

AGENDA ITEM 2

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19TH JANUARY 2016

IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN FERNDALE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING (COUNCILLOR MRS E HANAGAN)

**Authors: Chris Bradshaw, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Tel: 01443 744001 and Julie Hadley, School Organisation Manager Tel:
01443 744227.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of a proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer the pupils to Darran Park Primary School, subject to parental preference, in September, 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the attached consultation report, which includes details of items of correspondence received during the consultation exercise and notes of the various meetings held.
- 2.2 Agree to progress the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer the pupils to Darran Park Primary School, subject to parental preference, by issuing an appropriate statutory notice.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance (the School Organisation Code).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd October 2015, approval was given to begin a process of formal consultation on

a proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its education provision to Darran Park Primary School, subject to parental preference, in September, 2016.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equality and Community Impact Assessments were prepared in respect of this proposal and were published on the Council's website together with the consultation document that outlines the proposal in detail. Copies of both reports are attached as Appendix A to this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation process in respect of this proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st October 2013. These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any statutory notices which will progress the proposal. It further states that this Report must be published within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period, which is 31st March 2016 in this instance.
- 6.2 The Consultation Report prepared in respect of this particular proposal is attached at Appendix B for your attention. It contains information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the detailed notes taken at these meetings. It also contains details of correspondence received together with the responses given to the points raised in this correspondence.
- 6.3 The response to this particular consultation process was; 132 completed questionnaires, 19 e-mails and Freedom of Information requests and 41 persons attended the open evening held to provide further information on 8th December 2015. It must be noted that there is clear evidence of multiple copies of the questionnaire being completed by individuals; in one case one person has submitted 10 different copies.

7. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 7.1 The statutory notice for this proposal will refer to the:

- Closure of Ferndale Infants' School and the transfer of its pupils to Darran Park Primary School, subject to parental preference.

The Statutory Notice will, if agreed be published on 29th January 2016 and will allow for a 28 day period for objections, ending on 29th February 2016. If any objections are received, in accordance with the

mentioned Code an Objections Report will be prepared. This matter will then be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet, probably in March 2016 for Members to receive and consider the Objections Report and to make a final decision on this proposal.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 If the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School proceeds, it will realise annual revenue savings of £143,000. Closing a school and transferring pupils to another local school inevitably results in the need to employ less staff, and sometimes redundancy costs may arise. The Council seeks to minimise this cost by redeploying displaced members of staff wherever possible. Therefore, it is not possible at this point in the consultation process to identify any possible redundancy costs. Recent school closures have resulted in very few compulsory redundancies.

8.2 Whilst, the additional pupils from Ferndale Infants' School could be accommodated within Darren Park Primary School, building improvements and remodelling works are planned to be undertaken at Darran Park Primary to improve the accommodation and facilities of school for all pupils. It is estimated that the cost of this work will be approximately £400,000 and will be funded from the Council's own capital building resources. It is planned that this work is undertaken in 2016/17, irrespective of the decision to close Ferndale Infants' School, to improve the learning environment for all the pupils of Darren Park Primary School. In the event that this improvement work has not been completed by 31 August 2016, this will not compromise any future possible decision to close Ferndale Infants' and transfer the pupils to Darren Park Primary School.

9 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

9.1 This particular proposal forms part of the larger school reorganisation proposals that form our 21st Century Schools Programme for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, to agree to its immediate publication and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice to progress this proposal.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Children and Young People

Appendices

The appendices to the report are:

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Community Impact Assessment
- Consultation Report

Contact Officer

Julie Hadley, School Organisation Manager
01443 744227

APPENDIX A

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directorate: Education & Lifelong Learning

Service Area: 21st Century Schools

Responsible officer: Julie Hadley

Date: 2nd November 2015

1. Name of policy/procedure/practice/project: **Closure of Ferndale Infants School**

The Project is to:

Close Ferndale Infants School, and transfer its education provision to Darran Park Primary School.

2. Policy Aims

In recent years, Estyn has sharpened its approach to inspection of schools and local authorities and has raised the bar in respect of what it considers to be good and excellent provision. Furthermore, Estyn has taken a very hard line on local authorities in Wales that have weaknesses in key areas such as corporate governance, educational standards, attendance levels, surplus places and safeguarding.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's education services was inspected by Estyn in March 2012, at which time the following recommendations were made :

- R1 - raise standards in schools particularly in key stage 4;
- R2 - improve attendance rates in all schools;

- R3 - improve the evaluation and analyses of data across service areas and partnerships to drive improvements in outcomes for learners;
- R4 - use the full powers available to the authority to improve leadership and management in schools;
- R5 - reduce surplus places; and
- R6 - improve the rigour and the level of scrutiny and challenge across all services and partnerships.

Over the past three years the Council had focused its attention on these six recommendations, and in particular Recommendations 1, 2 & 5, which will have the greatest impact on pupil achievement in our schools. As a result, schools that, when compared with similar schools across Wales based on free school meals, are in the third and fourth quartiles are being subject to significant challenge, scrutiny and support.

Elected Members have accepted Estyn's recommendations and have undertaken a review of our school provision. The criteria we have used for selecting schools for review is one or more of the following:

- Surplus places in excess of 25% of published capacity;
- Buildings that are beyond economic repair/not fit for purpose;
- Financially unviable (usually due to a sharp fall in pupil numbers);
- Schools considered to be 'small' schools, i.e. schools with 90 or fewer pupils of statutory school age;
- Separate infant and junior schools in close proximity;
- 'Paired' schools, i.e. where children progress from one of the schools to the other;
- Mixed aged classes where there are more than two age groups in one class;
- Schools considered to be at risk, based on their academic Key Stage data and the quality of the leadership, of meeting Estyn's criteria as a school in need of significant improvement or special measures.

Ferndale Infants' and Darran Park have been assessed against the aforementioned criteria:

- The schools are 'paired' with each other, i.e. the children usually progress from the one to the other;
- The schools are located on sites that are in close proximity to each other;

- Darran Park has a current (January 2015) surplus places level of 21%; however, the comparable figure at Ferndale Infants' is 46%;
- Both schools have mixed aged classes;
- Pupil attendance has been mixed over the past 4 years when compared to similar schools in Wales, although Darran Park is now showing some improvement.

The opportunity exists to bring the two schools together to create a larger, more educationally and financially viable primary school.

Educational Considerations

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

It is the Council's view that creating a larger primary school for the community of Ferndale will improve educational outcomes and provision for the following reasons;

- A single school vision and ethos, with a single Governing Body and management team providing leadership across the full primary age range, using consistent policies and practices;
- Improved transition from Nursery to Foundation Phase and overall progression;
- Greater consistency of teaching and learning for pupils across the Early Years phase and the statutory key stages including:
 - Seamless curriculum planning and co-ordination;
 - Shared schemes of work, assessment and tracking of pupil progress;
 - Greater continuity in terms of expectations, behaviour, partnerships with parents and
 - Day to day organisation;
- Less change for parents and pupils;
- Greater continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils;
- Opportunities for staff to move between Early Years and the statutory key stages and further develop expertise;

- Potential for financial savings in terms of staffing structures and purchase of services, which accrue to the single school; and
- The future capital investment benefits that would arise from the modernisation of one institution rather than two.

There are opportunities for the teaching and support staff. A larger primary school for Ferndale could offer:

- A larger school with a bigger role;
- A more flexible organisation;
- Improved career prospects;
- Improved curriculum co-ordination;
- The opportunity to teach across a wider age range;
- An increased range of expertise;
- Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination

It is proposed that Darran Park will be remodelled and its teaching accommodation improved, to ensure that there are sufficient school places for children resident in its catchment area both at the present time and in the future. The school building will therefore be further refurbished, together with provision of improved outdoor learning and play spaces for pupils. This will entail remodelling of the existing playgrounds for creative play and the utilisation of the 'all weather' pitch in the adjacent public park (also called Darran Park) which is directly adjacent to the school, sharing a boundary wall and fence. Additional footpaths, fencing and gates will be installed to ensure the school has direct and secure access to the park from the school grounds.

A larger Primary School for Ferndale will be able to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced and secure financial situation. Overall, the single, larger Primary School will be more financially viable than the Infants' and Primary schools in their current form.

Demand for School Places

The table below sets out the capacity of Darran Park Primary and the forecasted pupil numbers in 2020 if this proposal is agreed.

Darran Park Primary School incorporating Ferndale Infants' pupils								
Capacity of the School (proposed)	2015 (Actual)	(% surplus places 2015)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020
315	287	(8.8%)	291	289	279	282	267	15.2%
Pre-nursery and nursery pupils (45 places at present)	61		65	59	58	55	51	

We have already advised that teaching space capacity at the school can be increased by internal modification of the buildings to meet future demand for places, including additional nursery and pre nursery provision if required.

School Buildings –

Ferndale Infants' School (Ferndale Infants') is an English Medium Community School located at North Road, Ferndale and the school site consists of a modern style building, constructed in 1985. The Council has invested £11K of capital investment and £40K on general maintenance in this school since 2009. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Ferndale Infants' is graded a B for condition and a B for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively. This means that the building condition overall is satisfactory, but is identifying minor remedial works.

Darran Park Primary School (Darran Park) is an English Medium Community Primary School located at Brook Street, Ferndale, just 0.4 miles from Ferndale Infants'. The school site consists of a brick building originally constructed in the 1940's as a grammar school, which was

extensively refurbished and remodelled in 1996 to create a Primary school. The Council has invested £313K of capital investment in this school since 2009, including replacement roofing, new energy efficient lighting, upgrades to classrooms and refurbishment of pupil toilets. The Council will continue with this programme of investment in forthcoming years, to ensure that the building is maintained to a good standard. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Darran Park is graded a B for condition and a B for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively.

3. Who does it apply to?

Members of the public Staff children aged 3-11 years in the community of Ferndale, parents and carers of these children.

4. Indicate whether this is a new proposal, a review or a proposed cessation:

New Review Cessation

All 3.

5. Identifying Impacts

	High	Low	Neutral (No impact)	

	High	Low	Neutral (No impact)	
Age (young and old)	Young – Yes		Old – no impact	<p>Better learning facilities for all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that all the children in the Infants' feel safe and secure, • make the learning environments, comfortable and attractive for all children who access them. • access services to improve the lives of children and their families. • Improved facilities will enable the pupils to access learning and cultural activities which can help develop relationships within communities. • The changing curriculum, life long learning opportunities and use of ICT will provide the opportunity to enable all learners to reach their potential. • Facilities at the Infants' school are geared towards the needs of very young children and are, as such not suitable for use by older persons. • Parents with more than one child will only have to transport their children to one building, as opposed to possibly two at the current time

	High	Low	Neutral (No impact)	
Disability (remember to consider the different types of disability)	Yes			The existing facilities at Darran Park Primary are currently compliant with legislation and will be further improved to make them more so. Darran Park also accommodates a specialist SEN provision for Foundation Phase pupils and the benefits of this provision, especially the qualified and experienced staff will be available to the children from Ferndale Infants' also.
Gender			Yes	
Gender Reassignment			Yes	
Race			Yes	
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Sexual Orientation			Yes	
Welsh Language			Yes	
Carers			Yes	

EVIDENCE

6. What evidence is there to support your conclusions? Please indicate below

Reports of the Director of Education to Cabinet - October 2015.
Public Consultation Document on the Proposal

7. In areas where a negative impact has been identified are there any ways that the negative effect could be reduced or removed? Please indicate below and include the evidence on which you have based your conclusion.

The only negative impact is the uncertainty as to the future use of the Infants' School building should these proposals be agreed. No decisions on this can be made at this time as we do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of this consultation, but we have stated that an alternative educational use for the building will be sought in the first instance.

INVOLVEMENT & CONSULTATION

9. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this (or similar) policy and what are the results?

The following consultation meetings/ open events were held.

School Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
Ferndale Infants' School	Governors and Staff Meeting	17 th November 2015, 4 – 6 pm	Ferndale Infants' School
Darran Park Primary School	Governors and Staff Meeting	18 th November 2015, 4 – 6 pm	Darran Park Primary School
Ferndale Infants' School	School Council	17 th November 2015, 2.30 – 3.00 pm	Ferndale Infants' School
Darran Park Primary School	School Council	18 th November 2015, 2.15 – 2.45 pm	Darran Park Primary School

Details of the proposal were displayed at Ferndale Library for the period of the consultation. A consultation questionnaire was also available at the local Library and on the Council's internet site at www.rctcbc.gov.uk

Interested parties were also welcome to put their views in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
 Ty Trevithick
 Abercynon CF45 4UQ

e-mail schoolplanning@rctednet.net

MONITORING AND REVIEW

10. What arrangements have you put in place to review the actual impact of the policy once it has been implemented?

The Council's school improvement team and the Central South Consortium will be fully engaged in supporting the head teacher and governing body of Darran Park Primary for as long as they require such support.

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT

11. What option have you chosen as a result of your impact assessment?

- Continue the Policy

Please indicate and provide reasons for your decision.

The evidence outlined in our consultation document clearly recommends that this is the right approach.

12. ACTION PLAN

You now need to complete the EIA action plan to outline how you will act on any impacts identified. You may need to prioritise in terms of what actions you choose to take and the timescales to complete them in. In general terms, you should try to act on all negative impacts unless there is a clear reason as to why this is not possible. You could also identify actions for positive or neutral impacts where appropriate i.e. to outline and further promote a positive impact or to outline how to make something have a positive impact instead of a neutral one.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Actions	Timescale and actions for Review	Measures to be taken to evaluate effects of actions
To finalise the plans for the remodelling and external improvements to Darran Park Primary and to apply for any	Colin Atyeo Director of Corporate Estates	By September 2016		

planning permission that may be required				
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13. Please outline below any negative impacts that have been identified in the EIA questionnaire but not addressed in the action plan. You will need to explain your reasons for not addressing them.

None.

Please keep a copy of the questionnaire and action plan and send copies to:

Equality, Diversity & Social Justice Team
 The Pavilions
 Cambrian Park
 Clydach
 CF40 2XX

Email: equality@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk

Tel: 01443 424075

Signed: Chris Bradshaw Date: 2/11/15
 Job Title: Director of Education & Lifelong Learning/Interim Chief Executive

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Proposal to close Ferndale Infants School

Community Impact Assessment

This assessment is prepared in accordance with guidance contained within Annex D of statutory guidance circular 006/2013, the School Organisation Code.

This proposal is being consulted upon between 2nd November and 31st December 2015. A detailed consultation document has been circulated to all prescribed consultees. Copies have already been forwarded to the WG in compliance with consultation and publication guidelines. This document clearly focuses on the education argument and case for change, which is why full details of this particular assessment are not specifically included; we are mindful that the document needs to be as concise and informative as possible, whilst at the same time being readable and 'user-friendly'.

The total number of pupils on roll at Ferndale Infants in January 2015 (date of the PLASC return) was 61; 21 of whom were not of statutory school age (nursery age pupils). 18 of the total pupils on roll did not reside within the catchment area of this school, i.e. the percentage of pupils attending Ferndale Infants that reside within the catchment area is 70.4%. The figures for Darran Park Primary show that 88% of the children in attendance reside in the school's catchment area.

Both Ferndale Infants and Darran Park Primary offer breakfast clubs to all pupils; this provision will continue in Darran Park should this proposal be agreed. There are no after school clubs at Ferndale Infants. Darran Park Primary offers an extensive range of after school provision, as detailed below. This provision will of course be available to all pupils who may attend this school in the future:

- Monday – Fun and Fitness, Craft Club, Rugby
- Tuesday – Netball, Stay & Play, Code Club (ICT), Pyramid Club (confidence building)
- Wednesday – Maths Club, Ziggy's (Reading and Craft)
- Thursday – Men Behaving Dadly (bring your Dad to school for activities), Football, Athletics
- Friday – Welsh Club

Neither school has any regular out of hours usage made of their school building by any outside organisations, except for ad hoc usage by groups affiliated to the school, such as the PTA for functions. Any outside usage made of the facilities at Darran Park Primary will of course continue.

This proposal seeks to enhance the accommodation and facilities of Darran Park Primary, to cater for all children who may attend the school in the future. The school has surplus places (68 in total) at the current time, which is sufficient to meet the requirements of the pupils from Ferndale Infants. However, internal modifications and remodelling works are planned for the school to improve the learning environment further for all pupils at Darran Park Primary School and this will meet future demand for places.

This is not a rural area, and the existence of so many other schools and other community facilities within a short distance means that it is not deemed necessary to consider the enhancement of other community facilities that may exist in the local area.

The distance between the two school sites is just 0.4 of a mile which takes less than 3 minutes by car or other mode of transport. It is not considered that this distance will be a barrier to any child who wishes to participate in the pre, and after school provision that will be offered at Darran Park Primary School in the future; all pupils will be given equal access and encouragement to participate in as many activities as they wish. It must also be noted that Darran Park Primary School is the school that Ferndale Infants' pupils would ordinarily transfer to for their statutory education at Key Stage 2. In the 2015 admissions round, 14 of the 15 children who left Ferndale Infants in the Summer term transferred to Darran Park Primary at Junior level, i.e. joined Year 3. It is considered therefore that it will in fact be of benefit to parents with children of both Infant and Junior age in future, as their children's school provision will be located in the same building, as opposed to being a 0.4 mile apart as it is at present.

The walking routes between the two schools are considered to be available. They have pavements, designated crossing points and street lighting along the full length of the routes, with a 30 mph speed limit in what is considered to be a built up area.

APPENDIX B

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposal : To close Ferndale Infants' School, with pupils transferring to Darran Park Primary School on 1st September 2016, subject to parental preference.

1. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 006/2013. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the consultation held during the period 2nd November 2015 and 31st December 2015 between all stakeholders and interested parties listed below.

2. Who did we consult with?

A copy of a consultation document which fully outlined and explained our proposal was sent to the following stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council website at

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/Schoolconsultations.aspx>

- The Governing Bodies of Ferndale Infants' School and Darran Park Primary School
- Pupils of Ferndale Infants' School and Darran Park Primary School
- Parents, carers, guardians, and staff members of Ferndale Infants' School and Darran Park Primary School
- Other governing bodies of neighbouring primary schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies and regional Assembly Members for the area
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- Central South Education Consortium
- South East Wales Transport Association
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The local Communities First Partnership
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership

Copies were also sent to all local authorities that share a boundary with Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3. The Proposal

The proposal consulted upon is to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its pupils to Darran Park Primary School, subject to parental preference. The existing school site and building at Darran Park Primary will be upgraded and improved. It is proposed that Ferndale Infants' would close on 31st August 2016 with the pupils transferring to Darran Park Primary School on 1st September 2016.

A programme of capital works to improve and upgrade the school site will be undertaken should this proposal be approved.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the consultation document that was circulated to all the stakeholders listed overleaf which is attached as Appendix 1.

4. The Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified in Section 2 overleaf were sent paper or electronic copies of our consultation documentation. The following meetings were also convened:

- Tuesday 17th November, 2.30 pm – School Council, Ferndale Infants’;
- Wednesday 18th November, 2.15 pm – School Council, Darran Park Primary’;
- Tuesday 17th November, 4 pm– Staff and Governing Body Ferndale Infants’;
- Wednesday 18th November, 4 pm – Staff and Governing Body, Darran Park Primary

Detailed notes of all of the above meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 2. These notes detail all questions raised, comments and statements made with responses provided where appropriate.

An open evening/exhibition was held at Darran Park Primary School on 8th December 2015, the purpose of which was to provide further information on the proposal, answer any questions and give parents in particular the opportunity to view the proposed facilities that will be available for their children at the school. Officers from the Education and Lifelong Learning Division were in attendance. This event was attended by 41 persons, which included school staff, governors, local councillors, parents and members of the local community.

A total of 19 e-mails and Freedom of Information requests have been received, from 12 persons, namely:

7 Parents and grandparents
 1 governor of a school in the area
 2 local residents

Member of Parliament for the Rhondda
 Assembly Member for the Rhondda

132 questionnaires have also been received, a summary of these is attached under Appendix 2. A 'message board' was provided at the consultation event held on 8th December 2015 and a summary of the comments posted is also attached at Appendix 2.

5. Summary of Responses to Consultation

- **Darran Park will require an additional 8 classrooms to accommodate pupils who require a place.**

This is incorrect. Our consultation document clearly outlines that Darran Park has sufficient capacity to accommodate all pupils who attend Ferndale Infants' School at the current time. However, building improvements and internal remodelling works are being proposed to improve the school accommodation and external play areas for all pupils.

- **Do you adhere to the UN legislation on the rights of the child?**

Due regard is always paid to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; this is not UK legislation.

- **Do you plan on carrying out any risk assessments in respect of traffic?**

Traffic impact assessments will be undertaken if required as part of any planning application that may be submitted; in addition they will be undertaken as part of other initiatives that may be considered, such as Safe Routes to Schools.

- **The traffic situation at Darran Park is horrendous**

The problem of parents causing traffic congestion by parking at school sites at the start and end of the school day is, unfortunately, a common scenario at most if not all schools in RCT and indeed beyond. It is also an issue for which the Council has very limited jurisdiction. The catchment area of Darran Park, which encompasses that of Ferndale Infants' is relatively small and the longest distance any child has to travel to the school from within catchment is approximately 1 mile; this is well within the national Government recommendation for maximum walking distance for Primary aged pupils of 2 miles. If this proposal is agreed, the Council will investigate whether there are any possible highways improvements that may alleviate this situation, as well as looking at other initiatives that could be implemented with the assistance of the school, such as walking buses.

- **The kitchen facilities at Darran Park cannot cope with the number of children requiring meals, food runs out, also children having packed lunches are forced to eat outside as there is no room for them in the dining hall. Also complaints regarding the quality of the food and the cost of school meals.**

Both statements are incorrect. The kitchen facilities at Darran Park are more than adequate to provide meals for all children who require them and there are no documented reports of children being refused meals due to the food running out. The initiative which allows children to eat their packed lunches outside when weather permits was introduced in the summer as a 'treat' for the children, which has proved very popular with them; it is a voluntary arrangement that no child is forced to do. All children that choose to eat outside are supervised by school staff. It must also be noted that, prior to commencement of this consultation process, there were no records of any complaints being received in respect of any aspect of the school meal provision at Darran Park Primary School. The cost of school meals provision is the same at all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- **Using the Astroturf in the park as a playground poses a risk to the pupils.**

It is not intended that this facility be used as an additional playground as this provision is not required for this proposal to proceed. The Astroturf is currently used by Darran Park Primary (and neighbouring YGG Llyn y Forwyn) during the school day as and when required for sporting activities that are supervised by school staff. What is being proposed is that the two schools be formally given exclusive use of the facility during the school day (at present it can be booked for use by outside organisations) and that access to the facility from Darran Park Primary be improved and made more secure. It is, in essence simply formalising and improving the arrangements for the usage that is currently made by the two schools. It should also be noted that at the current time, no other organisations use this Council owned facility during the school day; it is only used at evenings, weekends and school holidays by prior booking arrangement with the Council's Leisure Services division.

- **The public will be prevented from using the park during the school day.**

This is not correct. All that is being proposed is that the Astroturf facility within the park be securely fenced and made available for exclusive school use only when the schools are in session. The rest of the park will still be accessible to the public, as will the Astroturf outside of school hours.

- **The wellbeing of pupils at Ferndale Infants' is not being considered, Darran Park is graded lower for this aspect.**

During the last Estyn inspections of both schools, both undertaken in 2011, both schools were rated 'good' for the wellbeing element of Key Question 1 (how good are outcomes).

- **I do not agree with 3 year old children using the same playground as 11 year olds.**

This does not happen at the current time and it will not happen in the future. Infant and Junior children have separate yards at present and within the Infant yard is a segregated, fenced off area used exclusively by pupils under the age of 5 years.

- **The pupil data you have provided in the consultation document is incorrect.**

The information provided consists of pupil data derived from the 2015 PLASC return and forecasts produced using recognised methodology that is in common with that used by other local authorities in Wales. This information has to be submitted to the Welsh Government annually and is published. We consider that our data is as accurate as it is possible to provide. To illustrate this point, our consultation document, which was prepared in September 2015 states (at the foot of page 6) that we estimated 23 nursery pupils would attend the school in January 2016. The actual number of nursery and pre nursery pupils on the school register on 6th January 2016 was 23, exactly as forecast.

- **There are waiting lists for places at Darran Park.**

This is incorrect; there are no waiting lists for places in any year group at Darran Park and no admission applications for places at this school have been refused.

- **The free bus from Blaenllechau is being withdrawn/charges are to be introduced**

This bus is provided by the Council due to the nature of the walking route and there are no plans at the present time to either withdraw it or introduce charges for it.

- **Has federation of the schools, or using the Infants' School for children aged 3 to 5 years (with older pupils attending Darran Park) been considered?**

The options considered and the reasons for discounting them are outlined in the consultation document (pages 15 and 16). The creation of a split site Primary School has not been considered as it does not accord with the preferred model of 'all through' Primary education adopted by this Council.

- **Have you considered relocating the SEN class to create more space?**

This suggestion did not form part of our proposal as it has not been considered in this instance.

- **What are the plans for the building work at Darran Park?**

Our ideas in this regard were displayed at the consultation event held on 8th December 2015, but it was made clear that no firm plans had been agreed as no decision on this proposal has yet been made.

- **What plans do you have for the future use of the Ferndale Infants' building?**

As with the response to the previous question, no consideration has yet been given to this as no decision has yet been made.

- **Classes will be too big.**

Class size legislation will be adhered to, ie no more than 30 per class for the Foundation Phase, with this figure being a recommended guideline for Key Stage 2. The addition of more pupils to Darran Park will lead to additional classes being created, not to children being placed within existing ones.

- **Darran Park Primary is already overcrowded and the addition of pupils from Ferndale Infants' will make this situation worse.**

This statement is incorrect. Darran Park Primary School has a published pupil capacity of 315 statutory age places, plus 45 Nursery places, making 360 pupil places in total. These figures are calculated using the floor area measurements of the available teaching space within the school building. At the date of the last published pupil census (January 2015), there were 247 statutory age pupils on roll, meaning that there were 68 surplus places at that point in time. There were also 48 nursery children attending at this time and 5 pupils in the LA designated ALN class. At the same point in time, there were 40 children of statutory school age on roll at Ferndale Infants', plus 21 nursery children. We have provided this information in our consultation document, together with a commitment to undertake remodelling work at the school to provide additional places if these are deemed necessary. Information on possible options outlining ways in which we may achieve this were provided at the open evening held at the school on 8th December 2015.

- **Class sizes at Darran Park already exceed legal limits; some have nearly 40 pupils**

This statement is also incorrect. Welsh Government legislation stipulates that no class catering for pupils in the Foundation Phase, which covers the year groups Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 should exceed 30 in number. This legislation does not apply to the Nursery age group and is only a recommendation for Key Stage 2 classes (Years 3 to 6). In November 2015, the sizes of the classes at Darran Park were as follows:

Nursery (Bees)	35 pupils
Reception (Caterpillars)	29 pupils
Year 1 (Butterflies)	28 pupils
Year 2 (Ladybirds)	23 pupils
Year 3 /4 (Squirrels)	30 pupils
Year 3 /4 (Woodpeckers)	26 pupils
Year 4 (Bluebirds)	30 pupils
Year 5 /6 (Foxes)	31 pupils
Year 5 /6 (Otters)	31 pupils
Year 5 /6 (Owls)	32 pupils
ALN Class (Spiders)	5 pupils

- **Parents should have a choice of school for their child**

Legislation on school admissions stipulates that parents have the right to express a preference for their school of choice, not that they must have a choice of schools. The obligation on local authorities is to ensure that demand for school places from within a defined catchment area can be met and this proposal meets that obligation. Parents are able to select alternative schools in the area if they so wish and providing that the alternative school has not reached its admissions limit in the year group required, their preference will be met.

Responses to the matters raised at the meetings outlined above are, as indicated, summarised in the notes of the meetings attached as Appendix 2. Also enclosed as part of this Appendix are summaries of the questionnaires received (in total) and comments posted on a board provided for this purpose at the open evening. The main issues raised during consultation, with our responses to them include:

The View of Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales) of the Overall Merits of the Proposal.

Estyn has provided us with the following as their response to this consultation process:

This report has been prepared by Her 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 and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

Introduction

The proposal is by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The proposal is that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council discontinues Ferndale Infants' School and provides alternative provision at Darren Park Primary School.

Summary/ Conclusion

It is Estyn's opinion that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the present standards of education provision in the area.

Estyn inspected both schools in 2011, when each school's current performance was judged as good and prospects for improvement also good. Over the last three years, there has been a general trend of improvement in performance and attendance in both schools.

The schools are regarded as 'paired' schools by the local authority, with children from Ferndale Infants' School usually progressing to key stage 2 at Darren Park Primary School, which is less than half a mile away. The proposals therefore are likely to have limited impact on other schools in the area.

Description and benefits

The proposer has provided a clear rationale for the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its pupils to Darran Park Primary School. This is to create a school of a sustainable size for its catchment area by providing greater educational and financial stability through removing surplus capacity.

The rationale for the proposal is appropriately informed by the proposer's principal model of school organisation to create all through primary schools, which they believe should provide educational benefits and improved outcomes for pupils. It is also informed by a review of its school provision, which shows that, in January 2015, Ferndale Infants' School had a surplus place level of 46% and Darren Park Primary School 21%.

The proposal is that Darran Park Primary school will increase its current number of pupils on roll from 247 to at least 360, which includes nursery provision. The age range of pupils to be

admitted to the school will be unchanged and the school will remain an English medium community primary school.

The proposer outlines the expected benefits of the proposal clearly. This sets out key aspects for improving provision and leadership and management arrangements that would seem to indicate that the proposal would at least maintain the current standards of education in the area. The aspects include enhancing continuity and progression across the phases and releasing resources that will be reinvested to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Other expected benefits outlined include the removal of surplus places at Ferndale Infants' School, the reduction of surplus places at Darren Park Primary School and potential annual revenue savings of £143,000.

The proposer has appropriately considered the two key disadvantages of the proposal. These are the impact on the staff currently employed at Ferndale Infants' School and possible parental preferences for two smaller schools rather than one larger school. However, the proposer has not clearly identified any additional travel time that may be required for nursery and infant children attending Darren Park Primary School. Likewise, it has not considered whether the proposal will result in an increase in the volume of traffic in and around the school site and any measures to address this.

The consultation document does appropriately consider how it will manage most of the risks identified relating to the staffing implications and the building facilities. However, the proposer has stated that it 'does not consider that there are any specific risks associated with the implementation of this proposal and has not, therefore, considered any measures to manage or mitigate such risks'. This assertion is tenuous insofar as the proposer has not identified how they will manage the risk of any parents who may choose alternative provision, which may lead to a reduction in the projected numbers transferring to Darren Park Primary School.

The proposer has provided appropriate evidence to show that it has considered other alternatives to this current proposal. These include closing both schools and creating a new school on a suitable site in the catchment area of the combined schools or federating the two schools. The proposer reasonably justifies the preferred option in the proposal, based on the lack of available sites for a new build and federating the two schools not securing the potential educational benefits from creating a single school.

The proposer has largely considered the impact of the proposal on learner travel arrangements appropriately, which is likely to be limited. It intends to support home to school travel in line with the council's home to school transport policy, which includes transport provision from the village of Blaenllechau. However, the proposal does not address the additional travel time for children transferring from Ferndale Infants' School and the potential for increase in the volume of traffic in and around the Darren Park Primary School site.

The proposer appears to have suitably considered the impact of the proposals on pupils, staff and the community. The proposer clearly explains what the proposal will mean for

pupils and lists how the proposed changes should improve the quality of the educational provision and have a positive impact on pupils' performance and wellbeing.

Due consideration is given to the potential for short and long-term changes in the staffing structure at Darren Park Primary school, with the role of its governing body in determining any changes fully acknowledged. The proposer suitably addresses the future position for the staff at Ferndale Infants' School insofar as the proposal is not creating a new school provision and the senior management and governing body of Darren Park Primary School will remain in post. The proposer has confirmed that once the governing body of Darren Park Primary School has determined its new structure and staffing model, arrangements will be made to fill any vacant posts available, with advice given that priority consideration should be given to existing staff of Ferndale Infants' School, should they make applications. The proposer's established human resource policies and procedures are outlined.

The proposer confirms that a community impact assessment has been completed for this proposal, the details of which are available for scrutiny. The proposer reasonably asserts that the overall effect of the proposals on the community is considered to be neutral, as Darren Park Primary School will continue to offer the full range of community facilities as it does at present.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has considered the impact of the proposals on outcomes, provision and leadership and management appropriately. Useful details about the two schools concerned, including the performance of each school compared to similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is provided. This shows that in the 2014 national school categorisation system, Ferndale Infants' School is placed the amber support. The regional consortium asserts that this is because of the inconsistent performance of pupils when compared to similar schools. In contrast, Darren Park Primary School is in the yellow category, which the regional consortium states is because the school has many strengths, with evidence of self-improvement activities which have had an impact on improved outcomes for pupils.

The proposer reasonably assumes that by discontinuing Ferndale Infants' School and providing alternative provision at Darren Park Primary School, this will enable the school to create a Foundation Phase department that will promote the sharing of skills and expertise across more viable teams. The proposer believes that this will have a positive impact on pupil outcomes and the quality of provision in this phase of the school.

The proposer has not included an evaluation on the current quality of teaching or the quality of leadership and management at each school. However, the proposer reasonably asserts that, should the proposal proceed, it should provide greater opportunities for staff to further develop their expertise and create enhanced leadership opportunities for staff. The proposer has appropriately considered the likely impact of the proposals to ensure delivery of the full curriculum at the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. The proposer reasonably asserts that by creating a larger primary school this will enable a broader and more diverse curriculum to be developed, create wider extra-curricular opportunities for pupils and enable greater continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils. It also

provides an outline of how it plans to improve its teaching accommodation, outdoor learning and play spaces for pupils, together with associated costs to support this provision. The proposer has taken appropriate account of the impact of the proposal on vulnerable groups, including pupils with special educational needs, through an equality impact assessment. The proposal affirms that the designated local authority class for pupils with special educational needs, which caters for pupils at Foundation Phase with complex learning difficulties, currently based at Darran Park Primary School, will remain at the school following the transfer of pupils from Ferndale Infants' School.

The proposer has not provided details of how it will ensure that the disruption to learners is minimised, if the proposal proceeds. For example, there is no recognition of the disruption that will be caused by the proposed building work and alterations to the grounds and no assurance that work will be timetabled to minimise disruption, with the appropriate measures to be taken to ensure pupil safety.

6. Conclusion

The recommendation to be considered at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet to be held in January 2016 is that a statutory notice be published, to progress this proposal. The statutory notice will be published on 29th January 2016 and it will allow for a 28 day period, that includes 15 school days (to 5pm on 29th February 2016) during which any person may lodge an objection to the proposals. At the end of the objection period, an Objection Report will be compiled, summarising any objections received, this Report will be published within 7 days of the determination of the proposal. The outcome of this part of the process will be considered by Cabinet again at their meeting to be held in March 2016, for a final decision on the proposal to be made.

Appendix 1



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF
FERNDALE INFANTS' SCHOOL, WITH THE TRANSFER
OF ITS PUPILS TO DARRAN PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL,
FROM 1ST SEPTEMBER 2016.**

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Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its pupils to Darran Park Primary School. Work to remodel Darran Park and improve its accommodation will be required prior to any transfer of pupils taking place.

It is proposed that Darran Park Primary school shall have a total capacity of at least 360 places after remodelling work is completed, which includes Nursery provision. It will have an admission number of 45 per year group and the same number of Nursery places (45) will be available. Additional Nursery pupils can be accommodated by utilising spare capacity from within the school, if required. The age range of pupils to be admitted will be unchanged, i.e. 3 – 11 years and the school will remain an English Medium Community Primary School. The admission of pupils will be managed by the local authority; on implementation of the proposals it is intended that all pupils attending Ferndale Infants' shall automatically transfer to Darran Park Primary school, subject to parental preference.

The designated local authority (LA) class for pupils with special educational needs, which caters for pupils at Foundation Phase with complex learning difficulties currently based at Darran Park Primary School will remain at the school following the transfer of pupils from Ferndale Infants'.

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of Ferndale Infants' and Darran Park Primary Schools
- Pupils of Ferndale Infants' and Darran Park Primary Schools
- Parents, carers, guardians, and staff members of Ferndale Infants' and Darran Park Primary Schools
- Other governing bodies of neighbouring primary schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies and regional Assembly Members for the area
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- Central South Education Consortium
- South East Wales Transport Association
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The local Communities First Partnership
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 2nd November 2015 and will be completed at 5pm on 31st December 2015. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in January 2016. This consultation report will be available for all persons to view on the Council internet site and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on Page 5 of this document.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the report and will decide, based on the feedback, whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not proceed with the proposal.

If the Cabinet decides to proceed with the proposal a Statutory Notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections **must** be made in writing or by email, and sent to the Council within 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the outcome of the statutory notice at the next available Cabinet meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal.

If there are objections, the Council's Director of Education & Lifelong Learning will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and his response to them within 7 days of the day of the determination of the proposal, This report will also be available for all persons to view on the Council's internet site and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on Page 5 of this document.

If the Council's Cabinet approve the proposal, the proposal will be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice or any subsequently modified date. In the case of this proposal the implementation date is 1st September 2016.

What do you have to consider?

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposed change to primary education provision in Ferndale. We would like you to consider the information contained within this document and to hear your views as to whether or not you support the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its pupils to Darran Park Primary School. The existing school building of Darran Park Primary will be remodelled with additional capacity provided, refurbished and improved to benefit all of the pupils who will attend.

How do you make your views known?

Consultation events will be held and you are welcome to attend the appropriate meeting.

School Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
Ferndale Infants' School	Governors and Staff Meeting	17 th November 2015, 4 – 6 pm	Ferndale Infants' School
Darran Park Primary School	Governors and Staff Meeting	18 th November 2015, 4 – 6 pm	Darran Park Primary School
Ferndale Infants' School	School Council	17 th November 2015, 2.30 – 3.00 pm	Ferndale Infants' School
Darran Park Primary School	School Council	18 th November 2015, 2.15 – 2.45 pm	Darran Park Primary School
Both Schools and members of the local community	Parents and public drop in session and exhibition	8 th December 2015, 4 – 6 pm	Darran Park Primary School

A consultation questionnaire is attached, it will also be available at the drop-in session detailed above and on the Council's internet site at <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/consultations/currentconsultation/schoolsconsultations/schoolconsultations.aspx>

The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report to the Council's Cabinet.

You are also welcome to put your views, or any questions you may have on the proposals in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
School Organisation and Planning Unit
Ty Trevithick,
Abercynon CF45 4UQ Telephone (01443) 744227 Fax (01443) 744201

E-mail schoolplanning@rctednet.net

All correspondence should be received **no later than 5pm Thursday, 31st December 2015.**

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

All schools affected by this proposal are English medium schools and therefore all the consultation documents are provided via the English language. If a Welsh language copy of the consultation document is required, please contact the above address.

Background to the proposal

Information on the Schools – Ferndale Infants’ School

Ferndale Infants’ School (Ferndale Infants’) is an English Medium Community School located at North Road, Ferndale and the school site consists of a modern style building, constructed in 1985. The Council has invested £11K of capital investment and £40K on general maintenance in this school since 2009. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Ferndale Infants’ is graded a B for condition and a B for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively. This means that the building condition overall is satisfactory, but is identifying minor remedial works.

As this is a consultation process, no decisions have yet been made in respect of this proposal, including any future use of the Infants’ school building and land. However, if the proposal is eventually agreed, we will actively seek an alternative educational use for the building in the first instance, prior to any consideration of disposal of it.

The pupil numbers in Ferndale Infants’ over the past five years are shown below and are obtained from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. The numbers shown exclude nursery age pupils, as we are required to exclude these from the table by the Welsh Government’s Statutory School Organisation Code, however we have shown the nursery numbers separately.

Ferndale Infants’ School					
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total statutory aged pupils	56	54	47	39	40
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	24	17	22	25	21

Over the next five years the pupil forecasts for Ferndale', which are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government, are as follows:

Ferndale Infants' School									
Projected No on roll in January	Capacity of the School	2015 (Actual)	(2015 % surplus places)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020
Statutory aged pupils	75	40	(46.6%)	35	38	36	36	34	54.67%
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	24	21		23	21	21	19	18	

Ferndale Infants' School was inspected by Estyn in November 2011 and the school's current performance was deemed good, with its prospects for improvement also good.

Estyn also set out that, in order to build upon the progress made to date, the school should:

- R1** Ensure that more able pupils' extended writing skills are developed appropriately
- R2** further strengthen the links between the school's monitoring procedures and its self-evaluation
- R3** provide better opportunities for parents to contribute to the self-evaluation arrangements.

Since September 2012, the Council's School Improvement Services have been provided by the Central South Consortium, a regional school improvement service for the five local authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. The Consortium categorises the performance of each school in the region and considers that, in the current categorisation (2014 data):

"Ferndale Infants' is currently classed as an 'Amber' school within the National School Improvement and Categorisation Matrix (Green, Yellow, Amber, Red). This is because of the inconsistent performance of pupils when compared to similar schools."

The tables below set out the performance of Ferndale Infants' for the key measures of educational performance over the past three years and compare the school to similar schools across Wales based on free school meals. The three year average of the percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals (all pupils) is 38.6%.

Percentage of pupils at the end of Year 2 achieving at least outcome 5, and the Foundation Phase Indicator

	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile*	2014	2014 Benchmark Quartile*	2015	2015 Benchmark Quartile*
Foundation Phase Indicator	77.8	2	72.7	3	80.0	3
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	94.4	2	81.8	4	100	1
Language literacy and communication skills English	77.8	3	81.8	3	86.7	2
Mathematical development	94.4	1	81.8	3	86.7	2

* - benchmark quartiles – 1 being the highest, 4 the lowest.

Percentage of half-day sessions attended by pupils of statutory school age during the academic year

	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
% attendance	92.9	2	93.0	4	94.5	N/A published December

Information on the Schools – Darran Park Primary School

Darran Park Primary School (Darran Park) is an English Medium Community Primary School located at Brook Street, Ferndale, just 0.4 miles from Ferndale Infants'. The school site consists of a brick building originally constructed in the 1940's as a grammar school, which was extensively refurbished and remodelled in 1996 to create a Primary school. The Council has invested £313K of capital investment in this school since 2009, including replacement roofing, new energy efficient lighting, upgrades to classrooms and refurbishment of pupil toilets. The Council will continue with this programme of investment in forthcoming years, to ensure that the building is maintained to a good standard. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Darran Park is graded a B for condition and a B for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively.

The pupil numbers in Darran Park over the past five years are shown below and are obtained from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year.

Darran Park Primary School					
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total statutory aged pupils*	249	252	271	262	247
Pre-nursery and nursery pupils	33	44	34.5	33.5	50

* Excludes the LA SEN class

Over the next five years the pupil forecasts (excluding the LA SEN class) for Darran Park, which are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government, are as follows:

Darran Park Primary School									
Capacity of the School	2015 (Actual)	(% surplus places 2015)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020	
	315	247	(21.5%)	256	251	243	246	233	26%
Pre-nursery and nursery pupils (45 places)	50		42	38	37	36	33		

The following table depicts the capacity and numbers on roll at Darran Park in future years should these proposals proceed:

Darran Park Primary School incorporating Ferndale Infants' pupils									
Capacity of the School (proposed)	2015 (Actual)	(% surplus places 2015)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020	
	315	287	(8.8%)	291	289	279	282	267	15.2%
Pre-nursery and nursery pupils (45 places)	61		65	59	58	55	51		

The number of nursery places available at the school can be increased to meet evidenced demand, by utilising spare capacity that will exist within the school building. The nursery places will be funded on a part time basis in line with all other schools in RCT.

Darran Park Primary School was inspected by Estyn in February 2011. The school's current performance was deemed to be good, and its prospects for improvement also good.

Estyn also set out that, in order to build upon the progress made to date, the school should:

- R1** Raise standards in English and mathematics by building on recent improvements, so that end of key stage results reflect pupils' achievements
- R2** Continue to develop staff areas of expertise, team work and distributed management arrangements
- R3** Enhance the provision for information communications technology (ICT), so that pupils in all classes have immediate access to computers as an integral part of their learning.

Since September 2012, the Council's School Improvement Services have been provided by the Central South Consortium, a regional school improvement service for the five local authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. The Consortium categorises the performance of each school in the region and considers that, in the current categorisation (2014 data):

"Darran Park is currently classed as a 'Yellow' school within the National School Improvement and Categorisation Matrix (Green, Yellow, Amber, Red). This is because the school has many strengths, with evidence of self improvement activities which have had an impact on improved outcomes for pupils. Self evaluation is robust and evaluative and identifies the appropriate areas for development'.

The tables that follow set out the performance of Darran Park for the key measures of educational performance over the past three years and compare the school to similar schools across Wales based on free school meals. The three year average of the percentage of pupils with free school meals is 22.5%.

Percentage of pupils at the end of Year 2 achieving at least outcome 5, and the Foundation Phase Indicator

	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile*	2014	2014 Benchmark Quartile*	2015	2015 Benchmark Quartile*
Foundation Phase Indicator	77.4	3	72.7	4	78.4	4
Personal and social development	83.9	4	86.4	4	91.9	4

wellbeing and cultural diversity						
Language literacy and communication skills English	77.4	4	77.3	4	83.8	4
Mathematical development	83.9	3	81.8	4	86.5	4

* - benchmark quartiles – 1 being the highest, 4 the lowest. This data includes the performance of the pupils in the LA designated SEN class, who are placed in this school by the LA and do not necessarily live in the catchment area.

Percentage of pupils at the end of Year 6 who have achieved the expected level

	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
Core Subject Indicator	81.8	3	90.9	1	91.7	2
English	81.8	4	90.9	2	94.4	2
Maths	86.4	3	92.7	1	94.4	2
Science	84.1	4	90.9	2	91.7	3

Percentage of half-day sessions attended by pupils of statutory school age during the academic year

	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
% attendance	93.3	3	94.3	2	95.2	N/A published December

What is the basis for this Proposal?

In recent years, Estyn has sharpened its approach to inspection of schools and local authorities and has raised the bar in respect of what it considers to be good and excellent provision. Furthermore, Estyn has taken a very hard line on local authorities in Wales that have weaknesses in key areas such as corporate governance, educational standards, attendance levels, surplus places and safeguarding.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's education services was inspected by Estyn in March 2012, at which time the following recommendations were made :

- **Overall Judgement – Adequate** (Strengths outweigh areas for improvement);
- **Capacity to Improve – Adequate.**

In addition Estyn made the following recommendations for the Council:

- R1 - raise standards in schools particularly in key stage 4;
- R2 - improve attendance rates in all schools;
- R3 - improve the evaluation and analyses of data across service areas and partnerships to drive improvements in outcomes for learners;
- R4 - use the full powers available to the authority to improve leadership and management in schools;
- R5 - reduce surplus places; and
- R6 - improve the rigour and the level of scrutiny and challenge across all services and partnerships.

Over the past three years the Council had focused its attention on these six recommendations, and in particular Recommendations 1, 2 & 5, which will have the greatest impact on pupil achievement in our schools. As a result, schools that, when compared with similar schools across Wales based on free school meals, are in the third and fourth quartiles are being subject to significant challenge, scrutiny and support.

Estyn also highlighted that the Council had the highest number of surplus places in Wales and that action had to be taken to address this issue. This was followed up by a letter from the Welsh Government Minister for Education & Skills in June 2012 that instructed the Council to take action in respect of surplus places or the Welsh Government would take responsibility for removing the surplus places.

The Elected Members have accepted Estyn's recommendations and have undertaken a review of our school provision. The criteria we have used for selecting schools for review is one or more of the following:

- Surplus places in excess of 25% of published capacity;
- Buildings that are beyond economic repair/not fit for purpose;
- Financially unviable (usually due to a sharp fall in pupil numbers);
- Schools considered to be 'small' schools, i.e. schools with 90 or fewer pupils of statutory school age;
- Separate infant and junior schools in close proximity;
- 'Paired' schools, i.e. where children progress from one of the schools to the other;
- Mixed aged classes where there are more than two age groups in one class;
- Schools considered to be at risk, based on their academic Key Stage data and the quality of the leadership, of meeting Estyn's criteria as a school in need of significant improvement or special measures.

Ferndale Infants' and Darran Park have been assessed against the aforementioned criteria:

- The schools are 'paired' with each other, i.e. the children usually progress from the one to the other;
- The schools are located on sites that are in close proximity to each other;
- Darran Park has a current (January 2015) surplus places level of 21%; however, the comparable figure at Ferndale Infants' is 46%;
- Both schools have mixed aged classes;
- Pupil attendance has been mixed over the past 4 years when compared to similar schools in Wales, although Darran Park is now showing some improvement.

The opportunity exists to bring the two schools together to create a larger, more educationally viable Primary school.

What is the educational case for closing Ferndale Infants' and creating a larger Primary School?

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

It is the Council's view that creating a larger Primary school for the communities of Ferndale and Blaenllechau will:

- **Improve educational outcomes;**
 - Create a Foundation Phase department that will promote the sharing of skills and expertise across more viable teams;
 - Provide teaching and support staff with more opportunity to develop professionally;
 - Enable greater opportunities for staff to further develop expertise;
 - Provide a more appropriate curriculum and wider extra-curricular opportunities which will improve attendance and educational outcomes;
- **Improve educational provision;**
 - Provide the conditions that will enable a broader and more diverse curriculum to be developed to better meet the needs of the school's young people and in ways that will be viable and sustainable over the longer term;
 - Improve the range and quality of facilities and learning resources available to the benefit of all pupils;
 - Enable greater continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils;
 - Allow for the potential for financial savings in terms of staffing structures and purchase of services, which accrue to a larger school; and

- Broaden the range of extra-curricular and out-of-school activities and develop them in ways that are sustainable over the longer term;
 - The future capital investment benefits that would arise from the modernisation of one institution rather than two;
 - Create a school of a sustainable size for its catchment area by removing surplus capacity, providing greater educational and financial stability;
 - Release significant resources that will be reinvested in improving standards of teaching and learning, which otherwise would not have been available;
- **Improve leadership and management;**
 - Provides the opportunity for the Headteacher to distribute key leadership tasks such as child protection, literacy, numeracy, special educational needs etc to a greater number of staff. Often in a small school, the Headteacher takes responsibility for the vast majority of these tasks;
 - Creates leadership opportunities for other staff, and for others to specialise in key areas, which will enhance educational provision and outcomes;
 - Allow teaching and support staff access to a wider range of responsibilities:
 - Improved career prospects;
 - Improved curriculum co-ordination;
 - An increased range of expertise;
 - Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination.

Darran Park currently provides the full Primary age curriculum and this will, of course, continue.

It is proposed that Darran Park will be remodelled and its teaching accommodation improved, to ensure that there are sufficient school places for children resident in its catchment area both at the present time and in the future. The school building will therefore be further refurbished, together with provision of improved outdoor learning and play spaces for pupils. This will entail remodelling of the existing playgrounds for creative play and the utilisation of the 'all weather' pitch in the adjacent public park (also called Darran Park) which is directly adjacent to the school, sharing a boundary wall and fence. Additional footpaths, fencing and gates will be installed to ensure the school has direct and secure access to the park from the school grounds.

A larger Primary School for Ferndale will be able to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced and secure financial situation. Overall, the single, larger Primary School will be more financially viable than the Infants' and Primary schools in their current form.

What will this Proposal mean for the school pupils?

In making the proposed change, most things will not change for the children at all; indeed, there are several perceived benefits that can be realised:

- Some may have a longer or a different route to school;
- The pupils in the classroom are more likely to be of their own age and there will be more opportunities to make friends with children of a similar age;
- Being in classes with predominantly their own age group, the teacher will be better able to offer the pupils a wider and more varied curriculum to support all learners, including the least and most able;
- The teachers and teaching assistants may be different, however, a number of the teachers and teaching assistants should, with the agreement of the Darran Park governing body, be able to transfer between the schools, if they wish to do so;
- There will be more competition for pupils in and outside the classroom which is what children require if they are to achieve good educational outcomes;
 - Being part of a larger school creates opportunity to engage in a wider range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Transition between the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 will be 'seamless' in a Primary School
- Pupils will not have to physically transfer schools at the end of Year 2

The principal change will be an improvement in the quality of the educational provision, and this should have a significant impact on educational performance of the pupils.

The catchment area of Darran Park will not change, as it currently incorporates that of Ferndale Infants'; the two schools have the same catchment area. The Council's policy regarding free school transport, will continue to apply. Pupils currently resident within the catchment area of these schools do not qualify for free transport at present on distance criteria as the distances from home to school are less than the 2 miles this Council now provides transport at. Transport is however provided from the village of Blaenllechau due to the walking route not being considered to be available. None of the other walking routes to Darran Park have been determined to be not available. This provision will continue, but will be subject to regular review.

The Welsh Government and the Council has adopted the UN 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.

We consider that this proposal benefits the children in the communities of Ferndale and Blaenllechau in accordance with the seven core aims set out above.

What is the likely impact of the Proposal on the staff of the schools?

As with any major change, there could be some short term and possibly longer-term changes in the staffing structure. The governing body of Darran Park would determine any changes.

As this is not creating a new school provision, the senior management and governing body of Darran Park will remain in post. Once the governing body has determined its new structure and staffing model, arrangements will be made to fill any vacant posts available, with advice given that priority consideration should be given to existing staff of Ferndale Infants', should they make applications. The Council has well established Human Resource policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.

What will be the likely impact of the Proposal on the communities of Ferndale and Blaenllechau?

A community impact assessment and an equality impact assessment have been completed for this proposal. These will be updated after the consultation has been completed to ensure that they include pertinent issues that have arisen and need to be taken into account. The community impact assessment and equality impact assessment will be presented to the Council's Cabinet in the report that sets out the consultation feedback received in respect of this proposal. The overall effect of the proposals is considered to be neutral, as Darran Park will continue to offer the full range of community facilities as it does at present. A copy of the community impact assessment and equalities impact assessment are available from the contact details at the start of this document and are also available on the Council website using the link provided on page 5 of this document .

What are the financial implications of the Proposal?

The purpose of creating all through primary schools, as the principal model of school organisation is not driven by financial considerations. Savings that do arise initially benefit the remaining school, as they enable school improvements to be made, and then schools as a whole through redistribution of the savings across the County Borough.

A move from a position with, 'two schools-two budgets', to a single school with a single budget does result in a number of budgets being removed, or reduced, for example, there will only be one budget for a head teacher not two, but conversely the new single school is able to make significant savings from which it benefits. Although it is not possible to be precise about figures related to savings, as much would depend on future decisions of Darran Park's Governing Body, a summary of the known budgetary impacts is set out overleaf.

	Ferndale Infants' (Current)	Darran Park Primary (Current)	Darran Park Primary (Future)	Revenue Savings
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Annual Revenue Budget based on 2015/16 budget	281	916	1,054	143

Building improvements will be made to both current school buildings and sites to address the maintenance backlog and improve the accommodation and facilities at Darran Park Primary School. It is estimated that the total cost of this work will be in the region of £400K, and will be funded by the Council from within existing resources.

There may be redundancy costs associated with these proposals, which are not possible to quantify at the current time. This Council has had a successful track record in the past of minimising the need for compulsory redundancies, by offering alternative placements for displaced staff at other schools in the County Borough, under a formal arrangement it has between its' schools. No redundancy costs have therefore been identified, but in the event of staff choosing this option, all such costs will be met centrally by the LA.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

Some parents may feel that smaller schools are better for pupils rather than one larger school – in other words there could be a view that smaller schools may be more personal and less daunting, particularly for new entrants. Darran Park Primary School after the closure of Ferndale Infants' will still only be the size of slightly above average Rhondda Cynon Taf primary school, with just under 290 statutory age pupils in attendance and there are many much larger, very successful primary schools in the County Borough.

There will be staffing implications in that, for example, there will be need for only one Headteacher. Staff will be concerned about the security of their jobs which is why the temporary governing body will, as soon as possible, once the statutory processes are complete, address the staffing issues. In practice, governing bodies seek to keep as much continuity in the staffing as is possible in these situations.

The Council considers that the educational advantages of the proposal outweigh the short-term impact of the changes for pupils and parents.

The Council does not consider that there are any specific risks associated with the implementation of this proposal and has not, therefore, considered any measures to manage or mitigate such risks.

What alternative options have been considered other than the closure of Ferndale Infants' School?

The current position is that we have a small Infants' school with pupils' transferring into a Primary School (with its own Infant Department) that is just 0.4 miles away, 103 surplus places between the two schools, relatively low levels of attendance in the Infants' school and Ferndale Infants' in an 'Amber' category for support purposes.

The options available to the Council to improve educational performance and ensure the provision represents value for money are to:

- Close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer the pupils to Darran Park Primary School – the proposal;
- Close both schools and create a new school on a suitable site in the catchment area of the combined schools;
- Federate the two schools, maintaining the two school buildings but with one governing body and Headteacher.

At present, we do not have an alternative suitable site to build a brand new school for the Ferndale ward.

In respect of the option to federate the governing bodies, this would create a two -site school under one Headteacher and one governing body. Two separate legal entities would continue employing two sets of staff. This option would not enable the educational benefits that accrue from deploying the teachers across both schools and improving the standards of teaching and learning that arise from creating a single school. Both schools would still be subjected to separate inspections by Estyn also.

Therefore, the other options have been discounted and the preferred option is that proposed in this consultation document.

What is the statutory process to close a school?

The Code on School Organisation ("The Code") is made under Sections 38 and 39 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The Code came into force on 1 October 2013 and applies in respect of all school proposals published by way of a statutory notice after that date. Proposals to close a school have to follow the following process:

1. The Council's Cabinet considers the Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
2. At the start of the consultation period the Council **must** provide consultees with a consultation document and give them at least 42 days in which to respond, with at least 20 of these days being school days. If the Council considers it appropriate meetings are held with stakeholders during the consultation period;
3. Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council's officers own responses is published in a consultation

report within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration;

4. The Council's Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation period. If the decision is to proceed, Step 5 is taken. If a new option emerges during the consultation which the Council's Cabinet wish to consider, then Steps 1-3 are repeated;
5. Statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The notice **must** be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) in the notice period;
6. If objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them before the end of 7 days beginning with the day of its determination;
7. The Council's Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
8. If the proposals receive approval they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date.

Consultation Response Pro-forma

In order to help the Council reach a decision, it would be very helpful if you could answer the following questions. Completed questionnaires should be returned to:

*Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
School Organisation and Planning Unit
Ty Trevithick
Abercynon
CF45 4UQ
or by fax to 01443 744201, or e-mail schoolplanning@rctednet.net*

The Proposal

The proposal is to close Ferndale Infants' and transfer all the pupils to Darran Park Primary School. It is proposed that the school would close on 31 August 2016 with the pupils transferring to Darran Park on 1 September 2016.

1. Do you agree with the proposal? Yes No Not sure

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

2. Please state any additional views or points which you would like to be taken into account (attach additional sheets if necessary)

3. Please indicate who you are (eg parent of a pupil at named school, governor at named school etc.)

4. Name (optional)

5. Please provide contact details if you wish to be notified of publication of the consultation report

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Please forward completed questionnaires to the above address no later than 31st December 2015.

Appendix 2

Notes of a meeting held with the members of the School Council of Ferndale Infants' School on 17th November 2015, to consider the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and to transfer the pupils to Darran Park Primary.

Present

Mrs J Hadley, School Organisation Manager

Mrs R Rees, Headteacher

6 members of the School Council of Ferndale Infants' School (five Year 2 pupils and one Year 1 pupil)

Mrs Hadley opened the meeting by introducing herself and then asked the children to introduce themselves also.

Mrs Hadley explained that she was here today to discuss an idea to close Ferndale Infants' School and to transfer the children to Darran Park Primary. She then asked the children if they were aware of these plans (they confirmed they were) and what they thought of them, were they good or bad?

The responses from the children were:

- I think it is bad, I don't want this school to close.
- I think it is good, my brother is in Darran Park.
- I think it is good, I want to go up to Darran Park, but I also think it is bad because I like this school and don't want it to close.
- I think it is good, I want to go to Darran Park because my brother is up there.
- I think it is good, we can learn lots of different things in Darran Park.
- I think it is bad, I like this school and don't want it to shut down.
- I would be worried if I couldn't do the work and couldn't do things up there.
- I am scared, I have never been up there. Mrs Hadley said that no child should feel scared in school, if they were ever worried about something or felt scared they should always tell someone, a member of staff preferably.

Mrs Hadley asked the children if they had any questions at all, or wanted to add to anything they had said, they did not. She then thanked the children for their comments and for attending, the meeting was then closed.

Notes of a meeting held with the members of the School Council of Darran Park Primary School on 18th November 2015, to consider the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and to transfer the pupils to Darran Park Primary.

Present

Mrs J Hadley, School Organisation Manager

Mr T Britton, Head of Performance

10 members of the School Council of Darran Park Primary School, accompanied by a member of school staff

Mrs Hadley and Mr Britton opened the meeting by introducing themselves and then asked the children to introduce themselves also.

Mr Britton asked the children if they knew why this meeting had been called. They replied that they did, it was to talk about the possibility of Ferndale Infants' closing and the children transferring to Darran Park. Mr Britton responded by saying that The Council were considering this and need to ask people what they think, including the school pupils. He asked if they understood what the word 'consultation' meant, they confirmed that they did.

He then asked the children in turn what they thought about the proposal and whether they felt it was a good, or bad idea. Their responses were:

- I am happy about it, but sad at the same time as I used to attend Ferndale. I am happy because my cousins in Ferndale will be coming here.
- We will need more play area. Can we build the school bigger by going up (constructing a second floor). Mrs Hadley advised that this would not be possible.
- We will need more toilets, ours are very small.
- The Infants' Yard will need more room but I don't think it will be safe for them to use the park. The teachers or older children could however go with them to supervise and keep them safe.
- We could make the gardens smaller, or use one of them for the Infants'.
- We could build more classrooms at the side of the school for the Infants' as this area is not used at the moment.
- Create areas outside for the pupils to work. A shelter would help in poor weather.
- The hall will be full, knock down the PE cupboard to make more room.
- It is good for the Infants' to come here, we can get to know them better. Improve the yard for everyone, eg draw hopscotch and other games on it.
- Can we have AstroTurf on the yard so people don't hurt themselves if they fall? Install play equipment such as swings.
- Move the football area to the bottom of the yard (another pupil complained that this would make their playground smaller).
- Several suggestions to improve the play areas were made.

- We could have a buddy scheme, to help the children make friends and welcome them to our school. We could have a 'buddy bench' or a friendship stop where children who feel sad could go and sit and we could join them.

Mr Britton then asked the children what did they think would be the good things with only having one school instead of two? The children's responses and further replies were:

- It would be easier for parents, they would only have one school to drop their children off at.
- Make access to the park better, have a path leading to it, with the teacher having a key. Mrs Hadley said that the Council are looking to improve access to the Astro turf pitch, to make it easier and safer for the pupils of this school to use, also the children from the Welsh School would be able to use it as well.
- The walls in the Junior yard are crumbling, they need to be repaired.
- Put plastic tubs out in the yard so that playground leaders can collect play equipment from them.
- We will be able to make new friends and help the younger children.
- We have got iPads and laptops, the Ferndale children will be able to use them.

Mr Britton asked the children whether they could think of anything that may not be good about this proposal:

- We think that the school yard may be too small. Can we join the yards together and have different break times?
- Move the staff room to the room we are in now (Mrs Hadley said that it was possibly too small for such use). This room is used for interventions now.
- Can we have single desks with lids instead of tables in the classrooms, it would make things easier for us as our books etc are kept in trays at the front of the classroom.
- Would the Infants' staff come up here to work? Mr Britton replied that this was a matter for the school governors to decide, but hopefully they can.
- When will the infant children join us and how?

Mr Britton ended the meeting by thanking the children for their helpful ideas and suggestions. He said that if they thought of anything else they wanted to say on this matter, they could tell their teachers and they would send the details in to the Council.

Notes of a meeting held with the members of the staff and Governing Body of Ferndale Infants' School on 17th November 2015, to consider the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer provision to Darran Park Primary School.

Present

Mr C Bradshaw, Interim Chief Executive
Mr T Britton, Head of Performance
Miss A Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools
Mrs J Hadley, School Organisation Manager
Mrs E Williams, HR Adviser
17 members of staff and governors of Ferndale Infants' School

Mr Bradshaw (CB) thanked the staff and governors for attending. The officers present introduced themselves .

CB then outlined the proposal in question, namely to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its provision to Darran Park Primary School. He outlined the reasons and rationale behind the proposals, as advised in the detailed consultation document that had been widely circulated. The purpose of this meeting is to assist the consultation process, by affording staff and governors the opportunity to ask questions or raise comments, statements etc in respect of the proposals as outlined. Every effort will be made to answer questions if possible. The statutory process that must be followed was also outlined. It was noted that this part of the process is consultation; the receipt of objections is not appropriate at this time.

CB also highlighted a typographic error in the consultation document; there was a reference (on page 16) to a temporary governing body. The word 'temporary' should be deleted as the governing body of Darran Park would remain in post and would be unchanged.

The meeting was then opened to questions and comments:

- A question was raised regarding the position of the staff. CB and Mrs Williams (EW) both gave information on the management of change and redeployment policies in place.
- What is your success rate on achieving redeployment – EW advised that it is fairly high, but dependent on the vacancies available at the time and the personal circumstances of staff, eg their ability to travel. The policy covers all staff, both teaching and support staff. Salary protection (at one grade only) will be given for 3 years, but every effort will be made to find posts that match the staff member's current grade. Protection of hours worked cannot be made.
- Will posts at Darran Park be ringfenced? Advised no, but the governors of Darran Park will be asked to give displaced staff from Ferndale Infants' prior consideration for any posts that may be created. This will be a matter for the governors to determine.

- CB advised that there is no provision for headteachers and deputy headteachers to be redeployed as all such posts must be advertised nationally. Postholders could however be placed in temporary positions that could become available. Opportunities for VER would be available to staff if appropriate. Staff in other schools could also be offered the opportunity for VER if this releases their post for displaced staff.
- Will staff have to apply for posts in Darran Park and how will the governing body make their appointments? EW provided information.
- Would part time staff at Darran Park be given priority if full time posts are created in this instance? EW advised that this was a matter for the governing body to determine.
- No decision on this proposal will be made until the end of the Spring Term. Can staff speak to HR in the meantime to find out what their position is, to put their minds at ease? EW advised that HR can provide general advice and guidance and can come out to the school to speak with staff.
- Staff would like to receive information as early as possible. CB advised that we will have a clearer picture regarding the outcome of the consultation process by next Easter.
- This uncertainty for staff is soul destroying, we cannot move forward until a decision is made, in addition formula budgets are not known until late March. CB stated that, unfortunately, nothing could be done to alter this timetable as the Council will not be in a position to finalise its overall budget until mid- March.
- Have safeguarding arrangements been put in place at Darran Park with regard to the plans for use of the Astro turf? Miss Richards (AR) indicated that both Darran Park and YGG Llyn y Forwyn use the pitch at present, the proposal is to make it available exclusively for school use during the day and community use outside school hours. We are looking to create a safe and secure access, with a fence to allow children to access the pitch more safely and securely than at present.
- Will the pupils have to cross the public areas of the park? There are concerns that members of the public will be using the park at the same time. AR advised that the plan is to put a secure fence line from the school site to the Astro turf, which will then be closed to the public during school hours. Very little outside use is made of the facility during the day. This statement was disputed by those present.
- The comprehensive school uses it during the day. Darran Park does not use it regularly. We have concerns at the Astro turf being used as a playground, it is not safe. AR stated that the Council would not put something in place that is not safe, safeguarding of children is our priority.
- Staff will have to risk assess this daily. What if the public want to use the pitch during the day? AR advised that the pitch is not used during the day and that currently all usage should be pre-booked in any case.
- What about the public using the park when children are there? AR advised that access to the Astro turf will be restricted to school use only. The rest of the park will be open to all users as it is at present.
- Is the Astro turf to be used as a playground or for certain activities only? AR advised that this will be for the school to decide, as they see fit. The Astro turf is not well used during the day at present.

- You are taking a resource away from the community.
- Will the fence be high enough, children can climb the one at present? AR advised that this will be looked at.
- Dogs are being walked on the Astroturf at present. AR advised that the pitch will be secured to prevent such misuse.
- AR advised that the information provided regarding the possible future use of the Astroturf does not mean that it is to be routinely used as a playground. This proposal is intended to improve and enhance the facilities available to the school, but the use of the Astroturf is not required to ensure that this proposal can go ahead. We are not increasing the capacity of Darran Park, it is already large enough to accommodate the pupils who will require a place there. This is about improving and enhancing facilities for all children.
- Removing the use of the Astroturf does not enhance facilities for the community. AR replied by stating that all we are trying to do is to give the schools in the area priority access during the day.
- Have you ever visited the park? AR advised yes, in addition we have never stated that the playground at Darran Park is too small (this was disputed by those present). We are not taking the park away from the public.
- This aspect of the proposal needs to be looked at by the community.
- What work are you going to do in the school? AR advised that the Council is looking to remodel the building and create extra classroom space if this is in fact deemed necessary.
- When will the work start? AR advised next summer, if the proposal is agreed.
- The school will not be ready by September (statement made).
- What if you run out of money? AR advised that the work required will be properly costed and funded appropriately.
- Will you guarantee that you can accommodate the children and keep them safe? CB advised yes.
- Darran Park is too small now, it is at bursting point. CB stated that this is not the case and outlined the capacity of the school and how it is calculated. He referred to the relevant information contained in the consultation document. This data shows that the school has sufficient capacity.
- There is not enough room in the dining room (statement made)
- You are taking facilities away. This will result in larger classes.
- Mr Britton (TB) advised that class size legislation will be adhered to, namely a maximum of 30 per class in the Foundation Phase, with this being a guideline for Key Stage 2.
- The above statement was disputed. It was claimed that there are up to 40 in a class at Darran Park, you cannot move in the classrooms as they are too full and overcrowded. We have evidence that schools in RCT are exceeding this class size limit. (No schools were however named). *(post-meeting note – class size data was obtained from Darran Park, all Foundation Phase classes fully comply with the law and the largest class size at Key Stage 2 is 32 pupils).*
- If this proposal goes forward, will any transitional arrangements be put in place? Advised yes, the Council will work closely with the schools in this regard.

- How are you going to deal with the extra traffic, will you do a full risk assessment? AR advised that this will be done.
- The Blaenllechau free bus is being withdrawn. Mrs Hadley (JH) advised that this is not the case (which was disputed). She advised that this provision will continue and it is provided due to the nature of the route and not on the distance travelled, there has never been any indication made that this bus will be removed.
- Can you give us a date when the risk assessment will be undertaken? CB advised no, it cannot be done at the present time as no decision on this proposal has yet been taken, this is a consultation process only. The Council is asking for views and comments at this stage. He also said that incorrect information appears to be circulating (which was disputed).
- This is a purpose built infant school, why are you spending money on Darran Park when this school is in a good condition? Why can't you open a split site school and put the Foundation Phase pupils here? What will you use the empty building for? CB advised that no decisions on future usage had been made as this would undermine the consultation process; it was again reiterated that no decision on the proposal had been made.
- CB stated that Darran Park is located just 400 yards from Ferndale Infants', it is a Primary School that has the ability to accommodate all children who attend the both schools now. The advantages of larger schools, information that has been supported by Estyn, were outlined.
- We are glad to hear that you are not claiming the reason for this proposal is the standards at this school, but the issue of surplus places. Your document puts this school down. The attendance figures you have quoted for example do not compare us with Darran Park's Foundation Phase. There is only 0.7% difference. We need the data for Darran Park separated so we can compare like with like. CB advised that this data will be available in December and Darran Park will be able to provide it.
- CB advised that all data included in the consultation document is published information which is factually correct. The response from persons present was that they were not happy with the wording of the document, they claimed it showed Darran Park as being poor, some data is in quartile 4.
- The categorisation of the school outlined in the document (amber) is incorrect, the school is now in the yellow category. Advised that the information was correct at the time of publication.
- This is a good school, your document makes us look poor. CB disagreed with this statement and suggested that this was a personal view.
- The impression that you give that we are a failing school is soul destroying, we have had negative reporting in the local press. CB stated that no one in the Council has made such statements and that we have no control over the press.
- AR advised that by 2020, this school will have 54% of its capacity surplus. Welsh Government instructs us to address such issues.
- The community finds it hard to accept the loss of yet another local facility.
- CB stated that Darran Park is a good school, this community is fortunate to have two good schools. Ferndale Community School is one of the fastest improving schools in Wales, the children in this area are getting a good deal. Other local schools in this area have also been recognised by Estyn as good schools and parents have the

choice, due to them having surplus places of placing their children in these schools if they wish.

- CB also advised that the Council will do its utmost to secure posts for any staff that may be displaced at alternative schools in the County Borough. He also reiterated that no final decision on this proposal has been made and that Cabinet will meet to consider this matter further. The views of all persons are important and will be presented to Cabinet for them to consider.

Mr Bradshaw again thanked everyone for their attendance and encouraged them to attend the open evening event scheduled for 8th December 2015. The meeting was then closed.

Notes of a meeting held with the members of the staff and Governing Body of Darran Park Primary School on 18th November 2015, to consider the proposal to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer provision to Darran Park Primary School.

Present

Mrs E Thomas, Temporary Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Miss A Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools
Mrs J Hadley, School Organisation Manager
Mrs E Williams, HR Adviser
17 members of staff and governors of Ferndale Infants' School

The Headteacher welcomed the officers to the school. Mrs Thomas (ET) thanked the staff and governors for attending. The officers present introduced themselves .

ET then outlined the proposal in question, namely to close Ferndale Infants' School and transfer its provision to Darran Park Primary School. She outlined the reasons and rationale behind the proposals, as advised in the detailed consultation document that had been widely circulated. The purpose of this meeting is to assist the consultation process, by affording staff and governors the opportunity to ask questions or raise comments, statements etc in respect of the proposals as outlined. Every effort will be made to answer questions if possible. The statutory process that must be followed was also outlined. It was noted that this part of the process is consultation; the receipt of objections is not appropriate at this time.

ET also highlighted a typographic error in the consultation document; there was a reference (on page 16) to a temporary governing body. The word 'temporary' should be deleted as the governing body of Darran Park would remain in post and would be unchanged.

The meeting was then opened to questions and comments:

- Will the Governing Body have to increase in size? Mrs Hadley (JH) provided information, advising that the governing body will be unchanged.
- Will we have more TLR's to allocate? Advised that this will be a matter for the governing body to determine, the funding for these allowances are determined by pupil numbers.
- Information regarding possible improvements that could be made to the school site and buildings, including the potential to remodel the school and improve its facilities was outlined and discussed.
- If adaptations are not completed on time, what will happen then? AR gave information. She advised that officers will work closely with school staff to ensure that disruption is kept to an absolute minimum.
- A query on school capacity was raised. Will there be enough room in the Infant Department of the school? Advised that the school has sufficient capacity overall,

but it will need to be restructured and reconfigured, the governing body will be assisted in undertaking this process. Reference to the building works being planned was again made.

- The Headteacher queried whether plans for the school would be ready for the open evening to be held shortly. AR gave information. She also advised that officers will support and assist the school in this process, the majority of building works that may be required if the proposal is agreed will be undertaken during school holidays, plans will be produced to cater for all eventualities.
- Query on yard space and options for the use of the Astroturf. The Foundation Phase yard will be crowded. What are you going to do to create easier access to the park? AR gave information.
- There will be a problem if the park is used as there are no toilet facilities there for young pupils. AR confirmed that there are no plans to install such facilities in the park.
- There may be insufficient toilets in the Infants', we will we have additional provision? AR advised yes, if it is required.
- A discussion was held on the use of the Astroturf. Some concerns were expressed regarding the safety of pupils and the proposals to construct fencing. Staffing of this area may be an issue. The Headteacher advised that this could be resolved and managed.
- Some concern was expressed at the loss of the Astroturf facility to the community during the day. Cllr Annette Davies advised that she has not received any complaints from members of the local community in this regard. It was noted that the rest of the park will still be open and available at all times.
- This will affect elderly residents and users of the bowling green, they will have a longer walk through the park. AR advised that this would be looked at, but the intention is to close access gates to the Astroturf only during the day to ensure the safety and security of children using the facility.
- Will the school have to maintain the park facilities? AR advised no, the Education Department will work in conjunction with Leisure Services in this regard, it will not become the responsibility of the governors.
- Mrs Williams (EW) provided information in respect of staffing issues. It will be up to the governors of Darran Park to draw up a new staffing structure for the school if required. The Council will request that the governors give prior consideration for any posts that may become available to the staff of Ferndale Infants' in the first instance, on a redeployment basis. It was noted that there will be no impact on the staff of Darran Park.
- Parking is a major problem at the moment. AR advised that a traffic assessment will be undertaken, but the problem is being caused by parents bringing children to school by car instead of walking. The Council's Highways Division will look at this issue.
- JH confirmed that the free transportation provided by the Council from Blaenllechau is to remain.
- It was noted that pupil numbers are falling at schools throughout this area.

- AR advised that the Council is also looking to improve the outside play space at the school, e.g. by providing canopies/shelter, and by developing and improving the yard and play areas.
- A question was raised as to whether there are any legal requirements in respect of the amount of play area in a school. The response to this question was no.
- Is there a preferred option for the works to be undertaken at this school? AR advised no as there was no firm decision in place as to whether the proposal will go ahead as yet, this would be subject to discussion with the school should the decision be taken to proceed.
- Will the hall be used for dining? AR advised that this was a possible option, this is a common scenario in other schools and works well.
- JH outlined the consultation process that will be undertaken, with timescales.

Mrs Thomas again thanked everyone for their attendance and encouraged them to attend the open evening event scheduled for 8th December 2015. The meeting was then closed.

Summary of questionnaire responses provided

Name	Status	Agree with proposal?	Comments
Not provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	1 page letter attached - main issues raised - ones child is part of an education system disguising good intentions with a ruthless financial restructuring protocol, one has no confidence in unelected quangos making life changing decisions on my son's behalf, education isn't paramount in this financially orientated decision and I am investigating the deregister of my child from the state and home schooling, this would remove my son from an absolutely corrupted government whose only agenda is profit from children.
Provided	Grandparent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Size of classrooms for 30+ children is a backward step for young children, when Blaenllechau Infants' closed Ferndale Infants' was the preferred choice for some parents.
Provided	Grandparent, Ferndale Infants'	No	In bad weather it is difficult for non drivers to take their children to Ferndale Infants' without having to walk all the way to Darran Park. The children not entitled to use the bus would be soaked through, how can they be expected to attend if they are in wet clothes.
Not provided	Parent and local resident	No	Traffic congestion is bad as it is without adding to it. People park wherever they want, it is dangerous and local residents can't park or get out of their garages for work. This needs addressing.

Provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	<p>In addition to concerns about lack of space and resources, I am worried about teaching quality being compromised. Concerns at amount of playground space and traffic, already chaotic around the school. Dinner hall is packed. A serious concern for the Ferndale area, it is affecting the community and will impact on young people's dreams and aspirations in what is a deprived community. The upper Rhondda Fach has far less resources and opportunities than the Rhondda Fawr and Cynon valleys. Cramming more young people in to a very busy school is not going to be a nurturing environment, staff are already stressed, having packed classrooms is not going to achieve their aims.</p>
Provided	Chair of Governors,	Not sure	<p>Yes if just on falling school numbers. The school is a good school on last Estyn report and it is now a yellow school not amber as improvements have been made in the last year. As a purpose built school only 30 years old, consider federating both schools and using Ferndale Infants' as nursery/foundation phase for younger pupils, savings as only one headteacher.</p>
Provided	Parent	No	<p>A small school clearly meets the needs of some children - my daughter thrived at this school and would have struggled to cope at a large school. Choice is needed. Traffic is extremely dangerous, in particular Frederick Street, at the very least consider making this street one-way. An ideal solution would be to keep both schools open until a new site (eg by Greenwood Park) could be identified and a new school built</p>
Provided	Local resident	(no response)	<p>If Ferndale Infants' closes, to avoid taking the northerly quadrangle as a site for new classrooms, consider building a 2 storey structure over the existing car park. Access via a covered ramp would not be difficult and there would be no loss of play</p>

			area. Access to the park with all its complications would be avoided.
Provided	Local resident	No	Increased traffic, school personnel parking in street, no room for residents, parents and personnel parking in street until 8pm on occasions, children's safety is at risk as they run across the roads unsupervised. A conveyance dated 9/12/1920 shows it was gifted to the council and to preserve the lake as a lake, dedicate the remainder of the land forever to the use of the public as a public park and recreation ground.
Not provided	Staff member Ferndale	No	Ferndale has 25 children per class, children's needs are catered for in small groups. Classrooms are excellent with access to outdoors. The school has excellent parent teacher relationships due to its small school ethos. There are maths clubs at lunchtime which could not be delivered in a large school. All children are able to dine together. Class sizes do not exceed 30, unlike Darran Park. Interventions are provided from reception and the children gain from this. We have an open door policy with parents. The school is on the flat next to the bus station, parents do not want to walk up hills with the other siblings. Parking provision around the school is very good with parking available in the side streets. The school has an excellent community spirit with all local families and residents of North Road.

Provided	Governor Ferndale Infants'	No	I do not agree that the proposal is the best option for all parties including council funding/finance. I am sceptical of the data used for the proposal and would like to see better, more transparent data (one page letter attached outlining concerns in this regard). I believe the best option would be to federate the two schools with one headteacher, with Ferndale Infants' accommodating nursery and pre-nursery and Darran Park solely Junior pupils. I feel better long term planning is needed and strongly oppose the closure.
Provided	MEP	No	The proposal does not outline changes that will need to be made to the route to accommodate extra traffic and pedestrians in an already congested area. The remodelling work at Darran Park is lacking in detail. I disagree with denying the wider community the use of Darran Park for sport and recreation. The site of Ferndale Infants' has historical significance as the first free secondary school in England and Wales. It would be a shame to lose this facility and forget the foundations upon which our education system was built.
Not provided	Friend of a parent	No	Closing Ferndale would cause overcrowding in Darran Park and the children's education would suffer. The children will not have enough staff to supervise the extra children, they could be injured and there is a risk of them wandering
Not provided	Ferndale resident	No	I do not believe that large classes are beneficial to this age group, educational needs will not be met.

Provided	Grandparent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Class sizes in Darran Park will be too big, resulting in poor teaching. Transport will become dangerous, twice as many vehicles in small area. Not enough yard space. Astroturf dangerous, too close to lake. Loss of nursery places. Not enough room or teachers. Why build extra classrooms when you already have them at Ferndale Infants'? Poor dinners and lack of room to eat. Poor play space, need to have secure play area, children's safety and wellbeing should come first. Another terrible council decision, waste money paying themselves excessive high wages and then cut schools and other services. Take a look at yourselves.
Not provided	Pupil Ferndale Infants'	No	I love my school, my teachers are so nice
Provided	Grandparent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Class sizes at Darran Park will be too big, difficult to keep up teaching standards in very large classes. Transport will be dangerous, so many vehicles in a small area. Play room in yard will not be big enough. Keep both schools, use Ferndale for Nursery and Reception then Year 1 up in Darran Park, share the head and deputy. This would save money and there will not be any overcrowding
Provided	Great-grandparent	No	Class sizes will be too large, teaching standards will not be met. Danger around school with traffic, not enough play space, poor dining facilities.
Provided	Grandparent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Loss of nursery places. Too many children per class, standards will slip. Not enough classrooms or play space. Poor dining facilities. Danger around school due to traffic. Free school transport is being taken away. Using the astroturf is totally unacceptable and unsafe, you will leave yourself open to possible litigation if safety of children is compromised. Why not keep both schools open with nursery and reception at Ferndale and Year 1

			up in Darran Park with a shared head and deputy, this will save money and keep children safe with a decent standard of education and wellbeing.
Not provided	Pupil Ferndale Infants'	No	My school is the best, the council are stupid
Provided	Parent Ferndale Infants'	No	My children attend the school and are happy there, they have settled and have improved greatly since being there. The school supported them in going to speech therapy, the smaller classes meant they had more help.
Provided	Parent	No	Closing Ferndale will result in overcrowding Darran Park, the council claims they can accommodate the extra children, but we know that not all parents have been able to attend concerts. I know from gathering information and budget reports that the proposal has been given incorrect figures and numbers on more than one occasion. If the proposal is based on incorrect figures how can we trust anything written in this proposal is truthful and correct. If (two named Council officers) can't be bothered to present correct figures when proposing something that is going to affect our children's education in such a detrimental way
Provided	Home owner, Ferndale	No	Taking away our play area in park. We have a lovely park and you want to remove parts.
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Class sizes will be too big. All my children have gone to Ferndale Infants'. The park will be affected, no play area for evenings and weekends.
Not provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Darran Park is already full. The traffic around the school is already bad. Children's education will be affected. Safety issue with parking and using the astroturf

Not provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	I am worried about the shared use of the park, it is not safe to share the space with the public and children from the school.
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Safety and overcrowding
Provided	Grandparent, Ferndale Infants'	No	My grandchildren attend Ferndale, it is an outstanding school that my grandchildren love. There are issues with Darran Park children not having food - we do not live in a Charles Dickens book
Not provided	Resident	No	I work at Ferndale Fire Station, this is going to affect our work. The children's safety is of major concern
Provided	Local resident	No	Badly needed for the children of this valley. Please think your ideas, do not go backwards. Try your best to have jobs for youngsters leaving school, no jobs, no buses to take them
Provided	Parent	No	Not fair on kiddies or parents, not good enough
Not provided	Not provided	No	The council are not doing their job imposing this proposal on Ferndale. To serve the residents you must listen to them and we do not want this. This proposal is absolutely stupid. I really question the council running our area and will definitely be changing my vote
Not provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Inadequate facilities at Darran Park to accommodate displaced children
Not provided	Parent	No	Inadequate facilities at Darran Park to accommodate children
Provided	Parent	No	Inadequate facilities in the surrounding school
Provided	Grandparent	No	Make use of Ferndale Infants' as a going concern
Provided	Parent	No	I am worried about the traffic around Darran Park. Darran Park has a lower record of wellbeing even though you state this is a priority.
Provided	Community member	No	Darran Park is already full, once Ferndale closes where will children go if no room there? Using the football pitch at Darran Park is crazy, it's a community park

Provided	Community member	No	Small class sizes at present have been shown to lead to higher educational attainment in later years. This proposal is likely to increase class and school sizes which will reduce future attainment. This proposal appears very counter-productive and is likely to counteract the investment in an identified area of deprivation. Traffic problems are likely to be exacerbated. The proposal calls for parts of Darran Park, a key community space, to be built on or fenced off. What is the proposed use for the abandoned site and how will this avoid dereliction and be of use to the community?
Provided	Grandparent	No	Lots of people have safety issues. Ferndale Infants' is in the centre of our community and more central for children to get to. Not everyone has transport, children travelling from Highfield and Blaenllechau, bus fare issues. If you close the school you will be filling up bigger classrooms and can you accommodate pupils with special needs and slower progress. This is a good school and in my opinion it should be kept open.
Provided	Grandparent	No	There will be too many pupils in the classes. Ferndale Infants' is excellent, I am dead against the closure. I am concerned at the children leaving school with the extra traffic
Provided	Parent	No	I think it is ridiculous taking children out of a school they are settled in to cram them in to overcrowded classes at Darran Park. They are young children who need to be nurtured. I don't want my child playing in a park at lunchtimes and breaktimes as it has been proposed to use the astroturf as a yard. I would fear for my child's safety.
Provided	Grandparent	No	Darran Park is full to capacity, with already too many pupils
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	No chance this proposal is benefitting our children! This is a selfish move from our council

Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	The infants' will lose their play yard and garden. The traffic is really bad with children's lives being put at risk
Provided	Former parent and aunt	No	Darran Park is already overcrowded and closing Ferndale will only make it worse. Also closing or using the park is dangerous
Not provided	Work in the community	No	Unnecessary closure of a good school to go to an already overcrowded school. Children will not get a good opportunity to learn and be adequately supported in overcrowded classrooms
Provided	Former governor	No	Class sizes in Darran Park will be too big. It is fundamental to put children's needs before a funding issue. Nursery children need to be in a smaller environment and not get lost in a large school with older children. School at a young age needs to be specialised not lost in a big school
Not provided	Grandparent	No	I feel sure that little children aged 3 to 5 are now settled in Ferndale. With overcrowded classrooms the children are bound to miss the attention they had at Ferndale
Provided	Uncle	No	The playground on the astroturf will be a danger zone, the traffic will be super busy, the classrooms will be too cramped, the school will be too busy. If this goes ahead my sister-in-law will move her children out of the school for safety reasons
Provided	Aunt	No	The traffic will be too busy, the astroturf as a playground is ridiculous and the classrooms will be rammed. If this goes ahead my sister will be taking my niece out of the school because the playground will be a danger zone
Not provided	Parent, Ferndale and Darran Park	No	It is a silly idea, classes are full at Darran Park as it is. The astroturf as a playground - the risks are uncountable. Traffic will be awful, an accident waiting to happen.
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Overcrowding, needles left up the Pavilion by the lake is a big concern. Astroturf is a dangerous play area. Safety of children, park will be affected during term time for the

			public
Provided	Grandparent	No	The school will be missed, the numbers are large enough in Darran Park as it is.
Provided	Grandparent	No	My grandson goes to Ferndale, I really don't want him in an overcrowded classroom situation. Traffic congestion around Darran Park is going to be unrealistic
Provided	Uncle	No	Blaenllechau school was shut and the village hasn't been the same, I don't want Ferndale to be the same. Spend money to keep schools open. The fire station is next to the school, if there are more cars surely this is a safety hazard, also the park needs to use the astroturf
Provided	Resident	No	My kid will be overcrowded. Too many cars up there
Provided	Not provided	No	Darran Park overcrowded and there is no place to park. Hazard fire station
Provided	Parent	No	The proposal is utterly ridiculous and makes no sense. It is dangerous and if my child is hurt in any way I will take legal action
Not provided	Resident	No	The closure will cause dangerous congestion at Darran Park with 3 schools. Park area is not adequate for children to play safely
Provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	The proposal is ridiculous and puts the children at risk. Class sizes, astroturf, traffic congestion
Provided	Shop owner	No	You have a fully functional school in North Road. Council is struggling for money and want to spend a fortune on Darran Park! Small children are going to be let to roam near a lake!
Provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	I don't agree with this. Darran Park is already overcrowded, there is a lot of traffic congestion, I would fear for the safety of my child going there. Ferndale Infants' is a good school, staff have time to support children who are slightly behind. My son has come on leaps and bounds. I also think that using the park astroturf as a playground is a disaster waiting to

			happen.
Provided	Grandparent	No	Not happy with proposed standard of education. Against utilisation of Darran Park astroturf poses grave health and safety issues
Provided	Uncle	No	By closing the school you will greatly increase the class sizes in Darran Park hence exceeding the legal requirement of 30 per class. The traffic at school time would be untenable within a great portion of the surrounding area of the school
Not provided	Parent	No	Class sizes will be too large.
Provided	Not provided	No	Too many children in each class as it is more education needed. Difficult to get to, parking is horrendous now. Too many roads to cross
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	I do not agree to the idea of sending my child up the park to play. This is very dangerous and outrageous! I sent my child to Darran Park because it was a lovely school. Closing Ferndale will overcrowd Darran Park. They want to take out the indoor gardens and rebuild classrooms. This takes away essential skills to the pupils already attending
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	Children will lose their school yard and gardens and classes are overcrowded. Traffic is really bad and will make this a huge dangerous impact
Not provided	Parent	No	I believe that Darran Park is overcrowded and that more children would affect the teaching
Not provided	Not provided	No	The Valleys are a poor area and the only hope to improve the lives of our children is a good education
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	The state of education in Ferndale is poor as it stands, putting schools together equals overcrowded classes. This proposal is going to have a huge knock on effect
Provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Convenience, distance, road safety, choice

Not provided	Friend of a parent	No	Darran Park is going to be overcrowded, not enough teachers to cover all pupils and they will not get the help they need
Provided	Not provided	No	My concern is not only the education of children but they are taught in class sizes where teachers can give individual attention. Parking facilities, safety issues
Provided	Local resident	No	All our children will eventually be sent to so- called super schools which have no easy access for parents without transport. The quality of education given to our children will be non- existent as teachers will not be able to spend time with the increase in numbers
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Too crowded
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Young children having to travel further big disruption to all children. Traffic a problem adding more to school run
Provided	Parent	No	Convenience, child safety, traffic. As a community school personable and convenient, choice
Provided	Parent	No	Do not wish to move my child, safety, travel, class sizes
Provided	Shop owner	No	Darran Park school is a logistical nightmare
Not provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	It will be a shame if Ferndale were to close as the staff are so good with the children. I am not happy about using the astroturf as a playground as there are so many risks to the children and there is a lake opposite which is so dangerous. There should be more crossings for the school
Provided	Grandparent	No	Ferndale Infants' is a lovely little school, the children and staff are so happy, there is nowhere else to go. Darran Park is so busy for young children they will get bullied, no extra room for parking
Provided	Grandparent	No	100% dead against the decision, my granddaughter has started link up and this is going to be disruptive to her and not have the time that Ferndale can provide her. This will also cause massive disruption to the children that are already there

Provided	Parent	No	Unreasonable loss of jobs and upheaval for children, disruption to education. Does not benefit anyone. Darran Park too small. Parents of children in Darran Park don't want the Ferndale kids there. Too many children. Children from Blaenllechau will suffer
Provided	Parent	No	Ferndale Infants' is a better school in my opinion. Darran Park classes are full enough as it is, more children will impact on the children's education
Provided	School Crossing Patrol	No	There will be too many children in Darran Park
Provided	Grandparent	No	Overcrowding and potential safety issues. The waste of an excellent teaching facility which is more central to the community and the possible loss of quality staff and support personnel.
Provided	Grandparent	No	Safety, overcrowding, traffic, nothing will waive fears
Not provided	Aunt	No	Emotional, educational set back, safety, overcrowding in classrooms means the children will lose their sense of security, traffic, the danger of a child wandering off, a child not getting the education or attention that they need.
Not provided	Local resident	No	I object to the closure. The added traffic for residents will be awful. There would be 600 children all in school in a tiny area. The fire station is right in front of the school, surely the traffic is going to restrict access. Extra traffic will cause a fatality
Provided	Not provided	No	Distance for little children to walk to school
Provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Overcrowding in Darran Park, loss of public facilities in the park, class sizes will be too big with the effect this will have on children's education and the loss of nursery provision
Provided	Grandparent	No	Ferndale is a well placed school and there is no reason why it should not remain, children will suffer with increased class sizes, it's our future generation that will suffer. Concerned about increase in traffic, reducing amenities in Darran Park

Provided	Aunt	No	Bigger classes are never a good idea! Parents should have a choice of schools. I would want to send my child there in the future
Provided	Local resident	No	My own children went to Ferndale Infants', it would be a shame to lose such a lovely school. There is no room in Darran Park to accommodate the additional pupils
Provided	Grandparent and carer	No	My grandson attends Ferndale and has come on really well. My 3 children also attended. Class sizes in Darran Park are too big and they struggle with school dinners due to lack of space. If Ferndale closes class sizes will get bigger. I do not agree with the astroturf being used for safety reasons. The traffic is horrendous. I chose to put my grandson in Ferndale because of the smaller class sizes. If nursery numbers in Darran Park were set there would be more children attending Ferndale and we wouldn't have to fight for a lovely little school which is part of the community.
Provided	Great-grandparent	No	There would be too many children in the classes at Darran Park
Provided	Family member	No	Class sizes will be too big in Darran Park. Loss of nursery provision. Children's education will suffer. Use of the astroturf as a playground is not acceptable
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	Darran Park is overcrowded and there is no room for another 60 kids. This will not be improving education for our children. The classes are too big
Provided	Parent, Ferndale Infants'	No	Everyone is against this decision, it has caused stress and upset on parents, children and all the staff. The children are very happy and settled in school, don't change this. Darran Park is already full, too many in the classes. Dining hall is overcrowded, no yard space, we cannot use the astroturf as part of the school, no room for extra car parking

Provided	Parent	No	100% disastrous for the future of Ferndale community, not just our young children. To take away another public resource would be tragic
Provided	Parent	No	Children's education and wellbeing will suffer due to overcrowding of classes. The history of the school will be gone. Labour will yet again lose votes because of the unrealistic views on children's education
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	Darran Park will be too crowded. Parents should always have a choice on a school for their child.
Not provided	Parent, Darran Park	No	Ferndale Infants' is a vital part of the community and Darran Park will be detrimentally affected by this closure. Parents should be able to choose the school they wish their child to attend.
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Too many children in the classrooms. Infants' losing their playground and having to use the astroturf. Losing their garden
Not provided	Grandparent	No	Overcrowding in the classrooms at Darran Park
Not provided	Grandparent	No	This is an excellent school with ideal facilities, ideally positioned
Provided	Parent	No	Concerned with overcrowding, safety and traffic
Not provided	Member of public	No	Not safe, too many pupils in one school
Provided	Not provided	No	Our Council should be there to listen to residents. This proposal is clearly not wanted. The Council use the consultation process as a formality and pay no notice to what residents want
Provided	Shop owner	No	Overcrowding in Darran Park, parking problems, taking away park facilities to accommodate new pupils. Traffic congestion due to the volume of traffic due to change of school
Provided	Community member	No	The Authority has acted far too quickly. Why close a purpose built school. Why not transfer infant pupils from Darran Park. Why rush the proposals through

Not provided	Parent	No	Two schools should not be cramped in to one, overcrowding of children, excessive traffic making it hard for people who live in area. Children's personal space, having too many children in such a small school area with a wide variety of ages
Provided	Not provided	No	It's a good school and still being used by the community
Provided	Aunt	No	Education of the children will suffer with class sizes being too big in Darran Park. Using astroturf as an additional play area is not safe for children with the public using the park, the lake being so close and the temptation of the playground
Provided	Parent	No	My daughter goes to Darran Park, this plan is not right. Please save the school. Park safety at play times, I will not let my child play in the park
Provided	Local resident	No	This is a perfectly good school, still being used, where the children are happy. Why spend this large amount of money when there's no need
Provided	Ex pupil and family member	No	Ferndale Infants' is such a good school, it would be a shame to close it. I think it is dangerous and unsuitable letting children play on the astroturf at dinnertime especially with a lake so close
Provided	Ex pupil and family member	No	Children's education would suffer with larger class sizes and the quieter children would get lost in the crowd. Astroturf not suitable for children to play, with the public using it as well. Traffic will double and become unsafe for more children walking up there
Provided	Brother of pupil	No	I went to Ferndale Infants', we didn't think the school would ever consider shutting, why can't my brother go to the same school as I did? As children go to Darran Park at age 7 we need an infants' school to go to first. It is so busy they need to separate the children in to 2 schools it makes sense to keep things as they are

Provided	Grandparent	No	My grandson has settled in well, the teachers treat him like family, I couldn't fault the school or the teachers. We chose Ferndale as Darran Park had no room for another child, why have they got room for a whole Infants' School?
Not provided	Grandparent	No	My grandchildren attend Ferndale it would be awful if this school was to shut. Darran Park had a harvest concert where no parents could attend due to insufficient space and parking! What is the point of putting concerts on if parents can't attend? Absolutely ridiculous
Not provided	Shop owner	No	Closing more schools and merging to Darran Park, this is already a traffic nightmare
Provided	Grandparent	No	Safety issues, overcrowded, extra traffic
Not provided	Grandparent	No	The school has excellent teaching staff, is in a great position with facilities perfectly suited to the age group. It is a huge part of the community of Ferndale. Larger class sizes in Darran Park will be to the detriment of some children
Not provided	Aunt	No	If this proposal goes ahead the classrooms at Darran Park are going to be overcrowded. The astroturf will be unsafe to use to the high number of children using it plus other risks, eg public members
Provided	Grandparent	No	Overcrowding and the effect this will have on children's education. Don't like the idea of 3 year olds being in the same yard as 11 year olds
Not provided	Not provided	No	The Labour led council are shooting themselves in the foot with this proposal and are going to lose so many local votes if it goes ahead. I know for a fact that this proposal has so many illegal points the council will waste a lot of money fighting this closure

<p>Provided</p>	<p>Local resident</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Ferndale Infants' is a relatively new, purpose built school which has a good reputation and the confidence of parents who send their children there. Closing this school will do nothing to improve the morale of local people who already feel that you are closing down the Upper Rhondda Fach. Ferndale is centrally located and far more convenient for children in the catchment area to get to than Darran Park</p>
<p>Not provided</p>	<p>Aunt</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>If this proposal goes ahead classes will be overcrowded and children won't get the help needed to progress in learning. As Darran Park has access to the astroturf there is a risk of a child wandering as there won't be enough staff to supervise every child</p>
<p>Not provided</p>	<p>Aunt</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>I think that Darran Park would be overcrowded and pupils will miss out on the learning time that they need. Having playtime on the astroturf would be a risk to children as it is a public park, what if a child decided to go for a walk out of the play area, there is a lake, it only takes a second and they could be gone</p>

**Consultation Event at Darran Park Primary School, re proposal to close
Ferndale Infants', held on 8/12/15**

Summary of comments posted on the message boards provided

- Use of the Astroturf is unsafe. Are risk assessments going to be undertaken every day if it is used? This is unfair to staff!
- Use North Road (Ferndale Infants') 3 – 5 wraparound care for early learning years.
- Will there be free transport from Blaenllechau?
- There has been a study completed that children do better in smaller classes – how is this proposal improving education?
- North Road infants' is a lovely school, my son is happy there, he is too young to join a busy school at 4. These changes are unnecessary.
- What an absurd proposal. No extra space. No risk assessments have been taken regarding traffic!
- The staff our children have come familiar with have no guarantee of their jobs.
- The wellbeing of Ferndale Infants' pupils is not being considered. Also taking resources from Darran Park pupils is unfair!
- The numbers given in the proposals are not correct.
- Rubbish, not fair. Keep North Road 3 – 5's.
- Could we have a room specifically for adults to use for education, meetings, get-togethers etc.
- When is building work going to be undertaken/completed?
- Concern about sectioning off of the park, denying access to senior citizens, wheelchair access, limited mobility. Also increased traffic affecting safety of the community.
- How will dinner times (lunches) be arranged?
- Are quad teaching areas going to be compromised?
- The use of the Astroturf would be brilliant for the children's health and wellbeing.
- Pointless meeting, incorrect information given, different answers given, very inconsistent.
- Figures in the proposals are wrong. False information has been given.
- Astroturf lethal for falls.
- Proposed building of a path to the Astroturf for children's use will cut off public access to the park. It will also make an unsafe play area.
- What about safety of children walking to school, cars are parked everywhere, mounting pavements. Are safety barriers going to be installed?
- Class sizes will be too big having a detrimental effect on education. Traffic will be a major problem.

- Serious concerns about class sizes and the integration of new pupils, the effect on their self esteem etc.
- Less is more, bigger is not better.
- Both option 1 and 2 of building proposals illustrate increased classroom spaces, how about increase in hall size?
- The proposal says that nursery children will be housed in spare capacity, giving them no continuity or familiarity.
- Wrong info given out.
- Contradictive, nothing constructive.
- The whole proposal is going to affect our children enormously, education, health and well being wise.