



Ms Sandra Aspinall
Director of Education and Leisure
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Eich cyf. Your ref SA-EF/JW/SB
Ein cyf. Our ref A-EDC-22-07-010

26 February 2009

Dear Ms Aspinall

SCHOOL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK ACT 1998 SCHEDULE 6 AND SECTION 28 - PROPOSALS TO:

1. REQUEST TO BE RELIEVED OF THE DUTY TO IMPLEMENT A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW BILINGUAL PRIMARY SCHOOL ON THE FORMER SITE OF PENALLTA COLLIERY

2. ESTABLISH A NEW WELSH MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL ON THE FORMER SITE OF PENALLTA COLLIERY

I refer to the above proposals published on 4 September 2008 by Caerphilly County Borough Council (the local authority) under Schedule 6 and Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act"). Under paragraph 10(3) of Schedule 6 to the 1998 Act, the request published under Paragraph 10(4) to be relieved of the duty to implement a proposal requires approval by the Welsh Ministers. Proposals published under Section 28 of the 1998 Act require approval by the Welsh Ministers under paragraph 8 of Schedule 6 to that Act if notice has been given, within two months after a copy of the published proposals is sent to Ministers, that they require such approval. As the latter proposal published under Section 28, to establish a new Welsh primary school is linked to the proposal published under Paragraph 10(4) of Schedule 6 to the 1998 Act, notice was given on 20 October 2008 that it required approval by the Minister.

This matter has been considered by Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

I am directed by the Minister to say that she has carefully considered the proposals and the supporting evidence supplied by Caerphilly County Borough Council in accordance with the Education (School Organisation Proposals) (Wales) Regulations 1999 (the 1999 Regulations). In exercise of her powers under paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 6 to the 1998 Act and with due regard to National Assembly for Wales Circulars 9/99 and 23/02, the

Minister has decided to approve the proposal to establish the new Welsh medium primary school. In addition, in the exercise of her powers under paragraph 10(3) of Schedule 6 to the 1998 Act, the Minister has decided that the proposal published by the local authority on 2 September 2004 for the establishment of a bilingual primary school, which was due to be implemented in September 2009, no longer requires implementation.

In reaching this decision, and taking into account all matters brought to her attention, the Minister is satisfied that, in light of a review of pupil numbers on roll in both English and Welsh medium schools, and increased projected demand for Welsh medium education in the area, it is appropriate that the new school which has been built on the Penallta site is established as a Welsh medium school

The Minister agrees with the local authority that there had been a lack of clarity in the earlier proposal to establish a bilingual school. The Minister notes that since bringing forward the proposal for a bilingual school the local authority has completed further research on models of provision and has concluded that the proposal would not meet the needs of pupils in the area or provide a clear model of language provision. As originally proposed, the school would essentially be predominantly English medium with significant use of Welsh.

The Minister takes the view that opening a new "bilingual" school of this nature would present a difficulty for the local authority in meeting projected demand for Welsh medium places and at the same time could increase spare capacity at local English medium schools and lead to less overall efficiency.

It would not be cost effective for a new school to be established unless demand for that type of school could be shown, and the Minister has therefore concluded that the local authority's request to be relieved of the duty to implement the proposal to establish a bilingual school in September 2009 should be granted.

Since the time of the publication of the proposal in 2004 the authority has monitored increasing demand for Welsh-medium education and has provided information, including projections, suggesting strongly that further Welsh medium provision will be required in the vicinity of the Penallta site in future.

The establishment of the new school as Welsh medium is in line with the target set by Caerphilly Local Authority in its Welsh Education scheme.

The Minister is pleased to note that in order to protect Ysgol Bro Allta and Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed, the Welsh medium schools in close proximity to the new school, from losing pupils to the new school and to secure places for local in-catchment pupils in the future, it is proposed to phase admission of pupils to the school

The Minister notes that the new school's catchment area will include Glan- y-Nant, Tiryberth and Penpedairheol (which are currently part of the catchment area of Y G Gilfach Fargoed) and Gelligaer and Penybryn (currently part of Y G Bro Allta's catchment area). The Minister is pleased that pre-school pupils residing in the present catchment areas of Y G Gilfach Fargoed and Y G Bro Allta whose catchment area will transfer to the new Penallta School under these proposals will be protected on admission to reception where they have siblings in the existing schools.

The Minister is pleased that this brand new school has been provided cost effectively and will provide modern accommodation for 210 pupils and 30 nursery places

The Minister is satisfied that the local authority has met the statutory requirements in respect of consultation on and publication of the proposals and that the local authority has submitted the information required by the 1999 Regulations.

The Minister acknowledges that there were no objections to these proposals.

A Statement of Information which consists of the facts about the proposals on which the Minister based her decision can be accessed through the Welsh Assembly Government website via the following link:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/publications/accessinfo/drnewhomepage/?lang=en>

The Minister notes that the proposal to establish the school as Welsh medium is due to be implemented with effect from 1 September 2009 in accordance with the statutory notice. Schools Management and Effectiveness Division (SMED) of the Welsh Assembly Government, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills should be informed as soon as implementation of the proposal has taken place. SMED should also be informed of the new school's official name as it will appear on the Instrument of Government, along with the school's address, so that a school number may be issued to you.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Stuart Rosser, the Chief Executive of Caerphilly County Borough Council, the Chair of the temporary governing body of the new school and the Headteachers of Ysgol Bro Allta and Y G Gilfach Fargoed. The Chief Executive and the Chair of the temporary governing body will also receive a copy of the Statement of Information.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Lindoe

**SYLVIA LINDOE
HEAD OF SCHOOLS MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS DIVISION**