

# Strategy for Modernising Learning Communities



**9 Year Strategy**

**2026 - 2035**

**Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd**



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# Introduction

## Foreword

Conwy is committed to ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to receive the best possible education.

We must ensure that our school buildings, teaching resources and pupils' learning experiences are fit for the purposes of today's world, and can prepare our children and young people for the future.

The challenge we face is to ensure that our schools provide the appropriate environment which enables our children and young people to achieve life skills of the highest standard. As we move forward from the work of the 2010 strategy, our focus is on evolving our schools to meet these demands.

This new strategy aims to build on past successes, address emerging challenges, and leverage new opportunities to ensure our schools are fit for purpose, develop children and staff to their full potential and are the centres of their communities.

## Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy will:

- Reflect on Progress
- Engage Communities
- Establish Priorities
- Plan to deliver

The strategy sets Conwy's vision, strategic objectives, and drivers for change for schools in Conwy. Once the strategy has been adopted, any proposals made will be subject to careful evaluation and ultimately to approval by Cabinet.

## Vision

Our vision is to create a network of schools in Conwy that are dynamic, inclusive and resilient. We aim to develop environments where innovation in teaching and learning thrives, where students are inspired to achieve their full potential, and where the community is actively engaged in the educational journey of its children and young people. By embracing new technologies, sustainable practices and collaborative approaches, Conwy schools will not only be centres of academic excellence but also hubs of community activity and lifelong learning.

This vision will be enabled by building on our existing key strengths as highlighted in our recent ESTYN inspection:

### **Commitment to Education:**

"Senior leaders and elected members are committed to ensuring effective education for children and young people in Conwy."

### **Strong Team Ethos:**

"The strong team ethos, together with the positive attitude of senior leaders, elected members and officers, helps to drive continuous improvement across the local authority."

### **Support for Additional Learning Needs:**

"A notable strength of the work of the ALN service is their commitment to providing equitable provision for learners in Welsh and English."

### **Integrated Services:**

"The local authority works effectively through integrated services to provide valuable support for families to help children and young people to engage with education."

### **Welsh Language Development:**

"The local authority has a clear and purposeful vision to develop the provision for the Welsh language."

# Background and Context

## Conwy in Context

Conwy County Borough is centrally located in North Wales. The County Borough has an area of 113,000 hectares and a population of 114,800 residents. About 38% of its area and 4% of its population are within the Snowdonia National Park. The narrow coastal belt contains over 80% of the County Borough's population with Llandudno and Colwyn Bay as the two main urban areas. Rural Conwy is a mainly agricultural area with limited alternative employment and few development pressures. Its population is widely dispersed and is predominantly Welsh speaking.

Between the last two censuses, the average (median) age of Conwy increased by three years, from 46 to 49 years of age.

The number of people aged 65 to 74 years rose by around 2,400 (an increase of 17.2%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by just under 3,900 (a 17.5% decrease).



## Population Projections

Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Conwy fell by 0.4%, from around 115,200 in 2011 to around 114,800 in 2021 and as a result, Conwy was one of seven local authority areas in Wales to see its population decline.

There has been an increase of 11.5% in people aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 4.3% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and a decrease of 3.2% in children aged under 15 years.

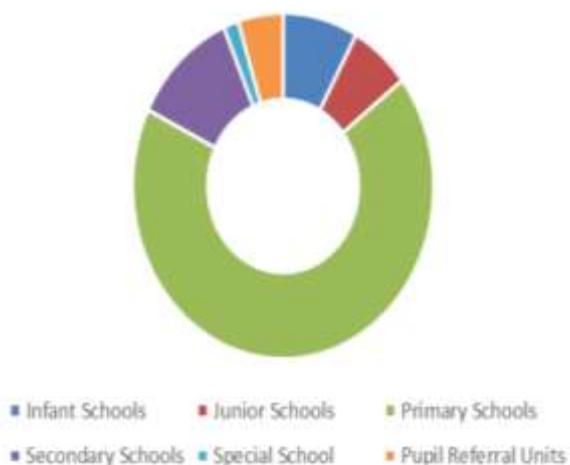
[Area Changes Data](#)

[Population Changes Data](#)

## Welsh Language

The percentage of Welsh speakers in Conwy fell from 27.4% in 2011 to 25.9% in 2021. In 2021, there were around 1,600 fewer Welsh-speaking Conwy residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011. The number of people who did not speak Welsh increased by 1,700.

## Education in Conwy



- 5 Infant Schools – ages 3 to 7
- 4 Junior Schools – ages 7 to 11
- 42 Primary Schools – ages 3 to 11
- 7 Secondary Schools – ages 11 to 18
- 1 Special School – ages 3 to 19
- 3 Pupil Referral Units

These schools are categorised under the headings of Community, Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, and Foundation Schools.

As of January 2025, there are 51 Primary schools in the Authority, 5 of which are voluntary aided denominational schools (2 Catholic schools located in Colwyn Bay and Llandudno, and 3 Church in Wales schools in Llanellian, Bodafon, and Llandudno).

The Local Authority supports 52 schools which have nursery units/classes admitting pupils on a part-time basis at the beginning of the term following the pupil's 3rd birthday.

The number of pupils attending our primary schools ranges in size from 15 to 380 pupils (excluding nursery) as of January 2025.

Welsh Government, through the Education (Schools) (Wales) Order 2014 defines small schools as schools with less than 91 registered pupils. As of January 2025, Conwy has 18 small primary schools.

The challenges that face small schools are:

- Teaching mixed age classes, including more than 2 or 3 age groups;
- A limited number of peers and sufficient challenge;
- Limited opportunities for social interaction;
- Challenges with recruiting and retaining staff;
- Excessive workload for staff with higher expertise who are required to support pupils with additional learning needs.

Whilst these challenges face schools, it is important to note that it also has an impact on the corporate budget.

## Progress and Changes since the 2010 Strategy

Since the 2010 strategy, Conwy County Borough has undergone several significant changes:

**Population changes:** The population of Conwy fell by 0.4%, from around 115,200 in 2011 to around 114,700 in 2021.

There has been an increase of 11.5% in people aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 4.3% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and a decrease of 3.2% in children aged under 15 years.

By 2040 it is predicted that:

- if the central growth trend continues Conwy County Borough will have a population of 123,000 – an increase of 4,800 (4.1%) from 2020 mid-year estimate levels. Conwy County Borough is predicted to make up 3.6% of Wales' population and just under 0.2% of the UK population, which is similar to the current figures. The population is predicted to grow by 3.6% in Wales as a whole in the same period, and by 6.8% across the UK.
- if the low growth variant trend continues Conwy County Borough will have a population of 117,750 – a decrease of -450 (-0.4%).
- if the high growth variant trend continues Conwy County Borough will have a population of 126,900 – an increase of 8,700 (7.4%).

**Updated Corporate Plan:** Conwy County Borough Council has updated its Corporate Plan to address current financial challenges and focus on five key goals: Resilience, Environment, Prosperity and learning, Housing, and Well-being. This plan aims to drive positive change and sustainable development in the community even during financial uncertainty.

**School Closures and Consolidations:** Between 2010 and 2025, 10 schools have either been involved in amalgamation, federalisation or full closure and further school reorganisation projects will be explored where appropriate.

**Infrastructure Improvements:** Investments have been made in school infrastructure to ensure that buildings are fit for purpose and can support modern educational practices. This includes upgrades to facilities and the integration of new technologies such as solar power.

## Drivers for Modernisation

The modernisation of Conwy's schools is driven by several key factors. These drivers, combined with strategic planning, ensure that our schools remain fit for purpose, providing high-quality education in a sustainable, resilient, and efficient manner. By addressing these drivers, we aim to create a network of modern, efficient, and welcoming schools that meet the needs of our students and communities both now and in the future.

### Ensuring All Our Buildings are Fit for Purpose

Our commitment is to ensure that all school buildings in Conwy are fit for purpose. This involves regular assessments of building conditions, security, capacity, curriculum needs, disability access, and community use. Despite significant investments over the past 10 years, some schools still require substantial upgrades to meet current and future needs with the present backlog maintenance estimated to cost £10.4m. This will require targeted investment to provide a wide range of facilities in order to maintain high standards across all school buildings and to contribute to enhanced educational outcomes, support teaching, improve student engagement, and create better learning environments.

### Reducing the Number of Unfilled Places

Addressing the issue of unfilled places in our schools is crucial. In Conwy, falling pupil numbers have led to an increase in unfilled places. According to 2025 PLASC data, there are currently unfilled places accounting for 18.6% of school places or places for 3,196 pupils based. The Primary sector accounts for 1871 of those places (20%) and in Secondary there are 1325 surplus places (17%). This impacts the efficient use of resources and Conwy must aim to optimise capacity to ensure that resources are used effectively to benefit all students. The allocation of school budgets is affected by pupil numbers and falling rolls can lead to reduced funding which puts pressure on schools.

### Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is a newer and critical driver for modernisation. Over the past 5 years, we have seen a significant rise in operational costs, including energy, maintenance, and staffing. Therefore, a strategic approach to financial management is needed to support schools. School buildings can see significant cost savings through improved energy efficiency and reduced maintenance expenses. Optimising the cost per pupil can help to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately and effectively for Conwy.

### Review the provision of post-16 education

In a changing educational landscape, the responsibility for funding and regulating the tertiary education and research sector in Wales is now undertaken by MEDR. MEDR is the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research and is an arm's length body of Welsh Government who regulate institutions, and fund:

- further education;
- higher education, including research and innovation;
- apprenticeships;
- adult community learning and
- local authority-maintained school sixth forms.

Their recently published strategic plan (2025-30) sets out 5 strategic aims:

1. To focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner.
2. To create a flexible and joined-up tertiary system where everyone can acquire the skills and knowledge they need for a changing economy and society.
3. To ensure learners receive the highest-quality provision in a tertiary education sector that strives for continuous improvement.
4. To grow internationally acclaimed research and inspire innovation throughout the tertiary education sector.
5. To encourage greater use of the Welsh language, increasing demand for and participation in learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh.

For Conwy to contribute to these aims where required, we want to be in a strong position to provide clear information, rationale, evidence and data to determine the future of post-16 education in Conwy and to drive this based on local need.

## **Community and Environmental Sustainability**

Welsh Government's aim is for schools to serve as community hubs, providing facilities and services that benefit the wider community beyond the traditional school day which includes promoting the use of school buildings for community activities and ensuring that schools contribute to environmental sustainability. By integrating green technology and promoting sustainable behaviours, we can create schools that are environmentally responsible and beneficial to the community.

## **Decarbonisation**

In response to the climate change emergency, the Council is committed to being a net zero carbon establishment by 2030. Following the development of the decarbonisation plan, Conwy County Borough Council set up the Climate Challenge Programme in 2020 to deliver the vision:

- 'To lead our communities in delivering a net carbon zero county.'

In order to reach this target, Conwy faces multiple challenges and decisions in order to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency in our stock of schools.

## **Early Years:**

Local Authorities must have regard to:

- ensure sufficient childcare is available;
- undertake Childcare Sufficiency Assessments;

- provide information, advice and assistance relating to childcare to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child in line with The Childcare Act 2006.

Conwy's Education teams work collaboratively to improve existing childcare provision on school premises within the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme via capital funding. Childcare settings on school sites provide opportunities for parents to access various childcare schemes, such as: Flying Start for 2-year-olds, Early Education for 3-year-olds, wrap around services, breakfast and after school provision. It also allows parents to access employment schemes such as the Childcare Offer for Wales, and Tax-Free Childcare.

These schemes encourage families to take advantage of opportunities available to them in their communities, to support and enable parents and families to work, train or seek employment to make a difference to their everyday lives for a prosperous future which has a positive impact on families and communities and provides integration of services on one site. The schemes also improve children's opportunities to learn and play to enhance and develop their wellbeing, as well as encouraging child development and school readiness to support transition.

### **Creating Greater Access to Educational Assets for Youth Work:**

Youth centres and youth spaces can have considerable social and developmental impacts on young people and the wider community, including:

1. Enhanced Social Connections: Encouraging young people to find new and innovative ways to socialise, fostering creativity and resilience in building safe environments for interaction.
2. Positive Community Engagement: Community-led initiatives can promote positive behaviour and reduce anti-social activities, creating a safer and more supportive environment.
3. Improved Mental Health & Well-being Support: Diverse mental health resources and mentoring programs can help ensure young people have access to a variety of support systems tailored to their needs.
4. Expanded Skill Development Opportunities: Training programs, employability workshops, and extracurricular activities can provide young people with opportunities to develop essential life skills and career guidance.
5. Collaborative Efforts with Other Services: Schools, social services, and law enforcement can come together to create a cohesive support network for young people.
6. Strengthened Community Bonds: A community engagement focus can lead to increased participation in volunteering, leadership programs, and local initiatives, and a sense of belonging and civic responsibility among young people.

### **Outdoor Education Provision and Expanding Support for Families:**

Conwy has a strong reputation for delivering high-quality adventure learning experiences in Eryri, providing outdoor education that helps children, young people and families build confidence and resilience. The service has developed a bespoke programme in partnership with Social Care, offering outdoor learning experiences designed to support families facing challenges such as poverty, additional learning

needs, poor mental health or difficult home circumstances. To assist vulnerable children and families in crisis, the centre employs a variety of specialist strategies, including:

- Nature-Based Therapy: Immersive outdoor experiences that foster resilience, confidence, and emotional well-being.
- Trauma-Informed Approaches: Staff receive training to support all family members who have experienced trauma, ensuring safe spaces for healing.
- Community Partnerships: Collaborations with schools, social services, and charities to reach and assist those in need.
- Structured Outdoor Learning: Skill-building, teamwork, and personal development through wilderness trails, conservation projects, and adventure-based learning, all aligned with the new Welsh curriculum.
- Safeguarding Policies: Strong measures in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

### **Inclusivity:**

Conwy County Borough Council aspires to be recognised as offering an excellent education for all children and young people. The Council and schools continue to focus on improving education and performance across the whole school system so that all young people become healthy and confident individuals who play an active role in their communities and who are skilled and ready for the job opportunities available.

In doing so, the Council is committed to developing excellent education, support and additional learning provision (ALP) for all children and young people with additional learning needs, and in delivering the principles of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code for Wales 2021. These principles aim to support:

1. the creation of a fully inclusive education system, where all learners are given the opportunity to succeed;
2. have access to an education that meets their needs; and
3. enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning.

### **Backlog Maintenance:**

Conwy's Estate and Asset Management team provide annual data on backlog maintenance requirements at education assets. The list is a valuable tool for planning and when considering both repair and maintenance requirements and the long-term viability of buildings within the education portfolio.

## **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan:**

Conwy's WESP is a key driver in achieving Welsh Government's goal of 1 million Welsh Speakers by 2050. Outcomes 1 and 2 are focussed on an increased number of nursery/three-year-olds (outcome 1) and reception class children/five-year-olds (outcome 2) receiving their education through the medium of Welsh. Conwy is ambitious to meet and even exceed these targets and relevant services are working with early years' settings and schools to achieve this. Whilst targets within the WESP are limited to delivering for children up to the age of 5, it is essential that opportunities to continue to receive education through the medium of Welsh are delivered. This requires short-, medium- and longer-term planning to ensure that a requisite number of school places are available for delivery of Welsh medium and bilingual education for children beyond the age of 5 and into the secondary sector. Conwy's current Welsh medium secondary schools are at or near capacity, and therefore it is prudent to plan ahead to ensure equity of opportunity for secondary education in a Welsh medium or bilingual setting for children and young people across Conwy who choose this.

## **Curriculum for Wales:**

Conwy's Education teams work in collaboration to ensure that schools continue to have the resources and the capacity to successfully drive forward the Curriculum for Wales. Schools and settings have worked hard to design curricula which effectively meet the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales which seek to develop:

1. Ambitious, capable learners
2. Enterprising, creative contributors
3. Ethical, informed citizens
4. Healthy, confident individuals

The curriculum is designed locally by school staff to respond to and meet the needs of all young people and is constructed for a fast-changing world. It focuses on progress-based learning (rather than age-based) and has a clear purpose of what needs to be achieved. Pupils learn about things that will help them every day and moves them forward in their learning when they are ready to do so, not because of their age. This is more relevant than ever due to the different effects the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the learning of young people. There are requirements for local contexts to be included in planning for the curriculum. From 2025, changes to the 14-16 curriculum are being implemented and qualification reform is underway. There may be further requirements to adapt learning environments to successfully deliver the new requirements and qualifications.

# Strategic Contributions

Education, and this strategy, aims to contribute to 4 of Conwy's 5 Corporate Goals (the 5<sup>th</sup> being Goal 4: Housing), in the following areas:

## **Goal 1: Resilient Council**

**Aim:** The council will be sustainable and will still be able to deliver core services to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

### **Education contribution:**

- Financial Management
- Asset Management
- Customers and Democracy

## **Goal 2: Environment**

**Aim:** Our actions will slow climate change and safeguard the environment for future generations.

### **Education contribution:**

- Sustainable Energy
- Transport

## **Goal 3: Prosperity and Learning**

**Aim:** Our rich heritage will have been protected to support the well-being of future generations. We will have retained talent that supports growth and places Conwy at the heart of the North Wales Economy. Our children will be ambitious and capable learners. They will be healthy, confident individuals who play an active role in communities and are skilled and ready for the job opportunities available.

### **Education contribution:**

- Access to Education
- Pathways for Lifelong Learning
- Ready for work and inclusive routes to opportunity
- Culture
- Investment
- Welsh Language
- Education Facilities

## **Goal 5: Well-being**

**Aim:** We want to create an environment where safeguarding is everyone's business and no one is harmed. We will enable people to live longer, healthier, and happier lives. We want people to be self-caring, to make healthy lifestyle choices, and live well with chronic health issues. We will have reduced the adverse impact of poverty. By

supporting the care sector, the right care will be available when it is needed and meets the needs of Conwy's changing demographic population.

**Education contribution:**

- Safeguarding
- Well-being
- Safety

## Linked Policies

### **Our National Mission: High Standards and Aspirations for All**

This roadmap sets out the Welsh Government's commitment to achieving high standards and aspirations for all learners by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner. Key elements include the Curriculum for Wales, Equity and Diversity and Wellbeing.

### **Education Workforce Plan**

Announced in January 2025, this strategic plan aims to address challenges in the education sector, including recruitment and retention issues, workload pressures, and the evolving role of teachers. The plan is developed in collaboration with key stakeholders to create a sustainable, well-supported workforce that enhances the quality of education in Wales.

### **Cymraeg 2050: Welsh Language Strategy**

This strategy aims to increase Welsh-medium education provision and support the goal of having one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

### **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act**

This act focuses on supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN) and ensuring they receive appropriate educational provision. It aims to create a more inclusive education system that caters to the diverse needs of all students<sup>1</sup>.

### **Sustainable Communities for Learning**

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is a long-term investment initiative by the Welsh Government aimed at transforming schools and colleges into hubs for learning and community engagement. This programme focuses on improving the condition and efficiency of educational buildings while promoting environmental sustainability and community cohesion.

# A new vision - Sustainable Communities for Learning in Conwy

## **Key Priorities for the Future of Conwy Schools**

Since the initial strategy in 2010, Conwy County Borough Council has continued to evolve its vision for education to meet the ever-changing needs of our communities. The following priorities reflect our commitment to providing high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable education for all children.

### **Priority 1: Create environments that are fit for purpose**

We will work to ensure that all children have access to suitable facilities that allow the delivery of a full range of educational experiences. This includes: classrooms equipped with the latest educational technologies, safe and engaging outdoor play areas that promote physical activity and social interaction, functional and comfortable spaces for staff to work and collaborate and well-maintained, secure and pleasant school environments.

### **Priority 2: Support Learners with Additional Learning Needs**

We will work with headteachers and governors and Conwy's ALN team to support the delivery of the objectives set out in Conwy's Additional Learning Needs Principles Document.

### **Priority 3: Reduce Unfilled Places**

We will work to reduce the number of unfilled places in our primary schools to be within the Welsh Government guidelines. This includes ensuring that individual primary schools have more than 75% of their places filled and that 90% of places are filled across the sector through optimising resource allocation and improving the overall efficiency of our school system. We will adhere to the Welsh Government's prescribed maximum number of 30 children per class. This standard helps to ensure that each child receives the attention and support they need to succeed academically and personally.

### **Priority 4: Review Post-16 Education Provision**

Ensure that Conwy contributes to MEDR's 5 strategic aims where required, by ensuring that clear information, rationale, evidence and data is readily available to determine the future of post-16 education in Conwy and to drive provision based on local need.

## **Priority 5: Promote the Welsh language and Culture**

Drive Conwy's WESP aims by increasing the number of nursery and reception class children/five-year-olds receiving education through Welsh and ensuring equity of opportunity for education in a Welsh medium or bilingual setting for children and young people across Conwy.

## **Priority 6: Financial Sustainability**

We will work with schools to promote financial sustainability by managing the running costs of buildings, optimising the cost per pupil, and implementing energy-efficient practices where possible. This will involve regular financial reviews and strategic investments to reduce operational costs.

## **Priority 7: Net Zero**

To contribute to Conwy's Net Zero Plan, which, in part, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the Council's estate to achieve net zero emissions, as a key member of Conwy's Net Zero Emissions Estate Project. These priorities will help us to create a network of modern, efficient, and resilient schools that meet the needs of our students and communities now and in the future.

## **Priority 8: Curriculum for Wales**

We will look to support schools in their delivery of the new Curriculum for Wales Framework by creating environments that support its integrated approach to learning and teaching.

## Impact on Conwy's Schools

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme operates on a rolling basis, allowing for continuous investment and improvement. This approach ensures that projects can be undertaken at a pace that suits local priorities and needs, rather than being constrained by fixed timelines. For Conwy's primary schools, the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme offers several benefits:

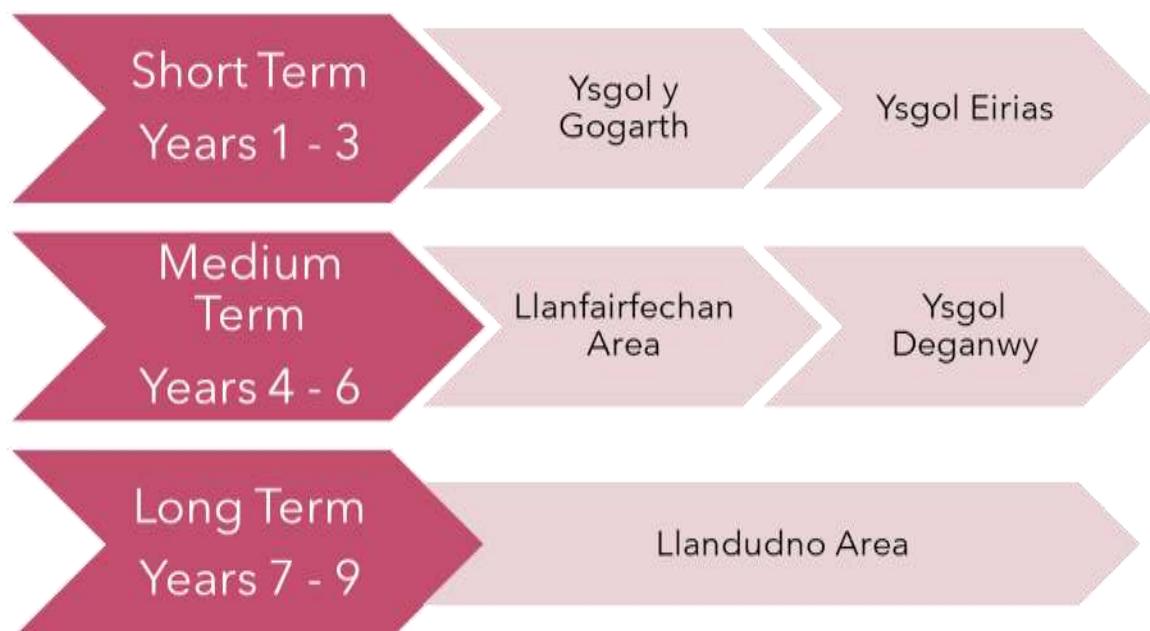
- **Modern Facilities**
- **Energy Efficiency**
- **Community Hubs**
- **Enhanced Learning Environments**

By aligning with this programme, Conwy County Borough Council can ensure that its primary schools are not only fit for purpose but that they also provide sustainable and community-focused education.

In 2024, Conwy's Cabinet approved Conwy's 9-year Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. The programme will remain adaptable, acknowledging the complex challenges faced, but will also recognise opportunities through collaboration and innovation with the aim of ensuring effective and appropriate planning for education in Conwy.

Plans for new school developments will be driven by the availability of finance for projects and will be reviewed regularly with the initial draft programme shown below.

Each project will be subject to full business case approval from Welsh Government and Conwy County Borough Council who will consider a variety of factors including, but not limited to, financial implications, legal requirements, land availability and planning constraints before approving projects in any area.



## Stakeholder and Community Involvement

One of our Corporate Priorities is that 'People in Conwy contribute to their community'. They are informed, included, and listened to and can actively contribute to their community. They live in a community where Welsh language thrives and local diversity is respected. By improving the way we work with communities, we will enable people to play an active role in what happens within them.

This strategy will support our corporate priority by engaging with stakeholders and communities at key points, the first of which will be when developing this 9-year strategy.

This strategy will be subject to a period of public consultation and will also be subject to Conwy's democratic approval process which offers stakeholders an opportunity to share their views and help shape our vision for education in Conwy.

In line with the School Organisation Code 2018, Conwy will follow the processes detailed later in this document before implementing any plan considered to be a controlled change, as defined within the code, which will include consultations and engagement as required.

## Models for Change

In line with Sections 1.7 and 1.8 of the School Organisation Code, Conwy will explore all options available to them and their schools to ensure that all children have equal opportunity to receive the best possible education, for example clustering, collaboration or federation with other schools to increase the school's viability or make use of the existing buildings as a community resource.

### Local Authority Models for Structural Change

To meet the priorities of this strategy, Conwy has a number of models to enable structural change and any proposals will be carried out in line with Welsh Government guidance, following the School Organisation Code where applicable.

#### **Establish 'All Through' Schools**

This model involves the amalgamation of junior and feeder infant schools into a single primary school, as well as the integration of secondary schools and special schools where appropriate to create a seamless educational journey for students from early years through to secondary education, with one Headteacher and one Governing Body overseeing the entire institution.

#### **Establish an Area School on One Site in Designated Geographic Areas**

This model refers to the creation of one school on a single site for a designated geographic area. This would involve the closure of all existing schools in the area and the establishment of a new school on an existing or new site. This school would serve the entire community within that geographic area.

#### **Establish an Area School on Multi-sites in Designated Geographic Areas**

This model involves the creation of one school that operates across two or more sites within a designated geographic area. This would mean the closure of all existing schools in the area and the establishment of a single school that serves the community from multiple locations.

#### **Integrate Satellite Provision within Mainstream Settings**

For special schools, we aim to integrate Satellite Provision within mainstream settings. This involves creating specialized units within mainstream schools to support students with additional learning needs (ALN). These units will provide tailored support while allowing students to benefit from the inclusive environment of a mainstream school whilst reducing pressures on Conwy's one special school.

### **Close a school or schools**

There may be circumstances where, having considered all suitable alternatives that the closure of a school, or schools, is the preferred option. If this option is progressed, it will be done with stakeholders and in line with all necessary statutory guidance.

# School Governing Body Models for Organisational Change

## **Governing Bodies Establish Formal Federal School Arrangements**

The Federation of Maintained Schools and Miscellaneous Amendments (Wales) Regulations, 2010, permit two to five governing bodies of maintained schools to federate voluntarily. Schools with a federated Governing Body will continue to be separate legal entities, retaining their own name, registered pupils, and budget. The federated Governing Body may appoint a single Headteacher to manage the schools across the federation. Alternatively, the existing Headteachers could continue in post under a collegiate structure for managing the federation. The Governing Body has the option of pooling the individual school budgets. Schools can work closely on governance, management, leadership development, curriculum delivery, staffing, and inclusion issues.

## **Governing Bodies to Develop Informal Organisational Models**

Schools may develop fewer formal arrangements to secure greater collaborative working and support Professional Learning Communities. These arrangements provide opportunities for economies of scale and efficiencies in the use and development of resources.

**School Clusters** Schools may work in cluster family groupings to share and develop resources. School clusters provide opportunities for schools to strengthen their collaborative working through sharing and developing resources and utilizing the curriculum and managerial skills of the staff at the schools.

**Informal Federations** Schools may work in arrangements like formal Federal School arrangements, with the individual school Governing Bodies agreeing to establish a Joint Committee with agreed delegated powers and options for a limited pooled budget. Schools can work closely on governance, management, leadership development, curriculum delivery, staffing, and inclusion issues.

# Underpinning Policies and Strategies

The strategy will support and consider the following policies/strategies where appropriate:

## **Maintaining and Sustaining the Welsh Language**

Conwy has a policy of developing schools which ensure that pupils are given the educational incentive to nurture language skills leading to bilingualism and proficiency in Welsh and English. All educational establishments are required to reflect and reinforce the County's language policy in their administration, social life, pastoral arrangements, and learning provision.

## **Transport**

The strategy will consider Conwy's school transport policy as part of any proposals.

## **Admissions**

The strategy will give regard to Conwy's policy of allowing parents and pupils to express their preference for admission to a school of their choice.

## **Local Schools (Catchment Areas)**

Each local school has a defined 'catchment area'. Catchment areas are based on community ward boundaries as supplied by the Boundary Commission. Catchment areas are mapped out and are required to be reviewed periodically. In rural areas, a catchment area will cover many square miles and may include one or more villages and their surrounding areas. In urban areas, with two or more schools within a town, the catchment areas will be a collection of streets.

## **Rural Village Schools**

Conwy recognises the vital role our village schools undertake within our rural communities to maintain the local culture, language, and way of life. When considering the options for future school structures within our rural areas, the Authority will follow guidelines within the School Organisation Code.

## Community-Focused Schools

The Local Authority will support schools to develop community links that provide opportunities for all, benefiting both the pupils and members of the community. When considering the options for future school structures.



## Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

The strategy will support the Conwy's aim to make appropriate and relevant educational provision for all children with additional learning needs and where possible, will endeavour to make such provision available in mainstream schools to support a network of joint working and sharing of facilities/resources/expertise.

## Youth Focused Policies

This initiative is linked to the Serious Violence Duty, Whole School Approach Bill, Youth Work Strategy for Wales, and the Community-Focused Schools Approach. Accessing Schools Outside of Regular Hours for Youth Clubs: Using school facilities for youth clubs can be an effective way to provide safe, structured spaces for young people. Key considerations include:

### Partnerships with Schools

- Establish agreements with local schools to use their facilities for youth clubs.
- Work with school leadership and governors to ensure policies align.
- Highlight the benefits, such as community engagement and youth development.
- Reduce financial costs associated with hiring external venues, which are often not fit for purpose.

### Safeguarding & Legal Requirements

- Ensure compliance with safeguarding policies for out-of-school settings.
- Conduct risk assessments to ensure health and safety.
- Secure insurance coverage for activities held on school premises.

## Voluntary Aided Schools

Voluntary Aided schools are maintained jointly by Conwy County Borough Council and either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Church. Any proposed changes to these schools will be considered closely with the relevant diocese. We will continue to work with the diocese to ensure they meet fit-for-purpose standards of their schools.

## Support for Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

As part of the any proposal, HR resources will be made available to inform, advise, and support headteachers, teachers, and school support staff in relation to workforce issues arising from the implementation arrangements agreed by the Council.

## **Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme**

To meet the key priorities, Conwy will develop an investment strategy that addresses the needs of schools. To deliver the investment needs identified, it is essential that Conwy can access capital funding via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme as well as our own central funds.

Conwy will continue to work with the Welsh Government in developing the investment strategy to ensure that we are maximizing the potential investment opportunities that may be available through the programme.

# Challenges

## **The need for capital investment**

The cost of building new schools is expensive, with costs more than doubling since 2020. These increases saw Conwy conduct a full review of our proposed Band B projects, with several schools missing out, having previously been identified as priorities.

Whilst Welsh Government contributes 65% of Band B project costs, it is a requirement of the Council to contribute towards the remainder of the cost.

It is important that the Council takes advantage of the opportunity to attract external funds (grants) to improve the condition of our educational building estate. However, considering the financial challenge the Council is likely to face over the coming years, the Council will need to prioritise the related work and make capital and revenue funding available to facilitate any projects.

## **Politics (Welsh and Council Elections in 2026)**

The upcoming Welsh and Council elections in 2026 could significantly impact the decision-making process for education projects, and any changes in political leadership or shifts in policy priorities could lead to delays or changes to planned projects.

To mitigate these challenges, it is essential to engage with all political parties to ensure that they understand the importance of strategy and build a broad consensus and cross-party support to help maintain continuity and commitment regardless of election results.

## **Staff Resources (Internal and External)**

The successful delivery of educational projects relies heavily on the availability and allocation of both internal and external staff resources. While Conwy has skilled professionals, the challenge lies in identifying these individuals early and freeing them up from their day-to-day roles to focus on project planning, management, and execution. Additionally, reliance on external contractors and consultants can lead to increased costs and potential delays if there are shortages in the labour market.

Proactive approaches to workforce planning, including early identification of key staff members and strategically freeing them from their regular duties to dedicate time to project-related tasks will ensure project success. Establishing strong partnerships with external contractors and consultants can ensure that the necessary expertise is available when needed along with implementing robust project management practices and regular monitoring will help optimize resource allocation and minimize delays.

## **Difficult Decisions**

Whilst implementing the strategy, it is likely that the Council will need to make difficult and often unpopular, decisions when considering the future of school organisation.

Conwy's Strategic Outline Plan and this strategy will look at all categories of education in the county, from primary to secondary, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools to ensure that all children have equal opportunity to receive the best possible education.

Where a regulated alteration is proposed, a consultation and an objection period will follow, which allows stakeholders to give their views on the proposal, with Cabinet generally making the final decision. Cabinet will consider this feedback carefully before deciding on each individual proposal and reports will include the required Impact Assessments to ensure that any impact on communities, equality, and the Welsh language are considered.

## **Resistance to Change**

A key challenge is the potential for resistance to change across stakeholder groups. This can be reluctance from elected members to support proposals, school community concerns around changes or wider public opposition to proposals.

Mitigation will include proactive and strategically aligned change management with inclusive consultation and participation, and comprehensive communication plans and support structures.

# Implementation Strategy

This 9-year plan, commencing in 2026, will align with Conwy's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. The strategy is designed to be flexible and adaptive, ensuring that we can respond to changing needs and opportunities without being constrained by fixed timelines.

## **Continuous Evaluation and Monitoring**

We will implement a robust system for continuously evaluating and effectively monitoring education provision across Conwy. This will involve regular assessments of school performance, infrastructure, and resource allocation to identify areas for improvement and ensure that all students receive high-quality education. There will be formal reviews undertaken every 3 years to ensure that the strategy remains valid.

## **Strategic Improvements**

Our strategy will focus on exploring and implementing options to enhance educational outcomes and operational efficiency. This includes:

### **Grant Funding**

Actively seeking and utilising grant funding to improve school buildings, reduce operational costs, and enhance learning environments.

### **Costs**

Implementing measures to lower the cost per pupil, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

### **Infrastructure Upgrades**

Investing in modern, energy-efficient buildings and facilities to create sustainable learning environments.

### **School Closures and Mergers**

Where necessary, we will consider the closure or merging of schools to optimise resource use and improve educational provision. Decisions will be based on thorough evaluations of school performance, capacity, and community needs, ensuring that any changes are made in the best interests of students and the wider community.

## **High-Level Flexibility**

The strategy is designed to be high-level and flexible, allowing us to adapt to new challenges and opportunities as they arise. By maintaining this flexibility, we can ensure that our approach remains relevant and effective throughout the 9-year period and this flexible and adaptive approach aims to create a dynamic and responsive education system that meets the needs of our students and communities now and in the future.

# Legislative Process

In line with the School Organisation Code 2018, the Council will follow the process below before implementing any plan considered to be a controlled change as defined within the code.

## **Stage 1**

Proposal paper presented to Conwy Cabinet to decide whether to consult on the proposal.

## **Stage 2**

Consultation on the proposal (at least 42 days, with at least 20 of them being school days).

## **Stage 3**

Consultation report on the output of the consultation presented to Cabinet to decide whether to proceed with, or to change the proposal.

## **Stage 4**

Statutory Notice issued (within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation), giving stakeholders 28 days to object to the proposal (with at least 15 of those days being school days).

This is the stage at which stakeholders are given the opportunity to object to the proposal (objection period).

Informal comments during the consultation period (Stage 2) will not be considered as objections.

## **Stage 5**

If a decision is required from Welsh Government ministers (for example if the proposal affects post-16 provision) an objection report must be sent to the minister within 35 days of the end of the objection period.

The minister will aim to respond within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period.

## **Stage 6**

When there is no need for the decision to be made by Welsh Government ministers

An objection report goes to Cabinet to make a final decision on the proposal.

Any proposals that are not subject to this process will be presented to the Social Care and Education Capital Programme Board for their input and decided in line with internal policies and processes.

# Monitoring, Management, Governance and Accountability

Updates on the strategy will be presented to the Social Care and Education Capital Programme Board annually to ensure that its objectives are being met, and progress is open to scrutiny.

As detailed above, any process that follows the School Organisation Code processes will also need approval through Conwy's democratic approval process, with any significant proposals being subject to Cabinet approval.

## **The programme, and any workstreams within, will:**

- Clearly express its vision and purpose, ensuring clear alignment between the programme's vision and the general strategic objective
- Adopt and use professional programme management methodology
- Have a clear overview and appropriate governance arrangements
- Have clear terms of reference
- Work closely with the community and other stakeholders in the process
- Ensure that benefits are clearly linked to better outcomes for the community
- Thoroughly consider and evaluate alternative options
- Develop robust business cases
- Be clear regarding the risks concerned, with scrutiny proportionate to the risk
- Clearly show how the programme ensures value for money

## Information Sources

The information sources used to form this strategy are listed below:

[Council Plan \(2022 to 2027\)](#)

[Estyn Inspection Report on Education Services in Conwy](#)

[2021 Census](#)

[Delegated School Budgets per pupil, by school \(£\)](#)

[Conwy CBC Net Zero Plan](#)

[Conwy population Profile](#)