

Estyn response to the proposal amalgamate Brynford Community Primary School and Lixwm Community Primary School Introduction

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

This consultation proposal is from Flintshire County Council.

The proposal is to amalgamate Brynford Community Primary School and Lixwm Community Primary School with existing pupils transferring to the proposed area school, subject to parental preference. If the current Proposal is agreed and implemented Brynford Community Primary School and Lixwm Community Primary School will close on 31 August 2019. The new amalgamated area school would open on 1 September 2019 initially on a split site arrangement on the current Brynford Community Primary School and Lixwm Community School sites (Phase 1) until capital investment is in place to develop a new area school (Phase 2) on one site. The phase 2 development would commence in April 2019 and projects will be scheduled over the five-year investment period.

Summary/ Conclusion

It is Estyn's view that the new arrangement will at least maintain the standards and outcomes for pupils in the area.

Description and benefits

The local authority's rationale for amalgamating Brynford Community Primary School and Lixwm Community Primary School is clear and is consistent with the local authority's revised School Modernisation Strategy.

The proposer has discussed with the head teachers and governors a good range of options, including:

- the status quo;
- an area school; and
- federation.

The schools were not able to agree to federation as an option.

The status quo has shortcomings. Currently Brynford Community Primary school is oversubscribed. The school does not have sufficient teaching space for nursery provision or for physical education compared to other primary schools.

Estyn judged Lixwm Community Primary School to have good current performance and adequate prospects for improvement at the last inspection in December 2016. Estyn continues to monitor the school's progress. The school is under-subscribed, with around 27% of unfilled places.

The local authority asserts that a 3-11 Area Primary school would help to alleviate the budgetary constraints that has limited both schools' development over many years. It argues that the new area school will have the staffing capacity and resources to enable them to provide a broader use of learning experiences including the use of new technologies. The plan is costed and takes good account of the risks involved.

The local authority has taken effective account of the impact on housing stock, and the sustainability of the school. It has also considered suitably the potential impact of the plan on other local schools. They have judged that the new school would not have a significant impact on the secondary provision within the area.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority asserts that their preferred proposal would improve the quality of education within the area by improving facilities, strengthening the distribution of staff and the quality of leadership. It has taken good account of Estyn's most recent inspections of both schools to argue its case.

The proposal clearly explains how learners with additional learning needs will be supported in order that they will continue to receive resources to support them. For learners with an SLA or Statement, the named officer would offer support to parents/carers and pupils during the period of transition.

The local authority has conducted a transport impact assessment that shows that transportation costs are not anticipated to rise significantly due to the number of learners currently accessing the service.