

Strategaeth Moderneiddio Addysg Modernising Education Strategy



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County Council



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Programme Overview

The Modernising Education Programme (MEP) is designed to deliver on the Local Authority's School Modernisation and reorganisation aspirations. Since its inception in 2004, the Modernising Education Programme has drawn widespread recognition for its strategic vision, transformational planning and impressive record of delivery. The purpose of this document is to outline the strategy, objectives and principles established to direct the MEP's future delivery.

In March 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government launched the 21st Century Schools Programme, a long-term investment programme which enables Welsh local authorities to provide learning environments fit for teaching and learning in the 21st Century. The first phase of investment (Band A) commenced in 2014 and represented a £1.4 billion investment over the five-year period ending in 2018/19.

Carmarthenshire's preparations for the national 21st Century Schools Programme commenced in 2010 through an invitation by the Welsh Government (WG) to local authorities to submit a Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for the modernisation of their whole schools' estate, placed within four bands for investment (A-D), in order of priority according to most urgent need.

In 2010 a major review of the MEP was completed as part of the process of developing the County Council's submission and the Authority's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) which identified the preferred option for programme delivery to implement on a local area basis. Through the initial submission process Carmarthenshire's Band A programme was approved at a value of £86.7 million (funded 50% by grant from WG and 50% from the Council's own resources). Carmarthenshire's Band A commenced in 2014/15 following approval of Band A projects as part of the MEP update in 2013.

Band A was updated in 2016 following a reassessment in line with the approved MEP investment criteria and the practicalities of delivery.

In May 2017 the WG confirmed its intention to progress with the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme. Band B began in April 2019 and was expanded to include further education colleges and as such was renamed as the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme. This Programme was expected to see a further £2.3 billion investment in school and college infrastructure and was expected to run until 2024/2026.

In December 2017, Carmarthenshire's Band B was approved at a value of £129.5 million. The Band B intervention rate is 65% grant for mainstream and 75% grant for Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units. Band B commenced in April 2019.

Background

Carmarthenshire's Modernising Education Programme (MEP) was approved by the County Council in November 2004 as our strategic investment and rationalisation plan to transform school provision across Carmarthenshire. The aim is to transform the network of nursery, primary and secondary schools into a strategically and operationally effective resource that meets current and future need for a school based and community focused education.

This is achieved (in collaboration with Welsh Government's [Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme](#)) through developing and improving buildings, infrastructure and

spaces that are appropriately located, designed, constructed or adapted to foster sustainable development for the people and communities of Carmarthenshire.

In line with the Local Authority's responsibility to review the number and type of schools it has, and whether or not it is making the best use of resources and facilities, the Modernising Education Programme is reviewed regularly to ensure that flexibility is maintained so that changes can be incorporated when required in line with current educational circumstances. Despite being a number of years since the Modernising Education Programme was last reviewed, the culmination of a number of factors has determined that it would be prudent to review the programme and strategy now.

Post the Covid 19 pandemic, the authority has seen a number of demographic changes across the county, such as shifts in pupil numbers and parental preference when choosing schools etc. Understanding the needs of the local community is important in order to provide the right school within the right area. It has also become necessary to review the future design of school buildings to ensure compatibility with organisational requirements set during the pandemic and meets the needs in terms of ventilation / access to good air quality etc. Serious consideration must be given to the consequences faced by the global pandemic. Staff, pupils, and facilities have had to work much harder in order to create a viable, safe yet still nurturing teaching and learning environment, however moving forward buildings could be designed in such a way to take account of all of these factors in order to avoid this dramatic change in operational management again in the future should it be required.

In addition, it has become apparent that the authority has an aging stock in terms of school assets, where the condition of these buildings is also deteriorating, resulting in the need for substantial capital maintenance. Consideration must be given to how suitable the stock continues to be in terms of being able to provide facilities fit for the 21st Century to provide the best for our learners. With the implementation of the new curriculum, we must also ensure that our assets are able to enhance elements of the new curriculum such as sustainability, biodiversity and outdoor learning.

It has become clear that due to financial pressures there are a number of Carmarthenshire schools in significant deficit. This causes additional stress on school leaders and impacts on recruitment. Increasing construction costs result in elevated project costs which limits the funding available to progress and develop new schemes. UK building costs are continuing to experience an unprecedented spike arising from a combination of Covid-19, inflation and Brexit implications. This has impacted upon contractor labour capacity, as well as causing the inventory of available materials to diminish thus contributing to price hikes on core packages, such as timber, steel, and cement. However, cost is not the only issue and extended delivery times on materials have also been experienced which has had an equally adverse impact on project programmes.

In November 2022 the Welsh Government published guidance on Community Focused Schools, detailing aspirations for schools to:

- *build a strong partnership with families,*
- *respond to the needs of their community and*
- *collaborate effectively with other services.*

Following this, further guidance was published in September 2023 on community engagement and how schools can maximise their role in securing educational, health and community developments, and how they can help to create, thriving, empowered and connected

communities. The Local Authority is currently utilising Community Focused Grant to develop projects to help schools become more accessible to their communities. As such, moving forward consideration needs to be given as to how schools can be designed with the local community in mind.

Over the last couple of years, the Welsh Government have promoted the expansion of early years childcare and education in Wales through the expansion of the Childcare Offer and Flying Start programmes. The Childcare Offer for Wales provides 30 hours a week of funded early education and childcare for eligible working parents of three and four year olds for up to 48 weeks a year. The childcare available through Flying Start is for two to three year olds. It includes 12.5 hours a week, for 39 weeks of the year, of funded high-quality childcare and is being implemented through a phased approach. Consideration now needs to be given on whether facilities to be able to provide these services need to be included within new school builds, if provision is not available within the local area.

In contrast to the development of Bands A and B, in 2024 Welsh Government has introduced a new 9 year rolling programme of investment, which will help local authorities prioritise projects on need and achievability whilst also managing the expectations of stakeholders. This programme will help local authorities plan over a longer period and determine an appropriate project plan for each scheme, meaning that stakeholders can be updated at the relevant point in time rather than waiting in anticipation of when their project is likely to start. Moving forward and in collaboration with the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, Carmarthenshire County Council can provide schools with 21st century facilities, through a carefully planned programme of re-organisation and investment.

The culmination of all of these factors means that the Local Authority can now undertake a holistic review of its Modernising Education Programme, ensuring that all key points are addressed suitably and effectively as part of the new strategy.

Carmarthenshire County Council's aim is to ensure that all learners are provided with the best possible start in life, with facilities and opportunities that are fit for purpose for teaching and learning in the 21st Century, as well as being accessible to the community.

Strategic Alignment (The Golden Thread)

As already noted the development of the Modernising Education Programme is underpinned by the principle of a holistic approach and the requirement to enhance and support a range of national, corporate and educational objectives. The development of the MEP is aligned to key national and local documents and policies as outlined below:

National

- Cymraeg 2050
- Curriculum for Wales
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021
- The Equality Act 2010
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Local

- Corporate Strategy 2022-2027
- Cabinet's Vision 2022-2027

- Education Sir Gar 2022-2032
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032
- NZC/Climate Emergency
- Medium Term Financial Plan

The MEP features prominently in the Council's [Corporate Strategy 2022-2027](#) which sets out the direction for the Local Authority over a five year period, incorporating our improvement and well-being objectives as defined by legislation:

Well-being Objective 1- *Enabling our children and young people to have the best possible start in life (Start Well)*

The future direction of Education Services will focus on supporting learners to become:

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to provide a full part in life & work.
- Healthy and confident individuals, ready to learn fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world

The MEP has a significant role to play in the [Cabinet Vision Statement 2022-2027](#).

The Cabinet's Vision for Education outlines a range of commitments that they will work towards achieving during the course of this administration. These commitments include:

- Continue investment in school buildings across the county and overhaul Carmarthenshire's Sustainable Communities for Learning Program to meet the needs of the 21st century. Ensuring that all new schools meet the required standards of insulation and ventilation to cut energy bills and be more environmentally friendly.
- Look to improve the availability of early years education and childcare settings across the county, particularly in rural areas; with a particular focus on providing and strengthening Welsh-medium childcare in all areas.
- Continue to ensure that pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are fully supported to meet their potential in line with ALN Reform.
- Work alongside schools to increase school attendance rates and improve access to education for vulnerable pupils.
- Increase the utilisation of school facilities for community use outside of teaching hours.
- Work with schools to deliver a full and rounded curriculum which aspires to raise educational standards and ensures that pupils understand and celebrate their local history, geography, and culture.
- In line with the vision of Welsh Government, provide high quality nutritious free school meals to all primary school pupils, over the lifetime of the administration.
- Support the provision of opportunities for residents in the county to engage in essential learning in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, in line with current Welsh Government funding. Enabling post 16 learners to upskill for employment and progression, as well as lifelong learning and community benefits and offer learners' high quality 21st century learning environments.
- Ensure that the standard of learning and teaching in our schools is of a high quality to support our learners to make appropriate progress.
- In line with the Welsh Government's programme, increase the availability of bilingual and Welsh medium education in our schools, following thorough consultation with parents, school governing bodies, learners, and the local community.

- Work with Welsh Government to consider the effectiveness of anti-COVID ventilation devices in schools.

To complement the Cabinet's Vision, the Education and Children Department has developed a Vision and Collective Moral Purpose:

'We will support all Carmarthenshire learners. We will ensure that they are happy, safe, are thriving, and are fulfilling their personal, social and learning potential. We will strive to become the best we can be and be highly regarded locally, whilst also earning national and international recognition.'

Moral Purpose

Making sure every learner is valued and valued equally.

In Carmarthenshire we strive to provide our learners with the best possible education experience. The [Education Sir Gar 2022-2032](#) strategy sets out a clear, shared vision for the role that education services play in the future development of vibrant communities and a prosperous economy in Carmarthenshire.

Our desired outcomes 2022-2032

We endeavour to develop the whole child/young person equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need for the next step in their learning or career pathway.

We are trying to achieve this at a time of increased demands on our resources and an increased focus on improving outcomes and attainment. Ultimately, we want to ensure that our learners are well educated, well informed and well qualified.

As a department we have clear priorities focused around four key themes, tied into Education in Wales: Our National Mission. We will achieve our desired outcomes by realising our 'purpose pieces' and the ideals of the new Curriculum for Wales.

Carmarthenshire Learners-

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world

The aspirations of the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027, the Cabinet's Vision 2022-2027, Education Sir Gar 2022-2032 and feedback from engagement with Carmarthenshire's headteacher are summarised in the department's 8 **Education Priorities for 2022-2025:**



Modernising Education Programme Strategy

The most recent [Estyn report](#) published in September 2023 notes the following with regards to the authority's educational objectives and strategy:

- The authority has a clear strategy for modernising and re-organising its schools, which is based on sound principles and objectives. The strategy reflects the authority's desire to create a range of high-quality schools, which meet the needs of their current and future learners. There is an appropriate link between the objectives of the school modernisation strategy, the council's well-being objectives and the education service's ten-year plan. This includes the vision to ensure that children and young people have the best possible start in life, as well as making their communities safe and prosperous. The authority has specific plans for providing community facilities to reduce the effects of poverty on the achievement of pupils and young people.
- The commitment of senior authority leaders, the Council Leader and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Children's Services to make the strategy a reality, is a positive feature. They are working effectively with the school modernisation team and other stakeholders to review the strategy to ensure it is intertwined and responsive to the authority's current requirements. For example, they adapted the strategy to support Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-32 as well as meeting challenges such as recruiting school leaders in rural areas of the county.
- However, delays in decision-making, including following formal consultations, have meant that the authority has not fully addressed their plans to reorganise and modernise education.

Strategic objectives

This strategy has been developed to direct the future delivery of the new Modernising Education Programme. The MEP is guided by a set of strategic objectives:

- To develop a schools' network that is educationally effective, resource efficient and sustainable for the long term.
- To develop a pattern of provision within which every learning setting can facilitate a high-quality education to all its learners, either as an individual institution or as part of a federation or collaboration with other settings or providers.
- To create school environments that allow every child within every school to access a curriculum and experience teaching that motivates them to achieve their full potential, whilst also facilitating a programme of extra-curricular activities that stimulate their physical and emotional well-being.
- To develop infrastructure at all schools that is equipped for learning in the 21st century, facilitating the realisation of core objectives for raising educational standards and sustaining them at high levels of performance.
- To deliver a strategic approach to capital investment, integrated with a programme for the rationalisation of provision across the schools' network to effectively match supply with demand.
- To develop a sustainable and integrated school network that aligns with local and national transport policies, ensuring efficient access for students while balancing statutory requirements with affordability considerations. This includes optimising school locations, transport links, and active travel routes to support accessibility, environmental sustainability, and cost-effectiveness.

- Aspire to rebuild, remodel, refurbish or modernise all school settings that are to be retained for the long-term, so that they conform as closely as practicable to adopted design standards.
- To contribute to the achievement of wider policy objectives, for example, community regeneration and renewal, healthy lifestyles, etc., through the development of appropriate enabling infrastructure.
- To improve the efficiency and educational viability of the schools' sector by reducing the number of empty places to a reasonable level, whilst facilitating wherever practicable the expression of parental preference, responding effectively to demographic change.
- To develop infrastructure at schools that is fully accessible to all persons and enables all learners to access a high-quality education, irrespective of individual needs.
- To develop individual and collaborative school solutions that contribute to a county-wide single comprehensive education system.

Carmarthenshire's Primary Educational Principles

Carmarthenshire's Primary Education Principles serve as aspirational goals. While they guide our approach and inspire our educational practices, they are intended to provide direction rather than a mandate. The principles should be seamlessly incorporated and continually pursued, reflecting our commitment to achieving excellence in education.

- Aspire to have sustainable leadership, with leaders who are free to lead and manage, without a permanent full-time teaching commitment.
- Aspire to have no more than 2-year groups per teaching class.
- Strive to maintain sufficient pupil numbers to support the above structural arrangements.
- Be financially viable under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) funding framework and operate long-term without a budget deficit.
- To have access to suitable outdoor teaching facilities to enhance learning and support physical well-being across the school.
- Be fully inclusive and accessible for all.
- Be equipped with modern facilities to support digital learning.
- To create a high-quality learning environment that supports the well-being of all learners and enhances their progress and achievements across a wide range of skills and curriculum areas.

It must be noted that:

- As part of any review, we will consider how we can realise Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and enhancing Welsh medium education.
- Should the decision to discontinue a Welsh medium school be taken, we will facilitate and support access to alternative Welsh medium provision.

The strategic aims and objectives/benefits of the MEP have been designed to promote and complement a range of expectations, alongside the Educational Principles and are centred around seven key themes:

	Theme	Objective/Benefits
1.	Viability	Develop a schools' network that is educationally sustainable and resource efficient for the long-term in line with Carmarthenshire's educational principles.
2.	Strategic	Deliver a strategic approach to capital investment, integrated with a programme for the rationalisation of provision across the schools' network to effectively match supply with demand through school re-organisation or federation.
3.	Modern	Deliver 21 st century infrastructure and facilities at all schools in enhanced learning environments with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgraded Facilities • Improved Safety and Security • Accessible Infrastructure • Technological Advancements These will support the achievement of core objectives for raising educational standards and maintaining them at high levels in line with the Local Authority's aspirations.
4.	Equity	Contribute to the achievement of core policy and sector objectives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) ✓ Poverty ✓ Early Years ✓ New Curriculum ✓ Foundation Phase ✓ Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. ✓ Post 16 (KS5) ✓ Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (Inc. ALN Reform) ✓ Behavioural Needs ✓ Vocational
5.	Community	Creating a community focused environment and delivering prosperity for all through facilities that can be shared by both the school and its surrounding communities and therefore contributing to personal, health, economic and community development.
6.	Cohesion	Contribute to the achievement of wider policy objectives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Active Travel ✓ Carmarthenshire's School Transport Policy ✓ Outdoor Play and Sports Provision ✓ Childcare and Wraparound Care ✓ Healthy Living
7.	Sustainability	Aspire to rebuild, remodel, refurbish or modernise all school settings that are to be retained for the long-term, so that they comply with 21 st century design standards to ensure that all buildings have the lowest environmental impact in order to meet the Local Authority's objective of becoming net zero carbon by 2030.

Modernising Education Programme Review

In 2010 County Council resolved MEP be reviewed every two years or otherwise as required to ensure consistency with the timeframe of the national 21st Century Schools Programme (Renamed Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (SCfLP)).

Since its inception regular review is a central feature of the MEP in order that it is able to retain flexibility at its core to ensure that the programme is current and responsive to changes in the education policy framework and is able to meet the needs of a constantly developing society. This is even more important in the current climate/post pandemic period.

Long-established criteria, developed and adopted locally through consultation with representative school leaders, have been agreed and adopted as appropriate indicators of viability and investment need. These were formally adopted in 2008 and have directed the structure of the MEP since that time. The criteria have been reviewed in line with strategy and policy changes, in addition to changes to external factors such as: financial pressures/budgets, school footprint, class sizes, recruitment, deteriorating building conditions and demographic changes to ensure they align with current and future aspirations.

Viability

Each time the MEP is reviewed, every school in Carmarthenshire is evaluated against a set of evidence-based criteria, which allow an assessment of the school's operational viability to be made, and decisions taken on the relative investment need of all schools.

This allows the Authority to objectively determine a programme for the strategic review of the schools' network and investment in the modernisation of the schools' estate in a manner that is transparent and demonstrably fair.

As a result, each school is placed in a category within a viability continuum, to confirm the prognosis for that school. The summary of the viability assessment forms the basis for the identification of modernisation projects and rationalisation proposals within the overall programme.

It should be noted that the viability assessment and conclusion for each school is based around mainstream provision and other forms of provision such as early years, additional learning needs, behaviour and Post 16 will be driven by separate strategies. The details of the viability criteria and viability continuum can be found below.

Viability Criteria	Quality and Standards in Education: considering key measures and performance as assessed through Estyn inspections. A school being placed under special measures will trigger a review.
	Leadership: having sustainable leadership with suitably qualified leaders who are free to lead and manage the school with no headteacher having a full-time teaching commitment.
	Pupil Numbers: the number of pupils attending the school, with low pupil numbers being a key indicator for review. Pupil numbers are the main factor in school funding and low pupil numbers can significantly influence sustainable provision and staffing structures.

	<p>Pupil Trends: the pattern of pupil numbers at the school over previous years, with a declining roll being a key indicator for review.</p>
	<p>Pupil Projections: an assessment of estimated pupil numbers expected to attend the school from within the designated catchment area and age range over the coming five years, with a forecast decline or increase being a key indicator for review.</p>
	<p>Surplus Places: the number of spare places at the school, with more than 10% surplus places in an area overall being an indicator for review to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of provision as defined by Welsh Government in the School Organisation Code (2018)</p>
	<p>Financial Viability: the present and predicted financial position of the school under the School Funding Wales Regulations 2010, with a budget deficit being a key indicator for review.</p>

Viability Criteria	School Building Condition: the condition of the school's physical assets and the cost of improving their condition to an acceptable standard, assessed as the cost of refurbishment as a factor of the asset value and relative to the number of pupil places (according to the school's official capacity).	
	School Building Suitability: the appropriateness of the school's buildings and site to support the effective delivery of the modern curriculum/new Curriculum for Wales and making the asset available for community use and the estimated cost of undertaking any adaptation or extension works to ensure the sufficiency of the premises.	
	Collaborative Regeneration/Funding Opportunities: should opportunities arise for funding and/or collaborative working through Regeneration initiatives including with other agencies e.g., Diocesan Authorities.	
Viability Assessment	Each school is assessed based on the viability criteria and subsequently grouped into one of the 2 categories within the viability continuum.	
Viability Continuum	Retain the school	Undertake a strategic review of the school or area

Investment

Following conclusion of the viability assessments, all projects are ranked based on the following prioritisation criteria to provide an overall, long-term programme for investment.

Need	In locations where the provision of additional space or the refurbishment of existing space is essential in order to accommodate pupils generated by the rationalisation of other schools or where demand for places is increasing naturally through demographic change, provided in the latter case that schools are complying with the Council's Admissions Policy.
Pupil Numbers	In locations that have increasing or stable pupil numbers or those schools that are deemed by the Authority to be necessary for the effective long-term delivery of education services.
Surplus Places	In locations where, in tandem with rationalisation proposals, it will facilitate the greatest reduction in the number of surplus school places.
School Building Condition	In locations where it will be possible to achieve the greatest progress towards securing objectives for high quality premises for the most significant numbers of pupils.
WESP	In projects that promote the expansion of Welsh medium education or the development of bilingual education in support of the objectives set out in the County Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. To provide the right number of places for the delivery of Welsh medium and bilingual education.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	In locations to achieve a model of inclusive and equitable education for all through the medium of Welsh and English.
Childcare Early Years	In locations to provide the right type and quantity of high-quality accessible childcare to meet the needs of parents/carers.
Net Zero Carbon (NZC) & Sustainability	In locations to work towards Net Zero Carbon and improving buildings that are resource inefficient and have a high environmental impact.
Accessibility	In locations that currently do not meet the needs buildings of all users and promote inclusion.
Community Facilities	In locations that are currently not equipped to promote safe community use outside of traditional school hours.

The viability and prioritisation criteria ensure that the Educational Principles and Objectives are maintained throughout the programme of development.

Parameters and Interventions

The MEP is guided by a number of National and Local parameters that influence the interventions available to develop and implement the programme.

Parameters

Any transformational change to the schools' estate is dependent upon the following:

- [School Organisation Code](#) – statutory guidance that set out the Local Authority's responsibilities in relation to school-reorganisation and regulated alterations to make significant changes.
- [Federation Process of maintained schools in Wales](#) – statutory guidance for establishing school Federations.
- [Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme](#) – WG Capital investment programme provides collaborative funding opportunities to LAs through its Business Case approval process.
- Capital Programme – Outlines the LAs Capital funding availability for the Education Department over a five-year period.
- Democratic Decision Making Process – Process approved by County Council for determining school organisation proposals. County Council is the ultimate determining body.

Interventions (Options for Change)

Interventions are used to facilitate change to the schools' network and can be split into two types, **Statutory & Policy** and **Infrastructure Investment**.

Statutory & Policy Interventions are used to develop a strategically and operationally effective network of schools that meet current and future need for education. Proposals are identified via the MEP Review and are reactive to the needs of areas at certain points in time and include:

- Recruitment
- Admissions Policy
- Catchment Areas
- Federations (Regulations)
- School Organisation Code Proposals:
 - *Reorganise (Open / Close)*
 - *WESP (Change in nature of provision)*
 - *Age Range*
 - *ALN*
 - *Increase / Decrease Capacity*
 - *Move School (Over a mile)*
 - *6th Forms*

Admissions Policy

Carmarthenshire County Council is the Admissions Authority for all its maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools with the exception of voluntary aided schools where the school's Governing Body is the Admissions Authority.

From September 2025, pupils will normally be admitted on a full-time basis to a primary school at the beginning of the term following their 4th birthday.

Some schools also offer part-time nursery provision and pupils are usually admitted at the beginning of the term following their 3rd birthday.

By law, parents must arrange for their children to receive full-time education at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Primary school pupils are required to start at a secondary school in the September following their 11th birthday.

All children are admitted to school in line with Carmarthenshire County Council's School Admissions Policy.

Catchment Areas

A catchment area refers to the geographical area from which pupils are normally expected to attend a specific school.

School catchment areas are used:

- to give parents an indication of their local school.
- to help schools identify with the communities they serve.
- to prioritise admissions to schools when there are more applications than places available. Residence within catchment area is one of the admission criteria in Carmarthenshire, ensuring that schools are available to serve local children first.
- as a planning tool to enable the Authority to fulfil its duty to forecast demand for education in an area and to plan to meet that demand.
- as an element of transport policy in order to facilitate the organisation of school transport and control costs.

Every school in Carmarthenshire has a designated catchment area which it serves.

Federation Regulations

The term 'federation' describes a formal and legal agreement where more than one school, and no more than six, share governance arrangements and have a single Governing Body.

As noted in the [Federation process of maintained schools in Wales](#), schools have been able to federate since 2010 using the process set out in The Federation of Maintained Schools and Miscellaneous Amendment (Wales) Regulations 2010. The Federation process of maintained schools in Wales replaced the 2010 Federation Regulations on 22nd May 2014, and in addition, provided Local Authority's with the power to federate schools. The current guidance sets out how Local Authorities, in addition to governing bodies can federate schools and how federations may be proposed, established and constituted.

The process a Local Authority would use to federate schools is almost identical to the one Governing Bodies would follow. If a Local Authority is considering federating a voluntary aided, voluntary controlled or foundation school it should first of all contact the Charities Commission to discuss proposals. It must also obtain the consent of the relevant diocesan authority, trustees or persons who are responsible for appointing the foundation governors.

A successful federation requires a commitment of time and resources from all schools involved. Clear leadership and management structures together with a shared vision and a common purpose will allow pupils access to a broader curriculum to enrich their experiences and provide a high-quality education to help raise their attainment.

The power given to Local Authorities to federate will provide an additional valuable tool to the MEP in the consideration of future provision for areas throughout Carmarthenshire.

Informal Federation has been used as an intervention to secure leadership in some of our schools where recruiting sustainable leaders is a challenge due to budget pressures/pupil numbers/rurality.

Formal Federation has been used by schools as well as the Local Authority to:

- Secure sustainable leadership
- Improve schools' future sustainability.
- Improve pupils' experiences.
- Improve budget position.
- Formalise collaborative working arrangements.

However, most recently, Federation as an intervention is being challenged. Finding sustainable Leadership for formal Federations is becoming increasingly difficult due to the responsibility associated with managing more than 1 school. The additional workload pressures associated with managing a Federation can impact negatively on Headteacher wellbeing. In addition, due to the rise in fuel costs, some Headteachers are questioning the viability of the Executive Headteacher role due to the additional travelling.

Prior to 2020, the Local Authority did not have an approved process in place for determining federation proposals, in contrast to the decision-making process that was in place for determining school reorganisation proposals. However, in February 2020, the Executive Board approved a decision-making process for Local Authority led federation proposals, whereby the decision on whether or not to implement a federation proposal would be made by the Cabinet Member for Education.

School Reorganisation

As noted in the School Organisation Code 2018, a Local Authority may make proposals to:

- establish, discontinue or make a regulated alteration (see 3.3 of Code) to community or maintained nursery schools;
- discontinue a voluntary or foundation school;
- increase or decrease the capacity of a foundation or voluntary school without a religious character.

Governing bodies of foundation or voluntary schools may make proposals to:

- discontinue their school;
- make a regulated alteration to their school.

Any person may make proposals to establish a new voluntary school. However, local authorities should work with the relevant religious body when the proposal is to establish a voluntary school with a religious character.

No new foundation school or foundation special school may be established in Wales.

Local authorities may also make proposals to add or remove school sixth forms at voluntary and foundation secondary schools, but only if they have first gained the

consent of the Welsh Ministers to do so. Consent must be sought by means of a written application that clearly sets out the Local Authority's rationale for the proposal.

In addition, the 2013 Act provides the Welsh Ministers with the power to make proposals to:

- a) remedy excessive or insufficient provision of school places (where they have already issued a direction to a local authority or governing body to that effect) (section 59);
- b) secure regional provision for special educational needs (where they have already issued a direction to a Local Authority/Local Authorities/governing bodies to that effect) (section 68); and
- c) add or remove school sixth forms (section 71).

The Local Authority's process for all statutory proposals other than rural school review proposals is illustrated at appendix 1.

Presumption against the closure of rural schools

The Welsh Government introduced the presumption against the closure of rural schools on January 1, 2018, as part of its revised School Organisation Code. This policy aims to safeguard the future of rural schools, recognizing their importance to local communities, not only as educational institutions but also as vital community hubs.

The presumption requires local authorities to provide compelling evidence that all other options have been thoroughly considered before proposing a closure. The introduction of this presumption reflects the Welsh Government's commitment to maintaining educational provision in rural areas and supporting the sustainability of these communities.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Cabinet remains fully supportive of doing all that it can to support and build the future resilience and sustainability of its rural schools and will work to Welsh Government's set of procedures and requirements within the School Organisation Code which works on a presumption against closure as noted in appendix 2.

The Local Authority's process for rural school review proposals is illustrated in appendix 3.

Projects are delivered through **Infrastructure Investment Interventions** (Options for Development) such as:

Extensions- refers to the process of expanding an existing building or structure to create additional space or rooms. It involves constructing new parts that are integrated with the original building, thereby increasing its overall size and functionality. Extensions can be added to various parts of a building, such as adding extra rooms, enlarging a kitchen, creating a new wing, or extending the upper floors. The purpose of an extension is to meet the changing needs of the occupants, accommodate growth, or improve the property's value and functionality.

New builds, also known as a new construction or ground-up construction, refers to the process of creating an entirely new building or structure from scratch. In this type of construction, there is no existing structure, and the project typically involves clearing the site, laying the foundation, and constructing all elements of the building, including walls, floors, roofs, and utilities. New builds are common for greenfield sites (undeveloped land) or when an existing structure is beyond repair or not suitable for renovation.

Remodelling involves making significant changes or improvements to an existing building's structure, layout, or design. Unlike an extension, which adds new space, remodelling focuses on renovating and altering the existing space to better suit the occupants' needs or to update the building's appearance and functionality. Remodelling projects can include renovating bathrooms, kitchens, or other rooms, changing the internal layout, upgrading electrical or plumbing systems, or adding new interior features.

Refurbishment refers to the process of renovating, repairing, or updating an existing building or structure, with the goal of restoring its condition and functionality to a better state. Unlike remodelling, refurbishment usually involves less extensive changes and focuses on improving the building's aesthetics, functionality, and overall condition. This can include repairing damaged or worn-out elements, repainting, replacing fixtures and fittings, and upgrading systems to bring the building up to modern standards.

Modular or mobile construction refers to a method of building structures in which the components or modules are constructed off-site in a factory or controlled environment and then transported to the final location for assembly. These modules are prefabricated, meaning they are manufactured in standard sizes and designs, allowing for easy transport and quick on-site assembly.

The investment interventions are governed Corporately as well as via the Modernising Education & Communities Programme and Project Boards (see appendix 4).

Investment Intervention Options	Description
No Capital Investment Required	No investment required
Additional Accommodation Extension/Modular	Investment would involve extending a school to provide additional accommodation/provision
Refurbishment/ Reconfiguration	Investment would involve refurbishing/ reconfiguring a school on its current site
New Area 3-11	Investment would involve constructing one new 3-11 school to replace more than one school in an area
Replacement 3-11 school	Investment would involve constructing a new 3-11 school to replace an existing school on its current site or a new site
New 3-11	Investment would involve constructing a new 3-11 school

Replacement 11-16	Investment would involve constructing a new 11-16 school to replace an existing school on its current site or a new site
New 11-16	Investment would involve constructing a new 11-16
Replacement 11-19 school	Investment would involve constructing a new 11-19 school to replace an existing school on its current site or a new site
New 11-19	Investment would involve constructing a new 11-19 school
Establishing 3-16	Investment would involve establishing a 3-16 school to replace existing primary/secondary provision
Establishing 3-19	Investment would involve establishing a 3-19 school to replace existing primary/secondary provision
Replacement Special School	Investment would involve constructing a new special school to replace an existing special school on its current site or a new site
New ALN provision	Investment would involve constructing new ALN provision
ALN Unit	Investment would involve establishing integrated ALN provision on school sites
New behaviour provision	Investment would involve constructing new behaviour provision
Behaviour Unit	Investment would involve establishing integrated behaviour provision on school sites.

Minimum Investment Principles

- Any new school that includes primary provision will need to contribute to achieving Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan ambitions.
- All schools will be constructed to accommodate space to provide 3-year-old Early Years Education.
- All schools will be constructed having considered the need for wrap around childcare provision from 2 years old (based on a gap analysis).
- All schools will be constructed having considered the need for spaces for community use.
- All schools will be constructed having considered the need for Additional Learning Needs provision.
- All schools will be constructed having considered the leisure/sporting requirements in the area.

Funding

The delivery of the MEP to date has been made possible by the establishment of an innovative funding strategy for capital investment which has drawn upon and integrated a variety of funding sources:

- **Welsh Government Grants** – Sustainable Communities for Learning Grant (previously known as 21st Century Schools Grant), School Building Improvement Grant, Fire Sprinkler Grant, Flying Start Capital Grant, etc.
- **Capital Receipts** – generated through the disposal of operationally redundant school assets (if not utilised for community use etc.). Following a previous decision by County Council, all receipts generated through the sale of former school premises are ring-fenced for reinvestment in the school modernisation programme.
- **Prudential Borrowing** – serviced by contributions from revenue generated through efficiency gains arising from the rationalisation of the schools’ network and through an adjustment in the delegated school budget.
- **General Capital** – contributions from the Council’s general capital allocation. (Ring Fenced)**S106 Agreements** – contributions from developers of residential properties.
- **School Contributions** – contributions from school revenue budgets.
- **Additional Grants** - e.g. Additional Learning Needs, Community Focused Schools

Rolling Programme (2024 onwards)

[Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme | GOV.WALES](#)

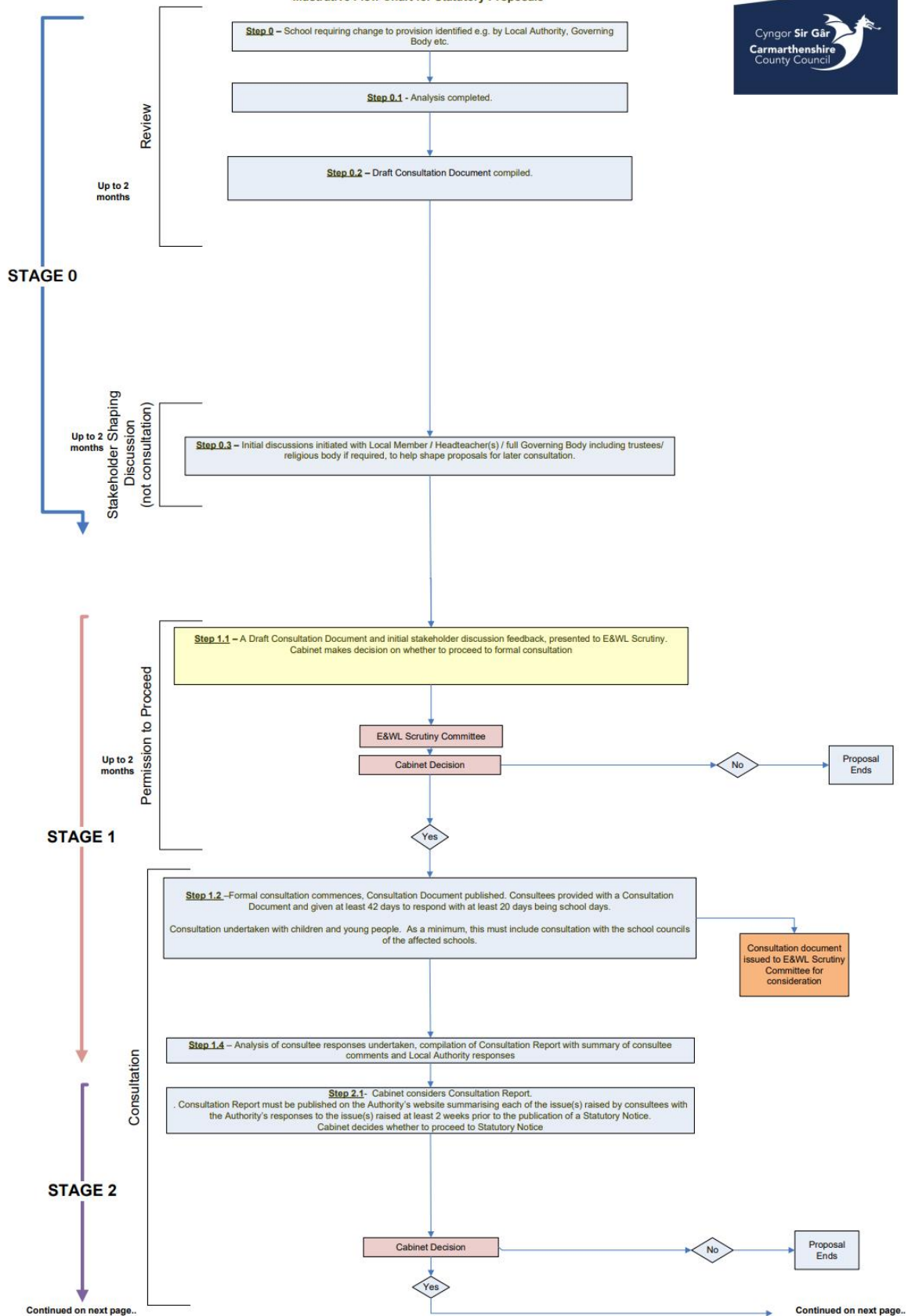
A rolling programme of investment has been implemented to improve efficiency and delivery for both partners (local authorities, colleges etc.) and the Welsh Government.

The rolling programme will strengthen one of the key attributes of the Programme, that of projects being taken forward at the pace of and to the priorities of delivery partners, removing the environment of ‘over-optimism’ or the need for delivery partners to put forward overly ambitious proposals during what is typically a narrow bidding window.

9-Year Capital Rolling Programme	
Years	Expectation
1, 2 and 3	Projects expected to reach full business case within the 3 years
4, 5 and 6	Projects being developed and going through statutory consultation
7, 8 and 9	Pipeline Projects

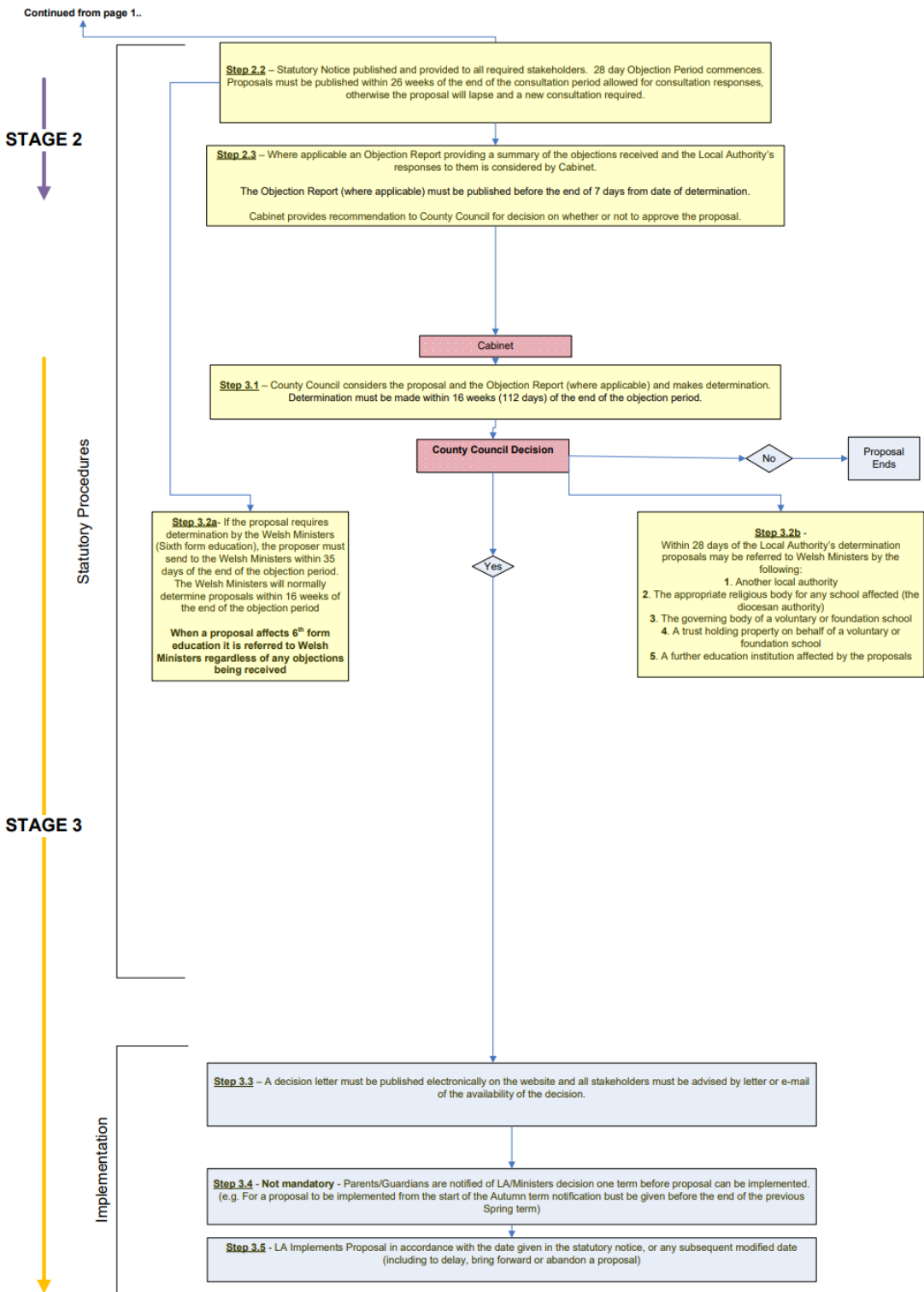
Appendix 1

Department for Education & Children Modernising Education Programme Illustrative Flow Chart for Statutory Proposals



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Appendix 2

Presumption against the Closure of Rural Schools

In Wales, the presumption against the closure of rural schools means that Local Authorities must consider alternative options before formulating a proposal to close a rural school.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Cabinet remains fully supportive of doing all that it can to support and build the future resilience and sustainability of its rural schools and will work to Welsh Government's set of procedures and requirements within the School Organisation Code which works on a presumption against closure.

As part of its vision to promote the Welsh language and sustain rural communities the Cabinet has a positive approach to maintaining rural schools if they are sustainable in terms of stable leadership, provide high standards of education within a safe and suitable environment and operate within their delegated budgets. However, Cabinet will consider the future of any school if it is not sustainable.

The 2018 [School Organisation Code](#) *“makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools establishing a procedural presumption against their closure. This requires proposers to follow a more detailed set of procedures and requirements in formulating a rural school closure proposal and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal. This does not mean that a rural school will never close but the case for closure must be strong and all viable alternatives to closure must have been conscientiously considered by the proposer, including federation.”*

The Code notes that *“the proposer must identify any reasonable alternatives to the proposal which might also address the reason for formulating the proposal. It is important to ensure that all reasonable alternatives identified are properly explored before the proposer decides to proceed to consult on closure.”*

Carmarthenshire County Council continues a commitment to incorporate Stage 0 in the flow charts (see appendix 1 and 3), so that Stage 0 is considered for every school subject to the MEP strategy. This means that all schools will be subject to a detailed set of considerations before formulating a proposal.

Improving the sustainability of a rural school can involve various strategies focusing on financial stability, community engagement, environmental practices, and educational innovation. Listed below are a number of options that could be taken forward by the Local Authority or school in order to address any issues, prior to the consideration of the closure of a school.

Collaboration Models- Federation/Amalgamation with Other Schools (Formal or informal)
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- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Voluntary Collaboration between schools for specific purposes or for a specific period of time. Each schools retains their Governing Body. |
|---|

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resource Sharing: Schools can share resources, facilities, and equipment, leading to cost savings. ○ Enhanced Curriculum: Broader subject offerings and extracurricular activities become possible. ○ Cost Efficiency: Reduces administrative and operational costs by combining schools. ○ Improved Professional Development: Teachers benefit from shared professional development opportunities and best practices. ○ Community Stability: Keeps the school operational, maintaining its role in the community. ● Research different models of Formal Federation e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A formal federation between a certain number of schools creating a single governing body to rationalise the use of human and educational resources. ○ A Formal Federation consisting of one central school and a certain number of smaller schools with one governing body. ○ A Formal Federation between a secondary school and a certain number of the primary schools that feed it, under one governing body. ○ Multi-site school- there may be circumstances in which it is more appropriate to close a number of neighbouring schools and reopen them as one school on a number of sites.
<p>Implementing Shared Leadership Models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership: Provides leadership across multiple schools. ● Management: Streamlines administrative functions, reducing costs. ● Collaborative Culture: Fosters a collaborative culture among schools, benefiting pupils and staff.
<p>Enhanced Use of Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remote Learning: Facilitates remote and blended learning, expanding educational opportunities. ● Resource Efficiency: Reduces the need for physical resources and space. ● Access to Specialist Teachers: Provides access to specialist teachers who may not be available locally.
<p>Enhanced Utilisation of School Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early Years Education/Childcare: Inviting a Cylch Meithrin / private provider in to provide wrap around care (subject to space) ● Increased Revenue: Renting out space can generate additional income for the school. ● Community Engagement: Strengthens the school's role as a community hub and use the school as a venue for community services like a library, daycare, health clinic, or Community Education Centre. ● Energy Efficiency: Implement energy-saving measures like LED lighting, solar panels, and better insulation.
<p>Increasing Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent-Teacher Association (PTA): Strengthen the PTA to involve parents in decision-making and fundraising efforts. ● Volunteer Support: Engages community volunteers to support school activities and programmes.

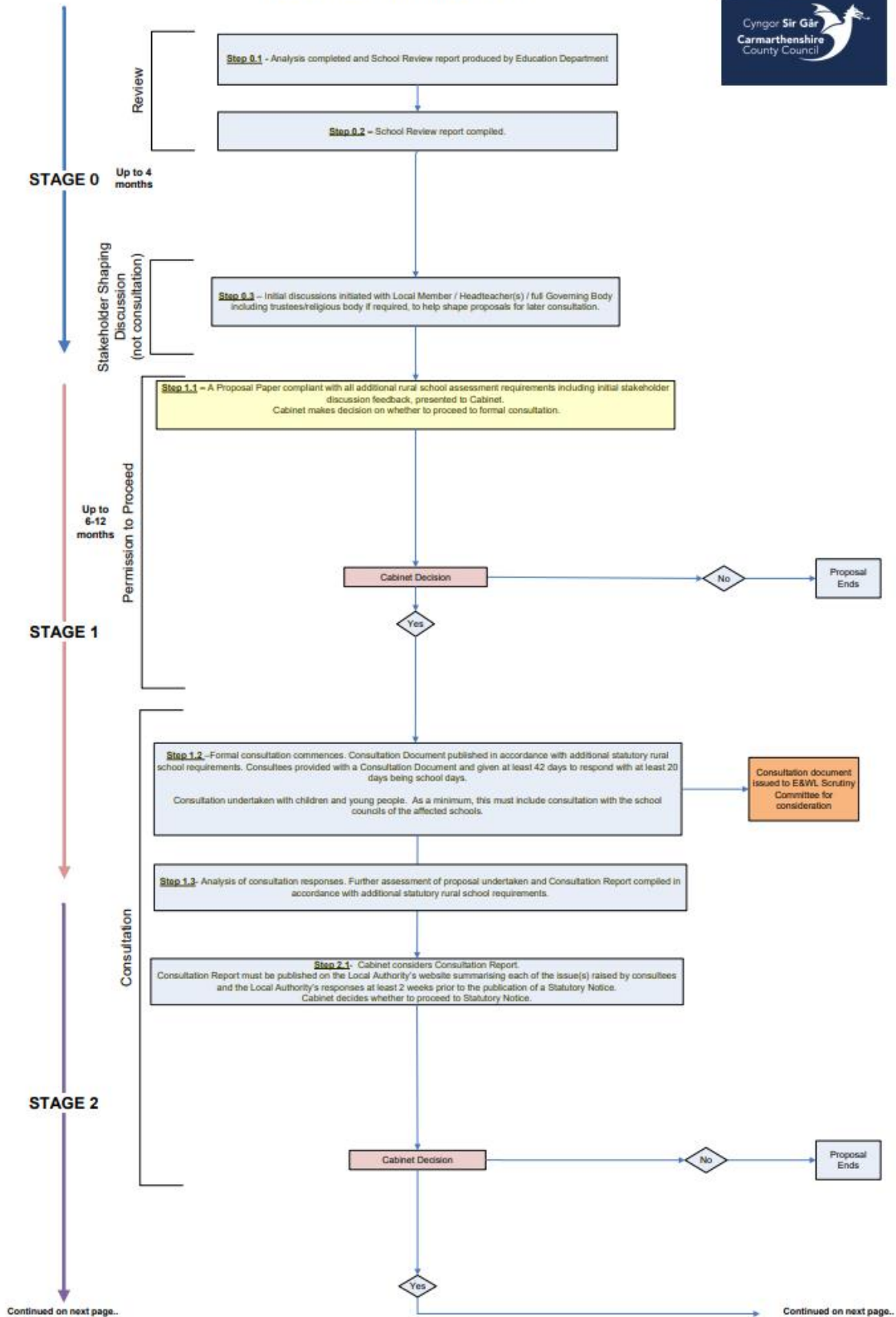
Exploring Grant and Funding Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Support: Secures additional funding to support school operations and programmes.• Innovation: Encourages innovative programmes and initiatives funded by grants.• Sustainability: Helps maintain financial stability and sustainability.

By considering these strategies, a rural school in Carmarthenshire could enhance its sustainability, ensuring it continues to provide valuable educational opportunities for its pupils.

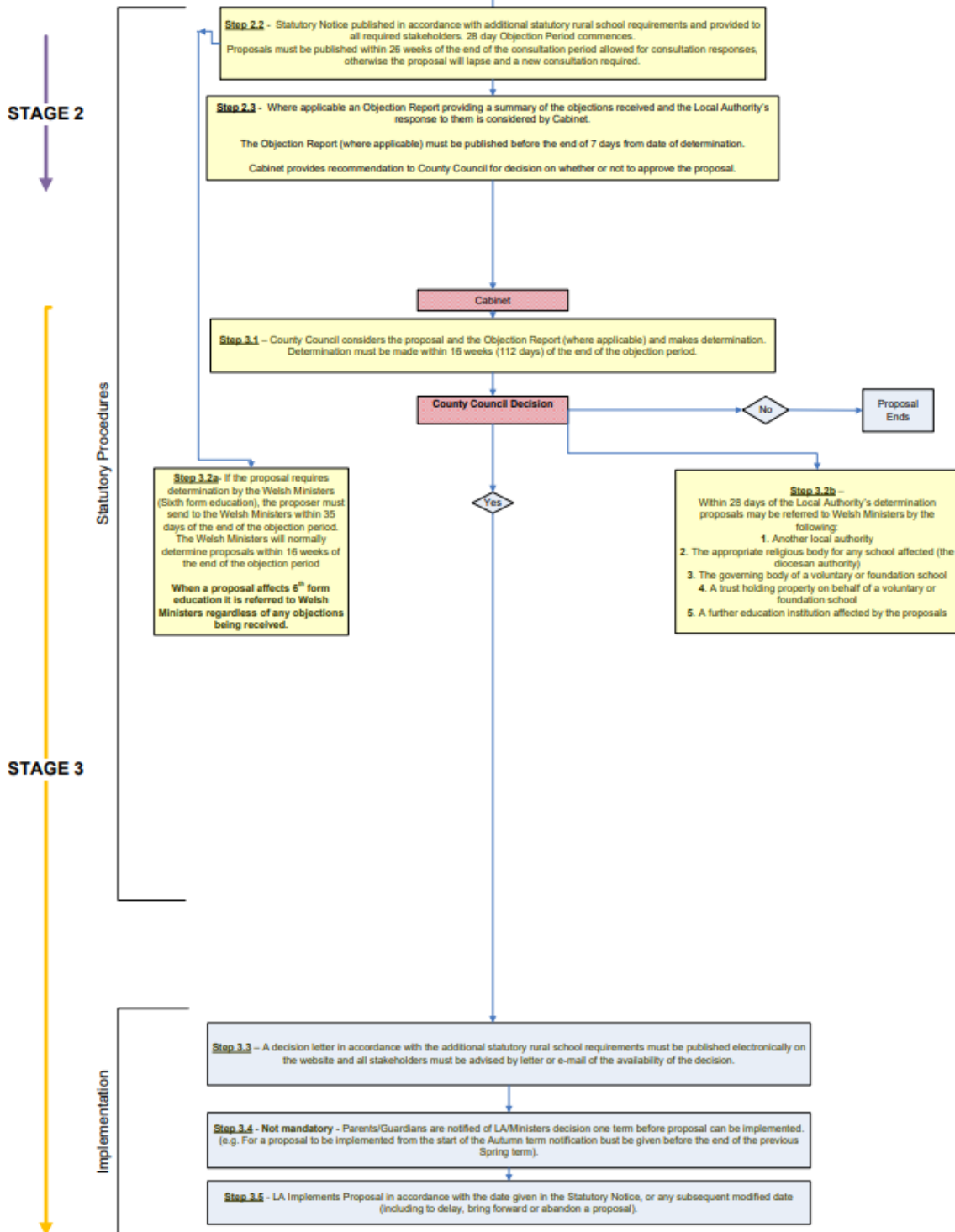
Whilst the Local Authority is committed to considering the viability of the options above prior to considering a proposal to close a school, this does not mean that it will not take forward individual school closure proposals if it is deemed that that is the most appropriate option based on the challenges faced by individual settings.

Appendix 3

Department for Education & Children Modernising Education Programme Illustrative Flow Chart for Rural School Review



Continued from page 1.



Appendix 4

MEP Governance

The governance framework (shown below) for the MEP (as part of the Modernising Education and Communities Programme (MECP) Board) is well established with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Modernising Education & Communities Programme Governance Framework

