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## **Introduction**

A full 12 week consultation on the potential changes to the school organisation process took place between 28 November 2010 and 18 February 2011.

A detailed consultation document was issued to a wide range of stakeholders including the WLGA and all local authorities, diocesan education authorities, the Children's Commissioner, all foundation school governing bodies and a 10% sample of all other schools. The document was also made available on the internet, and a press release was issued to coincide with the publication.

The document set out the current process and the rationale for change and gave a breakdown of the specific changes which are proposed. Consultees were asked a series of questions about particular aspects of the proposals in addition to being given the opportunity to comment more generally on the proposals. A separate questionnaire was produced for the use of children and young people.

In addition to the document, officials held seminars and meetings with representatives of the local authorities, the diocesan education authorities and the Children's Commissioner.

13 responses were received to the children and young people's questionnaire and 32 responses were received to the main consultation document – around half of which were local authority responses. Other responses were received from the WLGA, Welsh Language Board, teachers unions, Catholic Education Service, Governors Wales, representatives of foundation schools and members of the general public.

A list of respondents (where permission has been given to disclose this information) can be found on page \*\*

## **Next steps**

The Welsh Government is currently considering what legislative opportunities exist for the implementation of changes to the process of school organisation and will have due regard to the responses provided by consultees in drafting any resultant legislation.

## Summary of responses to the consultation document

**Question 1:** Is the current list of circumstances in which statutory proposals are required appropriate? If not, what would you want to add, remove or modify? [This question relates to paragraph 1 of part 2 and Annex C.]

Of the 26 responses to this question, 15 agreed that the current list of circumstances were appropriate. Strong disagreement was expressed by 2 parties who represented a foundation school, arguing that the proposed changes to disallow changes of category to foundation and to prevent the establishment of new foundation schools were inappropriate. Other responses called for clarification in regard to the prescribed alteration about provision reserved for children with special needs. There was a strong suggestion that research should be undertaken on the historical effect of the prescribed alteration relating to changes of language medium to ascertain whether this had restricted an expansion of Welsh medium provision. This contributor also suggested that future regulations might refer to the categories set out in WAG document 023/2007 such that proposals would be required if a school was to move from one category to another and Welsh medium provision were reduced.

It was suggested that a new alteration could be introduced to cover the merger of 2 schools, which might be more acceptable to local people than the current methods (involving the closure of at least one school). This suggestion was supported by the WLGA in the response based on input from several local authorities, as it would support the key principle of speedy and effective local decision making.

It was also suggested that the current limit on increasing the size of schools was too restrictive and that the replacement of temporary buildings with permanent was not appropriate as a prescribed alteration.

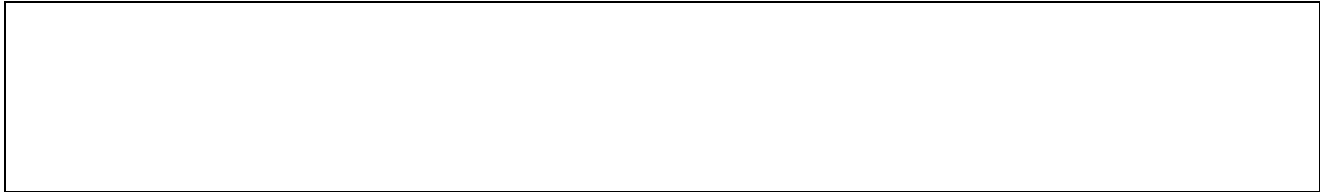
**Question 2:** Do you think that the following amendments proposed are suitable?

a) prescription about reduction in capacity; b) prescription about transfers of school site (for all schools including special); and if not, what would be preferable? [This question relates to paragraph 1 of part 2 and Annex C.]

Of the 27 responses to this question 16 agreed with both amendments and 3 additional responses agreed with (a) but not (b). Opposition to both amendments was expressed in 4 responses and felt that reducing the limit to 1 mile for permitted transfers was too restrictive, particularly in the light of limited availability of sites within a mile of an existing school serving a specific community. The WLGA response shared this view.

There were 4 suggestions for clarification and improvement, with one response suggesting differential distances for primary and secondary schools. A further response suggested that the point of reference for determining whether a reduction in capacity could be achieved without proposals should be by reference to projected numbers on roll rather than historical data.

Representing local authorities and ADEW, the WLGA advocated the removal of the need for statutory procedures when the nature of special needs provision is changing from one type to another, as this is a barrier to swift decision making.



**Question 3:** Do you agree with the current division of responsibilities in respect of making proposals for changes to school organisation? [This question relates to paragraph 2 of part 2 and Annex D.]

There were 27 responses to this question and 23 of these agreed with the current division of responsibilities. Two responses recommended that local authorities should also be able to propose prescribed alterations to voluntary and foundation schools. There was a query raised as to why the establishment of Foundation Special schools would still be permitted when no other foundation schools would be established if the 2011 Measure became law. The WLGA response suggested that governing body proposals should be subject to screening by the local authority, with evidence that the proposal had a strategic fit locally.

**Question 4:** Should proposers be required to publish a consultation document? [This question relates to paragraph 5 of part 2 and Annex E.]

None of the 28 responses disagreed with this proposal. Two emphasised the need to ensure that children and young people could access the consultation. One response suggested that the Welsh Assembly Government should produce a checklist of what should be included in documents. The WLGA supported the need for inclusive and meaningful consultation which provided proper opportunity for concerns to be voiced so that proposals command confidence. It supported the concept of a clear and consistent form of consultation document as it should help the decision making process, reassure key interests and can be used as a baseline document for a variety of purposes during the statutory process. It was suggested that there was good practice in a number of local authorities and there should be a logical and direct continuum through the report stages.

**Question 5:** If so, should the content of the consultation document (and other matters) be specified in a Statutory Code? [This question relates to paragraph 5 of part 2 and Annex E.]

There were 29 responses to this question and 23 agreed that the content of a consultation document should be specified in a statutory code. Opposition was expressed in 3 responses, all of which felt that such an arrangement would be overly bureaucratic and restrictive. There were 10 suggestions that whilst a Code should set out specification for content, this could be of minimum requirements and there should be room for local

authorities to add to this and to tailor documents for particular circumstances. A query was raised about what action should be taken if minimum requirements were not met. The WLGA response supported a Code specifying content with allowance for local flexibilities. This response suggested that there needed to be discussion on aspects of matters for inclusion as there could be practical difficulties with some currently proposed. Scope for local authority websites for consultation should be promoted.

**Question 6:** Is the list of matters to be included, as set out in the template document appropriate? Should anything else be included? [This question relates to paragraph 5 of part 2 and Annex E.]

There were 28 responses to this with 19 agreeing that in principle the list was appropriate and 2 disagreeing. Responses which made suggestions for additional or alternative content were made by a total of 13 individuals. Those who opposed the list included those who felt that there were often too many variables which were undeveloped at consultation stage that would make it difficult for local authorities to provide all information listed, whilst there would be other matters worth including, depending on the circumstances, such as

- Comparison of per pupil costs at named schools with LA average
- Data relating to cross catchment attendance
- Issues relating to suitability and condition of buildings
- Alternatives to closure

More than one response took the view that it was inappropriate to discuss staffing matters in consultation document and one response suggested that it was difficult to argue that the closure of a school would be of benefit to children. Amongst those who made suggestions for what should be included, was a response calling for detailed impact on the Welsh language, others asking for more detail about the effect on the community, and those who argued for specific coverage on all equality issues. The suggestion in the sample document that interested parties should be able to request notification of the publication of a consultation report was not universally accepted, and alternatives put forward suggested that communication should be by means of regular web page updates and e mail where possible. A number of local authorities who responded indicated that they would add to and otherwise tailor the list to suit circumstances. Some thought it unnecessary to cover the benefits to children with reference to the UNCRC whilst another provided detailed suggestions to the contrary, which went far beyond what the template document advocated. This response also emphasised the need to engage children and young people appropriately through different media if necessary rather than by a written proforma. Other responses also drew attention to the need to take a flexible approach to the conduct of consultation.

**Question 7:** For promoters: Would the template document contained in Annex E be a useful tool in producing future consultation documents? [This question also relates to part 2.]

Whilst almost all of the 22 responses agreed that the template document would be a useful tool, a few suggested that it should be open to adaptation to suit local circumstances. Two

contributors felt strongly that it was overly bureaucratic to insist on specific content. Two contributors pointed to the need to produce a different style of template, or good practice for consultation with children and young people. A few responses suggested that their current documents already exemplify good practice, albeit at variance with the suggested template.

**Question 8:** Do you agree:

- a. consultation documents should only be published during term time?
- b. consultation should run for a minimum of 6 weeks, with at least half of the consultation period falling in term time?
- c. with the list of those who should be consulted?

If not what would you wish to change/add? [This question relates to paragraph 7 of part 2 and Annex E.]

All 27 of those who responded on point (a) agreed that consultation documents should only be published in term time.

In respect of question (b), 14 agreed with a 6 week period for consultation with at least half of the consultation period in term time, and a further 7 agreed with the length of the period for consultation but felt that a greater proportion should be within term time, with a few suggesting that all should be in term time. One suggested that a shorter coverage of term time would be sufficient. On the length of the period, 3 felt that it was too short and should extend to 8, 12 or more weeks. There were 2 contributors who felt that 6 weeks was not always necessary and that a minimum of 4 weeks should be set as some straightforward proposals could be consulted upon more quickly. The WLGA supported a 4 week period.

On point (c), whilst almost all of the 26 responses broadly agreed with the list, there were suggestions for change, including – add - Welsh Language Board and other Welsh language interest groups; school staff (rather than only teachers); Unions representing all staff; town and community councillors, school councils and pupils who may not have contact with families, parents with young children not yet in school; and cross border individuals/representatives. There were also a number of comments under this section relating to permissible methods of consultation, with the emphasis on electronic communication where possible in order to economise, with the option for individuals to contact the local authority for paper copies. One contributor suggested that if the consultation document were also be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government, this should be a substitute for the prescribed information that is otherwise required.

**Question 9:** Do you agree that the proposer should publish a consultation report setting out the issues raised and the response to them; Estyn's assessment; and recommending how to proceed? [This question relates to paragraph 7 of part 2.]

Out of 29 responses only 2 took the view that a consultation report was inappropriate, one because it would cut across existing council procedures and one because it was considered that it could add a layer of information that would detract from the clarity of the proposal.

There were additional suggestions or requests for clarification from 11 of those who agreed in principle. These included: the role of Estyn and the timing of their contribution, its relative importance, and whether this would increase the workload of Estyn.

One response suggested that the proposer should send the consultation report to every one of the statutory consultees, whether or not they have submitted observations, (or inform them that it is available) and also to every other individual or body that has responded to the consultation. One local authority expressed concern over the timing of contributions to the process by the Welsh Assembly Government and about the volume of responses that would need to be analysed on some occasions which might strain resources. There was a strong recommendation that proposers should highlight separately the consultation responses from children and young people in an accessible way, indicating that this would bring the process more clearly into line with article 13 of the UNCRC which provides the child with the right to information. There was a suggestion that in order to deal appropriately with the concerns of children and young people, a follow up meeting with the school council might be appropriate at the time that the consultation report was finalised. There were suggestions that the consultation report should be distributed widely to all those consulted, including school councils. A number of local authorities emphasised the need to carry out as much of this distribution by electronic means as possible. One response recommended that the consultation report should include an equality impact assessment.

**Question 10:** Should a time limit be set on deciding how to proceed? If so, should that limit be 3 months from the close of consultation? Should proposers be able to apply to Welsh Ministers for an extension of time? [This question relates to paragraph 9 of part 2.]

All but 1 of the 27 responses agreed with a fixed limit on the period after consultation at the end of which decisions should be taken on how to proceed. The contrary view expressed was that these were matters for local decision. A significant minority (41%) of the responses agreed with all aspects of the question, including 5 local authorities. Others agreed with a time limit but suggested that 3 months was too short, and alternative time periods ranged from 4-6 months, with a suggestion in one case that if a limit of 6 months were chosen, then it might be appropriate not to offer opportunity to extend the time available. Other responses emphasised the need to have a clear system for requesting an extension of Ministers, with clear criteria enabling speedy resolution. It was suggested in 2 responses, including that of WLGA, that Ministers and Estyn should also be obliged to respond to requests within a specific timeframe. Many responses welcomed a limit so as to reduce uncertainty for all parties.

**Question 11:** Are the proposed publication requirements appropriate? If not, what would you want to change? [This question relates to paragraphs 10 and 11 of part 2.]

Out of 23 responses, 9, including 6 local authorities, took the view that the requirements were appropriate. Five contributors took a substantially different view, with 2 suggesting that the objection period allowed should be 2 -3 months. A further contributor drew attention to the fact that suggested requirements did not make provision for pupils to be notified and considered this a substantial flaw not in keeping with UNCRC. One of the other substantially negative responses suggested that proposals should be publicised nationally. The remaining substantially negative response took the view that copies should not be distributed to the extent suggested. There were 9 suggestions, mainly from local authorities, and supported by WLGA, which recommended that there should no longer be a need to advertise in a local newspaper as this had become prohibitively expensive. One local authority offered costings for such advertising as compared with sending a copy to

each parent, with the latter costing only 3% of the cost of advertising in a newspaper. Most of these 9 contributors suggested that the internet, together with postings at schools and in other localities, coupled potentially with targeted distribution by post would be sufficient. Some of these contributors thought that the notices should be distributed to a greater extent than suggested, with all statutory consultees to be included. Others took the view that a wide distribution on the basis suggested would be overly burdensome. There was substantial emphasis on the use of electronic means where possible. There was an additional suggestion for a more flexible approach so that promoters had to make sufficient efforts to inform all those with an interest without being prescriptive, although judgements would need to be made about what was a sufficient or reasonable effort.

**Question 12:** Do you agree with the proposed content for statutory notices? If not, what should be added or removed? [This question relates to paragraph 12 of part 2.]

There were 24 responses to this section. There were 4 contributions that disagreed to a substantial extent, 2 on the grounds that the objection period should be longer than the month suggested. One response took the view that where proposals affected Welsh language provision the prescriptions would not allow sufficient information to be included. It was argued that, for a prescribed alteration affecting the change of medium of education, the statutory notice should include an explanation of the linguistic impact of the proposal (which is more detailed than the “description of the proposed alteration”) referring specifically to the impact of the change on the school’s category as defined in the Welsh Assembly Government’s Information Document No 023/2007. In addition, in respect of proposals to close a school, as well as the matters listed, it was suggested that details of the alternative school(s) should contain a clear statement as to the nature of the linguistic provision offered in the alternative school(s). This contributor suggested that statutory notices for alterations and closures should also contain a statement dealing with the effect of closing a school on the local community, both linguistically and in other ways. The remaining contributor who strongly opposed the proposed content took the view that statutory notices should be simplified not made more detailed as the inclusion of more information in the Notice than is currently required would create additional costs. Costs of publication in a local newspaper were particularly highlighted with the average cost for the recent statutory notices in the region of £3,000. It was felt that additional text would significantly increase this cost. The contributor took the view that the effect of not including the additional information in the statutory notice could be mitigated by requiring proposers to include the relevant information in the consultation document which, together with a detailed Consultation report, would provide key interests with the information necessary for them to come to informed view.

There were 19 positive responses, 12 of which were from local authorities, which agreed with the content on the whole. Suggestions for modification covered the following ground: notices should require objectors to identify themselves and state that if this information is not submitted then the objection is void; notices should invite supporters to submit comments; children and young people might require additional support in order to make an objection; there would be administrative effort in verifying the status of objectors and thought would need to be given to the processes needed in order to bring this about.



**Question 13:** Do you agree that in future all objections should be lodged with the proposer? [This question relates to paragraph 13 of part 2.]

There were 26 responses to this question and only 2 disagreed substantially. One took the view that proposers could choose to ignore objections and one took the view that the Welsh Assembly Government should deal with all objections in the first instance. The remaining 24 responses supported the proposal, including 12 local authorities. Suggestions for clarification and modification came from 5 contributors, including the WLGA, and covered the following:

Whether non local authority promoters have sufficient resources to deal with objections promptly;  
where the proposer is not the local authority, it would be appropriate to share any proposal/objection with that authority;  
There could be difficulties where a new school was being proposed by a promoter such as a diocesan authority and the local authority were the promoters for the closure of other schools that might be required in order for the new school to be established.  
One response used this opportunity to query the basis of the legislative proposals and suggested that where funding is a pre requisite of any school proposal then the process should be simplified and linked into the funding bid process;

**Question 14:** Should the right to object be restricted to those groups identified in paragraphs 16 and 18? If not who should be added to or removed from the list?

Of the 29 responses to this question, most were in favour of restricting the right to object but there were varying views as to those for inclusion on the list. There was a welcome for the inclusion of children and young people, coupled with a suggestion that these parties needed an accessible means of expressing their position.

Potential objectors suggested for removal from the list were

- Staff of the school because of conflict of interest
- Governors because of vested interest, but a number of responses also suggested that individual governors should not be listed whilst the complete governing body should.
- Further Education Institutions, on the grounds that local authorities are not in a position to influence proposals relating to FEIs
- AMs, MPs and Diocesan Authorities on the grounds of non objectivity
- Pupils because they are often too easily persuaded by others to object.

Those suggested for addition to the list included

- the Welsh Language Board/Welsh Language Commissioner
- local elected members
- Staff of schools, not only teachers
- voluntary groups
- those with an interest in listed buildings when appropriate
- members of the local community on the grounds that schools were intended to play a part in the community and a community impact is required in the case of school closures, hence it appears somewhat contradictory to exclude community interests
- Unions representing school staff ( potentially instead of school staff hence avoiding conflict of interest)

One response suggested that Governing Bodies should be added to the first list (requiring Ministerial determination) along with Local Authorities and Diocesan authorities

Queries were raised as to whether would-be out of catchment pupils and their parents would be entitled to object and there was a suggestion that there should be a sliding threshold for objections, so that larger cohorts demanded a higher threshold.

Some concern was expressed as to what evidence would be required to prove that the objector fitted into the required category, and several took the view that this would be an administrative task of considerable proportions.

**Question 15:** Do you agree that the only proposals automatically determined by Welsh Ministers should be those attracting objections from a local authority, a diocesan authority or an FE institution? If not, who would you say should be included? [This question relates to paragraph 16 of part 2.]

There was a range of opinion on this question and a number, including some local authorities took the view that the Ministers should continue to determine all proposals where objections had arisen, regardless of source. Non local authorities who took this view felt that people were entitled to an objective appeal once local routes had been exhausted. Local authorities who took this view did not think that practicable local arrangements could be made in place of the Welsh Ministers. Nonetheless, 16 contributors, including 9 local authorities agreed with the list. Those who did not agree with the content of the list suggested that foundation schools should be added. Several took the view that Further Education Institutions had no more claim on Ministerial determination than other objectors, and that these should be in a category of objector but not in the category that triggered referral to Welsh Ministers. Two contributors recommended that governing bodies should be added to the list, and one that the Welsh Language Board could be considered as a potential addition. One response suggested removing Diocesan Authorities from the list as they play a lesser role in school organisation with fewer financial burdens. One contributor suggested that Constitutional bodies with Parent Teacher Associations of the schools affected and Local Community Councils should be included.

Some concerns were expressed that children have been used by adult campaigners and the Welsh Government could play a role in suggesting means of avoiding such situations as far as possible. It was suggested that there was also need for children and young people to have clarity over who would consider proposals when they decided to object.

**Question 16:** Should the trigger point for a local determination be an objection by an affected governing body, an MP or an AM; or a total of 10 objections from community/town councils, school staff, pupils or parents? If not, what do you consider the trigger point should be? [This question relates to paragraph 19 of part 2.]

This question led to a wide range of responses but in general 18 out of the 28 responses expressed support for the trigger point, and 11 of these were local authorities. One local authority expressed opposition to the principle of local determination in this response. A number of those who generally disagreed took the view that Further Education Institutions should be among the group of 10 and not accorded the higher level Ministerial involvement. One response stated that any objection should trigger the need for determination. One response queried a simplistic threshold and suggested it should be tailored depending on the population or size of the catchment area. One local authority dismissed the trigger for separate local determination, and whilst recognising that a few

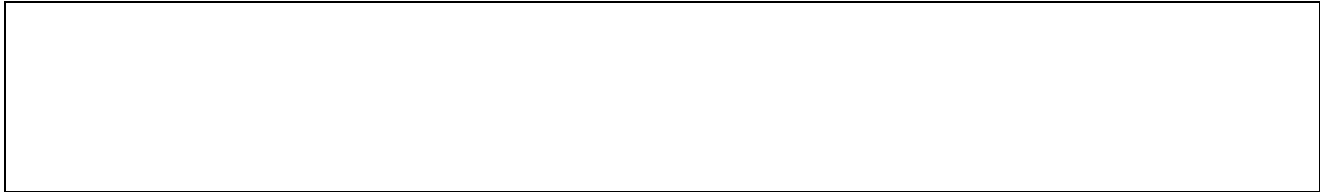
proposals in the “top table” category would be referred to Welsh Ministers, took the view that all proposals not objected to at the highest level stipulated should be determined by the responsible executive, not a separate body. One response took the view that the threshold of 10 would have no effect and that such a threshold could easily be orchestrated by few objectors. One response suggested that School Councils should be included as objectors triggering the need for separate determination. Two responses mentioned the need to ensure that Community Councils/Town Councils and local councillors should be objectors enabling a local referral.

More than half of those who agreed with the principle set out in the question made a number of suggestions or requested clarifications. A few of these suggestions advocated that petitions should count as one objection, and that the governing body counted as one objection, an opposing view was expressed in respect of staff of schools, such that if staff or their representatives opposed, the individuals signing up to the objection contributed to the trigger. There was a suggestion that objections would have to be individual (i.e unique) in order to count, such that standard letters would not contribute. There was a suggestion that any letters of support could be allowed to balance out objections such that the number would be reduced if support were expressed. One response suggested that local decision makers might be unwilling to make determinations where objections had been lodged by Assembly Members or other local elected members.

**Question 17:** Do you agree that proposers should be required to prepare an objection report and submit it to the local decision maker within 4 weeks from the end of consultation? [This question relates to paragraph 20 of part 2.]

Twenty-five respondents (including thirteen local authorities) agreed, implicitly or explicitly, to the principle of producing an objection report. A further two responses indicated a degree of misunderstanding of the question, interpreting it as relating to objectors making a report of their objections within a 4 week timescale. None disagreed with the principle of producing an objection report as correctly interpreted. Of those who agreed, respondents had concerns about the ability to produce such a report in the four week timescale indicated; reasons cited for this included time constraints connected with the clarification of technical issues (one), consideration of large numbers of objections (one) or achieving the necessary clearance (one). Five respondents also expressed concerns that a four week deadline would not accord with local authority reporting/decision making cycles, potentially triggering the need to call extraordinary meetings. In light of this, it was suggested that two months would be a more reasonable requirement. One respondent, in agreement with the principle, was of the view that the requirement to produce an objection report would be excessive if coupled with a need to respond to individual objectors. Another respondent, likewise in agreement, asked for guidance on the content of the report, including possibly a template. One respondent raised the query ““Within that 4 week period proposers would we need to decide whether to go ahead with the proposal or whether to withdraw it” – is 4 weeks enough time and if it ... isn't the consultation must be re-started.”

The Welsh Language Board suggested that Welsh Ministers should commit to publishing decisions within three months of receiving the proposer's report in every case unless there are exceptional circumstances.



**Question 18:** Do you anticipate that local authority decision making cycles could be adapted so as to make a decision to proceed within 4 weeks from the end of the objection period? [This question relates to paragraph 20 of part 2.]

A little over half of those who responded viewed this as a suitable time frame, but only 6 local authorities viewed the timetable as sufficient, and several more than this did not. A few of those who agreed in principle argued for flexibility so as to avoid the situation where the procedure might have to begin afresh. There was also concern that truncating the process would lead to lesser consideration of the substance of objections, particularly when these were received in substantial numbers. It was believed by a few that the need to operate to such a tight timescale could impact seriously on other local authority services. A few responses indicated that some Executives did not meet during the summer holidays. Two local authorities pointed out that delegations of decision making might avoid the difficulty of arranging meetings of Executives, but this approach might not be viewed favourably when objections had been lodged. A few local authorities were strongly of the view that one month was inappropriate and unachievable. Overall, there was a clear concern that this proposal would truncate timescales too much (especially in cases where there were 1000+ objections to process.) A counter-proposal was made to the effect that the timescales should provide for 4 weeks to prepare a report, and then a further 2 weeks to make the decision to proceed. Others suggested that the period should be at least 2 months, if not 3.

**Question 19:** Do you agree that where there are local objections a decision making panel or committee should be established to decide whether the proposal should be implemented, modified or rejected? Should the committee consist only of those who do not have an interest in the proposal under scrutiny? [This question relates to paragraph 23 of part 2.]

Whilst an equal number of responses supported and opposed the proposal, amongst the 12 responses supporting the concept of a decision making panel, only 1 of represented local authorities. There was strong opposition from 14 of those responding, including 11 local authorities, the WLGA and Society of Welsh Treasurers, and a further 7 responses, including 3 local authorities, whilst not wholeheartedly opposed, identified substantial difficulty in operating such proposals. Those who supported the principle referred to the importance of ensuring that the panel was entirely impartial, including that decision makers also represented minority groups and considered all equality issues. Two responses supporting the proposal suggested that there might also be need to establish an appeal committee to which references could be made subsequent to the decision of the local panel or committee, such as in the planning regime. Those who opposed made strong arguments including reference to current

difficulty in obtaining members for admission appeals panels where it is difficult to attract members even for this lower level decision making. There was also a view that school organisation is a complex matter and it would be expensive and challenging to suitably train members. One local authority made the point that the fact that such a panel could be judicially reviewed would deter individuals from taking part. Several local authorities pointed out that planning of school places is a statutory duty and determination /decisions should be made by accountable, elected members who would also have knowledge of the broader picture within the authority. There was also a view that decisions should be made during the normal programme of council meetings in order to avoid additional costs in a climate of budgetary pressure. There was a general view amongst those strongly opposed, that the relevant executive should take decisions. There was general feeling that these would have considered the proposals several times and would be ultimately accountable in both financial and democratic terms. Some of those opposed suggested that Ministerial call in was sufficient safeguard. One of those opposed took the view that a panel within the Assembly might be an alternative decision making body, and 2 suggested that Ministers should continue to make decisions. Another opposing response pointed out that at local authority level, the decisions of its executive are subject to rigorous cross party Committee scrutiny. One fundamental objection to the proposal made reference to the fact that an independent Panel, whilst having power to decide the future of any proposal, would not carry responsibility for the budgetary consequences of its decisions or, indeed, responsibility for any resulting educational consequences. The decisions of such a Panel could result in a financial commitment or educational outcome that would be wholly unacceptable to the proposer (normally the local authority) which would result in the proposal being rejected. In such a case the view was advanced that the consequent delay could even result in a financial loss being incurred. This response pointed out that WAG and local authorities are legal entities with statutory duties and accompanying responsibilities relating to educational provision and public finance, and were therefore appropriate decision makers. One response opposing the principle suggested that an alternative would be for the Council (or Cabinet) to be the decision maker, which, though also the proposer, is democratically accountable and ensures that the process of decision making is transparent. It is already a legal body and Councils are subject to the democratic process and administrations and individual councillors can be voted out if the issue is of such sufficient import to enough people. A further response suggested that if a separate panel is deemed necessary, a more realistic option would be that established Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committees be delegated with this responsibility, since they could meet the membership requirements suggested in the consultation document, and any member with a conflict of interest could be excluded.

Some of those who opposed also believed that the proposal would add bureaucracy as well as cost.

The WLGA opposed the principle, expressing strong belief that responsibility for proposals should fall to the local authority's executive in all cases other than those automatically referred to Welsh Ministers. WLGA took the position that this was a fundamental principle of local accountability and the efficient use of public funds and resources, identifying the creation of a separate body as a breach of its basic principles and responsibilities.

The Society of Welsh Treasurers made the point that Councils have to take difficult decisions on school reorganisation in the context of their consideration of a package of service delivery options and prepare budgets and set Council Tax accordingly. It took the view that potentially, decisions taken by a local panel could impact against Council approved budgets and force them to revisit spending plans for schools and other services. In the opinion of the Society of Treasurers, this would lead to Councils effectively losing the responsibility for making decisions on local school provision, and having to live with the consequences of it.

Responses largely neutral included one which pointed out that and there could be conflict as a result of decisions being made independently of the body that approved school organisation strategy for an area.

A few responses suggested that decisions might be made on a regional basis with regions at a suitable distance from the area in question. It was also suggested that such panels should be supported by a legal officer from a local authority not involved in the proposals.

**Question 20:** Should the decision making panel/committee have membership broadly as set out in paragraph 23 or, alternatively, as in paragraph 25? If not, how should a decision making body be constituted?

Responses to this question largely reflected those to the previous question with 12, including 2 local authorities, in favour of an independent panel, constituted largely as suggested, and 12 against, including 11 representatives of local authorities. A further 4 responses were largely neutral.

Of those who agreed with one of the membership proposals, a large majority favoured the membership set out in paragraph 25, of members with no connection to the Council. Some strong views in favour of independence were advanced. One response agreed that any committee should not constitute any parties who have an interest in the proposal under scrutiny, on the grounds that in light of the local authority's dual role as the commissioner of school places but also a provider, there is an in-built potential for conflict and therefore concerns that the interests of other providers may not adequately and appropriately be taken into account. This response therefore suggested that representation of other providers in a regional area should be included in any panel arrangement. This response also suggested that a further route of appeal might be necessary so as to avoid a proliferation of judicial review proceedings.

Those who opposed either suggestion mainly re-iterated points made in response to question 19, and supported decisions being made by Council executives, with a few supporting a panel consisting of council representatives from other areas, potentially based on the regional consortia. However, generally, several local authorities had reservations about the ability of councils to field a large enough pool of councillors to ensure a panel which was both politically balanced and free of councillors with an interest. Amongst those who disagreed with a panel being made up of disinterested councillors of the local authority, there were reservations about the ability of individual local authorities to produce suitable pools of councillors sufficient to constitute a panel. In respect of suggestions to constitute panels on a regional basis, it was suggested that regional consortia could form the basis, noting that a North Wales regional consortium was already in place. Concern was expressed in a few responses about councillors determining proposal in other (especially contiguous) LA areas owing to the competition for C21 schools funding.

Where there was agreement that a panel be formed, it was suggested that 5 was a suitable number for a panel to ensure quoracy and avoid stalemates in decision making.

Those who did not strongly state a view either for or against the proposals were in favour of an independent panel and 2 responses were against any Welsh Assembly Government involvement. Other neutral responses pointed out that consideration would need to be

given to ensuring effective training for local decision making panel or committee members so that they fully understand the criteria which they will need to apply.

**Question 21:** Do you agree that the decision makers should have 4 weeks within which to make its recommendation? If this is not considered sufficient time, what timescale would be more appropriate? [This question relates to paragraph 26 of part 2.]

Equal numbers of responses agreed, and disagreed with this proposal, and a further 4 responses took a more neutral position. The timescale was supported by 3 local authorities and opposed by 8. A few of those in favour of the proposal indicated that the length of time it currently takes unfairly places uncertainty and anxiety on staff, pupils parents and others. A further response indicated that since the results of the consultation/objection process and related evidence would be recent and the decision taken would be up to date. This response suggested that a more protracted deliberation would undoubtedly result in unnecessarily prolonging a decision, which may be criticised as being out of date.

Most of those who opposed the proposal referred to their responses to question 19 which strongly opposed the establishment of a local panel, preferring the Council executive to take decisions. A few of those who opposed treated the question on its own merits. Responses suggested that 4 weeks may not be adequate time when considering the sum of documentation and evidence that can be received with some of it technical in nature within the field of education. Alternative time frames of 6 or 8 weeks were considered preferable so that the information is digested in order that the panel be able to make informed decisions. One response suggested that panels should be able to meet several times to discuss, evaluate and ask for additional information or explanation as required.

Those responses which agreed in principle agreed that there was a need for some finality so as to ensure that decision making processes were dealt with expeditiously. Some concerns were expressed that it was difficult to convene panels to consider admission appeals, which could compromise the proposed timetable. It was considered in some responses that the period would depend upon the panel and its composition; the indicated timescale might be more achievable if the local LA led, and if meetings were scheduled well ahead so that school organisation planning could then take account of them.

However the view was also expressed that a regionally-constituted panel, as suggested in some responses could pose challenges as it might prefer to consider proposals “chunked” together as set times, not necessarily coinciding with the timescales applying to a given set of proposals.

**Question 22:** Do you agree that if the proposer did not accept a recommendation to modify the proposal, then the proposal would be considered rejected? [This question relates to paragraph 27 of part 2.]

Out of 28 responses, 17 agreed with this suggestion, including 4 representing local authorities. There were 10 responses opposed, all representing local authorities, but most of these made reference to earlier responses and their fundamental opposition to a separate panel or committee.

Amongst those who supported the proposal, one remarked that this should be on the basis that there would be opportunity for the panel to consult with the proposer over the determination period e.g. as occurs currently between WAG officers and LAs. In these circumstances, it was believed that if a modification cannot be agreed then a rejection seems valid. One response supporting the suggestion stated that since the local decision making panel or committee would be using objective criteria set out in guidance, a rejection would be logical if their recommendation to a proposer was not accepted. Some responses supported the proposition subject to the caveats that the panel must not be able to modify the proposal to the extent that it substituted a proposal of its own for that before it, and that the decision must be objective rather than subjective.

Those who opposed the proposal largely referred to earlier responses. The single neutral response made the point that whether this is appropriate this will depend always upon the content of the actual modification recommended and in particular whether it substantially alters or amends the original proposal.

**Question 23:** Do you consider that if the decision makers failed to make a recommendation a proposal should lapse? [This question relates to paragraph 28 of part 2.]

Opinion on this question was divided with 12, including 3 local authorities in favour and 13, including 11 local authorities against. Arguments advanced by those in favour included reference to this being appropriate only when the decision makers have exhausted all avenues in trying to make a recommendation supported by evidence. One supportive response indicated that it would underline the importance of the panel being constituted to include an “odd” number so that decisions would be made.

Several of those opposed continued to view the question in the context of non- support of local decision making. A few viewed the question on its merits and opposed. One made the point that should the decision makers have a valid reason for failing to come to a decision, for example, not enough relevant information, then it should be ensured that they have a further opportunity to overcome the problem (even if that goes over the period of 4 weeks). If they were then unable to make a recommendation after that, the proposal would lapse. This response stressed that it is important that the Welsh Ministers’ proposed guidelines should be designed in such a way that the decision makers cannot act in a frivolous or vexatious manner and went on to state the view that it is difficult to see what justification there could be for decision makers to refuse to make a recommendation as that would be a breach of their duty. Should such a case arise, this response suggested that the proposal should be referred to an alternative set of decision makers. Most of others opposed seemed to suggest that such a provision would lead to proposals having to be recommenced which would be undesirable, and stressed the need to have a system to ensure that decisions would be made. There were some suggestions that the opposite should apply, i.e that if the panel was not convinced that the proposal should be rejected, it should be considered approved.

Two responses took a more neutral position which emphasised the need to ensure that local decision makers could not fail to make a recommendation on a proposal which has been referred for local decision making. One response took the view that if there was a possibility that a proposal could lapse because local decision makers could not reach a decision, there is a clear possibility that communities would feel disaffected



by the entire process. This would be against the Welsh Assembly Government aspiration to develop a system which leads to speedier and more efficient decision making. The other neutral response took the view that the committee discussing the proposal should have an odd number of members so as to lead to certainty of having a majority vote.

**Question 24:** For local authorities: What costs might be incurred by local authorities in establishing and supporting a decision making panel/committee for school organisation proposals? [This question relates to paragraphs 23, 25 and 29 of part 2.]

This question was only for local authorities and responses were affected by the negative light in which the proposition of a local panel was viewed. No local authority offered an estimate of what the costs of such a panel might be, but the items identified as leading to costs were as follows:

- Clerking
- Room hire/refreshments
- Agenda dispatch
- ICT
- Legal advice
- Travel expenses
- Administrative costs, photocopying printing and postage
- Training
- Attendance allowances
- Loss of earnings
- Advertising for elections/nominations
- Officer support time

One response pointed to difficulty in recruiting panel members for admission appeals and anticipated that this might be even more difficult for school reorganisation as school closures can be a emotive and sensitive issue

A number of responses made the point that any additional costs incurred would be very difficult to justify in the current financial climate. Several responses pressed the view that decisions should be made by Council members within existing democratic processes, hence with little or no additional costs.

**Question 25:**

- a. Should Welsh Ministers have a fall-back power to call-in proposals for determination?
- b. If so, should this only be used in exceptional circumstances?
- c. What do you consider those circumstances might include? [This question relates to paragraph 30 of part 2.]

An overwhelming majority of the 28 responses to this question supported the principle that Welsh Ministers should have a fall back power to call in proposals. There were varying suggestions to cover part c of this question, with several agreeing with the circumstances set out in the consultation document. Additional suggestions were as follows:

Cases where Local Authorities are likely to damage educational achievement and standards by removing capacity from successful and high performing schools and by forcing it onto poorly performing, half full schools.  
Where decisions are unable to be made locally or where there is strong evidence that some stakeholders' views have been weighted unfairly.  
any proposal that would lead to a diminution in Welsh-medium provision

Substantial number of objections and/or from key stakeholders, e.g. all governing bodies directly affected by the proposal.

a proposer were acting outside its powers;

a proposal that is unreasonable and if implemented would have a

detrimental effect on the education of children and young people, or

would represent an inefficient and/or inappropriate use of public funds.

Evidence of subversion of the democratic process and lack of due regard to the consultation and decision making process.

should an objection raise concerns in relation to the UNCRC, which would be consistent with the Children and Young Persons Rights (Wales) Measure.

Concerns about equality issues

Where a governing body of a school makes a proposal that is unacceptable to the LA or is not consistent with school place planning policy to serve the interests of the local community.

Yes, perhaps if evidence were to arise suggesting that some of the factual items presented in a proposal were not accurate or potentially misleading.

Proposals not following due process set out in legislation

Where there have been a significant number of objections to the proposals or where Estyn has raised issues with the proposals

where there are concerns regarding the appropriate application of local determination

A few of those who supported the principle, suggested that call in should be exercised earlier than envisaged in the consultation, e.g. prior to the publication of the statutory notice. It was considered by those, that this would be more constructive and potentially more efficient. One response which was supportive made specific recommendations regarding Welsh language matters, and suggested that the Welsh Ministers should announce in advance what sort of matters would “raise significant concerns”, with the expectation that linguistic considerations would be one such matter.

Those against the proposition set out in the question included one local authority which seemed to take the position that the determination of proposals where objections are received should still reside with the Minister, in which case there would not be the need for a call in procedure. The same response indicated that should the new arrangement be implemented there should be no call in powers, as this would invalidate the local determination process. A further response echoed the latter sentiment.

**Question 26:** Should modified procedures be available for proposals for closure of mainstream small schools? [This question relates to paragraph 32 of part 2.]

Of the 28 responses to this question, 18 were favourable, including 10 from local authorities. Strong opposition was expressed by most of the remaining 10, which included 3 local authorities.

Those who supported the proposal included one which stated that reorganisation in its present form is a difficult and slow process which often has elements of high risk for politicians, especially concerning closure and reorganisation of schools in rural areas, which is often highly political. In the view of this individual, too many wider issues are taken into account as part of the objections to closure and reorganisation. This was viewed as ironic, in that there is a general consensus that the status quo is not an option but the present process of rationalisation is too cumbersome to ensure progress. The response stated that pedagogical aspect of the small school debate needs to take

precedence over all other considerations. One of the supportive responses suggested that clarification as to what a small school is would be needed first. A further supportive response observed that the pupil threshold option set out implies that the modified procedures relate specifically to primary schools since the suggested thresholds are far too small to have relevance at secondary school level. The response pointed out that Secondary schools, even small secondary schools, usually serve a wider community with a greater range of key interests than primary schools and that separate procedures would need to apply a secondary school level.

Those who did not support the proposal felt in the main, that to do so might be unjustifiably discriminatory. In a few responses, emphasis was placed on the need to consider must the need of the particular area and the community served.

More than one response expressed serious concerns regarding proposals to modify procedures in relation to small schools particularly since the rationale would appear to be based on pupil threshold, which might not be appropriate in each circumstance. One response suggest that what should be taken into account is sustainability including future projections and pupil numbers, and the fear was expressed that if regulations specify a specific number of pupils being an automatic trigger then this may override any other considerations. A further concern expressed was that the power might be used irresponsibly by local authorities, with a belief that the inclusion of this power would make it appear that small schools were being unfairly targeted and that this would engender suspicion and opposition. One response suggested that the application of such a power might result in perverse outcomes such as an increase in pupils flows from Wales to England.

**Question 27:** If so what should the pupil threshold be? Should it be 15 or 20 or higher?  
[This question relates to paragraph 32 of part 2.]

There were a wide range of views expressed on this matter with those opposed to the principle of setting a threshold and having different arrangements for very small schools, restating their views strongly.

The size at which a threshold might be set was suggested as 15 at the minimum. Several suggested 30 as the threshold, since it is in line with the Estyn definition of very small school as set out in their publication: *Small Primary Schools in Wales: Estyn 2006*. One local authority stated that it defines a small school as one with fewer than 57 pupils. When this figure was set (in 1996), it was the level at which a school could employ 3 teachers, have peer groups of about 8 pupils and allow some management time for the Head. One response suggested that the minimum threshold for secondary schools should be 200 and one allied its view with that of the Audit commission in relation to cost effectiveness suggesting a threshold of 90 for primary schools and 600 for secondary. A few local authorities suggested that they should be able to set thresholds depending on their own area. One response suggested that instead of a pupil threshold the % of surplus could be considered as an alternative e.g. >40%.

Those who opposed included one response stating that Local Authorities should not arbitrarily be able to decide these numbers, with safeguards put in place to stop Local Authorities closing small schools as a cost cutting measure based primarily on school numbers which have been set by them to fit in with their plans.

It was also pointed out by a further response opposing a certain threshold that the number of children in small rural schools tend to ebb and flow and that consideration should be given to future pupil population and whether children use the school's catchment local school or not.

**Question 28:** Should simplification take the form of omitting the statutory notices and objections stage? Or in the event of objections should the local review or determination by Welsh Ministers stage be omitted? Would any other modification of the full process be appropriate? [This question relates to paragraph 32 of part 2.]

Strong opposition was again expressed by those who opposed distinctive arrangements for small schools, almost half of those who responded to this question. Consensus amongst those who addressed the question was that the statutory notice step could be omitted on the grounds that the formal consultation process should provide all stakeholders with sufficient opportunity to express their views. The point was also made that the publication of notices is expensive. It was believed that little is likely to be raised in a formal objection which has not already been raised during the consultation period, so the Executive making the decision is unlikely to come to a different conclusion. A small minority took the view that publication should take place but the local review stage could be omitted. A minority took the view that governors should be able to object and trigger Ministerial determination.

**Question 29:** Should the requirement for statutory proposals for closure be removed when a school has no pupils, to be replaced by notification of closure by the local authority or governing body? [This question relates to paragraph 33 of part 2.]

All responses to this question were positive, although 5 out of the 28 responses were either qualified or requested clarification. One response indicated that if that school provided Welsh-medium education the requirement should not be removed unless the proposers were able to show that children who live in the area are able to gain admission to a school that provides at least the same amount of Welsh-medium education. Concern that staff should have sufficient notification was expressed in 3 responses, and the final qualified response queried who the local authority or governing body would notify in such circumstances.

**Question 30:** Do you agree that proposers should be able to give notice of a change of timing of a proposal by up to 3 years or the abandonment of a proposal without reference to Welsh Ministers? [This question relates to paragraph 36 of part 2.]

Of the 25 responses to this question, all, including WLGA, agreed with the principle, but 6 responses expressed qualified support, and 5 of these were from local authorities. Two responses suggested that 3 years seemed rather long, and one of the 2 suggested a reduction to 2 years. One local authority had concerns about the reference to change of location, since if land has to be acquired and a school has to be built, it may take more

than 3 years to achieve this and the exact location may not be known at the time of the proposal. This local authority would prefer that circumstance set out in the consultation document to be removed. Two responses felt that this freedom should be only available where proposals had not been called in and determined by Ministers. The final qualified response recognised that these proposals would give local authorities and other proposers a greater level of flexibility but only to retime or reschedule proposals. This response wished to emphasise that there would need to be clear communication to the children and young people affected as changes to timescales can cause uncertainty for children.

**Question 31:** Do you agree that Welsh Ministers should continue to have fall-back powers to address rationalisation of school places for use in cases where local authorities or governing bodies have failed to take action to match supply and demand? If not, how would you suggest this problem should be addressed? [This question relates to paragraph 37 of part 2.]

Of the 25 responses to this question, 23 were supportive, including 12 local authorities and the WLGA and a further 2 expressed qualified support including 1 local authority. Only 2 (not representing local authorities) were opposed.

Those who supported observed that these powers had never been used but that they were an appropriate safety net. One local authority implied in its response that the power should be exercised with a view to ensuring that situations would be addressed more promptly. One response from a local authority raised a separate issue and expressed the view that whilst some of the proposed changes to the approach to school organisation is welcome, there is a need for a further review of the process to link the process into the newly adopted business case model for 21<sup>st</sup> Century funding. The further qualified supporter made the point that the arrangements for using the fall-back powers should include ways of safeguarding Welsh-medium education in the area served by the schools in question. The two negative responses advocated that all decisions should be taken at local level.

**Question 32:** We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

The WLGA/ADEW response stressed that changes made to the process should result in speedier and more efficient decision making, and that unnecessary bureaucracy and costs should be eradicated, with as many decisions as possible being taken locally through a democratically elected body. This was essential in order that change should be progressive. The WLGA took the view that there must be certainty about how other contributors to the process such as WAG and Estyn adhering to timetables.

Three contributors took the opportunity to promote foundation schools and oppose legislation seeking to curtail growth, citing an inconsistency with the WAG approach to Further Education Institutions which have a greater degree of freedom and autonomy. One response set out reasons not to reduce the age range at a particular foundation school. These responses were against the local authority role of planning schools, preferring that this responsibility should rest with local communities. One response advocated uniting the legal process with Welsh Assembly Government funding applications which were perceived to be currently at odds.

One response queried whether the changes proposed would really save time or money, and a few others responding under this general heading echoed that position. An alternative suggested might be that all objections were sent to the Welsh Assembly Government which would summarise points raised, with responses from local authorities then requested. This approach was perceived as reducing duplication and maintaining independent decision making.

The Catholic Education Service made a substantial response to this section, expressing concern over what is currently, in their view, an over-emphasis on savings rather on educational matters. The response stressed the need for local authorities, in exercising duties of supply and demand, to give full regard to denominational demand. The CES expressed the view that the interests of other providers might not be well protected in the absence of an independent review similar to that of the school adjudicator in England. The CES therefore took the view that it is essential that true independence is built into any decision making process and that there is an appropriate and effective means of appeal to avoid the necessity of legal proceedings through judicial review in the event that local determination is not carried out in an equitable manner.

The Children's Commissioner welcomed the consultation and its reference to the UNCRC, which would need full consideration as the legislative proposals developed, as would the recently made Children and Young Person's Rights ( Wales) Measure which introduces a requirement for Welsh Ministers to pay due regard to the UNCRC when developing new guidance, policy and legislation from April 2012 onwards. The Children's Commissioner response urged the Welsh Assembly Government to look at the provisions of the UNCRC holistically when developing any new legislation in school organisation.

The response from Stonewall Cymru made a number of recommendations about equality issues, and equality impact assessments, that needed to be considered at all stages, stressing that where equality matters were raised the higher level of determination should be triggered, and that consultees for statutory proposals must include relevant third sector organisations and those representing sexual orientation interests. This response suggested that decision making committees should include representatives from equality experts, including Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual representation.

The society of Welsh Treasurers made the point that costs of consultation should be proportionate and no greater than currently.

Diocesan Directors expressed the view that there would be merit in having a mechanism for ensuring that proposals by voluntary schools would require the prior support of the relevant diocesan authority.

## Responses to the Children and Young People's Questionnaire

**Question 1:** If only one person does not like the change proposed for a school and objects to it, the decision has to be taken by a Welsh Assembly Government Minister. This can take a long time. Do you think this is sensible?

Of the 13 responses, 5 thought it not sensible that just one person not liking a proposed change could result in a Welsh Assembly Government making the decision. Of these 5, 2 expanded that it should not take a long time to make a decision  
Just 1 response thought that the current process is sensible, stating that everyone is entitled to their opinion.  
One response noted that it would depend what the objection was regarding.  
The remaining 6 seem to have misread the question, stating that they believe more people should be involved, suggesting that they thought that just one person would be consulted.

**Question 2:** Do you think final decisions about school closures and openings should be taken by a Minister in the Welsh Assembly Government or by specially chosen local people

Of the 13 responses, none favoured Welsh Assembly taking the decision.  
Two believed that a decision should be made by a combination of local people and the Welsh Assembly Government.  
The remaining responses favoured specially chosen local people including the local community, local authorities and local Councillors. Although one response did state that decisions should be taken by local people instead of people high up in the Council.

**Question 3:** If there were proposals to open or close a school or a school's sixth form how do you think children and young people should be able to give their views? Do you think special meetings should be held for everyone to have their say or do you think it is enough for the school council to give everyone's views?

An overwhelming majority believe that all children and young people should be able to give their opinion and not just the school council. 4 of the 13 positive responses would also like to see Youth Sub Groups be given the opportunity to provide opinion, another suggestion was to utilise questionnaires.  
The three remaining responses, 2 explained that the school council should ask for the view of all pupils and then provide opinion. The other simply stated that the school council to give their view

**Question 4:** Have you ever been asked about changes to schools in your area? If so, did you give your views and how?

Just 2 of the responses had been asked about changes to schools in their area, giving their views at a meeting. Of the 11 who said that they had never been asked about changes to schools in their area, 7 did specify that they would like to be asked and given the opportunity to provide opinion.

**Question 5:** Do you think schools should be closed if there are only a few children left? Why do you agree or disagree?

Of the 12 people who responded, 7 agreed that schools should be closed if there are only a few children left. 4 of those 7 went on to explain that keeping the schools open is wasting money. Three responses disagreed with the above statement, arguing that children should be able to attend a local school to maintain democratic communities, other schools would become overcrowded and that transport may become an issue. Two responses both agreed and disagreed.

**Question 6:** Would you like to be told how the local council has taken your views into account? If so, how?

The majority of responses were in favour of being notified how the local council had taken their views into account. Of these positive responses, one response stated that any results should be put into an email, one stated that there should be feedback through meetings, another thought a letter to youth forum would be sufficient, one response suggested information sheets to houses and another simply suggested putting any results in a report. Just 2 responses felt that they did not need to know how the Council had taken their views into account.

**Question 7:** Other comments.

Just 2 responses contained additional comments. One response felt that everyone should be involved in school organisation and not just the Council. The other believed that the decision needs to be a joint one because parental choice alone can create division and lack of community spirit in small communities. If people were to travel further it would cause congestion and pollution. This response went on to explain that people need to make local decision based on local demographics which the Welsh Assembly Government may not be aware of, however they did note that local decision in rural communities may be more open to biased decisions.



## **Respondents to the consultation document**

Head of Cwmcarn High School  
Chair of Cwmcarn High School  
ATL – The association of Teachers and Lecturers  
Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority  
Welsh Language Board  
Pembrokeshire Local Authority  
Caerphilly Local Authority  
Neath Port Talbot Local Authority  
Swansea Local Authority  
Bridgend Local Authority  
Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority  
Cardiff Local Authority  
One Voice Wales  
Powys Local Authority  
Governors Wales  
NUT Cymru  
Catholic Education Service for England and Wales  
Children’s Commissioner for Wales  
Denbighshire Local Authority  
Stonewall Cymru  
Brynmawr School Sixth Form Action Support Group  
Society of Welsh Treasurers  
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)  
Ceredigion Plaid Cymru Council Group  
WLGA/ADEW  
Gwynedd School Governor

plus 7 anonymous.