

Stakeholder letter November 2025
Update on new school builds for Riverbank and Woodlands

Dear Parents/Carer,

We are excited to share the latest updates on the construction of our new schools for Woodlands High School and Riverbank School - part of the Fairwater Community Campus development that will expand capacity for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), offering modern learning environments, sports facilities, and community spaces.

This state-of-the-art campus, will see Woodlands High School and Riverbank School co-located with Cantonian High School, and is the largest project ever delivered by Cardiff Council and Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning programme.



Artist Impression of Woodlands



WESTERN LEARNING FEDERATION

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Artist impression of Riverbank

What's New?

The structural and roofing works on our new schools are now complete and internal works are well underway.

In August 2025, the first milestone in the development was celebrated with the successful handover of the Health and Wellbeing block to Cantonian High School, named Copa, the Welsh word for “summit.”



These facilities are already being used by Cantonian High School pupils and once the rest of the project is completed, discussions will take place between the Governing Bodies to explore access opportunities for Western Learning Federation as well as community groups in the evenings, encouraging connections and helping to strengthen Cardiff's community spirit.

Features and benefits for our new schools:

- **Modern Learning Environments:** Both schools will offer outstanding facilities.

For **Woodlands** facilities will include;

- o Gym
- o Activity studio
- o Learning zone
- o Wellbeing zone
- o Esports room
- o Rebound therapy space
- o The loft (sixth form common room)
- o Sensory zone
- o Movement zone
- o Rebound zone
- o Music and drama rooms

In **Riverbank** facilities will include:

- o Learning resource centre
- o Let's explore - music and touch therapy
- o Soft play
- o Family room
- o Rebound therapy
- o Sensory studio
- o Music and drama room
- o Wellness lounge
- **Shared Spaces:** Both schools will share some facilities including an immersion room, community café, meeting and family rooms.

- **Sustainability:** The campus is a Net Zero Carbon and BREEAM Excellent development, with eco-friendly design and growing areas, making it a hands-on learning tool for sustainable living.
- **Career & Life Skills:** The Pontio vocational enterprise hub will connect our students with Cardiff Commitment partners, bridging education and work skills for a prosperous future.
- **Health & Education Integration:** A dedicated multi-agency hub will bring health professionals on-site, reducing time away from school for appointments and empowering our young people to thrive.

Western Learning Federation are keen to explore opportunities to extend provision for our families and further updates will be provided over the coming months. We are proud to be part of a project that goes beyond traditional schooling, supporting learning, arts, sports, inclusion, sustainability, and community.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the campus, there is a coffee morning hosted by BESL, taking place on site on a Thursday, please let us know if you'd like to attend

More information about the construction and development can be viewed here:

<https://www.fairwaterbesl.co.uk/>

Key dates and activity:

As we prepare for the future, a range of engagement activities are planned including:

- **Carbon/Construction Ambassadors:** Pupils participate in a monthly programme of hands-on activities including site tours, construction games, environmental projects, creative challenges, teamwork-based board games, sensory design tasks, community litter picking, tree care, bug house building, and drone flying, all designed to build confidence, encourage teamwork, develop creativity and problem-solving skills, and promote environmental awareness, with each session adapted to support different needs and encourage engagement.

In September and October two cohorts from Woodlands visited the site. The first group enjoyed an exciting tour of their new school site, exploring the spaces that will soon become their classrooms and activity areas. Their excitement and curiosity brought so much energy to the visit, it was wonderful to see them imagining what each room might become.

A second group visited the site for their first hands-on learning session. Dressed as site managers, they explored what it takes to plan and build, from choosing what kind of project they'd design, to selecting materials and colours, and even spotting real plant machinery on site. They finished the session with some creative colouring, which will soon brighten up our induction cabin – a lovely reminder of their visit.



- 1st December: Time Capsule Burial where pupils will be involved in deciding what legacy items will be buried
- Parent/Carer Sessions:
- Soft landings activity which will be developed after Christmas
- September 2026: Scheduled handover Riverbank and Woodlands Schools

We will also be sharing information with you very soon in relation to the session times for Woodlands School, this will be in the form of a letter. We will keep you regularly updated and thank you for your ongoing support as we build a brighter, greener future for all our pupils.

Best wishes

Wayne Murphy- Executive Headteacher Western Learning Federation