

From:

Sent: Tuesday, March 23, 2021 9:47 AM

To: Correspondence mail - KW <Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales>

Subject: Llythyr Ynglyn Ag Addysg Gymraeg Yn Mhowys

Dear Ms Williams

Following submission of the attached letter to Powys County Council yesterday, the Governing Body of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng, Welshpool has requested that a copy of the letter be forwarded to yourself.

Yn gywir / Yours faithfully

22 March 2021

Dear Interim Chief Education Officer

I am writing on behalf of the Governing Body of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng, to express our objection to the recently approved decision to create an all-age dual stream school in Llanfair Caereinion.

As the Governing Body of a new designated Welsh primary school, we have seen first hand the impact of Welsh immersion on the language and cultural development of our pupils. Over 90% of our pupils come from non Welsh speaking homes, and their Welsh language capabilities and cultural awareness / involvement has progressed dramatically since the school became a designated Welsh language primary, rather than a dual stream one.

The pupils are no longer having Welsh lessons in an English school. They are learning formal Welsh, playground Welsh, and everything in between. They aren't just learning to speak Welsh, they are learning to converse in it, to express their emotions in it, to play in it and to present themselves in it. To sing, act, create art, dance, write, read, discuss, debate, engage, live, succeed, and belong. And we are very proud that the school is delivering the Welsh education that the parents and carers of our pupils deserve.

According to Welsh Government, research shows the valuable skills learned at primary school are quickly lost if the language the pupil is taught in is changed. If those children who attend a Welsh primary school do not proceed to Welsh secondary education, particularly those from non-Welsh speaking homes, their Welsh language skills will not endure. Furthermore, Powys County Council has recently stated that it agrees with this view of Welsh Government, and acknowledges

that designated Welsh-medium schools are the preferred model of delivery for Welsh-medium education.

At present, this choice is not available to our pupils throughout their educational journey. In fact, we are the only County in Wales where pupils do not have access to designated Welsh-medium secondary education.

Powys County Council also acknowledges that a fundamental change is required to the method of delivering Welsh-medium education in Powys, to ensure that all learners can access high quality, robust provision from the early years onwards.

Last year just 22% of our pupils went on to Welsh secondary education. This year it will be 17%. Parents are telling us that it's lack of options, lack of choice, no clear Welsh education continuum, better options in the English stream, and lack of confidence in the Welsh system.

The Council's recent confirmation that they intend to close Llanfair Caereinion's primary and secondary dual stream schools and open a new 'all age' dual stream school in the town, appears to go completely against all of the above. The merger of the two schools will no doubt include investment in buildings and facilities, strengthening the existence of the school, and seemingly affirming the concept of dual stream provision.

Investing scarce Council resources in creating this all-age dual stream school will surely make it very unlikely that a designated Welsh-medium secondary school will be established in the area in the foreseeable future.

We know that there has been significant growth in the number of primary school pupils receiving Welsh education in the North East Powys area in recent years, and that this trend is set to continue. The Council has invested heavily in new designated Welsh primary schools. There are now sufficient pupil numbers to justify a designated Welsh-medium secondary school in the area and as a Governing Body, we want to fight for this right for our pupils.

On this basis, we feel that we must object to the plans to create an all age, dual stream school in Llanfair Caereinion, AT LEAST until such time that the Council has consulted on, and presented, clear and confirmed plans for how they intend to provide fair and equitable access to full Welsh-medium secondary education for our pupils.

Yours faithfully