- Estyn.

The proposal and consultation documents were published on the Gaer Primary School website, the Maesglas Primary School website and the Newport City Council website. Hard copies were also available at both schools. Specific separate engagement events for pupils and staff were facilitated by the two governing bodies.

Learner Voice

A pupil friendly version of the consultation document was prepared and shared with pupils across both schools. In addition, the two governing bodies arranged specific pupil engagement sessions, facilitated by the Senior Leadership Teams, where the proposal was discussed and the opportunity was offered for any questions or concerns to be raised.

At Gaer Primary, school ambassadors collaborated with their Deputy Head Teacher and presented to their peers in years 5 & 6. The pupils then voted via an online form and made comments on the proposal: Out of 106 responses, 90 respondents agreed that the proposal should be progressed; 7 were not in favour of the proposal; 9 answered that they were unsure as to be preferred way forward. Many pupils agreed that the federation would likely create more opportunities for both schools.

At Maesglas Primary, the school council discussed the proposal and at a later date shared discussions with their peers. Verbally they voted on the proposal and out of 91 responses, 87 pupils agreed that the proposal should be progressed with 4 either disagreeing or unsure. Pupils at this school were particularly excited about working on projects with pupils from Gaer Primary, the prospect of being

able to arrange visits between the two schools and being able to make friends before moving to High School.

Feedback from Staff

The Executive Headteacher made arrangements to share the consultation pack with members of staff across both schools. Staff were given an opportunity to respond and make comments on the proposal. No responses were received from staff at either school.

Consultation Responses

An invitation to take part in the statutory consultation was issued to the stakeholders with either a link to the consultation pack on the Council's website and an electronic version of the pack sent by e-mail, or alternatively by hard copies of the consultation material being issued. In addition, the proposal and consultation documents were published on the Gaer Primary School website, the Maesglas Primary School website and the Newport City Council website. Hard copies were also available at both schools. Responses could be made via an online form, email or in writing. Specific separate engagement events for pupils and staff were facilitated by the two governing bodies.

One response was received during the consultation period from the parent of a child at Gaer Primary School, raising concerns about the ability for one Head Teacher to manage two schools effectively. In response to this, the Chair of Governors of this school has advised that the Governing Body continues to play an active role, regularly meeting to review the performance of the Gaer Primary School in line with the high standards set by the Local Authority, Welsh Government and Estyn. This monitoring takes into consideration not only the teaching standards at the school, but also the leadership provided by the Senior Management Team. The Governing Body is highly satisfied with the strong leadership provided by the Executive Headteacher across both schools, and this was a significant factor in pursuing the formal federation. This is evident by the positive results and progress that pupils continue to make against national standards and is a demonstration of the collaboration and best practice between both schools. If this proposal is approved and implemented, the federated Governing Body will continue to review performance and leadership across both schools.

Estyn Response

The formal response from Estyn reports this as a comprehensive proposal which explains clearly the logic behind federating Gaer Primary School and Maesglas Primary School following a period of being managed by an Executive Headteacher. It also outlines that:

- The proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards in terms of education provision, and leadership and management;
- The benefits have been described clearly;
- The local authority has considered the risks and has identified reasonable measures to mitigate their effect;
- Suitable alternatives to the preferred option have been considered and the advantages and disadvantages of each on have been listed fairly;
- There is suitable consideration to the effect of the proposal on the quality of outcomes, provision, and leadership and management, and there is consideration of information from the most recent Estyn reports for each school;
- The support categories of both schools over recent years have been noted and suggests that the current arrangements are having a beneficial impact on the quality of the educational provision at Maesglas Primary School.

Recommendations

The governing bodies of both schools are asked to individually consider the content of this report and decide whether they wish to proceed with the proposal. If both governing bodies agree, the final decision will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Education through the Council's agreed democratic process. The target implementation date for the federation remains 1st January 2022.

This report has been prepared by Newport City Council on behalf of the governing bodies of Gaer Primary School and Maesglas Primary School in accordance with the ***Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014***.