



# Proposal to change the status of Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn from a mainstream nursery school to a primary special school and change the age range from 3-4 to 3-7 with effect from September 2025.

## Statutory Consultation Document



This document is available in languages other than Welsh or English upon request. It is also available in accessible formats such as large print, Braille, BSL DVD and audio-CD upon request.

To make a request for this document in another format or language, please email [SustainableCommunitiesForLearning@wrexham.gov.uk](mailto:SustainableCommunitiesForLearning@wrexham.gov.uk) or write to the Access and School Places Team, Education and Early Intervention Department, Crown Buildings, 31 Chester Street,

Wrexham, LL13 8BG.

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# The Proposal

## Introduction

Wrexham County Borough Council are holding a formal consultation on the following proposal:

**To change the status of Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn from a mainstream nursery school to a primary special school and change the age range from 3-4 to 3-7 with effect from September 2025.**

Following consultation on these proposed changes, the Council will consider whether the proposal should be implemented.

This is your opportunity to ask questions and make comments that will be considered by the Council's Executive Board, who will decide how to proceed.

The formal consultation period will begin on **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024** and will end on **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

## Background and Rationale for Change

Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn is currently registered as an English-medium mainstream nursery school with a mix of mainstream learners and learners with additional learning needs. The school is located on Prince Charles Road in the Queensway ward. The school has a published admission number (PAN) of 15 pupils (resource) and 15 pupils (mainstream), with an age range of 3-4 years. Nearly all pupils are eligible for free school meals, and nearly all pupils have additional learning needs. Nearly all pupils are non-verbal when they start at the school.

The Council has a strong track record for meeting a wide range of additional learning needs, with a continuum of specialist provision. The majority of children with ALN are educated in mainstream schools and the authority continues to work with mainstream schools to be increasingly inclusive and responsive to a widening range of needs.

Over recent years, the demand for specialist school places for children with additional learning needs (ALN) has risen in Wrexham. A significant number of children who have more severe and complex needs require a more specialist setting for their learning and well-being needs to be met.

By bringing this proposal forward, the Council intends to address the rising demand for special school places by increasing the age range at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn. In addition, the Council recognises that the current status of the school is no longer suitable. This will enable a wider age range of children with additional learning needs to have their learning and well-being needs met in a registered special school provision.

## Timetable of Key Dates

Please note that consultation timescales may be subject to change. In this event, any changes would be publicised.

Event	Dates
<p>The Consultation Period</p> <p>During this time you can make your views known by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending the drop in sessions (notes will be taken)</li> <li>• Completing the online survey</li> <li>• Writing to or emailing the Council</li> <li>• Completing the response form at the end of this booklet</li> </ul>	<p>2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024 to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025</p>
Consultation Report Presented to Executive Board	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2025
Statutory Notice Published and Formal Objection Period Begins	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2025
Formal Objection Period Ends	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2025
Executive Board Determines Final Decision on the Proposal	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
Decision Notification Presented to Consultees	July 2025
Implementation of the Proposal	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2025

## Impact of the Proposal – Benefits and Disadvantages

### What are the potential benefits?

The primary special school will have the following benefits:

- Increased access to specialist education for children in the Wrexham area with complex and significant additional educational needs.
- Sustainable and improved learning facilities to meet the needs of learners with more complex and significant additional educational needs.
- Specialist provision and specialist resources with improved access to facilities such as sensory rooms and therapeutic external learning environments.
- Improved indoor and outdoor learning environments for Wrexham children with additional learning needs.
- Earlier intervention for children aged 3-7, meaning better long term life chances.
- Fewer number of placements and transitioning, meaning children would be able to stay in the setting for longer with consistent support workers and consistent journeys / transport arrangements.
- More children will be able to remain within the authority for their education without the need to travel distances and access their education out-of-county.
- Flexibility to adapt to changing needs and increased demand.

- Compliments Wrexham's Additional Learning Needs Team vision to provide sufficient and flexible statutory provision for children with additional learning needs.
- Improved opportunities for multi-agency working, including access to health professionals for more children with additional learning needs.
- Resources targeted more efficiently relieving pressures on mainstream schools and learners.
- Increased value for money due to tailored support for learners with additional learning needs in a specialist setting.

## What are the potential disadvantages?

- Some children may have to travel further and for longer if they do not live in the local area.
- There is currently no childcare facility on site which impacts some families.

## Mitigations

- Children with ALN will be able to access specialist provision that meets their needs.
- Children with ALN will continue to be supported with regard to transport arrangements and costs.
- Children with ALN attending the school can be transported to another childcare setting.

## Summary of the Benefits and Disadvantages

In light of the above benefits and disadvantages, it is the view of the Council that the longer term benefits of the proposal outlined above outweigh any disadvantages. Any potential risks will be carefully managed and mitigated wherever possible.

## What would this proposal mean?

This proposal means that in the future Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn will be registered as a primary special school for children aged 3-7 with additional learning needs. Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn would no longer be able to offer mainstream applications. All children would be placed at the school through a panel process (see below). The school will eventually operate across two sites. Should Executive Board approve the proposal in July 2025 following the statutory objection period, the school would officially close as a registered nursery on 31 August 2025 and its status would change to a special primary school with effect from 1st September 2025.

The Council are putting forward this proposal due to an increasing demand for assessment placements for children aged 3-7 with additional learning needs. Societal changes over recent years, largely exacerbated by, but not solely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have seen a significant delay in development in early year's children in the following areas:

- Speech, language and communication
- Social communication
- Physical delay (fine and gross motor skills)
- Emotional and social development
- Self-help skills (e.g. toileting)
- Cognitive development

## Early Years Placement Panel

A panel of Early Years experts in Wrexham take an evidence based approach and have a criteria to place those most in need of an assessment/specialist placement. This happens three times a year. The panel is made up of health and education professionals, including service managers from Flying Start, Early Education, Inclusion Officers, Health professionals including speech and language therapists and health visitors, Wrexham pre-school development team, Resource Provision managers and the Early Years ALN Team. Each case is scrutinised, triaged and places are offered based on most need.

## Resourcing of Education / Financial Implications

Funding from the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme would be used to support any projects arising from this proposal that may require capital investment to optimise learning environments and promote inclusivity for pupils with additional learning needs (e.g. should the final proposal include additional capacity for ALN learners). Any additional revenue costs would be funded from the overall schools delegated budget. The additional costs would bring whole system benefits and mean that children who need specialist support will be able to access it in a more timely manner.

## Governing Body Implications

There is no direct impact on the governing body or governance arrangements at the school as a result of this proposal. The governing body are in full support of the proposal and recognise the multiple benefits for the children of Wrexham with additional learning needs who need to access primary special school provision. Any future proposed changes to policies and arrangements in respect of admissions, employment and the curriculum will be dealt with by the school and local authority accordingly.

## Staffing Implications

There may be an impact on teachers and support staff as a result of this proposal. The school will need to consider how to recruit additional staff where needed and revise staffing structures where necessary. Staff views will be considered as part of the consultation process.

## Transport Implications

Transportation for the pupils who attend Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn will not change and will remain in accordance with the Council's policy for home-to-school transport. In line with the Council's school transport policy, free transport is provided to all pupils with additional learning needs who require transport. This proposal will not impact on this arrangement.

The proposal could mean that some children may have to travel further and for longer if they do not live in the local area, however the benefits of having fewer placements and transitioning means children would be able to stay in the setting for longer with consistent support workers and consistent journeys / transport arrangements. In addition, more children will be able to remain within the authority for their education without the need to travel distances and access their education out-of-county.

## Sustainability

This specific proposal does not involve any changes to the existing internal or external school building.



As part of the Council's ongoing commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030, school projects involving refurbishment or new builds will include low carbon, energy efficient and innovative features in order to meet Welsh Governments requirements for Net Zero in operation.

## Supporting the Community

The future sustainability of our learning communities is supported well if we make the best use of existing educational facilities and if we create new facilities where they are needed most. We aim to provide a warm safe space for community groups and organised activities within our schools and to reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage in our communities. We work closely with the team working on Community Focussed Schools to ensure a joined up approach, providing inclusive spaces which aim to tackle poverty and improve wellbeing for families and learners within our communities.

## Impact on other schools

Other schools with specialist provision that could potentially be impacted are listed below. However, there will be minimal impact on these provisions as Cae'r Gwenyn currently has a high level of pupils attending with additional learning needs.

- Alexandra Assessment Centre
- Heulfan Specialist / SLD
- The Rofft – ASD unit
- Y Canol - PMLD / SLD
- Gwenfro Generic Resourced Provision
- Llay Generic Resourced Provision
- St. Mary's Brymbo Generic Resourced Provision
- Hafod Y Wern Generic Resourced Provision
- Bodhyfryd Generic Resourced Provision
- St. Anne's Generic Resourced Provision
- Y Hafod Generic Resourced Provision

## Quality and Standards in Education

The Council works closely with school Governing Bodies to ensure that standards are high, that teaching is good and that leadership and governance is strong. The Council works in partnership with Estyn in order to monitor the performance of schools and to support school improvement for the children and young people of Wrexham.

Estyn is the office of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is a crown body and was established under the Education Act 1992. Estyn is independent of the Welsh Parliament but receives its funding from the Welsh Government under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. Estyn inspects the quality and standards of provision in schools and training providers in Wales.

When proposing changes to this type of school, Local Authorities are required to refer to the most recent Estyn report and any other evidence derived from performance monitoring.

Local Authorities must also demonstrate the likely impact of the proposals on the quality of:

- Standards/Learning
- Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning
- Teaching and Learning Experiences
- Care, Support and Guidance
- Leadership and Management

Schools are inspected as part of a national programme. The purpose of an inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in a school so that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. Following inspection, Estyn issues a report and provides schools with recommendations for improvement.

The last Estyn inspection to take place at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn was in June 2023. For further information on the inspection, please follow the link below to the Estyn website:

[Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn](#)

## Impact of the Proposal on the Quality and Standard of Education

If the proposal is implemented, it is the view of the Council that the school would continue to maintain the current standards and quality of education for the children. This proposal seeks to build upon the current standard with a view to strengthening and improving educational provision for the children, leading to greater pupil engagement and enjoyment in learning and a positive impact on pupil well-being.

The school ensures that there are positive teaching and learning experiences. A nurturing environment of care, support and guidance is provided for the pupils who attend Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn.

## Risks / Dependencies of the Proposal

This proposal is subject to the consultation process and subsequent statutory notice period. If after considering the consultation responses, the Council's Executive Board decides to proceed with this proposal, the Council will publish a Statutory Notice, which will invite anyone who wishes to object to do so in writing within a period of 28 days.

If objections are received, an objection report will be published on the Wrexham County Borough Council website. Hard copies of the report will also be available on request. The report will summarise the issues raised and provide the Council's response to those objections.

All possible risks will be monitored as part of Wrexham County Council's School Risk Management Strategy. By monitoring and ensuring there is a robust approach to any risks and disadvantages, the impact on pupils, parents, carers, teachers and support staff can be minimised.

## Alternative Options Considered

In developing a preferred option, the Council has considered a range of alternative options.

### **Option 1 – Status Quo**

Maintain the current status and age range at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn.

Discounted due to:

- Insufficient capacity based on current and projected demand for pupils with additional learning needs.
- The current registered status as a mainstream nursery is unsuitable and no longer fit for purpose.

### **Option 2 – Increase provision within mainstream settings**

Discounted due to:

- Impact on mainstream learners due to the significant delayed development of children attending Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn.
- Every child placed at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn requires additional learning provision.
- The assessment period in Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn allows time to unpick the needs of children before a decision is taken as to whether they return to mainstream schooling or a long-term specialist placement.
- A total communication approach is provided for the children, plus daily sensory input and intensive adult interactions, which are provided within a specialist setting.
- Increased family support work in a specialist setting helps to support vulnerable families.

### **Option 3 – Change the status and age range at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn**

Preferred option for reasons outlined herein.

## Impact Assessments

The following initial impact assessments have been conducted as part of this proposal and the summaries below have been realised. Impact assessments are working documents and may be updated throughout the statutory process. Feedback from consultees during the consultation period will be used to inform the impact assessments.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

An initial integrated impact assessment has been carried in relation to potential impacts on a number of aspects including Equality and the Wellbeing of Future Generations. The integrated impact assessment report presents information and assurance about how, when taking decisions, we have considered our duties and commitments in relation to legislation, priorities and strategies regarding the proposal. No significant adverse effects have been identified in the initial assessment.

### **Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

An initial Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been carried in relation to potential impacts on the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. This proposal links to the following WESP objectives:

Objective 6:

*An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) (in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.*

Objective 7:

*Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.*

The Welsh Language Impact Assessment seeks to explore the extent to which the proposal supports the WESP targets and how the proposal could expand or reduce Welsh medium provision. An initial assessment has found that the proposal is likely to have a positive effect on the existing commitment to and use of the Welsh language at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn but recognises there is more work to be done to address shortfalls in Welsh medium provision for ALN learners and to upskill staff competency to mitigate any negative impact.

Ongoing work in relation to our WESP objectives will minimise and mitigate any potential impacts from the proposal as we continue to promote and raise the profile of Welsh medium education in line with the aspirations of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and Cymraeg 2050.

### **Community Impact Assessment**

The initial community impact assessment has indicated that there will be a positive effect on the community in that the school concerned will be able to provide a more focused, supportive and effective learning environment for pupils with complex and significant additional learning needs.

### **Transport Impact Assessment**

Outcomes of the initial Transport Impact Assessment indicate that the proposal is feasible and no significant adverse effects have been identified in the initial assessment. Free transport is provided to all pupils with additional learning needs who require transport. This proposal will not impact on this arrangement. Transportation for the pupils who attend Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn will not change and will remain in accordance with the Council's policy for home-to-school transport. It is recognised that the proposal may mean some children have to travel further and for longer if they do not live in the local area. However, the benefits of having fewer placements and transitioning means children would be able to stay in the setting for longer with consistent support workers and consistent journeys / transport arrangements. In addition, more children will be able to remain within the authority for their education without the need to travel distances and access their education out-of-county.

# The Consultation Process

This consultation document sets out information which consultees will need to consider in order to take part fully in the consultation process. The process follows regulatory guidance as set out in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

## Who will be consulted?

A range of individuals were asked for their views about the proposal including:

- Elected Members of Wrexham County Borough Council
- The Church in Wales and Catholic Dioceses
- Other Local Authorities: Flintshire County Council, Shropshire County Council, Denbighshire County Council, Powys County Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- The Governing Body of Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn
- All Wrexham Primary and Secondary School Governing Bodies
- All Wrexham Primary and Secondary Schools, including Welsh medium schools, English medium schools, Faith schools and Special schools.
- Parents/Carers (and prospective parents/carers) of Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn
- Staff members of Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn
- Caia Park Community Council
- The Welsh in Education Forum, including Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam, RhAG and Mudiad Meithrin
- Welsh Ministers and Senedd Members: Lesley Griffiths MS, Ken Skates MS, Llyr Gruffydd MS, Mark Isherwood MS, Carolyn Thomas MS, Sam Rowlands MS
- Local Members of Parliament: Andrew Ranger MP, Gill German MP, Becky Gittins MP
- Estyn and GwE
- Trade unions representing teachers and staff at Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn
- Wrexham Council's School Transport Department
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- Local Communities First Partnerships
- Local Independent Nursery Providers, Playgroups, Childminders and Flying Start Providers
- The Children and Young People's Partnership
- The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- SNAP Cymru
- Educational Psychology Service
- Health, including Speech & Language Service, Occupational Therapy Service, Physiotherapy Service, Pre-school Development Service, paediatrics
- North East Wales Sensory Support Service
- Early Entitlement / Flying Start Service

The above list is not exhaustive and the consultation is open to all who wish to take part.

## The Consultation Period

The formal consultation period will begin on **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024** and will end on **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

## Considering your views

There are several ways in which you can communicate your views with us including:

- Returning the enclosed response pro-forma to the address provided below.
- Emailing your views to [YsgolCaerGwenynConsultation@wrexham.gov.uk](mailto:YsgolCaerGwenynConsultation@wrexham.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can submit your views in writing to: Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn Consultation, Education, Crown Buildings, 31, Chester Street, Wrexham, LL13 8BG.

Due to the volume of responses we receive when consulting on options, we will not be able to acknowledge written responses nor enter into correspondence with interested parties either during or after the consultation period.

Responses will be analysed and key themes with examples of comments made will be made available to Elected Members for decision making purposes and they will also be responded to via publication of a post consultation report.

We kindly advise that any comments will not be treated as objections at this stage.

## Consultation Meetings

You may also call to see us at the drop in sessions that will take place at the school and within the community during the consultation period. At these sessions you will be able to talk to officers from the Council who will be available to answer your questions.

Please note that consultation timescales and drop-in sessions may be subject to change. In this event, any changes would be publicised.

## Timetable of Drop-In Sessions

<b>Nature of Session</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Drop-In Session	Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2024	9.00am-12.00pm	Acton Resource Centre
Drop-In Session	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2024	8.30am-9.30am	Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn
Drop-In Session	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2024	2.45pm-3.45pm	Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn
Virtual Session*	Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2025	5.00pm-5.30pm	Online link to be shared via email

*\*To request access to the virtual session please email:*

[YsgolCaerGwenynConsultation@wrexham.gov.uk](mailto:YsgolCaerGwenynConsultation@wrexham.gov.uk)

Please register your interest for the virtual consultation session by no later than Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024. This will give us sufficient time to send you a virtual link and instructions ahead of the session.

## Consultation with Pupils

Wrexham Council is committed to providing opportunities for children to be able to inform decisions made that affect their lives and the services they access.

A supplementary version of this consultation document has been made available to all pupils to enable them to give their views. A session will be undertaken with children at the school during the consultation period.

The Council will seek pupils' views in a number of ways, including via an online survey. The children and young people version has been written specifically to enable all children to better understand and engage with the formal consultation process. The information gathered will be included in the post-consultation document.

## Consultation Report

Within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period (and in any event prior to publication of the proposals), the Council will publish a consultation report which will:

- Summarise the issues raised by consultees.
- Respond to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons.
- Detail the overall merits of the proposal as highlighted by Estyn in their response.

The consultation report may also make recommendations to the Executive Board or the Governing Body about how to proceed (i.e. to publish the proposals as consulted on with any appropriate modifications, to abandon the proposals and retain the status quo or to make significant changes to the proposal and re-consult).

The Council will ensure that any views expressed by children and young people affected by the proposal are highlighted in the consultation report and that it is made accessible to them.

The consultation report will be published electronically on Wrexham County Borough Council's website and will undergo all accessibility checks in order to ensure that it is accessible to all consultees. Hard copies of the report will be made available on request.

## Publication of Statutory Notices

This is subject to the approval of the Post Consultation Report due to be presented to the Executive Board on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025. **Please note that this date may be subject to change.**

If the recommendation is accepted then a statutory notice will be issued and a 28 day objection period will begin on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025. **Please note that this date may be subject to change.** The statutory notice will be displayed at the entrance to the school.

## Statutory Objection Period

Statutory Notice Published and Formal Objection Period Begins	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2025
Formal Objection Period Ends	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2025

**Please note that these dates may be subject to change.**

If any objections are raised during the statutory objection period, a report will be published and this will be available on the Council's website.

A statutory notice is the formal publication of a finalised proposal. This will only be undertaken if a decision is made by the Council's Executive Board to proceed with a proposal, following consideration of all responses from the consultation process. This is a legal requirement as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).

We kindly ask that consultees only write in during the objection period if they have an official objection to the statutory notice. **Any positive comments received during this period will have to be treated as objections even if they are in favour of the proposal.**

Consultees can submit their objections to the statutory notice by emailing [YsgolCaerGwenynConsultation@wrexham.gov.uk](mailto:YsgolCaerGwenynConsultation@wrexham.gov.uk) or by writing to: Ysgol Cae'r Gwenyn Consultation, Education, Crown Buildings, 31, Chester Street, Wrexham, LL13 8BG.

## Determination of Proposal

The results of the Statutory Notice will be taken before the Executive Board in July 2025 and a decision as to whether the proposal should be implemented will be agreed. **Please note that the above date may be subject to change.**

## Decision Notification

Subject to the proposal being implemented, a decision notification will be made available to all consultees. This notification will also be published on the Council's website as soon as possible