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RHONDDA CYNON TAF
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED
AMALGAMATION OF CWMAMAN INFANTS' AND
GLYNHAFOD JUNIOR SCHOOLS, BY CLOSING BOTH
SCHOOLS AND CREATING A NEW COMMUNITY
PRIMARY SCHOOL, FROM 1ST SEPTEMBER 2018.**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Who will we consult with?	3
What will the consultation process entail?.....	3
What do you have to consider?	4
How do you make your views known?.....	4
Background to the proposal	6
Information on the schools – Cwmaman Infants’ School	6
Information on the schools – Glynhafod Junior School	8
What is the basis for this proposal?	10
What is the educational case for closing Cwmaman Infants’ and Glynhafod Junior Schools to create a new primary ?	11
What does the proposal mean for the schools’ pupils?	12
What is the likely impact of the proposal on the staff of the schools?	13
What will be the likely impact of the proposal on the local area?	14
What are the financial implications of the proposal?	15
What are the disadvantages of this proposal?.....	15
What alternative options have been considered other than the amalgamation of the schools?.....	16
The new proposed school.....	16
What is the statutory process to close schools and open a new one?.....	17
Consultation Response Pro-forma	18

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to amalgamate Cwmaman Infants' and Glynhafod Junior Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing schools and opening a new primary school to replace them. A new school building to accommodate all children from the village who require a place at the primary school is proposed to be built on the site of the former Fforchaman Colliery, on land in the ownership of the Council located between the Cwrt Alun Lewis sheltered housing complex and the football field at Glanaman Road. It is proposed that the two schools would close on 31st August 2018 with the pupils transferring to the new primary school on 1 September 2018.

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Federated Governing Body of Cwmaman Infants' School and Glynhafod Junior School
- Pupils of Cwmaman Infants' School and Glynhafod Junior School
- Parents, carers, guardians, and staff members of Cwmaman Infants' School and Glynhafod Junior 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

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 1st March 2016 and will be completed at 5pm on 29th April 2016. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in May, 2016. This consultation report will 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.

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 not to proceed, that will be the end of this 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 dates are 31st August 2018 for the school closures and 1st September 2018 for the opening of the new school.

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 Cwmaman, Aberdare. 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 amalgamate Cwmaman Infants' and Glynhafod Junior Schools. A new school building to accommodate all children from the village who require a place at the primary school is proposed to be built on the site of the former Fforchaman Colliery, on land in the ownership of the Council located between the Cwrt Alun Lewis sheltered housing complex and the football field at Glanaman Road.

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
Cwmaman Infants' and Glynhafod Junior Schools	Federated Governing Body and Staff Meeting	Wednesday, 15 th March 2016, 4 – 6pm	Cwmaman Infants' School
Cwmaman Infants' School	School Council	Wednesday, 15 th March 2016 2.30 – 3.00 pm	Cwmaman Infants' School
Glynhafod Junior School	School Council	Wednesday, 15 th March 2016, 1.45 – 2.15 pm	Glynhafod Junior School
Both Schools and members of the local community	Parents and public drop in session and exhibition	Wednesday 27 th April 2016, 4 – 6pm	Glynhafod Junior 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/GetInvolved/Consultations/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, comments and any questions you may have 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 Friday, 29th April 2016.**

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 the consultation document is 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 – Cwmaman Infants' School

Cwmaman Infants' School (Cwmaman Infants') is an English Medium Community School located at Fforchaman Road, Cwmaman, Aberdare. The school site consists of a traditional stone Victorian building, constructed in 1880. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Cwmaman Infants is graded a B for condition and a C for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively. The current figure for the maintenance work that would be desirable to undertake at this school is £289,000.

The pupil numbers in Cwmaman Infants' over the past four years are shown below and are obtained from the statutory 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.

Cwmaman Infants' School					
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total statutory aged pupils	85	90	95	96	97
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	41	41	39	46	37

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

Cwmaman Infants' School									
Projected No on roll in January	Capacity of the School	2015 (Actual)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020	
Statutory aged pupils	129	97	93	87	83	83	90	30.2%	
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	(43 places)	37	32	38	40	40	40		

Cwmaman Infants' School was inspected by Estyn in June 2015 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 consistency in teaching and developing pupils' numeracy skills and understanding in all classes; and increase opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in all areas of learning
- R2** Share good practice in Welsh language development to improve teacher confidence and ensure consistently good provision in all classes
- R3** Enable governors to challenge leaders more robustly in relation to the school's performance
- R4** Further develop the role of middle leaders in writing reports that focus more sharply on pupils' standards, and the ability of all leaders to write more evaluatively and consider the impact of initiatives more effectively

Since September 2012, the Council's School Improvement Services have been provided by the Central South Consortium, a regional school improvement services for the five local authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. Schools are rated as either Green, Yellow, Amber or Red in respect of their standards. The Consortium categorises the performance of each school in the region and considers that:

Cwmaman Infants School has recently been categorised as a 'Green' school, the highest level it can achieve. This rating means that the school has a track record of sustaining a high level of learner outcomes, it demonstrates resilience at all levels and is challenged to move forward towards, or sustaining excellence.

The tables below set out the performance of Cwmaman 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 52.94%.

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

	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile*	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile*	2014	2014 Benchmark Quartile*
Foundation Phase Indicator	93.8%	1st	92.9%	1st	88.2%	2nd
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	100%	1st	100%	1st	100%	1st
Language literacy and communication skills English	93.8%	1st	92.9%	1st	91.1%	1st

Mathematical development	96.9%	1st	92.9%	1st	88.2%	2nd
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* - 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

	2012 %	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
% attendance	93%	2nd	92.6%	2nd	92.7%	4th	94.9%	1st

Information on the schools – Glynhafod Junior School

Glynhafod Junior School (Glynhafod Junior) is an English medium Community School located at Glynhafod Street, Cwmaman and the school site consists of a traditional Victorian style stone and brick building, constructed in 1912 with a double mobile classroom unit on the front yard. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools Glynhafod Junior 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 current figure for the maintenance work that would be desirable to undertake at this school is £405,000; this includes the cost of a replacement roof and the removal of the mobile classrooms.

The pupil numbers in Glynhafod Junior over the past four years are shown below and are obtained from the statutory pupil level annual school census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year.

Glynhafod Junior School					
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total statutory aged pupils	82	82	80	90	102

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

Glynhafod Junior School							
Capacity of the School	2015 (Actual)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% surplus places in 2020
109	102	110	113	113	112	109	0%

Glynhafod Junior School was last inspected by Estyn in December 2010. 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** continue to address the gap between boys' and girls' attainment;
- R2** improve standards of Welsh language skills, especially in upper key stage 2;
- R3** strengthen the partnership with parents;
- R4** continue to improve attendance; and
- R5** further develop the role of the school council

Since September 2012, the Council's School Improvement Services have been provided by the Central South Consortium, a regional school improvement services for the five local authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. Schools are rated as either Green, Yellow, Amber or Red in respect of their standards. The Consortium categorises the performance of each school in the region and considers that:

Glynhafod Junior School like Cwmaman Infants School has recently been categorised as a 'Green' school, the highest level it can achieve. This rating means that the school has a track record of sustaining a high level of learner outcomes, it demonstrates resilience at all levels and is challenged to move forward towards, or sustaining excellence.

This is the same outcome as for Cwmaman Infants School. Since September 2012, the two schools have shared a federated governing body; they also share a Headteacher, as the Headteacher of Cwmaman Infants has, since the above date also undertaken the role as Acting Headteacher at Glynhafod Junior School.

The tables overleaf set out the performance of Glynhafod Junior 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 44.12%

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

	2012 %	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
Core Subject Indicator	73.9	3rd	81.3	2nd	87.5	1st	90.9	1st
English	73.9	3rd	87.5	1st	87.5	2nd	90.9	1st
Maths	78.3	3rd	87.5	2nd	93.8	1st	90.9	2nd
Science	82.6	3rd	93.8	1st	100	1st	95.4	1st

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

	2012 %	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013 %	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014 %	2014 Benchmark Quartile	2015 %	2015 Benchmark Quartile
% attendance	94.4	1st	92.2	3rd	94.2	2nd	95.4	1st

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 were 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.

Cwmaman Infants’ and Glynhafod Junior Schools 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 one mile apart from each other;
- Cwmaman Infants School has a current surplus capacity figure of 24.8%, just under the Wales Audit Office recommended ‘benchmark’ for review of 25%
- Both schools have mixed aged classes;

As advised, the two schools already share a federated governing body and a Headteacher.

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 Cwmaman Infants’ and Glynhafod Junior Schools and creating a 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 primary school for the community of Cwmaman, in a new, purpose built school will improve educational outcomes and provision for the following reasons;

- A single school vision and ethos, with a governing body and management team on a single site providing leadership across the full primary age range, using consistent policies and practices;
- Improved transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 (Yr 2 to Yr 3) and overall progression;
- Greater consistency of teaching and learning for pupils across the 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 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 construction of a modern, state of the art purpose built school that meets all the required standards of a 21st Century learning environment.

There are opportunities for the teaching and support staff. An 'all-through' primary school for Cwmaman 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.

A new, purpose built primary school for Cwmaman 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 Junior 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:

- The teachers and teaching assistants may be different, however, providing that pupil numbers remain stable at their current levels, the large majority of the staff currently employed in Cwmaman Infants' and Glynhafod Junior Schools will simply 'slot' in to similar posts in the new Primary School, 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.
- Build on the achievement gained at both schools by bringing together a larger team of staff to share expertise and experience.
- Being taught in a new, state of the art, purpose built school building, with sports facilities adjacent to it, which will be fit for the purpose of providing education in the 21st Century.

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 the new primary school will not change, i.e. it will continue to be the same as the current catchment area of Cwmaman Infants' and Glynhafod Junior Schools. The Council's policy regarding home to school transport provision will continue to apply. No address within the new school's catchment area will be more than 2 miles from the school, therefore no child will qualify for free transport on the grounds of distance. All walking routes to the new school site are considered to be available and the route is also well served by public transport. The difference in time taken to travel to the new school site will be negligible as it is in close proximity to the existing schools, some children may have a slightly longer journey to school but many will have a shorter one. The proposed new school site is more centrally located within the catchment area than the current schools which we consider to be of benefit with regard to travel times and journeys undertaken. To illustrate this point, the proposed new school site is just 0.36 miles on foot from Cwmaman Infants' and 0.39 miles from Glynhafod Junior, it is located almost equidistantly between the two current schools. Overall, we consider the impact on learner travel arrangements to be neutral.

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 community of Cwmaman 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. As this is a new school provision, a temporary governing body will be established if a decision to proceed with amalgamation is agreed. The main role of this temporary governing body will be to establish a staffing structure for the new primary school, appoint its senior management team and make decisions with regard to the method of 'slotting in' of all other staff to the posts that are available in the new primary school. The Council has well established Human Resource policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.

The Headteacher of Cwmaman Infants School also became the Acting Headteacher of Glynhafod Junior School in September 2012 and has continued to undertake both roles since this date. If the proposal is agreed, the temporary governing body will determine how the post of Headteacher of the new primary school is to be appointed.

A new permanent governing body will be appointed for the new primary school when it opens in September 2018; the temporary governing body will remain in place until all governor appointments are made. The existing federated governing body of the two schools will also remain in office until the new school opens.

There would also be benefits for teaching staff, which should improve teaching standards within the school. Currently, pupils are taught in mixed age groups. If the proposal proceeds, the new primary school will have approx 200 pupils of statutory school age which will equate to 7 teachers for 7 age groups. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be taught in their own age group, which makes it considerably easier for the class teacher to provide an appropriate curriculum and support for all pupils. This should result in higher standards of teaching and learning and better educational outcomes. The pupils and staff will also enjoy the benefits of enhanced and superior educational facilities that a new school build will bring.

Teaching (and also support) staff would be able to gain experience in working across the whole primary phase, rather than being restricted to just one key phase of education, as they are at present. This additional experience will bring benefits in respect of staff development and future promotion opportunities for all persons employed at the new primary school.

The creation of a larger primary school would also provide staff with the opportunity to specialise in specific areas of the curriculum. The primary school will require one co-ordinator for each subject area of the curriculum and for areas of school management such as child protection and additional learning needs; at present the separate Infants' and Junior Schools have one such co-ordinator per school. Being a small school with fewer staff means that staff have to take on multiple roles, leading to greater workloads and less opportunities to specialise. A larger primary school with more staff allows for such specialism with the ability to share workload more effectively and therefore gives staff more opportunities to progress their careers.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on the community of Cwmaman?

The Aberaman South electoral ward is a Communities First Area and is also a Flying Start Area.

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. 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 web link provided on page 5. It is considered that the overall impact on the local community of this new school provision, with its improved facilities will be a positive, beneficial one.

As this is a consultation process at this point in time, no decisions have yet been taken as to the potential future use of any school sites that may become surplus to requirements should these proposals be implemented. Such matters will be determined at the appropriate time.

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 the new primary school’s governing body, a summary of the known budgetary impacts is set out below.

	Glynhafod Junior (Current)	Cwmaman Infants’ (Current)	Cwmaman Primary (Future)	Revenue Savings
	£’000	£’000	£’000	£’000
Annual Revenue Budget based on 2015/16 budget	379	481	698	162

A new school will be constructed to accommodate the Primary School at an estimated cost of £7.9 million and will be funded from the 21st Century Schools Programme, 50% of which will be funded by the Welsh Government and 50% from the Council.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

Some parents may feel that two 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. The new primary school after the amalgamation will still only be the size of an average Rhondda Cynon Taf primary school, with approx 200 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, but the two schools already have a shared post holder. 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.

What alternative options have been considered other than the amalgamation of Cwmaman Infants' and Glynhafod Junior Schools?

The current position is that we have two relatively small 'paired' schools, located just one mile away from each other with approximately 40 surplus places between the two schools. If the option were to 'do nothing', this would not change the current position of the two schools at all and there would not be any opportunities to utilise this spare capacity in a more effective and efficient way.

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

- Close both schools and create a new build primary school on a new site in Cwmaman, located on a plot of land in Council ownership that is located between the two schools at the current time, equidistant from both and which is within in the catchment area of the combined schools – the current proposal;
- Continue with the current federation, maintaining the two school buildings, with two separate school budgets but with one governing body and Headteacher. This, in effect is the 'do nothing' option that would make no change and thus no improvement to the current way in which the two schools are organised and managed.

In respect of the federation of the governing bodies, this has already created in essence a two -site school under one Headteacher and one governing body. They remain as two separate legal entities and employ 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 as the school buildings are located a mile apart, making joint working relatively difficult. Both schools would still be subjected to separate inspections by Estyn also.

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

The new proposed school.

It is being proposed that a new school building will be constructed on the former Fforchaman Colliery site at Glanamman Road, Cwmaman. The new school will be an English Medium Community school and will cater for children aged between 3 and 11 years of

age. It will have a proposed admissions number of 34 pupils per year group, and an overall pupil capacity of 240. In addition it will have at least 34 nursery places available, funded on a part time basis; there will however be flexibility to increase the number of nursery places, if there is evidenced demand, by utilising spare capacity that will exist within the building. The accommodation will consist of a nursery, 8 teaching areas and ancillary accommodation that will be appropriate for the numbers of pupils on roll, including a multi-purpose hall, kitchen, offices, resource areas and of course toilet provision. Admissions to the new school will be administered by the local authority and all pupils currently attending the two schools will automatically transfer to the new school when it opens, subject to parental preference.

Any risks that may be associated with these proposals, such as construction delays will be mitigated by the detailed and thorough project management arrangements that will be put in place.

What is the statutory process to close schools and open a new 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 schools and open a new 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 the local authority’s determination as to whether to proceed with the proposals;
7. The Council’s Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposals 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 Cwmaman Infants and Glynhafod Junior Schools and transfer all the pupils to a new primary school for Cwmaman. It is proposed that the current two schools would close on 31 August 2018 with the pupils transferring to the new primary school on 1 September 2018.

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 29th April 2016.