



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C.Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: J Nicholls (scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a virtual meeting of the **EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **THURSDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 2023** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Tuesday, 12 December 2023 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

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SCRUTINY RESEARCH

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens Scrutiny Committee work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and

2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on the 16th October 2023.

5 - 14

REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

4. PRE- SCRUTINY OF A DRAFT CABINET REPORT

Pre-scrutinise the recommendations to Cabinet in respect of the 'PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL'.

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OFFICER'S REPORTS

5. ANNUAL SCHOOL EXCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23

For Committee Members to receive an analysis of school exclusion performance for the academic year 2022/23.

83 - 112

6. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA

For Committee members to receive an update on school attendance data across the local authority and the actions of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and wider Education and Inclusion Services to increase attendance levels.

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7. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

8. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special

circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee (County Borough Councillor S Evans and County Borough Councillor S Emanuel respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor M Ashford, Councillor J Brencher, Councillor J Cook, Councillor J Elliott, Councillor R Evans, Councillor S Hickman, Councillor C Lises, Councillor M Maohoub, Councillor C Preedy, Councillor J Smith, Councillor K Webb and Councillor D Wood

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr P Booth, Voting Diocesan Authorities Representative
Mr M Cleverley, Representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel
Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE
Mr C Jones, Representing GMB
Mrs R Lydon, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON
Mr M Thomas, Representing NEU
Mr M Veale, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on Monday,
16 October 2023 at 5.00 pm.

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

**County Borough Councillors – The following Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
Councillors were present in the online**

Councillor S Evans (Chair)

Councillor K Webb	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor J Cook
Councillor J Elliott	Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor S Hickman	Councillor C Lises
Councillor M Maohoub	Councillor C Preedy
Councillor J Smith	Councillor D Wood

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr P Booth, Voting Diocesan Authorities Representative
Mr M Cleverley, Representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel
Mrs R Lydon, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr M Thomas, Representing NEU

Officers in attendance:-

Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr D Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing
Ms Hayley Jacobs, Lead for Community Focussed Schools
Mrs S Daniel, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor R Lewis, Cabinet Member Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language Services
Councillor J Edwards, Chairperson Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Invitees:-

Ms E Lewis – ALN Coordinator
Ms R Macaully-Lane – ALN Coordinator

Apologies for Absence
Mr M Veale – Co-opted Member

In accordance with the code of conduct, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda

Councillor C Preedy, "Personal interest as one of the Special Schools named in Agenda item 7 resides in my ward"

Councillor C Lises, "Personal interest as Hawthorn High School is mentioned in Agenda item 6 and I am a governor of this school"

Councillor S Hickman "personal Interest in agenda item 6 as I am a governor of Porth Community School"

Councillor S Evans "Personal Interest in item 6, my Employer is the University of South Wales"

Ms Rebecca Lydon "Personal interest in item 7, both my sons are autistic"

Councillor Sera Evans "Personal interest in item 7 as my son is statemented"

Mr L Patterson "Personal interest in item 7 as my son is statemented and receives Education in RCT"

25 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

26 CONSULTATION LINKS

Members were advised that the latest open consultations had been circulated, and advised that if Members had any queries to contact the Scrutiny Team

27 Bi-Annual Cabinet Member Engagement

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to Members to allow them the opportunity to scrutinise the decisions undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language Services within the period set out in the report and to ensure the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

A Member asked what the proposals are to ensure the Authority is encouraging use of the Welsh Language within the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The Cabinet Member replied that one of the key priorities as a Local authority is achieving the targets in the WESP. He advised Members that the Local Authority has been given targets by Welsh Government to increase the number of Welsh speakers in the Borough and in schools. He advised that the Authority has invested Capital Resources into Welsh Medium schools in the form of improving their buildings and facilities but also building a number of new 21st Century Welsh primary schools. He added that the Authority is also working together with Early Years providers to invest in Early Years facilities to make the Welsh Language more appealing from a younger age with the ambition that those children will then stay in a Welsh Medium setting for their entire education.

A Member asked the Cabinet Member to comment on Capital Investment in the Estyn report and if there is any information on the suggested improved outcomes for pupils. The Cabinet Member commented that the Council is committed to building three new primary schools in the Borough with works on the sites already well under way. He added that the Minister for Education had also attended the sites and was pleased to see the progress being made for our children and young people. He advised the Committee that the key priorities for the Authority are having the best facilities available for learners and as well as building new facilities it was crucial that we continue to refurbish existing schools to increase attainment. He concluded that our children deserve the best facilities for their education.

A Member referred to recommendations in the Estyn report and asked the Cabinet Member what his view was as to how these would be improved in RCT

The Cabinet Member replied that whilst most of the Estyn report gives an accurate reflection of the high standard of Education across the Authority, he acknowledged there is always room for improvement. He acknowledged that partnership working with the Consortium is an area we can improve on and also the areas around self-evaluation will be reviewed to improve effectiveness. He added that in the report there is emphasis on purposeful Leadership and this is reflective of the calibre of our senior officers and the strategic leadership in RCT. The report reflects well our prioritisation of assisting the most vulnerable in the Borough and the comments on our long term succession planning strategy.

A Member asked for clarity on how long the new special school will keep up with demand for places.

The Cabinet Member responded that there are three settings that are close or on capacity which reflects the increased demand for the special services provided by those schools. He added that the new special school site in Clydach is large site and will provide the best facilities for our learners and will assist with meeting capacity requirements. He concluded that they will also continue to look at any opportunities to provide additional capacity of existing sites to keep up with the demand.

A Member asked where we will see the future investments in Education for RCT. The Cabinet Member replied that in recent years we have been one of the leading local authorities in Wales in drawing down funding from Welsh Government to invest in 21st Century Schools. Close working relationships with Welsh Government officials has allowed us to deliver our priorities as a Cabinet. He acknowledged that whilst the economic pressures and budget constraints have provided a challenge the Authority has continued to prioritise and protect the delivery of the education services as much as possible. Education remains a key priority as well as ensuring our education facilities are also able to provide facilities to our communities outside of the curriculum and school day.

A Member asked how the Council engages with young people in the Borough to ensure they are aware of any proposals and are able to have their voices heard before any potential decisions are taken that will affect their future. The Cabinet Member replied that the views of young people are key and he, along with senior officers regularly engage with the County Youth Forum, the Youth Service and School Councils to seek their views and feedback on matters that affect our

Children and Young People. He continued that one example was the naming of new schools whereby pupils were integral to the decision making process which is in place to ensure they feel part of the process.

A Member asked if future opportunity will be provided to the Committee to scrutinise further decisions of the Cabinet Member, namely the proposal to close Rhigos School which is still in the consultation phase and a decision not yet finalised.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications advised that there will be opportunity for Members to further scrutinise the matter either through a Cabinet Member and Engagement session or through pre-scrutiny before a final decision is taken forward.

The Chair asked if the Cabinet Member can make a statement on the Authority's journey to ensure there are enough opportunities for our students and young people with special educational needs to ensure access to the best support to meet their needs through the Welsh language. The Cabinet Member advised that one of the Authority's key priorities is developing their Additional Learning Needs facilities across the County Borough in line with legislation to ensure the very best facilities for our learners. He added that there had been over £1.2 million investment into ALN and Learning support classes in the last year. He added that while making the investment the Authority are keen to have the minimum amount of disruption to children's education. The Cabinet Member also advised that they are continuing to develop their ALN classes in Welsh medium settings, in line with their aspirations as set out in the WESP and this is currently being consulted on.

Following discussion, the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for attending the meeting and answering Members questions and looked forward to inviting him back again in the future

RESOLVED to:

1. Scrutinise the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language in respect of matters considered and agreed by Cabinet, and any key decisions taken, during the period 11 May – 16 October 2023.
2. Identify any areas arising from those matters determined within this period which Committee wish to further scrutinise, as part of revisions to the committees published work programme, in relation to Education and Inclusion

28 Member Nomination - Child Poverty

Following the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 27 September, Members were asked to nominate two Members of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to be invited to attend the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to contribute to discussions on the Child Poverty Notice of Motion

RESOLVED to nominate Councillor S Emanuel and Councillor C Preedy to be invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to contribute to the Child Poverty Notice of Motion discussion.

29 Child Poverty and Community Schools Update

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service presented the report to Members on the Community Focused School approach in RCT. The report provides a further update on the agenda following the report provided to Members in December 2022. The report discusses the approach to family engagement and utilisation of Welsh Government and Cabinet funding in this area as well as some of the Capital Grant that has been provided to RCT by Welsh Government. The Officer continued that the report also covers elements of the work undertaken to mitigate the impacts of poverty on learners and their families so that, where possible, barriers are removed to education.

Following conclusion of the presentation of the report, the Chairperson invited questions from Members

A Member referred to the Community Engagement and asked if the activities and services being offered outside of the school hours were easily accessible children living in poverty, i.e don't need to book online, pay for the activities and transport to / from the activities.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing replied that the YEPS service do work closely with schools to make sure, where possible that transport is put on for pupils to enable them to attend the activities and be transported home safely. He did acknowledge however, that following analysis of the data that this is an area that needs further work and development to see if barriers such as the high cost of transport can be overcome.

A Member commented that some parents evenings cannot be attended by those living in poverty as their children get bussed to school but the parents do not have the transport to be able to get back to the school for evening appointments. The Member stated that what has previously worked well is taking the meetings out into the Community where they are easily accessible to all parents. The Chair agreed and stated that with a figure of less than 50% of schools offering out of school activities, more needs to be done to combat Child Poverty and the barriers these families face. The Chair also referred to the decrease in the number of schools (61.5% to 59.3%) who have a designated member of staff with responsibility for developing and improving multi-agency working and stated that further exploration for this decrease was needed.

In response to a Member query around Multi-agency and third party attendance support and attendance at schools, the Head of Attendance and Wellbeing advised that there is a lot of work being undertaken in this area, recognising that there is still a long way to go. He added that they are in strategic conversations with Public Health Wales around providing co-location opportunities in schools i.e. through Health visitors and mental health support alongside central education services, although these talks are only in the early stages.

A Member asked if the Big Bocs Bwyd link with food banks to ensure wraparound service is there. As families are referred to the Food bank. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing replied that the Big Bocs Bwyd is usually operated by the Family Engagement Officers who have very close links with the food banks and they are best placed to understand the needs of the family. He added that through this initiative, families can access resources in addition to food such as school uniform through a recycling scheme and period products

which were funded by the local authority.

A Member referred to the Welsh Government model for Community focussed schools, specifically article 31 of UN convention which gives children the right to Play, Education, Health, Housing and food. The Member expressed concern that with the rollout of Universal Free School Meals not expected until September 2024, is there anything that could be done in the meantime to ensure no child in RCT is going hungry, as a Local Member, she was concerned and has had reports that this is the case, particularly where there were families who had no recourse to public funds.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing advised that a meeting was convened with Children's Services last month to discuss the issue with Colleges and Universities in the RCT areas as many of the families who have no recourse to public funds are students with families who choose to come to the UK with the student. The Director Education and Inclusion added that the issue was also raised in the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee and she reassured Members that if Schools were concerned that children were going hungry the school would immediately refer the matter to the Safeguarding teams. She concluded that the Authority are also ahead of schedule in progressing the implementation of the Universal Free School Meals for Primary School children

A Member requested further analysis of the survey outlined in 15.2 of the report due to the low response and possibly the same respondents feeding back a second time. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing replied that the survey is a considerable ask of Headteachers as each question presented has a supplementary box which is analysed for support needs and the survey as taking around 20 minutes to complete, therefore an 83% response rate is extremely high. The second survey received a 51% response which is again a fairly high response rate for a survey.

A Member referred to the use of Community facilities and stated that the authority should be consulting with the Community that live in the surrounding area to the facilities when considering opening or extending the hours of availability of the facilities as those that will be impacted as a result. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing confirmed that any such proposals would be subject to community engagement and they would have opportunity to provide feedback to any proposals through the usual planning processes.

A Member commented that it would have been good to see a robust set of outcomes as to what success looks like and how this will be measured in combatting Child Poverty and together with Community Focussed Schools. The Member added that it would be great to take a Strategic approach with detailed action plans and then review the outputs to assess their impact. The Chair agreed that she would also like to see an accompanying action plan with KPIs included with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informing some of this work through the Child Poverty Strategy. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing stated that the Strategy included in the Appendix is intended as the strategic document and there is a framework/toolkit document which sits beneath this and is used for operational approaches which includes KPIs following community mapping.

The Director Education and Inclusion advised that they are trying to achieve a streamlining of strategic plans to integrate them all into our Annual Delivery Plan. She reassured Members that the Annual delivery plan does have a

success criteria with more measures this academic year and Child Poverty underpins what we do as a Council and is being raised corporately and cross Directorate to ensure the work we do is evaluated and has the desired impacts.

The Chair commented that she was pleased to read that Governor training had been offered around the Community Focussed agenda and it was important that this continues to be rolled out to all schools. She added that she would like to see this item return with detail on the take up of initiatives such as Big Bocs Bwyd and how can the delivery of these services be improved to reach out to families who need it most. The report should also include data around the survey responses. She extended the invite at a future meeting to the Family Engagement officers and stated it would be great to hear their voices at Committee.

The Director Education and Inclusion suggested bringing the item back to Committee once the Corporate has been out for consultation and steps can be taken forward as to how the Directorate will take forward their Delivery Plan for the academic year and a self-evaluation can be provided to Members at this point. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication agreed and stated that as part of the Notice of Motion put forward in Council, Overview and Scrutiny Committee will first be provided the opportunity to shape specific plans in respect of Child Poverty.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the positive impact of the work undertaken around the Community Focused School and Child Poverty agenda as well as next steps.
2. To bring the item back to the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time to compliment the discussions that will take place at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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AN UPDATE ON YEAR 2 OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL ACT 2018 IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Head of Inclusion Services presented the report to Members to provide an update on the implementation of the ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) Wales Act (2018) and its associated ALN Code for Wales (2021) in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) during the academic year 2022/23.

The Chair welcomed ALN Coordinators to the meeting and thanked them for being in attendance to hear their contributions to the discussions.

Following conclusion of the presentation the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee

A Member asked if officers felt there are any gaps in RCT where they felt there should be provision but there isn't. The Head of Inclusion replied that learning support class realignments are regularly undertaken and we always strive to have an even distribution of learning support classes across the Local authority area. We are constantly looking at improving environments that suits the 21st Century curriculum. She added that she did not feel there were any gaps currently, but acknowledged there is always a need to keep provision under

review.

A Member asked if the portal that school staff use for submissions has improved. The Head of Inclusion Services confirmed that they had taken feedback from ALNcos and undertaken many changes to improve and streamline the situation. She added that the reasons for rejections were also investigated and used to improve the submission process. The Officer concluded that the Specialist Placement Request form had also been reviewed so that ALNcos do not have to submit as many forms as they did previously. She acknowledged that whilst it is another new process, the process had been simplified.

The ALNco advised that the portal had given them some challenges and whilst there were still some small challenges the Local Authority has done a lot of work to improve it. She added that a working group reviewed and assessed what improvements could be made and those have since been implemented.

The Chair asked the ALNcos if they felt they have sufficient time and resource to ensure they can carry out their duties.

The ALNco replied that she felt she was in a fortunate position to have strong leadership from her headteacher and she had a passion for inclusion and takes the time to ensure her team could be upskilled. She believed her school is firmly invested in needs of students and has a strong focus on ALN support and they are supported with assistants and administrative support too. Another ALNco confirmed that she was in a similar position and had been given a non-teaching role this year so she could put all her focus in to ALN. In addition she has a deputy ALNco who is working on a half timetable. She concluded that trying to teach as well as undertake a ALNco role is challenging.

The Chair advised that the Committee would like to see this item continue to feature on their Work Programme and they would like to see the findings, data and outcomes of the Quality Assurance and Person Centred Practice

The Head of Inclusion confirmed that the Quality Assurance will continue over three years, however feedback will be continual throughout the process. She advised the Committee that they released their ALNCo cluster leads for 12 days last year with the support of grant funding and they work closely with the Additional Learning Provision coordinators on a tiered Quality Assurance process. She confirmed that the outcomes of the process will be used to feedback to ALNco forums. She continued that they are working with the Central South Consortium to develop professional learning for their head teachers, ALNcos and Improvement Partners and they will develop training sessions on inclusive practice, effective self-evaluation of ALN and how the outcomes of self-evaluation can be used to feed into school development plans.

The Chair asked about the transition experience for learners as they enter the post 16 phase – Do they continue in school or college or seek alternative provisions.

The ALNco provided the following written response due to connection issues:

- We work closely with the college and have had a lot of success with several students who have gone on to study practical courses such as catering.

- We have our own robust transition for those students who continue into our own 6th Form. Sometimes this works better for our students as they are already familiar with staff and the site.
- We have had great success in the past with students who have gone on to Cardiff University following the discovery project.

The Chair asked for more detail of an audit of the Welsh Medium ALN workforce within Access and Inclusion and specialist settings in RCT and the development of a joint professional development opportunity for head teachers, ALNcos and Central South Consortium Improvement Partners to ensure a shared understanding of effective self- evaluation of ALN.

The Head of Inclusion advised that the ALN code states there is a requirement to develop a bilingual system with Welsh Government acknowledging there is some way to travel with this. She advised that many issues they face are faced by many local authorities on a national basis. Nationally she acknowledged there is a lack of welsh medium resources and workforce. More locally, we are confident we have welsh speaking specialists in all services, however, we do need to have more resilience and part of our WESP action plan is to ensure there are welsh essential posts in place across service areas

The Chair summarised that Committee would like to see this return to the Committee in the future with data around the quality assurance process, including outcomes and impact for our learners. The Chair thanked all officers for attending for the item and extended the Committees thanks to the ALNcos for also attending the meeting and giving their contributions to Members.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report
2. Receive the item again in the future at an appropriate time, to include data from the Quality Assurance process, including outcomes and impact on learners.

31 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

32 URGENT BUSINESS

None

**Cllr S Evans
Chair**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14TH DECEMBER 2023

PRE-SCRUTINY OF A DRAFT CABINET REPORT: 'PROPOSALS TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL'

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the opportunity for Committee to pre-scrutinise the recommendations of the Director of Education & Inclusion to the Council's Cabinet on the 18th December 2023, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language in respect of the 'PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILSTRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL'.
- 1.2 This report provides a mechanism for Committee to comment on the proposals and to authorise the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications, to present the comments and/or recommendations of Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and challenge the 'draft' Cabinet report and recommendations of the Director of Education & Inclusion, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language.
- 2.2 Following Members' consideration of the draft Cabinet report, authorise the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications to facilitate and provide Committee's comments, observations and/or recommendations to the Cabinet in respect of the proposals prior to Cabinet's consideration on the 18th December 2023.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Scrutiny with the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the proposal to transfer pupils from Rhigos Primary School to Hirwaun Primary School following its closure, in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) prior to its consideration by Cabinet.
- 3.2 The need to provide Members with information on the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposals, in order to make informed comments and provide feedback to Cabinet.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1. At the meeting of Cabinet held on 18th September 2023, approval was given to begin the relevant and required statutory school organisation consultation to close Rhigos Primary School in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018); and to extend the catchment area of Hirwaun Primary School to incorporate the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School.
- 4.2 Members are aware of the Council's statutory duty to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding. In its report to Cabinet in September 2023, it was proposed that due to the steady decline of pupils joining Rhigos Primary School and with pupil numbers forecast to continue to fall in the next five years, that Rhigos Primary School closes with pupils from the school moving to Hirwaun Primary School. The consultation also stipulated that 'in accordance with the School Admissions Code (005/2013) this proposal will be subject to parental choice'.
- 4.3 Members will note that the report also referenced that Rhigos Primary School is also within the catchment of the Welsh medium provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn, and tailored and individual support is currently available from the Council's Welsh language Immersion Team for any pupils wishing to continue their education, at YGG Penderyn, through the medium of Welsh.
- 4.4 The consultation in respect of these proposals was undertaken between 2nd October 2023 and the 17th November 2023 under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. These arrangements stipulated that 'the consultation must be undertaken when the proposals are at a formative stage and that Consultation Documents must be prepared and circulated to prescribed consultees, as well as being published on the Council website.'
- 4.5 Attached at Appendix 1A, is the draft Cabinet Report, including recommendations from the Director of Education & Inclusion, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language.

- 4.6 The feedback from a wide range of stakeholders provided via the consultation process has been incorporated into a Consultation Report (and subsequent appendices) which is attached at part of the draft Cabinet report included at Appendix A. The draft Cabinet report provides a summary of correspondence received during the consultation, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.

5 PRE-SCRUTINY

- 5.1 Members are reminded that the purpose of pre scrutiny activity is to influence and scrutinise decisions of Cabinet before they are made, as ‘critical friends’.
- 5.2 This draft Cabinet report was identified for pre-scrutiny by the Chair of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Sera Evans. This request is in accordance with the Council’s Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
- 5.3 This opportunity has been facilitated for Committee, with the support of the Director of Education & Inclusion, and the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language.
- 5.4 In the absence of the opportunity for Overview & Scrutiny Committee to determine the most appropriate mechanism for scrutinising this matter, the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications, has facilitated this report in consultation with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This approach will be reported for information, when the Overview & Scrutiny Committee next consider the Cabinet Work programme.
- 5.5 The Education and Inclusion Services Scrutiny Committee continues to have the opportunity to explore and comment on a number of reports in advance of Cabinet’s consideration to bring a different perspective to the decisions made and enabling Cabinet decisions to be more informed.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (with Social-Economic Duty) was prepared in respect of the proposal and was published on RCTCBC’s website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG’s School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).

7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and was published on RCTCBC’s website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG’s School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).

8 CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

8.1 The aforementioned proposals have been subject to a comprehensive public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including Estyn's full response and the clarification to the response, for a minimum period of six weeks.

8.2 The involvement of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee and public participation in the pre-scrutiny exercise will contribute to the quality and robustness of Cabinet decision-making.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The following legislation / regulations are aligned to this report: The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).

11 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

11.1 There are links between RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Service's School Modernisation Programme and RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the years 2020 to 2024, 'Making a Difference', as well as to the Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Strategic Plan for the years between 2022 and 2025 (as set out in the attached draft Cabinet report).

11.2 The proposal could contribute to the some of the seven well-being goals within the Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 and due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12 CONCLUSION

12.1 As the attached report sets out, 'the Council has a statutory duty through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding'.

12.2 The undertaking of pre-scrutiny by the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in respect of the outcome of the recent consultation, will ensure that the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee fully evaluates the recommendations of the draft Cabinet report, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSALS TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY
SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

14TH DECEMBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATIONS**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DRAFT CABINET

18TH DECEMBER 2023

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS
TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH
PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR R LEWIS)**

AUTHOR(S):

Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to:

Close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:

2.1.1 Note the content of this report.

2.1.2 Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, attached as Appendix A to this Cabinet Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.

2.1.3 Note the feedback from Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee which met on 14th December 2023 provided by the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication.

2.1.4 Agree to progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in the Welsh Government's (WG's) legislative guidance the School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th September 2023, approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024. The justifications for doing so were:

- 4.1.1 RCTCBC has a statutory duty through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding.

- 4.1.2 Rhigos Primary School is RCTCBC's smallest school and the number of pupils joining Rhigos Primary School has been in steady decline and pupil numbers are forecast to continue to fall in the next five years.

- 4.1.3 Allowing surplus places to remain high through inaction would directly and negatively affect the future financial viability of Rhigos Primary School and impact children's education in the future. Rhigos Primary School's budget, with a diminishing income would have less money for staff salaries, curriculum activities, equipment, running costs and maintenance of the school estate and would therefore struggle to maintain their current good education offer.

- 4.1.4 To continue to effectively manage the education provision available in the Cynon Valley area of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). The proposal would extend and expand upon the positive outcomes delivered through the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, enabling more pupils to benefit from this significant investment which has included the provision of the new Hirwaun Primary School building.

- 4.1.5 To continue to deliver on the objectives included within the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme, specifically:

- Transforming learning environments and learner experience.
- Meeting demand for school places.
- Improving condition and suitability of the education estate.
- Developing sustainable learning environments.
- Supporting the community.

- 4.1.6 To continue to deliver the mission of RCTCBC's [Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Strategic Plan](#) for the years between 2022 and 2025 to ensure '*Equity and Excellence in Education and Enhanced Wellbeing for All*'.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and published on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). This Assessment has been updated following a review of the responses received.

5.2 The outcome of Equality Impact Assessment identified:

- Positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts, upon the protected characteristics.
- Hirwaun Primary School is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 thereby ensuring that no pupil, staff member, parent / carer or member of the wider community is prevented from fully accessing the whole extent of the new facilities.
- There would be positive impacts on the Welsh language as, despite Hirwaun Primary School being an English medium primary school, it provides improved facilities to assist with the delivery of Welsh as a key element of the curriculum and in line with Cymraeg 2050 and RCTCBC's WESP, as we aim for the teaching of Welsh as a second language in English medium schools, to be of the highest quality.
- Hirwaun Primary School has first class facilities that ensure that all families who wish to access places at the school can be accommodated. The excellent facilities on offer may encourage more parents / carers to choose their catchment school, including the families of learners with ALN. The capacity may assist armed forces personnel and carers who may move to the area mid-academic year.

5.3 It was considered that no negative impacts were identified within the Equality Impact Assessment which would prevent approval to be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Equality Impact Assessment would continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the proposal's delivery period.

5.4 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, RCTCBC has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1.How would RCTCBC's proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex.
- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Sexuality.

- Religion/Belief.
- Gender Identity.
- Relationship Status.
- Pregnancy.
- Preferred Language.

5.5 Of those respondents that answered this question, the majority, 136 (92.5%), gave no answer to this question. However, 4 (2.7%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their age whilst 7 (4.8%) commented that the proposal could negative impact them due to their disability.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and was published on RCTCBC's website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). This Assessment has been updated following a review of the responses received.

6.2 The outcome of the Welsh Language Impact Assessment identified:

- Hirwaun Primary School has recently benefitted from a £9.6M investment via the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, delivering a brand new school with a high quality, 21st Century teaching and learning environment, enriching the teaching and learning experiences for both pupils and staff. The school opened its doors to the English medium pupils previously attending Penderyn Community Primary School in September 2021. It is a fully accessible school building which wholly complies with the Equality Act 2010.
- Rhigos Primary school is also within the catchment of the Welsh medium provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn, and tailored and individual support would be available from the Council's Welsh Language Immersion Team for any pupils wishing to continue their education, at Penderyn, through the medium of Welsh.
- Although Hirwaun Primary School is an English medium primary school, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum and all pupils would benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century.
- RCTCBC aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use of the Welsh language amongst pupils inside and outside schools. Facilitating the use of the Welsh language across the curriculum and in wider contexts in schools, to ensure a continuum of linguistic progression to support pupils in the transition between key stages, offers all pupils the opportunity to become fully bilingual and aligns with the Curriculum for Wales 2022. Pupils attending Hirwaun Primary School would continue to be encouraged and supported to do this through the achievement of the 'Cymraeg Campus' Welsh Language Charter, a framework to promote and increase the use of Welsh.

- Hirwaun Primary school is a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area has been designed within so that the local community are allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day. The headteacher of the Hirwaun Primary School will continue to be encouraged and supported to consider using these facilities to increase participation in the Welsh language by offering the opportunity to parents/carers and other members of the community to attend Welsh medium learning classes for adults and/or other opportunities for community engagement through the medium of Welsh.
- This could contribute towards the Welsh Government's ambitious goal of creating a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 and the WESP.

6.3 It was considered that no negative impacts were identified within the Welsh Language Impact Assessment which would prevent approval to be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Welsh Language Impact Assessment would continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the proposal's delivery period.

6.4 In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with RCTCBC's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

6.5 A summary of the responses received in relation to these questions can be found in the Consultation Report.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The consultation processes in respect of the proposal have been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018). These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notice which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation should a decision be made to progress with the statutory process.

7.2 The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of the proposal contains:

- Information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings.
- Estyn's response to the proposal and the clarification to the response.
- A summary of the responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.

- The response received by the ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee established on behalf of the community of Rhigos.
- 7.3 As stated above, Estyn’s full response can be found within the consultation report however, in summary, Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area. The response further states that the *‘local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school’*.
- 7.4 The ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee, established on behalf of the community of Rhigos, undertook three separate petitions to the proposal. In total, 784, 974, and 65 signatures were added to the petitions respectively by the consultation deadline, these will be counted as three responses. In addition, 236 written responses were received, 89 in writing / or via email and 147 via online survey.
- 7.5 Governing Body and staff meetings outlined in the Consultation Report were held virtually face-to-face. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 2 (A to B) to the Consultation Report.
- 7.6 School Council meetings outlined in the Consultation Report were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people’s version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 3 (A to B) to the Consultation Report.
- 7.7 Two drop in sessions were also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with Officers from RCTCBC’s Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. They took place in Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School on Monday 6th November 2023 at 15:00 to 18:00 and Tuesday 7th November at 15:00 to 18:00 respectively. Attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.
- 7.8 Out of the 239 responses were received, 3 (1.3%) were in favour of the proposal, 226 (94.5%) were against the proposal, 1 (0.4%) was unsure and 9 (3.8%) did not provide an answer. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	%
In Favour	3	1.3
Against	226	94.5
Unsure	1	0.4
Not Answered	9	3.8
Total	239	100.0

- 7.9 To confirm, **all** of the comments and issues raised during this consultation have been reviewed by RCTCBC’s Cabinet Members.

8. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 8.1 The Statutory Notice for the proposal would refer to the:
- 8.1.1 Closure of Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.
- 8.2 If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice would be published in January 2024, and would allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections.
- 8.3 If any objections are received during this period, in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018), an Objection Report would be prepared. This matter would then be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet for Members to consider.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There will be no capital funding implications should the proposal go ahead, and revenue savings accrued from the closure of Rhigos Primary School would be reinvested into supporting pupils' education in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 9.2 Given the 2.8 mile distance between Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School, all pupils residing in the Rhigos catchment area would qualify for home to school transport to Hirwaun in line with the statutory provision as identified within Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Additional revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the closure of Rhigos Primary School, including the increase in home to school transport costs, would be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into RCTCBC's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.
- 9.3 Financial projections show that progressing with the proposals would have a positive impact upon the budgetary position of Hirwaun Primary School. Further information on the current and projected budgetary positions of both schools affected by the proposals were included in the Consultation Document presented to Cabinet on 18th September 2023.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Powers for Councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the:
- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
 - The WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018).
- 10.2 Council's must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, act in accordance with any relevant

requirements contained in the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018) and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it.

11. LINKS TO RCTCBC'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

11.1 There are links between RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Service's School Modernisation Programme and RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the years 2020 to 2024, 'Making a Difference', specifically:

- **People:**
 - Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing:
 - Delivering new indoor and outdoor sporting facilities available for community use and enhancing existing sporting facilities such as changing rooms and outdoor play areas.
 - Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do:
 - Improving the social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the range of specialist services available on our school sites and within our communities.
- **Places:**
 - Ensuring RCT is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion where residents feel safe:
 - Supporting the voluntary, community and faith sectors to help build active communities, creating the capacity for meeting the needs of residents within their communities.
- **Prosperity:**
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

11.2 There are links to RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Strategic Plan for the years between 2022 and 2025, specifically:

- **Strategic Priority 3:**
 - Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- **Strategic Priority 5:**
 - Delivering 21st century learning environments and innovative services for our pupils and communities.

11.3 The proposal in this report would lead to a more efficient use of RCTCBC's education estate supporting RCTCBC's Think Climate, Making RCT Carbon Neutral by 2030, for the years 2022 to 2025. The closure of an energy inefficient school would contribute towards achieving the overarching objective of RCTCBC's carbon reduction targets to become carbon neutral by 2030. It also aligns with the WG's ambition of a carbon neutral public service by 2030 and the wider goal of a net zero carbon Wales by 2050 as set out in the WG's Net Zero Carbon Strategic Plan: 2022. The investment at Hirwaun Primary School has seen a number of sustainable technologies incorporated into the design

including a rainwater harvesting system, photo-voltaic panels, electric vehicle charging facilities and biodiversity areas on the school site.

11.4 Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the five ways of working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long-term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

11.5 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the seven wellbeing goals by:

- **A Healthier Wales** – Accommodation at Hirwaun Primary School consists of enhanced outdoor spaces and sports facilities. As well as supporting the full range of curriculum activities these facilities are also available for community use.
- **A More Equal Wales** – The wider catchment area for Hirwaun Primary School and the way the school is used would bring neutral or positive socio-economic impacts to all of the vulnerable groups over an extended geographical area.
- **A Wales of More Cohesive Communities** – Hirwaun Primary School is a fully accessible and integrated community school with a dedicated area designed within so that the local community can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** – Although Hirwaun Primary School is English medium, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum and all pupils would benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century (as is currently the case there is also the option to attend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn and engage the support of the Welsh language Immersion Team to support transition, subject to parent/carer choice).
- **A Globally Responsive Wales** – The new school at Hirwaun has been built to BREEAM excellent standards and the school can use sustainability features of the building, e.g., photo-voltaic panels, rainwater harvesting and biodiversity, to further develop extra-curricular activities which encourage healthy lifestyles for the school and wider community.

11.6 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the five ways of working by:

- **Long Term** – The proposal forms a part of RCTCBC's wider 21st Century School Organisation Strategy and supports the better strategic management of RCTCBC's education estate.
- **Prevention** – RCTCBC believes that the proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for further improvement.
- **Integrations** – Hirwaun Primary School is a fully accessible and integrated community school. A dedicated area is provided within the school so that the local community and parents/carers can safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.

- **Collaboration** – RCTCBC would continue to work effectively with internal and external partners to ensure the changes brought about by these proposals would meet the short and long term needs of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community.
- **Involvement** –The proposal is made in accordance with the School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011 / 2018) and seeks the views of a prescribed list of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community. As such face to face meetings were held with Governing Bodies, staff and School Councils of both Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School.

11.7 As stated in paragraph 5.1 above, an Equality Impact Assessment which further details the contribution of the proposal to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been prepared.

12. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

12.1 The proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School (subject to parental choice) is relevant to the specific wards covered by these catchment areas.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 RCTCBC has a statutory duty through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding.

13.2 Rhigos Primary School is RCTCBC's smallest school and the number of pupils joining Rhigos Primary School has been in steady decline, pupil numbers are forecast to continue to fall in the next five years. To note, since the commencement of the consultation period in relation to this proposal, the number of statutory pupils at the school has reduced from 51 to 49.

13.3 Allowing surplus places to remain high through inaction would directly and negatively affect the future financial viability of Rhigos Primary School and impact children's education in the future. Rhigos Primary School's budget, with a diminishing income would have less money for staff salaries, curriculum activities, equipment, running costs and maintenance of the school estate and would therefore struggle to maintain their current good education offer.

13.4 The proposal seeks to provide the opportunity for more pupils to benefit from the significant investment delivered via the WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning programme in the Cynon Valley. Consultation outcomes suggest that there is strong opposition to the proposals but the rationale for change highlights many potential benefits.

Estyn confirmed that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area. The response further

states that the *'local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school'*.

- 13.5 It is recommended therefore, that Members consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice in January 2024 which will trigger the Objection Period and progress this proposal.

DRAFT

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee.

Contact Officer(s):

Andrea Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation.

Lisa Howell, 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18TH DECEMBER 2023

**ITEM: PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS
TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

DRAFT

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Consultation Report.

DRAFT

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RHIGOS PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO HIRWAUN PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Consultation Report and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.



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3 (B)	Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Rhigos Primary School.	

1. Proposal

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) wishes to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School. The pupils of Rhigos Primary School will instead attend Hirwaun Primary School.

It is proposed that Rhigos Primary School will close with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024.

The proposal is made in accordance with the Welsh Government's (WG's) School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Section 2.1 of the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) refers to elements of school organisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- The closing of a maintained school.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:

[Consultation on a proposal to close Rhigos Primary | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)

2. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This Consultation Report is prepared in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Its purpose is to inform the stakeholders listed below of the outcome of the consultation held between 2nd October 2023 and completed at 17:00 on 17th November 2023.

3. Who Have We Consulted With?

A copy of the Consultation Document, which fully outlined and explained our proposal, was sent to the following stakeholders. The Consultation Document was also published on RCTCBC's website.

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of:
 - Rhigos Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
 - Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn.
- Parents / carers, prospective parents / carers (where possible), and staff members of:

- Rhigos Primary School.
- Hirwaun Primary School.
- Pupils of:
 - Rhigos Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
- Neighbouring local authorities.
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf constituencies.
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Childcare providers.
- Mudiad Meithrin.
- Menter Iaith.
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.
- Children and Young People’s Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.
- Rhigos Community Council.
- Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council.

4. Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified were sent a link to electronic copies of the Consultation Document, and those that requested paper copies received them. The table that follows also outlines the meetings that were convened with the Governing Bodies and Staff Members and School Councils of Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School.

School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
School Council			
Rhigos Primary School	School Council	Monday 6 th November 2023 at 13:30 to 14:30	Rhigos Primary School
Hirwaun Primary School	School Council	Tuesday 7 th November at 13:30 to 14:30	Hirwaun Primary School
Governing Body and Staff			
Rhigos Primary School.	Governing Body and Staff.	Thursday 26 th October 2023 at 15:30 – 17:00.	Rhigos Primary School.

Hirwaun Primary School.	Primary	Governing Body and Staff.	Thursday 26 th October 2023 at 15:30 – 17:00.	Hirwaun Primary School.
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All Governing Body and staff meetings outlined in the previous table were held face-to-face. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 2 (A to B). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

All School Council meetings outlined in the previous table were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people’s version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response Form. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 3 (A B). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

Two drop in sessions were also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with officers from RCTCBC’s Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. The table that follows also outlines the dates and times of the meetings.

Public Drop in Session		
Parents/carers and members of the local community.	Monday 6 th November 2023 at 15:00 to 18:00.	Rhigos Primary School.
	Tuesday 7 th November at 15:00 to 18:00.	Hirwaun Primary School.

At the two drop in sessions all attendees were requested to sign in so that the level of attendance could be recorded. The attendance registers indicate that at the session held in Rhigos Primary School a total of 69 people signed in, however it should be noted that attendance was perceived to be higher than this number as some attendees did not sign in. At the session held in Hirwaun Primary School 3 people attended. Attendees cumulatively included Governing Body members, local Elected Members, local residents, parents / carers, pupils and staff.

Where appropriate, attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the questions raised at the Governing Body and staff meetings and School Council meetings are summarised in the notes of the meetings attached at Appendix 2 (A to B) and Appendix 3 (A B) respectively.

The ‘Save Rhigos Primary School’ action committee, established on behalf of the community of Rhigos, undertook three separate petitions to the proposal. In total, 784 signatures were added to an online petition, this has been classed as one response for the

purpose of this report and 974 and 65 signatures were added to two separate paper petitions, these have been classed as two responses for the purpose of this report.

In addition to this, 236 written responses were received, 89 in writing / or via email and 147 via online survey. Where emails from individuals had been sent to numerous recipients these have been counted as one response.

In total, 239 responses were received. 3 (1.3%) were in favour of the proposal, 226 (94.5%) were against the proposal, 1 (0.4%) was unsure and 9 (3.8%) did not provide an answer. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	%
In Favour	3	1.3
Against	226	94.5
Unsure	1	0.4
Not Answered	9	3.8
Total	239	100.0

In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), a summary of the written responses received during the consultation period are detailed in the table that follows along with clarification (where required).

For completeness it should be noted that there were a number of responses received that made statements and comments in relation to political issues, staff conduct, and wider Council issues that are unrelated to the specific requirements of a school organisation consultation, and as such these comments have not been included within the summary below. For those respondents that wish to raise any further concerns on such matters then there is the opportunity to do so outside of this consultation process, more information on how to make your views known can be found on RCTCBC's website.

To confirm, all of the comments and issues submitted during the course of this consultation have been made available and reviewed by RCTCBC's Cabinet Members.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme	Clarification	
Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	What support will there be for the pupils with ALN?	<p>All pupils with ALN will continue to be supported. The Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act provides detailed guidance on the duties and responsibilities of local authorities (LAs) in meeting the ALN of children and young people. Children and young people have ALN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for an additional learning provision to be made for them.</p> <p>The ALN Code for Wales (2021) recommends that Early Years and school settings adopt a graduated response to meeting ALN. A graduated response means that progressively greater expertise and</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>support can be brought in to address the difficulties a child or young person may be experiencing. Additional or different provision should be made depending on the severity of the child/young person's level of need.</p> <p>This duty and responsibility in this regard will be met regardless of which school a child attends.</p>
	The pupils of Rhigos Primary School will get lost in a school the size of Hirwaun Primary School.	<p>As detailed above, there is a duty and responsibility placed on local authorities for all pupils to receive the support they need regardless of the size of the school.</p> <p>Creating larger schools can build capacity within staffing structures and enable opportunities for developing more specialist wellbeing and/or family liaison posts which will clearly benefit more vulnerable children and families.</p>
Admissions	My child will not be attending Hirwaun Primary.	Choosing a school is parent / carer choice. Applications will be dealt with in accordance with the School Admissions Code.
	What if I don't want my child to attend Hirwaun Primary School?	
	Reports of issues with registering for a place at Rhigos Primary School for September 2024.	<p>During the school application period between September 1st to November 10th, RCTCBC received on-line applications for pre-nursery, nursery and reception places for Rhigos Primary School for the September 2024 academic year.</p> <p>To note there was a period of time during the admissions period that all parents across RCT were unable to apply online due to essential works being undertaken on the system from October 2nd to October 3rd. This message was posted on RCTCBC's web site.</p> <p>The admissions team have confirmed that they did receive a phone call from a Rhigos parent requesting a hard copy of the admissions form, however it transpired that the parent had already successfully applied for a place online. The parent was informed of this at the time.</p>
	Is fulltime nursery provision available in Hirwaun Primary School.	Hirwaun Primary School currently offer full time nursery provision.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
Extra-curricular activities	How will pupils' access after school clubs?	<p>The provision of after school clubs are the responsibility of the individual schools and whilst these provisions are considered to be important, it should be noted that post school activities are not a statutory requirement.</p> <p>As is the case across RCT, there will be no home to school transport provision available purely to access these activities, transport will be provided at the start and end of the normal school day only.</p>
	The consultation document states the proposal will provide more opportunities for extracurricular activities but given the transport issues this will be reduced.	<p>This is in reference to the multiple accessible spaces available in Hirwaun Primary School, internally and externally, that can be utilised for such purposes. The fully accessible facilities at Hirwaun Primary School by their very nature do provide more opportunities.</p> <p>The transport provision is as stated above.</p>
	There are lots of extracurricular activities already on offer in Rhigos.	<p>This is not disputed; the Consultation Document states that the view of RCTCBC is that Rhigos Primary School is a good school. It is noted within the Community Impact Assessment that after school clubs run at both schools.</p>
	Will the range of after school clubs still be available at Hirwaun?	<p>This was confirmed in the Community Impact Assessment where it states, <i>'There are after school clubs being run at both Rhigos and Hirwaun Primary School, and clubs currently running at Rhigos Primary School can continue at Hirwaun'</i>.</p>
Breakfast Club	How will pupils access breakfast club?	<p>The provision of breakfast club is the responsibility of the individual schools and whilst this provision is considered to be important, it should be noted that pre-school activities are not a statutory requirement. Therefore, there will be no home to school transport provision available purely to access this provision, transport will be provided at the start and end of the normal school day, as is currently the case for all schools across RCTCBC.</p> <p>However, if any child travelling on the school bus wishes to have a breakfast once they get to school then arrangements will be put in place to ensure that they receive one.</p> <p>The breakfast club operating in Hirwaun Primary School is very popular with an average of 53 pupils receiving a breakfast every day. The average daily number for pupils accessing a breakfast in Rhigos is 13 so there will be plenty of space available for any</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	pupils wishing to have a breakfast to do so. These figures have been calculated as a daily average of the attendance of the first half term of the 2023/24 academic year.
	Rhigos was voted Best Breakfast Club in Wales 2022. RCTCBC are aware of this impressive achievement and rightly the school community are very proud. A statement of congratulations was provided by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services at the time the award was received. Catering Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf have responsibility for delivering breakfast clubs in partnership with schools.
Building Condition	Why was the property condition survey used four years old? Property condition surveys are carried out cyclically on a five yearly basis which aligns with an industry standard timescale, so the survey used is still valid. The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) states that: <i>'Information about the quality of accommodation at all existing schools likely to be affected by the proposals including reference to the Local Authority's most recent (property) condition survey using the categories of the original 21st Century Schools Survey'.</i> This information has been included in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). The 2019 property condition survey was the most recent undertaken and so this was used accordingly. To note, a copy of the condition survey was shared with those who requested it during the consultation period.
	How much work has been undertaken at Rhigos Primary School since the property condition survey was undertaken? Lots of work has been undertaken at Rhigos Primary School since the property condition survey was undertaken in 2019. Works include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replacement windows and doors.• New fencing and gates.• New drainage and resurfacing.• Repairs to roof areas.• Mechanical and electrical upgrades.
	How much money has been spent at Rhigos Primary School since 2019? Including the cyclical maintenance checks over £180,000 has been spent at Rhigos Primary School. This can be broken down as follows:

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works funded through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for repairs and maintenance – £94,084. • Works funded directly by RCTCBC – £79,736. • Works funded by the school's delegated budget – £7,876.
Why hasn't the work identified within the property condition survey been undertaken?	<p>Some work of the work identified in the property condition survey has been undertaken, as listed above. Works are undertaken proactively and reactively across all 116 school sites, and as such have to be prioritised within the budgets available.</p> <p>In addition, lots of work has also been undertaken that was not identified in the property condition survey, including health and safety and safeguarding works.</p> <p>The property condition survey identifies the condition of a building at a point in time and is used as a tool for RCTCBC to manage its estate. In total, RCTCBC has 115 schools across 116 sites to manage, regular visits are undertaken by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and issues are flagged up on a priority basis and undertaken when required. Rhigos Primary School has been in regular contact with, and has been visited regularly by, the RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team.</p>
Why hasn't the RCTCBC looked after its buildings?	<p>RCTCBC has an obligation to ensure that its buildings are safe, watertight and warm, and that's what it has done. As stated above there have been regular visits to Rhigos Primary School by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and its contractors, and it also undertakes cyclical maintenance checks and surveys of its mechanical and electrical equipment.</p> <p>All schools in RCTCBC buy into a building maintenance SLA and work is undertaken and managed through this SLA. On many occasions RCTCBC has paid for works at Rhigos Primary School that have been the responsibility of Rhigos Primary School's Governing Body, due to the school not having the required budget for the works to be undertaken.</p>
Why is one of the buildings at Rhigos Primary School deemed 'end of its life / beyond economical repair'?	<p>The term 'beyond economical repair' is a classification given to an asset where that asset requires repairs likely to be more expensive than its replacement value. It does not mean that the building is unsafe.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>What does this mean?</p>
	<p>Why was permission denied for a member of the Action Group to undertake their own survey?</p> <p>RCTCBC has 116 school sites to manage and as such it is important that there is consistency in the way surveys are undertaken so that it can appropriately manage its education estate and prioritise works. A third party looking at one particular school would not be comparable with our in-house procedures given the subjectivity of the survey process.</p> <p>The survey undertaken in 2019 was free from prejudice.</p>
	<p>How does Rhigos Primary School not comply with the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>In terms of the physical site and the school buildings at Rhigos Primary School these are largely inaccessible, however, there is scope for improvement. Looking just at the protected characteristic 'disability', the school site is largely non complaint. Given the topography and the age of the buildings there will inevitably be some areas of the school and site that are inaccessible for those with mobility difficulties or for wheelchair users. In addition, there is no hygiene room available at the school.</p> <p>Building Bulletin 99 (BB99): Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects, is what all local authorities in Wales use as a guide to build new schools. BB99 states the following: <i>In the context of classroom layouts 'fully inclusive' means that which enables a pupil using a wheelchair to access all areas of the room, and therefore, all activities easily, without any disruption to classroom layouts.</i></p>
Community Impact	<p>The Community Impact Assessment is lacking in information.</p> <p>To confirm, what has been included within the Community Impact Assessment is in line with the requirements of the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>However, as advised in the published Community Impact Assessment, this document has been revisited and updated following a review of the comments received throughout the duration of the consultation process. The updated version of the Community Impact Assessment will be available on RCTCBC's website once the Consultation Report is formally published.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme	Clarification	
	What will happen to the Rhigos Primary School site? It's mentioned in the Consultation Document that it could be used for the community.	<p>Considerations and options of any potential future use of the Rhigos Primary School site will be consulted upon separately.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, colleagues in RCTCBC's Community Development Team will work with the local community of Rhigos to identify any viable and sustainable options for a community use. RCTCBC's Community Development Team will also be able to support any potential community groups to identify and apply for any funding that may be available to secure to develop any provision.</p>
	The children will lose their cultural identity if the school closes; their 'Cynefin'.	<p>There will be many opportunities for all pupils to learn about their local area and cultural identity as they navigate the curriculum for Wales and develop their enquiry based learning.</p> <p>Hirwaun is only approximately 2 miles from the village of Rhigos, and so the expectation is that this will not be lost for any pupils.</p>
	Will the parent and toddler group currently running at Rhigos be moved to Hirwaun?	RCTCBC are aware that there is a parent and toddler group running at Rhigos Primary School for a day a week. There is a dedicated community room available at Hirwaun Primary School so should the group leader want to establish a parent and toddler group at Hirwaun then this can easily be accommodated.
Educational Outcomes	<p>Pupils from Rhigos Primary School will not have the same educational experience at Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>Both schools should be reinspected by Estyn prior to a decision being reached.</p>	<p>In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix One.</p> <p>Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011 / 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. However, Estyn are a statutory consultee in such matters and as such have provided their opinion on the overall merits of the school organisation proposals.</p> <p>Estyn have considered the educational aspects of the proposal and their conclusion is that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in this area.</p>
	Why close a 'good' school to one that required 'Significant Improvement'.	The consultation document acknowledges that Rhigos Primary School is a good school. That is not disputed.

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>Hirwaun Primary School's inspection was undertaken in 2018 and the following year, in 2019, a follow up visit was undertaken by Estyn which judged that sufficient progress had been made in relation to the recommendations.</p> <p>As a result, Estyn removed Hirwaun Primary School from the list of schools requiring 'Significant Improvement' with no further visits required. An inspection provides a snapshot of the school at that moment in time, Hirwaun Primary School would not have been removed from the category should any of Estyn's concerns remained.</p> <p>It is important to note that school performance and improvement is not static and this does fluctuate over time. At the time of writing, both schools are accessing core support from Central South Consortium school improvement services. Neither school is deemed to be in need of enhanced support due to presenting issues.</p>
	Ability to successfully deliver the Curriculum for Wales (CfW).	<p>The Consultation Document acknowledges that the teachers at Rhigos are providing pupils with a great education, however it also sets out the challenges in delivering the (CfW) in a small and aging school.</p> <p>At no point does it state within the Document that staff at Rhigos Primary School are not delivering upon their obligations in terms of delivering the CfW, the Consultation Document highlights the difficulties of doing so within the defined parameters at the school in relation to its size and age, and the ongoing challenge this will create in view of the projected falling numbers at the school. The possibilities for more distributed models of leadership are inevitably more restricted in smaller schools due to the smaller size of the workforce.</p>
	Teacher/parent interactions will be lessened, and relationships will be diminished as a result of the pupils being transported to school on a bus.	<p>There are already children from the community of Penderyn who travel to Hirwaun Primary School on home to school transport and so the school has well established systems in place to ensure that parents and carers are kept fully informed of any issues that have arisen during the school day, and should the proposal go ahead this communication will continue in order to support both the new pupils joining the school and their families.</p>
Pupil Numbers and Capacity	How are the pupil projections calculated?	In terms of pupil projections, RCTCBC collects birth data from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board covering the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Ely

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>areas. This provides the births and postcode for each child. There is also an allowance for new housing developments and existing pupils on roll allowing for predictions to be accurate.</p> <p>In relation to the pupils already in school the cohort survival method is utilised, where the number of pupils in each year group is assumed to be the number in the preceding year group during the previous academic year multiplied by a constant.</p>
Why was Hirwaun Primary School built with so much capacity?	<p>RCTCBC's current Local Development Plan (LDP), adopted in 2011, has a significant housing allocation identified as part of a strategic site within the current Hirwaun Primary School catchment area. In addition, at the time the new school in Hirwaun was being developed there was tourism and commercial opportunities being designed as well as the plans for the dualling of the A465. Given the attention that was and still is focussed upon this specific area on a regional scale, it would have been remiss of us not to include additional capacity at that juncture.</p> <p>RCTCBC's Revised LDP is currently being prepared and so we do not know what, if any, new housing allocations will be included within the new LDP for this area, however, should the same housing allocation be identified within the new LDP then the surplus capacity at Hirwaun Primary School will be sufficient to cater for the number of pupils the development will generate.</p> <p>Comments made in relation to the size of Hirwaun School being anything other than to plan for the pupil places required for the potential new development are refuted.</p>
There is surplus capacity in a lot of schools across RCT, why is just Rhigos affected.	<p>There is a statutory duty placed on Councils to effectively manage its school places. All school places, capacities, admissions and projections are kept under constant scrutiny. RCTCBC has implemented reorganisation proposals affecting over 40 schools over the last 10 years and all schools will continue to be reviewed.</p> <p>Information on the capacity of all schools affected by proposals must be included within all school organisation documents in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Without the inclusion of this information the consultation would not be valid.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
		<p>This proposal has been prepared for consultation for a number of reasons, the rationale for closure is not purely based on one thing alone. The capacity of the school is included for information, amongst many other data sets, as it provides stakeholders with a wider picture of the proposal presented.</p>
Rural School Categorisation	<p>Why isn't Rhigos Primary School classed as a rural school?</p>	<p>The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) contains a list of rural schools for the procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools. As such, it is specified within the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) that The National Statistics Urban Rural classification has been used as the basis of the designation of rural schools for this purpose.</p> <p>The rural schools listed were identified as being located within villages in the sparsest context, other (hamlet or dispersed) in sparsest context and other (hamlet or dispersed) in less sparse context. There are no schools in RCT on the list of rural schools as there are no schools that meet the above classifications for this singular purpose.</p> <p>For clarification, on the Office of National Statistics website, Rhigos itself does have a rural classification, as in fact does Hirwaun, but neither meet the specified criteria to be included on the list as defined above.</p>
	<p>The Council was in receipt of a Small and Rural School Grant from the Welsh Government that was allocated to Rhigos Primary, this demonstrates that the Council acknowledges its rural status.</p>	<p>This is correct. Rhigos Primary School was one of the schools in receipt of funding awarded via this grant. Since 17/18 there have been 13 schools across RCT that have been a recipient of this grant.</p>
Transport and Travel	<p>The home to school transport costs have not been made available.</p>	<p>There will inevitably be a cost for home to school transport and this has been acknowledged in the Consultation Document and listed as a disadvantage in the assessment of the proposal.</p> <p>Should the proposal go ahead, any new home to school transport contract will be competitively tendered. As the number of pupils attending Hirwaun Primary School will factor into the size of the transport</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>required and consequently have an impact upon the service costs, this financial information remains unavailable.</p>
<p>There will be no active travel opportunities for those pupils who currently walk to school.</p>	<p>RCTCBC acknowledges that pupils living in Rhigos will need to travel to Hirwaun Primary School either by bus or by car. This information is included within the Community Impact Assessment and is not in dispute, however what is also included within the Assessment is how this will be partly mitigated by the opportunities the new school will provide given the many outdoor facilities at Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>The Community Impact Assessment states '<i>Those pupils that will be travelling by bus or car under the new arrangements will still have the opportunity to experience the outdoors and gain plenty of fresh air given the plentiful opportunities on the Hirwaun Primary School site. External canopies, the outdoor classroom, the spacious yard, the MUGA, the sports field, gardens etc all present multiple opportunities to support and nurture health and well-being for pupils and staff.</i></p>
<p>Hirwaun Primary School is further away than Rhigos Primary School so the carbon footprint will be increased.</p>	<p>Given the distance between Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School, all pupils residing in the current Rhigos Primary School catchment area will qualify for home to school transport, therefore negating the need for numerous car journeys to the school.</p> <p>If the proposal were to go ahead, RCTCBC will close an energy inefficient building with pupils moving to an existing energy efficient building, so implementing this proposal will have an overall positive impact upon the carbon footprint.</p>
<p>If there is an emergency, how will my child get home if I don't have a car?</p>	<p>There are already children from the community of Penderyn who travel to Hirwaun Primary School via home to school transport and so Hirwaun Primary School has well established systems in place to ensure that parents / carers are kept fully informed of any issues that have arisen during the school day. Should the proposal go ahead this communication will continue in order to support both the new pupils joining the school and their families.</p> <p>Hirwaun Primary School, as do all schools, have a duty of care to look after the care and wellbeing for all pupils. If any issues or emergencies arise during the school day, as is currently the case, the staff at Hirwaun Primary School will ensure that they do all</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>they can to support any families that cannot attend Hirwaun Primary School.</p>
<p>The traffic outside Hirwaun Primary School is already busy.</p>	<p>Hirwaun Primary School has been built with a dedicated staff and visitor car park, as well as an onsite bus drop off facility. As part of the planning obligations for the project, an off-site school drop off / community car park was constructed. This additional parking has significantly reduced the congestion outside Hirwaun Primary School at the start and end of the school day. To note Rhigos Primary School has neither a dedicated staff nor community car park within the vicinity.</p> <p>Since this work has been undertaken, neither RCTCBC or the Hirwaun Primary School have received any recent complaints in relation to parking and traffic congestion.</p> <p>Given that all pupils currently residing in the Rhigos Primary School catchment will qualify for home to school transport, there is an expectation that the impact upon the traffic, as a result of the proposal, is minimal.</p>
<p>I'm not happy for my child to travel unaccompanied on a school bus.</p>	<p>RCTCBC's Integrated Transport Unit successfully transports thousands of children a day to schools throughout RCT from the ages of 3 to 19. Understandably there can be a great deal of anxiety for all parents when their child travels on a school bus for the first time, this can also be the case for pupils travelling for the first time, however there is strict criteria in place that transport providers must adhere to in order to ensure the safety and safeguarding of the pupils, which is of paramount importance to us.</p>
<p>The cost and frequency of public transport from Rhigos to Hirwaun is prohibitive for regular use.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the cost and operation of the public transport in the area is not within the remit of RCTCBC to manage.</p> <p>As all pupils living in Rhigos will have the opportunity to utilise the home to school transport provision we anticipate that the number of journeys required on public transport to be minimal.</p>
<p>Should the pupils numbers attending Hirwaun be lower than expected, would the home to school transport</p>	<p>No, in compliance with distance criteria contained within Welsh Government's Learner Travel Measure, this transport provision would remain in place regardless of the numbers of pupils transported.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
	provision cancelled?	be
Impact on Pupils	Transition arrangements.	<p>If the proposal were to go ahead, there will be targeted support for all pupils from Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School. Meaningful and positive transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school setting with little disruption to their well-being and education. This is supported by providing effective pastoral and academic support and structured opportunities for learners to become familiar with the new school environment and staff.</p> <p>Advice and support will be provided by RCTCBC to both schools involved to ensure that the transition process is as smooth and seamless as possible.</p>
	Pupil well-being has not been considered.	<p>The well-being of all pupils has been considered and is paramount. The transition arrangements that will be delivered, as noted above, ensure there will be lots of opportunities to help the pupils navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Further information is included within the Equality Impact Assessment, in addition RCTCBC considers that the proposal benefits the children and young people in accordance with the seven core aims set out within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>
	The children from Rhigos will feel like outsiders as they attend a school outside of their community.	<p>Hirwaun Primary School already welcomes children from other communities, the catchment area was extended to include pupils from Penderyn in 2021 and there are also a number of pupils that attend from outside the current catchment area. The new pupils from Penderyn were welcomed into the Hirwaun Primary School family and they have successfully settled into their new school. To provide reassurance we can confirm that they are not treated any differently which I'm sure will also be the case for any pupil from Rhigos wishing to attend Hirwaun.</p>

Summary of Written Responses		
Theme		Clarification
Impact on Staff	What support is available for staff?	<p>RCTCBC has well established Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</p> <p>HR Council officers have already visited all staff in Rhigos Primary School, and all are aware of the processes that may follow and the operational and personal support that is on offer.</p>
Legitimacy of the Consultation Process	The consultation period was too short.	The WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) sets out the parameters for the consultation. It states that consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document. For this consultation, consultees were given 47 days which exceeds the statutory obligation placed upon us in this regard.
	The information presented in the documentation is biased in favour of Hirwaun Primary.	<p>The purpose of the Consultation Document is to present a proposal, and the fact that this is just a proposal at this point in time is clearly referenced throughout all documentation made available during this period. To confirm, all information presented has been done in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>Some responses specifically question the choice of the images used in the documentation. To clarify, the same data for both schools has been included in the 'Where we are now' section of the Consultation Document, with external images of both schools included. Further information and images on Hirwaun Primary School were included within the 'Where we'd like to be' section as this sets out the perceived benefits of moving pupils from Rhigos to Hirwaun. There is no bias intended, merely the logical and coherent setting out of the proposal.</p> <p>RCTCBC refutes this comment.</p>
	The data presented within the documentation is out of date.	<p>The data presented within the report is in compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).</p> <p>All data sets provided were the most up to date at the time of writing. Those included are in accordance with the information prescribed within the Code. To clarify, in terms of the pupil numbers reported, there is a distinction made between statutory aged pupils and non-statutory aged pupils.</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Theme	Clarification
	<p>The Estyn information included in the report is taken from the most recent inspections undertaken in Hirwaun and Rhigos Primary Schools respectively in 2018 and 2019. This is in accordance with the Code where it states consultation document must contain 'information from the most recent Estyn reports for each school.'</p> <p>The Condition Survey information included in the report is taken from the most recent survey undertaken in 2019. This is in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) where it states that 'information about the quality of accommodation at all existing schools likely to be affected by the proposals including reference to RCTCBC's most recent condition survey'.</p>

In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with RCTCBC's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The table that follows provides a summary of the responses received from those respondents that answered the questions. As a result of the responses received, the Welsh Language Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal will be updated accordingly.

Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015: Summary of Consultation Responses						
Questions	Responses					
	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language?	43	29.3	24	16.3	80	54.4
Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
	42	26.6	20	13.6	85	57.8
How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be	Positive Effects Increased		Negative Effects Decreased		Not Sure	

<p>increased, or negative effects be decreased.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Medium Schools – The only way it will increase the positive effects of the Welsh language is to send children to a Welsh medium school. • Teach More Welsh – Teaching more Welsh in schools will increase the positive effects of the Welsh language. • Transferring to Welsh Medium Schools – The proposal may result in additional children transferring to the neighbouring Welsh medium primary, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller Classes – Teachers in a larger class will have more responsibility and less time to focus on every pupil, therefore the Welsh language be negatively affected. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>140</td> <td>95.2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Number	%	140	95.2
Number	%						
140	95.2						

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, RCTCBC has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1. How would the proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex.
- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Sexuality.
- Religion/Belief.
- Gender Identity.
- Relationship Status.
- Pregnancy.
- Preferred Language.

Of those respondents that answered this question, the majority, 136 (92.5%), gave no answer to this question. However, 4 (2.7%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their age whilst 7 (4.8%) commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their disability. As a result of responses received, the Equality Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal will be updated accordingly.

6. Response from Estyn

In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011 / 2018 the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix 1. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018) and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in this area. The response states that the 'local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary school'.

In accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), the areas of the response from Estyn that require clarification are documented in the table that follows.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
The proposal has also considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards in education including separate sections on outcomes, provision, leadership, and management. While the sections on outcomes and provision appear to be fair and reasonable, the section on leadership and management is too generic and doesn't focus specifically enough on the implications of the proposal on leaders in both schools. The proposal identifies that transferring pupils from Rhigos Primary School to the newly built Hirwaun Primary School would provide extensive outdoor space, including green space, for pupils to learn and play. It assumes fairly that pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning would benefit from a diverse and engaging outdoor space. It further notes that a fit-for-purpose school building would help create a better learning	There will be staffing implications for those staff employed at Rhigos Primary School. For example, there will be certain roles that are currently replicated in Hirwaun Primary School's staffing structure. Staff will be concerned about the security of their jobs which is why these concerns will be addressed as soon as possible during the statutory consultation process, consulting with staff and utilising RCTCBC's 'Managing Change Policy' to explore options for staff affected.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
environment. The proposer identifies that if the proposal comes about it is likely to have a positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum at the school.	

7. Assessment of Consultation

There were a lot of highly emotive and passionate responses received during the consultation period which is important to note. Correspondence was received from staff, pupils, parents/carers, past pupils, members of the communities and from those elected locally and regionally. Rhigos Primary School is clearly a much loved school, and should a decision be made to close; it is recognised that there would be a feeling of loss by the community. This is acknowledged within this report, as it is within the Community Impact Assessment.

In accordance with WG's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), a further assessment of the proposal has been undertaken. This involved a review of the same matters assessed in formulating the proposal, in conjunction with giving due consideration to the responses and comments received during the consultation period. The proposal was reassessed against:

- the likely impact on quality and standards in education,
- the likely impact on the community, and
- the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

After further consideration of the proposal, and consciously considering the responses received to the proposal, the conclusion reached is that the proposal remains to be the most appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

8. Conclusion

No information that has been presented during the consultation is deemed to necessitate a change to the Consultation Document, as such the information contained within it remains unchanged. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal should be wholly implemented with no amendments.

The recommendation of this report is that a Statutory Notice be published, to reflect the proposal as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress the implementation of this proposal.

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Estyn's response to the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School

This report has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals. Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

The proposal is the closure of Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School.

Summary/ Conclusion

Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to, at least, maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area.

Description and benefits

The local authority has set out a clear rationale for its proposal. It outlines strongly the many advantages of closing Rhigos Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School. It is proposed that pupils who are in the Rhigos Primary School catchment area will instead go to Hirwaun Primary School, where there is a brand new 21st Century building and new facilities. Hirwaun Primary School's catchment area would extend to include the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School and would therefore cater for pupils aged 3 and 11 years of age requiring English medium education in both communities.

The local authority provides a suitably detailed description of the proposal. This includes a background to the proposal and an estimated timetable for statutory procedures. It is proposing that Rhigos Primary School will close resulting in pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School no later than September 2024.

The proposer identifies clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo and how they will manage any risk. One of the main advantages detailed in the proposal is that the pupils of Rhigos Primary School will benefit from the fully accessible, brand new primary school in Hirwaun, which would provide an improved learning environment with first class facilities. Most of the

risks are deemed as low impact. One risk is deemed as having medium impact following implementation of the proposal which is that existing Rhigos Primary School staff may not be retained.

The local authority has considered four alternative options, including maintaining the status quo. It lists the advantages and disadvantages of each option and these appear to be fair and reasonable.

The proposer has considered the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements. The proposal sets out that the local authority has exercised discretionary powers afforded to it under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 to make a more generous provision to pupils. The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1.5 miles, instead of 2 miles as required by the measure. This is provided to pupils who meet the 1.5 mile eligibility criterion from the start of the foundation phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), which seems reasonable.

The local authority has usefully demonstrated the impact of the proposal on surplus places. The projected pupil numbers at Rhigos Primary School over the next five academic years for statutory school aged pupils falls consistently year on year, from 51 pupils in 2023 to a projected 36 pupils in 2028. The projected pupil numbers for Hirwaun Primary School for the next five years demonstrates that there is capacity for all current and future pupils of Rhigos Primary School to attend.

The proposal takes a detailed account of the impact of the proposal on Welsh medium provision within the local authority and the extent to which the proposal supports the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The local authority aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use of the Welsh language amongst pupils inside and outside schools. Hirwaun Primary School will continue to be encouraged and supported to do this through the achievement of the 'Cymraeg Campus' Welsh Language Charter, a framework to promote and increase the use of Welsh.

The local authority has appropriately considered the financial implications of the proposal. It states that there is no need to invest additional capital as Hirwaun Primary School is a new build. If the proposal progresses, Hirwaun Primary School will receive an increase on their funding formula as a result of the additional pupils on roll. In addition, the modern building design and fabric at Hirwaun Primary School is more energy efficient which also has a positive impact upon the running costs of the school, as well as delivering benefits in terms of sustainability and reducing carbon emissions.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority has considered the quality of outcomes, provision and leadership and management at the school which include the outcomes of the last Estyn inspection report for both schools. Rhigos Primary School was inspected by Estyn in February 2019 and the outcomes in the five inspection areas were judged to be good. Hirwaun Primary School was inspected by Estyn in 2018. The care, support and guidance area was judged to be good, three other inspection areas were adequate whilst teaching and learning experiences was unsatisfactory. As a result of the inspection in 2018, Estyn placed Hirwaun Primary School in the reported category of 'Significant Improvement.' In response to the outcome of the core inspection, Hirwaun Primary School was required to draw up an action plan to address the recommendations, subject to review by Estyn. In July 2019, Estyn removed Hirwaun Primary School from the list of schools requiring 'Significant Improvement'.

The proposal has also considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards in education including separate sections on outcomes, provision and leadership and management. While the sections on outcomes and provision appear to be fair and reasonable, the section on leadership and management is too generic and doesn't focus specifically enough on the implications of the proposal on leaders in both schools. The proposal identifies that transferring pupils from Rhigos Primary School to the newly built Hirwaun school would provide extensive outdoor space, including green space, for pupils to learn and play. It assumes fairly that pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning would benefit from a diverse and engaging outdoor space. It further notes that a fit-for-purpose school building would help create a better learning environment. The proposer identifies that if the proposal comes about it is likely to have a positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum at the school.

The proposal considers the impact of the proposal on vulnerable groups, including children with Additional Learning Needs. It does note that moving pupils to Hirwaun Primary School from Rhigos will result in greater capacity and space for additional needs intervention and support. In terms of accessibility, Hirwaun school is fully accessible and compliant with the Equality's Act 2010.

The proposal takes a detailed account of the impact of the proposal on the community. These considerations include the positive impact of additional facilities on the Hirwaun site for community use and that the current Rhigos site is not compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. The proposal also considers the 'out of hours' support for pupils. For example, breakfast club and private after school care will be provided on the new site if the proposal materialises.

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Appendix 2 (A) - Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Hirwaun Primary School

Date	26 October 2023
Time	15:30
Venue	Hirwaun Primary School, Hirwaun

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Catrin Edwards	CE	Head of Service Transformation, Data Systems, Admissions and Governors
Nicola Goodman	NG	Lead for Strategic Planning and MIM
Kylie Lewis	KL	21 st Century Schools Officer
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Bethan Hill	BH	Headteacher of Hirwaun Primary School
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Hirwaun Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

CE welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

CE provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Hirwaun Primary School were invited to ask questions. The questions raised from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1.	BH noted that Hirwaun Primary staff have been through this process previously with the changes to Penderyn Primary School. BH stated Hirwaun Primary School staff are neutral in this process; should Rhigos Primary School close and pupils transfer to Hirwaun Primary School, staff will endeavour to work hard to welcome pupils and ensure pupils settle quickly.	Noted.
2.	If Rhigos Primary School were to close, how would this impact on pupil numbers at Hirwaun Primary School?	BH explained Hirwaun Primary School has the capacity for future growth and could accommodate additional pupils in the future.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
3.	If pupils from Rhigos Primary School moved to Hirwaun Primary School, what impact would this have on class sizes?	BH explained this would depend on how many pupils transferred to Hirwaun Primary School should the proposal proceed, and in which year group they join. It is difficult to predict at this stage.
4.	Would Hirwaun Primary School receive funding for any additional pupils?	Yes. CE duly explained that following the consultation process, if it is agreed that the proposal is to proceed to close Rhigos Primary School, and if pupil numbers increase in Hirwaun Primary School, the school would receive additional funding.
5.	What would the impact be on lunchtimes, in terms of numbers of lunchtime staff etc?	CE duly explained if it is agreed that the proposal is to proceed to close Rhigos Primary School, and if pupil numbers increase in Hirwaun Primary School, the school would receive additional funding for additional lunchtime staff.
6.	Would only current Rhigos Primary School pupils be entitled to school transport to Hirwaun Primary School, or future pupils also?	CE explained any current, and future pupils from Rhigos, who live a specified distance from Hirwaun Primary School, or for whom there is no safe available walking route, would be entitled to free school transport as per the Welsh Government's Learner Travel Policy.
7.	Would pupils from Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School still be at Hirwaun Primary in September 2024?	NG explained that pupils from Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School are temporarily sited at Hirwaun Primary School whilst works are ongoing at their school. Those works are progressing well as such that pupils will return to Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School by September 2024.
8.	Would staff from Rhigos Primary School be guaranteed employment elsewhere?	<p>BD informed the meeting that should the decision be made to close Rhigos Primary School, those staff members would be under a notice of redundancy. Under the Management of Change Policy, staff would be eligible to seek redeployment. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) works hard to secure the redeployment of staff and has positive previous experiences of this happening.</p> <p>BH stated that staff from other schools have previously been redeployed to Hirwaun Primary School.</p> <p>BD explained RCTCBC would consult with Trade Unions and all staff of Rhigos</p>

Number	Question/Comment	Response
		<p>Primary School to achieve the desired outcome.</p> <p>CE stated redundancy packages would be available for those staff who may choose that option.</p> <p>Staff and governors present acknowledged this is an emotional time for everyone at the school, and the whole community of Rhigos.</p>
9.	What have the residents of Rhigos said about the proposals?	CE explained that as part of the consultation process, drop-in sessions have been arranged at both schools for members of the public to talk to RCTCBC Officers and voice their opinions. For those who are not able to join in person, they could participate in the consultation process by completing the online survey.
10.	Staff and governors stated if Rhigos Primary School were to close and pupils transferred to Hirwaun Primary School, it would have an impact on current Hirwaun Primary School pupils; therefore, parents should be kept informed of discussions.	<p>BH explained it is difficult to plan anything at present until we know the outcome of the proposals.</p> <p>CE reiterated that the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School has not been decided upon at this stage, however, if the decision at the end of the process is to close Rhigos Primary School, RCTCBC would support with the transition of pupils.</p>
11.	If it is decided that Rhigos Primary School will close, will RCTCBC Officers return to Hirwaun Primary School to explain the next steps of the process?	CE confirmed that if required, RCTCBC could arrange further meetings to discuss the next steps.
12.	Would there be a change to the Governing Body of Hirwaun Primary School?	CE explained should the number of pupils in Hirwaun Primary School increase, the composition of the Governing Body would need to be looked at to see if any changes needed to be made. This could be reviewed at a later date.

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 16:30.

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Appendix 2(B) - Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Rhigos Primary School

Date	26 October 2023
Time	15:30
Venue	Rhigos Primary School, Rhigos

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Tim Britton	TB	Head of Achievement RCT (Primary Sector)
Anneli Hunt	AH	Governor Support Officer
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21st Century Schools Assistant Project Officer
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Mrs J Mundy	JM	Headteacher of Rhigos Primary School
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Rhigos Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Rhigos Primary School were invited to ask questions. The questions from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question	Response
1.	Can you explain why the Consultation Document used information from surveys carried out in 2019?	The information from the 2019 condition surveys is the most current data available and is valid in line with industry standards.
2.	Why was the backlog maintenance not addressed by Rhondda Cynon Taf Cuntly Borough Council (RCTCBC)?	The condition surveys represent a point in time and help to establish if the buildings are safe, watertight and warm. Some repairs and improvement works have been carried out at Rhigos Primary School by RCTCBC.
3.	RCTCBC have a duty to maintain the building.	The maintenance of the school building must work on a partnership approach with the Governing Body as they have a responsibility under Local Management of schools to undertake repairs and maintenance.
4.	The Early Years building was constructed in 1950, why did RCTCBC not address the issue when it came to its 'end of life' (after 20 years)?	The 2019 condition survey outlines the condition of the building and suggests that the school building has reached the end of its life. The building is not worth further investment from RCTCBC due to the age, condition and type of structure. There are 115 schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and RCTCBC is currently working through its School Modernisation Programme of investment. It is a challenge to prioritise invest in all schools in RCT and RCTCBC must prioritise schools that cause the most concern. Though the Early Years building is safe, it would not benefit from further investment.
5.	Too much investment is being put into schools that are not full. Money was recently invested into Rhigos Primary School by the community, not by RCTCBC.	Noted. The Council has invested in the school and also undertaken repairs and maintenance with the co-support of the Government Body, due to the costs of the work.
6.	Consultation Document is not accurate. The details of the building are not correct.	Details of the building were drawn from the 2019 condition survey, which is the most current information available.

Number	Question	Response
7.	Why is Rhigos Primary School not a rural school?	Rural schools are a Welsh Government classification. RCTCBC do not have the power to designate schools as rural schools.
8.	Why are there no rural schools in RCT?	This is a Welsh Government designation. All rural schools are listed in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2 nd Edition) (011 / 2018).
9.	The school building must be safe as pupils are still being allowed to use it. Where do the pupil figures and pupil projections come from? The nursery figures are not accurate.	The buildings are 'safe, watertight and warm' and perfectly safe due to planned maintenance works identified. Pupil projections come from live birth data from school catchment areas. There is a trend of declining data. Pupil projection figures are not guaranteed, however, that is the data that is available currently.
10.	How can we believe that the pupil numbers are correct?	RCTCBC must look at predictions and trends based on the data that is available. RCTCBC has to make efficient use of resources to make difficult decisions based on the data.
11.	The Hirwaun Primary School pupil numbers in the report are incorrect.	We must work with the data given to us and look at the Local Development Plan to take into account housing in the catchment areas. The numbers are correct, the data used is the most accurate taken from the PLASC data sets. The projections and future capacity include information from the Local Development Plan to take into account of housing in the catchment area.
12.	What happens if pupils from Rhigos Primary School go to Hirwaun Primary School, as well as pupils who will come from the new houses?	There is currently enough space for both. RCTCBC is currently drafting the new Local Development Plan, which is a plan for 10 years. If there are more housing developments allocated, and there is not enough capacity at Hirwaun Primary School, then the Local Development Plan will reflect this demand.

Number	Question	Response
13.	When did RCTCBC start to write the Consultation Document?	The decision to write the Consultation Report was recent. No definitive date can be given, however, work on the report began late in the last academic year.
14.	Why did RCTCBC allow two permanent members of staff to be taken on at Rhigos Primary School if the consultation was a recent decision? No support given to staff.	Proposals are highly confidential and cannot be shared with stakeholders before they have been shared with elected Members and the wider community. HR do provide support to our employees during management of change process. Occupational Health have offered and will continue to offer support to staff. RCTCBC cannot assume that the proposal would be agreed, and so must go through the consultation process.
15.	RCTCBC could have looked at a school restructure – there are no contingencies.	This was a confidential proposal; no information could have been shared widely. These proposals are highly emotive and RCTCBC has been successful in the past at supporting staff who need to find new roles.
16.	Concerns over pupils when moving schools	The process of change is managed and pupils will receive supported transition if the proposal goes ahead.
17.	Concerns over wellbeing of pupils and staff had no time to process the news. Staff should have had training and support when dealing with pupils after the Consultation Document came out.	Noted.
18.	Don't believe staff will be supported.	Noted.
19.	How can RCTCBC say that Rhigos Primary School can't deliver the New Curriculum for Wales? The statements in the Consultation document are open to challenge. While RCTCBC does recognise that Rhigos Primary School is a good school, some of the statements made are hurtful.	The Consultation Document states that a bigger school will assist with the delivery of the new Curriculum for Wales. The information in the report is factual. Comments can be fed back to RCTCBC as part of the consultation.

Number	Question	Response
20.	Is RCTCBC promoting failure? Good schools are not receiving investment while other schools are. If we were a failing school, would we have had investment?	It is good that Rhigos Primary School has done well, and Estyn will also feed into the consultation. Any comments can be fed back to RCTCBC as part of the consultation and the transition process.
21.	Is the decision already made?	No it has not. RCTCBC's Cabinet will see all comments that are submitted as part of the consultation process and the meetings taking place.
22.	If we waited, would Rhigos get a new school?	RCTCBC must look at the cost of investment against pupil numbers and demonstrate value for money. The Consultation Document is looking at all points and aspects that form part of this case.
23.	You are using Rhigos Primary School as a plaster for Hirwaun Primary School.	Noted.
24.	Rhigos Primary School currently get EP visits, as does Hirwaun Primary School. These visits would be lost if pupils go to Hirwaun Primary School.	The number of sessions for each school is taken into account, and applications for further visits can be made if necessary. No EP visits will be lost.
25.	There will be more additional learning needs demand on the staff of Hirwaun Primary School.	It is likely that there will be more capacity for resources to provide for ALN pupils at Hirwaun Primary School as it is a bigger school. All Hirwaun Primary School staff have a duty to ensure that the needs of pupils are met and provision made.
26.	How will pupils access breakfast club in Hirwaun Primary School? Pupils of Rhigos Primary School currently walk to breakfast club.	Yes, there is a breakfast club at Hirwaun Primary School. There may be some flexibility with the timing of breakfast club at Hirwaun Primary School, and in our experience, there could be capacity to access breakfast club in time at Hirwaun Primary School (before the school day begins) from using school transport.
27.	Will there be any transport for after school clubs?	There will be no extra transport for after school clubs. The management of after

Number	Question	Response
		school clubs are decisions of the Governing Body.
28.	No transport for after school clubs will reduce the number of extra-curricular activities for pupils of Rhigos Primary School. Currently, around 70.0% of Rhigos Primary School pupils attend extra-curricular activities and opportunities.	Noted.
29.	What if pupils don't go to Hirwaun Primary School?	RCTCBC cannot regulate where parents send their children to school. This is a matter of parental choice out of the available schools.
30.	How much would a bus cost to transport pupils to Hirwaun Primary School?	This would depend on the number of pupils that would require transportation.
31.	It is chaos at Hirwaun Primary School during pick-up time, there were cameras there last week to look at traffic congestion.	Concerns can be put down as part of your response to the consultation.
32.	Is this already a 'done deal' or not?	The decision has not been made yet – this is a proposal. Any parents who don't want to send their children to Hirwaun Primary School would have to make arrangements to apply to other available schools if the proposal to close is approved.
33.	Applications to RCTCBC to admit pupils to Rhigos Primary School are already being directed to Hirwaun Primary School.	This is not the case.
34.	This process undermines parents. There is an obligation to parents, pupils and staff – the process should reassure parents that it is only a proposal currently.	The community will have an opportunity to voice concerns at the drop-in sessions arranged.
35.	Parents are happy with the mixed classes at the school, and RCTCBC should respect that.	The wider school community will have an opportunity to voice concerns at the drop-in sessions arranged.

Number	Question	Response
36.	What is happening to parents who are looking into applying for a school place at Rhigos Primary School but are being directed to Hirwaun Primary School?	This shouldn't be happening. Parents can apply for a place in both schools.
37.	How will parents be reassured that this is only a proposal?	The Council recognises that this is a complex process and that there is a lot of information to go through that form part of the consultation. Assurances were given than this is a proposal.
38.	The image of Rhigos Primary School in the Consultation Document is not representative of the school and gives a bad impression. There are no internal images of the school used (like there are with Hirwaun Primary School) – this makes Rhigos Primary School look bad when next to the images of the new school at Hirwaun.	Noted.
39.	When will the report be published and when will the decision be made?	The report will go to RCTCBC's Cabinet in December or January. The decision will be made to move on with the process and start the statutory notice period. All dates and information will be shared as soon as it is available to all stakeholders. Any comments to the consultation can be used as an objection if the individual wishes.
40.	How will pupils of Rhigos Primary School learn about the community of Rhigos, instead of learning about Hirwaun? Concerns over the loss of heritage.	The schools are not that far away from each other. Please make any comments known as part of the consultation process.

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 17:00.

DRAFT

Appendix 3 (A) - Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Hirwaun Primary School

Date	Tuesday 7 th November 2023
Time	13:50
Mode	Face to Face

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Project Officer
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Tim Britton	TBC	Head of Achievement (Primary Sector)
Mrs Bethan Hill	JM	Headteacher at Hirwaun Primary School
N/A	N/A	School Council of Hirwaun Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

Officers in attendance introduced themselves to the School Council and thanked them for attending the meeting. The School Council introduced themselves.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the School Council with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Hirwaun Primary School were invited to ask questions and makes comments. The questions and comments made are summarised in the table that follows along with their response, where necessary.

Number	Question	Response
1.	I think we should go ahead with the proposal but the children from Rhigos Primary School may want to stay with their friends.	Hirwaun Primary School will try to keep friendship groups together.
2.	It would be good to make more friends.	Noted.
4.	It is nice for children from Rhigos Primary School to have more space.	Noted.
5.	It would be a pleasure to have the children from Rhigos Primary School with us at Hirwaun Primary School.	Noted.
6.	It is nice for the children at Rhigos Primary School to experience some of the facilities	Noted.

Number	Question	Response
	that we have here at Hirwaun Primary School.	
7.	What would happen to the teachers at Rhigos Primary School.	It is too early to say what changes may happen as the proposal is yet to be decided.
8.	<p>The children talked about some of the clubs that take place at Hirwaun Primary School including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choir. • Football. • Gardening. • Rugby. • Netball. • Fitness. • Coding. • French. • Art and craft. • Beat ball. <p>Year three children also take part in swimming lessons.</p>	Noted.
9.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School talked about their vision. They explained that this is revisited periodically.	Noted.
10.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School talked about enquiry based learning and the benefits that this has on their learning.	Noted.
11.	<p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School commented that they would welcome the children of Rhigos Primary School visiting.</p> <p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School commented that they would show the children of Rhigos Primary School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chrome books. • Learning tools. • How kind the school community is. • Where all the toys are. • The after school clubs. • The art pieces that they have worked on. • The sports facilities. • The school layout and how the school day operates. • The multi-use games area. <p>The children commented that a good transition event would include:</p>	Noted.

Number	Question	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making craft activities and posters to welcome the children of Rhigos Primary School. • Friendly activities to get to know each other. • Different work stations. • Circle time. • Playtimes, at Hirwaun Primary School there is one playtime and a lunch time. 	
12.	<p>The headteacher explained that Hirwaun Primary School is open to the local community at certain times of year celebrate with the community, such as Harvest and Christmas.</p> <p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School also go out to the community and they commented that they would be exited to extend this to the community of Rhigos.</p>	Noted.
13.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School also commented that they have a book fayre every year. Year six pupils are given the opportunity to help work at the book fayre.	Noted.
14.	The children at Hirwaun Primary School said that they have fun events like school discos.	Noted.
15.	<p>There are lots of committees at Hirwaun Primary School such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Council. • Rights Respecting Schools Committee. • Eco Committee. • Sports Leaders. • Criw Cymraeg. <p>These are appointed to every September, so if the proposal goes ahead the children of Rhigos Primary School would be welcome to participate.</p>	Noted.
16.	What do the children at Rhigos Primary think about moving schools?	They are a bit worried about change. The children at Rhigos Primary School love their school and don't want it to close. However, we are listening to all of your views, and they will form part of any decision made.
17.	We will be opening a clothes sale as part of the Eco Club.	This is a great idea to be renewable.
18.	What colour school uniform do the children at Rhigos Primary School wear?	The children at Rhigos Primary School wear burgundy jumpers.

Number	Question	Response
19.	How long have you all worked at the Council for?	All of the officers gave an outline of how long they work at the Council for and what job they do.
20.	<p>The children at Hirwaun Primary School talked about their school trips that they have been on including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pantomime. • Heatherton. • Caerphilly Castle. • Santa's Toy Mine. • Cantref Farm. • Gruffalo Trail. • Dare Valley Country Park. • Teddy Bears Picnic. <p>Visitors also come into the school including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animated dinosaurs. • World War Two exhibition. 	Noted.

4. Closing Remarks

The School Council were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 14:45.

Appendix 3 (B) - Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Rhigos Primary School

Date	Monday 6 th November 2023
Time	13:45
Mode	Face to Face

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Project Officer
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Sarah Corcoran	SC	Head of Achievement and Wellbeing
Mrs Janine Mundy	JM	Headteacher at Rhigos Primary School
Mrs Rebecca Murphy	RM	Deputy Headteacher and School Council Lead at Rhigos Primary School
N/A	N/A	School Council of Rhigos Primary School

1. Welcome and Introductions

Officers in attendance introduced themselves to the School Council and thanked them for attending the meeting. The School Council introduced themselves.

2. Consultation Overview

The children presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled 'Save our School'. The pupils were thanked and officers confirmed that this would be shared with the Council's Cabinet.

GD provided the School Council with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Rhigos Primary School were invited to ask questions and make comments. The questions and comments made are summarised in the table that follows along with their response, where necessary.

Number	Question	Response
1.	What if your parents don't drive and you miss the school bus?	If you miss the bus, you will have to arrange your own transport. We would hope that you wouldn't miss the bus, as most parents are very organised and would help you catch the school bus on time.
2.	What will you do with Rhigos Primary School if it closes?	If the proposal goes ahead, we will work with the community of Rhigos to see if the school building could be used within the community.
3.	Will there be buses for breakfast and after school clubs?	There will be one bus for the school at the start and end of the school day, depending on the time of breakfast club and the home to school transport, you may be able to attend breakfast club.
4.	I have moved school lots and it is not nice. Some schools don't have as many play times as we do at Rhigos Primary School, and they have classes that are bigger.	Most schools have three play times, but we will check how many play times they have at Hirwaun Primary School.
5.	Why do you want to close Rhigos Primary School?	We clarified the points already discussed in the children's version of the Consultation Document
6.	What about our siblings?	Parents will have the option about what primary school they would like their child to attend. If you have siblings, there will be plenty of space for them to attend Hirwaun Primary School.
7.	Would we all be able to go on the yard at play time at the same time, like at Rhigos Primary School?	We will check how play times at Hirwaun Primary School operate.
8.	When Penderyn Primary School became a Welsh medium primary school, I had to leave and attend Rhigos Primary School, an English medium school. If Rhigos Primary School closes, that would mean I will have to change schools again.	We are sorry to hear this.
9.	When will we find out if Rhigos Primary School will close.	The consultation timeline was provided, and it was explained that if the proposal is approved it would go ahead by September 2024.

Number	Question	Response
10.	Will you set up days when we can visit Hirwaun Primary School.	Absolutely, this is an incredibly good idea, and we will make arrangements for all pupils of Rhigos Primary School to visit Hirwaun Primary School if they wish.
11.	Will a year six pupil have to move to Rhigos Primary School before starting comprehensive school?	No, if agreed these proposals is approved it would go ahead by September 2024. By this date, pupils who are currently in year six would become year seven pupils and would be in secondary school.
12.	If we make a friend and they don't live in Rhigos, could they play in our park.	I'm sure these arrangements could be made with your parents.
13.	It would be nice to go to a newer school.	It is often the people that make a place, and we understand how important Rhigos Primary School is to you all.
14.	Why are you taking the proposal further if we are saying that we do not want Rhigos Primary School to close.	This is part of the process. We clarified the points already discussed in the children's version of the Consultation Document.
15.	Rhigos Primary School is still in quite good condition.	We can see that you have made a wonderful environment.
16.	Will we still get to learn through the enquiries that we have picked?	The new Curriculum for Wales started last year, in many schools its taught through an enquiry based approach. We will check what approach is used at Hirwaun Primary School.
17.	If Rhigos Primary School closes, will we have to change our school uniform?	Hirwaun Primary School has established its school uniform. We cannot confirm that the school uniform at Hirwaun Primary School would be changed immediately, however, this may happen in time.
18.	How will you help us fit into a different school's vision.	Any school's vision is about ensuring the best teaching and learning for children, and we would hope that Hirwaun Primary School is an inclusive school that will help you fit in. In addition, transition events will be arranged for you to visit Hirwaun Primary School.
19.	If we move schools, will we be able to have school discos and assemblies?	We are sure that these will be offered at Hirwaun Primary School.
20.	Will all our teachers and friends be able to come with us?	It is too early to say what changes may happen as the proposal is yet to be approved.
21.	Are you going to bring the oldest lady in Rhigos to Hirwaun Primary School?	Potentially, Hirwaun Primary School is a community school, and they would welcome members of the community visiting.

Number	Question	Response
22.	Will the School Council change?	Hirwaun Primary School has many clubs, offering lots of opportunities for those who wish to take part.
23.	Why did you pick Hirwaun Primary School?	We looked at many things, including pupil numbers, how close Rhigos Primary School is to another school. Hirwaun Primary School has lots of space and is close to Rhigos Primary School. Change can be very worrying; however, it can be positive as it gives you lots of opportunities.
24.	Will there be a football team at Hirwaun Primary School?	We will check with the school but we do know they participate in lots of sports and activities.
25.	Are there breakfast clubs at Hirwaun Primary School?	Yes, Hirwaun Primary School has a breakfast club.
26.	My headteacher is the best headteacher.	We are all pleased that you feel happy with your headteacher.
27.	I don't want to change schools because we think Rhigos Primary School is the best school.	We are all pleased that you feel happy with your school.

4. Closing Remarks

The School Council were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 14:50.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14TH DECEMBER 2023

ANNUAL SCHOOL EXCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an analysis of school exclusion performance for the academic year 2021/22 and a comparison of performance over the last five years where appropriate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 3.1 Schools must have policies and procedures in place that promote good behaviour and prevent poor behaviour. A school's behaviour and attendance policy should be seen as an integral part of its curriculum, as all schools teach values as well as skills and knowledge. The policy must be based on clear values such as respect, fairness and inclusion, and reflect the school's overall aims and its social, moral and religious education programmes.
- 3.2 These values should be the basis for the principles underlying the school's behaviour and attendance policy. The principles should include promoting self-discipline and respect for others, and the importance of listening to all members of the school community, including the learners. They should be relevant to every member of the school community, including staff, governors and parents/carers.
- 3.3 A decision to exclude a learner should be taken only:
- in response to serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
 - if allowing the learner to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the learner or others in the school.

- 3.4 Only the headteacher or teacher in charge of a PRU can exclude a learner. If they are absent from school, the most senior teacher may exercise the power of exclusion, though they should make clear that they are acting in the headteacher's absence. The headteacher or teacher in charge cannot routinely, or on an ad hoc basis, delegate the power to exclude to another teacher.
- 3.5 A decision to exclude a learner permanently is a serious one. It will usually be the **final** step in a process for dealing with disciplinary offences following a wide range of other strategies, which have been tried without success. It is an acknowledgement by the school that it has exhausted all available strategies for dealing with the learner and should normally be used as a last resort.
- 3.6 There will, however, be exceptional circumstances where in the headteacher's judgement it is appropriate to permanently exclude a learner for a first or one-off offence. These might include:
- serious actual or threatened violence against another learner or a member of staff;
 - sexual abuse or assault;
 - supplying an illegal drug;
 - use or threatened use of an offensive weapon.

In most cases it would be appropriate for schools to inform the police if they believe such a criminal offence has taken place. There may be cases where this approach is appropriate for learners excluded for a fixed term. Schools should also consider whether or not to inform other agencies, e.g. Youth Offending Team, Children's Services etc.

These instances are not exhaustive but indicate the severity of such offences and the fact that such behaviour can affect the discipline and well-being of the school community.

- 3.7 Exclusion should not be used for:
- minor incidents such as failure to do homework;
 - poor academic performance;
 - lateness or truancy;
 - breaches of school uniform rules or rules on appearance (including jewellery and hairstyle), except where these are persistent and in open defiance of such rules and where all other avenues for resolving the uniform dispute have been exhausted.
- 3.8 Exclusion should not be used if alternative solutions are available. Examples include the following.
- **Pastoral Support Programmes (PSPs)** for learners who are not responding to schools' general actions to combat disengagement and disaffection and are in need of longer-term intervention. PSPs are plans for learners to better manage their behaviour and should be drawn up using a multi-agency approach (including the learner and parents/carers) and reviewed on a regular basis;
 - **Restorative approaches**, which gives offending learners the opportunity to redress the harm that has been done to a victim and enables all parties with a stake in the outcome to participate fully in the process. All professionals need to be involved in the process and all parties must consent to participate;
 - **Internal exclusion** (also known as internal seclusion), which can be used to diffuse situations that occur in school that require a learner to be removed from class but may not require exclusion from the school premises. The exclusion

could be to a designated and supervised area within the school, with appropriate support, or to another class on a temporary basis, and may continue during break periods;

- **Managed move:** if a school feels that it can no longer manage the behaviour of a particular learner, the school may arrange, normally through the local authority (LA), for another school to take over the learner's education. This should only be done with the full knowledge and cooperation of all parties involved, including the parents/carers and the LA, and in circumstances where it is in the best interests of the learner concerned. Parents/carers should never be pressured into removing their child from school under threat of a permanent exclusion, nor should learners be deleted from the school roll to encourage them to find another school place.

4. **SUMMARY OF EXCLUSIONS**

4.1 This report provides an analysis and evaluation of exclusion data over a 5-year period. Due to the fact that rates of exclusion during the pandemic were affected by significant school closures during this period, rates of exclusion during the pandemic are not directly comparable with typical academic years, hence the inclusion of comparators with pre-Covid data in relation to specific data sets throughout the report.

4.2 Table 1 shows the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions and the number of days lost for the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Table1a: Summary of Exclusions within RCT in 2021/22 – 2022/23

	2021/22	2022/23	Percentage difference between 2021/22 & 2022/23
Permanent Exclusions	18	31	72.22%
Reinstated from Permanent Exclusion	3	9	200.00%
Number of Fixed Term Exclusions	2436	2927	20.16%
Number of Days Lost	4446.5	5516	24.05%
Average length of exclusion (days)	1.83	1.88	3.24%

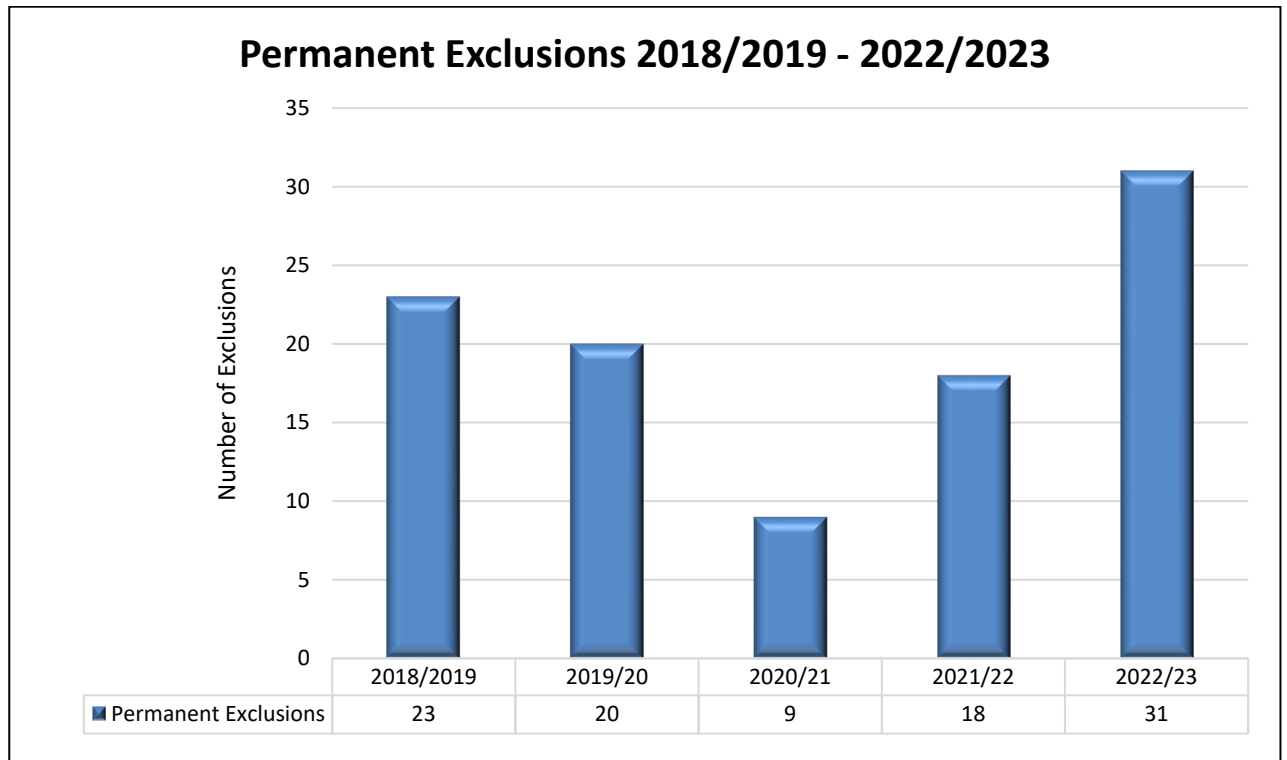
Table 1b: Breakdown of Overall Summary Detailed in Table 1a for 2022/23

	Primary Phase	Secondary Phase	PRU/Special School	Total
Permanent Exclusions	0	30	1	31
Number of Fixed Term Exclusions	369	2418	140	2927
Number of Days Lost	490	4775	251	5516

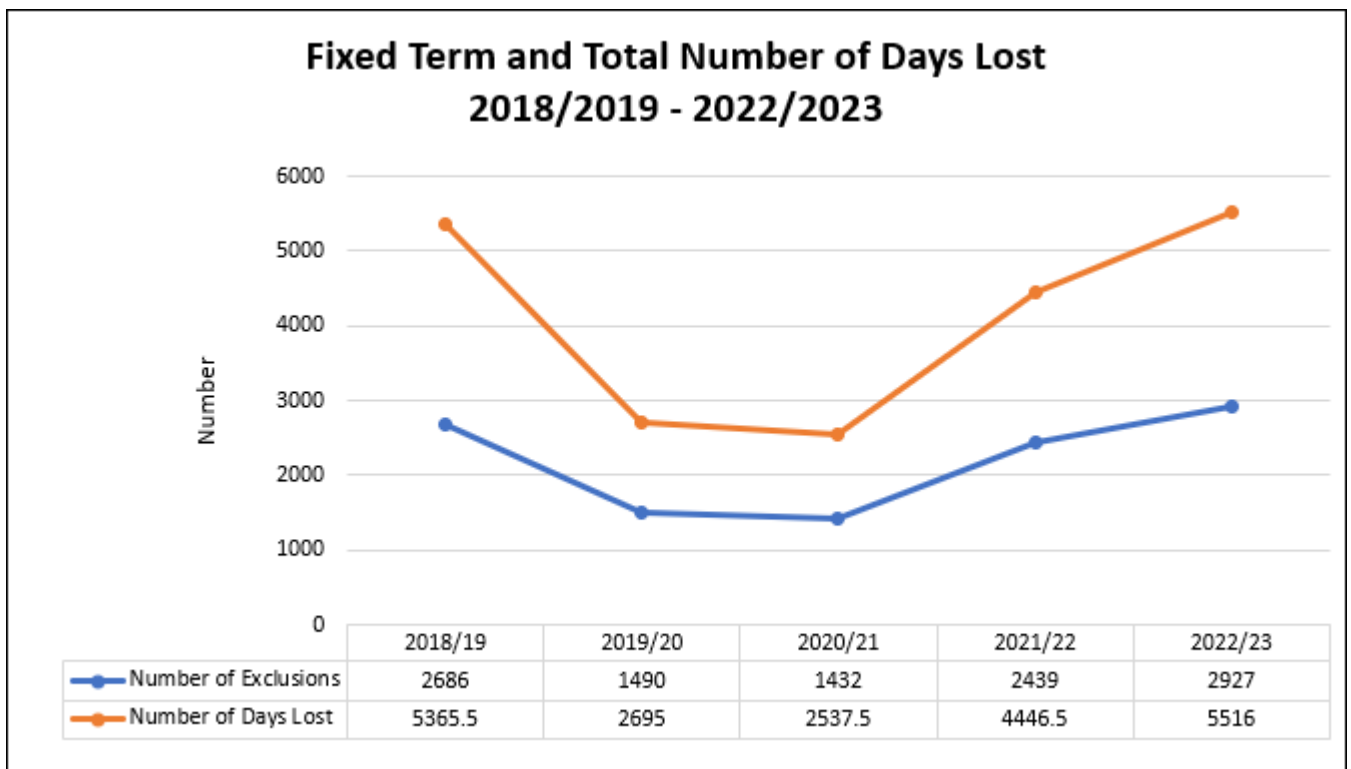
4.3 The above data demonstrates a significant increase in the number of permanent exclusions, fixed term exclusions and the number of days lost within RCT schools when comparing academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

4.4 Graphs 1 and 2 highlight the fluctuating trends evident within RCT for both permanent and fixed term exclusions over the past 5 academic years:

Graph 1: Permanent Exclusions within RCT over 5 years



Graph 2: Fixed Term Exclusions and the number of days lost within RCT over 5 Years



4.5 The number of pupils subject to an exclusion has also fluctuated over the past five academic years with a dip during the Covid period. However, it is concerning that the

number of pupils incurring a fixed term exclusion in 2022/23 exceeded the number excluded in 2018/19 prior to the pandemic:

Table 2: Number of pupils excluded 2018/19 – 2022/23

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Pupils excluded	1118	756	864	1203	1220

5. NATIONAL BENCHMARKING DATA

5.1 The national context with regards to pupil exclusions is highlighted using the Welsh Government's Statistics. The latest comparison data available at the time of writing relates to 2021/22 data sets (First Release: Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusions for Schools in Wales 2021/22) which was published on the 9th November 2023. Therefore, the national benchmarking data relates to previous academic years 2017/18 - 2021/22 and the local data sets relate to 2022/23.

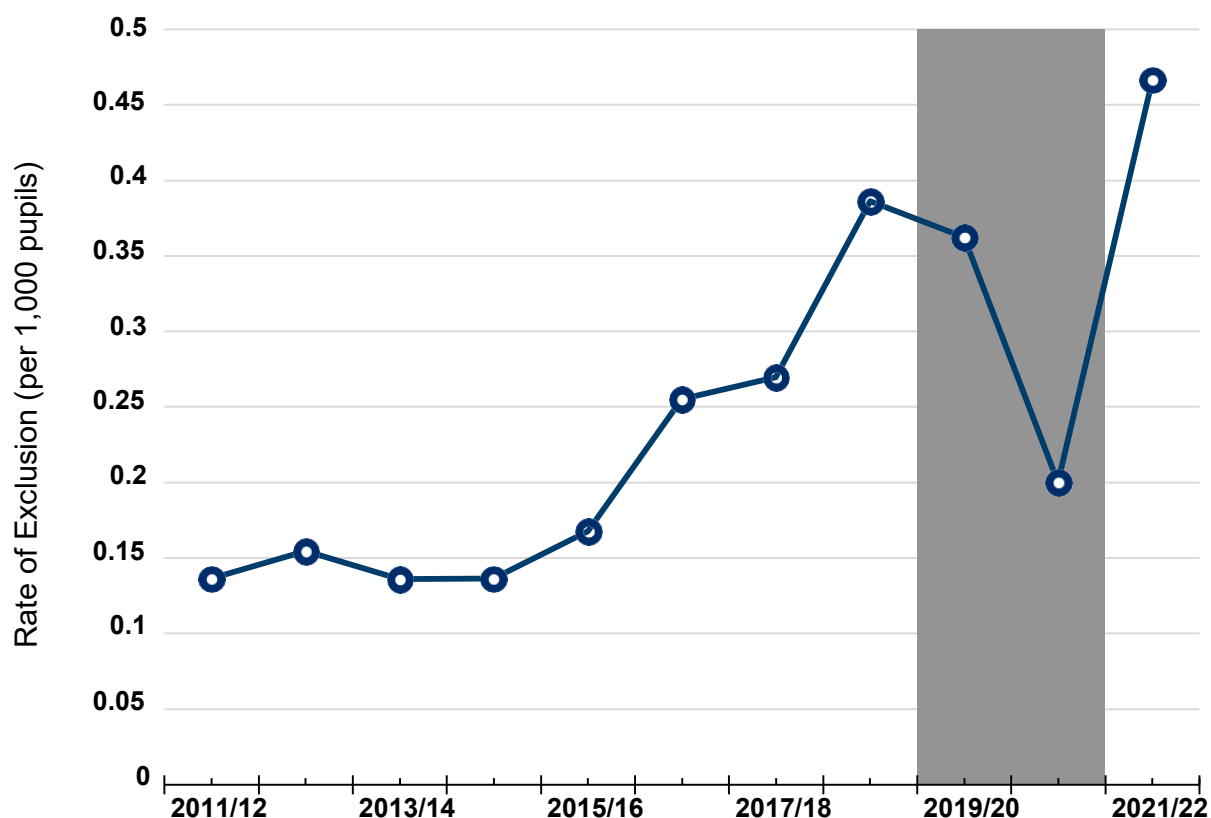
5.2 Table 2 below highlights the trend data for RCT compared to other local authorities. RCT's national ranking remains the same as 2020/21 at 15th for permanent exclusions. Despite this there was a significant increase in the number of incidents from 8 in 2020/21 to 18 in 2021/22. Slight improvements are noted when comparing rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils with RCT's ranking improving from 10th in 2020/21 to a ranking of 9th in 2021/22.

Table 3: Permanent exclusions in Wales, by local authority, 2021/22

Local Authority	Number of exclusions					Rate of exclusions				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Isle of Anglesey	5	9	13	5	6	0.5	0.9	1.3	0.5	0.6
Gwynedd	*	13	12	7	15	*	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.9
Conwy		*	5	*	6		*	0.3	*	0.4
Denbighshire	*	6	*	*	9	*	0.4	*	*	0.6
Flintshire	26	26	19	9	27	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.4	1.2
Wrexham	10	20	23	5	20	0.5	1.0	1.2	0.3	1.0
Powys	7	5	*	*	7	0.4	0.3	*	*	0.4
Pembrokeshire	7	5	*	*	*	0.4	0.3	*	*	*
Carmarthenshire	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Swansea	17	25	15	18	22	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.6
Neath Port Talbot	8	16	13	8	19	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.9
Bridgend	12	8		*	13	0.5	0.3		*	0.6
The Vale of Glamorgan		5	*				0.2	*		
Rhondda Cynon Taf	8	24	18	8	18	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.5
Merthyr Tydfil		*	*	*	10		*	*	*	1.1
Caerphilly	26	18	31	13	36	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.5	1.3
Blaenau Gwent	12	*	8	6	5	1.3	*	0.9	0.6	0.5
Torfaen	6	10	7	*	*	0.4	0.7	0.5	*	*
Monmouthshire	*	*	6	5	5	*	*	0.5	0.4	0.4
Newport	11	16	8	15	9	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.3
Cardiff	10	30	41	14	73	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.2	1.3

Source: Pupil level annual school census (PLASC), Welsh Government

Graph 3: Rate of Permanent Exclusions across Wales



Source: Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) the shaded areas show years affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

- 5.3 Graph 3 is an extract from the *Welsh Government Exclusions from Maintained Schools: September 2021 to August 2022 Report (published November 2023)* and reports a line graph showing the rate of permanent exclusions between 2011/12 and 2021/22 across Wales. It is evident the rate increased steadily from 0.1 per 1,000 pupils in 2011/12 to 0.4 per 1,000 pupils in 2018/19. It dropped to 0.2 per 1,000 pupils in 2020/21 during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. In 2021/22 it increased to 0.5 per 1,000 pupils. The graph highlights the significant increasing trend across Wales.
- 5.4 Table 4 records the number of fixed term exclusions (5 days or less). There was no change in RCT's ranking of 22nd in relation to the number of fixed term exclusions issued for 5 days or less in RCT schools in 2020/2021 and 2021/22. Despite there being an increase in the rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils from 35.5 in 2020/2021 to 60.3 in 2021/22, RCT's ranking is now 15th compared to 17th in 2020/2021 for rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils.

Table 4: Fixed-term exclusions (5 days or less) in Wales, by local authority, 2021/22

Local Authority	Number of exclusions					Rate of exclusions				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Isle of Anglesey	213	369	353	242	461	21.9	38.0	36.4	24.6	47.0
Gwynedd	287	380	422	445	575	16.9	22.4	24.8	26.0	33.7
Conwy	475	491	494	341	635	29.9	30.9	31.2	21.4	40.2
Denbighshire	1481	1193	697	770	1710	94.4	75.7	44.1	47.9	106.2
Flintshire	1215	1437	1069	995	1650	51.7	61.2	45.7	42.2	70.5
Wrexham	818	1040	752	732	1275	41.8	53.0	38.7	37.7	66.1
Powys	454	503	321	307	576	26.3	29.3	18.8	17.7	33.5
Ceredigion	145	203	123	165	217	15.1	21.1	12.8	17.0	22.7
Pembrokeshire	702	718	354	223	380	40.4	41.4	20.6	12.6	21.9
Carmarthenshire	754	797	531	525	1046	27.7	29.1	19.4	18.8	38.1
Swansea	897	1262	742	727	1608	24.9	35.0	20.7	20.0	44.6
Neath Port Talbot	870	1075	1021	649	1110	41.5	50.9	47.9	30.0	52.2
Bridgend	693	953	793	792	1324	30.1	41.2	34.3	33.8	57.1
The Vale of Glamorgan	557	610	416	328	584	24.8	27.0	18.2	14.0	25.1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	1887	2493	1387	1387	2352	48.6	64.1	35.5	35.3	60.3
Merthyr Tydfil	446	304	276	258	638	50.2	33.5	30.7	27.9	69.4
Caerphilly	1103	1132	935	974	1718	38.7	39.9	33.4	34.3	61.6
Blaenau Gwent	601	617	400	349	819	64.4	66.0	42.8	36.7	87.3
Torfaen	591	652	431	539	939	39.3	43.6	29.1	37.3	65.8
Monmouthshire	542	707	402	381	588	46.5	61.5	34.9	32.8	51.0
Newport	964	948	654	757	1468	37.5	36.1	24.6	27.9	53.7
Cardiff	1451	1368	923	1138	2224	26.5	24.8	16.6	20.0	39.1

Source: Pupil level annual school census (PLASC), Welsh Government

5.5 Table 5 highlights fixed term exclusions of over 5 days and reports a significant increase in the number of incidents between 2020/21 and 2021/22 from 40 to 71. There was also an increase in the rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils between these years. RCT's ranking is 19th which is a slight improvement compared to 2020/2021 ranking of 20th in relation to the number of exclusions. RCT's national ranking of 11th in 2021/22 compared to the 2020/21 ranking of 12th in relation to the rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils is also positive

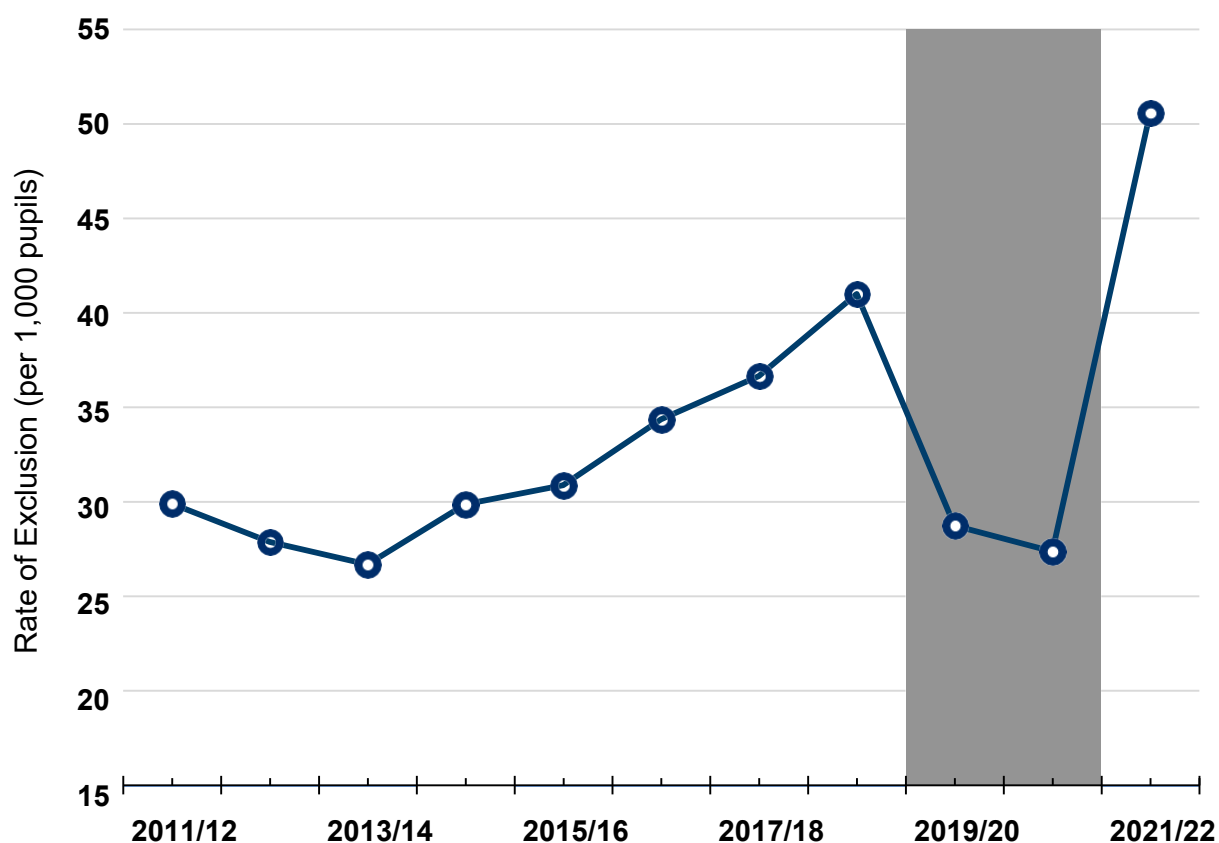
Table 5: Fixed-term exclusions (over 5 days) in Wales, by local authority, 2021/22

Local Authority	Number of exclusions					Rate of exclusions				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Isle of Anglesey	*	23	16	14	44	*	2.4	1.6	1.4	4.5
Gwynedd	18	45	33	31	62	1.1	2.6	1.9	1.8	3.6
Conwy	19	22	23	14	29	1.2	1.4	1.5	0.9	1.8
Denbighshire	27	20	21	30	53	1.7	1.3	1.3	1.9	3.3
Flintshire	52	32	22	34	81	2.2	1.4	0.9	1.4	3.5
Wrexham	107	101	66	76	91	5.5	5.1	3.4	3.9	4.7
Powys	32	31	37	21	23	1.9	1.8	2.2	1.2	1.3
Ceredigion	8	*	*	7	6	0.8	*	*	0.7	0.6

Pembrokeshire	31	32	7	9	17	1.8	1.8	0.4	0.5	1.0
Carmarthenshire	26	31	29	23	32	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.8	1.2
Swansea	58	41	51	36	65	1.6	1.1	1.4	1.0	1.8
Neath Port Talbot	40	58	27	30	59	1.9	2.7	1.3	1.4	2.8
Bridgend	37	37	33	21	56	1.6	1.6	1.4	0.9	2.4
The Vale of Glamorgan	34	43	26	12	27	1.5	1.9	1.1	0.5	1.2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	60	109	39	40	71	1.5	2.8	1.0	1.0	1.8
Merthyr Tydfil	*	5	*	*	17	*	0.6	*	*	1.8
Caerphilly	125	81	55	64	118	4.4	2.9	2.0	2.3	4.2
Blaenau Gwent	19	16	14	7	15	2.0	1.7	1.5	0.7	1.6
Torfaen	19	7	21	9	13	1.3	0.5	1.4	0.6	0.9
Monmouthshire	7	15	9	16	13	0.6	1.3	0.8	1.4	1.1
Newport	24	23	*	11	21	0.9	0.9	*	0.4	0.8
Cardiff	56	24	26	20	22	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4

Source: Pupil level annual school census (PLASC), Welsh Government

Graph 4: Rate of Fixed Term Exclusions 5 Days or Less

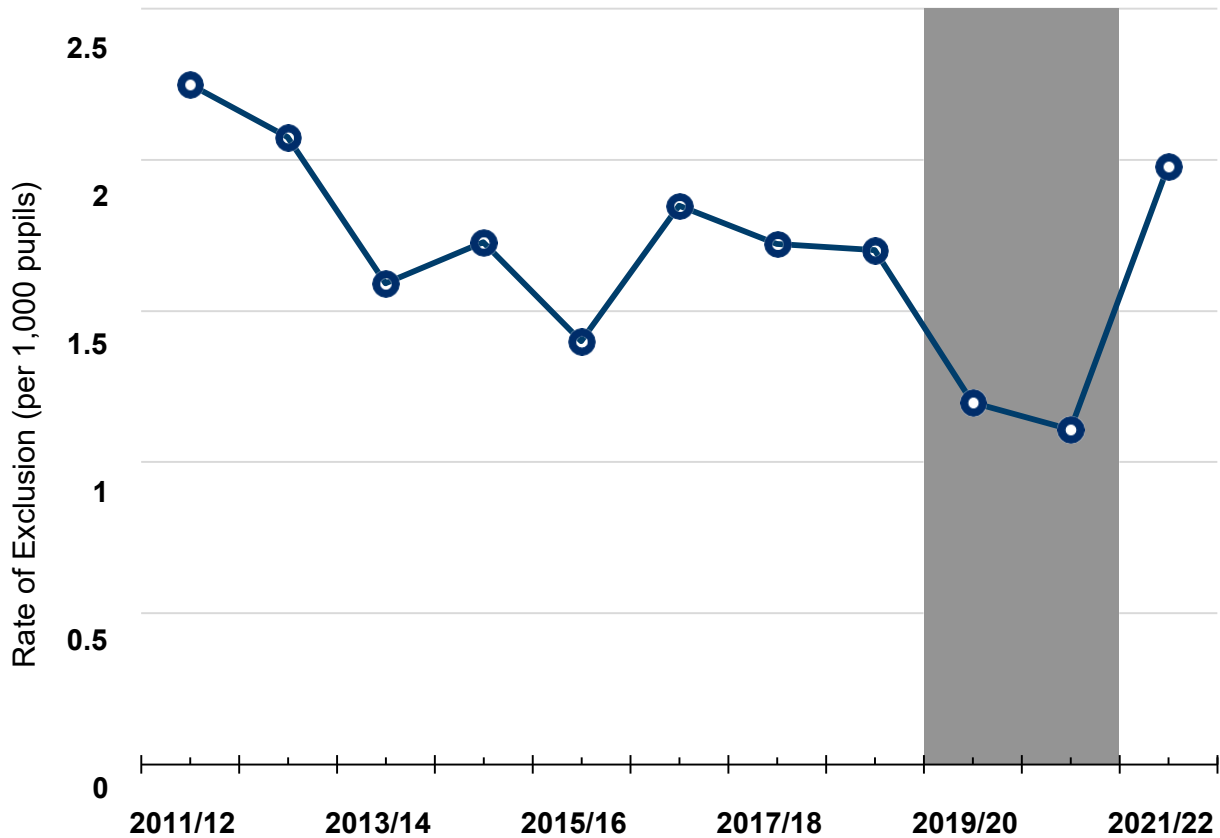


Source: Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) the shaded areas show years affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

5.6 Graphs 4 & 5 are further extracts from the *Welsh Government Exclusions from Maintained Schools: September 2021 to August 2022 Report*. Both graphs indicate a significant increase in the rate of fixed term exclusions since the pandemic to a level which is notably higher than pre-pandemic levels of exclusion in 2018/19. Graph 4 is a line graph reporting the rate of fixed term exclusions of up to 5 days between

2011/12 and 2021/22 across Wales. The rate increased slowly from 28.0 exclusions per 1,000 pupils in 2013/14 to 39.0 exclusions per 1,000 pupils in 2018/19. During the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic the rate dropped to 2013/14 levels. In the most recent year for which there is data, 2021/22, the rate has increased to 50.6 per 1,000 pupils.

Graph 5: Rate of Fixed Term Exclusions Over 5 Days



Source: Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) the shaded areas show years affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

5.7 Graph 5 reports the rate of fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days between 2011/12 and 2021/22 across Wales. The rate is low. It started at 2.3 exclusions per 1,000 pupils in 2011/12 and steadily decreased to 1.1 per 1,000 pupils in 2020/21. In the most recent year for which there is data, 2021/22, the rate has increased to 1.9 exclusions per 1,000 pupils.

6. LOCAL CONTEXT: AN ANALYSIS OF PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS

6.1 Table 6 shows the number of permanent exclusions in Rhondda Cynon Taf during 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years:

Table 6: Year Groups of Permanently Excluded Pupils over last 2 years.

Year Group	2021/2022	2022/2031
Year 7	1	3
Year 8	0	3
Year 9	5	10
Year 10	9	13
Year 11	3	2
Total	18	31

- 6.2 There has been a 72.22% increase in the number of permanent exclusions in schools within RCT during 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. This is a 34.78% increase compared to 2018/19 (pre-pandemic) and an 55.00% increase compared to 2019/20 (pandemic period).
- 6.3 Of the 31 pupils permanently excluded in 2022/23, 12 were female and 19 were male.
- 6.4 The permanent exclusions for the academic year 2022/23 were in the following schools.

5 (16.13%) Hawthorn High School
 4 (12.90%) Pontypridd High School
 2 (6.45%) Aberdare Community School
 2 (6.45%) Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School
 2 (6.45%) Cardinal Newman R C Comprehensive School
 2 (6.45%) Ferndale Community School
 2 (6.45%) Mountain Ash Comprehensive School
 2 (6.45%) Y Pant Comprehensive School
 2 (6.45%) Ysgol Garth Olwg
 2 (6.45%) Ysgol Nantgwyn
 1 (3.23%) Porth Community School
 1 (3.23%) St John Baptist C in W High School
 1 (3.23%) Tonyrefail Community School
 1 (3.23%) Treorchy Comprehensive School
 1 (3.23%) Ty Gwyn Education Centre
 1 (3.23%) Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun

There were no permanent exclusions in our primary schools in 2022/23.

- 6.5 The 31 permanent exclusions imposed related to serious breaches of behaviour including: 20 cases of incidents of physical assault against a pupil, 4 in relation to physical assault against staff, 3 for verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards an adult, 2 for substance misuse, 1 for persistent disruptive behaviour and 1 for verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards a pupil. Serious cases of physical assault against a pupil that were considered of such a serious nature to impose a permanent exclusion have increased dramatically over the past academic year.
- 6.6 Should a parent/carer have significant concerns regarding the Governing Body's decision to uphold the headteacher's permanent exclusion they are able to formally appeal to a panel of independent professionals. Four cases were referred to an Independent Appeal Panel (IAP) in 2022/23 of which; one resulted in the decision to permanently exclude being overturned with reinstatement of the pupil back into the excluding school, one resulted in the decision being overturned but not to reinstate the pupil back into the excluding school and two decisions to permanently exclude a pupil was upheld by the IAP.

7. LOCAL CONTEXT: AN ANALYSIS OF FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS OF MORE THAN 5 DAYS

- 7.1 Table 7 details the number of incidents of more than 5 days and duration of exclusion. Fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days have fluctuated over the last 5 years, but despite an increase in the number of incidents incurred in 2021/22 and 2022/2023, it is positive to note that the number of incidents in these years are lower than in 2018/19 prior to the pandemic.

Table 7: Number and Duration of Fixed Term Exclusions of more than 5 days within RCT over 5 years

More than 5 days	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
Incidents	113	44	40	74	106	377
Duration	1006.5	439.5	317	803	1029	3595

*please note that slight variations in local and nationally reported datasets are evident.

7.2 Over the last 5 years the most common reason for a fixed term exclusion of over 5 days has been physical assault against a pupil at 22.87% of the total incidents, followed by verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards an adult at 18.62%. Of the other 58.51% of incidents, 15.96% was as a result of physical assault against staff, 15.43% persistent disruptive behaviour, 13.03% other, 6.12% substance misuse, 3.46% verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards a pupil, 2.13% damage, 1.60% sexual misconduct, 0.53% bullying and 0.27% racial abuse. The highest reason for over 5 days exclusion in 2022/23 was verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards an adult with 31.13% of the incidents.

7.3 In 2022/23 of the 106 incidents of fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days: 102 pupils were excluded of which 1 pupil had 3 exclusions and 2 pupils had 2 exclusions within the academic year.

8. AN ANALYSIS OF FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS 5 DAYS OR LESS

8.1 There has been a 19.28% increase in fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 and a 9.64% increase when comparing 2018/19 and 2022/23 data sets. There has also been a 22.85% increase in the number of days lost when comparing the 2021/22 and 2022/23 data sets and a 2.94% increase when comparing 2018/19 and 2022/23 data sets.

Table 8: Number and Duration of exclusions 5 days or less within RCT over 5 year period

5 days or less	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
Incidents	2573	1446	1392	2365	2821	10597
Duration	4359	2255.5	2220.5	3652.5	4487	16974.5

*please note that slight variations in local and nationally reported datasets are evident.

8.2 When excluding pupils, schools are required to record the reason for the exclusion (e.g. disruptive behaviour, substance misuse etc.). Persistent disruptive behaviour is cited as the most frequent reason for fixed term exclusions (5 days or less) with 32.29% of the total incidents followed closely by verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards an adult with 22.76%. Of the other 44.95% incidents, 11.66% was a result of other, 14.21% Physical Assault against a pupil, 8.37% physical assault against staff, 2.30% substance misuse, 2.55% damage, 3.23% verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards a pupil, 1.21% racial abuse, 0.35% theft, 0.57% sexual misconduct and 0.50% bullying. The most common reason for fixed term exclusion prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2018/2019 was also persistent disruptive behaviour. Furthermore, the two most prevalent reasons above reflect national data whereby persistent disruptive behaviour and verbal abuse / threatening behaviour towards an adult are cited as the two most common reasons for exclusions in 2021/22, and also 2018/19 pre-Covid.

- 8.3 Table 9 highlights that in 2022/23 of the 2821 incidents of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less 1191 pupils were excluded. The number of repeat exclusions is summarised as follows:

Table 9: Number of repeat exclusions of 5 days or less 2022/23

Number of Exclusions	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils	Number of Days Lost
1 Exclusion	674	56.59%	1049.5
2 Exclusions	167	14.02%	505.5
3 Exclusions	114	9.57%	576.5
4 Exclusions	75	6.30%	483.5
5 Exclusions	52	4.37%	400
6 Exclusions	35	2.94%	335
7 Exclusions	19	1.60%	206
8 Exclusions	15	1.26%	202.5
9 Exclusions	10	0.84%	150
10 Exclusions	10	0.84%	140
11 Exclusions	6	0.50%	122.5
12 Exclusions	3	0.25%	65
13 Exclusions	3	0.25%	70.5
14 Exclusions	5	0.42%	118
15 Exclusions	1	0.08%	18.5
16 Exclusions	2	0.17%	44
Grand Total	1191	100.00%	4487

- 8.4 Repeatedly excluded pupils are closely monitored by the Exclusion Intervention/Prevention Officer to ensure schools are following Welsh Government Guidance on the reporting of these pupils. The LA is supporting and challenging schools who are repeatedly excluding pupils to ensure that appropriate support is being provided at School Action Plus/Early Years Action Plus in accordance with the requirements of the outgoing SEN Code of Practice for Wales or in relation to the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) outlined in their Individual Development Plans (IDP) under the new ALN Code for Wales.

9. AN ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY PHASE FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS

- 9.1 Since academic year 2020/21 primary fixed term exclusions have been analysed as 'primary phase' exclusions to incorporate exclusions incurred by primary aged pupils in our through schools. Prior to this, data relating to primary schools was analysed separately from all-through schools data. Primary phase exclusions have seen a notable increase in the past academic year. Table 10 below shows the overall primary school exclusions rates (including both 5 days or less and 5 days or more) in RCT over the last five years:

Table 10: Fixed Term Exclusions within the Primary Phase between 2018/19 – 2022/23

Primary Phase Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Percentage difference between 2018/19 & 2022/23	Percentage difference between 2021/22 & 2022/23
Incidents of exclusions	370	208	174	269	369	-0.27%	37.17%
Total number of days lost	657.5	280	250.5	352	490	-25.48%	39.20%
Average length of exclusion (days)	1.78	1.35	1.44	1.31	1.33	-25.28%	1.48%
Number of pupils excluded	179	96	97	122	155	-13.41%	27.05%

9.2 A breakdown of school performance on incidents of exclusions, number of days lost and per 1000 pupil rates are detailed at Appendix 1.

9.3 Primary Phase with the highest rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils in 2022/23 are as follows:

Trerobart Primary	216.22 per 1000 pupils
Cwmbach C in W Primary	174.31 per 1000 pupils
Penrhys Primary	141.31 per 1000 pupils
Ynysboeth Primary	128.05 per 1000 pupils

The primary phase with the highest number of incidents of exclusions were:

Trerobart Primary	40 (10.84%) incidents (6 pupils who lost 76 (15.51%) days)
Heol Y Celyn Primary	26 (7.05%) incidents (6 pupils who lost 26.5 (5.41%) days)
Cymmer Primary	23 (6.23%) incidents (8 pupils who lost 34 (6.94%) days)
Ynysboeth Primary	21 (5.69%) incidents (5 pupils who lost 16 (3.27%) days)

The primary phase with the highest number of incidents of 5 days or less exclusions were:

Trerobart Primary	39 (10.63%) incidents (6 pupils who lost 68 (14.41%) days)
Heol Y Celyn Primary	26 (7.08%) incidents (6 pupils who lost 26.5 (5.61%) days)
Cymmer Primary	23 (6.27%) incidents (8 pupils who lost 34 (7.20%) days)
Ynysboeth Primary	21 (5.72%) incidents (5 pupils who lost 16 (3.39%) days)

The primary phase with the highest number of incidents of more than 5 days exclusions were:

Trerobart Primary	1 (50.00%) incidents (1 pupil who lost 8 (44.44%) days)
Aberdare Park Primary	1 (50.00%) incidents (1 pupil who lost 10 (55.56%) days)

10. **AN ANALYSIS OF ALL-THROUGH SCHOOLS FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS**

10.1 Despite a significant increase in fixed term exclusions in 2021/22 following pandemic related decreases between 2019/20 and 2020/21, it is evident that the number of

exclusions issued in 2022/23 has risen to almost pre-pandemic levels. It is positive however, that there has been a notable decrease in the number of pupils excluded. Nearly all exclusions within the all-through schools are issued to pupils in the secondary phase.

Table 11: Fixed Term Exclusions within All Through Schools 2018/19 - 2022/2023

All Through Phase Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Percentage difference between 2018/19 & 2022/23	Percentage difference between 2021/22 & 2022/23
Incidents of exclusions	585	418	291	545	580	-0.85%	6.42%
Total number of days lost	1188	670.5	395	830.5	877.5	-26.14%	5.66%
Average length of exclusion (days)	2.03	1.6	1.77	1.52	1.51	-25.62%	-0.66%
Number of pupils excluded	225	189	194	312	239	6.22%	-23.40%

10.2 The all through schools with the highest rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils were:

Ysgol Garth Olwg	186.89 per 1000 pupils
Porth Community	135.56 per 1000 pupils
Tonyrefail Community	102.28 per 1000 pupils

The all through schools with the highest number of incidents of exclusions were:

Ysgol Garth Olwg	228 (39.31%) incidents (79 pupils who lost 301.5 (34.36%) days)
Tonyrefail Community	166 (28.62%) incidents (69 pupils who lost 266.5 (30.37%) days)

The all through schools with the highest number of incidents of 5 days or less exclusions were:

Ysgol Garth Olwg	226 (39.79%) incidents (79 pupils who lost 282.5 (36.66%) days)
Tonyrefail Community	163 (28.70%) incidents (69 pupils who lost 243.5 (31.60%) days)

The all through schools with the highest number of incidents of more than 5 days exclusions were:

Ysgol Nantgwyn	4 (33.33%) incidents (4 pupils who lost 43 (40.19%) days)
Tonyrefail Community	3 (25.00%) incidents (1 pupils who lost 23 (21.50%) days)

11. AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY PHASE FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS

- 11.1 Since academic year 2020/21 secondary fixed term exclusions have been analysed as 'secondary phase' exclusions to incorporate exclusions incurred by statutory secondary aged pupils in our all through schools. Prior to this, data relating to secondary schools was analysed separately from all-through schools' data. Having taken this into account, exclusions within the secondary phase have exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

Table 12: Fixed Term Exclusions within the Secondary Phase 2018/19 – 2022/23

Secondary Phase Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Percentage difference between 2018/19 & 2022/23	Percentage difference between 2021/22 & 2022/23
Incidents of exclusions	1467	753	1133	1987	2412	64.41%	21.39%
Total number of days lost	3010	1490.5	2053.5	3756.5	4766	58.33%	26.87%
Average length of exclusion (days)	2.05	1.98	1.57	1.89	1.98	-3.41%	4.52%
Number of pupils excluded	649	431	716	1014	1010	55.62%	-0.39%

- 11.2 A breakdown of school performance on incidents of exclusions, number of days lost and per 1000 pupil rates are detailed at Appendix 1.
- 11.3 Secondary Phase with the highest exclusions per 1000 pupils are as follows:

Mountain Ash Comp	351.91 per 1000 pupils
Ferndale Community	327.73 per 1000 pupils
Cardinal Newman RC	273.09 per 1000 pupils
YG Cwm Rhondda	249.30 per 1000 pupils

The secondary phase with the highest number of incidents of exclusions were:

Mountain Ash Comp	360 (14.93%) incidents (117 pupils who lost 541 (11.35%) days)
Cardinal Newman R C	275 (11.40%) incidents (94 pupils who lost 741 (15.55%) days)
	227 (9.41%) incidents (78 pupils who lost 298.5 (6.26%) days)
Ferndale Community	195 (8.08%) incidents (69 pupils who lost 394.5 (8.28%) days)

The secondary phase with the highest number of incidents of 5 days or less exclusions were:

Mountain Ash Comp	349 (15.08%) incidents (117 pupils who lost 468.5 (12.23%) days)
Cardinal Newman R C	257 (11.10%) incidents (88 pupils who lost 569 (14.86%) days)
Ysgol Garth Olwg	225 (9.72%) incidents (78 pupils who lost 279.5 (7.30%) days)
Ferndale Community	186 (8.03%) incidents (65 pupils who lost 294.5 (7.69%) days)

The secondary phase with the highest number of incidents of more than 5 days exclusions were:

Cardinal Newman RC	18 (18.56%) incidents (18 pupils who lost 172 (18.38%) days)
YG Cwm Rhondda	17 (17.53%) incidents (16 pupils who lost 160.5 (17.15%) days)
Mountain Ash Comp	10 (11.34%) incidents 11 (10 pupils who lost 72.5 (7.75%) days)
Ferndale Community	9 (9.28%) incidents (9 pupils who lost 100 (10.68%) days)

- 11.4 Significant improvements have been evident in several schools when comparing the number of incidents per 1000 pupils between 2021/22 and 2022/23 data sets. These include:

Table 13: Schools showing significant improvements: number of incidents of exclusion per 1000 pupils

School	2021/22 Incidents per 1000	2022/23 Incidents per 1000	Decrease in Incidents per 1000	Percentage Decrease in Incidents per 1000
Ty Gwyn Education Centre	3,638.89	3,272.73	-366.16	-10.06%
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	164.04	39.89	-124.15	-75.68%
Ysgol Nantgwyn	147.30	23.36	-123.94	-84.14%
Cwmbach C in W Primary School	279.66	174.31	-105.35	-37.67%

- 11.5 Concerning data trends have been evident in several schools as noted in Table 14 when comparing the number of incidents per 1000 pupils between 2021/22 and 2022/23 data sets.

Table 14: Schools showing concerning data trends: number of incidents of exclusion per 1000 pupils

School	2021/22 Incidents per 1000	2022/23 Incidents per 1000	Increase in Incidents per 1000	Percentage Increase in Incidents per 1000
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	81.66	249.3	167.64	205.29%
Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	194.31	351.91	157.6	81.11%
Trerobart Primary School	77.32	216.22	138.9	179.64%
Ysgol Garth Olwg	69.9	186.89	116.98	167.36%
Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School	157.68	273.09	115.41	73.20%

12. EXCLUSION RATES OF SPECIFIC OR VULNERABLE GROUPS IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

- 12.1 Exclusions are analysed by fixed term 5 days or less, fixed term more than 5 days, permanent exclusions, by school phase and individually. A further analysis is completed of vulnerable groups to monitor the rates of exclusion for our most vulnerable pupils.
- 12.2 Of the 2927 total number of incidents of fixed term exclusions in 2022/23, 1220 pupils were excluded of which 449 (36.80%) were female and 771 (63.20%) were male. The number of females has remained the same when compared with 2021/2022 data with 449 (37.42%) excluded. There has been a slight increase of 2.66% in the number of males when compared with 2021/2022 data when there were 751 (62.58%) excluded. Over the last 5 years male pupils have generally been excluded more than their female counterparts.
- 12.3 The year groups with the highest fixed exclusion rates in 2022/23 were:
- Year 10 with 684 (23.37%) exclusions
 - Year 9 with 653 (22.34%) exclusions
 - Year 8 with 540 (18.48%) exclusions
- 12.4 Over the past 5 academic years there has been a decrease in the number of pupils with a Special Educational Need (SEN) or an Additional Learning Need (ALN) being excluded from 479 in 2018/19 to 306 in 2021/22 and a further decrease to 287 in 2022/23. The percentage of pupils with a SEN / ALN incurring exclusions of the total cohort of excluded pupils significantly decreased from 42.84% in 2018/19 prior to the pandemic to 25.5% in 2021/22 and 23.5% in 2022/23. This is against a backdrop of a general increase in the number of pupils being excluded. The increase in the number/percentage of pupils with no SEN/ALN incurring exclusions during 2022/23 continues to reflect concerns raised by schools regarding an overall deterioration of behaviour within the school population following the pandemic and reflects the national picture.
- 12.5 The percentage of eFSM learners being excluded was 43.11% in 2022/2023.
- 12.6 Table 15 data relates to the exclusion rates of children and young people who are looked after (CLA) for the last 5 years. Despite a fluctuating trend in performance overall, data for the past two academic years shows a more stable trend.

Table 15: Children and young people who are looked after and have been excluded over the last 5 academic years

Academic Year	Total number of incidents of exclusions	Total number of excluded CLA pupils	RCT exclusion cohort	Rate per 1000 pupils
2018/19	109	40	1118	35.78
2019/20	119	41	756	54.23
2020/21	50	22	864	25.46
2021/22	137	55	1203	45.71
2022/23	153	54	1220	44.26

- 12.7 During 2022/23, 2 CLA pupils were subject to a permanent exclusion, one due to physical assault against a member of staff and one substance misuse. 153 incidents

of fixed term exclusion were related to 54 children and young people who were looked after at the time of their exclusion and accounted for a loss of 270.5 school days. It is concerning that levels of exclusion for CLA during 2022/23 were above pre-pandemic levels in 2018/19.

- 12.8 The number of exclusions issued in relation to protected characteristics remains low. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of exclusions relating to racial incidents over the past five academic years but this remains low at 34 incidents in 2022/23 (1.16%). 16 (0.55%) pupils were excluded for bullying and 17 (0.57%) for sexual misconduct in 2022/2023.

13. ADDRESSING RISING DATA TRENDS

- 13.1 The report details both the national and local data sets. In a national context, performance in RCT showed a slight improvement in All Wales rankings when comparing its rate of permanent exclusions per 1000 pupils with other local authorities in 2021/22. Likewise, despite an increase in the number of fixed term exclusions in RCT in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, RCT’s ranking on an all-Wales basis relating to rates per 1000 pupils excluded was more positive in 2021/22 for both its fixed term exclusions of over 5 days and 5 days or less compared to the previous academic year. Local data sets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 are concerning with significant increases in all but one measure of exclusions for the second consecutive academic year, now exceeding the last recorded pre-pandemic figures in 2018/19. Data for the current academic year 2023/24 is also currently demonstrating a further increase in both fixed term and permanent exclusions as seen in Table 16 below. However, it is important to consider local data against the backdrop of the significant increase in all measures of exclusion on a national basis in 2021/22 as shown in the *Welsh Government Exclusions from Maintained Schools: September 2021 to August 2022 Report (published November 2023)* whereby both permanent and fixed term exclusions rose to levels considerably higher than pre-pandemic levels. In addition, school leaders are reporting increased levels of challenging behaviours amongst a larger cohort of pupils.

Table 16: Summary of Exclusions within RCT in Autumn Terms 1

Autumn Term 1	Number of Exclusions
2020/21	455
2021/22	316
2022/23	542
2023/24	588
Grand Total	1901

- 13.2 The Education Directorate acknowledges the need to have a continued focus upon reducing exclusions. This was recognised by Estyn during the RCT Local Government Education Services (LGES) inspection in January 2023 with the following recommendation:

R3 Work closely with schools, pupil referral units and the regional consortium to build on the local authority’s work to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

- 13.3 The Team Around the School (TAS) Protocol, a more collaborative framework for addressing school improvement concerns involving schools, Central South Consortium Improvement Partners and LA Inclusion Officers, was established last academic year with the aim of providing support and challenge to schools where

significant concerns had been identified in relation to behaviour management and exclusions. Despite encouraging early indications of improved exclusion data for some schools engaged in the TAS process, overall impact of this approach to date is limited and will need further consideration. There is, however, an escalation process built in to the TAS Protocol where there has been limited progress made by schools in reducing their exclusions and addressing behavioural concerns over time. From Spring Term 2024, schools will be required to set specific targets to reduce exclusions in their settings. Communication will be sent to schools and Governing Bodies in relation to the above in January 2024.

13.4 Access and Inclusion Services continue to implement a range of wellbeing and behaviour initiatives with the support of Welsh Government grant funding. In acknowledgment of the link between wellbeing and behaviour, grant funding has been used to roll out training to schools by Nurture UK on diagnostic assessment of behaviour through Boxall Profiling and the implementation of nurture approaches in schools at both an accredited and non-accredited level. The six principles of Nurture underpin the training as follows and provide schools with a relevant clear basis upon which to build their behaviour and wellbeing approaches:

- All behaviour is communication
- Language is a vital means of communication
- The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
- The classroom offers a safe base
- Children's learning is understood developmentally
- The importance of transition in children's lives.

13.5 The **Boxall profile** is an evidence-based assessment tool which is used to assess the social, emotional and mental development of pupils aged 4-18. By adopting this as an authority wide approach it has provided a common language for all schools to use and is a core focus of the work of the Behaviour Support Team. Feedback from workshops provided to schools on Boxall assessment in Summer 2023 demonstrated that staff felt more confident in administering the assessment, analysing outcomes and planning intervention for pupils.

13.6 All secondary and through schools were offered the opportunity to participate in the two-year accredited **National Nurturing Schools Programme** together with those primary schools that host a Learning Support Class for Nurture or Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). Delivery and implementation of the programme was significantly impacted by the pandemic resulting in an agreement with Nurture UK to extend the timescale for schools to undertake training and gain accreditation into this academic year. One primary school has successfully completed accreditation, reporting positive impact of the nurturing approach upon the whole-school approach to behaviour and wellbeing. A case study is provided in Appendix 2 with a link to a video that provides a flavour of the assessment process. In addition, six secondary schools, two through schools and two primary schools are on course to gain accreditation this academic year, with an additional secondary school awaiting the outcome of their formal assessment. It is disappointing that four secondary schools have declined the offer of training. In addition, 26 school-based delegates accessed non-accredited **Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups** training which has resulted in nine participants setting up a nurture group for pupils in their schools and a further eight implementing nurture approaches within the wider school provision. At this stage it is not possible to evaluate the impact of this approach in schools as it will need time to embed.

13.7 As part of the Education Directorate's Wellbeing strategy to support the implementation of the Welsh Government's statutory guidance *'Framework on*

embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing, a range of projects and training opportunities to address issues such as healthy relationships through theatre workshops and R-Time group work continue to be funded via the Whole School Approach Funding together with further training for school staff on Trauma Informed Approaches so that they develop a deeper understanding of pupil behaviour and the implementation of supportive, non-punitive approaches as alternatives to exclusion.

- 13.7 Based on the evaluation of Tranches 1-3 of the Step 4 Programme and following proposals received from schools in Summer Term 2023 additional funding of approximately £900k has been agreed to establish a further 8 school-based Step 4 SEBD provisions in secondary/through schools in Tranche 4 of the Step 4 programme between September 2023 and August 2025 to strengthen the continuum of SEBD provision in RCT. The Step 4 programme provides enhanced funding to mainstream schools to develop their own school-based wellbeing and behaviour provisions to provide effective support and intervention for pupils with significant wellbeing needs and SEBD within their local school communities and without the need to access LA specialist provision. Overall, feedback from schools demonstrates positive outcomes for pupils accessing Step 4 provisions in relation to improved attendance, reduced exclusions and academic attainment.

14 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.

15. CONSULTATIONS

- 15.1 No consultation exercises have been undertaken.

16. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 There are no Welsh Language implications as a result of the recommendations of this report.

17. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17.1 There are no financial implications contained within this report.

18. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 18.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

19. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 19.1 Supporting learners who experience significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to achieve the best possible educational outcomes supports the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference' to promote independence, healthy and successful lives for all and to enable them to fulfil their potential and prosper. This also supports the Sustainable Development principle and the Wellbeing Goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act (Wales) that underpin the vision and working practices of the service.

20. CONCLUSION

20.1 Reducing school exclusions is a key priority for the local authority. However, it is evident from both local and national exclusion data that there will be clear challenges for local authorities and schools in addressing the significant social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils in the post-Covid pandemic era. This will require commitment, creativity and a shared ambition to improve the life chances of our most vulnerable and challenging learners to ensure that we work collectively to achieve our mission as set out in the Education Strategic Plan 2021-2024 **'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all'**.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14TH DECEMBER 2023

**ANNUAL SCHOOL EXCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT
FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES**

Comparison Information of Fixed Term Exclusions 2022/23 – Primary Phase

Appendix 1

School	2022/23													
	Autumn			Spring			Summer			2022 PLASC NOR				
	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	NOR	Number of Incidents	Total Duration	Incidents per 1000	Average Length (Days)
Abercynon Community Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	1.5	1	1.50	3	2	1.50	333	3	4.5	9.01	1.50
Aberdare Park Primary School	5	1	5.00	15	2	7.50	1.5	1	1.50	319	4	21.5	12.54	5.38
Alaw Primary School	0.5	1	0.50	0.0	0	0.00	0.5	1	0.50	197	2	1	10.15	0.50
Blaengwawr Primary School	2	2	1.00	1	1	1.00	2	1	2.00	216	4	5	18.52	1.25
Bodringallt Primary School *	3	2	1.50	0.5	1	0.50	0.0	0	0.0	87	3	3.5	34.48	1.17
Caradog Primary School	2	1	2.00	1	1	1.00	2	1	2.00	212	3	5	14.15	1.67
Cefn Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	1.5	1	1.50	139	1	1.5	7.19	1.50
Coedpenmaen Primary School	5	6	0.83	1.5	2	0.75	0.5	1	0.50	266	9	7	33.83	0.78
Craig Yr Hesg Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	1	1	1.00	6	2	3.00	165	3	7	18.18	2.33
Cwmaman Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	1.5	1	1.50	208	1	1.5	4.81	1.50
Cwmbach C in W Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	5.5	4	1.38	13.5	15	0.90	109	19	19	174.31	1.00
Cwmbach Community Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	2	3	0.67	268	3	2	11.19	0.67
Cwmclydach Community Primary School *	2	2	1.00	3	2	1.50	0.0	0	0.0	205	4	5	19.51	1.25
Cymmer Primary School *	13	8	1.63	5.5	4	1.38	15.5	11	1.41	238	23	34	96.64	1.48
Darran Park Primary School	1.5	1	1.50	0.0	0	0.00	0.5	1	0.50	350	2	2	5.71	1.00
Darrenlas Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	2.5	1	2.50	226	1	2.5	4.42	2.50
Dolau Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	11.5	5	2.30	520	5	11.5	9.62	2.30
Ffynnon Taf Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	1	2	0.50	201	2	1	9.95	0.50
Glenboi Community Primary School *	0.5	1	0.50	0.0	0	0.00	2.5	2	1.25	140	3	3	21.43	1.00
Gwauncelyn Primary School	6	4	1.50	3	3	1.00	0.0	0	0.0	406	7	9	17.24	1.29
Hafod Primary School	1.5	1	1.50	1	1	1.00	2	4	0.50	118	6	4.5	50.85	0.75
Hawthorn Primary School	7.5	4	1.88	1.5	1	1.50	8	5	1.60	231	10	17	43.29	1.70
Heol Y Celyn Primary School	10.5	6	1.75	5	4	1.25	11	16	0.69	325	26	26.5	80.00	1.02
Llanharan Primary School	7.5	3	2.50	0.0	0	0.00	5	3	1.67	149	6	12.5	40.27	2.08
Llanhari Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	7	5	1.40	179	5	7	27.93	1.40
Llwydcoed Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	4	2	2.00	134	2	4	14.93	2.00

Llwynypia Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	1.5	2	0.75	0.0	0	0.0	220	2	1.5	9.09	0.75
Maesybryn Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	3.5	1	3.50	375	1	3.5	2.67	3.50
Parc Primary School	0.5	1	0.50	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.0	218	1	0.5	4.59	0.50
Pengeulan Primary School	1	1	1.00	0.0	0	0.00	4	5	0.80	124	6	5	48.39	0.83
Penrhys Primary School	6	5	1.20	4.5	3	1.50	5.5	6	0.92	99	14	16	141.41	1.14
Penygawsi Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	0.5	1	0.50	240	1	0.5	4.17	0.50
Penyreglyn Community Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	0	1	0.00	188	1	0	5.32	0.00
Penywaun Primary School	9	5	1.80	4.5	4	1.13	12	8	1.50	187	17	25.5	90.91	1.50
Pontrhondda Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	1	1	1.00	156	1	1	6.41	1.00
Porth Community School	2	1	2.00	0.0	0	0.00	0.5	1	0.50	218	2	2.5	9.17	1.25
Ton Infants School	3.5	7	0.50	0.0	0	0.00	1	1	1.00	169	8	4.5	47.34	0.56
Ton Pentre Junior School	1	1	1.00	7.5	6	1.25	6.5	4	1.63	187	11	15	58.82	1.36
Tonyrefail Community School	0.0	0	0.00	1	1	1.00	0.0	0	0.0	281	1	1	3.56	1.00
Tonysguboriau Primary School	0.0	0	0.00	1.5	1	1.50	2	1	2.00	238	2	3.5	8.40	1.75
Trallwng Infants School	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	1	1	1.00	92	1	1	10.87	1.00
Trealaw Primary School	1	1	1.00	0.0	0	0.00	1	1	1.00	131	2	2	15.27	1.00
Tref Y Rhyg Primary School	5.5	3	1.83	8	6	1.33	4.5	5	0.90	111	14	18	126.13	1.29
Treorchy Primary School	1.5	1	1.50	1	1	1.00	7	5	1.40	429	7	9.5	16.32	1.36
Trerobart Primary School	44.5	24	1.85	8.5	6	1.42	23	10	2.30	185	40	76	216.22	1.90
Tylorstown Primary School	7.5	8	0.94	4	3	1.33	7	5	1.40	155	16	18.5	103.23	1.16
Williamstown Primary School	1.5	3	0.50	3	4	0.75	1	2	0.50	341	9	5.5	26.39	0.61
Ynysboeth Primary School	8.5	10	0.85	2	4	0.50	5.5	7	0.79	164	21	16	128.05	0.76
Ynyshir Community Primary School	6.5	4	1.63	5.5	3	1.83	0.5	1	0.50	255	8	12.5	31.37	1.56
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castellau	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	1.5	2	0.75	239	2	1.5	8.37	0.75
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyncelyn	4.5	2	2.25	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.0	328	2	4.5	6.10	2.25
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn Y Forwyn	1.5	1	1.50	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.0	180	1	1.5	5.56	1.50
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontsionnorton	5	4	1.25	2.5	1	2.50	0.0	0	0.0	263	5	7.5	19.01	1.50
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen	1.5	1	1.50	5	5	1.00	4.5	4	1.13	277	10	11	36.10	1.10
Ysgol Llanhari	2.5	2	1.25	1	1	1.00	1.5	2	0.75	164	5	5	30.49	1.00
Ysgol Nantgwyn	0.0	0	0.00	0.0	0	0.00	2	1	2.00	389	1	2	2.57	2.00
Total	182	128	1.42	107	79	1.35	201	162	1.24	19082	369	490	19.34	1.33

* Represents schools that have a Learning Support Class for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Comparison Information of Fixed Term Exclusions 2022/23 – All Through Schools – Whole school Data

School	2022/23													
	Autumn			Spring			Summer			2022 PLASC NOR				
	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	NOR	Number of Incidents	Total Duration	Incidents per 1000	Average Length (Days)
Porth Community School	54.5	32	1.70	51.5	42	1.23	79.5	48	1.66	900	122	185.5	135.56	1.52
Tonyrefail Community School	134	72	1.86	93	61	1.52	39.5	33	1.20	1623	166	266.5	102.28	1.61
Ysgol Garth Olwg	74	61	1.21	139.5	98	1.42	88	69	1.28	1220	228	301.5	186.89	1.32
Ysgol Llanhari	9.5	9	1.06	25	19	1.32	10	11	0.91	694	39	44.5	56.20	1.14
Ysgol Nantgwyn	61	12	5.08	5	3	1.67	13.5	10	1.35	1070	25	79.5	23.36	3.18
Total	333	186	1.79	314	223	1.41	230.5	171	1.35	5507	580	877.5	105.32	1.51

* Represents schools that have a Learning Support Class for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Comparison Information of Fixed Term Exclusions 2022/23 – Secondary Phase

Comparison Information of Fixed Term Exclusions 2022/23 -Secondary Phase

	2022/23													
	Autumn			Spring			Summer			2022 PLASC NOR				
	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	NOR	Incidents	Total Duration	Incidents per 1000	Average Days Length
Aberdare Community School	32.5	18.00	1.81	72	33.00	2.18	131.5	42.00	3.13	1318	93	236	70.56	2.54
Bryncelynog Comprehensive School	116.5	59.00	1.97	108	53.00	2.04	58	29.00	2.00	1319	141	282.5	106.90	2.00
Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School	289	118.00	2.45	242	79.00	3.06	210	78.00	2.69	1007	275	741	273.09	2.69
Ferndale Community School	155	71.00	2.18	92	53.00	1.74	147.5	71.00	2.08	595	195	394.5	327.73	2.02
Hawthorn High School	111	58.00	1.91	96.5	60.00	1.61	57	35.00	1.63	697	153	264.5	219.51	1.73
Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	129	83.00	1.55	227	129.00	1.76	185	148.00	1.25	1023	360	541	351.91	1.50
Pontypridd High School	146.5	69.00	2.12	35	28.00	1.25	68.5	47.00	1.46	849	144	250	169.61	1.74
Porth Community School	52.5	31.00	1.69	51.5	42.00	1.23	79	47.00	1.68	674	120	183	178.04	1.53

St John Baptist C in W High School	65.5	34.00	1.93	75	44.00	1.70	39	27.00	1.44	964	105	179.5	108.92	1.71
Tonyrefail Community School	132	71.00	1.86	92	60.00	1.53	39.5	33.00	1.20	940	164	263.5	174.47	1.61
Treorchy Comprehensive School	46	13.00	3.54	35	8.00	4.38	35	11.00	3.18	1559	32	116	20.53	3.63
Y Pant Comprehensive School	108.5	35.00	3.10	112.5	43.00	2.62	94.5	46.00	2.05	1434	124	315.5	86.47	2.54
Ysgol Garth Olwg	74	61.00	1.21	139.5	98.00	1.42	85	68.00	1.25	707	227	298.5	321.07	1.31
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	135	62.00	2.18	148	54.00	2.74	209.5	62.00	3.38	714	178	492.5	249.30	2.77
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	25	12.00	2.08	26	13.00	2.00	40	18.00	2.22	1078	43	91	39.89	2.12
Ysgol Llanhari	7	7.00	1.00	24	18.00	1.33	8.5	9.00	0.94	451	34	39.5	75.39	1.16
Ysgol Nantgwyn	61	12.00	5.08	5	3.00	1.67	11.5	9.00	1.28	625	24	77.5	38.40	3.23
Total	1686	814.00	2.07	1581	818.00	1.93	1499	780.00	1.92	14496	2412	4766	166.39	1.98

Comparison Information of Fixed Term Exclusions 2022/23 – Sixth Form in Secondary Schools

School	2022/23													
	Autumn			Spring			Summer			2022 PLASC NOR				
	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	NOR	Incidents	Total Duration	Incidents per 1000	Average Length (Days)
Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School	4	4	1.00	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	185	4	4	21.62	1.00
Tonyrefail Community School	2	1	2.00	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	357	1	2	2.80	2.00
Ysgol Garth Olwg	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	3	1	3.00	132	1	3	7.58	3.00
Total	6	5	1.20	0	0	0.00	3	1	3.00	2367	6	9	2.53	1.50

Comparison Information of Fixed Term Exclusions 2022/23 – Special Schools/PRU

School	2022/23													
	Autumn			Spring			Summer			2022 PLASC NOR				
	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	Actual Duration	Number of Incidents	Average Length (Days)	NOR	Incidents	Total Duration	Incidents per 1000	Average Length (Days)
Maesgwyn Special School	20	9	2.22	10	9	1.11	18	11	1.64	125	29	48	232.00	1.66
Tai Education Centre	0	0	0.00	2	1	2.00	0	0	0.00	39	1	2	25.64	2.00
Ty Gwyn Education Centre	78.5	60	1.31	100.5	41	2.45	20	7	2.86	33	108	199	3,272.73	1.84
Ysgol Hen Felin	1	1	1.00	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	194	1	1	5.15	1.00
Ysgol Ty Coch	0	0	0.00	0	0	0	1	1	1.00	192	1	1	5.21	1.00
Total	99.5	70	1.42	112.5	51	2.21	39	19	2.05	693	140	251	202.02	1.79

Case study: Extract from Cwmclydach Primary School Assessment Report

This report cannot reflect the hard work that goes on at the school each and every day. A very comprehensive and highly creative evidence file and related documents have been provided as part of the assessment process. They created a website to showcase their evidence which exemplified the standards. This includes attendance and exclusion data and Case Studies for Partnership, Community and The Boxall Profile along with a clear understanding of the 6 Principles of nurture, evidenced in the application and Principles into Practice report. It is reflective of their commitment and determination to provide fun, engaging experiences that enable their pupils to enjoy learning and achieve their potential and develop resilience to respond to a diverse and ever-changing society.

It is very clear that there is a whole school approach to nurture at Cwmclydach Primary School. The NNSP is strongly led by Alanco, Jan Edwards and head teacher Linsey Owens. There is a longstanding nurturing ethos at Cwmclydach School. The NNSP has helped formalise nurture and provide a common language for staff and children.

“We were doing so much already but it signposted us to areas we could develop such as the Boxall and the classroom environments.”

“It has given the children a common language –e.g. safe space, quiet room, sensory room, happy place, comfort zone and regulate my emotions.”

Moreover, it has been credited with the improvements of wellbeing in staff and pupils alike.

“There have been significant improvements in the wellbeing of both staff and pupils. This is demonstrated through the dramatic reduction in pupil incidents. It is also reflected in the staff comments on assessment day.”

“We feel supported as a staff team, by each other and by SLT – there is equity of staff.”

"We are looked after and nurtured by each other".

There is no doubt Jan has created a nurturing legacy which has become woven into the fabric and ethos of the school.

Linsey's commitment and vision for the school remains clear and unwavering. Her desire to create a school that is transparent and nurturing is achieved through high levels of communication with all stakeholders. It is inspiring and actually tangible. It is reflected in the comments of her staff. "There is now a high level of communication between us all. We even have a staff calendar so we all know exactly what is going on."

Senior Leader's encourage, believe, support, nurture and empower their staff within a nurturing, highly communicative approach and as a result it was clear it permeates every aspect of school and community life. One parent said, "Communication is the highest it's ever been."

It was a privilege to assess this very nurturing school who actively seek to nurture and enrich the lives of the children in their care on a daily basis.

Thank you Cwmclydach Primary School for a fabulous assessment visit and I wish you every success in the future.

Examples of excellent practice include:

Parental work – this is excellent and interviews showed obvious impact for the pupils and their families. Linsey explained "Building relationships with our parents is a priority for us."

Parents explained "I feel listened to and welcome. My child is made to feel important."

"It is home from home, everybody is welcoming. Staff go above and beyond. The school is a huge part of our life, they are like our extended family."

"The school is accommodating to my son's needs, there is no judgement".

"There is a real warmth to the school, you have a lovely feeling from the minute you enter. The reception staff are very welcoming."

Community links are also a real strength, particularly through the work done with local schools. The school hosts cluster meetings bringing together other educationalists to cement relationships.

The school is at the heart of the community. It has forged very strong community links and successfully maintained this despite a global pandemic. Examples include: Lakeside, the church, the community centre and sporting marvels to name but a few. Furthermore, community members are frequent visitors within the school to enrich the experiences of the pupils. A parent explained "The school is the beating heart of the community."

The pupils expressed their thoughts, "We love it when people come into our school to talk to us, they motivate us."

See link for video of assessment process. <https://sites.google.com/hwbcymru.net/cwmclydach-primary-school/home>

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022-23

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14th DECEMBER 2023

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA

Author(s): Daniel Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on school attendance data across the local authority and the actions of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and wider Education and Inclusion Services to increase attendance levels.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained within the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Prior to the pandemic, annual figures were brought before the committee ordinarily during Spring Term, however there were no reports that focused solely on this area between February 2020 and March 2023. The report brought in March 2023 focused on the need, as we move beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, to increase the focus on ensuring learners attend school when they can.
- 3.2 The Welsh Government revoked the School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011 (in force from 7th August 2020). As a result, there has been no statutory requirement for schools to set targets for future years or report on those previously set for 2019 to 2020 onwards. This arrangement continues for 2023 to 2024 although schools have been asked to set targets on a non-statutory basis. Annual statutory data collections were also halted during the pandemic but were reintroduced in the 2022/23 academic year.

4. AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL PHASE ATTENDANCE

4.1 The tables below show the overall school attendance rates broken down by phase for the last four academic years. These figures are for statutory school age only across mainstream and special schools (pupil referral units are not included). Primary data is full academic year and secondary data is shown up to the end of Summer 1 in line with Welsh Government data collection dates even though this did not take place in all of these years as outlined in 3.2.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Primary Phase Attendance								
Academic Year	All Pupils	Non FSM	FSM	EAL	SEN	Persistent Absence	Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller	Service Family
2019/20	93.0%	94.0%	90.1%	92.2%	90.1%	5.4%	86.8%	93.7%
2020/21	91.1%	93.1%	86.4%	92.1%	87.6%	11.7%	61.8%	93.3%
2021/22	89.8%	91.2%	85.4%	91.1%	85.6%	10.8%	69.0%	92.0%
2022/23	91.0%	92.3%	86.8%	91.2%	86.6%	9.3%	75.7%	92.8%

Rhondda Cynon Taf Secondary Phase Attendance								
Academic Year	All Pupils	Non FSM	FSM	EAL	SEN	Persistent Absence	Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller	Service Family
2019/20	92.1%	93.4%	88.0%	95.1%	88.0%	7.9%	75.2%	95.3%
2020/21	85.5%	88.6%	76.7%	91.7%	81.8%	23.2%	53.3%	89.9%
2021/22	85.2%	87.6%	76.8%	91.5%	81.4%	22.3%	69.9%	88.1%
2022/23	85.8%	88.3%	77.0%	91.7%	82.4%	21.0%	67.1%	88.2%

Table 1. All data presented above is reflective of PLASC data taken during January of the academic year. Persistent Absence is the % of all learners who have below 80% attendance. SEN attendance does not currently include ALN.

4.2 As shown in the tables above, we can see the significant impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on attendance levels across RCT with a drop in primary attendance of 3.2 percentage points at primary phase between 2019/20 and 2021/22 and a 6.9 percentage point drop at secondary phase across the same timeframe. We have however seen encouraging signs at primary schools last year, with a 1.2 percentage point increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23 although still down 2 percentage points when compared to 2019/20; secondary schools with a 0.6 percentage point increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23 although still significantly below 2019/20 levels.

4.3 However, Table 1 must be taken into a wider context around attendance coding at this time. As a result of the pandemic, for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 there were additional temporary attendance codes introduced by Welsh Government. These were for confirmed Covid cases and for those isolating/accessing remote

learning. The confirmed case code was statistically an authorised absence and mapped back to illness coding. However, the code for isolation/remote learning was statistically a 'not required to attend' mark and therefore does not appear in attendance data collection figures presented above. Similarly, the existing Y code usually reserved for partial or full closures of schools was also utilised during these years when cohorts were forced to isolate and again, these are also 'not required to attend' marks and do not appear in attendance data percentages as a result. Physical absence for these academic years is therefore higher than percentage figures alone would suggest which again provides some reassurance in the rising attendance marks in 2022/23 which is from a lower benchmark than the percentage figures alone may show.

- 4.4 From the data presented above, we can see that improvements have been made across all but one group of learners in 2022/23 compared to the previous academic year. However, there remains considerable challenge particularly at secondary phase and for eligible Free School Meal learners. Secondary phase attendance was 1.7% below the Welsh average of 87.5% in 2022/23 (gap was 1.0% in 2018/19), 21st position across Wales and therefore is a central focus for continued improvement.

RCT and Welsh Government Comparisons

(mainstream secondary only)

Secondary	RCT	Welsh Average	Difference
Overall Attendance	85.8%	87.5%	-1.7%
FSM	76.8%	79.4%	-2.6%
Non-FSM	88.3%	89.8%	-1.5%
FSM Gap	11.5%	10.4%	+1.1%

- 4.5 Although we do not yet have primary figures from Welsh Government, we can analyse some overall data from the regular Welsh Government data releases. The last release of the 2022/23 academic year (available here: [Attendance of pupils in maintained schools: 5 September 2022 to 24 July 2023 | GOV.WALES](#)) suggests the All Wales attendance rate is lowest at year 11 which is reflected in RCT, and the gap between learners aged 5-15 who are eligible for Free School Meals and those who are not was 7.3%. Our internal data suggests the gap in RCT was slightly wider at 7.7%.
- 4.6 Welsh Government continues to provide data on attendance at regular intervals although these are not classed as National Statistics or verified data. The latest figures at time of writing cover the current academic year and are available here [Attendance of pupils in maintained schools: 4 September to 10 November 2023 |](#)

[GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales). This data shows that currently RCT attendance for learners aged 5 - 15 is 90.8% (our own data for the same period last year shows attendance at 90.6%) which is 0.5 percentage points behind the Welsh average of 91.3%. This would place RCT as the 17th highest local authority attendance.

- 4.7 The table below shows the overall pupil referral unit (primary and secondary) attendance rate in RCT over the last three years; these figures include the attendance of education other than at school learners (EOTAS), including those on home, group and individual tuition, who are some of the most vulnerable and hard to engage learners in RCT. As this includes secondary pupil data, the parameters used are the same as secondary attendance in table 1 and include up to the end of Summer Term 1.

Academic Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
% Attendance RCT	68.8%	65.9%	69.0%	63.5%

Table 2. PRU Attendance across the last 4 academic years

- 4.8 PRU attendance has been separated from the data presented in Table 1 as Welsh Government has historically not held a statutory requirement for PRU attendance to be submitted. Across similar lines to mainstream and special school attendance, PRU and EOTAS attendance is stronger at primary phase than secondary phase (88.0% and 53.4% respectively in 2022/23) but the overall figure remains a concern particularly for some of our learners accessing EOTAS provision who can be heavily disengaged.

5. ATTENDANCE AND WELLBEING SERVICE

- 5.1 The local authority has a statutory legal duty to ensure that every child of compulsory school age is getting the education required by law, either at home or at school. In RCT this statutory legal duty is devolved to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service who act as the Council's enforcement agency in ensuring that parents/carers and schools carry out their legal responsibilities as set out in the following legislation:
- Education Act 1996;
 - Children Act 1989;
 - Crime and Disorder Act 1998;
 - Registration Regulations, 2010;
 - Education and Inspections Act 2006;
 - Children and Young Person's Act 1963;
 - Children (Performance) Regulations 2015.
- 5.2 The RCT Attendance and Wellbeing Service undertake the following statutory duties on behalf of the Council:

- 5.2.1 Prosecution for non-school attendance** - Where there is sufficient evidence that parents are not fulfilling their legal duty to ensure regular school attendance (section 7 of the Education Act 1996) court proceedings may be instituted under Section 444 (1) and/or (1a) of the Education Act 1996.

At the start of the pandemic, all prosecution cases were withdrawn but these were reintroduced during the 2021/22 academic year. This remains a 'last resort' option and will only be considered if a parent/carer does not effectively engage with the process to secure the learner's attendance. In the 2022/23 academic year 121 prosecutions were pursued (120 successfully). 91 of these formed part of the Single Justice Procedure as a result of escalation following non-payment of a fixed penalty notice (FPN). The remaining 30 were progressed following attendance referrals to the service. In total, 971 monitoring period were set in relation to FPNs for non-attendance. Of these 466 were not issued after the warning due to improved attendance. A further 161 were also not issued for other reasons. 207 FPN's were issued and paid.

- 5.2.2 Formal Register Inspections** – Duty to ensure clear and efficient registration practices are in place in all schools (the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010).

The service proactively inspects each school's register every term via a formal Registration Compliance Check process (345 per annum). These may result in action plans for schools to improve their practices, which are reviewed by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service's management team on a regular basis. If necessary, they will be fed into the School Improvement process. Escalation processes are in place for any school who continually perform poorly in this area.

- 5.2.3 Education provision in place for vulnerable children** – Duty to ensure the local authority are responsible for Gypsy Traveller children receive suitable education (section 437 of the Education Act 1996).

There are currently 12 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people that have declared their ethnicity status to the local authority residing in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This number of pupils has remained consistent over recent years but may be underreported as we rely on notification from the family during school admission phases.

- 5.2.4 Children Missing Education** – Duty to establish the identities of children not receiving suitable education by identifying, investigating, locating and tracking children (section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).

There were 120 'Children Missing Education' referrals made to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service during 2022/23 compared to 104 in 2021/22. 111 children were located with 9 ongoing cases. Where the children resided in RCT, support was given to enrol the child into an appropriate education setting.

- 5.2.5 **Issuing entertainment licences and work permits** - Risk assess employers to protect children from being exploited and harmed and ensure their health and safety (Children and Young Person's Act 1963; Children (Performance) Regulations 2015).

During 2022/23, the Attendance and Wellbeing Service issued 201 child performance licences (up from 120 in 2021/22) and 5 work permits for child of statutory school age (up from 4 in 2021/22). In addition, 48 chaperones have been licensed to accompany and support children and young people whilst performing (up from 29 in 2021/22).

- 5.2.6 **Truancy** – Arrangement and co-ordination of formal truancy operations with Police and return them to school when truanting (section 16 Crime and Disorder Act, 1998).

Truancy operations did not place throughout the pandemic but restarted in targeted areas in the 2022/23 academic year in line with the Attendance Strategy.

- 5.3 The Attendance and Wellbeing Service provides support to schools, pupils and their families to address any difficulties that are affecting regular attendance at school. They work in partnership with a range of support services and agencies to provide an essential link between home and school to ensure that pupils benefit fully from the educational opportunities available to them.

- 5.4 During the academic year 2022/23 the Council's Attendance and Wellbeing Service performance includes the following:

- 978 Education Appraisals for families in receipt of support from the Resilient Families Service (942 in 2021/22).
- 773 new open case referrals received (841 in 2021/22).
- 7,135 Wellbeing Response Visits undertaken (6,802 in 2021/22) for 3,826 learners. 3,690 visits (51.7%) resulted in improved attendance when comparing the 40 days prior to visit, and 40 days afterwards.
- Prosecuted 30 parents for non-attendance of their children following open case work (28 in 2021/22).
- 18 schools received additional support for attendance via Progress Meetings, Team Around the School or single-agency response. 11 of the 18 (61.1%) have improved their attendance when comparing Autumn Term 1.

- 5.5 An attendance event for Headteachers and Attendance Leads was held in Hawthorn Leisure Centre in July 2023 with over 80 school representatives. The session covered LA expectations, Estyn processes and good practice sharing from RCT and out-of-county schools. A maintained focus on attendance practices and processes will continue in the 2023/24 academic year and beyond.
- 5.6 Additional support has also been provided to schools since early 2020 in the form of Family Engagement Officers. Funding has been provided via RCT Cabinet, and later through Welsh Government, with match-funding in 29 schools. These schools were identified through a combination of attendance and deprivation data in order to support some of the most vulnerable learners across RCT. Termly monitoring reports are submitted from each of these schools. More information on Family Engagement Officers was presented to Members as part of the Community Focused School and Child Poverty report on 16th October 2023.
- 5.7 Additional funding was received from Welsh Government for the 2022/23 financial year for Education Welfare services. RCT has utilised this funding to employ three additional temporary Attendance and Wellbeing Officers, a Targeted Support Officer, and Educational Psychology support for the service for the most difficult and entrenched cases and/or those with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). This will be coupled with a pilot this academic year for multi-agency EBSA forums in secondary schools to discuss learners facing these difficulties and the support that can offered by school and partners.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

- 6.1 Additional attendance guidance was published by Welsh Government in October 2023 in the form of the 'Belonging, Engaging and Participating' guidance document which can be found here: gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-10/improving-school-attendance-guidance_0.pdf
- 6.2 This guidance document will have implications for future reports to Scrutiny committee as well as implications for comparative data via the school half termly reports. Most notably the definition of persistent absence previously used in Wales, and used in this report in table 1, covered learners with absence over 20% (below 80% attendance). The latest guidance revises this figure to over 10% absence (below 90% attendance) and brings the Welsh definition of persistent absence in line with England.
- 6.3 The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing will also form part of the Welsh Government national attendance taskforce to look at the strategic

direction and priorities for driving further improvement in attendance and re-engaging learners.

- 6.4 On release of the guidance document outlined in 6.1, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language also outlined activity underway to review exclusions guidance, the development of referred and commissioning guidance for EOTAS provision and to develop school behaviour guidance. We hope this documentation will also strengthen our approaches moving forward to enhance our support to learners across RCT.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Welsh Language implications as a result of the recommendations of this report

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 There has been no consultation to inform this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set above

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The Attendance Strategy is aimed at meeting the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan for People by 'ensuring People are independent, healthy and successful' through improving services for children and young people as well as their families. It will also meet the Prosperity target by ensuring we have good schools with improved attendance, so all children have access to a great education.

- 11.2 The processes and interventions directed by AWS meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by fostering effective school and community relations via Cluster based officers to create a Wales of cohesive communities while improving the prosperity and resilience of our children, young people and families.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 Improving school attendance remains a priority for the local authority and its schools and formed part of one of the recommendations by Estyn following this year's LA inspection. Whilst the pandemic has had a considerable impact on attendance, there are some improvements in the 2022/23 academic year, and we are hopeful the Strategy and focus on attendance will support continued improvement in the coming years.
- 12.2 Excellent school attendance is key to raising educational outcomes. In addition, schools play a pivotal role in safeguarding children and young people ensuring their positive social and emotional wellbeing, which would not be possible without their engagement in education. We will continue to liaise with all stakeholders to ensure that attendance remains a priority at local, regional, and national level. We will also continue to implement our Attendance Strategy to drive forward our ambitions to increase attendance via close working relationships with our schools and school communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
EDUCATION & INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14TH DECEMBER 2023
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES