



Appendices
Cabinet Report 17-12-13 Regarding
School Organisation in Y Gader catchment
area, Dolgellau

Order	Document
1	Full Council Report 14-07-11
2	Cabinet Report 16-07-13
3	Maps and Data on schools in the Catchment Area, September 2013

APPENDIX 1

MEETING	Full Council
DATE	14 July 2011
TITLE	Schools Reorganisation in Y Gader Catchment Area
PURPOSE	Outline proposals for Y Gader primary schools re-organisation, establish the rationale and seek Scrutiny Committee approval to the aim of moving to a statutory phase when applicable
RECOMMENDATION	That the Council approve the proposals and recommend statutory consultation periods on the relevant proposals
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PORTFOLIO LEADER	Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts

NOTE:

The content of this report follows a period of discussion in Y Gader catchment area, Dolgellau. The proposals reflect the needs of Gwynedd Council in accordance with the Council's Schools Reorganisation Strategy. Clear guidelines have been published by the Welsh Government regarding the statutory process that is necessary to follow when changing a school's status. It is confirmed that a period of statutory consultation on these proposals will not start until the Council approves a statutory consultation. This document includes the following:

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Gwynedd Schools Reorganisation Improvement Working Group was established in June 2008.
- 1.2 15 meetings were held to discuss a range of evidence, including presentations by:
- Welsh Assembly Government
 - ESTYN/Wales Audit Office
 - Welsh Language Society
 - Federation of Schools and Supporters
 - Heads representing small, medium and large schools in Gwynedd
 - National Association for Small Schools
- 1.3 During Spring 2009, the Improvement Working Group published its strategy *Primary Education of the Best Quality for Gwynedd's Children*.
- 1.4 It was agreed that there was a need to review education throughout the county by catchment area. Clear steps were established to undertake the process.
- 1.5 A list of aims and criteria that should be kept in mind when carrying out the reviews were included:
- Class sizes
 - Population and number of pupils
 - The child's learning environment
 - The community
 - Financial resources
 - The Welsh language
 - Geographical factors
 - Exceptional circumstances
 - Circular 21/2009
- 1.6 A range of criteria were developed around the above factors, When looking at the situation of individual catchment areas against the criteria, Tywyn was identified as the first catchment area to be reviewed, then the Berwyn catchment area, and the Gader catchment area to follow.
- 1.7 ***The strategy was accepted unanimously by the Council on 2 April 2009.***
- 1.8 During October 2009, the first catchment area proposals were published that recommended a new organisation in the Tywyn catchment area. Consultation took place on the proposals and a decision was made to publish statutory notices in the catchment area during January – March 2011.
- 1.9 The discussion took place in the Berwyn catchment area in the same way. The Full Council came to a decision in May 2011.
- 1.10 Below proposals for reorganising education in Y Gader catchment area are outlined.

2. REVIEW OF THE GADER CATCHMENT AREA

2.1 Means of communication

2.1.1 A number of opinion forums were established as the Education Portfolio Holder developed her proposals, including:

- Catchment Area Review Panel
- Meetings with staff, governors and parents in every school
- Session for the schools' children and young people
- Wider communication

2.1.2 It was also ensured that written information was available for everyone who had an interest.

2.2 Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel

2.2.1 Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel was established during April 2010. The first meeting of the Panel was held on 29 April 2010. 5 further meetings were held on 13 May 2010, 25 May 2010, 6 July 2010, 25 May 2011 and 13 June 2011.

2.2.2 Representatives were invited – that is the head, chair of the governors and a parent governor – from every one of the nine primary schools in the catchment area. An invitation was also extended to the head and chair of the governors of Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader, local councillors, a representative of Bangor Diocese and representation from Coleg Meirion Dwyfor.

2.2.3 A range of evidence was received and discussed by the Panel, including a package of statistics of the area agreed by the whole Panel as a full and fair reflection. In preparing the statistical information, the schools' representatives were asked to provide comments, challenge the contents and ask for any further information as necessary.

2.2.4 Also information was presented on:

- the financial context
- information about national developments including the Government's guide on discussing proposals to reorganise schools and new regulations for establishing patterns of collaborative working between schools

2.2.5 A long list of options was prepared for reorganising the area's schools. The long list was refined to 14 main models to be considered further. An analysis was received of the educational, managerial and financial implications of every proposal in the meeting of the Panel on 25 May 2010, and the options were discussed again in detail in the meeting of the a Catchment Area Review Panel on 6 July 2010. 14 models were discussed including:

- Developing a model of collaborative working
- Models of rural area schools

- Lifelong Learning Community or School

2.3 *Meetings with individual schools*

- 2.3.1 A visit was undertaken to every school in the catchment area by the Education Portfolio Holder and a representative of the County Consultation Panel at the beginning of the process. The purpose of the visit was to meet heads and to see and come to understand the situation of individual schools.
- 2.3.2 One round of meetings was held with individual schools during the process, during the periods 7 June - 23 June 2010. An open invitation was extended to staff, governors and parents to attend separate meetings. There was opportunity to discuss general matters including the specific models being considered.
- 2.3.3 ***30 individual meetings were therefore held across a period of 16 days with representatives of individual schools.***

2.4 *Children and Young People*

- 2.4.1 During the first meeting of the Catchment Area Review Panel on 4 November 2009, it was suggested that the opinion of children and young people should be sought as the process went ahead. Representatives of every school in the Catchment Area Review Panel agreed to this.
- 2.4.2 Individual schools were informed that the session for children and young people would be held in Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader. Schools were asked to arrange representation from members of the School Council, and it was agreed that it should include 3-4 children from each school. The session was facilitated on 5 July 2010 by the Council's specialist officers.
- 2.4.3 A range of activities were held in order to find the opinions of children and young people on a number of topics, including:
- class sizes
 - age range within the class
 - children's language outside the classroom
 - travelling distances to school
- 2.4.4 Closing the session, the children were asked to suggest the kind of facilities they would wish to see in a school. Generally, the children showed loyalty to their schools and teachers while also identifying a number of resources they would wish to see in their schools.

2.5 *Member Input*

- 2.5.1 When accepting the strategy *Primary Education of the Best Quality for Gwynedd's Children* unanimously, the Council gave permission to the members of the Improvement

Working Group to continue as a forum to support the Education Portfolio Holder as she led the reviews in each catchment area. This was done under the name of the *County Consultation Panel*.

- 2.5.2 During the process of discussion in the Gader catchment area, as part of the review of the implementation of the Reorganisation Strategy, the County Consultation Panel was replaced by an Improvement Working Group which operates to the work programme and brief of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.5.3 Also as part of the review, it was decided that there was a need to ensure that local Members met during the process of the catchment area reorganisation.
- 2.5.4 There were 4 meetings of the County Consultation Panel to discuss developments in the Gader catchment area, on 24 February 2010, 24 March 2010, 8 July 2010 and 21 October 2010. Also, there was a joint meeting between Local Members and Members of the Working Group on 18 May 2011. The situation of the catchment area was discussed and the options for reorganising the area's schools were proposed, side by side with an analysis of the models proposed by the Catchment Area Review Panel.
- 2.5.5 ***The Panel, Working Group and Local Members carefully discussed the models for the catchment area – and Members made comments.***

2.6 Assessment of Community and Language Impacts

- 2.6.1 As part of the process, Dylan Bryn Roberts Consultancy was commissioned to carry out an assessment of the potential community and language impacts of the various reorganisation proposals.
- 2.6.2 Meetings were held with individual schools to gather information and findings. A questionnaire was prepared to gather the opinions of staff, governors, parents and the wider community about the options. Electronic and hard copies of the questionnaire were circulated.
- 2.6.3 The findings of the assessments were presented in a special meeting of the Catchment Area Review Panel on 29 June 2010. The results of the assessments have been a central part of the development of the proposals presented and the findings of the assessments are considered further in this report.
- 2.6.4 The reports can be seen on the Council's website, and copies are available to read as noted in Appendix 1.

2.7 Written communications

- 2.7.1 ***Newsletters were prepared to circulate to every school during the catchment area discussions. Hard copies were sent to the schools to circulate to every parent, the newsletter was emailed to every school and the newsletters were published on the Council's website.***
- 2.7.2 All the papers of the Catchment Area Review Panel were published on the Council's website.

2.7.3 The contact numbers of officers involved in the work were put on the website.

2.8 Process status

2.8.1 Note that the activities undertaken up to now are part of the process of gathering information when formulating initial proposals.

2.8.2 Circular 021/2009 *Organisation of Schools Proposals* was published on 18 September 2009 and these proposals were formed under these guidelines.

2.8.3 ***It is confirmed then that the activities undertaken when formulating these proposals are not part of the statutory process of reviewing the provision in Y Gader catchment area. The discussions up to now are additional to that which is expected by the Welsh Government.***

3. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING PROPOSALS FOR Y GADER CATCHMENT AREA

3.1. It soon became apparent during the process of discussing the options in this catchment that the answers were not clear and simple. In fact, as already noted, as many as 14 models were discussed in detail. During the fourth meeting of the Catchment Area Review Panel, held on 6 July 2010, the Portfolio Leader decided that it was not possible to come to a conclusion about proposals for the catchment area at that time.

3.2. The reasons for the delay in the discussions

3.2.1 Research work on sites and work on models:

3.2.1.1 It was noted that significant work was further required on the identifying suitable sites to coincide with the possible models, and that further consideration was required on the proposed models. Assessment of sites needed to be completed and consideration between this assessment and the model possible for the Catchment. The Council's Property Section was commissioned to undertake this work on site options and further work was done on the models discussed.

3.2.2 Changes to the availability and funding method of nationally funded capital projects

3.2.2.1 During the past few months, the effect of the recession has become apparent, with a cut of 40% in public capital funding. Therefore funding for capital projects in the public sector has become scarcer. Without a doubt, public services across Wales will face substantial funding cuts and this is likely to have an effect on all the Council's services, including Education.

3.2.2.2 During this period also, the Assembly's funding method for capital projects for school buildings changed. There used to be an annual funding window where Authorities could bid for capital funding for such projects.

3.2.2.3 During the past year, a new method came via the Twenty First Century Schools Programme. Now Authorities are asked to present bids by band over a period of time. It is a requirement that authorities identify expenditure needs by expenditure "bands".

Authorities were required to submit bids for Band A – the period 2012-2015 – in some detail with the application. The details of Band A bids for Gwynedd were presented to a meeting of Council Board on 14 December 2010.

3.2.2.4 This meant that a delay was introduced into the process where there would be an opportunity to submit a bid for funding, but taking into account the effects of cuts in public capital funding as well – there is intense competition for capital funding at the moment, and for the future.

3.2.3 Review of the implementation of Gwynedd Council’s Reorganisation Strategy

3.2.3.1 The *Best Quality Education for Gwynedd’s Children Strategy* was unanimously supported by Gwynedd Council in April 2009, but after 18 months of implementing the strategy it became apparent that there was a need to look at some aspects of its implementation.

3.2.3.2 After considering these matters that came out of the review, the meeting of the Full Council on 16 December 2010 decided as follows:

- to include the remainder of the county’s educational provision in the process of the nursery, primary, secondary, special and lifelong learning communities;
- to re-establish an Education Organisation Improvement Working Group led by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to take an overview of the county’s entire educational provision;
- to accept the need to rationalise the number of schools in the county so as to ensure a network of the correct numbers of schools, of the correct type, in the correct locations;
- to fully take into account the national and county context, including financial matters and the need to develop a long-term capital investment programme
- to undertake a broad range of preparatory work during the next few months to provide information for the discussions and expedite the catchment area reviews;
- to conduct a basic assessment of language, community, economic and equality matters throughout the county and hold an initial assessment of the impact of some of the possible reorganisation models on those matters;
- to give much greater priority to critical situations and plan a response programme
- to continue to conduct reviews at a catchment area level and through convening a Catchment Area Review Panel based on the above mentioned preparatory work;
- to ensure that local Members meet during the process of the catchment area review.

3.2.3.3 The *Towards 2025* strategy was approved by Gwynedd Council on 21 October 2010. This strategy established the long term strategic direction for education and training for children and young people 3-19 in Gwynedd, and offers our viewpoint as a Council for national policy developments, such as the 21st Century Schools Programme and the Schools Effectiveness Framework.

3.2.3.4 The strategy notes a vision to:

“offer bilingual education and training of the highest possible quality which will give the experiences, skills and confidence to the County’s children and young people and enable them to be bilingual, successful and whole citizens”.

4 PROPOSALS FOR THE GADER CATCHMENT AREA

4.1 When developing options for the catchment area, it became apparent that the catchment area could be distributed into three areas:

- Eastern side – Which includes the schools of Brithdir, Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Machreth), Ieuan Gwynedd and Dinas Mawddwy
- Western side – Which includes the schools of Llanelltyd, Clogau, Ganllwyd and Friog
- Dolgellau Town – Which includes Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader

4.2 Options were discussed based on this distribution for the following reasons:

- Geographical location and travelling times
- Local wishes that note a large school centralised for the whole catchment area will not be supported
- Site development and building reasons
- The aims of the Council's Reorganisation Strategy especially as regards developing schools to be establishments that are a hub for community activities.

4.3 On June 13, 2011 the Education Portfolio Holder outlined her proposals for the Schools Reorganisation in Y Gader Catchment Area to the Catchment Area Review Panel, that is:

- Establish a Multi-site Area School – with one school site in the present location of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other site either at the present site of Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain. This would mean that one or other of the sites would close as a school. As part of this recommendation, Ysgol Llanfachreth will also close and the provision will be offered in the Area School.
- Delay discussions for the present in the western part of the catchment area, (catchment area of the schools of Llanelltyd, Clogau, Ganllwyd and Friog) ensuring that this part of the catchment area is prioritised in the next stage of the schools reorganisation process.
- The recommendation for Dolgellau town is to establish a Multi-Site Lifelong Learning Community (school) for 3 to 16 years of age.

Investment options were noted at the time for implementing the proposal either by;

- Establishing a Lifelong Learning model without capital investment; or
- Asking Gwynedd Council to consider investing approximately £1.95m to make improvements to the current site of the primary school so that it was possible to get the teaching buildings on one site; or
- Asking Gwynedd Council to make a bid for approximately £4.5m for capital funding to the Twenty First Century Schools Programme to develop provision on the site of Ysgol y Gader for Key Stage 2

4.4 When developing and discussing options for schools reorganisation in the Gader catchment area, it became apparent that it was not possible to offer an answer for the whole catchment area at present. It was noted as one of the principles of the Reorganisation Strategy;

“That the scale, nature and timetable of change will vary between catchment areas”

4.5 A summary is offered here of the rationale behind the proposals that are presented and the reasons for the delay in part of the catchment area. A full analysis of the rationale for the proposals are given in the next part of the report, with additional background information in the appendices:

5 INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSALS FOR THE EASTERN PART OF THE CATCHMENT AREA

5.1 The context:

5.1.1 The eastern part of the catchment area comprises the catchment areas of:

- Ysgol Brithdir,
- Ysgol Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Machreth),
- Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain and
- Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy

5.1.2 It was resolved that the situation as regards the eastern side of the Y Gader catchment-area needed to be prioritised for the following reasons:

- **Uncertainty regarding the leadership situation** at 2 schools due to staff turnover
- The **4 schools** in the area receive **an additional amount to the usual allocation** through the minimum staffing protection policy. The total additional amount is £111,616 between the 4 schools
- **A total of £593,916 is allocated to the 4 schools** in this part of the Y Gader catchment-area in 2011/12. This equates to £5883 per pupil on average. There is a range between schools of £3910 (Brithdir) to £7519 (Ieuan Gwynedd). The average range for the county for this period is £3352.
- Number projections at 3 of the schools is a cause for concern. The projections for 2013 are as follows;
 - Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd – 15 (**forecast for September 2011 is 15**)
 - Llanfachreth - 20 and
 - Dinas Mawddwy – 23.
- **There are several empty places** (94 in total) - 43% within the 4 schools or 58% if the situation at Ysgol Brithdir is not included. This implies, when considering empty places at Ieuan Gwynedd, Llanfachreth and Dinas Mawddwy schools, that **there are more empty places than there are children attending the schools.**

- The **numbers at Ysgol Brithdir exceed capacity** (There are 40 pupils at the school and pupil capacity is 38)
- **Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is geographically isolated** and provides education for a wide area.
- **There is a clear case in favour of and a need to ensure long-term stability for educational provision in the rural area in this part of the catchment-area.**

5.2 The recommendation for the area:

5.2.1 The recommendation for the eastern part is:

Establish a Multi-site Area School – with one school site in the present location of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other site either at the present site of Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain. This would mean that one or other of the sites would close as a school. As part of this recommendation, Ysgol Llanfachreth will also close and the provision will be offered in the Area School.

5.2.2 A number of other models were considered during the process, which included:

Models of collaboration

Different forms of Area Schools – which included models to close the Dinas Mawddwy site

Forms of Lifelong Learning Community or School – including one central site with satellites and centralising the whole educational provision for the area

5.2.3 The complete considerations associated with these models are included in Appendix 3 of this report, with the advantages and disadvantages of all the models considered in the Catchment Area Review Panels discussions together with financial considerations.

5.3 Additional information about the proposal:

- What is meant by a Multi-site Area School in this case?

5.3.1 A Multi-site Area School means that one present school site will be extended and upgraded as the main site of the Area School, with the other two schools closing. There will be a second site for the Area School in another location. The reasons why there is a need for a second site in Dinas Mawddwy are noted below.

5.3.2 The main characteristics of an Area School are:

- Legally the school will have one legal entity,
- The school will have one Head, with a manager/managers on different sites
- Both sites will have one Estyn Inspection, as one school
- One budget and
- One governing body

5.4 Why recommend an Area School?

5.4.1 There is a recommendation to establish an Area School in this part of the catchment area after considering a number of factors including;

- Class sizes
- Number of pupils
- Leadership
- Financial resources
- The Welsh language
- Learning environment and quality
- Travelling times

These factors and others are considered below.

5.4.2 Class sizes

5.4.2.1 The class sizes of the 4 schools on average today are 13, with class size range between 10 and 20. It is noted that Ysgol Brithdir is over capacity and the other 3 schools have a number of surplus places (58% or 94) – Ysgol Llanfachreth has 52% surplus places and Ieuan Gwynedd 58%.

5.4.2.2 The study of a range of evidence outlines the general opinion – confirmed in the Government’s policy – that classes of over 30 pupils are unacceptable for children aged under 7 but undesirable for children aged 7-11.

5.4.2.3 Furthermore, recent research suggests that classes can be too small. Peter Blatchford noted in his publication “The Class Size Debate: Is Small Better” (2003) “...it may also be worth considering that class sizes can be too small” reporting that teachers had suggested “...the dynamics of the group could become flat and some children could dominate”.

5.4.2.4 The strategy adopted by the Council on 2 April 2009 has noted an ambition to ensure classes of between 12-25 in the number of pupils

5.4.2.5 If the recommendations are realised, class sizes in this area will be on average approximately 20. It is foreseen that average class sizes in the main school site will be 25, while class sizes in the second site will be approximately 12.

5.4.3 Number of pupils

5.4.3.1 The number of primary age pupils in this part of the catchment area has varied greatly since 1975. An increase was seen in two schools (a substantial increase 90% in the numbers in Ysgol Brithdir) and a reduction in 2 of the other schools. According to figures submitted by individual schools and checked and confirmed with schools, it is expected that the numbers will decrease (about 12%) during the next few years. Every school, except Ysgol Brithdir foresee a reduction in the numbers of pupils varying between 8% to 21% with Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd forecasting as few as 15 pupils by 2013.

5.4.3.2 Education standards are crucial to the proposals. Although there is a general assumption that education standards in small schools are higher than larger schools, there is no evidence to support the assumption. In fact, ESTYN's report on Small Primary Schools in Wales (2003) notes that there is not a substantial difference between education standards in large and small schools but "... *the smaller the school, the more challenging it often is for the teacher to match work to all pupils' learning needs.*". The report goes on to note "... *it can be more difficult for teachers to match work to pupils' needs because pupils in each class may be of widely different ages and stages of development. This is particularly the case in the smallest schools (with up to 30 pupils), where there is 28% of unsatisfactory work compared with 8% of unsatisfactory work in schools with over 210 pupils.*"

5.4.3.3 If the proposal is achieved, the Area School would have approximately 96 pupils, with approximately 73 pupils on one site and approximately 23 on the site at Dinas Mawddwy. Although the numbers of Dinas Mawddwy are low, as noted below, there are other factors to explain the proposal of keeping this site as part of the Area School.

5.4.4 Education Quality and the Learning Environment

5.4.4.1 Recent Estyn inspection surveys in the 4 schools note that the schools provide good quality education with no significant weaknesses. No concerns or doubts were expressed about the standard of education in any of the schools.

5.4.4.2 The strategy unanimously approved by the Council in April 2009 notes that teaching and learning circumstances are crucial to the provision of first rate education.

5.4.4.3 ESTYN's report "*An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings or significantly refurbished premises*" (2007) confirms the above opinion. The report notes that schools that have experienced their building being refurbished had seen an improvement in pupils' attainment and achievement. It is noted that Estyn inspections of individual schools shows that the quality of learning has improved, that staff morale is higher, that attendance is maintained and behaviour improved and that buildings offer more choice and better provision as regards education within school and activities before and after school.

5.4.4.4 Recent assessments have estimated that there is a need to spend about £2.1m to repair and adapt the 3 present primary schools if twenty first century buildings standards are to be achieved. In closing two sites – this would reduce the expenditure need by between £1.2m and £1.58m, but this would ensure substantial investment on the site that is developed as the main site of the Area School.

5.4.5 Leadership and Staffing

5.4.5.1 The 4 schools today receive sufficient budgets to fund 8 full time primary teachers, 4 of these heads. But because of staff turnover, 2 of the schools face a situation of having to fill the post of Head.

5.4.5.2 If the new arrangements came into force, when looking at forecast numbers it is likely that the budget would be for 5 primary teachers (full time) for the whole Area School. The exact nature of collaborative working and sharing staff between the two school sites

is a matter for further discussion but a matter that would need the attention of the governing body of the Area School. The new Area School will be a new entity, therefore the new governing body will need to appoint the Head and the staff for the school.

5.4.5.3 Gwynedd Council has developed a detailed staffing policy in conjunction with the Trades Unions and heads. The policy will be the basis for any redundancies that arise from this proposal. Clear and open communication will be core to the successful operation of any proposals. Staffing the Area School will be a matter for its Governing Body. However, the Council suggests that the Area School should try to ring fence jobs that arise from operating the new school for teachers who are working within the 4 schools in the first instance, and then in other schools in the Dolgellau area.

5.4.6 The Community

5.4.6.1 The statistical pack contains a published analysis of the community-based use made of every school, and schools contribution to their communities. Resources are also listed (e.g. community-based centres, playgrounds etc).

5.4.6.2 The Government guidelines (Circular 021/2009 Schools Organization Proposals) on schools re-organization specify factors that require consideration when drawing up school re-organization proposals. Information on those factors that were considered in a statistical analysis of the catchment-area are available on the Council web-site. A study of the potential impact on the community of adopting the various options were commissioned from independent advisers as part of the proposal development process. An economic impact assessment has also been commissioned to accompany the community-based study. The reports are available on the Council web-site, and copies are available for inspection as noted in Appendix 1.

5.4.6.3 When scrutinizing an assessment held of the potential impact of several of the initial models considered, both the community-based and economic assessments specified categories of the impacts of various model types. Briefly, what was noted was that school closures in the rural areas in any model would have a negative impact - this implied that any model of an area school or lifelong model would have a similar impact. The only model that would not have a negative impact – a neutral impact, would be a collaboration model that would in reality, imply no change in school attendance in individual villages.

5.4.6.4 As specific models were developed – the assessment was refined for the Area school models. It was noted that school closures when establishing the Area School would have a negative impact both on the community and economically in those communities where there are school closures. On the other hand, whilst acknowledging that there is a risk involved in transferring children regularly from Dinas Mawddwy, the initial assessment of models and satellites mentions that this model is less detrimental than site closure.

5.4.6.5 For those communities where school closure will occur, the impact recommends some measures for consideration by the Council so as to ameliorate the negative impact, such as:

- Providing support for communities where schools close so as to try and maintain the situation of those communities;

- Providing support for those communities to enable them to consider best use of the school building following closure
- Plan so as to ensure that the Area School includes villages in the school catchment-area in activities and occasionally hold activities in those villages.
- Provide transport so as to facilitate children's transport from communities effectively and safely.
- Strive to limit children's travel time to the Area School to the County Target (30 minutes), assessing parents and children's level of satisfaction with the transport arrangements as regards safety and punctuality.
- Strive to ensure transport provision that complies with extra-curricular activities so as to reduce the need for parents to transport children.

5.4.6.6 These measures will be incorporated in the working programme if the decision is to support the recommendations.

5.4.7 Financial resources

5.4.7.1 A total of £593,916 was allocated (not including SEN units and integration) to the 4 schools in this part of Y Gader catchment area in 2011/12. This equates to £5883 per pupil on average, although it ranges between schools from £3910 (Brithdir) to £7519 (Ieuan Gwynedd). The county average is £3352.

5.4.7.2 The total of the new allocation following the recommended organisation for the area – on the basis of the current allocation would be £413,803. As regards revenue costs, establishing the new organisation would save £180,000 less the additional transport needs estimated at £48,000, that is £132,000 per annum.

5.4.7.3 The 4 schools in the area receive an additional sum to the usual allocation through the protection of staffing minimum policy which guarantees at least a head and teacher in every school and a head and assistant in schools with fewer than 15 pupils. The total of this additional sum is £111,616. In comparison, if the proposal is realised, there will be an additional sum of £69,069 to the usual allocation as a multi-site allowance.

5.4.7.4 If the proposals are accepted, the Council has a policy to keep a percentage of any savings within the catchment area throughout the reorganisation process across the county, in order to meet the county's strategy aims.

5.4.8 The Welsh language

5.4.8.1 An analysis was provided of the language background of every school - based on information gathered when preparing a Language Assessment of every school in the county during spring 2008 – in the statistics pack. Schools had an opportunity to challenge the evidence, and some did so. Following that, the analysis was agreed upon.

5.4.8.2 Drawing similar language schools together was considered when developing the proposals for the catchment-area.

5.4.8.3 A Language Impact Assessment of the various models considered in the catchment-area was commissioned when developing this proposal. This is achieved in compliance with Assembly Government requirements in Circular 021/2009. The entire report is published on the Council web-site. As regards this proposal to establish the Area School, the Language Assessment notes that establishing this model would have a positive impact on the Welsh language.

5.4.8.4 The assessment score for a Rural Area School (Brithdir, Llanfachreth and Ieuan Gwynedd) on one site and pupils from Dinas Mawddwy on another sites > +6 Positive. It is noted that there is healthy social use of Welsh at each one of the schools – especially the three schools that will amalgamate on one site. There are no indications of social nor academic language deterioration. It was noted that there was bilingual proficiency linked to the model. It was also noted that the impact of 3 schools on Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy may serve to reinforce Welsh. **The assessment therefore concludes that such an Area School could strengthen the Welsh language at a larger establishment that could develop into a positive language bastion.**

5.4.9 Religious status

5.4.9.1 It must be noted that Ysgol Llanfachreth has a Church status (Voluntary Controlled School). Closing the school would have implications with regards the Church provision in the area. This will need to be assessed alongside other proposals in the catchment area. The Church owns the main Llanfachreth school site, with other parts of the school grounds having covenants. There is a need to look in more detail on the implications of these covenants with regards after use, if it is decided to implement this proposal.

5.4.10 Geographical factors

5.4.10.1 It was aimed at limiting travelling where possible. This proposal meets the requirements of the strategy as regards travelling, that is to limit travelling to no more than 30 minutes one way.

5.4.10.2 When developing the proposals, it was considered that Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is already an Area School, and provides education for a wide area where some children already travel some distance to school. Also, consideration was given to the fact that the present site of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy is some way away from other locations, over 8 miles to the nearest location. The travelling times of some Dinas Mawddwy pupils were considered since some travel up to 25 minutes to the school at present. Therefore it was suggested that there was a need to continue with the education provision on that site.

5.5 CHOOSING SITE LOCATION FOR THE AREA SCHOOL

5.5.1 Background:

5.5.1.1 In developing the proposal for this part of Y Gader catchment area, as previously mentioned, it is recommended that one Area School site should be on the existing Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy site, whilst a decision still needs to be taken on the main Area School site.

5.5.1.2 When the proposal for an Area School was being developed it was estimated that the construction of a brand new school would cost in the region of £3.8m. It was also estimated that one of the existing sites could be developed at a cost of between £1.1m and £1.5m.

5.5.1.3 Initial research work was undertaken to find a new site for the Area School, but the recommendation now put forward is to locate the school on the site of one of the existing schools for the following reasons:

- As stated above, a solution needs to be found as soon as possible for the situation in this part of the area.
- It is estimated that the cost of a new school on a new site would be around £3.8million. On account of the amount of money involved the Council would have to submit a bid for funding from the Assembly's Twenty First Century Schools Programme fund.
- From the information currently held by the Council, it would not be possible to submit an initial bid to the Assembly for money out of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme fund until at least 2016/17. This would mean that – in view of the construction work involved – the school would not be ready until 2018 at the earliest.
- There would not be any guarantee of success with any bid due to the competition for money out of the capital fund by then.
- Also, consideration must be given to the problems that might arise in gaining planning permission for a new site, since the area is within the National Park.
- There are more than one options for developing the site of one of the existing schools. Financially, these options would be within the reach of the Council and could be considered, but apart from this they would also meet the technical requirements for their development.

5.5.1.4 **The Catchment Area Review Panel was strongly of the opinion that action should be taken without delay in this part of the catchment area due to its vulnerable situation.** Therefore, this means that, whilst regretful that there is no way of achieving a new school, it is necessary to move ahead and develop the Area School. **In its meeting on 23 June, the Scrutiny Committee confirmed this opinion, and emphasised the need for a prompt answer to this area.** The matter was discussed further by the Board, 5 of July.

5.5.2 Consideration of sites:

5.5.2.1 On account of their geographical location within the area, road network and development possibilities, the existing sites of Ysgol Brithdir and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain were looked at and assessed as possibilities for the main location of the Area School. Initial consideration was given to the existing site of Ysgol Llanfachreth, but concern was voiced over the viability of the location due to its geographical position and the nature of the road network to the site.

5.5.2.2 If this proposal is accepted, the site at either Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd will be developed and improved. With the support of substantial investment, these recommendations would ensure an improvement in the learning environment. A full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and problems of the

Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd sites, along with the Review Panel comments are in Appendix 4.

5.5.2.3 Here are some of the features of Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain site:

- Current site is 0.3 acres short of meeting all Assembly requirements for re-development.
- In technical terms, falls a little short of the standards.
- Suitable land available at the rear of the site.
- To achieve the requirements, additional learning space would be required, extend the hall, staff/preparation space, learning resources storage space, use “Astroturf” to try and meet play space requirements
- Development cost approx £1.1m

5.5.2.4 Here are some of the features of the Brithdir site:

- Unable to extend the site unless neighbouring land is purchased. The surface area is below requirement for current numbers i.e. before adding more pupils.
- Positive discussions have been held with the land owner.
- To meet requirements, additional learning space would be required, extend the hall, staff/preparation space, space for learning resources, play areas.
- Best geographical site as regards pupil movement and distance from Dinas Mawddwy
- Development cost – approx £1.5m

A further assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and problems of the Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd sites, along with the Review Panel comments are in Appendix 4.

5.5.2.5 The Panel was divided in their opinion as to the location of the Area School. The representatives of Brithdir and Ieuan Gwynedd schools favoured their schools current sites. The merits and some of the problems attached to both sites were noted.

5.5.2.6 The merits of the current site of Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd and the lower cost of developing that site are noted, whilst there were views expressed on the geographical location with regards proximity to Dinas Mawddwy and the viability of the site to attract the children of the area.

5.5.2.7 On the other hand, the merits of the Brithdir site noted are its geographical location with regards the viability of the site in relation to where the children of the area live, and also its closer proximity to Dinas Mawddwy, it’s links with the nursery provision available in Brithdir. Some concerns by some members of the panel were expressed about the nature of the road to the Brithdir site.

5.5.2.8 The process of discussing with land owners and information gathering on the location of the main site of the Area School is ongoing, and further time will be needed for these technical matters. When considering the technical information to hand, it is noted that the Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain site is the less expensive and less complex option. It should be made clear that extending the Brithdir site is entirely dependant on the ability to purchase additional land. Positive discussions have taken place with the land owner.

Initial discussions have taken place with the Planning Authority of the National Park. There is no objection in principle to either site, however seeking planning permission on the Brithdir site will be more difficult than in Rhydymain.

5.5.2.9 A recommendation for the Council with regards to this matter, to delegate the decision on the site to the Council Board (for its meeting on the 20th of September 2011) to allow time for these technical matters, and ensure that it's possible to consult in accordance with the timetable noted in Part 9 of this report, and in accordance with the views of the local review panel and the Scrutiny Committee.

5.6 The implications of the proposal of establishing an Area School

5.6.1 This proposal means that the two schools will close and there will be a prescribed change in the other two schools.

5.6.2 Considerations regarding closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth (also known as Ysgol Machreth)

5.6.2.1 The current site of Ysgol Llanfachreth was considered as an option for the Area School, but due to the following reasons, it was decided not to recommend it as a site for further consideration:

- The Llanfachreth site is the furthest as regards time factor from Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy (25minutes).
- A small number of pupils reside in the school catchment-area - with only 7 pupils residing within their natural catchment-area. The school has the highest number of pupils from outside the catchment-area (59% - 13 pupils). Locating the Area School would lead to the largest movement in pupil numbers.
- 73% of pupils (16) Ysgol Llanfachreth reside closer to another school.
- Geographically, this site is the least favoured as regards where children live.

5.6.2.2 As a consequence of the proposal, Ysgol Llanfachreth would close, and as has already been noted, this would impact the Church education provision in the area. In compliance with Assembly guidelines, the Council will have to further discuss and consider this matter, assessing the impact abolishing religious provision will have in the area. Further work will be done on this element during the next few weeks.

5.6.2.3 The community and economic impact reports voice concerns about the impact of the closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth on the community there, and the other school site that will close. It will need to be ensured that the measures recommended in those assessments are considered, so as to ensure that the impact on those communities is ameliorated.

5.6.3 One School entity, but two sites:

5.6.3.1 Consideration was taken to the best method of establishing the Area School legally and constitutionally. It is proposed that the schools in questions (Llanfachreth, Dinas Mawddwy, Brithdir ac Ieuan Gwynedd) should close, and that the Dinas Mawddwy site

and, either Brithdir or Ieuan Gwynedd will re-open to establish the Multi-Site Area School.

5.6.3.2 The implications of creating a single entity have been noted as regards to:

- Leadership (one Head),
- Governance (a single governing body) and
- Budget (one budget),

5.6.3.3 By creating A Multi-Site Area School, a school governing body and constitution will need to be established along with appointing staff. Staffing the Area School will be a matter for its Governing Body. However, the Council suggests that the Area School should try to ring fence jobs that arise from operating the new school for teachers who are working within the 4 schools in the first instance, and then in other schools in the Dolgellau area.

5.6.3.4 The budget will be based on pupil numbers attending the school in accordance with schools funding formula. Dinas Mawddwy site will be part of the Area School, and there will be a multi-site allowance to maintain the Area School on two sites.

5.6.4 Deciding on a school site: Depending on the choice of location for the school's main site; that is the present site of Ysgol Brithdir or the Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain site, this would mean that one or the other of the schools would close, and the school site chosen will be extended and improved. These options have been assessed as regards these factors; travelling distance, accessibility, the effect on the school management, land availability, cost, planning implications, and the future viability of the school. A full assessment of these options can be found in Appendix 4. As noted, sufficient time will be needed for further work to be done on these technical matters.

5.7 To Conclude

5.7.1 By considering all the factors therefore, it is proposed to establish multi site area school in this part of the Dolgellau catchment. This proposal would mean closing two of the four schools, and ensuring that one school is extended and upgraded to receive children from three of the schools. Ysgol Llanfachreth would close, and this will mean that Church education provision in this area will not be available. Dinas Mawddwy to continue as part of the area school.

5.7.2 As a preventative measure of school closure in an area – the Council would ask its Economic Regeneration Officers to support the community when considering any post school use of any land available as a result of school reorganisation, if there is a local desire for this.

5.7.3 Over the summer, further considerations will be given to technical matters as regards the main site of the school. Recommendations proposed are that the Full Council delegates the decision on the site to the Council Board. It is anticipated that it will be possible to report on this matter early in the Autumn that will allow the statutory consultation to run in accordance with the timetable.

6. THE SITUATION IN THE WEST OF THE CATCHMENT AREA

6.1 The context

6.1.1 The meaning of the western part of the catchment is:

- Ysgol Ganllwyd,
- Ysgol Llanelltyd,
- Ysgol Clogau and
- Ysgol Friog.

6.1.2 The discussions for the western part of the catchment area are deferred for the time being for the following reasons.

- Further work needs to be done regarding the possibilities of developing sites and linking such work with models of schools for the future.
- Because of the fragile aspect of the eastern side there is an urgent need to prioritise response in that area.
- To publish potential options at this time for this area would cause additional concerns and lead to parents moving their children away to other schools.
- Insufficient capacity to achieve all the work involved under the statutory process within the limitations of the democratic cycle. The discussion must fall within this democratic cycle in order to complete the statutory process, in order to feed into the next democratic cycle before purdah restrictions apply as a result of the local authority elections.

6.1.3 It is fair to note that representation on the local Area Review Panel have noted their disappointment that it was not possible to develop a proposal for the area as a whole at the same time and concerns were raised about this. On the other hand some members noted that the situation was fragile in a part of the catchment which required priority. It was noted that the Western part of the Catchment would receive priority in the next part of the review process.

6.2 Next steps in the Western area of the Catchment.

6.2.1 The work on the western side of the catchment area will be prioritised as part of the schools reorganisation process.

6.2.2 In the meantime research will be done for possible sites and other background work will continue.

7. INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL FOR THE TOWN OF DOLGELLAU

7.1.1 The recommendation for the town of Dolgellau:

The recommendation for the town of Dolgellau is:

To establish a Multi-Site Lifelong Community (School) for 3 to 16 years of age by either closing the two present schools; or forming a federal establishment.

7.1.2 Methods of investment to realise this recommendation were discussed;

- i. A multi-site Lifelong Learning Community (School) could be established without any capital investment required.
- ii. A request could be made to Gwynedd Council to invest approximately £1.95million for improvements to the present primary school site and ensure that all the teaching buildings are on a single site and build a new provision on part of the site.
- iii. Gwynedd Council could be requested to make a bid for approximately £4.5million capital funding for the Twenty First Century Schools Programme to develop a provision on the Ysgol Y Gader site for Key Stage 2.

7.1.3 The options have been considered and have been discussed by the Local Review Panel and the Scrutiny Committee.

7.2 Further Information about the proposal - Why the recommendation to establish a Lifelong Learning Community (School) in the town of Dolgellau?

7.2.1 During reorganisation discussions in the County the lifelong model became an option in particular situations. In reviewing the implementation of the Reorganisation Strategy it became apparent that the catchment area's secondary school could not be excluded from discussions on proposals for primary education. This is confirmed in the strategic document "Towards 2025", which states clearly that the present system must be changed:

"it is critical that every effort is made to utilize resources as effectively as possible within the education and training system – human, technical, construction or financial resources – for the benefit of children and young people"

7.2.2 During discussions of the Y Gader Catchment Area Review Panel, there was a general desire to consider this model as an option. The model was seen to contain many strengths. The options were considered in many ways including the development of a provision for all the catchment area's 3 – 16 year olds on a single campus and also the model for a multi site campus.

7.2.3 It was acknowledged in the Review Panel Review that the establishment of a Lifelong Model would strengthen the viability of the Secondary sector in the Catchment area, and also offer practical and strategic opportunities to the town's primary sector and to the wider. Concerns were expressed regarding changes in the numbers attending Ysgol Y Gader with projected reductions in the region of 13% in future years.

7.2.4 Concerns were also expressed in the discussions regarding the site of the Dolgellau primary school. The school was split which resulted in the duplication of certain provisions and also this led to managerial problems. In addition, based on the sum included in the Council's Asset Management Plan for 2008/09 it was noted that an expenditure in excess of £110,000 was required on the two sites of the Dolgellau primary school.

7.2.5 Evidence from other parts of Britain suggests that the establishment of lifelong arrangements offers an opportunity to maintain a sustainable focus for a rural community.

It is a way of protecting a rural provision in the face of escalating costs of maintaining small schools, through co-ordinating school management.

7.2.6 A lifelong learning community can bring *Curriculum benefits* by the creation of a common ethos and shared expectations for pupils, staff and parents in maintaining flexibility when planning and implementing the curriculum. Evidence shows that the transitional period from primary to secondary school can be challenging for children and during this period there is a reduction in attainment. The creation of a stronger relationship between the primary and secondary sectors would reduce the uncertainty for children.

7.2.7 There is an opportunity to *benefit from staff expertise* across the learning ages and also it presents an opportunity for staff to learn from their peers, which is of benefit to pupils' education.

7.2.8 *The welfare of pupils* could be promoted by reducing the concern and anxiety in moving from the familiar setting of the primary sector to the secondary sector. A procedure suitable to the age and needs of pupils will be established as support for pupils and a long term relationship will be established between parents and staff.

7.2.9 Evidence also shows a *close relationship between the school and parents*, and therefore that a close community is being established. It was noted in research work done in Scotland that "...the strong relationship with parents [is one] which is rooted in the contacts established during the early years of children's education" (Learning Together HMIE (Scotland), 2010). This type of relationship can only be a good thing for the pupil and also for the wider community.

7.2.10 Experience from other areas shows that an opportunity arises to *support families* by the provision of integrated services including health services, child care, training for adults and a range of other services.

7.2.11 A *comprehensive language policy* could be developed across the primary and secondary sectors including community activities and adult education. This has particular relevance for Dolgellau in view of the results produced by the language assessment undertaken and based on this model.

7.2.12 As regards *school management*, there are opportunities to amalgamate governing bodies and budgets. This could be achieved formally or by way of federalisation, and present scope to make management savings.

7.3 The implications of the proposal to establish a Lifelong Learning Community (School)

7.3.1 This option entails either closing the Dolgellau primary school and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader and their re-opening as a Lifelong Learning Community (School). Since the beginning of the democratic cycle, it was noted that there is a different method to realise this option – through Council and governing body collaboration to form a federal establishment. By either method – the model of a Lifelong Learning Community can be realised.

7.3.2 Features of the model:

7.3.2.1 Presented below are some of the main recommendations for the lifelong model. It should be noted that these are recommendations and in the long term, management matters would be invested in the school and its governors.

- The Community Lifelong Community would include a nursery, primary and secondary provision.
- A single governing body for the lifelong learning community, or a shadow body in a federal model
- A single leader with assistant sector heads to be responsible for the primary and secondary sectors and any other facilities provided.
- The second tier of management could include a system of co-ordinators with responsibilities across the establishment for matters such as Pastoral Care, Assessments or Community Activities.
- The establishment would be funded as a single entity.

7.3.3 Education focus in the catchment area

7.3.3.1 The Lifelong Learning Community would encompass the whole catchment area by working closely with all the primary schools in the area and benefit from developments in the town and also the expertise of the staff. Of course there are current options regarding improvements related to the proposal and they have particular features and implications.

7.3.4 The Legal status and establishing procedure of the Lifelong Learning Community (school)

7.3.4.1 According to the law, there are specific categories of schools, and it has to be pointed out that consideration would have to be given to the mechanism of establishing a Lifelong Learning Community.

7.3.4.2 Should the two schools be closed, re-opened and combined, then a legal status would have to be placed on the school as one entity. On the other hand, the two schools could retain their present legal status if they form a federal model.

7.3.4.3 At present the status of Dolgellau Primary School is Church in Wales School (Voluntary Controlled School) and the status of Ysgol Y Gader is Community Secondary School. Regarding the status, there are two options:

- Bestow upon it the status of a Lifelong Community School, OR
- Bestow upon it the status of a Church Lifelong School
 - Status of a Voluntary Controlled School or
 - Voluntary Aided School

Each of these options has different characteristics.

7.3.4.4 Characteristics of Community School Status:

7.3.4.5 Most of the primary schools in Gwynedd have Community School status, and indeed all the secondary schools in the county also have this status. In a word the characteristics of a Community School are as follows, since the Local Education Authority:

- Owns the school land and buildings, but the governing body is responsible for:
- Running the school,
- Funding the school,
- Employing the staff,
- Providing ancillary services, for example – special needs and psychological services etc,
- Implementing the access policy,
- Also, the national curriculum is followed.

7.3.4.6 Characteristics of Church School Status:

There are two types of Church School (or Voluntary School):

- Voluntary Controlled School status or
- Voluntary Aided School status

7.3.4.7 These are some of the characteristics of Church School status:

- The Local Authority controls school entry and staff appointment and provides ancillary services
- The Church is represented on the school's governing body
- As a rule, the land or piece of land is owned by the religious institution or a charity.
- At practical level, the Christian ethos is reflected in the school life and at community level.
- The Council is the Authority which controls entry.

7.3.4.8 Consider each status:

7.3.4.9 If the Lifelong School was given Community School status the Church School status would be deleted. This would mean – in terms of the recommendation to close Ysgol Llanfachreth as well – that there would be no Church provision in Y Gader catchment area. At the moment there is uncertainty regarding the influence that this factor could have on parents' deliberations when choosing a school, but an assessment is currently being held.

7.3.4.10 If Church status was given to the Lifelong School in Dolgellau, this would mean that Y Gader Secondary School would be the only one in Gwynedd with the status. There is a joint Secondary Church School in Wrexham, and the Church in Wales has three secondary schools in South Wales. The Catholic Church has a secondary school in Denbighshire and one in Flintshire.

7.3.4.11 Usually 'Community' status is given to Lifelong learning establishments, but there are examples in England of Church Lifelong Schools; if this status was given to the Dolgellau Lifelong School, it would be the first in Wales to receive this status.

7.3.4.12 Alternative Option:

7.3.4.13 Another option is to establish a federal model between the primary and secondary schools. By implementing this federal model, it would be possible to retain the present legal status. It is noted that the difference is the mechanism of realising the Lifelong Learning Community. With this option, the Council would need to collaborate with both school's governing body, rather than complete the statutory process.

7.3.4.14 Conclusions:

7.3.4.15 To assess this matter, further work will be completed in the next few weeks to gather opinion on establishing the Lifelong Learning Model proposed and further discussions will taken place with representatives from the Church in Wales in the Bangor Diocese.

7.3.4.16 Full Council are asked to recommend the proposal to delegate the decision on the best method to establish the Lifelong Learning Community to the Council Board. It is foreseen that it will be possible to report on this matter early in the Autumn.

7.3.5 Language and Community Impact Assessments

7.3.5.1 In accordance with Assembly Government requirements in Circular 021/2009, language and community impact assessments were commissioned with this model – as well as others.

7.3.5.2 The language impact notes that the model would have a negative impact. The Language Assessment Report outlines the background to these results, explaining that the impact result is due to the current situation, and that in reality the model serves as a means to maintain the status quo.

7.3.5.3 The assessment notes that the percentage of pupils from non-Welsh speaking homes exceeds that whom come from Welsh homes, currently at both the primary and secondary school. It is mentioned that there is social and academic use of English. It is noted that extensive use is made of English socially in the Primary and to a varied degree, in the Secondary. Approximately a third of Secondary School pupils for whom Welsh is their mother tongue, opt to follow GCSE courses through the medium of English. In addition, a percentage of parents of Secondary school pupils apply for their children to follow subjects through the medium of English. Assessment findings indicate that Primary pupils bilingual proficiency is good although pupils language cohorts vary - it is noted that this is due to lack of use of Welsh. As regards the situation of Welsh in the ward/community, through the assessment both schools note that situation regarding Welsh is 'fair' and losing ground.

7.3.5.4 As the impact assessment notes that the recommended model provides a means to maintain a situation that causes concern as regards language, several measures to ameliorate the impact are noted, and may provide opportunities to challenge the existing situation through establishing the Lifelong Learning Community model.

- Lifelong Learning Community has thorough pastoral care and management to maintain and strengthen the current situation.
- Encourage provision to immerse pre-school age children in Welsh.

- Adopt a School policy where teachers and support staff would commence and hold conversations in Welsh with pupils in order to establish and maintain a Welsh ethos and nurture daily use of the language amongst pupils.
- School Development Plan and schemes of work to enable Teachers to establish positive language models for pupils in the classroom.
- Play time and lunch time assistants to receive training on methods to encourage social use of Welsh in a fun and positive manner.
- Adopt playground games to be held through the medium of Welsh.
- Provide leisure-time and sporting opportunities through the medium of Welsh.

7.3.5.5 A key dimension is pupils language background ratio. The Language Assessment notes “...that there are other issues such as extent of teachers success, proficiency of pupils and their families towards Welsh and community-based support impact on creating outcomes that promote and reinforce Welsh in Y Gader catchment-area schools”. It is mentioned that re-organization of education at 6 of the Gader catchment-area schools through the Lifelong model and the Area School model could promote the language through increasing the ratio of pupils who converse in Welsh at home.

7.3.5.6 The community-based impact of the lifelong model is less detrimental. This is due to the model maintaining the current situation as regards attendance on both sites separately.

7.4 Options for implementing the recommendation in Dolgellau town

7.4.1 The recommendation in Dolgellau town is to establish a Lifelong Learning Community.

7.4.2 Substantial research has been carried out as regards site options on the form of a variance of the lifelong model. Having assessed a number of sites – 10 in detail, the conclusion was reached that it was not possible to have one site for creating one Lifelong Learning Community. This was for reasons of the size of sites, location as regards the danger of flooding, access problems etc.

7.4.3 As noted option were considered for implementing the proposal either by;

- Establishing a Lifelong Learning model without capital investment
- Asking Gwynedd Council to consider investing approximately £1.95m to make improvements to the current site of the primary school so that it was possible to get the teaching buildings on one site,
or
- Asking Gwynedd Council to make a bid for approximately £4.5m for capital funding to the Twenty First Century Schools Programme to develop provision on the site of Ysgol y Gader for Key Stage 2

There are no major revenue savings expected from the plans in the town of Dolgellau.

7.4.4 i A multi-site Lifelong Learning Community can be established without any capital investment whatsoever.

7.4.4.1 This option means that a Lifelong Learning Community would be developed, but that there would be no capital improvements beyond that already programmed into the Council’s investment programme. It would be possible to proceed with changing the

status of the school and changing its leadership, governance and financial and even educational form with this option.

7.4.4.2 Local opinion expressed a desire for investment in the education provision in Dolgellau to improve the provision for the future. The Reorganisation Strategy notes the need to assure a sustainable provision of an acceptable standard from the reorganisation process, but capital funds limitations are noted.

7.4.5 ii. Develop the present site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau so that the learning buildings can be on one site.

7.4.5.1 During the catchment area discussions concerns became apparent about the fact that Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau would operate on two sites – the Foundation Phase site on one side of the road and Key Stage 2 on the other.

- Site split in two
- Traffic and parking problems
- Sub-standard hall and dinning area
- Sub-standard toilets
- Lack of space for teaching resource
- Lack of staff resources

7.4.5.2 As part of this option it would be possible to develop one of the sites of the primary school to accept all ages in the school, and to develop the other site as a car park and purpose built playing area. The new part would be built with the following benefits:

- Amalgamate on one site
- Traffic and parking improvements
- More play area
- New hall and dining area
- New toilets
- Space for teaching resource
- Space for staff resource

This option would mean that some rationalisation of resources would be possible. If one of the present sites at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau were not needed, this would save around £54,000 of backlog maintenance works, fire precaution and adaptation costs.

7.4.5.3 The estimated cost of such a development is approximately £1.95m. It is noted that Gwynedd Council could be asked to consider funding such a sum within its financial strategy and within a timetable set by the Council. There was local support for this option as a method of improving a situation which is difficult at the moment, and a way of improving education provision. This view was confirmed in the Scrutiny Committee. Further discussions and work will be needed as regards land ownership on the site.

7.4.6 iii. Develop the present site of Ysgol y Gader to receive Dolgellau Primary Stage 2 leaving the Foundation Phase at the present site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

- 7.4.6.1 Another suggestion made during the discussions was looking to see if it would be possible to develop the present site of Ysgol y Gader to receive Key Stage 2 which is at present on the site of the primary school on the other side of town.
- 7.4.6.2 The feature of this scheme would be being able to alleviate the concerns of the transitional phase from primary school to the secondary school which can be challenging for children and attainment generally worsens during this period. Of course it could be argued that this action would create a new transition phase between Key Stages 1 and 2.
- 7.4.6.3 This development would mean developing a building from new for Key Stage 2 at the present site of Ysgol Y Gader. Also parking improvements would be part of the scheme.
- 7.4.6.4 The estimated cost of this development is at least £4.5m. In order to fund this sum, the Council would need to be asked to make a bid to the Assembly for a contribution towards the sum. It cannot be certain when this could be done, or if the bid would be successful. It is noted that the earliest bid could not be submitted until at least 2016/17 and that the building would not be ready until at least 2018 at the earliest.
- 7.4.6.5 As it would not be possible to make a bid for funding for a while, investment and working with the school governors to formulate a scheme for the future would have to be delayed. There is some ambiguity because of the need to delay and circumstances changing in the meantime – not only in Dolgellau town, but on a County level and possibly in the requirements of national capital bids.
- 7.4.6.6 There was no support for this option locally for many reasons. Concerns were raised about the financing timetable, and the suggestions of splitting the primary age sector, and practical problems of developing the Gader site.

7.4.7 Assessing the implementation options

- 7.4.7.1 The two options have been considered and are assessed further in Appendix 4 with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems assessed, along with the views of the Area Review Panel noted.
- 7.4.7.2 The Catchment-area Review Panel was strongly opposed to the option of moving Key Stage 2 to the Gader site. There were concerns about the need to delay before submitting a bid for funding, there were also concerns about the benefits of this option as well as the split in the primary aged years. The Scrutiny Committee confirmed this view expressed locally and supported this opinion. The views expressed at the Board will be presented verbally.
- 7.4.7.3 It is proposed that Gwynedd Council should consider investing to develop the current Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site to ensure the improvements noted.

7.5 To Conclude

- 7.5.1 Therefore, the recommendation for schools in Dolgellau is to close Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader, establishing a Multi-Site Lifelong Learning Community for pupils aged 3-16 years. This would mean that the school would have one Headteacher, one governing body and one budget. The merits of this proposal is that an

educational focal –point would be established for 3-16 year olds within the catchment-area and provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing specializations and skills across the entire catchment-area.

- 7.5.2 It is also proposed that Gwynedd Council should consider investing to develop the current Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site to ensure the improvements noted. Further consideration will be given to the school legal status – to consider whether church or community status would be most appropriate. It is proposed that an assessment of the situation will be undertaken to gather the views on the legal status of the Lifelong Learning Community and to have further discussions with the Church of Wales representatives.
- 7.5.3 It is proposed that Full Council recommend delegating the decision on the best method to establish the Lifelong Learning Community to the Council Board to enable a period for further work on the matter. It is foreseen that it will be possible to report on this matter in the Autumn.

8. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS FOR THE CATCHMENT AREA

- 8.1 When developing and discussing options for schools reorganisation in the Gader catchment area, it is recommended that it is not possible to offer an answer for the whole catchment area at present. The principles of the Council’s Reorganisation Strategy acknowledges *“that the scale, nature and timetable of change will vary between catchment areas”*.
- 8.2 Eastern of the catchment area:
- 8.2.1 The situation of some of the schools in the east of the catchment area is vulnerable, but a recommendation is offered as a long term answer for that particular area. A way of providing education provision in a rural area was looked at in this part of the catchment area, but also a way of ensuring sustainability and support for a site that is geographically isolated and already provides education for a wide area. The proposal will create stability and ensure a future for the rural area school and enable community planning to happen around that school.
- 8.2.2 The new arrangement will ensure equal opportunity for the area’s children to receive an education in groups of reasonable size and to offer opportunities to work with and play with peers more regularly. The proposal gives the best balance between providing effective education in efficient establishments while offering parents a choice. No child will then have to travel more than 30 minutes to the primary school after implementing the proposals.
- 8.2.3 There is more staffing assurance in the area and an opportunity for teachers to share various specialisms and offer that specialism to more pupils. Classes will contain a smaller age range and so facilitate planning and teaching by the teachers.
- 8.2.4 It is estimated that implementing the proposal will mean a saving of £132,000.
- 8.2.5 Alternative options were considered for schools reorganisation in this part of the catchment area but it is deemed that these proposals offer the best balance between

maintaining education standards, ensure viable schools, reduce leadership difficulties, and maintain accessibility at schools.

8.2.6 Over the summer, further considerations will be given to technical matters as regards the main site of the Area School. It is foreseen that it will be possible to report on this matter early in the Autumn which would allow the statutory consultation to run in accordance with the timetable. The effect of the proposal in the catmnet-area on the choice of religious provision, following further work, could also be reported at this time.

8.3 Dolgellau town

8.3.1 In Dolgellau town the recommendation to develop a Lifelong Learning Community is an opportunity to ensure an educational hub for the whole Gader catchment area. It is essential for every school in the catchment area - in Dolgellau town and the surrounding rural area to have the opportunity to take advantages of the virtues of this model.

8.3.2 Options have been considered for implementing the Lifelong model. It was noted that one of these options involves asking the Council to make a bid for funding to the Assembly – this would mean a delay for some years before this could be done; while on the other hand it would be possible to ask the Council to consider a bid to fund the other option and set its own timetable. There was a clear opinion locally, and this was confirmed in the Scrutiny Committee. It is proposed that Gwynedd Council are asked to consider investing to develop the Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site.

8.3.3 It is also noted that further work on the legal status of the lifelong learning establishment will be undertaken to enable the Board to consider and decide on the best method to establish the Lifelong Learning Community which would reflect the results of this further work.

8.4 Western part of the catchment area

8.4.1 As already noted, further work needs to be done in the other part of the catchment area in order to try and obtain a robust answer for future sustainable education provision. Discussions in this area will be prioritised in the next part of the reorganisation scheme.

9. **NEXT STEPS**

9.1 It is intended to present these proposals to the attention of the Council Board (5 July 2011) and the Full Council (14 July 2011).

9.2 If the intention is approved by the Council, it will be necessary to hold a period of statutory consultation on the proposals regarding each individual school that faces closure or a change in status, in accordance with the Assembly Government's guidelines.

9.3 The period of statutory consultation will include:

- Constant discussions with schools when preparing the statutory consultation document
- Publishing the statutory consultation document in September / October

- Formal meetings with staff, governors and parents of the schools to discuss the statutory consultation document in September / October
- Period of not less than 4 weeks for receiving comments and written responses to the statutory consultation document
- At the end of the period of statutory consultation, a report will be presented for the Council's attention before the end of the year summarising the issues raised during the consultation as well as further comments. Then an opportunity will be given for the Council to decide whether to go ahead with the process of closing or changing the status of the schools.
- If there is a decision to go ahead, statutory notices will be published per school noting clearly the intentions for that school. The statutory notice will be circulated to the specific schools and other relevant establishments, copies will be placed in public places in the area and on the Council's website. No less than 1 month will be given for presenting formal written objections to the statutory notice.
- At the end of the period for presenting statutory notices, the matter will come back before the Council Board to confirm the intention. If the Board decides to go ahead with the stated proposal and that no formal objections have been received, the decision can be confirmed. If formal objections are received, the matter will be transferred to the Education Minister in the Welsh Assembly Government.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Subject to the decision on the proposed location of the school, undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requirements during Autumn Term 2011 on the aim to establish a multi-site Community 3-11 Area School, with one school site located on the current Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other either on the current location of Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain to open September 1st, 2013.
- 10.2 To establish the proposed Area School, undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with Section 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requirements during the Autumn 2011 term on the closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth, Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, Ysgol Brithdir and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd 31 of August 2013.
- 10.3 Recommend that Full Council delegates, to the Council Board, the decision on the site of the proposed Area School either on the present Ysgol Brithdir site or the present Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd site
- 10.4 Recommend to support consulting on the principle of establishing a multi-site 3-16 years Lifelong Learning Community (School) in Dolgellau town to open 1st of September 2013.
- 10.5 Recommend that Full Council delegates the decision on the legal status of the proposed 3-16 years Lifelong Learning Community (School) to the Council Board, to enable further work which includes an option of creating a Federal School together with establishing the appropriate statutory consultation process to move the process forward.

A Opinion of the Local Member:

B Opinion of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive

“As obvious from the report, very detailed work has occurred while preparing these proposals, which has by now received non-objection support in the Scrutiny Committee. The report enlarges upon the financial considerations that are attached to the decision and the Head of Finance has brought attention to this in his comments.”

2. Monitoring Officer:

The report has been the subject of legal advice. It should be noted that some key aspects concerning the legal status of the proposed Lifelong School as well as site availability and control need further consideration and resolution before it is possible to move forward to statutory consultation on the proposals.

3. Chief Finance Officer:

“The proposals of the relevant Working Group that have been put forward in parts 5 and 7 of the report is evidence of thorough work that has been completed by elected members, head teachers, teachers, governors, officers, and others, in order to move on with the process of reviewing the re-organisation of primary schools in the Y Gader catchment area. I confirm that appropriate input was given to the report by Finance officers and the presence of the relevant Finance Manager in meetings of the Y Gader Catchment Area Review Board in the period between May 2010 and May 2011, and the figures in the report are either the accurate actual costs or a reasonable estimate (where appropriate).

I note from the report that the ability to bid for Welsh Government finance fund to new school buildings is currently severely limited, but a reduction in the number of sites, by establishing an area school in the east and a lifelong learning school in the town of Dolgellau, will lead to financial savings as noted in the report.

The proposals that have been put forward should not be compromised, in order to ensure the viability of the proposed procedure. I support the recommendations that have been put forward and encourage relevant members to continue with immediate reviewing of school reorganisation.”

C Background Papers:

Please see Appendix 1 for a list of background documents.

APPENDIX 2

CABINET REPORT 16 July 2013

Cabinet member: Councillor Sian Gwenllian

Subject: Reorganisation of schools in the town of Dolgellau

Contact officer: Iwan Trefor Jones – Corporate Director

The resolution sought / purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet an update and explanation on the discussions regarding the reorganisation of schools in the Dolgellau catchment area. A resolution by the Cabinet is required on the following:

- i. Support for the outlined vision for the catchment area.
- ii. A decision by the Cabinet on holding a statutory consultation on the best method of providing education in the town of Dolgellau into the future; and considerations regarding the technical matter of the legal category for the model put forward.
- iii. A resolution on the nature of the investment to coincide with the development in the town of Dolgellau.

Views of the local members

Any comments will be presented in the meeting.

I. BACKGROUND

1.1. In accordance with the Strategy *Primary Education of the Best Quality for the Children of Gwynedd* discussions have been ongoing since 2010 on the provision of education in Y Gader catchment area, Dolgellau.

1.2. In this report, the following is presented:

- Background of the discussions and work thus far in the Gader area and Dolgellau specifically, and the case for change (Parts 1 and 2)
- The outline vision for the education provision in the area (Part 3)
- The Cabinet are asked to consider 3 issues relating to future education provision in the town of Dolgellau:
 - i. Consider the options for town of Dolgellau. Proposed favoured option for statutory consultation (Parts 4 and 5),
 - ii. Technical and legal options and considerations on how to realise the favoured option (Parts 6, 7 and 8)
 - iii. Possible investment options (Part 9)

1.3. A report was submitted to the Full Council on July 14, 2011 regarding the Reorganisation of Schools within Y Gader catchment area. The report is important in the context of this presentation and a copy can be found at Appendix I (and copies of other relevant reports are available on the Council website). At that meeting, the Council resolved as follows:

- i. Subject to a decision on the proposed location of the school, to undertake a statutory consultation process in accordance with Section 28 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 during the Autumn term 2011 on the proposal to establish a multi site Area Community School for 3-11 year olds with one site on the existing site of Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy and the other on the existing site of either Ysgol Brithdir or Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Rhydymain, to open on 1 September 2013.
- ii. In order to establish the proposed Area School, to undertake a process of statutory consultation in accordance with the requirements of Section 28 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 during the Autumn term 2011 on the closure of Ysgol Llanfachreth, Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, Ysgol Brithdir and Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd on 31 August 2013.
- iii. Deputise to the Council Board, following consultation with local member(s), the decision regarding the location of the proposed Area School for consultation on either the existing site at Ysgol Brithdir or the existing site at Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd.
- iv. Support the proposal for consultation based on the principle of establishing a multi site All Through Community (School) for 3 – 16 year olds in the town of Dolgellau to open on 1 September 2013.
- v. Delegate the decision on the legal category of the proposed multi site All Through Community (School) for 3 – 16 year olds to the Council Board in order to allow further work to be carried out, including discussions on the options of closing and reopening the schools or the establishment of a Federal School as well as establishing the appropriate statutory consultation process for moving the proposal forward.

1.4. Statutory consultation took place on the proposal to implement the plan in the Brithdir and Dinas Mawddwy area and a report was submitted to the Full Council in December 2011. Because objections had been received the matter was transferred to the Minister for Education at the Welsh Government for a final decision. In November 2012 a decision in favour of the proposal was announced.

1.5. In the meantime, detailed work was carried out on the site at Ysgol Brithdir and substantial problems and obstacles were encountered in terms of developing the Brithdir site - these involved matters appertaining to planning and funding. Since the consultation period and as the designs were being developed, it became obvious that planning permission would be almost impossible to obtain. It was noted that the land level would have to be substantially lowered before construction could commence and since the area was very rocky it involve considerable cost. During the same period it became apparent that the technical requirements imposed by the Government had changed and that the extension would have to provide more space. As a result, what is now being considered is different to what was discussed during the consultation, the cost would be higher and also there would be a strong risk that planning permission would not be obtained. The concern is that the additional money would be spent to overcome the mechanical problems on the site rather than on educational resources for the pupils of the area.

1.6. As a result the conclusion reached was that the original proposal will not be implemented and that another plan will have to be developed.

- 1.7. Despite the fact that there has been a consensus from the start regarding the principle of consultation on establishing an All Through School in the town – considerable delay has occurred in moving the plan forward due to the technical problem regarding the legal category of the establishment. On account of this delay, therefore, the matter is put before the Cabinet to be resolved.
- 1.8. A review of the plans for the catchment area has been held, and a meeting of local representatives – Local Members, Head Teachers, Chairpersons, Governors and Church representatives – took place on 9th May 2013, to explain the reasons for the delay and to discuss the best way forward. Two obvious steps are being taken to move the matter forward in the area:
- i. This report is being submitted in order to explain the vision and to ask permission from the Cabinet to move towards consultation in the town of Dolgellau
 - ii. Substantial background work is being undertaken on the situation in the rural areas within Y Gader catchment area – aimed at holding further discussions with local representatives early in the new term following the break for the summer holidays.
- 1.9. Another important context, of course, is the size of the capital funding envelope available for this catchment area. Since the start of discussions in this catchment area, a programme of capital investment from the Welsh Government was adopted under the banner of the Twenty First Century Schools Programme. Through that programme, the Council has an envelope of £3.6 million for the entire catchment area. Careful consideration will have to be given regarding the best use of that money for this catchment area and to assess any additional requirements to be funded.

2. THE SITUATION IN THE TOWN OF DOLGELLAU AND THE WIDER CATCHMENT AREA

- 2.1. Detailed information on the schools of the area can be seen in Appendix 2 – Information on the Catchment Area.
- 2.2. The case for any change within the catchment area has already been made at a number of forums. In view of the fact that considerable discussions have already been held locally and that this matter has been discussed at democratic forums, over time a consensus has been developed that change is needed. The case for change is within the wider context of the catchment area.
- 2.3. Therefore, after considering specific factors, the case for change within the town of Dolgellau where Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd y Gader are located can be summarised as follows:
- 2.4. Numbers and projections
- 2.4.1. There has been a reduction of 42% in the number of primary school pupils in the town of Dolgellau during the last 40 years.

Niferoedd [Meithrin – Bl.6 3-11 Oed] Number [Nursery - Yr.6 Age 3-11]											
Ysgol School	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2012	1975-2012 twf / growth	1975-2012 % twf / growth
Cynradd Dolgellau	259	230	230	197	221	180	165	149	150	-109	-42%

2.5. Projected numbers for Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader show a reduction in numbers to around 304 pupils by September 2015.

Rhagamcan Medi 2013 September Projection						
Blwyddyn Ysgol / School Year						
YSGOL / SCHOOL	7	8	9	10	11	Cyfanswm / Total
Y Gader	59	68	76	97	69	369

Rhagamcan Medi 2014 September Projection						
Blwyddyn Ysgol / School Year						
YSGOL / SCHOOL	7	8	9	10	11	Cyfanswm / Total
Y Gader	43	59	68	76	97	343

Rhagamcan Medi 2015 September Projection						
Blwyddyn Ysgol / School Year						
YSGOL / SCHOOL	7	8	9	10	11	Cyfanswm / Total
Y Gader	58	43	59	68	76	304

2.6. Standards of education

2.6.1. According to recent Estyn reports – the standard of education at presence is as follows;

Ysgol Y Gader	
Key question	December 2010 Result *
1. How good are outcomes?	Good
2. How good is provision?	Good
3. How good are leadership and management?	Good
* Grades are from Excellent to Unsatisfactory	

Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau	
Key question	June 2009
1. How well do learners achieve?	Grade 2
2. How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	Grade 2
3. How well do the leadership experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	Grade 2
4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	Grade 3
5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?	Grade 3
6. How well do learners and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	Grade 2
7. How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	Grade 3
Grade 1 – Outstanding features / Grade 5 – Many shortcomings	

2.6.2. The decrease in pupil numbers in the catchment is a cause of concern – with regards some of the primary schools of the area, and also the possible effects on the secondary sector. With fewer pupils it becomes more and more difficult to provide the curriculum and standards.

2.6.3. Within such scenarios, methods of strengthening elements of collaboration and ensuring an effective future system for educational provision requires consideration. Best methods are considered of ensuring carefully planned use of staff skills to shoulder cross-sector responsibility for specific curricular fields as a means to raise standards, and reduce use of staff who work outside their principal area of expertise.

2.7. Pupil movements

2.7.1. 30% of the pupils living in Dolgellau move out of the town for their primary education. Over 200 primary pupils live in the town of Dolgellau. 140 of those pupils attend Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

2.8. Surplus places

2.8.1. There are over 60 surplus places in Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau (22%)

2.8.2. There are over 100 surplus places in Ysgol Uwchradd y Gader (30%)

2.9. Property Matters

2.9.1. Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau is on two sites – with severe traffic and parking problems. There is around £260,000 maintenance backlog cost on the entire site buildings.

2.10. The situation within the town cannot be understood without looking at the wider context within the catchment area. In the remainder of the catchment area, there are 8 primary schools. Here is the picture for the remainder of the catchment area – in brief it is as follows:

2.10.1. Surplus places – there are over 41% of surplus places in the rural schools – this is equivalent to more than 160 surplus places. It has to be noted also that some schools have exceeded their capacity.

2.10.2. Financial allocation and safety net – The average cost per pupil at the rural schools in the catchment area is £6942 which is much higher than the County average of £3838 throughout Gwynedd. The rural schools receive £160,000 of additional funding each year in the form of a safety net.

2.10.3. Leadership within the schools – Head Teachers and staff at the individual schools make a huge effort to maintain standards. It is very difficult in some cases where Head Teachers are responsible for more than one school and other schools are under temporary arrangements.

2.10.4. Pupil movements – This is an obvious feature of this catchment area. There is a large movement of pupils between the schools' catchment areas. It was noted earlier that pupils move from the town of Dolgellau to the rural schools for their education, but there is also movement between rural schools. One example is the fact that 32 pupils attend Ysgol Y Clogau – but only 8 of those pupils live in Clogau. 12 come from Dolgellau and a number from Barmouth and other places.

2.11. When discussing the case for change, consideration has to be given also to opportunities for developing and establishing a new model for this type of situation:

- Opportunities for strengthening the education provision in view of the reduction in pupil numbers
- Opportunities for stabilising the pupil movement which is taking place within the catchment area
- Opportunities for improving collaboration between the schools and ensuring that there is co-ordinated planning so that work is not duplicated and pupil transition from one phase to another is smooth
- Opportunities for ensuring that good practice and expertise is shared
- Opportunities for considering more effective ways of running an establishment.

3. THE VISION

3.1. As stated above, it has to be remembered that the development of this discussion on a review for reorganisation within Y Gader catchment area has to take place in the context of a number of discussions which have already taken place. During these discussions, what could be summarised as an outline vision for the catchment area has been developed. This vision does not presume any specific plans which could develop as a result of the consultations which will have to be undertaken.

3.2. The essence of the outline vision would be to aim towards attaining the following results:

- Fair experiences for children, maintaining educational standards and equal opportunity
- Wider sharing of expertise between schools and sectors
- More stability within the area
- More opportunities in terms of professional development and an opportunity to improve leadership
- Co-ordinated public services

3.3. Therefore, there is a vision to develop a central education establishment in the town of Dolgellau, in the context of other developments in the town by the College (the Llandrillo Menai Group), which is a move towards developing Dolgellau as an Education Centre.

- 3.4. There is a wish to ensure a strong and sustainable education provision, across all the sectors throughout the whole catchment area. This will entail discussions on rationalising the number, nature and category of the schools in some parts of the catchment area. If the vision is fully implemented it would be possible to strengthen the education provision in Y Gader catchment area by setting the foundations for co-operation, joint planning and joint development in the future.
- 3.5. No decision has as yet been reached regarding the details or the shape of the provision in each part of the catchment area since this will be the subject of statutory consultation processes and those processes cannot be presumed.

4. MODEL OPTIONS

4.1. During the initial discussions held approximately eighteen months ago in the catchment area, a full list of possible options for the reorganisation of schools in the catchment area was prepared and the list included:

- Taking no action
- Developing models of collaboration
- Models of rural area schools
- Learning Community or All Through School.

4.2. The information considered is included in the background papers for this report.

4.3. The purpose of this report is to try and develop the process for Dolgellau town. In terms of possible options, the following could be considered for the provision of education in the town of Dolgellau;

- 1) Take no action
- 2) Centralise the education provision for the catchment area on one campus in the town of Dolgellau
- 3) Establish an All Through School in the town of Dolgellau.

4.4. No change

4.4.1. It has already been noted that there are matters which require attention across the catchment area and in the town of Dolgellau. There is instability in terms of primary pupil movement out of the town of Dolgellau. Also, there are over 100 surplus places in the secondary school. It is obvious that ensuring a firm foundation for a strong education provision in the catchment area is essential and that taking no action is not the best option for ensuring positive development for education provision in the catchment area.

4.5. Centralise the education provision for the catchment area on one campus in the town of Dolgellau

4.5.1. Some features of this kind of model would be to develop and centralise the education provision in the town of Dolgellau. A substantial capital

investment would be needed in order to implement such a plan. Opportunities which the model would provide were also noted:

- Alleviate the effect of any decline in standards during the transition period between the primary and secondary sectors,
- Opportunity to utilise expertise in different areas across the sectors,
- Opportunity to share good practice across the establishment,
- Opportunity to centralise administrative and service support for the school e.g. refectory.

4.5.2. During the course of the initial discussions, considerable research work was carried out into the choice of sites for developing one lifelong campus in Dolgellau. Having assessed a number of sites, the conclusion was reached that it would not be possible to develop one All Through campus. This was due to reasons relating to the size of the campus, location in terms of flood danger, access problems and so forth. There has been no change in this situation.

4.5.3. When this model was discussed at local level at Catchment Area Panel meetings, there wasn't much support to the model because it would centralise much of the education provision – if not all of it – in the town of Dolgellau. As part of the vision – there is aspiration to sustain rural education in parts of the area. Further, opinions were voiced regarding the implications of travelling in such a rural area and also implications for the language and the local communities. The absence of a site for such a development means that we cannot proceed with this any further.

4.6. Establish an All Through School in the town of Dolgellau.

4.6.1. Another option considered was the development of a All Through School in the town of Dolgellau. As part of a wider plan, other options will have to be developed in order to stabilise the provision in the rural areas. In terms of a model – this is the model which has developed most successfully from the discussions over a period of time and this is the favoured model for providing education in the town of Dolgellau into the future.

5. THE OPTION FAVOURED FOR CONSULTATION – WHY RECOMMEND AN ALL THROUGH SCHOOL IN THE TOWN OF DOLGELLAU?

5.1. During reorganisation discussions in the County, the All Through model has developed as a possible option in some situations. By now, it is seen as appropriate to include the senior sector of the catchment area in the discussions when considering proposals for primary education. This is seconded by the

strategic document “Towards 2025”, which states clearly that the present system will have to change:

“It is of key importance that every effort be made to utilise resources in the best possible way within the education and training system – human, technical, constructive or financial – for the benefit of children and young people” .

- 5.2. Issues in the Government circular and a new proposed code were considered when scrutinizing the options that would be conducive to the best circumstances to ensure a firm future to maintain and improve quality of education in the town of Dolgellau, and also how best in such a situation, to improve the effectiveness of the educational provision.
- 5.3. During the initial discussions of the Catchment Area Review Panel, a general wish was expressed for looking at this model as an option for consultation.
- 5.4. The Review Panel acknowledged that establishing a All Through School would strengthen the viability of the secondary sector in the catchment area and would also offer practical and strategic opportunities for the primary sector in the town and the wider catchment area. It was noted that changes in the numbers at Ysgol Y Gader were a cause for concern and that projections noted a reduction of around 20% in the next few years (from 380 in 2013 to 304 in 2015). As stated above, the option was assessed in several forms including developing a provision for all the 3 - 16 year old children of the catchment area on one campus and also establishing the model on a multi site campus. But as already stated, the absence of a suitable site means that we cannot move ahead with this option.

5.5. Features of the All Through School

- 5.5.1. There is evidence in some areas of Britain that establishing an All Through system is **a means of maintaining sustainable focus for rural communities**. It is a **means of protecting rural education provision** in the face of higher maintenance costs where there are fewer pupils through co-ordinated schools organisation.
- 5.5.2. An All Through School can offer **curricular advantages** by creating a common ethos and similar expectations for pupils, staff and parents by maintaining flexibility in planning and implementing the curriculum. Research shows that the transitional phase from the primary to the secondary school is challenging for children and that attainment in general suffers during that period. By creating a closer relationship between the primary and secondary sectors, the uncertainty for the children during this period could be reduced.
- 5.5.3. **An All Through School will allow the establishment of a new and co-ordinated managerial structure** with definite responsibilities throughout the school for specific curricular aspects such as literacy, numeracy and ICT development. The size of the staff team as one unit will be considerably bigger and this in turn will mean a wider range of expertise and more efficient use of the strengths offered by individuals within the team. Careful planned use will be made of staff skills to shoulder cross-sector responsibilities for specific curricular fields and this

will be a means of raising standards and reducing the level of use made of staff working outside their main responsibility area.

- 5.5.4. A **catchment area curricular partnership plan** between the primary and secondary sectors in the town of Dolgellau and all the other primary schools within the catchment area would ensure equal opportunity for primary age pupils within the catchment area. Through careful collaboration it can be ensured that every key Stage 2 pupil within the catchment area has access to the resources and experiences offered at the All Through school, including aspects such as modern language teaching, use of modern science, technology and sport resources. There will be more formal managerial collaboration at catchment area level and this will allow curricular aspects such as literacy and assessment as well as managerial aspects such as maintenance, health and safety, appraisal and performance management plans to be included within one co-ordinated catchment area system. Background work on developing the concept of an All Through establishment is being carried out by a group of Primary and Secondary Head Teachers within a catchment area context.
- 5.5.5. **The welfare of pupils** can be supported by reducing the stress of moving from the familiar system of the primary sector and into the secondary sector. A support system suitable for the age and needs of the pupils and a long term relationship between parents and staff will be established.
- 5.5.6. Evidence also shows that there is a closer relationship between the school and the parents, and that a closer community is established. Research work in Scotland revealed that "...the strong relationship with parents often has its roots in connections established during the early years of the children's education" (Learning Together HMle (Scotland), 2010). Such a relationship can be nothing but healthy for the pupils – and indeed for the community as a whole.
- 5.5.7. Experiences in other areas show that there is an **opportunity to support families** by providing integrated services to include health services, child care, adult training and a range of other services.
- 5.5.8. A comprehensive language policy could be developed through the primary and secondary sectors and could include community activities and adult education. This is especially true of Dolgellau considering the results of the language assessment carried out on this model.
- 5.5.9. With regard to school management, opportunities will emerge for amalgamating governing bodies and budgets. This could be carried out formally, and it would offer scope for making managerial savings and diversifying resources according to need.
- 5.5.10. As regards the school's management, opportunities are provided to merge governing bodies and opportunities as regards **financial matters**. Scope would be provided to make management savings and divert resources. Such a model would provide limited opportunities to make revenue savings through the allocation formula. Opportunities would be provided

to make better use of the allocation received through obtaining a cross sector budget overview, and be able to direct resources in accordance with the demand. There may be further opportunities for minor savings as part of any capital scheme that would ultimately form part of the scheme – but these amounts would probably be small.

5.6. Centrepiece of education within the catchment area

5.6.1. Below are noted the main recommendations for the lifelong model. Please note that these are recommendations and that some managerial matters would in the long run be in the hands of the school and governors.

- The establishment will include primary and secondary provision and possibly nursery provision as well.
- One governing body,
- One leader for the entire establishment, with assistant sector heads to take responsibility for the primary and secondary sectors and any other services provided.
- Developing a catchment-area coherent curricular partnership scheme between the primary and secondary establishment in the town of Dolgellau and all the other primary schools in the catchment-area would provide an equal opportunity for primary school age pupils in the catchment-area.
- More formal management collaboration at a catchment-area level would allow curricular aspects such as literacy and assessment as well as management aspects to be included in a coherent catchment-area system.
- In the second management rank a system of co-ordinators could be established with responsibilities for aspects such as Pastoral Care, Assessment or Community Activities across the establishment.
- The school would be funded in such a way that resources could be diverted according to local need and priority.

5.6.2. The All Through School would be expected to cover the whole catchment area by working closely with all the primary schools within the catchment area so that they could benefit from any developments in the town and from the expertise offered by all staff members. Therefore, with regard to the vision it is noted that it is a vision to develop a central education centre in the town of Dolgellau in the context of other developments.

5.7. Assessments of Linguistic, Community and Equality Effects

5.7.1. In accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government, assessments were commissioned on the linguistic, community and equality effects of the models considered as part of the initial discussions.

5.7.2. The Linguistic Assessment Report notes the background and that the favoured model in truth retains the status quo and offers possible opportunities for developing the situation of the Welsh language.

5.7.3. The assessment notes that the percentage of pupils coming from non-Welsh homes is higher than the percentage coming from Welsh homes, in

the primary and secondary school at present. It also notes that social and academic use is made of the English language. Widespread use of English as a social medium at Primary level and to various degrees at Secondary level is also noted. The findings of the assessment show that the bilingual skills of primary pupils is good although pupils' linguistic proficiency varies – it notes insufficient use of the Welsh language. With regard to the situation of the Welsh language in the ward/community, the assessment notes the situation as 'fair' only.

- 5.7.4. Since the impact assessment notes that the model would continue with the present situation with very little impact, we recommend measures to strengthen the Welsh language by establishing the model, and possibly offering opportunities to challenge the situation which exists at present and improve it by establishing the All Through School model.
- Thorough pastoral care and management in order to maintain and strengthen the current situation.
 - Encourage a provision to immerse pre school age children in the Welsh language.
 - Adopt a school policy whereby teaching and auxiliary staff start and conduct conversations with pupils in Welsh in order to establish and maintain a Welsh atmosphere and encourage everyday use of the language among the pupils.
 - School Development Plan and work plans to allow teachers to set positive language models for the pupils in the classroom.
 - Playtime and dinnertime assistants to receive training on ways to encourage social use of the Welsh language in a friendly and positive manner.
 - Adopt playground games played through the medium of Welsh..
 - Hold sports and leisure opportunities through the medium of Welsh
- 5.7.5. The conclusion of the community impact assessment on the lifelong model is that there will be no impact since the model – in terms of the presence of education provision on two sites in Dolgellau - would continue with the existing situation. A preliminary equality impact assessment has been conducted. The equality assessment identifies the current situation and shows that policies and procedures are in place that would ensure that the proposal considered is compatible with and equal rights. Having considered the relevant factors, its concluded that guarantee equal opportunities are promoted positively as a result of the proposal and that measures are in place to ensure that no unlawful discrimination or harassment. Arrangements are in place to monitor and review the situation. The equality assessment will be completed once the category and faith element of the new establishment is decided.

6. METHODS OF ESTABLISHING THE ALL THROUGH SCHOOL AND ITS LEGAL CATEGORY

6.1. In this part of the report, the Cabinet is reminded of the possible options in terms of moving ahead and establishing the All Through School in Dolgellau and the possible implications of some of those options for the category of the establishments in the long term. Also, we report on the results of the discussions held and further developments made and outline definite steps regarding the best way forward.

6.2. The technical matter of the 'legal' category and possible religious designation of any new establishment for the provision of education in Dolgellau will need to be considered as part of any consultation. The Primary school at Dolgellau is a Voluntary Controlled School category - a Church in Wales school, and has a designated religious character. The legal category of Ysgol Y Gader is 'Community School' which does not have a designated religious character. The designated religious character of a Voluntary Controlled school is important in terms of

- The character of the school
- Membership of the governing body
- Site ownership

6.3. As defined by the Maintained Schools Wales Regulations 2005, schools in Gwynedd are categorised as Community, Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled. Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled schools may also be designated as having a religious character i.e. a church school. The following table shows the number of Gwynedd's primary schools in each category, and the number of pupils in those schools.

CATEGORY	PRIMARY		SECONDARY	
	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils
Community	88	7,984	14	7,396
Voluntary Controlled (VC)	11	1,493	0	0
Voluntary Aided (VA)	3	243	0	0
Total	102	9,720	14	7,396

6.4. With regard to the situation in Dolgellau, possible options need to be considered regarding the means of establishing the All Through School and the implications of that mechanism for the 'legal' category and religious designation options of the proposed establishment in the town:

- i. Establish a federal body between the Primary and Secondary sectors which would retain the existing legal category (the category of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau is 'Church in Wales' School (Voluntary Controlled School), and the category of Ysgol Y Gader is 'Community School').

- ii. Close both the Primary School and the Secondary School, reopen and amalgamate them and give the establishment the legal category of 'Community School'.
- iii. Close both the Primary School and the Secondary School, reopen and amalgamate them and give the establishment the legal category of Voluntary Assisted Controlled School (Church in Wales)

6.5. The different features of the each legal category are given in the table below:

	<u>Community Category</u>	<u>Church Category</u> (Voluntary Controlled School with religious designation)
Ownership of land and school buildings	Local Authority The Local Authority is the owner/tenant of the school site and buildings	The Local Authority is the tenant of the religious body (usually a Diocese)
Funding responsibility	Local Authority	Local Authority
Staff employment and staff appointment	Local Authority No priority can be given on the basis of religion.	Local Authority When appointing the Headteacher, candidates can be asked if they will support and develop the Christian character of the school
Responsibility for auxiliary services	Local Authority	Local Authority
Admissions policy	Local Authority	Local Authority
Governing Body constitution	In accordance with Schools Organisation Regulations (Wales) 2005 Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, parent representation, Education authority, Teachers, Staff, Community and Community Council.	In accordance with Maintained Schools Wales Regulations 2005 parent representation, Education authority, Teachers, Staff, Community and Community Council and Governors appointed by the Church.
Joint worship	Meet legal requirements for daily worship. The act of worship to be of Christian nature either totally or mainly.	Meet legal requirements for daily worship. The act of worship to be of Christian nature either totally or mainly, and may include elements of the religious body's worship
Curriculum and Religious Education	Religious Education to be part of the school curriculum. Religious education syllabus agreed upon locally through SACRE	Religious Education to be at the Part of the school curriculum. Christian Values will also be a valuable part of the school's curriculum, and an essential part of school life Religious education syllabus agreed upon locally through SACRE Following a consultation and democratic vote, parents/carers can ask that the school uses the religious body's RE curriculum instead.
Inspections	Estyn inspections only.	Estyn inspections . The governors and religious body are responsible under Section 50 of the 2005 Education Act for an inspection of the school's worship and Christian character

7. OPTION OF CREATING A FEDERAL ESTABLISHMENT

- 7.1. There is an option of creating a federal establishment between the primary and the secondary schools.
- 7.2. This method is dependent on voluntary agreement between the governing bodies of the two existing schools, amalgamating the two institutions and creating one federal governing body. This would have to be undertaken in accordance with the legal requirements of the Schools Federation Regulations. In establishing a federal model, the current legal category of both establishments could be retained.
- 7.3. Some features of a federal model are that:
- It is possible to make better strategic use of resources across the federal establishment.
 - It would be possible to provide more opportunities for pupils by sharing resources between schools.
 - It would be possible for staff to work in more than one school in order to encourage new skills and experiences.
 - The policies and systems would be consistent and based on good practice.
 - Governors' understanding of the wider context would be increased and there would be an opportunity for sharing the expertise and skills of a wider range of governors.
 - It would be possible to share resources, avoid duplication and ensure savings.
- 7.4. A federation of schools means that the schools can retain their unique identity and remain within their communities. Also, federal schools can retain their delegated budgets, their own name, character, school uniform and ethos, but they can also consider the advantages of sharing resources such as equipment, IT, staff and other assets. The new single governing body created by the federation would supervise and have equal responsibility for every school within the federation.
- 7.5. According to the existing Schools Federation Regulations, federation is dependent on voluntary agreement between the governing bodies of the two schools, their amalgamation, the creation of one federal governing body and a strict procedure which must be followed in order to establish the federation.
- 7.6. The first part of the process of creating a federal establishment would be for the governing bodies to discuss a report on the proposal. The two bodies could publish joint proposals for creating the federation. If there is agreement to move ahead, then a consultation process must be followed.
- 7.7. The proposal would have to offer specific information involving: the names of the schools in question and confirmation that the governing bodies have decided to federate; the proposed size and constitution of the governing body for the federate; arrangements for staffing the schools within the federation; the "federation date" and the consultation period (not less than six weeks). The regulations stipulate the consultation requirements but the process also involves

the school stakeholders including the Education Authority, governors, staff and parents.

- 7.8. The governing bodies which propose federation would have to jointly discuss any objections to the consultation when they are in the process of reaching a formal decision. Then the Council would have to complete the legal procedure of dismissing the governing bodies of the schools joining the federation and forming a new governing instrument to incorporate the federation governing body which would come into force on the federation date. In creating a federation the federal Governing Body would have corporate category the same as a single governing body. All the land, property, rights and obligations of the schools would be transferred to the federal governing body.
- 7.9. The Cabinet should be aware that it is possible to abolish the federation, or for a single school to exempt itself from the arrangement at any time. This would be subject to instigation by a threshold number of governors, parents or staff, or the authority, or trustees of any relevant established body connected with the school. e.g. the Church. Consultation would have to be undertaken with the customary range of bodies with interest in the proposal: relevant authorities, head teachers, staff, trusts or established bodies connected with the federation, and every parent and pupil. Following the consultation the federal governing body would have to consider the application and decide to either accept it, refuse it or dissolve the entire federation.
- 7.10. Although a federation can be dissolved it is not likely to be straightforward and in reality it is a major step to take. In establishing a federation of this type detailed work would have been undertaken and an agreement reached between the schools on a number of aspects which could strengthen the arrangements.
- 7.11. During the past few months much discussion has been held on obtaining a full agreement between the governing bodies of Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader and Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau. But in this instance the two bodies did not reach an agreement in accordance with the regulations operational at the present time.
- 7.12. Up to the present time, under the regulations in force, the governing bodies needed to volunteer and lead the process of establishing a federation. A series of discussions was held during the past year but to date it has not been possible to move the process forward.
- 7.13. The Education Act of 2010 provides a method of forming Regulations which will allow an Education Authority to lead and create a federal relationship between schools. At the moment, the Government have not brought this provision into effect. In the absence of this, and further information about relevant Regulations that would be needed, no further guidance can be given.
- 7.14. **Considering the Federal Option:**
 - 7.14.1. Under the existing regulations, obtaining the agreement of the governing bodies is essential to the creation of a federal establishment. At present, as a result of initial discussions with representatives from the bodies, it is uncertain whether there would be support for the principle of agreeing to

this arrangement due to concerns over the nature and strength of the federal body. Much would depend on the goodwill of the federal body to work towards a strong All Through establishment, but there are also concerns over the fact that a federal body would not fully combine the entities of the establishments, as compared to what would happen by closing and reopening the schools as a new entity. Also, due to the nature of the federal model, there is some uncertainty over the ability to separate and dissolve the federation at any point in time according to the regulations as they stand at present.

7.14.2. Establishing a federal body would be a means of ensuring the existing legal category of the two schools. But, without the full support of the governing bodies, there is no way that the Authority can force this arrangement under the current regulations. It has been noted that new regulations are to be issued but the details have not as yet been published and they will not come into force for some months yet. Subject to the details of those regulations, the Council, with support from the Church, could recommend federation of the two governing bodies. At the moment this is not an option. However this is not an option at present. It was assessed whether this is the best mode of establishing a structure for efficient management in order to strengthen provision in the town of Dolgellau, in comparison to other options.

8. OPTION OF CLOSING AND REOPENING

8.1. If an All Through School was established by closing the two existing schools and reopening them as one school, the process of closing and reopening would be subject to a statutory consultation in accordance with the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 which comes into effect in October.

8.2. By establishing the school through closure of the existing establishments and reopening them, a legal category and possible religious designation for the new establishment needs to be chosen:

- Community category, or
- Church category
 - Voluntary Controlled (with a designated religious character)
- Voluntary Aided (with a designated religious character)

8.3. At present the category held by Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau is Church in Wales School (Controlled Voluntary School with a designated religious character.) and the category held by Ysgol Y Gader is Community School which does not have a designated religious character. The Voluntary Aided School category was not discussed in detail as they are not categorizing either schools in the catchment at present. Setting this category involves some further changes, for example; access control to school and transferring land ownership to the Church.

8.4. Considerations

8.4.1. Therefore there are new options and forces that could possibly be considered in order to move ahead and establish the All Through School

in Dolgellau. But there are also other important factors which should be fully considered before a final decision is taken on the matter.

8.5. Legal Requirements

- 8.5.1. When discussing the technical details of the matter, full consideration should be given to the guidelines issued by the Welsh Government. The Cabinet should be aware that there is a new draft Code, School Organisation Code which comes into effect in October and gives specific guidance on the reorganisation of schools processes is reviewed. This means that any statutory consultation would have to be implemented under the new Code.
- 8.5.2. In the case of schools with a specific character or category, the need for such a provision in the area has to be assessed and evidence provided as support. The situation must be dealt with appropriately and consideration must be given to the local needs and wishes for education of a specific nature. The Code also notes, because of the Voluntary Controlled Category of the Dolgellau Primary, a requirement to hold a consultation with the Church before finally deciding to move ahead with the statutory consultation process. This requirement is reflected in the recommendations.

8.6. Church Provision

- 8.6.1. As already noted, with the option of closing and reopening the existing establishments in order to create the new establishment, a decision has to be reached on the legal category for the new establishment. The features of each category – Church or Community – are given above (see Table in section 6.5).
- 8.6.2. An assessment would have to be made of the effect that the choice of provision available under the various options would have.
- 8.6.3. Discussions with representatives from the Church in Wales in the Bangor diocese have revealed concern if there was no Church provision in the area. Cabinet members should be aware that the Church is a core consultee in this situation.
- 8.6.4. If the All Through School in Dolgellau were to be a Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled school, this would mean that Y Gader Secondary sector would be the first in Gwynedd with this category. There are other Church secondary schools in other Counties, for example in Wrexham, and there are three Church in Wales secondary schools in South Wales.
- 8.6.5. There are examples of Church All Through Schools in England. There is currently a consultation underway at St. Bridget's Roman Catholic 3-16 School in Denbighshire, where there are proposals are being consulted upon which would see the school become a joint Church in Wales-Roman Catholic 3-16 school.

8.6.6. The features and virtues of Education in schools with a religious character designation are summarised in a document issued lately by the Government – ‘Faith in Education’ (www.cymru.gov.uk). The document outlines the features of schools with religious nature and notes the ethos and character of these schools.

8.7. Context of other proposals in this catchment area and others.

8.7.1. Of course, this matter must be considered in the context of other discussions held on the subject of schools reorganisation. A proposal for part of this catchment area is now under review. But, in view of the vulnerability of some rural schools in the area, we must remember the outline vision for the catchment area, namely to ensure sustainability and a future for education in the rural areas and to strengthen the urban provision as the core education provider within the area.

8.7.2. We must also bear in mind the fact that a decision regarding the future of the only other Church School within the catchment area, Ysgol Machreth in Llanfachreth, has been taken (but at present is part of a review), and that the situation at that school is very vulnerable in terms of numbers. Therefore, we must combine that with other considerations for a choice of provision – if there is a need for a choice in the area.

8.7.3. It must also be remembered that Ysgol Beuno Sant, which has a designated religious character, in the Berwyn catchment area has been part of the reorganisation discussion in Bala. Attached to the initial discussions in the area – the possibility of the “Church” category being dissolved as part of the development of the Lifelong Learning Campus. The Dioceses of Bangor and St. Asaph (who cover Bala) are working together, and see no reason why Church in Wales provision cannot be maintained in the Bala/Dolgellau part of Meirionnydd. This situation must also be remembered as part of the context.

8.7.4. Going forward with these issues along the way, the broader context of the provision of education and the Church category in the area must be considered.

8.7.5. In the Gader catchment, the majority of the schools have a “community” category of a non designated religious character. The largest primary school in the catchment (with 40% of primary pupils) has a “Church in Wales” voluntary controlled category and a designated religious character. Therefore, consideration must be given on the what the views of the parents and children of Y Gader will be in regard to the option of possibly attending the secondary sector with a designated religious character. Indeed, it is assumed that wider stakeholders teaching work will take place in the catchment concerning what this could mean, and seek their views on the matter.

8.8. Context of wider discussions on the future of education provision in Meirionnydd

8.8.1. Cabinet members will be aware of the wider discussion which looks more broadly at the future of education provision in Meirionnydd – including the secondary sector in the face of a substantial reduction in pupil numbers etc. The implications of this specific matter in Dolgellau for the wider transitional discussion will have to be considered.

8.9. Summary of the technical matters

8.9.1. Matters relevant to the options of establishing the All Through Community in Dolgellau can be summarised as follows:

Option	Who decides?	Implications	Notes
1 a) Close and reopen with COMMUNITY CATEGORY	Council, - or Welsh Government Statutory Consultation	The Church has suggested that it would oppose this option There would be no Church in Wales provision at all in Dolgellau Catchment and potentially in the Meirionnydd Area. There is no guarantee that the Diocese would make the infants site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau (which it owns) available for the use of the new school	The option would involve abolition of all Church provision in the area. The Church has suggested that it would oppose this option.
1 b) Close and reopen with VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED (CHURCH) CATEGORY	Council or Welsh Government Statutory Consultation	Church supports and favours this option. Governing Body would have up to 3 Foundation Governors appointed by the Church Diocese . The Church has a specific status within the decision Process. Ownership of the sites would transfer to the Diocese, though not the public value (financial value). In years to come, if a site were sold, the financial value would come back to the Authority.	It would involve undertaking a statutory consultation process There is no information regarding what the opinion of staff, parents and pupils of Y Gader catchment area would be on attending a secondary school with Church category. This would be the first or second example in Wales of an establishment of this structure.
2 a) Federate EXISTING REGULATIONS	Governing Bodies Consultation with specific stake holders in accordance with Regulations on Federating Maintained Schools (Wales) 2010	Then two governing bodies must agree to federate. It would be a means of securing the existing legal category of the primary and secondary schools. In simple terms it means dissolution of two governing bodies and establishing one body to cover both establishments. The Church is supportive. Both governing bodies must agree to do this.	The schools will retain their present category (Primary – Church and Secondary - Community). No voluntary agreement between the two governing bodies was reached so the matter could be moved forward under these regulations.
2 b) Federate PROPOSED REGULATIONS – SUMMER 2013 (Education Act 2011)	Council (and then possibly the Welsh Government)	The Church is supportive. Instead of the governing bodies deciding whether to carry on or not, the authority can enforce federation. However, as the measure stands the diocese would have to give permission to federate a Church school.	The Council could put forward a proposal for federation. The schools will retain their present category (Primary – Church and Secondary - Community). The statute has not currently been implemented.

- 8.9.2. By closing the existing schools and reopening them as an All Through School, a statutory consultation process would have to be followed and one legal category chosen for the establishment. Above are explained the implications of giving the establishment either a Community or Church category. In order to do this, the local opinion would have to be assessed, but also consideration would have to be given to the implications of a decision taken by the Council in other parts of this catchment area and others.
- 8.9.3. We also have to consider that the Church has strongly voiced its opinion on this matter and has expressed a clear wish to ensure Church provision in the area.
- 8.9.4. If the All Through School in Dolgellau were to be a Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled school, this would break new ground in Gwynedd by giving a religious character designation to the Secondary element of the establishment. It has to be noted also that the opinion of parents and pupils in the remainder of Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader catchment area regarding attending a secondary sector with Church category a religious character designation is not known. Discerning opinions will be possible during the Statutory Consultation process using a dual-option consultation. The options will have to be fully assessed and considered.
- 8.9.5. The implications need to be considered in full following the discussions on the secondary sector in Meirionnydd. Thus far, the discussions have been directed towards implementing arrangements for close collaboration between some specific sectors – and the direction of these wider discussions on the matter will have to be considered.

8.10. Conclusions on the technical matter

- 8.10.1. Under discussion here is the technical matter of how to establish the All Through School. Consideration must be given to the effects and implications of possibly changing the legal category as a result of this.
- 8.10.2. The option of establishing the school has been discussed over a period of time – but no consensus has been reached on this. The Council is aware of the proposed new powers it will have for forming a federation – but there is no certainty regarding a timetable for implementing those powers. It is believed that creating the establishment by closing and reopening would be a straightforward method and a clear and transparent way of implementing the favoured model, thus creating a strong establishment.
- 8.10.3. While the Sequential School model is a model recommended as part of this proposal, the option remains in regard to either a Community Sequential School or Church Sequential School. The Council notes guidance of the prospective consultation Code, which notes;
“Under certain circumstances, the proponents may be of the opinion that it is appropriate to consult on a range of options rather than one specific proposal.”

8.10.4. It was deemed that this situation was one where it is appropriate to consult on two options, both as a means of ensuring that stakeholders are informed about the options in full and to express opinion and comments on that. This will also be a means to gather information and views before reaching a final conclusion after the consultation.

9. INVESTMENT OPTIONS

9.1. Another matter for consideration is the investment options. As part of the Council's application for funding through the Twenty First Century Schools Programme, the Council has an envelope for the catchment area. An application would have to be made for any increase, or otherwise diverting resources from other schemes, or making an application for additional funding.

9.2. These are the possible options discussed for investment plans as part of the development:

- i. Establish a multi site All Through Community with no capital investment at all.
- ii. Invest in improvements to the existing site of the Primary School.
- iii. Redirect resources or submit a new application for developing a provision on the site of Ysgol y Gader for Key Stage 2.

9.3. These options are assessed below:

9.4. Establish a Multi Site School with no capital investment

9.4.1. This option means that an All Through School would be developed, but that no capital improvements would be made other than those made within the maintenance programme. Even with this option, steps could be taken to change the category of the school and change the form of the leadership, governance, budgetary and educational aspects. Of course, by not investing – the current deficiencies would prevail.

9.4.2. The local view is that investment needs to be ensured for education in the town of Dolgellau in order to improve the provision for the future. The Reorganisation Strategy notes the need to ensure sustainable provision of acceptable standard following the reorganisation process.

9.5. Develop the existing site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

9.5.1. During the catchment area discussions concern was voiced regarding the site at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau. The following problems were noted;

- Traffic and parking problems
- Sub standard hall and refectory
- Sub standard amenities
- Lack of flexible and adaptable space for learning
- Lack of space for staff resources
- School on two sites

- 9.5.2. As part of this option it would be possible to develop and invest in the site to improve the existing situation, if possible, in terms of:
- Improve the learning environment
 - Improve the traffic and parking system outside the school
 - Hall and refectory
 - New toilets
 - Space for learning equipment
 - Space for staff resources
 - Improve link between the sites
- 9.5.3. This option would mean that some of the provisions which are duplicated at present could be rationalised and also the teaching environment would be improved, thus leading to positive effects. By completing the improvements it would also be possible to juggle with existing expenditure required such as maintenance, fire precautions etc.
- 9.5.4. Further work would have to be undertaken on some possible options and discussions would have to be held regarding land ownership on the site since the Diocese owns part of the site.

9.6. Develop the existing site of Ysgol y Gader to accommodate Key Stage 2 pupils from Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and leave Foundation Phase pupils on the present site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau.

- 9.6.1. Another suggestion made during the discussions was to find out if the existing site at Ysgol y Gader could be developed to accommodate key Stage 2 pupils who are at the moment on Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau site, the other side of town (with the option of developing the site for this Key Stage across the catchment area)
- 9.6.2. The aim of this option would be to alleviate concerns over the transitional period between the primary school and the secondary school which can be challenging for children whose achievement in general deteriorates during this period. Of course, it could be argued that this movement would create a new transitional period between key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- 9.6.3. This development would mean the construction of a new building for Key Stage 2 pupils on the existing site of Ysgol y Gader. Improvements to parking and access would have to be a major part of the scheme.
- 9.6.4. A large part of the investment would go towards improving traffic arrangements rather than on improving education provision. From the figures referred to around 18 months ago (approx. £4.5m), a bid would have to be made for more capital funding or consideration given to diverting resources from other schemes.

- 9.6.5. This option causes some concerns, namely:
- Concerns over separating the learning phases in the primary age group which would cause a new transitional period for much younger pupils.
 - Practical concerns over the development of the Gader site.
 - Uncertainty and also problems if the option included or did not include pupils from the rural areas.
 - The major part of the expenditure would be on improving traffic problems rather than on improving the education provision.
 - Concerns regarding the timetable for any bid for additional funding.

9.7. Assessing the investment options

- 9.7.1. The investment options have been assessed. Details of the assessment are to be found in Appendix 3 and the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities are also listed.
- 9.7.2. Since it has to be assured that any investment adds value – it is believed that the option which would contribute the most to the educational welfare of pupils would be the option of improving the provision on the site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau. A large part of the money invested would contribute towards improving the education provision and would be a means of strengthening the education provision in the town of Dolgellau.
- 9.7.3. It is recommended to ask the Cabinet to approve the development of a plan which will ensure improvements to the existing site at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau as noted above.

10. IN SUMMARY

- 10.1. Therefore, the recommendation for the schools in the town of Dolgellau is to delegate the right to the Education Cabinet Member, subject to the requirements of the Schools Organisation Code, to commence and undertake a consultation process on the closure of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau and Ysgol Uwchradd Y Gader in order to establish an All Through School for 3 – 16 year old pupils . This would mean that the school would have one Head Teacher, one governing body and one budget. The advantages of this proposal would be to create an educational centrepiece for pupils between 3 and 16 years old in the catchment area and to create opportunities for collaboration and sharing expertise and skills across the whole catchment area. It would be vital for every school within the catchment area – in the town of Dolgellau and in the surrounding rural area – to take advantage of the benefits of this model and the opportunity to strengthen the education provision for the future within the entire catchment area.
- 10.2. Whilst the All Through School is a proposed model for consultation, the question regarding the category of the proposed model, that is, a Community All Through School or a Church All Through School will be incorporated in the consultation.

- 10.3. It was deemed that this situation was one where it is appropriate to statutorily consult on two options, both as a means of ensuring that stakeholders are informed about the options in full and to express opinion and comments on that. This will also be a means to gather information and views before reaching a final conclusion on publishing Statutory Notices after the consultation.
- 10.4. Also as part of the proposal, we recommend that the Cabinet be asked to approve the development of a plan to ensure improvements to the existing site at Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau as noted above.

11. NEXT STEPS

- 11.1. If the Cabinet supports this recommendation, it is possible to conduct a consultation after the new consultation regulations come into force in the Autumn. Of course, after the period of consultation, there will be a further report to Cabinet. The new Code on School Organisation will set the framework for the timetable for the remainder of the process. One of the next steps in this process will have to be followed as set out in the new code is;
*“In the case of proposals to reorganise schools in the land and/or buildings are held in trust, or designated schools with a religious character, the proposed **must** consult with the trustees and / or the appropriate religious body before the consultation document is published. The proposed **must** allow 28 days for comment and shall give due consideration to these comments before making any decisions to hold a general consultation.”*
- 11.2. In the meantime, the aim is to move ahead with discussions with Local Members relating to the remainder of the catchment area and to hold a meeting of the Catchment Area Panel early in the new school year.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1. Approve the vision as explained in section 3.
- 12.2. To delegate to the Education Cabinet Member the right to decide on conducting a statutory consultation process on establishing an All Through School in Dolgellau on the basis of this report and including consulting on the possible legal category of the All-Through as; ‘Community’ or ‘Voluntary Controlled’ with a religious (Church in Wales) character designation, and subject to the requirements of the proposed School Organisation Code, including conducting a pre-consultation with the Church of Wales and responding to the pre-consultation.
- 12.3. Develop options and a strong business case for developing the site of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau as part of the Council’s bids for funding from the Welsh Government’s Twenty First Century Schools Programme.

Views of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive:

“There are a number of considerations which needs attention with regards to the direction of educational development to the future and improvements to the education provision for the children in the area, the structure of this, individual school’s designation and property matters, not only in Dolgellau but throughout the area. The recommendations here provides a way forward. Important factors within this context is the financial resources for any developments/ improvements in the area, which are dependant upon 21st Century Schools Programme resources, and the increase pressure on the Council revenue budget and the Education budget.”

2. Monitoring Officer:

"I can confirm that this report received legal input and there are no matters arising regarding propriety."

3. Chief Finance Officer:

“The majority of this report deals with educational and technical matters of schools organisation in Dolgellau. In itself, establishing the ‘all-through school’ would not result in major revenue savings, but any inward capital investment would benefit the county (a boost to the economy and confirming a useful asset). In this unprecedented financial climate, with the possibility of no further safeguard to the education budget in the next few years, it would be beneficial to accelerate the considerations in the wider catchment area where this project could possibly secure efficiency savings and would limit any financial cuts.”

APPENDIX 3

Ysgolion Dwyrain y Dalgylch Schools East of the Catchment



YSGOL MACHRETH – DATA 2013/2014

Disgybl / Pupil	16
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	65% (30)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	46
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	56% (9)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£8,865

YSGOL IEUAN GWYNEDD – DATA 2013/2014

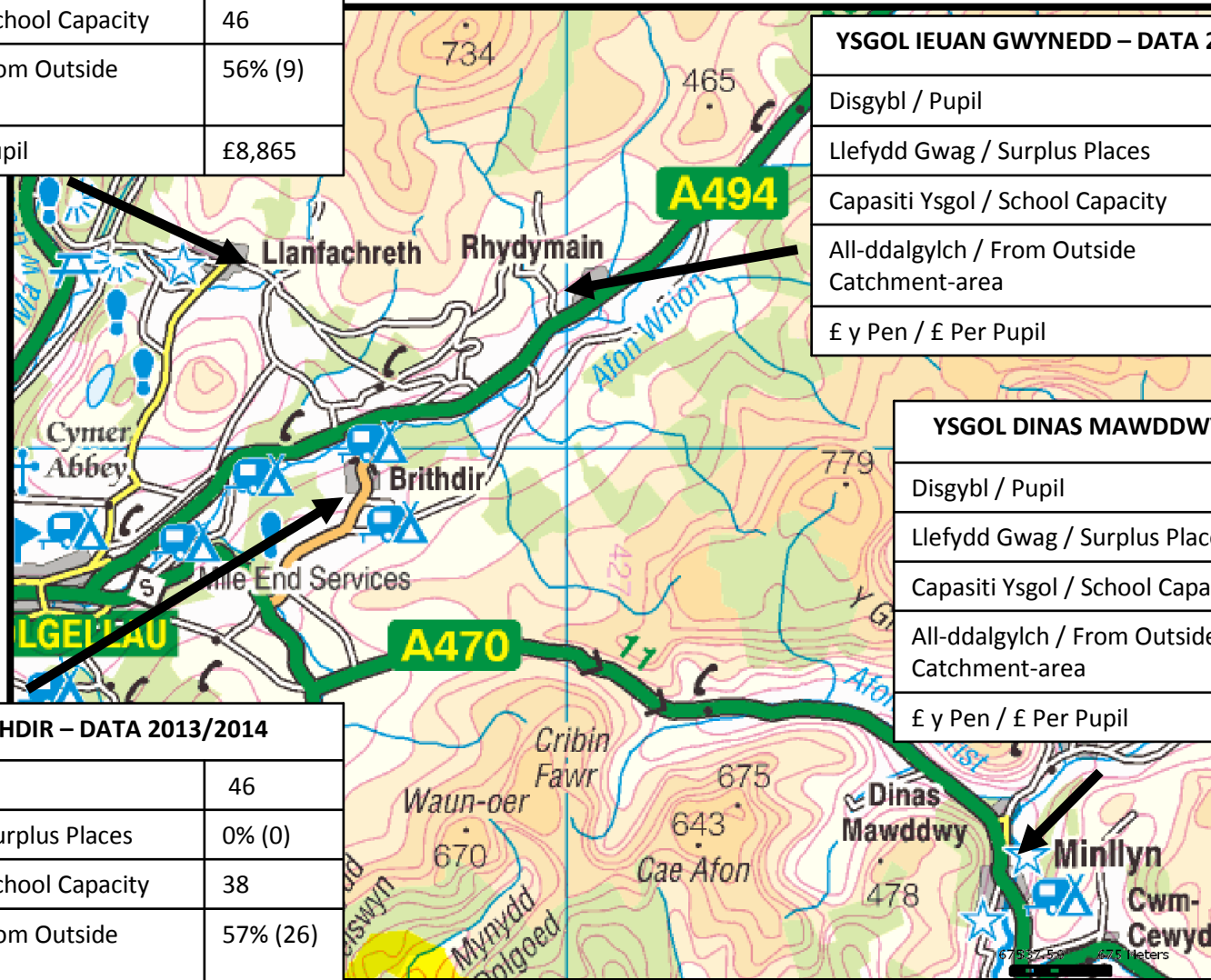
Disgybl / Pupil	18
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	60% (27)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	45
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	39% (7)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£10,616

YSGOL DINAS MAWDDWY – DATA 2013/2014

Disgybl / Pupil	21
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	70% (48)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	69
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	10% (2)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£9,756

YSGOL BRITHDIR – DATA 2013/2014

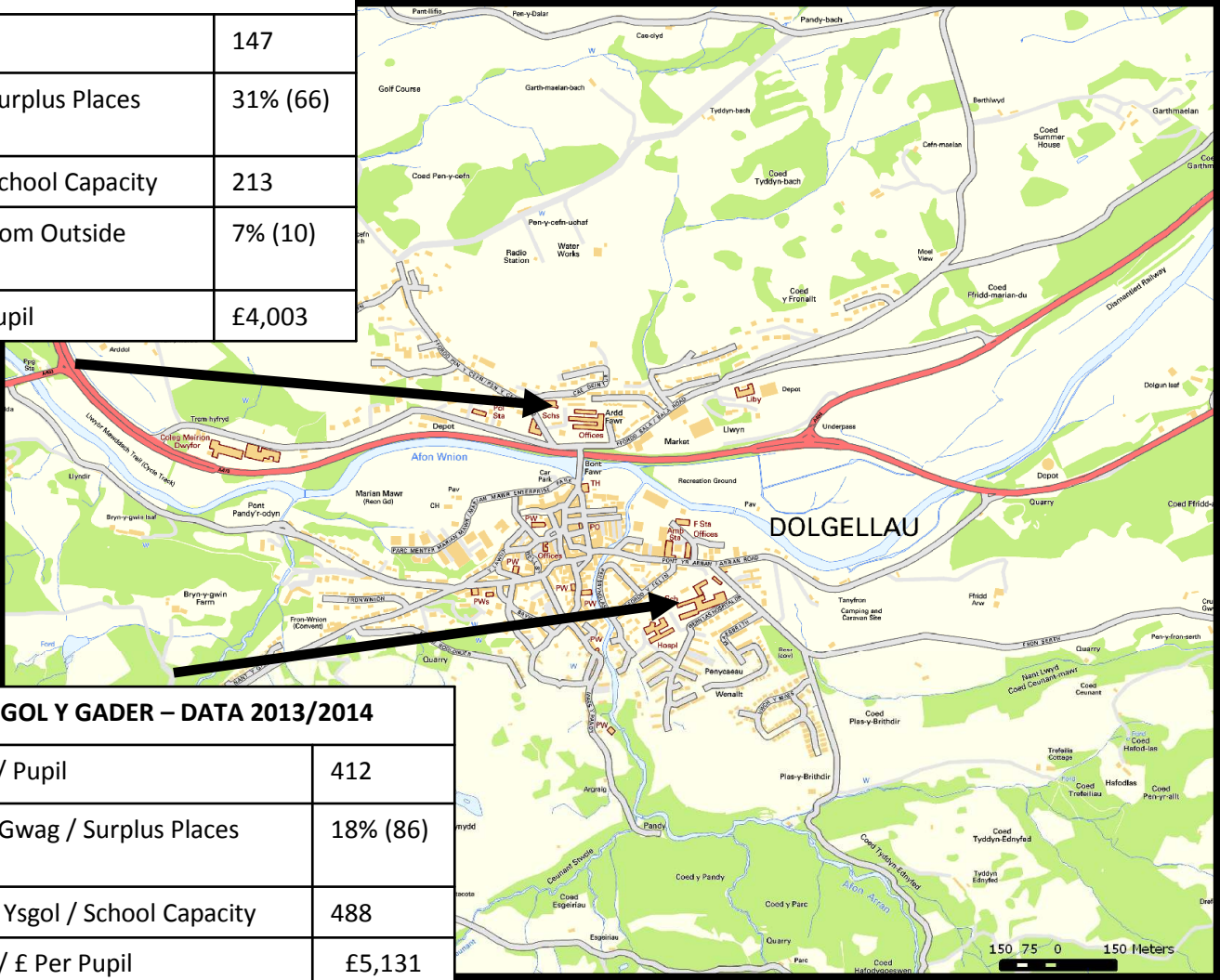
Disgybl / Pupil	46
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	0% (0)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	38
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	57% (26)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£4,142



Ysgolion Tref Dolgellau Dolgellau Town Schools



YSGOL DOLGELLAU – DATA 2013/2014	
Disgybl / Pupil	147
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	31% (66)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	213
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	7% (10)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£4,003



YSGOL Y GADER – DATA 2013/2014	
Disgybl / Pupil	412
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	18% (86)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	488
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£5,131



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Ysgolion Gorllewin y Dalgylch

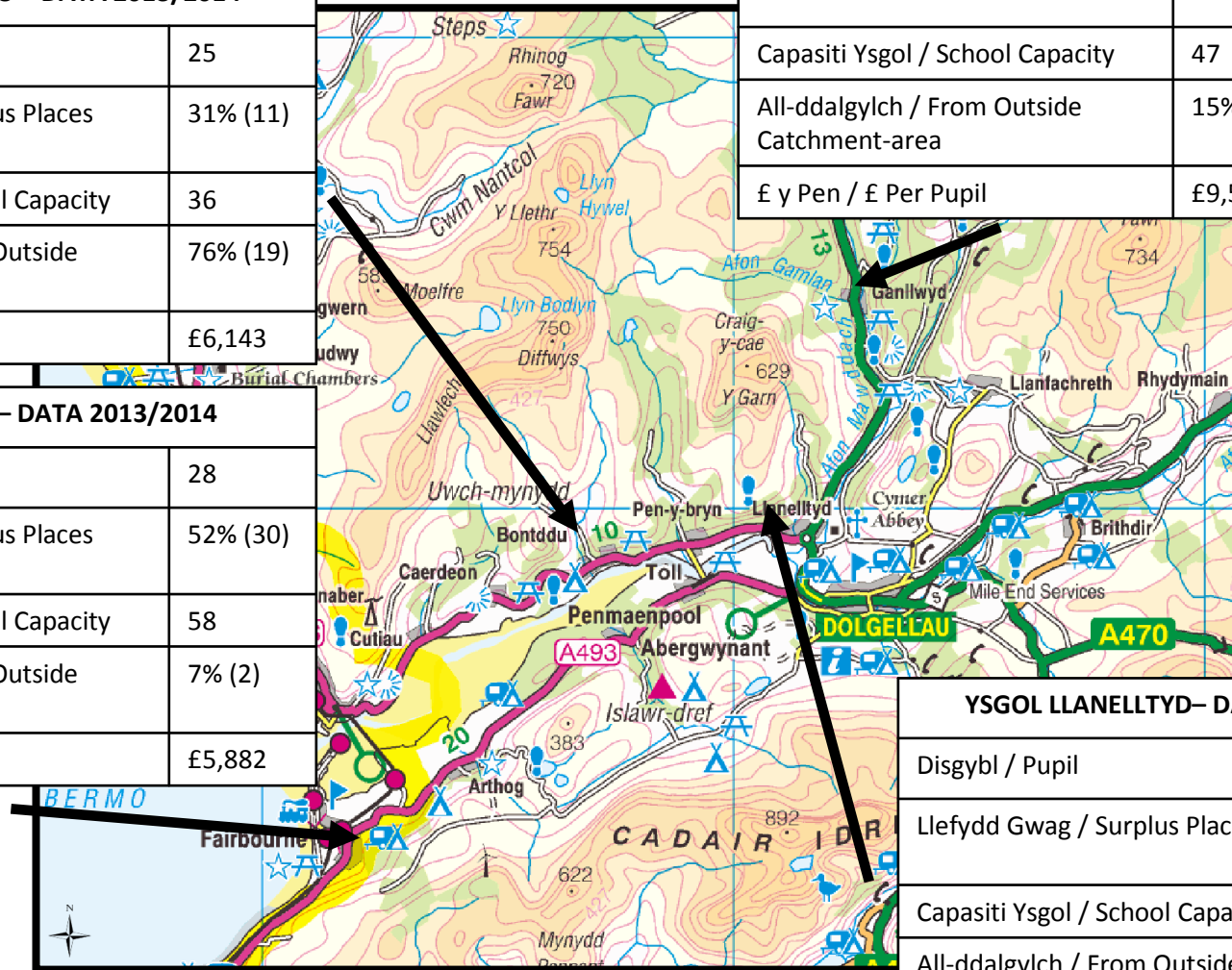
Schools West of the Catchment




YSGOL Y CLOGAU – DATA 2013/2014	
Disgybl / Pupil	25
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	31% (11)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	36
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	76% (19)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£6,143

YSGOL FRIOG – DATA 2013/2014	
Disgybl / Pupil	28
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	52% (30)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	58
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	7% (2)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£5,882

YSGOL Y GANLLWYD – DATA 2013/2014	
Disgybl / Pupil	20
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	57% (27)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	47
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	15% (3)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£9,541



YSGOL LLANELLYD– DATA 2013/2014	
Disgybl / Pupil	41
Llefydd Gwag / Surplus Places	17% (9)
Capasiti Ysgol / School Capacity	50
All-ddalgylch / From Outside Catchment-area	66% (27)
£ y Pen / £ Per Pupil	£4,536

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