

Comments by Councillor Peter Thomas on the report of the statutory consultation that was held on the proposal to close Ysgol Baladeulyn on 31 December 2026 and to offer places for pupils at Ysgol Talysarn from 1 January 2027.

I would like to start by thanking you as officers in the Modernising Education Department for your work over the past two years in considering the future of two primary schools here in Dyffryn Nantlle. I am sure this has been very challenging and a very arduous process for you, and as you know for the parents, children, staff and the community generally.

Although I have been clear from the beginning that the number of children attending the school is not sustainable, I had hoped that the Council would agree with me that the way forward was to keep Ysgol Baladeulyn open through the option of federating with Ysgol Talysarn and adding a specialist unit for children with additional learning needs ALN.

The School Organisation Code states that federation brings great benefits to rural schools through collaboration and strengthening leadership and opportunities for collaboration. This model would ensure continuity in the presence of the school in the village of Nantlle through a collaborative arrangement with Ysgol Talysarn under the leadership of one headteacher and one governing body.

During the consultation, I raised concerns about the impact that closing Ysgol Baladeulyn could have on the use of the Welsh language within the community within the village. I emphasised the important role of the school in welcoming and including new families, including those from English-speaking backgrounds, amongst others, into the Welsh-language life of the community.

It was emphasised that the school contributes significantly to the use of Welsh in informal contexts, such as social gatherings, after-school play and interaction between parents and local residents. Concern was expressed that the loss of the school could be a severe blow to the village and its residents, and that if there were no school, then families with children would not consider buying or renting homes in Nantlle, thereby leading to a gradual decline in the use of Welsh in the community.

I am pleased to see that the Council recognises the concerns raised regarding the role of Ysgol Baladeulyn in supporting the use of Welsh within the community in the village, and accepts that the comments received highlight a potential adverse impact on local linguistic vitality outside the formal educational provision.

The likely impact on travel arrangements and the effect that moving school could have on the children must also be considered.

The closure of Ysgol Baladeulyn would be a severe blow to this community in Nantlle, and the feeling is that closing another school here in Gwynedd is another sign of the challenges our communities face here in the rural parts of the county.

I would be extremely grateful if the Cabinet would consider the points I have raised and the comments received during the statutory consultation, and reject the opinion of the Modernising Education Department to close Ysgol Baladeulyn at the end of December 2026.

Thank you very much for your time.

Peter Thomas (CYNG/COUN)