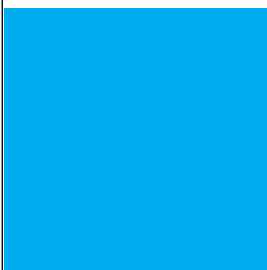
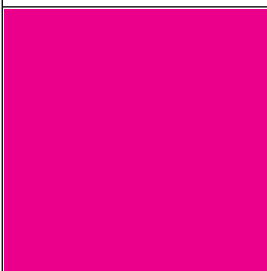


# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS



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

The Consultation Document 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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## Introduction

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 Governments School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018). Section 2.1 of the School Organisation Code 2018 refers to elements of school organisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- The closing of a maintained school.

### Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of:
  - Rhigos Primary School.
  - Hirwaun Primary School.
- 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.

## What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 and will be completed at 17:00 on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a Consultation Report presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet during December 2023. This Consultation Report will be available for all persons to view on RCTCBC's website and copies can be obtained on request from the address detailed on page 4.

RCTCBC's Cabinet will consider the Consultation Report and decide, based on the feedback, whether to proceed with the proposal, amend the proposal or not proceed with the proposal. If RCTCBC's Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of the proposal.

If RCTCBC's Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 requires that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal can do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections **must** be made in writing or by email, and sent to RCTCBC within 28 days of the date on which the Statutory Notice was published.

RCTCBC's Cabinet will consider the outcome of the Statutory Notice at the next available Cabinet meeting and determine the proposal.

If there are objections, RCTCBC's Director of Education and Inclusion Services will publish an Objection Report providing a summary of the objections and the response to them within seven days of the day of the determination of the proposal. This Objection Report will also be available for all persons to view on RCTCBC's website and copies can be obtained on request from the address detailed on page TBC.

If RCTCBC's Cabinet approve the proposal, it will be implemented in accordance with the date stated in the Statutory Notice or any subsequently modified date.

## What do you have to consider?

The remainder of this Consultation Document sets out the rationale for the proposal. We would like you to consider the information and to hear your views as to whether you support the proposal.

## How do you make your views known?

Face to face meetings will be arranged with School Councils, Governing Bodies and staff as set out in the table that follows:

School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
<b>School Council</b>			
Rhigos Primary School	School Council	TBC	Rhigos Primary School
Hirwaun Primary School	School Council	TBC	Hirwaun Primary School

Governing Body and Staff					
Rhigos Primary School	Primary	Governing Body and Staff	TBC	Rhigos Primary School	Primary
Hirwaun Primary School	Primary	Governing Body and Staff	TBC	Hirwaun Primary School	Primary

A Consultation Response Form is attached on page TBC. The Consultation Response Form will also be available in the meetings detailed in the previous table and on RCTCBC's website on the 'Get Involved' page.

The Consultation Response Form enables consultees to indicate if they wish to be notified of the publication of the Consultation Report, once presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet.

Consultees are also welcomed to put their views, comments, and any questions in writing to:

Director of Education and Inclusion Services 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Ty Trevithick Abercynon CF45 4UQ	<b>OR</b>	<a href="mailto:schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk">schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
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**All correspondence should be received no later than 17:00 on TBC November 2023.**

Please note that responses to the consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal unless expressly requested. Objections can only be forwarded following the publication of the Statutory Notice.

### **The views of children and young people**

RCTCBC has acknowledged that the voice of children and young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management, and improvement of their educational experience.

Children and young people have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and considered in accordance with their age and maturity. As such, RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team will ensure that suitable arrangements are made to involve children and young people as active participants throughout this consultation process, and if a decision is made to progress the proposal, throughout the implementation process.

RCTCBC will consult with the children and young people who attend:

- Rhigos Primary School.
- Hirwaun Primary School.

This will be done by producing a children and young people's version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response Form. As detailed on page 3, RCTCBC will hold a meeting with the School Councils of:

- Rhigos Primary School.
- Hirwaun Primary School.

To discuss the proposal and guide the School Council through the children and young people's version of the Consultation Response Form. These consultation sessions will have the support of school-based specialist staff to support pupils and assist with the engagement process. Feedback from these meetings will be collated and summarised, and a Consultation Report will be presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet for consideration once the consultation period has ended.

### **Community, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments**

As set out in the Welsh Governments School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), it is a requirement to publish Community, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments. These have been produced and are appendices to this Consultation Document and are also available on RCTCBC's website:

- Appendix A – Community Impact Assessment.
- Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment.
- Appendix C – Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

## Section One – Background to the Proposal

### Where we are now...Rhigos Primary School

Rhigos Primary School is a 3 to 11 English medium primary school located at Heol-y-Graig, Rhigos with a capacity of 65 pupil places. The school site includes the original school building, which is approximately 115 years old, two brick extensions that were added in the 1960's which accommodate two toilet blocks and a steel framed, brick built hall that was added in the 1980's. There is also a 1950's prefabricated metal classroom block which houses the early years' pupils at the school. This building has profiled metal walls and a felt low-pitched roof, this building has single-glazed steel windows and timber doors which has come to the end of it's useful life. The school is in an enclosed area, surrounded by boundaries consisting of natural vegetation, fencing and brick walls.

According to the condition survey of the school carried out by RCTCBC in 2019, Rhigos Primary School is graded C for condition and C for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building, respectively. The buildings are in poor condition with refurbishment work required to the walls, roof, doors and windows. Mechanical systems also need to be upgraded to comply with current building standards.

The backlog maintenance figure for the school is circa £184,790. This figure represents the total cost of all maintenance work identified as being required at the school. It does not include costs of further improvements to enable the school to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century schools' standards to enable the school to deliver the new curriculum for Wales or to become energy efficient. The condition survey also notes the presence of asbestos within the fabric of the building which is currently being managed in compliance with the Asbestos Regulations. The asbestos rating is 'A' which is classed as low level and is managed and monitored appropriately.

The site itself and the school building does not fully comply with the Equality Act 2010. The low-level perimeter fence bordering the play area at the front of the school site is insufficient to stop individuals accessing the school grounds out of school hours. The location of the school, on a main road, makes drop off and pick up times challenging, with inadequate parking and turning arrangements available for parents / carers.

Rhigos Primary School currently has just three classes, all of which are made up of mixed year groups.



*External view of Rhigos Primary School.*



*External view of the metal prefabricated building*





*External view of the hall and canteen building*

The table that follows outlines the pupil numbers at Rhigos Primary School over the previous five academic years. They were obtained from the statutory Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. The number of nursery age pupils for each academic year is shown separately, as required by the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018).

<b>Pupil Numbers at Rhigos Primary School Over the Previous Five Academic Years (PLASC)</b>					
<b>Pupils</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>				
	<b>2018 / 2019</b>	<b>2019 / 2020</b>	<b>2020 / 2021</b>	<b>2021 / 2022</b>	<b>2022 / 2023</b>
<b>Statutory School Aged Pupils</b>	56	59	63	59	58
<b>Nursery Aged Pupils</b>	12	15	8	8	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>62</b>

The data demonstrates the pupil numbers over the last few years at Rhigos Primary have steadily reduced. To note, there are currently 7 statutory aged pupils attending the school that are out of catchment.

The table that follows outlines the projected pupil numbers at Rhigos Primary School over the future five academic years. They are calculated in accordance with the guidance issued by the Welsh Government and are based on live birth data for the area.

<b>Projected Pupil Numbers at Rhigos Primary School Over the Future Five Academic Years</b>									
<b>Pupils</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>						<b>Surplus Capacity in 2027 / 2028</b>	
		<b>2022 / 2023 (Actual)</b>	<b>2023 / 2024</b>	<b>2024 / 2025</b>	<b>2025 / 2026</b>	<b>2026 / 2027</b>	<b>2027 / 2028</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Statutory School Aged Pupils</b>	65	58	54	52	46	42	37	28	43.1
<b>Nursery Aged Pupils</b>	9	4	6	6	5	6	6	3	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>41.9</b>

The data demonstrates that the number of pupils on roll at the school will decrease significantly over the next 5 years. Projections indicate that there will only be 37 pupils, of statutory school age, in Rhigos Primary in 2027.

### **Where we are now...Hirwaun Primary School**

Hirwaun Primary School is a 3 to 11 English medium primary school located at Glannant Street, Hirwaun with a pupil capacity of 394. The school has recently received investment of over £9million as part of the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. The build followed the successful consultation on the 2019 proposal to construct a new English medium 3 to 11 primary school at Hirwaun Primary School, accommodating both pupils attending Hirwaun Primary and the English medium pupils from Penderyn Primary School. Successfully delivering this proposal has allowed Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn to become a fully Welsh medium 3 to 11 primary school. The investment at Hirwaun Primary School, delivered a brand new primary school building and extensive external areas, including new play areas, an outdoor classroom and sporting facilities. There is a two-court Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) as well as cycle storage, and secure fencing around the perimeter of the site to ensure the safety of all pupils.

As this is a new school, Hirwaun Primary School is graded A for condition and A for suitability. The building has been built to meet the required standards and regulations, allowing pupils of Hirwaun Primary School to benefit from a learning environment fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Hirwaun Primary School also has facilities that are regularly used by the local community ensuring that others are benefitting from the new resources available.

The site and the school building is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. A 'pick-up, drop-off' area for parents / carers has been installed as part of the new build to help with traffic management issues, as well as a separate car park which is available for parents / carers to use. There is also a dedicated on-site drop-off/pick-up area for home to school transport, which currently caters for the pupils attending from Penderyn.



*External view of Hirwaun Primary School.*

The table that follows outlines the pupil numbers at Hirwaun Primary School over the previous five academic years.

<b>Pupil Numbers at Hirwaun Primary School Over the Previous Five Academic Years (PLASC)</b>					
<b>Pupils</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>				
	<b>2018 / 2019</b>	<b>2019 / 2020</b>	<b>2020 / 2021</b>	<b>2021 / 2022</b>	<b>2022 / 2023</b>
<b>Statutory School Aged Pupils</b>	216	211	217	237	233
<b>Nursery Aged Pupils</b>	42	37	47	35	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>272</b>

The data above reflects the increase in the numbers of pupils on roll in 2021 as a result of the English medium pupils from Penderyn Primary School moving to Hirwaun as detailed above.

The table that follows outlines the projected pupil numbers at Hirwaun Primary School over the future five academic years. They are calculated in accordance with the guidance issued by the Welsh Government and are based on live birth data for the area.

Projected Pupil Numbers at Hirwaun Primary School Over the Future Five Academic Years									
Pupils	Capacity	Academic Year						Surplus Capacity in	
		2022 / 2023 (Actual)	2023 / 2024	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026	2026 / 2027	2027 / 2028	Number	%
Statutory School Aged Pupils	391	233	231	232	229	219	228	163	41.6
Nursery Aged Pupils	56	39	41	38	36	38	36	20	35.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>40.6</b>

The data demonstrates that over the next 5 years pupil numbers are projected to remain largely stagnant.

### What is the basis for the proposal?

#### Surplus Capacity

Reducing surplus places is one of a number of key priorities for RCTCBC's Education and Inclusion Services, as we focus on becoming a more sustainable and economically viable service area. 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 59 pupils in 2022 to a projected 37 pupils in 2027. By the 2027 academic year Rhigos Primary School will have an estimated statutory age surplus capacity of 43.1%. The projected pupil numbers at Hirwaun Primary School over the next five academic years for statutory school aged pupils is consistent year on year, from 233 pupils in 2022 to a projected 228 pupils in 2027. By the 2027 academic year, Hirwaun Primary School will have an estimated statutory age surplus capacity of 41.6%.

The table that follows outlines the combined projected pupil numbers at Hirwaun Primary School and Rhigos Primary School over the future five academic years. They are calculated in accordance with the guidance issued by the Welsh Government.

Combined Projected Pupil Numbers at Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School Over the Future Five Academic Years									
Pupils	Capacity (Hirwaun Primary School)	Academic Year						Surplus Capacity in	
		2022 / 2023 (Actual)	2023 / 2024	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026	2026 / 2027	2027 / 2028	Number	%
Statutory School Aged Pupils	391	292	285	284	275	261	265	126	32.2

<b>Nursery Aged Pupils</b>	56	44	47	44	41	44	42	14	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>31.3%</b>

The data demonstrates that there is capacity at Hirwaun Primary School for all current and future pupils of Rhigos Primary School to attend, continuing to meet the local demand for English medium primary education.

### **Site Constraints**

The existing school buildings at Rhigos Primary School require significant repairs and are no longer fit-for-purpose, with a backlog maintenance figure of circa £184,790. The age and construction of the buildings prevent Rhigos Primary School from receiving any significant upgrades which would allow it to be deemed as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools' provision. We acknowledge that teachers at Rhigos are providing pupils with a great education despite the building challenges however neither the building nor the wider site is conducive to assisting the delivery of the new curriculum for Wales.

The site and buildings are largely inaccessible and as such are not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

It is the view of RCTCBC, that moving pupils of Rhigos Primary School to a purpose-built 21<sup>st</sup> century school building could help them benefit from a learning environment which nurtures and supports pupils, while enabling them to benefit from being taught in larger year groups of pupils of the same age.

RCTCBC believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard educational standards for the future and make the most of significant investment in permanent and fit-for-purpose facilities. The investment at Hirwaun Primary School provides a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities including improved Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provision, creative outdoor play areas and access to community facilities. Hirwaun Primary School focuses on creating a flexible environment that fosters pupils' personal growth in communication, collaboration, creativity, and leadership skills.

### **Class Sizes**

Rhigos Primary School has only three classes that are vertically streamed, and currently there are three year groups being taught in two of the three classes. Having to organise classes in this way creates significant challenges for teaching and learning, and more information on this is included within the 'Educational Case for Change' section on page 24. As such, RCTCBC considers that providing education for the pupils currently attending Rhigos Primary School in a larger, new, purpose built 21<sup>st</sup> Century English medium primary school at Hirwaun, amongst other benefits, would offer:

- Greater flexibility and opportunity for pupils within a modern, more enhanced educational environment in which they can learn and grow;
- Potential for financial savings in terms of services which accrue within a larger school which can be reinvested for the benefit of all pupils;

- More professional and progression opportunities for the teaching and support staff which are provided by a larger school;
- Less demand on staff as responsibilities for developing the Areas of Learning and Experience as part of the Curriculum for Wales, and ALN statutory obligations, will be shared;
- More opportunities for extra-curricular activities;
- Pupils being taught, in the main, with their year group. All classes in Rhigos Primary School are currently mixed year groups, with some classes accommodating pupils over 3-year groups; and,
- Greater opportunities for learners to socialise and interact with larger number of their own year group peers.

### **Finance**

All schools are allocated funding based on the number of pupils they have on roll, as a result small schools have far less financial flexibility. As Rhigos Primary is a small school, it will also face additional pressures as they are not able to benefit from the economies in scale that larger schools can e.g. a greater number of teachers to share the wide range of roles required i.e. ALNCO, curriculum leads, attendance and behaviour leads, and safeguarding.

At the end of the 22/23 financial year the outturn budget set by the respective Governors at both schools means that Rhigos Primary School will have a balance of £21,013 and Hirwaun Primary School £80,120.

Schools are facing increased pressure from pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff which are significantly in excess of the estimated budget uplift to be provided to Local Government, as well as increased energy costs and other inflationary financial challenges. As a result, for the financial year 24/25, if no action is taken, it is estimated that Rhigos will end 24/25 with a deficit of £78,855 and Hirwaun with a deficit of £50,422.

However, if the proposals are progressed 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 a positive impact upon the running costs of the school as a whole, as well as delivering benefits in terms of sustainability and reducing carbon emissions.

### **What alternative options have been considered?**

Given the limitations of the site of Rhigos Primary School, and the challenging topography of the catchment area, the number of alternative options available for consideration were limited. In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 (011/2018), alternative options were identified and consciously considered. Some of the benefits and disadvantages of each of the discounted options are listed in the table that follows.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Retain the status quo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Welsh Government Sustainable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspects of the Rhigos Primary School buildings</li> </ul>

Option	Benefit	Disadvantages
	<p>Communities for Learning investment required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No RCTCBC investment required.</li> <li>• No disruption to the pupils, parents / carers and staff.</li> <li>• No impact on home to school transport.</li> </ul>	<p>have reached the end of their usable life and are now beyond economic repair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhigos Primary School's buildings are not of a 21<sup>st</sup> century schools standard. As such, delivering the New Curriculum for Wales would be a challenge.</li> <li>• Rhigos Primary School would continue to not be fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</li> <li>• The backlog maintenance figure of circa £184,790 at Rhigos Primary School would remain.</li> <li>• Parking issues at Rhigos Primary School would continue to not be resolved.</li> <li>• Surplus places at Rhigos Primary School would not be addressed.</li> <li>• The benefits of moving to a larger more educationally and financially viable primary school would not be realised.</li> <li>• School budgets could not be protected sufficiently, and deficit budget positions would directly contribute to the school's lack of viability.</li> </ul>
<p>Build a new primary school on the site of Rhigos Primary School.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No long-term change for pupils, parents / carers and staff.</li> <li>• No impact on home to school transport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning investment required – there is currently no funding allocated for this.</li> <li>• Temporary classrooms would need to be utilised for the duration of the construction and given the site restrictions, may need to be located elsewhere.</li> <li>• The location of the site would restrict the ability to build a fully accessible school fit for the 21<sup>st</sup></li> </ul>

Option	Benefit	Disadvantages
		<p>century, with appropriate outdoor facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the site, on a main road, is unsatisfactory.</li> <li>• Existing parking issues would be exacerbated.</li> <li>• The benefits of moving to a larger more educationally viable primary school would not be realised.</li> </ul>
<p>Refurbish Rhigos Primary School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No long-term change for pupils, parents / carers and staff.</li> <li>• No impact on home to school transport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning investment required – there is currently no funding allocated for this.</li> <li>• Temporary classrooms would need to be utilised for the duration of the construction and given the site restrictions, may need to be located elsewhere.</li> <li>• The location of the site would restrict the ability to build a fully accessible school fit for the 21st century, with appropriate outdoor facilities.</li> <li>• Access to the site, on a main road, is unsatisfactory.</li> <li>• Existing parking issues would be exacerbated.</li> <li>• The benefits of moving to a larger more educationally viable primary school would not be realised.</li> </ul>
<p>Federate both schools under one head teacher and one governing body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning investment required.</li> <li>• No RCTCBC investment required.</li> <li>• No disruption to the pupils, parents / carers and staff.</li> <li>• No impact on home to school transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspects of the Rhigos Primary School buildings have reached the end of their usable life and are now beyond economic repair.</li> <li>• Rhigos Primary School's buildings are not of a 21st century schools standard. As such, delivering the New Curriculum for Wales would be a challenge.</li> <li>• Rhigos Primary School would continue to not be</li> </ul>



Option	Benefit	Disadvantages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would realise some financial savings.</li> </ul>	<p>fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The backlog maintenance figure of circa £184,790 at Rhigos Primary School would remain.</li> <li>• Parking issues at Rhigos Primary School would continue to not be resolved.</li> <li>• Surplus places at Rhigos Primary School would not be addressed.</li> <li>• The wider benefits of moving to a larger more educationally and financially viable primary school would not be realised.</li> <li>• School budgets could not be protected sufficiently, and deficit budget positions would directly contribute to the school's lack of viability.</li> </ul>

### Benefits and disadvantages, risks and mitigation factors

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

Any proposals involving school reorganisation will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty, although experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum through meaningful engagement throughout the consultation process, and if a decision is made to progress with the proposal, during the implementation phase.

The benefits and disadvantages of the proposal are highlighted in the table that follows, as is information as to how any identified risks can be managed.

Benefits
<p>Rhigos Primary School does not form part of RCTCBC's and the Welsh Governments Sustainable Communities for Learning programme. This means that no investment to create 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities at the site will happen in the near future, and there is no budget to make significant improvements in the meantime. Attending a new 21<sup>st</sup> century standard school will result in significant improvement to the quality of the educational provision for the pupils of Rhigos Primary School, having a significant positive impact upon their educational performance.</p>
<p>Rhigos Primary School was not built to be energy efficient, unlike the new building at Hirwaun Primary School. Hirwaun Primary School has also been built to BREEAM Excellent standards, and has an EPC rating of A, and has EV chargers on site, contributing to the delivery of RCTCBC's Tackling Climate Change Strategy: 2022 to 2025 – Think Climate Rhondda Cynon Taf and as close as possible to being</p>

carbon neutral as a County Borough by 2030. This proposal will also support the Welsh Government's Delivery Plan for a Low Carbon Wales and its 'Route Map' to decarbonise the public sector in Wales.			
A dedicated area at Hirwaun Primary School has been included within the school, enabling the local community to safely utilise the facilities at the school, both during and after the school day. Current pupils and parents / carers of Rhigos Primary School will benefit from this.			
Hirwaun Primary School has a secure perimeter boundary for the safety of all pupils on site and prevents unauthorised individuals from accessing the site out of school hours which has been constructed to 'Secure by Design' industry standards.			
Access to 21 <sup>st</sup> century schools' external facilities, including an outdoor classroom and a Multi-Use Games Area, will allow staff, pupils, and the community to benefit from a greater breadth of teaching and learning experiences.			
Pupils of Rhigos Primary School will not have to wait for a new school to be built. The construction of the new school at Hirwaun Primary School is complete and ready for the current pupils of Rhigos Primary School to move into.			
Traffic arrangements for current Rhigos Primary School pupils will improve, as all pupils will be entitled to free home to school transport.			
There will be greater financial stability with a larger school with more pupils on roll.			
<b>Disadvantages</b>			
Some current Rhigos Primary School pupils and staff will inevitably live further from the new school site.			
There will be an increase in home to school transport costs which will be met by RCTCBC.			
Moving to a new school site could cause some anxiety for some pupils, staff, and parents / carers.			
There will be staffing implications for those 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 this statutory process.			
There will be a community impact of removing a much valued school. In a small community the loss of a school will be felt proportionately more than in a larger community.			
<b>Risks</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating Action(s)</b>
<b>Approval</b> – Parents / carers choose to send their children to another primary school.	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team will ensure that suitable arrangements are made to involve parents / carers and children and young people as active participants throughout this consultation process,</li> </ul>

			and if a decision is made to progress the proposal, throughout the implementation process.
<b>Home to School Transport</b> – Increased home to school transport costs.	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any revenue implications that arise as a result of home to school transport will fall to RCTCBC. Neither the school nor the parents / carers of pupils who will require home to school transport as a result of the proposal will be impacted.</li> </ul>
<b>Increased Traffic</b>	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is capacity in the locality for an increase in traffic movements. As part of the significant investment at Hirwaun Primary there was a particular focus on enhancing the onsite and offsite traffic management arrangements including improved staff parking and the creation of a dedicated home to school transport drop off area, while offsite, a community car park was constructed providing additional parking spaces for parents and carers during busy periods.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff</b> – Existing Rhigos Primary School Staff may not be retained following implementation of the proposal.	Medium.	Medium.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTCBC is committed to retaining staff and will, as has been the case with the delivery of other 21<sup>st</sup> century schools previously throughout RCT, work with staff and</li> </ul>

			<p>Trade Unions to ensure the change process is dealt with sympathetically and supportively and that there will be opportunities to engage with staff as the proposal progresses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff will be kept informed of any updates or decisions made, as will any relevant Trade Unions. RCTCBC has well established Human Resource policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Impact</b>	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerations and options of any potential future use of the school site will be consulted upon separately.</li> <li>• It is recognised that the local community may be impacted by the proposal however this cannot be the overriding factor in determining this proposal. Falling numbers on roll, sustainability, financial viability and the quality of the education must be the prime consideration in determining the future of the school.</li> </ul>

## **Where we'd like to be...**

It is being proposed that Rhigos Primary School closes and for its pupils to attend Hirwaun Primary School. Hirwaun Primary School caters for children aged between 3 and 11 years of age who require English medium education and has a capacity of 391 pupils (plus nursery).

The current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School sits within the larger catchment area of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Penderyn (YGG Penderyn), and as is already the case, pupils of Rhigos Primary School have the option to attend YGG Penderyn, the local Welsh medium primary school. The Welsh Language Immersion Team provides support for pupils who choose to move to Welsh medium education from the English sector, and this provision will continue to be available for any pupils that wish to utilise it. There is capacity at YGG Penderyn for any pupils of Rhigos Primary School who wish to attend Welsh medium primary education instead of continuing with English medium at Hirwaun Primary School.

Hirwaun Primary School was built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 and is fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The provision at Hirwaun Primary School consists of:

- Modern, flexible learning environments for all pupils, a large hall / dining area, a multi-purpose learning resource area and fully accessible facilities.
- Flexible spaces to allow delivery of the areas of learning and experience in accordance with the new curriculum for Wales.
- Internal and external areas for use by the local community.
- Some additional space for additional learning needs interventions.
- Enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities, including an outdoor classroom and a 'forest schools' area.
- Improved traffic management.

Hirwaun Primary School was built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 which requires new primary schools to include provision for team sports, including changing rooms, a playing field area suitable for team games for pupils aged 8 and over and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for sports such as football, basketball and netball. New primary schools are also required to include soft play areas, commonly made up of grassed space for pupils to sit and socialise, outdoor classrooms, and a forest schools area alongside hard surfaced playgrounds and sheltered space to complement the soft play areas around the school site. Pupils who fall under the catchment area of Rhigos Primary School will have access to all of these facilities and will gain valuable experiences from the 21st century resources available to them.

Hirwaun Primary is a community school with a private childcare provision located on the school site. Rachael's Playhouse, the childcare provider, offers Flying Start, private childcare, childcare offer, and a wraparound service for children up to the age of 5.

They are registered with Care Inspectorate Wales for 30 places and they currently have a few places remaining.

## **Photos of Hirwaun Primary**



A multi-purpose learning resource area or 'heart space' at Hirwaun Primary School.



Foundation phase classroom in Hirwaun Primary School.

## **Additional Learning Needs Provision**

There are currently no Additional Learning Needs Support Classes at Rhigos Primary School or Hirwaun Primary School. Support for pupils currently provided by

Inclusion Services will continue and this proposal will not affect this provision in any way.

Hirwaun Primary School is fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010, including having provisions such as hygiene rooms for those that may need to use them. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 requires Councils to keep the arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs within their area under review and consider whether they are sufficient. As such, the need for additional learning needs provision at Hirwaun Primary School will continue to be reviewed, and there is sufficient capacity at the Hirwaun Primary School for further resources should there be a need for it in the future.

Hirwaun Primary School has been designed with flexible spaces to allow opportunities for teaching and learning in smaller groups, intervention spaces, and to provide one to one support where required. More information on this can be found in the Equality Impact Assessment attached at Appendix B.

### **The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan**

All Local Authorities in Wales must produce a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The WESP is a long-term language planning tool which sets the direction for the strategic planning, delivery and growth in Welsh medium and Welsh language education. Through the WESP, and effective strategic planning and investment, the RCTCBC aims to contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050. RCTCBC's current WESP can be viewed and downloaded from RCTCBC's website via the following link:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/WelshServices/Relateddocs/WelshinEducationStrategicPlan201720.pdf>

There are seven outcomes within RCTCBC's WESP which will help RCTCBC to archive the targets set, one of which is:

- More opportunities for pupils to use Welsh in different contexts in school.

RCTCBC aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use the Welsh language amongst pupils inside and outside school. Rhigos Primary School currently supports this aim by employing initiatives such as 'Cryw Cymraeg,' and both Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School encourage pupils to use incidental Welsh wherever possible. Pupils currently attend Rhigos Primary School will continue to be encouraged to use the Welsh language when they move to Hirwaun Primary School.

Pupils of Rhigos Primary School already have the opportunity to attend YGG Penderyn should they wish, the local Welsh medium primary school. Support from the Welsh Language Immersion Team is available for any pupil who chooses to move to Welsh medium education as is currently the case. There is capacity at YGG Penderyn for any pupils of Rhigos Primary School who wish to attend Welsh medium

primary education instead of continuing with English medium at Hirwaun Primary School.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment for this proposal has been written and is included within the consultation documentation.

### **Admission Arrangements**

The catchment area of Hirwaun Primary School will extend to include the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School.

In the case of oversubscription at any school, published admissions criteria are applied to all applications received for places, to determine which pupils are successful in obtaining the places available. These criteria, which are outlined in RCTCBC's school admission policy booklet entitled 'Starting School' are listed in priority order below:

1. Category One – 'Looked after' children (children in public care) and previously 'looked after' children.
2. Category Two – Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, who will continue to attend that school on the expected date of admission of the younger sibling.
3. Category Three – Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.
4. Category Four – Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, who will continue to attend that school on the expected date of admission of the younger sibling.
5. Category Five – Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.

The term 'home' in the categories above refers to the actual location of the residential dwelling in which the child lives.

Children will be admitted up to the Published Admission Number in the order of priority as outlined above. If, within any one of the priority categories listed, all applicants cannot be offered a place, preference will be given to children living nearest to the school. Distance will be measured using the shortest, safe walking route between the home address and the nearest open school gate. In areas where no safe walking route has been identified, the shortest driving route between the home address and the nearest open school gate will be used. This distance will be measured using the 'MapInfo System' only. Measurements calculated by any other system will not be considered. The home address in instances where parents / carers have shared responsibility for children, will be the address to which Child Benefit is paid.

The admission application period for a September 2024 start has already commenced and runs until November 10<sup>th</sup>2023. Any applications for Rhigos Primary School will automatically transfer to Hirwaun Primary School or parents/carers are able to apply for another school.



## Section Two – The Likely Impact of the Proposal

### The educational case for the proposal

School organisational proposals should highlight the educational benefits that any change could offer, particularly in relation to overall improvements in standards, but also in terms of the social and emotional development of children, which could usually impact beneficially on their overall achievement and outcomes.

It is RCTCBC's view that closing Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School could improve educational outcomes and provision for current pupils of Rhigos Primary School. A fit-for-purpose school building helps to provide a balanced curriculum in all year groups in line with the Welsh Government's Curriculum for Wales – 2022. Smaller schools may find it more difficult to deliver all 'Areas of Learning and Experience' of the Welsh Government's Curriculum for Wales – 2022 as they have fewer staff to specialise and to lead on curriculum and strategic developments. . Smaller schools with fewer staff require staff to take on multiple roles, which can lead to greater workloads and less opportunities to specialise. A 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment could also provide greater flexibility, a more adaptable learning environment and greater choice and variety in pupils' learning experiences.

Larger schools can provide greater flexibility for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced educational environment in which to learn and develop. There is more opportunity for staff to develop specialisms and more bespoke interventions in a larger school which is important for learner progression and the achievement of good educational outcomes for all. In larger schools there is also often the opportunity for pupils to engage in a wider range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. If this proposal is successful, more pupils will be taught in a purpose-built school building that is fit for the purpose of providing education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In smaller schools, there are limited opportunities for distributed models of leadership which can in turn result in workload pressures and capacity issues.

Currently Rhigos Primary School has three classes that are vertically streamed, with two of the three classes teaching pupils across three year groups. Given the projected reduction in pupil numbers at the school, this situation will become even more challenging in time.

There are significant challenges to teaching vertically grouped pupils. In what is considered to be a standard size class of pupils there will always be a range of abilities that need to be catered for through effective differentiation to ensure that the work meets the pupils' needs to ensure that they make strong progress in their learning and are suitably challenged. In a small school where you have vertical groups and a wide range of abilities it can prove to be challenging for the teaching and support staff to meet the wide range of academic, as well as the social and emotional needs, of all the learners. It is acknowledged that Rhigos Primary School offers learners positive learning experiences, nevertheless the teaching of multiple year groups within one classroom environment can be a significant challenge in educational settings.

Being a teacher in a vertically streamed class provides added pressure to an already challenging role, as in effect the teacher is required to constantly effectively differentiate in all areas of learning to ensure the individualised needs of all pupils are met. If this does not happen and pupils are set identical or very similar tasks to complete which do not meet their wide ranging needs effectively, this can result in pupils displaying poor motivation, disengagement and poor academic progress.

In a vertically streamed class it can become the norm that the teaching and subsequent work provided is pitched to meet the abilities of the average pupils in the class and as a result there is a potential that more able pupils are not effectively challenged in their learning and those pupils who require additional support may fall further behind in their learning as their needs are not met. The impact of such a style of teaching can potentially result in underachievement of high ability and low ability pupils. Clearly, this can be tackled through highly effective teaching and learning and extensive differentiation but this can be challenging when you have up to 3 year groups within one classroom.

In all classes pupils will have a perception as themselves as the learner and where they are positioned in terms the learning in the classroom. In these circumstances it is pupils' self-esteem that can also influence how they see themselves as learners and how they learn. In a vertically grouped class it will be inevitable due to the wide age range of pupils there can again be potential challenges with pupils' self-esteem particularly if older pupils are undertaking work which is either the same or similar to younger pupils in the same class. This can be addressed through highly effective differentiation but nevertheless this can be challenging from a teaching and learning perspective when there are a wide ranging year groups involved.

Another challenge of the small school is that a pupil may be taught by the same teacher for a number of years, or possibly the whole of the time if that teacher moves classes regularly. It may be considered that being taught by the same person is an advantage as they get to know that pupil really well. However, the converse can be true in that they might become too familiar and then do not provide the level of challenge that the pupil requires. It is also beneficial for pupils to have access to wide ranging staff with a range of specialisms and expertise so that they realise their potential across the full range of the curriculum. Additionally, the pupil/ teacher relationship is an important one and the quality of that relationship can vary from teacher to teacher. When there is little exposure to wide ranging staff, this can also be potentially challenging in the minority of cases where perhaps a relationship is less positive.

Small schools, by their very nature, have a limited choice for after-school activities, traditional clubs for football, rugby and netball are possibly not provided as there are not enough pupils of that age range to create the teams. Similarly, if teachers or support staff are providing the after-school activities if there are small numbers of staff inevitably there will be small numbers of clubs. As a result, there are few opportunities afforded to pupils to engage in a wide range of activities to enhance their social and emotional skills and this means that as they progress to secondary education, they, in comparison to their peers from larger schools, could potentially be less developed in certain areas. The same again can be said for pupil voice in school as the small numbers could mean that there are not enough available pupils to be involved in the various committee structures or that the committees are made

up of the same pupils in each resulting in a lack of varying views and perspectives, and a potential for repetition of ideas and action plans for each committee.

Finally, the demands of the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) are significant for a small school. The six areas of learning and experience (AoLE) could result in each teacher having to lead on two areas each. This has significant workload implications on top of the other responsibilities that the teacher would also have to undertake. The CfW expects the creation of a bespoke curriculum that has authentic contexts and is relevant to the community it serves, meaning that it is a fluid concept that changes and adapts to meet the needs of the learners.

The CfW places a heavy expectation on staff to trial, develop and create this new bespoke curriculum, and there would be a need for staff to be out of class on professional learning sessions as well as creating resources and materials. This by design would mean that a teacher's class could, as a result, end up having a significant number of supply teachers covering their class over a long period of time, which would mean that pupils would not be being taught regularly by their class teacher and these supply teachers may not have the knowledge and skills to teach the class effectively and this negatively impacts on the education attainment of pupils in this class. This heavy workload could be further exacerbated if one member of staff is absent from work, this could lead to two members of staff leading on three AoLEs, this workload would be significant and potentially the resulting curriculum created and delivered may not be the best that it can be and would not provide the very best curriculum offer that the pupils need.

A small school inevitably provides less opportunities for learners to interact with a wide range of children of the same age and to develop extended friendship groups. Furthermore, due to the smaller budgets associated with smaller schools, there are less opportunities for employing wide ranging support staff and to release staff from their classrooms to lead on specialist roles. Resilience can also be a significant factor in smaller schools when staff are absent from the workplace.

### **Estyn Information**

Rhigos Primary School was inspected by Estyn in February 2019.

Rhigos Primary School's performance in the five inspection areas was as follows:

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning	Good
Teaching and Learning Experiences	Good
Care, Support and Guidance	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Estyn also set out recommendations for Rhigos Primary School to implement in order to make improvements to the quality of education provision on offer. Estyn's recommendations were as follows:

1. Recommendation One – Give pupils in key stage two more opportunities to make independent choices and decisions about how to apply their literacy and numeracy skills within lessons.
2. Recommendation Two – Develop pupils’ speaking and listening skills in Welsh in key stage two.
3. Recommendation Three – Provide further opportunities for pupils in key stage two to use their extended writing skills across the curriculum.

Hirwaun Primary School was inspected by Estyn in 2018.

Hirwaun Primary School’s performance in the five inspection areas was as follows:

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and Learning Experiences	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Care, Support and Guidance	Good
Leadership and Management	Adequate and needs improvement

Estyn set out recommendations for the school to implement in order to make improvements to the quality of education provision on offer. Estyn’s recommendations were as follows:

1. Recommendation One – Improve the quality of teaching and feedback to pupils.
2. Recommendation Two – Improve standards of pupils’ reading, writing and presentation of work.
3. Recommendation Three – Improve pupils’ standards in ICT.
4. Recommendation Four – Ensure that the curriculum meets requirements and develops pupils’ skills progressively.
5. Recommendation Five – Improve pupils’ independent learning skills.
6. Recommendation Six – Correctly identify and address important areas of teaching and learning that need to improve and hold all members of staff to account robustly.

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, a follow up visit was undertaken which judged that sufficient progress had been made in relation to the recommendations. As a result, Estyn removed Hirwaun Primary School from the list of schools requiring ‘Significant Improvement’.

Since its latest inspection, Hirwaun Primary School has received a brand new 21<sup>st</sup> century building and facilities as part of the Welsh government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

It is RCTCBC’s view that closing Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to a new, purpose-built school fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century at Hirwaun Primary School could have a major positive impact on all five Estyn inspection areas, as detailed below:

1. Standards (Learning) – More pupils will have access to a new school building fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that provides enhanced teaching spaces, dedicated resource areas, stimulating learning environments and state-of-the-art ICT equipment, all of which will support to continue to raise standards, and make progress against Estyn’s recommendations. Larger schools have more potential for economies of school and financial efficiencies which can accrue and be reinvested for the benefit of all pupils.
2. Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning – Moving pupils from Rhigos Primary School to Hirwaun Primary School, a site with brand new facilities should have a positive impact on pupil wellbeing. Flexible internal spaces are available to deliver additional support to pupils. Extensive outdoor space will provide a diverse and engaging environment for pupils to learn and play in. There could also be greater flexibility for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced educational environment in which to learn and grow and there will be greater opportunities for learners to socialise and interact with large numbers of their year group peers.
3. Teaching and Learning Experiences – Moving pupils of Rhigos Primary School, a small school, to the larger Hirwaun Primary School will increase opportunities for interaction, coordination and the sharing of expertise and experience. Pupils of Rhigos Primary School, who are currently in classes of two and three year groups, will be able to benefit from being taught in classes of their own age group. A fit-for-purpose school building helps to provide a balanced curriculum across all age groups in line with the Welsh Governments Curriculum for Wales – 2022. Smaller schools may find it more difficult to deliver all ‘Areas of Learning and Experience’ of the Welsh Government’s Curriculum for Wales as they have fewer staff to specialise and to lead on curriculum and strategic developments. A 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment could also provide greater flexibility and therefore greater choice and variety in pupils’ learning experiences.
4. Care, Support and Guidance – The 21<sup>st</sup> century environment at Hirwaun Primary School will provide opportunities for pupils of Rhigos Primary School to further develop a wide range of extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyles and nurture pupils. A fully accessible building and the provision of flexible spaces allows the Hirwaun Primary School to extend its good practice and facilitate further interventions and engagement with families and the local community. The new school site has been designed to ensure that safeguarding is not compromised, with the school achieving ‘secure by design’ accreditation.
5. Leadership (and Management) – It is important that leadership in schools is supported by fit for purpose resources that are appropriate for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hirwaun Primary School has made progress against the Estyn recommendations in this regard. The new resources and facilities at Hirwaun Primary School provide effective and supportive learning environments for pupils. Pupils can benefit from suitable and stimulating outdoor areas to play and learn, and the appropriate resources and equipment of a 21<sup>st</sup> century school ensure that the Welsh Government Curriculum for Wales can be delivered to the required standards. A larger school will provide more professional and progression opportunities for the teaching and support staff and greater scope for distributed models of leadership.

## **What is the likely impact of the proposals on pupils?**

It is anticipated that the proposed changes will not adversely impact upon pupils. Some pupils may initially be daunted at the prospect of moving to a new, larger school on a new site, however the headteacher and staff team will ensure they are appropriately supported through this transition period.

The proposed changes could have many benefits for pupils. Being taught in a new, state of the art, purpose-built school building with first class facilities could have a significant impact on the quality and variety of the learning experience and the educational performance of pupils.

Moving pupils of Rhigos Primary School, a small school, to the larger Hirwaun Primary School will increase opportunities for interaction, coordination and the sharing of expertise and experience. Pupils of Rhigos Primary School, who are currently in classes of mixed year groups, will be able to benefit from being taught in classes of their own age group. There could also be greater flexibility for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced educational environment in which to learn and grow and there will be greater opportunities for learners to socialise and interact with large numbers of their year group peers.

The catchment area of Hirwaun Primary School will extend to also include the catchment area of Rhigos Primary School. Whilst inevitably some pupils who currently attend Rhigos Primary School will live further away from the new site, some may, in fact live, closer to it. Overall, the impact on pupil travel arrangements is considered to be minimal.

The Welsh Government and RCTCBC has adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which is expressed in seven core aims that all children and young people:

1. Have a flying start in life.
2. Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.
3. Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation, and exploitation.
4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting, and cultural activities.
5. Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
6. Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing.
7. Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

RCTCBC considers that the proposal benefits the children and young people accordance with the seven core aims set out above.

Further information relating to the impact of the proposal on pupils, including how the proposal contributes to all seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and an assessment of the proposal on the five ways of working, can be found in the Equality Impact Assessment which is at Appendix B.

### **What is the likely impact of the proposal on staff?**

It is our intention to recommend to the Governing Body of Hirwaun Primary School that they ringfence any additional positions they need to appoint as a result of increased pupil numbers, below senior leadership level, to the existing staff currently employed at Rhigos Primary School in the first instance. This process means that the Rhigos Primary School staff will be given the first opportunity to apply for additional posts in Hirwaun Primary School prior to any being advertised externally. If they are successful, they will then simply transfer to the Hirwaun Primary School when the proposal is implemented. RCTCBC has well established Human Resource policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.

Staff who transfer to Hirwaun Primary School could have the opportunity to specialise in specific areas of the curriculum. The CfW places a heavy expectation on staff to trial, develop and create this new bespoke curriculum which is very challenging in a smaller school such as Rhigos Primary School. Being a much larger school, Hirwaun Primary School has more staff to allow for such specialism with the ability to share workload more effectively and therefore gives staff more opportunities for progression and professional development.

### **Financial implications of the proposal**

There will be no capital funding implications should this proposal go ahead. The new building and facilities at Hirwaun Primary School were completed in 2021 and there is capacity at the school for pupils who fall under the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School.

There will be other revenue implications resulting from the proposal, including an increase in home to school transport costs which will be determined once pupil numbers seeking transport are confirmed. These will be identified as the proposal is developed and detailed revenue implications will be incorporated into RCTCBC's Medium Term Financial arrangements.

At present the cost per pupil for Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School is £6,426.01 and £4,406.37 respectively. If the proposals were to go ahead the estimated cost per pupil for Hirwaun Primary School is £4,031.89.

More detailed financial information in relation to this proposal can be found on page 11 of this document.

### **Home to School Transport provision**

There is a statutory duty placed upon all local authorities in Wales to provide pupils with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond safe 'walking distance' to that school. The term suitable school applies to the catchment area English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided mainstream primary school, secondary school or special school/class as appropriate. The law relating to safe 'walking distance' is defined as two miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving secondary education.

RCTCBC has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 to make a more generous provision to pupils. The relevant information in relation to Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School is set out below:

- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1½ miles, instead of 2 miles as required by the Measure.
- Free transport to their nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to pupils who meet the 1½ mile eligibility criterion from the start of Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than from the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday) as required by the Measure.
- The term suitable school applies to the catchment area English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate.

Further information in relation to the RCTCBC's Home to School transport provision can be viewed and downloaded from RCTCBC's website via:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/SchoolandCollegeTransport/SchoolandCollegeTransport.aspx>

There is approximately 2.8 miles between Rhigos Primary School and Hirwaun Primary School which is over the 1.5 mile distance allowed within the home to school transport eligibility criteria listed above. In addition, there is no safe walking route for the current pupils of Rhigos Primary School to walk to Hirwaun Primary School should the proposal be successful. As such, **all** pupils in the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School will be entitled to free home to school transport. All costs associated with this increased service will be wholly met by RCTCBC.

### **Land and buildings information**

If the proposals outlined in this document are implemented, the existing Rhigos Primary School site will become redundant. As this is an initial consultation process no decisions have yet been made in respect of the future of this site and building, however one option, if the site does become surplus, is to consult with the local community to ascertain whether there is a sustainable community need locally that can be successfully delivered and met from this site.

This process will be managed in accordance with RCTCBC's Policy on Surplus Land and Buildings.



## Consultation Response Form

To comply with its legal duty under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and help RCTCBC reach a decision on the proposal, it would be helpful if you could answer the following questions. Please note, any personal information given will not be shared and will only be used to provide you with feedback, should you request it. Any comments that could identify you will be anonymised in the Consultation Report produced. Completed Consultation Report Forms should be returned to:

Director of Education and Inclusion Services 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Ty Trevithick Abercynon CF45 4UQ	<b>OR</b>	<a href="mailto:schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk">schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
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### The proposal:

To close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School.

Do you agree with the proposal?    Yes    No    Not Sure

Please let us know the reasons for your choice.

- 2 Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
- Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
- How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?
- Please state any alternative views or points which you would like to be considered (attach additional sheets if necessary).
- Please indicate who you are (e.g., parent/carer of a pupil at named school(s), Governor at named school(s), etc.).
- Name (optional):



Please provide contact details if you wish to be notified of the publication of the Consultation Report.

**Please forward completed questionnaires to the above address no later than no later than 17:00 on 17th November 2023.**

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