

## **Estyn response to the proposal to extend the age range of Ysgol Gynradd Llanbedr from 4-11 to 3-11**

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

### **Introduction**

The proposal is by Gwynedd Council and Ysgol Gynradd Llanbedr.

The proposal is to extend the age range of Ysgol Gynradd Llanbedr from 4-11 to 3-11 as of September 2019.

### **Summary**

Nearly all primary schools in Gwynedd admit children in September following their third birthday. Ysgol Gynradd Llanbedr is one of the very few schools in the county not admitting three-year-old pupils. Nursery provision for the area is currently provided by Cylch Meithrin Llanbedr at the village hall adjacent to the school.

It is Estyn's opinion that it is unclear whether the proposal is likely to at least maintain the standards of education in the area.

### **Description and benefits**

The proposal includes a useful overview of pupil numbers, surplus places, projected pupil numbers, building condition categorisation and cost per pupil for the area's primary schools. The proposal also includes detailed information on the number and

ages of the children engaging with nursery education at the local Cylch Meithrin in 2018.

The proposer has presented seven potential benefits to the introduction of 10 hours per week of nursery provision at the primary school. Three of these, corresponding to the same key feature, are likely to benefit the community's children:

- Children can start school, part-time, a year earlier.
- Facilitate the preparation of children and make them ready to join the reception class.
- Provide seamless education from nursery to year 6, thereby ensuring continued teaching and learning methods and better curriculum planning.

However, it is not clear how the following proposed benefits will improve on the current nursery provision available locally:

- Increase pupil numbers at school.
- Ability to offer the same provision as the majority of the county's primary schools.
- No capital investment is required.
- The Governing Body supports the proposal.
- More opportunities for children to be immersed in experiences and activities in the Welsh language.

The proposal and supporting documentation do not consider the current nursery provision available adjacent to the school when evaluating potential improvements in Welsh language opportunities for pupils. Estyn's inspection (2018) of Cylch Meithrin Llanbedr found that the provision and the use of the Welsh language by practitioners at the Cylch Meithrin nursery setting were excellent.

The proposer also states that pupils will be able to take advantage of Welsh-medium education in school at an earlier age; especially those who did not attend the Cylch Meithrin. The proposal does not refer to a projected increase in the proportion of three-year-olds engaging with nursery education if this provision were offered by the primary school.

The proposal accurately identifies a possible negative effect on Cylch Meithrin Llanbedr. It helpfully notes that assistance is available from the Gwynedd Children & Family Support Team Business Officer to analyse any impact that the proposed change could have on the Cylch Meithrin, and to plan to respond to any negative impact. However, the proposal does not clearly state the likely extent of this negative impact, or how the council and the primary school intend to work with the Cylch Meithrin in order to maintain the standards of nursery provision in the area.

The proposer helpfully provides the primary school's most recent (2016) Estyn inspection judgments of adequate for current performance, prospects for improvement and leadership and management. The proposal also states the school's 'yellow' status in relation to the National School Categorisation system. However, the proposer does not provide a concise analysis of the performance of the school or the nursery setting involved. The proposal does not explain how the standards of nursery education for the area will be maintained or improved. It does not suitably consider the Cylch Meithrin's strengths and good inspection judgments across all key questions (Estyn 2018).

The proposer appropriately identifies the following risks associated with the proposed change:

- There is not enough room in the school for additional children.
- Standards will be lowered following change.

However the mitigation steps outlined are too superficial and do not make sufficient reference to current nursery provision or any potential costs. The proposal is not clear on the accommodation arrangements for the intended nursery group.

The proposer clearly states that no capital investment is required to realise this proposal, and that there are unlikely to be any revenue savings from the proposal. However, it is not clear whether this has taken into account the costs of current nursery provision for the area. The proposal also states that it is possible the primary school will require additional staff to offer the proposed nursery provision. No reference is made to any associated potential costs.

The proposer has undertaken an appropriate equality impact assessment, which considers the impact of the proposal on vulnerable groups including those with a disability or special educational needs. The proposer is accurate in assessing the impact on transport and the community as minimal. The proposal includes suitable arrangements for consultation.