

ENGAGEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF WELSH- MEDIUM SECONDARY PROVISION

HELP SHAPE THE
FUTURE OF WELSH-
MEDIUM SECONDARY
EDUCATION IN
CARDIFF

Mae'r dogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh





- Expansion of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, September 2025



- Ysgol Gymraeg Treganna, new buildings opened September 2013



- Ysgol Glan Morfa, new buildings opened September 2018



- Ysgol Gymraeg Hamadryad, new buildings opened January 2019

Why Are We Asking for Your Views?

Decisions about schools affect real lives, your children, your family, your work, your community. That's why, before any formal proposals are drafted, Cardiff Council wants to hear from you.

We are seeking your views on how to ensure an appropriate balance of Welsh-medium and English-medium secondary school places to serve Cardiff in the future, including any changes you feel would help to shape future proposals for the area.

This is your chance to tell us what matters most, what concerns you, and what you hope for the future of Welsh-medium secondary education in Cardiff.

No decisions have been made yet.

Your feedback will help Cabinet see the full picture so that, if we move to a formal consultation in the future, the options reflect what you've said is important.

We're doing this in line with the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 and Cardiff's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022–2032.

How We Will Approach Any Change

We know changes to schools affect families and communities, so we will take a careful, transparent, and evidence-led approach.

Our guiding principles are:

- **Quality:** Protect the standards and strengths of Cardiff's schools.
- **Fairness and inclusion:** Ensure all communities are supported to access mainstream and specialist provision in English or Welsh.
- **Sustainability:** Changes must be both affordable in the short term and must represent value for money for the Cardiff schools system in the long term.
- **Balance:** Growth must not compromise urgent or mandatory priorities, such as expanding provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and resolving condition, suitability and health and safety matters.

What this means in practice:

- This is an initial engagement exercise, not a formal consultation on proposals.
- We're listening before any detailed proposals are drafted or progressed.
- We'll use evidence and your feedback to identify guiding principles and to shape options.
- We are testing ideas, not making commitments: the options shared now are starting points for discussion.
- Transparency about constraints and impacts: major changes depend on funding, sites, and staffing.
- Phased and flexible: temporary measures are needed for 2027/28 whilst viable longer-term solutions are explored.

What's Happening, and Why Now?

Cardiff's Welsh-medium school community is something we're proud of, and we want to see it continue to flourish. Beyond the short-term spike projected for 2027/28, our aspiration is to grow the number of learners choosing Welsh-medium education. This will need to happen sustainably, over time, reflecting the aspirations of each community.

We want to build on the excellent practice already in place across our three Welsh-medium secondary schools and explore future opportunities to extend high-quality learning options. At the same time,

we must protect what makes the offer strong and viable, ensuring any growth does not dilute standards or compromise provision.

We also need to balance this ambition with other urgent priorities, such as addressing the acute need for places for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

Our goal is simple: find solutions that are fair, realistic, and sustainable, and we need your help to get it right.

Looking Further Ahead: The Long-Term Options

Families, staff, and communities want certainty for the future, not just a short-term fix. That's why we're asking for your thoughts on some larger, longer-term ideas.

Nothing is decided yet. Your feedback will help us work out if there are options worth exploring further and whether there are new ideas you'd like us to consider in the future, if funding becomes available

Who are we engaging with?

The Council is engaging with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders, including children and young people, parents and carers, school staff, governing bodies, local residents, elected representatives, diocesan education directors, neighbouring authorities, and all Cardiff schools. As part of this we work with local community members to support engagement with less-heard groups to seek a broad range of views.

This engagement also includes national bodies such as Estyn, Welsh Ministers, and the Welsh Language, Future Generations and Children's Commissioners, alongside organisations representing early years, childcare, play and Welsh medium education, including Mudiad Meithrin, RhAG and Menter Iaith. The Council is also working with trade unions, voluntary sector partners, health and college providers, and both mainstream and specialist Additional Learning Needs providers.

Views of children on the proposed change

Cardiff is committed to being a child-friendly city where children are able to inform decisions that affect their lives and the services they access.

The Council will meet with pupils in the schools included as part of these proposals and the information gathered in these sessions will be considered when shaping proposals.

How you can find out more and share your views

Your views are important to us, and we want to hear what you think about these proposals. There are several simple ways you can get involved:

- **Attend a drop in session** – in person or online.
 - In person sessions do not need booking.
 - For online sessions, email schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk to ask for the link.
- **Attend an in person public meeting**, to ask questions and give your views.
- **Fill in the online response form** www.cardiff.gov.uk/welshsecondarieschools
- Print and post the response form to:

School Organisation Planning Team, Room 463,
County Hall, Cardiff, CF10 4UW.

- Write to us by email at schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk or by post. You can also ask for a call back if you have a question.

Please include your full name and postal address with any written or emailed response.

You can also read this engagement document on the Council website www.cardiff.gov.uk/welshsecondarieschools

If you cannot access it online, you can ask us for a printed copy by emailing schoolresponses@cardiff.gov.uk or by phoning **029 2087 2720**.

The closing date for responses is 26 March 2026. We cannot consider any responses received after this date.

The dates of the engagement meetings are set out below:

Table 1: Engagement meetings

Nature of consultation	Date/Time	Venue
Drop-in session	Thursday 19 February 2026, 9:30am – 11:30am	Llanishen Hub
Drop-in session	Friday 27 February 2026, 10:30am – 12:30pm	Ely and Caerau Hub
Drop-in session	Friday 06 March 2026, 11:30am – 1:30pm	Star Hub
Drop-in session	Monday 09 March 2026, 12 noon – 2pm	Loudon Culture and Media Centre
Drop-in session	Wednesday 18 March 2026, 11am – 1pm	St Mellons Hub
On-line drop-in session	Wednesday 18 February 2026, 12 noon – 1pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Monday 23 February 2026, 1pm – 2pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Tuesday 24 February 2026, 2pm – 3pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Monday 02 March 2026, 5pm – 6pm	Teams
On-line drop-in session	Friday 13 March 2026, 12:30pm – 1:30pm	Teams
Public meeting (in person)	Tuesday 24 February 2026, 5:30pm – 6:30pm	Lisvane Memorial Hall
Public meeting (in person)	Thursday 19 March 2026, 5:30pm – 7pm	County Hall
Public meeting (on-line)	Monday 16 March 2026, 1pm – 2pm	Teams



- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf Specialist Resource Base (new build completion spring 2027)

Existing Welsh-medium secondary school provision

The size and location of Cardiff's Welsh medium secondary schools reflect the sites available when each school was established.

Welsh-medium schools:

- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf (Llandaff North): eight form entry, ages 11–19. Initially served all Welsh medium secondary learners in Cardiff before catchment boundaries were introduced.
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr (Fairwater): seven form entry, established in 1998 on the former Waterhall site.
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern (Penylan): six form entry, established in 2012 on the former St Teilo's High School site

Catchment areas for the three schools were established and later revised following consultation.

As there are three Welsh medium secondary schools across the city, some areas fall more than three miles from their local school. In such cases, the Local Authority must provide free transport to the nearest school. Cardiff Council extends this by funding discretionary transport to support families' preferred type of provision (English medium, Welsh medium or faith) exceeding Welsh Government statutory requirements and promoting equitable access.

In the Welsh medium sector, free transport supports:

- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern: parts of Splott, Llanrumney, Rumney, Trowbridge, St Mellons
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf: parts of Butetown, Grangetown, Lisvane, Llanishen, Thornhill
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr: parts of Caerau, Ely, Morganstown, Pentyrch, Creigiau

Although intakes vary, overall surplus places remain low, comparable with English medium schools. A temporary increase at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern raised capacity from 180 to 210 in 2023/24. Despite lower intakes in 2024/25, 2025/26, and a projected dip in 2026/27, a further temporary capacity increase will be needed for 2027/28.

Modelling of secondary school intakes can be undertaken to 2031/32, based on pupils already enrolled in Reception year at the time of the most recent school census (PLASC) in January 2025.

Intakes to Welsh-medium secondary schools are projected to be at a lower level from 2028/29 until at least 2031/32, taking account of recent net retention rates for pupils already enrolled in primary education.

The Council has published a Welsh-medium pupil placements analysis at www.cardiff.gov.uk/welshsecondarieschools which provides information in respect of the capacity of schools, take up of places and future projected intakes.

The Council is currently progressing proposals to expand provision through the medium of Welsh for pupils with Additional Learning Needs who require a specialist placement.

At present, there are:

- No planned permanent changes to Welsh-medium secondary schools planned in the period 2026 – 2032.
- Sufficient places planned to accommodate all learners who require a place.



- Ysgol Gynradd Groes-Wen, new buildings opened September 2023

What's good about the current arrangements?

- Sufficient places planned for the projected intakes to Welsh-medium secondary education until at least 2031/32
- No disruption for learners, families, or staff.
- No cost or need for new sites.
- Preserves the current strong practice and stability in the sector.

What are the potential disadvantages?

- Would not provide capacity to meet the growth targets set by Welsh Government in future years.
- Travel concerns for some families in some parts of south and north Cardiff not addressed.
- Size of post-16 provision may limit the ability to expand subject choices or extra-curricular opportunities in the future.

OPTIONS TO EXPAND WELSH-MEDIUM SECONDARY EDUCATION

Option 1: Expand the three Welsh-medium secondary schools on existing sites

What does this mean?

Increase capacity at the current three Welsh medium secondary schools by adding classrooms or facilities where feasible.

Potential advantages

- Capacity increases would align with projected demand and population growth.
- Construction activity would take place within existing school sites, reducing the scale of change for learners and staff.
- Existing Welsh medium schools would continue to operate on their current model, supporting financial stability.
- Maintains current educational approaches and organisational structures.
- Estimated capital costs are lower than those associated with constructing a new school.
- Fewer adjustments to catchment areas would be required than for other expansion options.
- Could support travel flexibility when considered alongside proposed rail pass arrangements.

Potential disadvantages

- Welsh medium secondary provision would remain concentrated in current locations.
- Travel concerns for some learners not addressed, particularly in the south and parts of the north.
- Existing building condition issues would remain unaddressed.
- Some schools have limited space for significant expansion, including support facilities (e.g., catering, halls, sports areas). Additional expansion may be needed in the long term.
- Any construction or refurbishment required on existing sites to facilitate expansion would have potential to disturb learners albeit this would be kept to a minimum.

Option 2: Relocate and expand Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern, with potential for a future fourth school

What does this mean?

Move Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern to a new site in the south of the city, increase its capacity, with the option to develop a fourth Welsh medium secondary school at a later stage.

Potential advantages

- Locates a Welsh medium secondary school closer to projected demand in the south of the city.
- Addresses existing building condition and suitability issues at the current Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern site.
- Disposal of the existing site could contribute funding towards the overall cost of relocation and new build facilities.
- Creates opportunities to increase overall system capacity through the potential expansion of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern on a new site.
- Existing Welsh medium secondary schools could continue with their current operating models, supporting sector wide financial stability.
- Allows current educational approaches and organisational structures to continue and potentially develop further.
- A new build could provide facilities with capacity to support wider Welsh medium educational needs.

Potential disadvantages

- Relocates Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern further from projected demand in the East of the city, that it currently serves.
- Welsh medium secondary provision would remain concentrated in particular areas, with less visibility in others.
- Additional long term capacity would still depend on the later establishment of a fourth secondary school.
- Combined land acquisition and construction costs are estimated to exceed £80m.
- Relocating the school would involve disruption for learners who would need to move site.
- Catchment areas would require significant redesign.
- Travel times may increase for some families, particularly those in the east.
- Home to school transport costs for the Council may rise compared with current arrangements.
- High investment for limited increase in number of places available.

Option 3: Create a central Welsh-medium post 16 site and expand years 7–11 at existing schools

What does this mean?

Establish a dedicated post 16 site for Years 12–13. Existing schools would focus on provision for Years 7–11 and change their mainstream age range from 11–19 to 11–16.

Potential advantages

- Larger combined post 16 cohort may allow for a broader range of courses, including a greater number of vocational options supporting new Welsh-medium learner pathways.
- Existing buildings for Years 7–11 would be used more efficiently.
- Minimal disruption for learners in Years 7–11.
- Only small adjustments to catchment areas required.
- Provides additional capacity to support growth in Welsh medium education.
- May enhance home to school travel options for some learners if combined with rail pass proposals.
- Post-16 learners no longer required to travel between schools for some subjects (Bro PlasTaf partnership).
- Acquiring a site suitable for post-16 provision would be more cost effective and more potential sites could be an option whilst comparing that with a site for Years 7-13.

Potential disadvantages

- Welsh medium provision would remain located on existing sites.
- Establishing a new post 16 site would involve significant refurbishment or new build costs.
- Additional land or building acquisition may be required.
- Staff restructuring and redistribution may be needed.
- Average travel times for post 16 learners to the new provision could increase, compared to the travel time to their home school under current arrangements.
- Travel distances for pupils age 11-16 would remain unchanged.
- Existing school building condition issues would not be directly addressed.
- Consolidating all post 16 learners onto one site may be a substantial operational change for schools and staff may need to work across multiple locations.
- Could introduce changes to current organisational structures within the Welsh medium sector.

Option 4: Establish a new fourth Welsh-medium secondary school in south Cardiff

What does this mean?

Build a new Welsh medium secondary school in the south of Cardiff. Existing schools would reduce in size in the medium term.

Potential advantages

- Broadens the geographical distribution of Welsh medium secondary provision by providing Welsh medium secondary places in closer proximity to families living in the south without reducing current access from the north and east.
- Increases overall capacity, supporting long term growth in Welsh medium education with scope to grow demand.
- Improved visibility of provision in south Cardiff.
- May reduce Council transport expenditure compared with existing or planned arrangements.
- A new build school could provide facilities with capacity to support wider Welsh medium educational needs and provision of extra-curricular activities.

Potential disadvantages

- Investment cost likely to exceed £80m including new build construction and land purchase in area with few suitable sites available.
- Significant changes to school catchment areas would be required.
- Building condition issues at existing schools would not be resolved.
- Unless carefully phased, adding another school would reduce intakes at current schools.
- Smaller intakes could lead to staff restructures or increased staff turnover as number of pupils reduces and/ or fluctuates at existing schools.
- Redistribution of pupils may reduce individual school budgets and narrow the range of subjects offered.
- Would remove free home to school transport from some families in south Cardiff
- Structural and organisational changes may affect current practices within the sector.
- Recruiting sufficient Welsh speaking staff for an entirely new organisation may be challenging.

Option 5: Establish a new age 3–16, or 3–19, Welsh-medium school in south Cardiff

What does this mean?

Create an all through Welsh medium school providing nursery, primary, secondary and optional post 16 education on a single site.

Potential advantages

- Broadens the geographical distribution of Welsh medium secondary provision by providing Welsh medium secondary places in closer proximity to families living in the south without reducing current access from the north and east.
- Increases overall capacity, supporting long term growth in Welsh medium education with scope to grow demand with enhanced visibility of provision in south Cardiff.
- A new build school could provide facilities with capacity to support wider Welsh medium educational needs and provision of extra-curricular activities.
- The 3-16/19 model allows continuity for learners who progress from the primary phase into secondary education within the same school.
- May reduce Council transport costs compared with current or planned arrangements.

Potential disadvantages

- Investment cost likely to exceed £80m including new build construction and land purchase in area with few suitable sites available.
- Significant changes to school catchment areas would be required.
- Building condition issues at existing schools would not be resolved.
- Unless carefully phased, adding another school would reduce intakes at current primary and secondary schools.
- Smaller intakes could lead to staff restructures or increased staff turnover as number of pupils reduces and/ or fluctuates at existing schools.
- Redistribution of pupils may reduce individual school budgets and narrow the range of subjects offered.
- Structural and organisational changes may affect current practices within the sector.
- All through schools often have smaller secondary and post 16 cohorts, which can influence curriculum range.
- Would remove free home to school transport from some families in south Cardiff.
- Structural changes could affect existing organisational stability.
- Recruiting sufficient Welsh speaking staff for an entirely new organisation may be challenging.

Option 6: Add Welsh-medium provision to an existing English-medium School

What does this mean?

Introduce Welsh secondary provision within an existing English medium school in the south of Cardiff. This could be as a starter school sharing the English-medium school facilities at the outset to grow with longer term expansion in the future or developing a different model of provision to existing Cardiff secondary schools.

Potential advantages

- Provides Welsh provision closer to families living in the south.
- Broadens the geographical spread of Welsh secondary provision.
- Supports long term growth in Welsh speakers.
- May reduce transport costs for the Council compared with current or planned arrangements.
- Capital costs would be lower than constructing a new stand alone school.

Potential disadvantages

- Would require expansion or intake adjustments at the host English medium school.
- Construction and adaptation costs would depend on the specific location.
- Requires substantial catchment area changes.
- Families may experience significant changes in school allocations.
- Does not resolve condition issues at existing Welsh medium schools.
- Could lead to staff restructures or increased staff turnover as number of pupils reduces and/or fluctuates at existing schools.
- Redistribution of pupils may reduce school budgets and curriculum breadth for Welsh learners.
- Requires substantial transition planning.
- Some stakeholders have expressed concern about the loss of the fully immersive Welsh language environment and experience of Welsh-medium schools.



Money Matters: Being Honest About What's Possible

The Council wishes to be transparent regarding the current financial position. Budget pressures are significant, and a substantial proportion of available resources is currently directed towards ensuring sufficient provision for learners with Additional Learning Needs. This includes securing adequate specialist places for learners who wish to access Welsh-medium Additional Learning Needs provision, which remains both a statutory obligation and a key priority for Cardiff.

Some of the potential changes set out in this document would incur capital costs for the Council, for building works and / or adaptation of buildings. Any school proposals taken forward in the future would also incur revenue costs for the Council associated with potential and/or employment of additional staff depending on the option.

Capital funding of any future changes

The Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is a long term plan to improve school buildings across Wales. This supports the Council to invest in building new schools or upgrading current schools so that all children can learn in modern, high quality environments.

For large projects, Welsh Government match funding through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme depends on approval of a business case from Government Ministers.

Revenue funding of school placements

Funding for mainstream schools is based mainly on the number of pupils they have, along with several fixed lump sum payments for each school.

The revenue costs for any additional places would need to be funded from the existing delegated school's budget.

The Council also funds home to school transport for secondary age learners who live more than three miles from the nearest Welsh-medium, English-medium or faith-based school. If Welsh-medium provision expands, the overall cost to the Council of transporting a greater number of pupils

to schools may increase or decrease. This would depend on a number of factors including the number of learners eligible for free home to school transport and the types of transport available.

Any expansion of provision may therefore have a significant, long-term impact on all schools in Cardiff. That's why we're also looking at smaller, phased, or temporary solutions alongside larger higher cost options. Our ambition remains to grow Welsh-medium education in Cardiff in a way that's fair, and sustainable.

Getting to school and getting involved

We know that travel can be a barrier. Cardiff Council already goes beyond the legal minimum, offering free home-to-school transport to the nearest Welsh medium school if you live far enough away. We're also looking at piloting rail travel, and

we're investing more in active travel (like cycling and walking) to make it easier for everyone to get to school and join in after-school activities.

Admissions and catchment areas

If we need to change catchment areas or admissions arrangements, we'll follow all the legal steps and consult with you again.

We want to make sure that any changes:

- Balance places across the city.

- Protect the least well-off communities.
- Consider what parents want.
- Support diversity and inclusion.
- Take account of schools' finance matters.

What happens next?

Here's what you can expect:

- **Spring 2026:** Public engagement period.
- **Summer 2026:** Cabinet looks at all the feedback from this engagement. There's also a Scrutiny review.
- **Autumn 2026:** If needed, a formal consultation on admissions/catchments for 2028/29.
- **2027/28:** Any temporary changes for that year are put in place (if agreed).
- **2026–2033:** We keep working with you to refine and, if funding allows, move forward with long-term options and formal consultation in line with the School Organisation Code.

How will your feedback be used?

We commit to:

- Read and consider every response.
- Publish a summary of what you've told us.
- Explain how your views have shaped what happens next.
- Not make any big decisions until there's funding and a full, formal consultation.

Thank you

Diolch for taking the time to help shape the future of Welsh-medium secondary education in Cardiff. Your voice matters, and together we can find the best way forward for all learners and communities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will every learner who wants a Welsh-medium secondary place in 2027/28 get one?

Yes, that will be achieved through implementation of the temporary increase we're planning.

Does this mean new schools will be built straight away?

No. This is early engagement, not formal consultation. Major changes like reorganising provision or building new schools would need significant funding, a suitable site, and enough Welsh-speaking staff. Any proposals brought forward in the future would follow the School Organisation Code and a full statutory consultation would be required.

Will free transport rules change?

No. There would be no changes to the Home to School Transport Policy as a result of these changes.

How will you make sure there's a broad range of subjects and activities?

Large schools are more able to offer a broad curriculum. We also need to encourage collaboration between schools and invest in more Welsh-speaking teachers and staff. We also know access to extra-curricular activities matters, so we'll factor that into planning.

Is a new Welsh-medium secondary school guaranteed?

No. It's one of several options we're exploring, but it depends on funding, site availability, and staffing. Nothing is decided yet.

What about learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)?

Meeting Additional Learning Needs is a legal requirement. We're investing to make sure Welsh-medium learners with Additional Learning Needs have the right support and places.

Will catchment areas or admissions arrangements change?

Catchment areas are regularly reviewed. They may change in the future, but only after full consultation. Any changes would aim to balance places fairly, protect vulnerable communities, and keep schools financially healthy.

How will my feedback be used?

We'll read every response, publish a summary, and explain how your views have shaped next steps.



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