

Responses to Estyn comments on the Statutory Consultation on the proposal to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran to a new site in Penrhyndeudraeth on 1 September 2016, increase the capacity of the school and add a residential and short break facility

	Comments	Gwynedd Council responses
1.1	<p>Are the proposals likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area?</p> <p>It is Estyn's opinion that this proposal is likely to improve the present standards of special educational needs provision in this area of Gwynedd. However, this may not be the case for Tŷ Meirion pupils as they will not benefit from the new provision.</p>	<p>It is intended that Uned Tŷ Meirion pupils receive the opportunity to use the specialist resources and Equipment that will be available in the new school.</p>
1.2	<p>What effect do the proposals have on other schools and educational institutions in the area?</p> <p>The proposals are likely to have a limited impact on other schools in the area as the development solely involves the two special schools. The other special school in Gwynedd is located too far away to be effected. However it may influence the long term viability of Tŷ Meirion as the preferred option is to retain this provision at its current location on the secondary school site in Dolgellau. The possibility of the primary aged pupils who transfer to the new school deciding they wish to stay there rather than be separated from peers is not discussed. Should pupils decide not to move to Tŷ</p>	<p>All children will be individually assessed by the SEN Moderation Panel and referred to the most appropriate provision for their needs. A decision to place a child in Uned Tŷ Meirion will depend on this assessment, the suitability of Tŷ Meirion for the child's needs and the wishes of the parent.</p> <p>Referring to Uned y Traeth – this is an unit which is part of Ysgol Cymerau and has been established because there is insufficient room in Ysgol Hafod Lon and therefore no appropriate place for primary age children who require AAA provision. If we were to relocate Ysgol Hafod Lon to Penrhyndeudraeth then continuing with Uned y Traeth would be an option for children who would have difficulty in travelling to Penrhyndeudraeth.</p>

	<p>Meirion this could significantly impact on pupil numbers there and make the provision unviable. Furthermore, a very brief reference is made to another provision called Uned y Traeth but no reasons are given for not including this unit in the relocation.</p>		
<p>I.3</p>	<p>How well has the proposer:</p> <p>Given a clear rationale for the proposal?</p> <p>The proposer has set out a clear rationale for the proposal. This is mainly focused on the local authority's responsibility for the planning and management of school places along with securing sufficient resources on improving education outcomes. The proposer clearly shows that the current location, suitability of the buildings, the facilities and the lack of residential provision significantly contribute to the rationale behind the proposal. However some of the reasons for retaining Tŷ Meirion, such as integration with mainstream pupils and difficulties with travelling, could also be applied to Tŷ Aran.</p>		<p>In contrast to Tŷ Meirion there is more choice of primary schools that can offer access to disabled pupils in the south of the county. Because of this choice it is not envisaged that not continuing with the provision in Ty Aran will create any problems if a placement is required in the south of the county which is closer to a the home of a child that would have difficulty in to Penrhyndeudraeth.</p>
<p>I.4</p>	<p>Considered suitable alternatives and given good reasons as to why these have been discounted?</p> <p>The proposer has considered suitable alternatives which include the combinations of relocating and retaining the current school and units. It has given valid reasons for the preferred option of relocating Ysgol Hafod Lon and Tŷ Aran and for retaining Tŷ Meirion. However, the proposal does not include past or projected pupil numbers for either Tŷ Aran or Tŷ Meirion or mention whether these were taken into consideration.</p>		<p>The historical figures for Ysgol Hafod Lon were included (2008-14) in the consultation document and the numbers for Uned Ty Aran (2008-14) in the attachment sent to stakeholders following the welsgh Government comments on the consultation document.</p> <p>As the consultation recommended continuing with Uned Ty Meirion the numbers for that provision were not included.</p> <p>It is very difficult to predict the future numbers of SEN children therefore no numbers are included. The only prediction we can make, on the basis of local and National patterns, is that the number of children that are identified with SEN needs severe enough to need an SEN school placement continues to increase and will in the future and that we are</p>

			confident in this assumption.
1.5	<p>The proposed site was chosen due to its central location and the fact that the majority of pupils would travel shorter distances to the new provision. Other sites were considered in the Porthmadog and Penrhyndeudraeth areas but no reasons are given for choosing this specific site over any others.</p>		<p>An assessment was carried out of 6 possible sites in the Porthmadog and Penrhyndeudraeth area and this assessment and reasons for choosing the site in Penrhyndeudraeth was to be seen in the Background Pack provided as an additional document to the Consultation Document. The Consultation Document clearly noted where the Background Pack was to be seen and how to obtain a hard copy.</p>
1.6	<p>Considered the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements and on accessibility of provision?</p> <p>The proposer notes that based on present transport contracts the majority of pupils would travel shorter distances to school. The complex medical needs of some of the pupils currently at Tŷ Meirion have contributed to the decision to retain this provision. However, the proposer has not included information to show that they have researched whether prospective pupils at Tŷ Aran would have similar needs.</p>		<p>As an option that was closer to some children's home was needed in the south of the county that would be nearer than Penrhyndeudraeth, because their physical needs would make it difficult for them to travel far, it was sensible to continue with Uned Ty Meirion as the travelling to the other 2 secondary schools in the south of the county would be too far and are not fully adapted for the disabled at present. Continuing with Uned Ty Meirion would therefore mean continued access for disabled children (who need access to a mainstream curriculum) in a mainstream secondary school in Meirionnydd.</p> <p>In contrast to Tŷ Meirion there is more choice of primary schools that can offer access to disabled pupils in the south of the county. Because of this choice it is not envisaged that not continuing with the provision in Ty Aran will create any problems if a placement is required in the south of the county which is closer to the home of a child that would have difficulty in to Penrhyndeudraeth.</p>
1.7	<p>Effectively shown how surplus places will be affected? If surplus places will be increased, has the proposer give adequate reasons for this?</p> <p>The proposal is thorough in its use of data with regard to past and current pupil numbers at Ysgol Hafod Lon. This data clearly shows that the school, which was constructed to accommodate 28 pupils, is presently at</p>		<p>The historical figures for Ysgol Hafod Lon were included (2008-14) in the consultation document and the numbers for Uned Ty Aran (2008-14) in the attachment sent to stakeholders following the Welsh Government comments on the consultation document.</p> <p>As the consultation recommended continuing with Uned Ty Meirion the numbers for that provision were not included.</p>

	<p>overcapacity with 54 pupils. The proposal would increase capacity in order to meet the rising pupil numbers. However, the proposal does not include past or projected pupil numbers for either Tŷ Aran or Tŷ Meirion.</p>	<p>It is very difficult to predict the future numbers of SEN children therefore no numbers are included. The only prediction we can make, on the basis of local and national patterns, is that the number of children that are identified with SEN needs severe enough to need an SEN school placement continues to increase and will in the future and that we are confident in this assumption.</p>
<p>1.8</p>	<p>Ensured that the disruption to learners is minimised?</p> <p>The proposer has not included clear specific reference to how it will ensure that the disruption to learners is minimised. This is especially important as any change is likely to disrupt pupils with Special Educational Needs.</p>	<p>Ein bwriad yw ceisio sicrhau bydd y gwaith adeiladu a dodrefnu'r ysgol newydd wedi ei gwblhau erbyn mis Ebrill 2016 er mwyn rhoi'r cyfle i'r plant hynny fydd yn trosglwyddo o Ysgol Hafod Lon ac Uned Ty Aran yn cael cyfle i ymweld a'r ysgol newydd yn ystod tymor yr haf cyn symud yno'n barhaol o Fedi 2016 ymlaen.</p> <p>Our intention is to try and ensure the building work and furnishing the new school will be completed by April 2016 in order to give the children who will be transferring from Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Ty Aran will have the opportunity to visit the new school regularly during the summer term before moving permanently in September 2016.</p> <p>Also, as the intention is to re-locate Ysgol Hafod Lon and Uned Tŷ Aran the current staff will also be offered a transfer to the new School. The hope is that this will reduce disruption when transferring from one site to another.</p>