

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	22 SEPTEMBER 2026
Report Title:	PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LEARNING RESOURCE CLASSES IN BRIDGEND
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES
Responsible Officer:	GAIL BIGGS GROUP MANAGER (INCLUSION)
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the Policy Framework and or Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	Request to consult on the proposal to increase the number of Learning Resource Classes (LRC) across Bridgend to ensure that pupils with Additional Learning Needs, where needs cannot be met in mainstream school, are fully supported.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to consult formally on the proposal to establish six new Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and change the purpose of one already established LRC.

2. Background

- 2.1 Bridgend has a strong track record for meeting a wide range of Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The needs of learners are changing and the numbers of learners requiring specialist support are increasing.
- 2.2 Local authorities across the United Kingdom are experiencing a rise in the demand for services for children and young people with ALN and the cost to support this often exceeds budget. Anecdotal evidence from many local authorities suggests that not only are these needs becoming more numerous by volume, but also in their complexity.
- 2.3 The proposal is being made as there are an increasing number of pupils who have complex ALN who require a more specialist setting for their learning needs to be met.

- 2.4 The law has changed as a result of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. This legislation places a requirement on local authorities to keep their provision for ALN under review. The Act also requires schools to respond differently to children and young people with additional needs. It is anticipated that the majority of these students will receive their education locally, with support provided at the school level through a variety of strategies tailored to meet the unique needs of each learner.
- 2.5 Schools in Bridgend are inclusive and continue to support children with additional learning needs and the majority of pupils with additional learning needs are educated in mainstream schools. The local authority has a role in ensuring this inclusive approach is consistent across all schools.
- 2.6 Over the past five years the number of pupils with ALN has risen, driving an increasing demand for specialist teaching provision within Bridgend. There are notable shifts in the types of needs among children and young people and in Bridgend currently the highest areas of need are for pupils with Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). While there is a recognised national rise in ASD cases, it is crucial to understand that not every individual with ASD requires a specialist placement or additional learning support, nor do they automatically necessitate an Individual Learning Plan.

3. Current situation/proposal

- 3.1 A Learning Resource Class (LRC) is a specialist Local Authority provision hosted at a community maintained (mainstream) school. These classes provide education places for pupils with ALN whose needs cannot be met in regular mainstream classes. Places in the LRCs are allocated by the Inclusion Group, ALN teams, following relevant assessments of need.
- 3.2 Currently, in Bridgend the more specialised settings include the following:

School	Year Group	Designation	Available places
Llangynwyd Primary School	Foundation Phase	Communication Autism Resource Education (CARE)	8
Llangynwyd Primary School	3-6	CARE	8
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon Y Cymoedd	3-6	CARE	8
Llangewydd Junior School	3-6	CARE	8
Tremains Primary School	3-6	CARE	8
Maesteg School	7-11	CARE	12
Bryntirion Comprehensive School	7-11	CARE	12
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd	7-11	CARE	12

Betws Primary School	Primary	Hearing Impaired Resource	8
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	7-11	Hearing Impaired Resource	8
Bryncethin Primary School	3-6	Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	15
Caerau Primary School	3-6	MLD and Complex Needs	23
Ogmore Vale Primary School	3-6	MLD	15
Ysgol Cynwyd Sant	3-6	MLD	15
Cefn Cribwr Primary School	3-6	MLD	15
Corneli Primary School	3-6	MLD	15
Litchard Primary School	3-6	MLD	16
Llangewydd Junior School	3-6	MLD	15
Pencoed Primary School	3-6	MLD	30
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	7-11	MLD	55
Cynffig Comprehensive School	7-11	MLD	35
Pencoed Comprehensive School	7-11	MLD	55
Caerau Primary School	Foundation Phase	Observation and Assessment Classes (OAC)	19
Ogmore Vale Primary School	Foundation Phase	OAC	8
Cefn Cribwr Primary School	Foundation Phase	OAC	19
Bryntirion Infants School	Foundation Phase	OAC	22
Tremains Primary School	Foundation Phase	OAC	22
Pencoed Primary School	Foundation Phase	OAC	8

3.3 Subject to Cabinet approval, the proposal is to undertake consultation using the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2026 for on the establishment of the following new LRCs and changes to existing provision:

- One Foundation Phase OAC at Tondu Primary School creating 12 new places;
- One Foundation Phase CARE base at Litchard Primary School creating 8 new places;
- One Foundation Social and Communication base at Porthcawl Primary School creating 8 new places;
- An additional CARE base at Llangewydd Junior School creating 8 places;

- One secondary school CARE base for pupils at Porthcawl Comprehensive School creating 12 new places;
- One secondary school learning resource base to support pupils with MLD at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd creating 12 new places; and
- Re-designate the Key Stage 2 Learning Resource Base from an MLD class to a CARE base to reflect the increased need for pupils presenting with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and reduced need for MLD provision at Pencoed Primary School.

3.4 A copy of the proposed Consultation Document is attached as **Appendix 1** and will be published on the Council's website with hard copies also made available on request. Consideration will also be given to publishing in other formats where accessibility might otherwise be an issue. In accordance with the 2026 Code, the Consultation Document will be issued on a school day and consultees will be given at least 42 days to respond, with at least 20 of those days being school days.

3.5 In developing these proposals, consideration has been given to the 2026 Code, including specific provisions relating to the reorganisation of specialist provision for pupils with ALN. The review of provision identified areas where demand has reduced, including Key Stage 2 MLD provision at Pencoed Primary School, allowing resources to be reconfigured to address increasing demand for ASD specialist provision.

Due regard has also been given to:

- the Council's strategy for promoting inclusion and enabling more pupils with ALN to be educated within mainstream settings where appropriate to their needs;
- the need to ensure a sufficiency of high-quality specialist provision across the Authority;
- the requirement to regularly review provision to ensure it reflects changing learner needs and patterns of demand;
- the standards of provision, needs for places and accessibility and impact on other provision and services;
- the impact of these proposals on existing ALN provision within the Authority;
- the balance of provision across the county borough;
- the wider implications for inclusion services, educational psychology, specialist outreach, health services and support services for children and young people with ALN;
- whether regional provision would provide a more effective solution. It has been concluded that expanding local provision will better support inclusion, reduce travel and allow learners to be educated closer to home.

If progressed, the proposals are expected to:

- improve access to specialist, high-quality provision within local mainstream schools;
- provide appropriate accommodation and learning environments for pupils with ALN;
- support pupils' health, safety and wellbeing through provision tailored to need;
- support increased inclusion by enabling pupils to access mainstream education alongside specialist support;

- improve access to specialist accommodation and learning environments designed to meet learners' needs, including ensuring appropriate accessibility arrangements where required. Work required to improve learning environments will be funded by the ALN Capital Grant scheme.

The proposals would also respond to:

- a clearly evidenced increase in demand for specialist ALN provision across Bridgend;
- the changing profile of need, particularly in relation to ASD and complex needs;
- the need to reduce reliance on out-of-county placements; and
- the importance of provide local provision to reduce travel distances for many learners requiring specialist provision and reduce the need for transport to placements outside their local area.

3.6 Following the consultation period, to progress to the next stage, a Consultation Report will be presented back to Cabinet to inform Members of the findings and to determine next steps. Should the proposals proceed, Statutory Notices would then be published outlining the final proposal for a period of 28 days allowing formal objections to be made.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.
- 4.2 Meeting the needs is designed to deliver the key principles of equality, choice and opportunity for all. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been undertaken which indicates that a full EIA will be undertaken in parallel with the consultation process (). The outcomes and actions identified by this EIA will be included in the Consultation Report presented back to Cabinet following the consultation process.
- 4.3 The Council must consider the impact of a policy decision on the Welsh Language and seek views on the impact in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards Regulations 2015. This is a separate requirement which means that the Council must undertake an impact assessment and then questions must be asked about that assessment. The Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) is included within the Consultation Document at Appendix 1 (see Appendix B). The School Organisation Code 2026 also requires a WLIA to be undertaken for all statutory proposals.
- 4.4 The Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) concludes that the proposal is expected to have a positive impact on the Welsh language. The proposal supports the Council's commitment to providing equitable access to specialist ALN provision through the medium of Welsh and contributes to the objectives of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and Cymraeg 2050. Existing Welsh-medium specialist provision, including CARE and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) classes, will be maintained, while the proposed establishment of a Welsh-medium

Learning Resource Base at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd will strengthen specialist pathways available to Welsh-speaking learners. The proposal therefore supports opportunities for learners to continue their education through the medium of Welsh, treats Welsh no less favourably than English, and promotes the long-term sustainability of Welsh-medium ALN provision across the county borough.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting children, young people and their families. The approach is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long term	Affords pupils with additional learning needs a place in a school as near to their home as possible. Provides additional places required to meet the needs of an increase in pupils with ALN.
Prevention	Provision of locally based LRCs enables pupils to be educated as part of the graduated response as stipulated in the ALN Code of Practice and ultimately preventing being placed out-of-county.
Integration	LRC provision is key in ensuring that pupils with identified ALN have access to mainstream education experiences with their peers and also have the opportunity to reintegrate into mainstream where appropriate. There are also efficiencies related to this proposal as the cost of an out-of-authority place far outweighs the cost of opening an LRC locally.
Collaboration	A fundamental principal of the approach that focuses on improving collaboration and creating a unified system. There is excellent collaboration between the local authority with schools that have LRCs. The Council's Inclusion Group provides on-going support, advice and guidance to all schools.
Involvement	A range of key stakeholders are involved with a pupil placed in LRCs ensuring that the individual needs of the pupil are met. Engagement of all potential stakeholders including Cabinet, members, governors, staff, pupils, community, internal and external partners will take place during the consultation process. There would be a full statutory consultation process undertaken in accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2026, should Cabinet determine to proceed with the proposal.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 Where appropriate, the Council's 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' and Welsh Government's carbon reduction commitments will be addressed, as all new provision (if applicable) will be designed to ensure that it is Net Zero Carbon 'in operation' and embodied carbon targets are achieved.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Directorate has a robust approach to safeguarding, and this is detailed within the Directorate's strategic plan. The Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is aligned with Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC's) Corporate Parenting Strategy.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Should the proposal be progressed, the funding for staffing the LRCs would be allocated through the mainstream school's delegated budget.
- 8.2 Funding levels in the primary sector would be on a class basis, derived from notional staffing requirements and are primarily based on the salaries of teachers and support staff. The funding to be allocated to the secondary sector is based on the number of places. One-off funding for the set-up costs would be £10k for each LRC
- 8.3 As part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025-2026 Council approved budget growth of £370k towards supporting an increasing number of pupils being referred for support and specialist provision. Council approved a further £800k in 2026-27 towards Additional Learning Needs pressures including additional resource bases in schools, of which, £211k is proposed to be used to support these proposals. The overall funding of £581k will be used to fund the six new classes at Tondu Primary School, Litchard Primary School, Llangewydd Junior School, Porthcawl Primary School and Porthcawl Comprehensive School, including the set-up costs, should the proposal go ahead.

Additional funding to set up the Welsh-medium learning resource base was approved in 2022-23 and is currently retained as part of the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) until the consultation process is completed.

The required changes to the MLD Learning Resource Base classroom in Pencoed Primary were identified when there were no referrals due reduced demand for MLD places at Key Stage 2. The space and staffing have been utilised to support a small number of pupils with ASD and is currently funded as an MLD. Where additional staffing is required this is currently funded through the ancillary staffing budget.

The combined MTFS allocations are sufficient to meet the cost of the proposed provision, including the six new LRCs and associated set-up costs, with existing resources being reconfigured where provision is being re-designated.

9. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 9.1 Approve the commencement of consultation on the proposals to establish additional LRCs and changes to existing provision as outlined within the report;
- 9.2 Note that a Consultation Report will be presented back to Cabinet following the consultation period so that Members can consider the findings and determine next steps.

Background documents

Initial Equality Impact Assessment Screening