

CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



Report for a meeting of Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Date of meeting: 10 February 2026

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dewi Jones

Contact Officer: Gwern ap Rhisiart – Head of Education Department

Title of Item: Proposal Paper - Ysgol Y Garreg

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 To approve the publication of a statutory notice, allowing a statutory objection period of 28 days in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the guidance of the School Organisation Code 011/2018: on the proposal as follows -
- 1.2 "To close Ysgol Y Garreg on 31 August 2026 and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school from 1 September 2026."
- 1.3 If the proposal would be approved, the Ysgol Cefn Coch catchment area would be extended to include the existing Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1 Permission is sought to publish a statutory notice on the proposal to address the critical situation at Ysgol Y Garreg. The substantial drop in the number of learners attending Ysgol Y Garreg recently has led to an unsustainable and very vulnerable situation. Based on the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) January 2026, Ysgol Y Garreg is the smallest school in the county, with only 2 learners from Reception to Year 6 on the register and 0 in the nursery class.
- 2.2 The Education Department is submitting a report to the Cabinet requesting permission to hold a statutory objection period on the proposal to close Ysgol Y Garreg in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the statutory Welsh Government Code (School Organisation Code 011/2018). The main challenges faced by the school are detailed in this report.

3. INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Context

3.1 The Council has been implementing the 'Excellent Primary Education For The Children Of Gwynedd' strategy since it was adopted by the Full Council in April 2009. At its meeting on 18 December 2018, the Cabinet approved the principles of "Fit for Purpose Education" which now provides a basis to realising the Education Department's vision and develop the system to ensure a high-quality education for the children and young people of Gwynedd for the twenty first century. These principles work towards rationalising age-ranges within primary classes and ensuring sufficient non-contact time for headteachers to focus on leadership matters in the primary schools.

Presumption against the closure of rural schools

3.2 In the case of Ysgol Y Garreg, which has been listed as a rural school for the purpose of the code, specific consideration was given to the additional procedural requirements in relation to drawing-up proposals for rural schools when drawing-up this paper.

3.3 The School Organisation Code includes a special procedure in relation to rural schools, establishing a procedural presumption against closure. It is noted in the Code *"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."*

3.4 In addition to the factors that are relevant when developing any proposal, specific assessments must also be undertaken in relation to a proposal of this type. Several assessments were conducted in line with the requirements of the Code, in relation to the options believed that would address the school's situation.

Closure of a school with fewer than 10 registered learners

3.5 Where a school has fewer than 10 registered learners at the January census point (PLASC - Pupil Level Annual School Census), the Code states:

"The 2013 Act permits governing bodies / local authorities to undertake a streamlined procedure to bring about official closure. This consists solely of the issue of the notice of closure – the requirement for general consultation being waived, provided sufficient equivalent school places have been identified which would be reasonably accessible to those pupils actually or potentially displaced."

3.6 Since there were fewer than 10 registered learners at Ysgol Y Garreg (January 2026 PLASC), the School Organisation Code allows the authority to follow a streamlined procedure to close the school. Specifically, the requirement for general consultation is waived, and the only requirement is to issue the statutory notice.

3.7 Following this the 28-day objection period would be held, and there would be a need to consider any objections received before making a final decision. Proposals to close schools with fewer than 10 learners cannot be referred to the Welsh Ministers in accordance with section 54 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Ysgol Y Garreg is a community primary school located in the village of Llanfrothen. The school provides education for learners between the ages of 3 and 11 years old and is a Category 3, Welsh-medium school. Learners are admitted to the school on a part-time basis in the September following their third birthday, and as full-time learners in the September following their fourth birthday.

4.2 Based on the PLASC figures in January 2026, there are 95% surplus places at the school (Reception to Year 6), therefore the school is operating with a very high level of surplus places. The school has a capacity for 41 learners (R to Yr6). There is capacity for 7 learners in the Nursery Class. With no learners on the register in the Nursery Class, there are 100% surplus places in the Nursery.

4.3 There is a reduction of 88% in the numbers on the register compared to PLASC data from January 2025 when there were 17 learners at the school. When the number of learners drop to very low levels, particularly below 10, the ability to present a broad curriculum for the future is hindered. The low number of learners raises concerns regarding:

- Educational experience and interaction with peers
- Staffing viability and resilience
- Financial sustainability and efficient use of resources
- The ability to satisfy the curriculum's statutory requirements

5 THE EXISTING SITUATION OF YSGOL Y GARREG

5.1 In September 2025, there were 9 learners on the register (Reception to Year 6) with 0 learners in the Nursery Class. During the Autumn term, a substantial drop was seen in the numbers and the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) on 20 January 2026 shows that there are only 2 learners at the school (Reception to Year 6) with 0 learners in the Nursery Class, a reduction of 78% of learners in the school during one term.

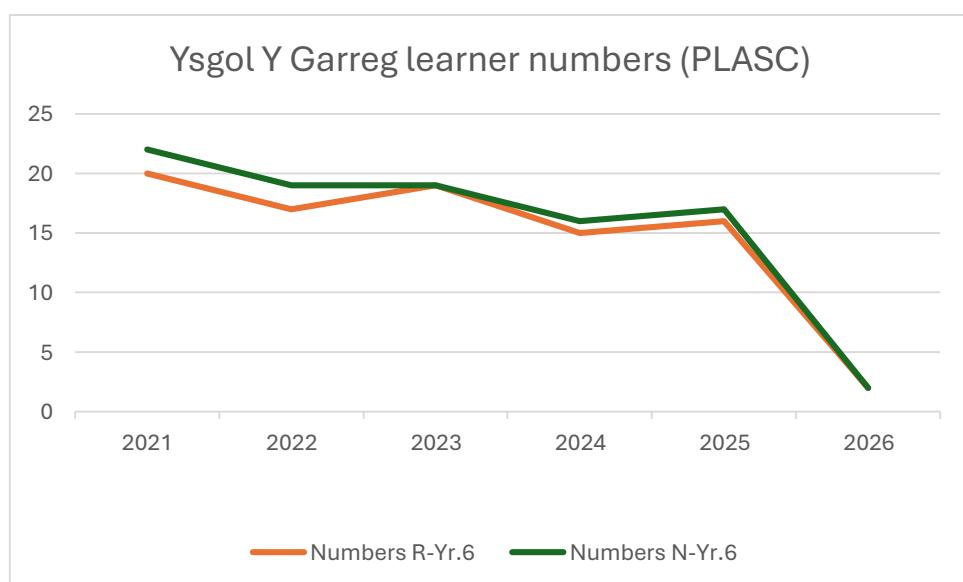
5.2 The changes in the number of learners during the academic year disrupts the usual learner projections modelling, which is based on numbers. Sudden changes in numbers usually take around four years to stabilise, and parents' choice of school impacts how registration figures change from one year to another.

5.3 In accordance with the Schools Organisation Code (Wales) 2018, which makes it a requirement for local authorities to use the most robust information available when planning school places, the January 2026 PLASC census shows that there are no learners of a statutory age in Reception to Year 5 at Ysgol Y Garreg. When drawing-up this report (January 2026), there were no applications for admission to the Reception class at Ysgol Y Garreg for September 2026. Consequently, and in the absence of any robust evidence of new admissions in the near future, it is anticipated that no learners of a statutory age will attend Ysgol Y Garreg in September 2026.

5.4 The historical data from January PLASC numbers below shows that the numbers have reduced drastically and suddenly at Ysgol Y Garreg. This situation comes as a result of Reception to Year 5 learners moving during the 2025 Autumn term from Ysgol Y Garreg to other schools.

Learner numbers at Ysgol Y Garreg (January historical PLASC)									
	Nursery	Reception	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2026	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
2025	1	2	0	1	2	3	3	5	17
2024	1	0	1	1	3	2	5	3	16
2023	0	3	1	3	2	5	3	2	19
2022	2	1	3	2	6	3	2	0	19
2021	2	2	2	6	2	2	0	6	22

Data source January PLASC



Main challenges facing the school:

5.5 As a result of the current very low numbers, the school is in a critical situation and is facing numerous increasing challenges, including:

- **Low learner numbers** - The PLASC data in January 2026 shows that there are two full-time learners at the school (Reception to Year 6) and 0 learners in the nursery class.
- **Leadership and staffing** - The existing staffing structure at Ysgol Y Garreg includes an interim headteacher who is responsible for two schools through an informal arrangement, one full time teacher and a part-time teaching assistant that works 0.6 FTE. The current staffing arrangement has offered a short-term solution; however, the very low numbers of learners have contributed to a situation that is challenging in terms of long-term sustainability.
- **High percentage of surplus places** - Based on the figures of January 2026 (Reception to Year 6), there are 95% surplus places at the school (39 in total). The school has capacity for 41 learners (Reception to Year 6) and capacity for 7 learners in the Nursery Class. Therefore, with 0 nursery learners on the register, there are a further 7 surplus places in the nursery also.
- **Very small class sizes and a broad age range** - The learners (Reception to Y6) are educated in one class. The second classroom in the school is not used. There are no learners in Nursery to Year 5 at the school.
- **Projected numbers** - The projections based on the PLASC numbers in January 2026 suggest that there will be no statutory aged learners at the school in September 2026 as there are no learners in the Reception to year 5 classes nor in the Nursery class this year.
- **Catchment area learners** - The GIS data taken in January 2026 shows that only 8% of learners from Ysgol Y Garreg's catchment area choose to attend the school. 92% of the learners in the catchment area choose to attend schools outside of the catchment area.
- **Ysgol Y Garreg receives an additional sum to the core financial allocation** - Ysgol Y Garreg receives an additional amount to the usual allocation via the minimum staffing protection policy (which ensures at least a headteacher and teacher at each school, and a headteacher and a teaching assistant in schools with fewer than 15 full-time learners). The total additional funding for the 2025-26 financial year (based on the numbers in September 2024) was £89,701.
- **Average cost per learner** - The average cost per learner at Ysgol Y Garreg in 2025-26 is £14,621, compared with the county average of £5,780.

6 DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNING BODY OF YSGOL Y GARREG

6.1 In June 2025, the Education Department was informed of concerns regarding the school's staffing situation. The headteacher and governing body were advised by senior officers from the Education Department that urgent action was needed to secure appropriate staffing levels for September 2025.

6.2 After advertising for a permanent teacher post during the summer term, efforts to appoint a teacher for the school before the end of term were unsuccessful. During this period, several learner transfers to nearby schools were recorded, which led to a substantial drop in learner numbers at Ysgol Y Garreg by September 2025.

6.3 Senior Officers from the Education Department visited the school to meet with members of the Governing Body in November 2025, as a result of further transfers of learners from the school during the autumn term. The intention to look at Ysgol Y Garreg's critical situation was noted, as well as possible options that would attempt to respond to the challenges facing the school.

7 SPECIFIC FACTORS WHEN CONSIDERING CLOSING A SCHOOL

Although a process to close a school that has fewer than 10 learners waives the requirement for general consultation, the Schools Organisation Code 011/2018 states that relevant matters included in the Code must be considered. It notes that when considering whether a school closure is appropriate, special attention should be given to the following options:

- a. Whether the establishment of multi-site schools might be considered as a means of retaining buildings, or the reasons for not pursuing this option.*

With only 2 learners at the school, Ysgol Y Garreg is facing increasing challenges to set a balanced budget as the school receives an allocation based on learner numbers, and this, as well as the protection sum allocated to them will enable them to employ a headteacher and teaching assistant only, based on the numbers of 2 learners. Because of this, Cyngor Gwynedd is of the opinion that consideration cannot be given to the establishment of multi-site schools as a means of keeping the school open.

- b. Whether alternatives to closure, such as clustering, collaboration or federation with other schools, might be considered or the reasons for not pursuing these as an alternative.*

As clustering, collaboration or federation with other schools would mean continuing with the existing school, and therefore a high likelihood that the current challenges would continue and intensify over the next few years, the Council is of the opinion that making this an option does not address the challenges facing Ysgol Y Garreg now and in the future.

- c. Whether the possibility of making fuller use of the existing buildings as a community or educational resource could be explored.*

Since Canolfan Gymdeithasol Llanfrothen is located next door to the school, and the local pub, Menter Y Ring (The Brondanw Arms) has received funding to re-open for the benefit of the community, it is not anticipated that another community resource is needed in the area. Nevertheless, if the proposal is implemented, Cyngor Gwynedd has a post-occupancy policy for using former school sites and this policy would be followed when considering the future of the site.

- d. The overall effect of closure on the local community (including the loss of school-based facilities which are used by the local community)*

At present, no community use is made of the school. A Community Centre is located next door to the school. Cyngor Gwynedd is of the opinion that as the Centre is independent from the school, it is not anticipated that closing the school would have any impact on local community events.

- e. How parents' and learners' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported.*

To mitigate against any potential negative impact on learners, we would encourage discussions between Ysgol Cefn Coch and the parents of learners within the catchment area of Ysgol Y Garreg so that they can take advantage of their facilities and after-school activities, and to encourage collaboration between the school and the community of Llanfrothen.

8 IDENTIFYING OPTIONS

8.1 All of the challenges noted in 5.5 above meant that there was a need to review the school's sustainability for the future, giving consideration to what the Schools Organisation Code 011/2018 notes as examples of possible options that could be worth considering when drawing-up the proposal for a rural school. During discussions with the school's main stakeholders, a list of options for consideration was created for the school. These options were:

- No change - continue with the current situation
- Federalisation with a nearby school
- Close Ysgol Y Garreg and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school.

Other considerations

8.2 Comments were received from the governing body which noted concerns about the proposal to close Ysgol Y Garreg and the impact that this would have on the local education provision and the community of Llanfrothen. They suggested -

"If the Council decides to close the school, I wish to strongly encourage you to consider restructuring the building as a specialist centre for pupils who experience difficulties in settling in at mainstream schools, but who are not eligible for Special Educational Needs Schools."

8.3 The authority was requested to carefully consider the local community and social impact should the school close, and to consider the capacity and suitability of Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school. It was emphasised that there was an opportunity to retain Ysgol Y Garreg as a specialist educational resource, instead of disposing of the asset.

9 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

9.1 In line with the "*Excellent Primary Education for the Children of Gwynedd*" Strategy, several factors were considered when appraising the options for the situation, specifically:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupil numbers and surplus places• Class sizes and age ranges• Leadership and staffing• The community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial resources• The Welsh Language• Geographical factors and transport
---	---

9.2 A further comparison of all options against the strategy's factors can be seen in **Appendix 1** (Options Appraisal Table) and the conclusion from the evaluation of the individual options can be seen below.

9.3 No change - continue with the current situation

This option means that there would be no change to the current provision in the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area.

Having weighed-up the school's latest situation against the relevant factors, it is concluded that this option does not address the current challenges facing the school, noted in 5.5, including:

- **Low learner numbers** - Low learner numbers would continue, two Reception - Y6 learners and 0 learners in the Nursery class and substantial surplus places (95% R-Y6 and 96% N-Y6). Projected numbers suggest that no learners of statutory age will attend the school in September 2026.
- **Very small class sizes and broad age range** - There are two classes in Ysgol Y Garreg, and one of these classes is not in use. (January 2026) There are two learners (Reception - Year 6) in one of the classes.
- **Financial resources** - In 2025-26, Ysgol Y Garreg receives a substantial additional protection allocation of £89,701, and the average cost per head for every learner is £14,621; an amount that is higher than the county average of £5,780. As it is not anticipated that this option will lead to an increase in learner numbers, it is not anticipated that this option will affect the budgetary allocation of Ysgol Y Garreg.
- **High percentage of surplus places** - Based on the figures of January 2026 (Reception to Year 6), there are 95% surplus places at the school (39 in total). The school has capacity for 41 learners (Reception to Year 6) and capacity for 7 learners in the Nursery Class. Therefore, with 0 nursery learners on the register, there is 100% surplus places in the nursery also.
- **Average cost per learner** - The average cost per learner at Ysgol Y Garreg in 2025-26 is £14,621, compared with a county average of £5,780.

9.4 Federalisation with a nearby school

The Code notes that federalisation brings particular benefits to rural schools and states that the proposer must therefore show how federalisation has been considered as an option. It has been demonstrated that federalisation could offer advantages to rural schools in some circumstances, specifically strengthening leadership and opportunities to collaborate.

This option would involve establishing a formal collaboration arrangement, between 3 schools, as Ysgol Cefn Coch is already federalised with Ysgol Talsarnau (Ffederasiwn Afon Dwyryd).

This model would ensure the continued presence of the school at the village of Llanfrothen by means of a collaboration arrangement with nearby schools, led by one headteacher and one governing body. The governing bodies of the individual schools would be dissolved, and a (new) federal governing body would be formed. The identity of the school in question (including the name, ethos and school uniform) would continue, and it would enable the possibility of sharing staff, resources, buildings and expertise.

When considering this model, there is a need to assess any potential impact on how the schools in the federation would operate. Whilst noting the challenges facing Ysgol Y Garreg, there would be a need to ensure that such arrangements would offer advantages to all children and young people in the federation by improving the educational provision.

As numbers at Ysgol Y Garreg have reached a critical situation with two learners (Reception-Y6) and 0 learners in the Nursery Class on the register, and as an informal collaboration arrangement already exists with another school, it was anticipated that there were no obvious advantages for other schools from federalising with Ysgol Y Garreg.

There is no clear evidence that federalisation would lead to an increase in numbers.

After weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of federalisation, it was concluded that this option did not respond to the main challenges faced by the school, as noted in 5.5 above, including:

- **Learner numbers and surplus places.** There is no clear evidence that federalisation would lead to an increase in numbers. Consequently, it is anticipated that federalisation would mean that the challenge of low learner numbers (2 Reception - Y6 and 0 Nursery) and substantial surplus places (95% R-Y6 and 96% N-Y6) at Ysgol Y Garreg will continue.
- **Very small class sizes and broad age range.** There are 2 classes in Ysgol Y Garreg, and one of these classes is not in use. (January 2026) There are 2 learners (Reception - Year 6) in one of the classes. As it is not

anticipated that federalisation would lead to an increase in the numbers, it is anticipated that federalisation would not respond to the challenge of very small classes.

- **Financial resources.** In 2025-26, Ysgol Y Garreg is receiving a substantial additional protection allocation of £89,701, and the average cost per head for every learner is £14,621; an amount that is higher than the county average of £5,780. As it is not anticipated that this option will lead to an increase in learner numbers, it is not anticipated that this option will affect the budgetary allocation of Ysgol Y Garreg.

9.5 Close Ysgol Y Garreg and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school

This option would mean closing Ysgol Y Garreg and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school. Ysgol Cefn Coch is considered the alternative school as this is the school located closest geographically to Ysgol Y Garreg. Ysgol Cefn Coch and Ysgol Y Garreg are in the secondary catchment area of Ysgol Ardudwy. The school is located 2.1 miles from the Ysgol Y Garreg site.

Although Ysgol Cefn Coch is designated as the alternative school for the purposes of the proposal, this does not restrict the choice of parents. Subject to capacity, parents retain the right to express choice of any school in accordance with the Gwynedd schools admissions policy.

Subsequently, it is proposed to extend the Ysgol Cefn Coch catchment area to include the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area for the future.

The rationale behind recommending this proposal as the preferred option is elaborated upon further in Section 11, The preferred option.

10 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS – PRESUMPTION AGAINST THE CLOSURE OF RURAL SCHOOLS

10.1 In addition to the factors that are relevant when developing any proposal, specific assessments must also be undertaken in relation to a proposed proposal of this type. Several assessments were conducted in line with the requirements of the Code, in relation to the options being considered. The full assessments can be seen in **Appendix 2**, and a summary of these assessments can be seen in the table below:

Option	Assessment of the likely impact on the quality and standards of education	Assessment of the likely impact on different travel arrangements	Assessment of the likely impact on the community
No change - continue with the current situation	Neutral - No change	Neutral - No change No learner in the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area will need to travel an unreasonable distance to the school.	Neutral - No change Keeps the school and its potential to be a community resource in the village of Llanfrothen.
Federalisation with a nearby school	Neutral/Partly positive - No impact on the provision at Ysgol Y Garreg Opportunity to share good practices between both schools and the possibilities of making better use of resources.	Neutral The learners would continue to be educated as Ysgol Y Garreg and the learners' travel arrangements would remain the same. No learner in the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area will need to travel an unreasonable distance to the school.	Neutral Possibility of community collaboration between both schools that are part of the federation. Keeps the school as a community resource in the village of Llanfrothen.
Close Ysgol Y Garreg and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as	Partly positive The assessment noted that the standard of education	Negative Transport would need to be provided for Ysgol Y Garreg	Neutral/Partly Negative Leads to the loss of a school at the village of Llanfrothen.

the alternative school	<p>provided at Ysgol Cefn Coch is equivalent to the standard of education provided at Ysgol Y Garreg.</p> <p>As there are more learners at Ysgol Cefn Coch, it is anticipated that there will be an opportunity to educate children in larger groups, with age-relevant peers to expand their experiences.</p> <p>Based on this, it is concluded that there would be a positive impact on teaching and learning experiences by teaching the learners of Y Garreg catchment area at Ysgol Cefn Coch.</p>	<p>catchment area learners who wish to attend Ysgol Cefn Coch, in line with Cyngor Gwynedd's Transport policy.</p> <p>Additional transport costs are anticipated - estimated cost, approximately £30,000-£40,000 per year.</p> <p>Some of the learners will need to travel further to school than they currently do.</p> <p>No learner in the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area will need to travel an unreasonable distance to the school.</p>	<p>To mitigate the impact on the community, opportunities are noted to ensure that the community of Llanfrothen is aware of the activities of the alternative school, and community collaboration will be encouraged between Ysgol Cefn Coch and the community of Llanfrothen, where appropriate.</p> <p>It is noted that a vast proportion of the children who live in the school's catchment area already attend other schools, including Ysgol Cefn Coch, therefore it is concluded that there is an existing link between Ysgol Cefn Coch and the community of Ysgol Y Garreg.</p>
-------------------------------	---	---	--

11. THE PREFERRED OPTION

11.1 Of the options considered, the preferred option for this proposal paper is the option to close Ysgol Y Garreg and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school.

11.2 This option is preferred for the following reasons:

11.3 Learner numbers and surplus places

11.3.1 In January 2026, two learners from Reception - Year 6 and 0 Nursery learners, attended Ysgol Y Garreg. As a result, Ysgol Y Garreg have 39 (95%) surplus places at the school (Reception - Year 6). The school has capacity for 7 learners in the Nursery class also, therefore, with 0 nursery learners on the register, there are a further 7 surplus places in the nursery (100%).

11.3.2 The number of learners at the school has dropped substantially during the past year, from 17 Reception to Yr 6 learners in January 2025, to 2 learners in January 2026, which is an 88% reduction.

11.3.3 According to the projections created in September 2025, it is anticipated that the numbers will remain very low over the next three years, with learner numbers continuing to be below 10. See below the numbers for September 2025 and the projected numbers of Ysgol Y Garreg for 2026-28.

	N	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total R-Yr 6
Numbers September 2025	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	3	9
Projections September 2026	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	6
Projections September 2027	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	4
Projections September 2028	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2

11.3.4 In September 2025, 131 learners (Reception - Yr 6) and 15 Nursery learners attended Ysgol Cefn Coch.

11.3.5 Ysgol Cefn Coch has capacity for 208 (Reception - Yr 6), which means that Ysgol Cefn Coch has sufficient capacity to receive learners from the Y Garreg catchment area.

11.3.6 The Schools Organisation Code 011/2018 notes that "excessive numbers of unused places that could be removed mean that resources are tied up unproductively. A significant level of surplus provision is defined as 25% or more of a school's capacity". As a result of the low numbers, there are 95% (39 in total) empty places (R-Yr 6) at Ysgol Y Garreg.

11.4 Class sizes and age ranges

11.4.1 As seen from the table below, only 1 class is being used at Ysgol Y Garreg. There are two Reception - Yr 6 learners in this class all day.

11.4.2 The table shows that there are 7 classes (Nursery - Yr 6) at Ysgol Cefn Coch (January 2026). The average class size at Ysgol Cefn Coch has 21 learners.

School	Year								
	Nursery	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Y Garreg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
	Class				A class with 2 learners				
Cefn Coch	16	20	22	21	23	10	12	9	15
	Class 16	Class 20	Class 22	Class 21	Class 23	Class 22	Class 24		

11.4.3 If the proposal would be approved, Ysgol Cefn Coch would be the catchment area school for any future learners living in the existing Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area. As a result, they would receive their education in classes with other learners of the same age group, if they attend Ysgol Cefn Coch.

11.5 Geographical factors and transport

11.5.1 It is noted in the "Excellent Primary Education for the Children of Gwynedd" Strategy that an attempt should be made to restrict travelling to a maximum of 30 minutes of one-way travel between the home and the school. From implementing the proposal, it is anticipated that all existing learners from the catchment area would be within a reasonable distance (less than 30 minutes of travel), to the alternative school, namely Ysgol Cefn Coch.

11.5.2 After assessing the distance of Ysgol Y Garreg from Ysgol Cefn Coch and the safety of walking and cycle paths to the alternative school, it is concluded, as the distance is more than 2 miles and the paths are unsuitable for primary school age children to walk or cycle along, transport would be offered to the learners from the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area to Ysgol Cefn Coch, in line with the County's School Transport Policy. It is anticipated that the transport costs would be around £30,000-£40,000 per year.

11.6 Financial Resources

11.6.1 As a result of the very low learner numbers at Ysgol Y Garreg, the learner-based allocation is not sufficient to be able to maintain the school. Consequently, Ysgol Y Garreg receives an additional amount to the

core allocation via the minimum staffing protection policy (which ensures at least a headteacher and teacher at each school, and a headteacher and an assistant in schools with fewer than 15 full-time learners). Additional funding of £89,701 was allocated to Ysgol Y Garreg this year (2025-26), through the Minimum Staffing Protection Policy.

11.6.2 The allocations for Ysgol Y Garreg and Ysgol Cefn Coch for the 2025-26 year, are based on the numbers in September 2024 and the amounts received by the two schools are noted below:

School	Allocation base (September 2024 numbers)			Core allocation	Additional financial allocation (protection)	Total	£ per learner
	N	FP	KS2				
Y Garreg	1	3	13	£150,662	£89,701	£240,371	£14,621
Cefn Coch	21	66	72	£856,802	£0	£856,802	£5,819
Total	22	69	85	£1,007,464	£89,701	£1,097,173	-

11.6.3 The average cost per learner at Ysgol Y Garreg is £14,621, and £5,819 at Ysgol Cefn Coch. The average county-wide cost per learner for 2025-26 is £5,780. This means that the cost per learner at Ysgol Y Garreg is £8,841 higher than the county average for the same period.

11.6.4 A total of £1,097,173 is allocated to the two schools in the 2025-26 financial year. Ysgol Cefn Coch does not receive an additional sum through the minimum staffing protection policy. The school's current learner numbers attract a sufficient budget to maintain appropriate staffing levels.

11.6.5 In terms of revenue costs, should the proposal be implemented, and should the learners of the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area wish to attend Ysgol Cefn Coch, based on the 2026-27 budget (which is based on the learner numbers in September 2025):

- it is estimated that the proposal would create an annual saving of £147,845, less additional transport needs costs (up to £40,000) - which is approximately £107,845 per annum.
- it is anticipated that the core allocation for Ysgol Cefn Coch would increase to £859,000 and the cost per learner would be £5,859.

11.6.6 Any savings in revenue costs would be retained in the Gwynedd Schools budget area.

11.6.7 Note that there are no capital costs associated with the proposal.

11.7 Leadership and Staffing

11.7.1 The current staffing structure at Ysgol Y Garreg includes an interim Headteacher in charge who shares her duties between Ysgol Y Garreg and another school via an informal arrangement, along with one full time teacher and one teaching assistant (0.6 FTE).

11.7.2 At Ysgol Cefn Coch, there is a non-contact Headteacher who spends 100% of his time leading the federation of Ysgol Cefn Coch (3.5 days) and Ysgol Talsarnau (1.5 days). There are 6 full-time teachers and 7 assistants, as well as a clerical officer, at the school.

11.8 The Community

11.8.1 Welsh Government guidance (The Schools Organisation Code) states that a community impact assessment must be held as part of any proposal for school reorganisation. A community impact assessment was carried out on the list of options noted in paragraph 8.1. See the full report in Appendix 2.

11.8.2 This assessment shows that there will be some negative impact on the community if the proposal to close Ysgol Y Garreg is implemented. It is acknowledged that closing the school would lead to the loss of a school in the community of Llanfrothen, however, the assessment notes that a very vast proportion (92%) of the learners who live within the school's catchment area already attend other schools. Of the number of learners within the school's catchment area, 13% attend Ysgol Cefn Coch, therefore, it is concluded that there is already some link between Ysgol Cefn Coch and the Ysgol Y Garreg community.

11.8.3 Although no community use is made of the Ysgol Y Garreg building, the school is engaged with its community and occasionally uses the community's facilities.

11.8.4 Should the proposal to close Ysgol Y Garreg be realised, every effort will be made to mitigate the impact on the community by encouraging links between the communities and Ysgol Cefn Coch. To mitigate the impact on the community, opportunities are noted to ensure that the community of Y Garreg is aware of the activities of the alternative school, and community collaboration will be encouraged between Ysgol Cefn Coch and the community of Ysgol Y Garreg, where appropriate.

11.8.5 Should the proposal to close Ysgol Y Garreg be realised, it will be essential as part of the process, to encourage discussions between Ysgol Cefn Coch and the parents of Ysgol Y Garreg learners, so that parents and learners can take advantage of their facilities and any after-school activities.

11.9 The Welsh Language

11.9.1 Welsh Government guidance (Schools Organisation Code) notes that a Welsh language impact assessment must be held as part of any proposal for school reorganisation. See the full report in Appendix 2.

11.9.2 The Welsh language impact assessment notes that it is anticipated that the proposal would have a partial impact on some elements in the context of the Welsh language, mainly:

- the proposal to close Ysgol Y Garreg and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school would mean that the learners of the Y Garreg catchment area would continue to be educated in a Welsh-medium school.
- the proposal would mean that the learners would have access to a higher supply in terms of staffing and they would be a part of a larger group of peers of the same age; the proposal could strengthen the opportunities for learners within the classroom.
- the proposal would mean that Ysgol Y Garreg learners would be more likely to use the Welsh language in informal Welsh contexts with their peers outside school hours.
- the proposal would mean that fewer parents would be likely to meet daily in the community of Llanfrothen during the school run.

11.9.3 Based on the above, from implementing the proposal, it is anticipated that there would be no impact on the learners from the Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area's use of Welsh in a formal context at the school. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that there would be more use of Welsh in informal context outside school hours.

11.10 Quality and Standards of Education

11.10.1 An assessment of the probable impact on the quality and standards of education was carried out on all options. See the full report in Appendix 2.

11.10.2 According to the latest Estyn reports, Ysgol Cefn Coch offers a quality and standard education which is equivalent to Ysgol Y Garreg, at least.

11.10.3 Ysgol Y Garreg was last inspected by Estyn in 2023 (new inspection framework), and it was noted that 'the teaching standard was consistently good'. Estyn submitted the following as recommendations:

- *Ensure an appropriate level of challenge to support pupils to develop their skills to the best of their ability.*
- *Provide opportunities for pupils to undertake leadership roles to contribute to the work and wider life of the school.*

11.10.4 Ysgol Cefn Coch was last inspected by Estyn in 2018, where it was concluded that the school's current performance against the outcome questions and their provision was Good, and the leadership and care and well-being was Outstanding (previous inspection framework).

11.10.5 As there are more learners at Ysgol Cefn Coch, it is anticipated that there will be an opportunity to educate children in larger groups, with age-relevant peers to expand their experiences, should the proposal be implemented. Based on this, it is concluded that there would be a positive impact on teaching and learning experiences by teaching the learners of Y Garreg catchment area at Ysgol Cefn Coch.

11.10.6 It should be noted that it is not concerns about the quality of the current education at Ysgol Y Garreg that have led to this proposal. Indeed, due to the very low teacher:learner ratio, the children make good progress. However, the main challenges faced by the school and the very low numbers and small class numbers, mean that there are restrictions on the school's ability to provide opportunities for learners to nurture and take advantage of extra-curricular and social experiences and the ability to work together in pairs and groups of peers in the classroom, in line with the curriculum's requirements.

11.11 Condition and suitability of buildings

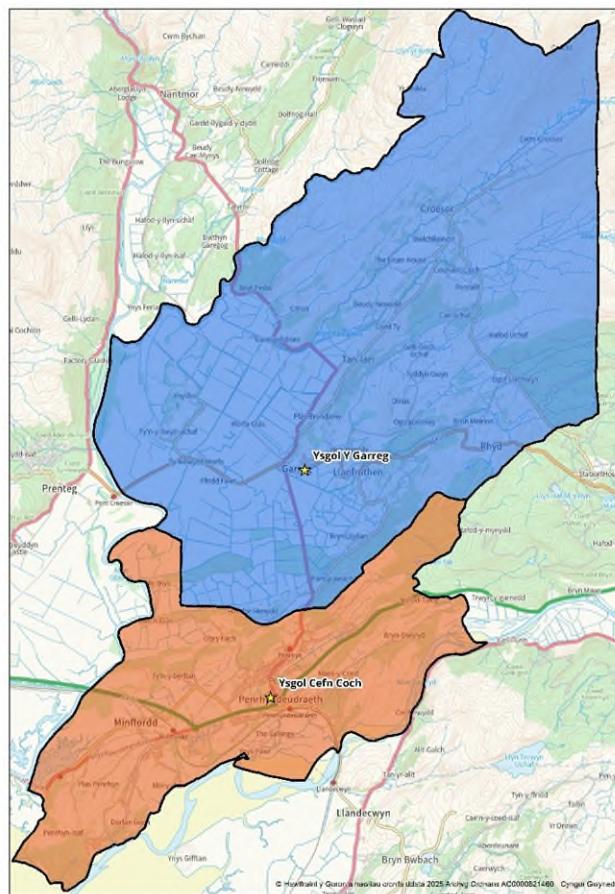
11.11.1 The Authority's latest condition assessment notes that the condition of Ysgol Y Garreg and Ysgol Cefn Coch school buildings are noted as being in category 'B'.

12. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

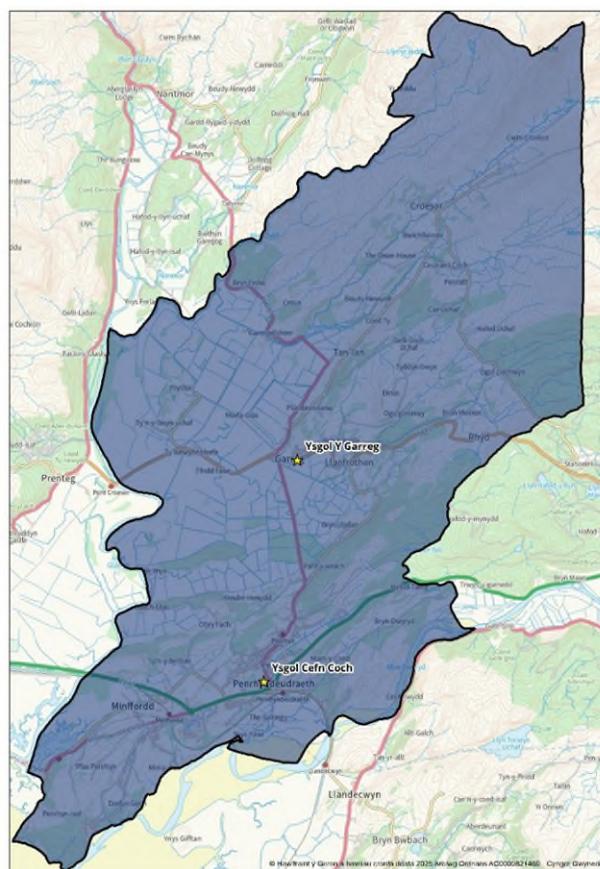
12.1 School admissions catchment areas

12.2 Should the proposal be implemented, the Ysgol Cefn Coch catchment area would be adapted to include the current Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area.

Map 1: The current Ysgol Y Garreg and Ysgol Cefn Coch catchment areas



Map 2: Ysgol Cefn Coch catchment area if the proposal is implemented



12.3 Transport

12.4 Should the proposal be implemented, learners living within the catchment area of Ysgol Y Garreg would be offered a place at Ysgol Cefn Coch and would receive transport in accordance with the County's School Transport Policy. It is anticipated that the transport costs would be around £30,000-£40,000 per year.

12.5 Staffing Considerations

12.6 Should the proposal be implemented to close Ysgol Y Garreg on 31 August 2026, staffing implications will lead to redundancies as the positions would end when the school closes. All the school's stakeholders will receive the statutory notice including staff and representatives of the Unions as part of the objection period process. Any redundancies resulting from the proposal will have to comply with the necessary employment law and the Gwynedd Redundancy scheme. Clear and open communication with staff will play a key role in implementing any proposal.

13 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

13.1 School Organisation Code 011/2018

13.2 Any statutory process will be conducted in accordance with Welsh Government Guidelines (School Organisation Code).

13.3 Equality Impact Assessment

13.4 An equality impact assessment was held on the proposal. The full assessment can be found in Appendix 2.

13.5 The assessment gives particular attention to different equality elements such as race, gender, disability, language, religion or belief and age. The assessment notes the current situation and shows that policies and procedures are in place which will ensure that the proposal considers and is in accordance with equal rights.

13.6 Having weighed-up the relevant factors, it is concluded that the proposal is unlikely to have a negative impact on most equality characteristics. We note that there are already measures in place to ensure that there will be no unlawful discrimination or harassment.

13.7 It is anticipated that the proposal would reduce socio-economic disadvantage by ensuring that the learners have more experiences and access to more services and activities in the alternative school. Learners would receive more equal opportunities since the learners would have learning experiences that are based on national learning principles, with a range of methods, including working in collective groups, smaller groups, partner work and individually within their specific age range, along with lessons that have been appropriately differentiated for the age range in question.

13.8 By implementing the proposal, Ysgol Y Garreg learners would have a better learning environment, and learners would benefit from having more age-related peers at a school with more learners, which will be a way to ensure suitable educational and extra-curricular experiences for them, as well as access to additional extra-curricular activities.

13.9 The Council will follow the usual procedures by supporting and monitoring, in order to ensure the compliance of every school with the equality characteristics.

13.10 The Well-being of Future Generations Act

13.11 Following consideration and assessment in accordance with the requirements of the well-being act, the seven well-being act goals and Council's well-being objectives, and it is concluded that the proposal meets the requirements. The full assessment can be found in Appendix 2.

13.12 It is acknowledged that should the Cabinet decide to proceed with this proposal, it may result in losing the school in the Llanfrothen community. However, a vast number of the children who live in the school's catchment area already attend other schools, including Ysgol Cefn Coch, therefore, it is concluded that a link already exists between the schools and that school community. Every effort will be made to mitigate any negative impact on the community by encouraging links between the communities and Ysgol Cefn Coch. Should the proposal be approved, discussions will take place to discuss the possibility that Ysgol Cefn Coch community activity includes the community, where appropriate.

14 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

February 2026	Publish a Statutory Notice: Should the Cabinet decide to support the recommendation presented in this report a Statutory Notice will be published. A period of 28 days is granted for anyone to submit an objection to the proposal, namely the 'Objection Period'.
May 2026	Final decision on the proposal: Following the objection period, if objections are received, the Cabinet will discuss the objections report and decide whether the decision should be confirmed or not. If there are no objections, or if all are withdrawn, the Cabinet Member can make the decision.
August 2026	Implementation of the Proposal: Ysgol Y Garreg officially closes, subject to the Cabinet's decision.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1: Options Appraisal Table

Appendix 2: Impact Assessments:

- Assessment of the Likely Impact on the Quality and Standards of Education
- Assessment of the Likely Impact on Travel Arrangements
- Assessment of the Likely Impact on the Community
- Language Impact Assessment
- Composite Impact Assessment

16. Views of the statutory officers

Monitoring Officer:

"The report has been the subject of advice by the Legal Services. I am satisfied of the propriety of the decision sought."

Head of Finance Department:

"It is clear from the evidence contained in this report that the situation at Ysgol y Garreg is no longer sustainable and that decisive action is needed to address the situation. I have no objection to the decision sought"

17. The Local Member's Comments

"Ysgol Y Garreg has been a key part of the community for over a century and has provided excellent education to the children of the area. It is sad that the numbers have fallen to this extent. The two pupils currently at school are in Year 6 and will be transferring to secondary school in September 2026.

Like other parts of Gwynedd and indeed the western world, the number of children has fallen significantly which has consequently affected the number of pupils on the register.

Society has also changed, and for many years now parents have had the right to consider educating their children in a school of their choice.

I believe it is important to thank the staff for their dedication in challenging circumstances, and for providing both pupils with excellent and entertaining educational experiences.

I would like to draw attention to the opinion of the governing body which is set out in the report."

"Should the Council decide to close the school, I would like to strongly encourage you to consider restructuring the building as a specialist centre for pupils who have trouble settling in mainstream schools, but are not eligible for a Special Learning Needs School."