



CABINET - 24TH JULY 2024

SUBJECT: SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - PROPOSAL FOR THE AMALGAMATION OF HENDRE JUNIOR SCHOOL AND HENDRE INFANTS SCHOOL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval on the recommendation to proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides a background to the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018. It outlines processes and practical aspects of amalgamation.
- 2.2 The report identifies the Schools and Governing Bodies who wish to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with the Local Authority (LA).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to:
- a) Note the contents of this report
 - b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To seek Cabinet approval to proceed to formal consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the following schools:

- Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School

- 4.2 To work in partnership and support the schools identified in 4.1 in undertaking a consultation exercise on the proposal to amalgamate which if approved will formalise a successful collaboration that has been in place for a number of years.
- 4.3 To assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 where this statutory legislation applies.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 The term "Amalgamation" describes a formal and legal agreement by which two or more existing schools become one school, for example where an Infant and Junior school become a Primary.
- 5.2 The amalgamation of schools is a more formal way of extending existing collaboration and promoting closer working relationships.
- 5.3 The advantages of amalgamation include the added benefits of a single school entity with one consistent vision and ethos, continuity, progression of learning through a seamless transition, shared teaching expertise and more effective deployment of resources.
- 5.4 To be successful, amalgamation needs to be based on a commitment to work as a single school entity with one budget, one development plan and one governance structure and a willingness to do things differently for the added benefit of all pupils, their well-being and achievements.
- 5.5 **Proposal – Amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School**
- 5.5.1 The proposal relates to the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School to create a single Primary School provision for pupils aged 3 to 11.
- 5.5.2 Both schools have been informally 'collaborating' since September 2022 and share the same Head Teacher with both Governing Bodies working together for the best interests of the school, pupils and wider community.
- 5.5.3 Subject to approval, there would be one governing body established, the composition of which should have a minimum of 15 Governors and a maximum of 27 with a proposed composition made up as follows:
- (a) at least one but no more than two parent governors elected or appointed to represent the interests of parents of registered pupils at that school;
 - (b) at least one but no more than two teacher governors;
 - (c) at least one but no more than two staff governors;
 - (d) at least two but no more than four LA governors;
 - (e) at least two but no more than four community governors;
 - (f) the Head Teacher
- 5.5.4 It is proposed that the current school sites would remain in operation but function as a single Primary school campus. Both schools are located in the same locale within

the Caerphilly basin (130 yards on opposite sides of St Cenydd Road) and there are no proposed changes to the existing shared catchment arrangements.

- 5.5.5 The Governing body of both schools that have been working in collaboration for a number of years, have agreed to proceed to formal consultation for amalgamation status in partnership with the Local Authority, subject to Cabinet approval.
- 5.5.6 In order to progress the proposal, a consultation exercise is required in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.
- 5.5.7 Subject to Cabinet approval, a prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the code will be written to. A consultation document will be published in both hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website based on the recommendation for amalgamation. Reasonable access to information will be promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats will be made available on request.
- 5.5.8 The consultation period will be for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for consideration and response and conscientious consideration will be given to any responses received.
- 5.5.9 The principles of engagement outlined in the Local Authority's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020 will also be acknowledged and the team will engage with any additional 'interested parties' as required, through appropriate channels to ensure the dissemination of information and provision of a suitable platform for the consultees to make their views known is made available.
- 5.5.10 Following the consultation period, a consultation report along with any responses received will be collated and reported back to Members, where a decision will be made as to whether to proceed with the proposal as outlined and publish a Statutory Notice.

5.6 **Conclusion**

Members are asked to approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 Not required at this stage in the process. A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be completed at the relevant stage in the process.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The amalgamation process does not bring any savings to the Local Authority but may ease financial pressures within schools by sharing resources which can be deployed across the combined.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the process.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 This proposal was presented to the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 16th July 2024. Comments and responses are summarised as follows:

10.2 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee 16th July 2024

Comments on School Organisation Code 2018 - Proposal for the Amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School

Members commented that the schools have already been working closely together and that they are also physically located close to each other.

A member asked about the potential impact of amalgamation on the school budgets. The committee were advised that should the amalgamation go ahead there will be one school and one budget, at the funding formula for each school budget contains a lump sum so there will be one lump sum. However, in terms of managing the budget this will be compensated as the budget will be easier to manage and more flexible.

Following the debate the scrutiny committee noted the contents of the report and recommend to Cabinet to proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the amalgamation of Hendre Junior School and Hendre Infants School with effect from September 2025.

This was supported by a majority 14 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Andrea West, Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning
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Consultees:

Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director for Social Services
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy / Place Shaping

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Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Background Papers:
None