

DECISION NOTICE OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

DATE OF DECISION 29 March 2019

DATE DECISION PUBLISHED 29 March 2019

DATE DECISION WILL COME INTO FORCE and implemented,
unless the decision is called in, in accordance with section 7.25 of
the Gwynedd Council Constitution **5 April 2019**

Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Thomas, Cabinet Member for Education

SUBJECT Proposal to close Ysgol Cwm y Glo.

DECISION

To act on the proposal published on 22 February 2019 to close Ysgol Cwm y Glo (Community School) on 31 August 2019.

REASON WHY THE DECISION IS NEEDED

Please see the attached officer report

DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND ANY RELEVANT DISPENSATIONS APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE


None

ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

Consultation with
Gwynedd Council Statutory Officers

The results of the consultations are reported upon in the attached report

DECISION NOTICE OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S CABINET – OFFICER'S REPORT

Name and Title of Cabinet Member/s:	Councillor Gareth Thomas
Name and Title of the Report's Author:	Diane Jones Education Officer
Date Decision was Taken:	29 March 2019
Cabinet Member/s Signature:	

Subject:

Proposal to close Ysgol Cwm y Glo.

Recommendation for the Decision :

To act on the proposal published on 22 February 2019 to close Ysgol Cwm y Glo (Community School) on 31 August 2019.

The reason for the need for a Decision:

In the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census in January 2019, there were no pupils on the School's register.

The School Organisation Code 011/2018 notes:

'Where a school has fewer than 10 registered pupils (or there are no pupils remaining at a school) at the January census point the 2013 Act permits governing bodies/local authorities to undertake a streamlined procedure to bring about official closure.

The only thing they would be required to do under that procedure would be to publish the closure notice - the requirement to consult generally would be omitted'.

Considering this need, and the fact that there were no pupils on the Ysgol Cwm y Glo register on the 2019 census point, it was resolved to release a Statutory Notice on the proposal to close Ysgol Cwm y Glo on 31st August 2019, in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code guidance (011/2018).

Objection Period

In accordance with the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013, the School Organisation Code, and the Cabinet member's decision on 14 February 2019, a statutory notice was issued on 22 February 2019, and a statutory objection period was held on the proposal between 22 February 2019 and 22 March 2019.

A Statutory Notice was published on 22 February 2019 and copies of the notice were placed on main entrance of Ysgol Cwm y Glo and on the Council's website (www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/modernisingeducation). Electronic and hard copies of the notices were distributed in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. It was made clear in the notices that anyone could object and how this could be done.

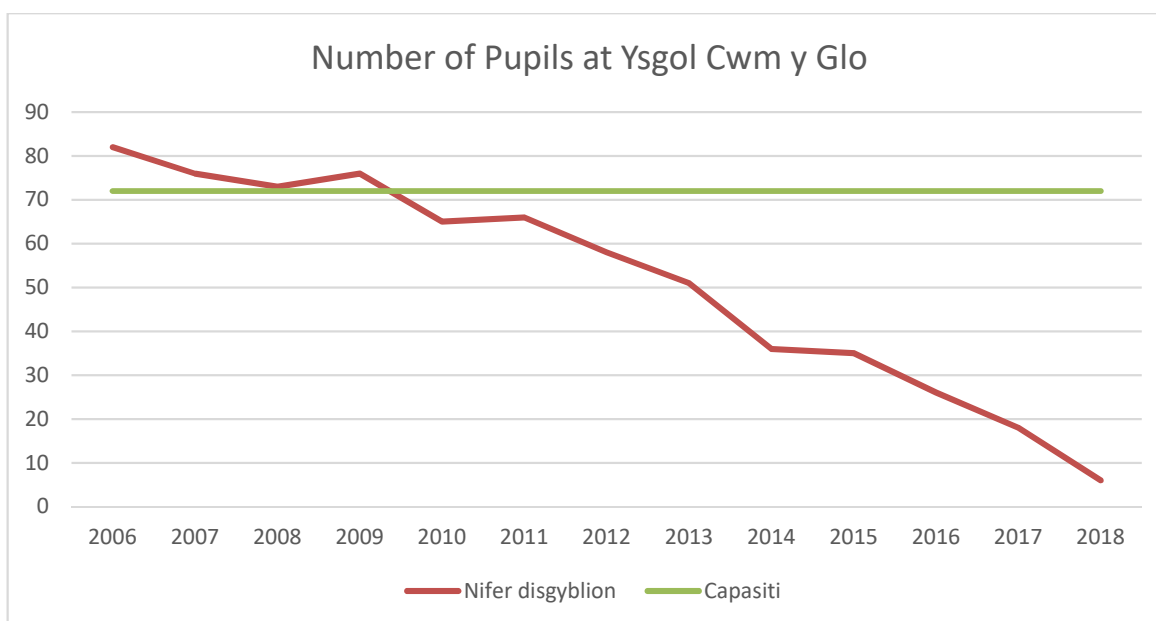
Under the 2013 Act and the Organisation Code, when objections are received, the authority is required to publish a summary of them, and the authority's response to them. The authority must consider these objections before reaching a final decision on the proposal.

No objections were received during the objection period Objection Period.

Rationale and justification for reaching the Decision :

In recent years, there has been a substantial fall in the number of pupils at Ysgol Cwm y Glo. With a capacity of 72 places, the school exceeded its capacity for a period preceding 2009. Since 2009, the numbers have fallen year on year, and by September 2018 there were only six pupils on the register. By 18 September 2018, these six pupils had moved to other schools.

Regular discussion were held between Council officers and the school's Headteacher in order to discuss concerns about the possibility of low numbers on the school's register by September 2018. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, and with the full Governing Body where possible options and the school's current and future situation was discussed. Following this meeting, the governors held a meeting with the parents in order to raise their awareness of the school's situation. The willingness of the Governing Body and Headteacher to respond pro-actively to the situation meant the arrangements for transferring the children to other schools were made with as little impact as possible on the children's education.



The table below shows that nearby schools have sufficient capacity to admit children from the Ysgol Cwm y Glo catchment area without the need to increase any capacity.

School	Number on the register September 2018 (N - Yr6)	Full Capacity (N - Yr6)	Number of Surplus Places 2018 (N - Yr6)	% Surplus Places 2018 (N - Yr6)
Cwm y Glo	0	72	72	100%
Llanrug	266	352	86	24%
Penisarwaun	62	73	11	8%

In 2018, with 16 pupils on the register, the cost per head was more than double the County average, and a minimum staffing contribution of more than £58,000.

School Cwm y Glo	Cost Per Head	Minimum Staffing Protection	Average Cost Per Head for the County
2014/15	£4,077	£0	£3,856
2015/16	£4,698	£11,274	£3,857
2016/17	£4,658	£17,388	£3,811
2017/18	£6,266	£39,741	£3,777
2018/19*	£9,858	£58,491	£3,823

* financial distribution on 1 April 2018, based on the numbers on the full register in January 2018, which was 16 pupils.

Although a process to close a school with fewer than 10 pupils removes the requirement for general consultation, the Schools Organisation Code 011/2018 states that relevant matters included in the Code must still be considered:

- a) Whether the establishment of multi-site schools might be considered as a means of retaining buildings, or reasons not to select this option.

As there are no pupils on the school register, this option would not be practicable.

- b) Could there be alternatives to closure that might merit consideration such as clustering, collaboration or federalisation with other schools, or reasons not to consider these as an alternative option to the school's closure

Again, as there are no pupils on the school register, this option would not be practicable.

- c) Could the possibilities of making greater use of the existing buildings as a community or educational resource be considered.

Currently, the school is used by the community occasionally. In accordance with the Council's Post-use Policy, community groups would be given the opportunity to take possession of the building, if the recommendation to close the building were approved, dependent on presenting a successful business case.

- d) The general impact of closing the building on the local community (including loss of facilities at the school that are used by the local community)

Currently, the community makes occasional use of the school and it is not anticipated that this would have significant effect on the community. A Community Impact Assessment has been carried out separately from this report (Appendix 1). Although no other such resource exists in Cwm y Glo, there are numerous other options in nearby villages (Llanberis, Llanrug, Penisarwaun, or Brynrefail).

- e) How could parents and pupils be supported to capitalise on the alternative school and any other facilities this could offer

As there are no pupils on the school register, this factor is no longer relevant. The Education Department has been supporting the school and parents with applications to transfer children to nearby schools since September.

Relevant considerations

Equality - An Equalities Assessment has been held with input from the Equalities Officer (Appendix 2).

The outcome of the assessment was that the proposed change (namely to close Ysgol Cwm y Glo) would not have an impact, neither positive nor negative, on the specific protected characteristic as there are no pupils at the school. There is, therefore, no need to conduct the full assessment.

Language - As regards any possible linguistic impact, considering that no children now attend Ysgol Cwm y Glo, it is considered that there would be no impact on the Welsh language should there be a decision to implement this proposal. The aim of the Language Policy is the same across all the county's primary schools, which is to develop the ability of all pupils to be confident in both languages by the end of KS2. Welsh is the official assessment language in the school at the end of the Foundation Phase. In KS2, the aim is to continue to develop the pupils' grasp of Welsh giving attention to the development of their skills in both languages. Furthermore, our expectation is that the County's primary schools support and enhance the use of the Welsh language as their pupils' social language and educational language. On this

basis, the children that have already left the school have transferred to other schools that have the same linguistic status and that follow the same language policy as the rest of the County.

Catchment Area - Consideration will be given to which catchment area any children from the Cwm y Glo catchment area would belong, if the school were to close. A process will take place and consultations carried out with nearby schools before this would be confirmed.

Transportation - as there are no children on the school's register at present, free transport arrangements in accordance with Gwynedd Council transportation policy need not be made.

Next Steps

If there is a decision to continue with the proposal, the decision will take effect on 8th April 2019, and Ysgol Cwm y Glo will formally close on 31st August 2019.

Record of any personal interest by any Cabinet Member consulted and any dispensations approved by the Standards Committee:

None

Any consultations undertaken prior to making the Decision:

Chief Finance Officer –

The report is self explanatory and I support the recommendation.

Monitoring Officer –

I draw attention to the conclusion of the objection period and note that no objections to the proposal were received. The recommendation in the report is appropriate.

Local Member/s –

The main reason for the decline in pupil numbers at Ysgol Cwm y Glo is the demographic change in the school catchment area which has led to significant changes in the community. There is a scarcity of housing for families in the village with many houses rented to short and long term visitors which has resulted in a lack of community stability. In addition, as parents are able to make a request to register their children in schools outside of the catchment area, many follow their friends and transport their children to other schools. Although the Building is only used occasionally by the community at present, as Ysgol Cwm y Glo is a 'community school' it is important to ensure that future plans for the site include a community element.