

Estyn response to the proposal by Caerphilly County Borough Council to expand the existing Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, via a new building extension and outdoor play space with an anticipated completion date of September 2023.

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.

Introduction

The proposal is by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The proposal seeks to address identified need for additional facilities to accommodate growing demand for places and provide additional classrooms, specialist intervention areas and outdoor play space for pupils with special educational needs. It is proposed the additional facility will house a new and flexible hall, hydrotherapy pool and soft play facilities to increase provision on site and enhance the lives of the pupils with provision that cannot be accommodated within the current building. This new provision would also be available for community use at suitable times.

Summary / Conclusion

The proposer has clearly defined the benefits of establishing these additional facilities and provision for pupils and young people who have special educational needs. The proposal has been developed in line with the local authority's programme to improve its educational provision and meet the needs of children and young people with SEN. This proposal offers pupils and young people with SEN the opportunity for specialist educational experiences in a setting within their county borough.

Funding has already been allocated for the council's share of the capital costs of the project and will be jointly funded by Welsh Government as part of their 21st century schools remit.

It is Estyn's opinion that the proposal is likely to improve the current educational provision for children and young people with SEN.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given clear rationale for the proposal. The proposer clearly states that the proposal has been made in order to meet the identified changing and more complex needs of SEN pupils living in Caerphilly with the aim of ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils. The local authority aspires to improve the environment to create fit for purpose 21st century schools. The proposal appears to indicate that there is room to accommodate the new buildings. The proposed site for the location of the works is an adjacent piece of land to the current site owned by the local authority and utilised for recreational use. The land in question is currently configured as a rugby/football pitch available on a "pay as you use" basis. The local authority will however, work closely with the club to look at

potential options for the remaining 2 pitches on site and any other actions considered appropriate.

The design and management of the works will have a minimum impact on the main teaching facilities.

The proposer clearly defines what the proposal means in practice and the expected benefits of the proposal. The proposed new building will provide additional facilities to accommodate growing demand for places and will provide specialist indoor intervention and outdoor play spaces. This provision will enhance pupils' provision and experiences.

A risk assessment regarding implementing the proposal has been carried out which lists as potential risks for example, the planning process itself, the impact of any planning on cost and project governance and decision making. However, the risk assessment does not identify any educational considerations.

The proposer has also considered the disadvantages within the proposal when compared with the status quo. Maintaining the status quo would not realise the opportunities of specialist provision within the county neither would it alleviate the current pressure to address demand for places for pupils with complex SEN.

The proposer has provided appropriate evidence to show that it has considered other alternatives to the current proposal and has given good reasons why these have been discounted.

The proposer has duly considered reasonable travelling distances for pupils likely to attend. Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre is the only special school within Caerphilly local authority and therefore the catchment area for the school remains unchanged. Therefore there is no impact to current journey time. Free appropriate transport is provided to all pupils who attend specialist provision within Caerphilly.

The proposer appears to have considered the extent to which the proposal would support the targets in the approved Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. It notes that there is currently no evidence of demand from parents for Welsh medium provision as no requests for such provision have been received by the school. The school understands its responsibility to record the home language of all the pupils and actively offer Welsh provision if the home language is Welsh. The school employs a number of teachers and teaching assistants who are Welsh speakers, and as such the headteacher and the local authority are confident that an effective SEN provision through the medium of Welsh could be provided is necessary. However, it is not clear whether the teaching and learning experiences would be fully equitable with that of English medium provision.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has considered suitably the impact of the proposal on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management. The proposer appropriately notes that Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre was last inspected by Estyn in 2019. The school received a judgement of excellent in all inspection areas. The report highlights a very effective setting, with strong leadership, providing excellent learning experiences and provision to all pupils. The proposer suggests that the implementation of this proposal will ensure that the school continues to build on its current excellent practice. The proposer also makes reference to the fact that Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre has consistently been a green school under the Welsh Government school categorisation

process. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, national categorisation has been suspended.

The proposed provision will ensure specialist continuity for pupils from 3 -19 years old that have severe learning difficulties, physical and medical difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. This provision will also will further complement and support SEN mainstream provision within the county borough. In turn, this will develop expertise and capacity of staff working with children with SEN and will benefit their standards and provision.

The design and management of the work should ensure that there is minimal disruption to pupils and provision.

It is envisaged that the provision will also provide greater opportunities for working with and providing support for parents and carers. The proposed project will also facilitate community use of the building. It appears that this provision will safeguard the promotion of inclusivity within the community.

It seems that staff at Trinity Fields School and Resource base will not be adversely affected by this proposal. Increased number of pupils would appear to secure staff employment. This proposal supports the potential to expand provision and support further professional learning and development.