

Proposal to change the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl

Objection Report



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A statutory consultation was undertaken regarding the proposal to change the age range of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl from 4–11 to 3–11. Following consideration of the consultation report on 26 January 2026, the Council's Cabinet members agreed to progress the proposal and approve the publication of a Statutory Notice.

Overall, the response rate during the objection period was very low, and the majority of responses supported the proposal, with only one objection received. The objector raised concerns that extending Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl's age range to admit 3-year-olds would not be in children's best interests. They drew upon international evidence suggesting that later school starting ages are associated with better mental health, self-regulation, and academic outcomes, while earlier entry may increase risks for the youngest pupils and widen inequalities. Reference was made to findings from Danish and Norwegian studies linking later school entry to reduced ADHD diagnoses, improved attention, and higher test scores, along with international comparisons showing that many high-performing education systems begin formal schooling later.

The objection also emphasised that admitting 3-year-olds could create significant cost, staffing, compliance and infrastructure pressures, duplicate Welsh Government-funded Foundation Phase Nursery provision, and further strain a sector already facing funding challenges. The objector suggested that maintaining the school's existing 4–11 age range, while strengthening local early years settings and transition arrangements, would be a more developmentally appropriate and financially sustainable approach.

2. BACKGROUND

This report presents the feedback gathered during the objection period, held between 10 February 2026 and 10 March 2026, undertaken in response to the proposal to change the age range at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl from 4–11 to 3–11, incorporating provision for part-time nursery education.

The report outlines the publication of the Statutory Notice and the objection period process, summarises the objections received, and provides an analysis of the key issues and comments raised by stakeholders.

3. THE OBJECTION PERIOD

In line with Welsh Government guidelines, as set out in the School Organisation Code (2018), the objection period gave everyone an opportunity to make an objection on the proposal.

The Statutory Notice on the proposal was published on 10 February 2026 for a period of 28 days until 10 March 2026.

The document was distributed electronically to all stakeholders and published on Carmarthenshire County Council's website. Hard copies were made available on request and displayed on the school's perimeter fence and gates. The notice set out the details of the proposal and the process for submitting objections.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

In total, 3 observations were received in response to the statutory notice, of which 1 objected to the proposal and 2 supported it. All 3 observations were submitted before the end of the objection period.

All 3 observations were submitted before the end of the objection period.

The table below notes the objections received.

Objections Received			
Online Survey	E-mail	Letter	Total
1	0	0	1

The table below notes the supportive comments received.

Supportive Comments Received			
Online Survey	E-mail	Letter	Total
2	0	0	2

5. THE OBJECTION REPORT

The objection report summarises the submissions received in objection or support to the proposal and the Local Authority's responses to these submissions.

For completeness, these responses have also been included within this report and the themes for the objections or supportive comments received are as follows:

Concerns

- **Theme 1 – Child Development and Well-being**
- **Theme 2 – Starting school later helps learning**
- **Theme 3 – Equality and Fairness**
- **Theme 4 – Financial, Staffing and Infrastructure Pressures**
- **Theme 5 – Proposal does not fit with Wales's early-years approach**
- **Theme 6 – Preferred Strategic Approach**

Supportive Comments

- **Theme 1 – Access to Early Years Provision**
- **Theme 2 – Welsh Language Development**
- **Theme 3 – Educational and Social Benefits**
- **Theme 4 – Support for the Proposed Age-Range Change**

6. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED AND LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES

The following table notes the themes of the objections received and the Local Authority's responses to those themes. Each theme's count reflects the number of distinct responses that mention it:

Concerns Raised			
Point Number	Point Raised	Number of responses raising this point	% of responses raising this point
1.	Child Development and Well-being	1	33.3%
<p>The objector said that starting school at age 3 may negatively affect young children's emotional and developmental needs. They referred to international research showing that children who start school later often have fewer attention and hyperactivity difficulties, are less likely to receive ADHD diagnoses, and develop better self-regulation. They felt that the youngest pupils in the year group are particularly vulnerable and may struggle more in a school environment.</p>			
Local Authority Response			
<p>The Local Authority acknowledges the concerns raised regarding the developmental needs of 3-year-olds. Nursery provision within schools in Carmarthenshire is delivered through the Foundation Phase curriculum, which is explicitly play-based and developmentally appropriate for early learners. Provision for 3-year-olds is designed to support emotional well-being, early social development and gradual transition into school routines through short, part-time sessions. Schools must meet national requirements for staffing ratios, qualifications and learning environments, ensuring children receive high-quality, age-appropriate support.</p>			

2.	Starting school later helps learning	1	33.3%
<p>They argued that there is no academic benefit to starting school at age 3. Evidence from several countries shows that older children typically perform better in early reading and maths, and that later school entry supports stronger early learning. They noted that high-performing systems with later school starting ages demonstrate good outcomes without early formal schooling.</p>			
<p>Local Authority Response</p> <p>The Local Authority notes the evidence referenced regarding later school starting ages in other countries. In Wales, however, schools do not provide formal academic teaching to 3-year-olds. Early years education is delivered through the Curriculum for Wales and the Foundation Phase principles, which prioritise play, exploration, physical development, and early social skills rather than formal instruction. This approach is designed to support children’s developmental readiness while ensuring equitable access to high-quality early learning opportunities. Part-time provision from the age of three is non-statutory, and it remains the decision of parents to determine whether it is appropriate for their child and whether they wish to apply for a part-time place at the school.</p>			
3.	Equality and Fairness	1	33.3%
<p>The objector raised concerns that younger children in a class often face more challenges academically and behaviourally. They argued that families with more resources can avoid early school entry, while others cannot, which may widen inequalities. Allowing entry at age 3 could increase pressure on the youngest children and create unfair differences between families.</p>			
<p>Local Authority Response</p> <p>The Local Authority recognises the concerns about potential inequalities. Offering part-time nursery places at the school increases accessibility for all families, particularly those who may face barriers in travelling to alternative providers. The proposal expands parental choice rather than restricting it, including for families who currently travel out of catchment for provision. All learners,</p>			

regardless of age, are supported through differentiated approaches, pastoral systems and child-centred transition arrangements to ensure fair and inclusive experiences.

4.	Financial, Staffing and Infrastructure Pressures	1	33.3%
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They highlighted that admitting 3-year-olds is not cost-neutral. Schools would need specialist early-years staff, appropriate adult-child ratios, additional compliance processes, and potentially changes to buildings. They noted that early-years funding is already stretched and that expanding provision at the school would duplicate existing funded nursery places, placing additional pressure on both budgets and local early-years providers.

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority recognises that early years provision requires appropriate staffing, ratios and suitable learning environments. These requirements are already embedded in the planning and operational frameworks for 3–11 schools across the county. The proposed nursery class is part-time and non-statutory, which limits additional cost pressures. Schools are funded through established early years mechanisms, and the mixed-market childcare system remains supported, as parents can continue to access private or voluntary settings for funded hours or wraparound care. No adverse financial or infrastructure impacts have been identified that would prevent implementation of the proposal.

5.	Proposal does not fit with Wales’s early-years approach	1	33.3%
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The objector said the proposal does not align with Wales’s play-based early-years model, which is mainly delivered through a mix of school and non-maintained nursery settings. They felt moving 3-year-olds into the school roll goes against this approach, reduces flexibility in local provision, and is not consistent with Welsh Government guidance on early learning.

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority considers the proposal fully aligned with Welsh Government policy, which supports mixed provision delivered through both maintained and non-maintained settings. The Foundation Phase and Curriculum for Wales are already delivered successfully within school-based nurseries across Carmarthenshire and Wales. The proposal increases access to Welsh-medium early years education and helps ensure sufficiency of provision within the locality. Schools remain required to deliver a play-based curriculum consistent with national early years frameworks.

6.	Preferred Strategic Approach	1	33.3%
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They recommended keeping the school as a 4–11 setting and supporting 3-year-olds through existing Foundation Phase Nursery and Childcare Offer settings. They said this would be more developmentally appropriate, financially sustainable, and better aligned with early-years policy. They suggested investing in transition arrangements and play-based learning between nursery settings and school, rather than lowering the school entry age.

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority acknowledges the suggestion to retain the school as a 4–11 provider. However, the proposal aims to address gaps in local early-years provision, increase choice for families and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the school. Integrating nursery provision supports smoother transitions, earlier identification of needs, and continuity of Welsh-medium education. Existing early years settings continue to play a vital role locally, and families may still choose to access non-maintained provision. The Authority considers the proposed change to the age range to be the most appropriate and beneficial strategic option.

7. SUMMARY OF SUPPORTIVE COMMENTS RECEIVED AND LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES

The table below notes the themes of the supportive comments received and the Local Authority's responses to those themes:

Point Number	Point Raised	Local Authority Response	Number of responses raising this point	% of responses raising this point
Supportive Comments				
1	Access to Early Years Provision		2	66.7%
<p>The availability of early-years provision within the village is essential. The current lack of local options makes it difficult for families to access suitable provision for three-year-olds, especially given the landscape and geography of the area. Travelling outside the village is not straightforward, and this can be a barrier for both children and parents. Having provision located within a teaching institution in the village would ensure that younger children can access early education safely, conveniently, and without unnecessary travel challenges.</p>				
Local Authority Response				
<p>The Local Authority welcomes the feedback recognising the importance of accessible early years provision within the local community. The proposal increases the availability of Welsh-medium, play-based nursery places within the village, reducing the need for families to travel to access suitable provision. This supports equity of access and helps ensure that all children, including those who may face transport or geographical barriers, can benefit from high-quality early years education close to home.</p>				

2	Welsh Language Development	2	66.7%
<p>Respondents believe strongly in the value of introducing children to the Welsh language as early as possible, particularly in a community where its everyday use is limited. Early immersion gives children the best chance to develop natural, confident Welsh-speaking skills. Young children absorb language most effectively when immersed from the start, and offering Welsh-medium provision at age three is a critical opportunity to strengthen language acquisition. This early exposure has long-term benefits for children’s confidence, fluency, and connection to the Welsh language.</p>			
<p>Local Authority Response</p> <p>The Local Authority acknowledges the strong support for enhancing Welsh language development from an early age. Providing nursery places at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl offers children the opportunity to experience early immersion in Welsh, which is proven to strengthen long-term language acquisition and confidence. The proposal aligns with local and national commitments, including the WESP and Cymraeg 2050 goals, by increasing opportunities for children to begin their Welsh-medium education as early as possible.</p>			
3	Educational and Social Benefits	2	66.7%
<p>Respondents feel that starting education earlier within a nurturing school setting brings significant benefits. Early-years provision helps children build their language abilities, social skills, and readiness for learning. They feel that joining a structured environment at age three supports children’s emotional, social, and cognitive development, helping them settle more easily into full-time education later on. This early input provides a strong foundation that can positively influence their educational journey throughout primary school and beyond.</p>			

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority recognises the benefits identified by respondents regarding children’s early social, emotional and cognitive development. High-quality, play-based nursery provision supports the development of communication skills, social confidence, early learning readiness and smooth transition into full-time education. Integrating nursery provision within the school environment enables continuity of support, early identification of needs and a nurturing, consistent setting for younger learners.

4	Support for the Proposed Age-Range Change	2	66.7%
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Supportive comments highlight they fully support the proposal to extend the age range of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl from 4–11 to 3–11 as they believe this change will benefit families, strengthen Welsh-medium education in the area, and provide younger children with the early opportunities they need. The proposal addresses both the practical challenge of accessing early-years provision and the need to promote Welsh language development from an early age. Overall, this is a positive and necessary step for the school and the wider community.

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority welcomes the overall support expressed for the proposal. The change in age range strengthens the long-term sustainability of the school, enhances parental choice, and increases access to Welsh-medium early years provision. Stakeholder support for improved local availability, better continuity of education and early opportunities for language development reflects the intended benefits of the proposal. The Authority considers the change to be a positive step for children, families and the wider community.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were received for consideration during the objection period.

9. CONCLUSION

The Local Authority acknowledges the concerns raised during the objection period, particularly those relating to child development, equality, early-years funding pressures and alignment with national early-years policy. These issues have been considered carefully as part of the decision-making process. However, no evidence was presented through the objection period to indicate that the proposal would have a negative impact on learners or that it would be unmanageable within the school's existing planning, staffing, or curriculum frameworks.

The majority of responses received during the objection period supported the proposal, recognising the benefits of accessible early years provision within the village, the opportunity to strengthen Welsh-medium immersion from an earlier age, and the positive impact on children's early social, emotional and educational development. The proposal is consistent with the Foundation Phase ethos and the Curriculum for Wales, both of which emphasise play-based, developmentally appropriate experiences for younger learners.

The Local Authority considers that extending the age range to include part-time nursery provision will improve parental choice, enhance continuity of learning, and support the long-term sustainability of the school. The proposal also contributes to wider strategic aims, including increasing access to Welsh-medium early years education and ensuring sufficiency of provision within the local area.

After taking full account of the views expressed during the objection period, the Local Authority remains of the view that the proposal to change the age range of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl from 4–11 to 3–11 will have an overall positive impact on children, families and the wider community.

10. RECOMMENDATION

Following consideration of the responses received during the objection period, it is recommended that approval is sought to implement the proposal to change the age

range of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl from 4–11 to 3–11 without amendment. There are no related proposals that would prevent or undermine implementation.

The objections submitted have been examined in detail, and no evidence has been presented to indicate that extending provision to include part-time nursery education would negatively affect learners or place unmanageable pressures on the school. The proposal aligns with the Foundation Phase and the Curriculum for Wales, both of which are grounded in developmentally appropriate, play-based experiences for younger children.

Supportive responses highlighted the benefits of improved access to early years provision within the village, stronger opportunities for early Welsh-medium immersion, and enhanced continuity for children as they transition into full-time education. The proposal also contributes to wider strategic aims, including increasing the availability of Welsh-medium early years provision and supporting the long-term sustainability of the school.

In light of the evidence presented, and the balance of feedback received, the Local Authority recommends proceeding with the implementation of the proposal as set out in the Statutory Notice.

11. NEXT STEPS

The Objection Report will be presented to the Cabinet and then ultimately to the County Council, who will determine whether or not to implement the proposal to change the age range of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Tymbl from 4-11 to 3-11 with effect from 1 September 2026.