

School Organisation Code

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by 30 September 2017 to

School Organisation and Admissions Branch
Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: SchoolsManagementDivision3@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Question 1 – Do you agree with the suggested amendments to the Code to reflect feedback and learning after three years of operation?

Agree

Disagree

If not, please tell us why

Question 2 – Do you agree with the proposal to require the consultation document to be published on a school day?

Agree

Disagree

If not, please tell us why

Question 3 – Do you agree that consultees should be advised of the availability of the consultation document; including the web address and that a hard copy can be obtained on request.

Agree

Disagree

If not, please tell us why?

Question 4 – Do you agree that those who do not carry out the consultations themselves **must** consider the extent that the statutory consultation and proposal have been conducted in accordance with the Code?

Agree

Disagree

If not, please tell us why?

Question 5 – Do you agree that there should be a procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools?

Agree Disagree

If not, please tell us why.

Question 6 – Do you agree with the more detailed set of procedures and requirements proposers will need to follow 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?

Agree Disagree

If not please tell us why.

Question 7 –The requirement to consult does not apply to small schools with fewer than ten pupils, although the proposer is still required to take into account the factors in Chapter 1 of the Code.

Do you agree that the proposer should also be required to follow the more detailed set of procedures and requirements in formulating a rural school proposal where the small school is also designated as a rural school?

Agree Disagree

If not please tell us why.

Question 8 – Do you agree with proposals to designate some schools as rural for the purposes of the presumption against closure and the list of schools at annex 1.

If not, please note which schools should not be included and which other schools should be included along with the reasons?

Agree Disagree

Question 9 – Do you agree with the proposed amendment to the section on surplus places to make clear that although local authorities are required to manage surplus places this does not necessarily mean closing schools, and that they should consider alternatives.

Agree Disagree

If not why not?

Question 10 – We would like to know your views on whether the detailed set of procedures and requirements proposers will need to follow in respect of proposals to close rural schools will add a burden to the local authority?

If you feel that there will be an additional burden on the local authority, what do you think the burden will entail? Please give details of impact including time and cost.

Question 11 – We would like to know your views on the effects that a presumption against the closure of rural schools would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

It can only be of benefit to use of the Welsh language for small rural Welsh medium schools in North and mid Wales to remain open, not just for the learners themselves but for those engaged in other community activities that may take place within the school buildings that are also conducted in the Welsh language.

Question 12 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

No further comment.

Question 13 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

We consider that it is a glaring oversight that the number of possible redundancies at a school, whether designated as rural or not, is not included within the factors to be taken into account when considering a school organisation in section 1 of the Code.

At a time when record numbers of teachers are leaving the profession and fewer NQTs are entering the profession, it is critical that teachers and support staff are valued and are only subject to redundancy in the most extreme of circumstances.

Further, even in circumstances when the Code is followed to the letter by local authorities, this does not preclude local authorities from cost-cutting and making redundancies in circumstances in which other options may have been available. (We refer to current proposed school closures and the new ‘through’ schools being opened by Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council.)

School Organisation Code notwithstanding, smaller rural schools will remain at risk of closure if local authorities in rural areas continue to suffer disproportionate funding cuts higher than urban authorities and there is simply insufficient money in the system. Given the advantages of keeping rural schools open and the fact that school budgets are the most likely reason for local authorities wanting to close such schools, it is paramount that the Welsh Government continues to provide additional funding to such schools, particularly when EU Rural Communities funding is no longer available.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: