

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd SEPTEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG
LEARNING**

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IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN WATTSTOWN

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of a proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School, and transfer pupils to Pontygwaith Primary School, subject to parental preference in January, 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:-

- 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 Consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report and to agree to its immediate publication as required by Welsh Government.
- 2.3 Agree to progress the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School to the next stage of the review process by issuing an appropriate statutory notice.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 13th May 2014, approval was given to begin a process of formal consultation on a proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School, and transfer education provision to Pontygwaith Primary School, in January 2015.

- 3.2 This consultation process in respect of a school closure proposal has been undertaken under the new arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st October 2013. These new 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 was 18th July 2014 in this instance.
- 3.3 The Consultation Report prepared in respect of this particular proposal is attached at Appendix 1 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.
- 3.4 It should be noted that there has been a relatively limited response to this particular consultation process; only two items of actual correspondence were received, a detailed objection letter from the governing body of Aberllechau Primary and the views of Estyn on the proposal. A total of 243 questionnaires were returned, these are also summarised in the Consultation Report. 38 persons attended the open evening held to provide further information on 30th June 2014, the large majority of whom had connections to Pontygwaith Primary School, such as parents, governors, staff and pupils. It must be noted that invitations were also sent out to all such persons connected with Aberllechau Primary School.
- 3.5 Members' attention should be drawn to the response from Estyn on page x of the Consultation Report.
- 3.6 As required by Welsh Government, the Consultation Report at Appendix A must be published electronically, on the Council's website. In addition, hard copies must be available on request. This must take place before the proposal is published. Welsh Government specify that the following must be advised of the availability of the consultation report:
- Pupils, parents (and where possible prospective parents), carers and guardians, and staff members of schools which are subject to the proposals and
 - Consultees who had requested notification.
- 3.7 The following must receive either a hard copy of the consultation report or be e-mailed a link to the Council's website:
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located;
 - Any other appropriate religious body for any school likely to be affected by the proposals;

- The governing body of any school which is the subject of the proposals and of other schools likely to be affected by the proposals, including those that might receive any displaced pupils;
- The Welsh Ministers;
- Assembly Members (AM's) and Members of Parliament (MP's) representing the area served by/ intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals;
- Estyn;
- Teaching and staff trade unions representing teachers and other staff at any school which is the subject of the proposals;
- Central South Regional Education Consortium;
- South East Wales Transport Authority;
- The Police and Crime Commissioner;
- The local Communities First Partnership;
- In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, and independent providers who may be affected;
- The Children and Young People's Partnership and/or the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships.

4. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

4.1 The statutory notice for this proposal will refer to the:

- Closure of Aberllechau Primary School, and transfer of the pupils and educational provision to Pontygwaith Primary School, subject to parental preference.

4.2 The Statutory Notice will, if agreed be published on 10th October 2014 and will allow for a 28 day period for objections, ending on 7th November 2014. If any objections are received, in accordance with the new Code an Objections Report will be prepared. This matter will then be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet, in November 2014 for Members to receive and consider the Objections Report and to make a final decision on this proposal.

5. SUMMARY

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.

APPENDIX 1

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposal : To close Aberllechau Primary School, with all pupils transferring to Pontygwaith Primary School (subject to parental preference) on 1st January, 2015.

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 June 2014 to 18th July 2014 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 www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

- The Governing Body of Aberllechau Primary School
- Pupils of Aberllechau Primary School
- Parents, carers and staff members of Aberllechau Primary School
- Other neighbouring primary schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members who serve the Rhondda Cynon Taf area (constituency and regional members)
- Members of Parliament who have constituencies in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area
- The Governing Body of Pontygwaith Primary School
- Pupils of Pontygwaith Primary School
- Parents, carers and staff members of Pontygwaith Primary School
- Parents, carers, staff and governors of Ynyshir Primary School
- 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
- The Early Years and Childcare

- Estyn Partnership
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board

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 Aberllechau Primary School and transfer all the pupils to Pontygwaith Primary School. The existing school buildings at Pontygwaith have sufficient surplus capacity to comfortably accommodate all pupils upon transfer. It is proposed that Aberllechau Primary School would close on 31 December 2014 with the pupils transferring to their new school on 1 January 2015.

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 copies of our consultation documentation. The following meetings were also convened:

- Tuesday 17th June, 2pm – School Council, Aberllechau Primary
- Tuesday 17th June, 4pm – Staff and Governing Body, Aberllechau Primary
- Wednesday 18th June, 2pm – School Council, Pontygwaith Primary
- Wednesday 18th June, 4pm – Staff and Governing Body, Pontygwaith 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 Pontygwaith Primary School on 30th June 2014, the purpose of which was to provide further information on the proposal for the communities of Aberllechau and Pontygwaith, answer any questions and give parents in particular the opportunity to view the facilities available for their children at the recommended receiving school. Officers from the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate were in attendance. This event was attended by 38 persons, which included school staff, governors, parents, pupils and members of the local community.

5. Summary of Responses to Consultation

Responses to the matters raised at the meetings outlined above are, as indicated, summarised in the notes of the meetings attached as Appendix 2. A total of 243 questionnaires were returned, a summary of these is attached as Appendix 3. Formal responses were received from the Governing Body of Aberllechau Primary and the AM for the Rhondda, Leighton Andrews. Both items of correspondence contained similar questions and comments, a summary of these are reproduced below with appropriate responses:

- **We, the Governing Body, request that the LA/Links explain the reasons for the lack of support that the school has required.**

The Council completely refutes this allegation. We have detailed, documented evidence of support and intervention provided to this school since the appointment of the present Headteacher in 2010.

School improvement is the responsibility of the school, its headteacher and governing body. The Council and Consortium have provided significant levels of support, but it is not the Council's or the Consortium's role to undertake the work of the Headteacher and her staff. Governors also have a role to play through learning walks, visits to the School and seeking the views of pupils. It is also important to recognise that although the School is a small school, the Headteacher had an actual teaching commitment of only half a day. This in itself should provide sufficient school improvement capacity.

The Council and Consortium cannot turn around the performance of a school without the commitment and determination of the whole School to address weaknesses in provision. School improvement is a team effort and in the case of Aberllechau there have been significant weaknesses in the quality of the leadership. When this became evident, the Council has acted promptly.

The School initially made good progress after 2009, with considerable support from the Council. Over the next two years it became a first quartile performer when compared to similar schools across Wales and in 2012, recognising the small cohorts, it was still in the top 50% of schools. During 2013 there were issues at the School with staffing, which resulted in a significant fall in performance. During 2012 and 2013, the Consortium provided school improvement support to the Headteacher via regular programmed visits and through literacy Catch Up teams which have had an impact on reading standards. It should be noted that the School declined Catch Up Numeracy.

Given the decline in performance, in September 2013 the Headteacher and Chair of Governors met the Director of Education to discuss the performance of the School and what we needed to do to address the decline. A statement

of action setting out the planned response was agreed between the Headteacher and Systems Leader.

In the Autumn term, the Consortium ensured that an experienced headteacher worked with the School on the self evaluation, the scrutiny of books, planning and undertaking joint lesson observations, assessment for learning and marking of books, and following up progress on actions agreed. This work was carried out over six visits to the School.

A follow up meeting was held with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and the Director of Education to discuss progress at the end of November. It was evident that the Headteacher had not engaged in the sessions with the Consortium. As a result, the Director of Education sent a pre-warning letter to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors expressing his concern with the lack of engagement in the support we were providing. Furthermore, to provide challenge and support in respect of the likely lines of enquiry of Estyn and to ensure that the revised self evaluation, school improvement plans, data tracking, etc were sufficient the Consortium arranged for two experienced Estyn Inspectors to provide additional support to the School. Further support was provided in respect of the School's approach to mathematics, through book scrutiny and lesson observations with the Headteacher choosing to monitor the standards in literacy herself.

After the Headteacher started her period of sickness absence, the Consortium provided an experienced headteacher for the next 5 days to support the Deputy Headteacher to prepare for the Estyn inspection. In doing so it was clear that agreed actions for the School to complete in the previous term were still outstanding. Since the inspection, this level of support has continued in order that the School adequately plans and drafts a post inspection action plan. Furthermore, specific support for literacy and numeracy from the Consortium has also been agreed.

The Council working with Central South has provided the School with significant support and advice in a coordinated manner. Unfortunately, the School did not undertake its responsibilities and act upon the advice and guidance provided. The 2013 Annual Performance Report is very clear in respect of the position of the School, which was also recognised in the School's self evaluation.

- **We would welcome an explanation as to how the school would become more 'educationally viable'.**

It is the Council's view that creating a larger school for the communities of Wattstown and Pontygwaith will:

- **Improve educational outcomes;**
 - Create larger Foundation Phase and KS2 departments 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 move between key stages and 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 the buildings and in improving standards of teaching and learning, which otherwise would not have been available;
- **Improve leadership and management;**
 - Provides the opportunity for Headteacher's 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;
 - The opportunity to teach across a wider age range;
 - An increased range of expertise;
 - Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination.

These benefits apply equally to the mainstream and the SEN pupils in the schools. This argument is supported by Estyn in its recent report "School Size and Educational Effectiveness", that stated "*Pupils' standards are good or better in a higher proportion of large primary schools than small and medium-sized primary schools. This may be because large schools tend to have more expertise and capacity to address the needs of more vulnerable pupils and the more able and talented pupils.*"

Currently, pupils are taught in mixed age groups. If the proposal proceeds, Pontygwaith Primary School will have greater than 170 pupils of statutory school age (excluding the SEN class) which will equate to 6 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.

This will also address the issues raised by Estyn in its inspection of Aberllechau Primary School when it refers to:

- *“In too many classes, teachers do not match the tasks sufficiently well to pupils’ starting points. As a result, across the school, work does not challenge more able pupils sufficiently, and less able pupils are not able to complete the work set for them”;*
- *“Teachers’ expectations of what pupils can achieve are inappropriate, and the activities do not provide suitable challenge to pupils”;*
- *“The activities that teachers provide do not take close enough account of what pupils can already do”.*
- **The governing body would welcome an explanation as to why the prior attainment of our pupils has not been taken into consideration, particularly as this cohort, and the previous cohort were in KS1 when the school required significant improvement**

The data reproduced in the consultation document is that considered by Estyn when they came to the conclusion that the school was in need of requiring special measures. It is the 2013 verified and published school data. In coming to their conclusion it is evident that Estyn has considered all the school pupil tracking data, for example it refers to the following:

- *“The rate of progress in school improvement in recent years has been too slow, pupil outcomes have not improved sufficiently and many do not make good progress as they move through the school”;* and
- *Performance data is analysed accurately and leaders observe teaching and talk to pupils about their work. However, this process is not robust enough and leaders so not ensure that they use their findings effectively to bring about change”.*
- **The governing body would like to hear how the Director believes closing Aberllechau and expecting pupils to walk an additional 0.5 – 1 mile to school will improve attendance and punctuality.**

The furthest home address within the current catchment area of Aberllechau will be 1.37 miles from Pontygwaith Primary School; the majority of addresses within the catchment will be closer to the school than this. This distance is

within the limit at which this LA currently provides transport for Primary aged pupils, i.e. 1.5 miles and well within the limit provided for by legislation, namely 2 miles. There are many other examples of Primary schools in RCT where pupils have to travel similar distances to school; there are no recorded issues with either attendance or punctuality at these schools.

- **We would therefore like to be informed for what educational reasons has federation been discounted.**

This is explained in the consultation document. Federation will not address the issue of mixed aged classes and will not create the full educational benefits of a larger school as set out above.

- **The governing body would like to be informed how this would give greater opportunities given that 3 of our permanent teachers have taught in both key stages and the school regularly moves staff between classes/Key Stages and**
- **We would like to know how sharing responsibilities amongst greater numbers of staff will improve the career prospects of our staff and how this will enhance educational provision and outcomes**

We believe that the educational and other advantages of larger school provision compared with small schools are clearly outlined within the consultation document. In small schools, a small number of staff are given a range of whole school responsibilities in addition to their teaching workload, which is considerable if they are teaching mixed aged classes. The majority of teachers struggle with this workload if these tasks are to be completed effectively and to a high standard. Being part of a larger school allows staff to share the whole school responsibilities and the opportunity to specialise in a specific area, for example literacy or SEN. The additional burden placed on teachers in small schools, may be one of the reasons for the high turnover of teaching staff in Aberllechau in recent years.

- **The governing body would be interested to know how many councillors would be happy for their children/grandchildren, or indeed themselves or parents to walk this distance in all weathers.**

This is a hypothetical question which the Council is not able to respond to. It is the full responsibility of parents to transport their children to school and to determine the mode of transport used. Across the County Borough and Wales, other parents take full responsibility and overcome this issue.

- **The governing body would be interested to hear how the Director believes these friendships would be sustainable outside of the school day given that many families do not have access to transport.**

Another hypothetical question, but would refer to the answer provided above regarding the actual distances involved between the community of Wattstown and Pontygwaith Primary. The distances between home and

school for the Aberllechau children are experienced elsewhere in the County Borough and are not considered to be a barrier to any part of school life, including after and pre- school activities and friendships.

- **The governing body would like to be told how the authority can justify spending more than £300,000 on a building only to see it sold off for development.**

Any expenditure on this school building in recent years has been deemed necessary to ensure that the school meets our absolute basic standard of being safe, weather-tight and warm. Governors would have undoubtedly complained had these essential works not been undertaken? As this is only a proposal, at consultation stage, no decisions whatsoever have been made in respect of the future use of the school site and buildings, including its sale for development as is being claimed.

Furthermore, the last statement in Estyn's reports states that:

“the school provides unsatisfactory value for money”.

The proposal seeks to address this.

- **The governing body would like to be informed how this will improve standards for our pupils**

A programme of transition will be put in place, with support from the School Improvement Service, who will work closely with both schools to ensure that the transfer of pupils to their new school is as seamless as possible. It is not proposed to change teaching staff again in September as is being claimed; the LA has arranged for the secondment of highly experienced staff from other schools to support the staff of Aberllechau following their inspection and this support will continue in place until the school closes, should this proposal be agreed.

- **Given that Estyn have rated Leadership and Management Inadequate the governing body would like to know why this was not picked up through all of the support and monitoring the LA say the school has had over the past 4 years so that clear targets and support could have been set for the headteacher and the governors be kept informed of issues and progress.**

We would reiterate the response given to the first question as outlined on Page 3 of this report, which clearly provides evidence to the contrary of this allegation. The Systems Leader for the Central South Consortium presented the Governing Body with the Annual Performance Report for the school in the Autumn Term of 2013, well before the inspection which took place in March 2014. The overall grading given to the school was a D, the lowest rating possible. Governors would have been fully aware of this situation long before Estyn inspected the school.

Many of the questionnaires summarised in Appendix 3 raise common issues, the responses to these are summarised below:

- **Road safety/distance that children will have to walk to school**

As part of the consultation process, the Council's Highways Division have undertaken detailed assessments of the walking route and traffic situation between the communities of Wattstown and Pontygwaith, to ascertain what improvements can be put in place with regard to road safety. At the open evening held on 30th June, detailed plans of these proposed improvements were displayed and Council officers were available to explain them in detail to any person who required this information. The proposed improvements, which will be put in place should these proposals proceed include the installation of two new zebra crossings along the route, with associated measures to allow for traffic calming at these points.

Despite claims made that children will have to walk two miles, the accurately recorded walking distance from the address in the community of Wattstown that is at the outer limit of the catchment area to Pontygwaith Primary School is 1.37 miles; the distance between the two school sites is exactly 1 mile. Where children are not eligible for home to school transport, it is the full responsibility of parents to determine how children travel to school and what mode of transport is to be used; it is also the responsibility of parents to provide adequate and appropriate supervision on the journey as they see fit.

- **House prices will fall**

Not only is this not an educational consideration, but there is no documented evidence whatsoever to support this statement. This scenario has not been realised in other communities where schools have been closed previously.

- **The school is the heart of the community**

Again, this is not an education consideration and as with the previous comment, no adverse community impact has been seen in other areas where schools have been closed previously. The distance to the new school is just one mile; this is not considered to be excessive and will not make the new school's facilities inaccessible to the community of Wattstown in any way.

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 their response to this consultation process, which is attached as Appendix 4. In summary, Estyn concluded that:

“Although Estyn has concerns about the outcomes in both Aberllechau and Pontygwaith schools, it would seem that the proposal is likely to improve the present standard of education provision in the area. This premise is based on the fact that Aberllechau is currently in Special Measures and it would seem that bringing both schools together would provide a stronger base from which to bring about improvements. Moreover, Pontygwaith is currently in Category B within the Central South Consortium’s system of categorisation of effectiveness (A-D). This is because ‘although educational standards have generally been variable when compared to similar schools, the school is the most deprived in the family of schools and has cohorts of less than 10 pupils. When individual value added is tracked, the school gives value to all pupils. Teaching is usually good and leadership is effective’. Also Pontygwaith’s 2014 data is stronger than 2013 for nearly all measures, and in nearly all cases, significantly so”.

Estyn has recognised that the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 data for Pontygwaith Primary School for 2013/14 has significantly improved as shown below.

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
Foundation Phase Indicator	80%	1	68.75%	3	77.8%
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	90%	2	68.75%	4	88.9%
Language literacy and communication skills English	80%	3	68.75%	4	77.8%
Mathematical development	80%	2	75.0%	3	77.78%

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

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

	2011	2011 Benchmark Quartile	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile	2014
Core Subject Indicator	75%	2	70%	3	55.6%	4	82.3%

English	75%	3	70%	4	55.6%	4	94.1%
Maths	72.7%	3	70%	4	66.7%	4	88.2%
Science	69.7%	4	70%	4	66.7%	4	58.8%

Performance in Key Stage 2 at Pontygwaith Primary School is higher in 2014 for 3 of the 4 indicators than it was during the period of the Estyn Inspection in 2011 when Pontygwaith was graded Good for current performance and Good for prospects for improvement. Furthermore, in 2011 Estyn graded the quality of leadership and the quality of teaching in the school to be both good. Since 2011, the leadership and teaching staff have remained the same and have taken further steps to improve the school.

The Consortium is able to evidence that this effective approach to ensuring all pupils make sufficient progress is as effective in 2014 as it was in 2011 when Estyn inspected the School. Furthermore, recent classroom observations by Central South Consortium also evidence that the teaching continues to be good in the School.

6. Conclusion

The recommendation agreed at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet held on 25th September 2014 is that a statutory notice be published, to progress this proposal. The statutory notice will be published on Friday, xx Sept/Oct 2014 and it will allow for a 28 day period (to 5pm on Friday, xx Oct/Nov2014) 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 28 days of the end of the objection period detailed above. The outcome of this part of the process will be considered by Cabinet again at their meeting to be held in November 2014, for a final decision on the proposal to be made.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF
ABERLLECHAU PRIMARY SCHOOL
WITH ALL THE PUPILS TRANSFERRING
ON 1 JANUARY 2015 TO
PONTYGWAITH PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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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 Aberllechau Primary School and transfer all the pupils, including the Council's special educational needs class, to Pontygwaith Primary School. It is proposed that Aberllechau Primary School would close on 31 December 2014 with the pupils transferring to Pontygwaith Primary School, subject to parental preference on 1 January 2015.

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

The Governing Body of Aberllechau Primary School	The Governing Body of Pontygwaith Primary School
Pupils of Aberllechau Primary School	Pupils of Pontygwaith Primary School
Parents, carers and staff members of Aberllechau Primary School	Parents, carers and staff members of Pontygwaith Primary School
Other neighbouring primary schools	Parents, carers, staff and governors of Ynyshir Primary School
The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities	Teaching and staff trade unions
Welsh Minister for Education & Skills	Central South Education Consortium
Assembly Members who serve the Rhondda Cynon Taf area (constituency and regional members)	South East Wales Transport Association
Members of Parliament who have constituencies in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area	South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
Estyn	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 June 2014 and will be completed at 5pm on 18th July 2014. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in September 2014. 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 consider, 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 for the foreseeable future.

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, or within 28 days of the end of the objection period (as appropriate). 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 January 2015.

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 Wattstown. 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 Aberllechau Primary School, with the transfer of its provision, pupils and staff to Pontygwaith Primary School.

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
Aberllechau Primary	Governors and Staff Meeting	17 th June 2014, 4pm – 6pm	Aberllechau Primary School
Pontygwaith Primary	Governors and Staff Meeting	18 th June 2014, 4pm – 6pm	Pontygwaith Primary School
Aberllechau Primary	School Council	17 th June 2014, 2pm – 3pm	Aberllechau Primary School
Pontygwaith Primary	School Council	18 th June 2014, 2pm – 3pm	Pontygwaith Primary School
Both Schools and members of the local community	Parents/carers and public drop in session and exhibition	30 th June 2014, 4pm – 6pm	Pontygwaith 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 www.rctcbc.gov.uk

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 18 July 2014.

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 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 – Aberllechau Primary School

Aberllechau Primary School (“Aberllechau”) is a Community Primary School located at Victoria Terrace, Wattstown, and the school site consists of two, traditional Victorian buildings, constructed in 1887. The Council has invested £292k in the school buildings since 2009, however the backlog maintenance figure is still £539,000 and this does not include costs of improvements to meet the 21st Century School criteria. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools, Aberllechau is graded a C for suitability, and C for sufficiency, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively.

The pupil numbers in Aberllechau over the past four years are shown below and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. Aberllechau also hosts a Council Special Educational Needs class which provides places for children from across the County Borough, and which does not provide a specific provision to the children in the Aberllechau catchment. As a result, the number of pupils in the special class is shown separately. 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.

Aberllechau Primary School				
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mainstream pupils	63	58	64	59
SEN Class	8	7	4	4

Total	71	65	68	63
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	6	17	15	7

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

Aberllechau Primary School							
Projected No on roll in January	Capacity of the School	2014 (Actual)	2015	2016	2017	2018	% surplus places in 2018
Mainstream pupils	97	59	67	67	66	67	31%
SEN Class	8	4	4	4	4	4	50%
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	13	7	14	15	14	14	-

Aberllechau Primary School was inspected by Estyn in March 2014, and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that **special measures** are now required in relation to the school. Schools in special measures are likely to have many important areas for improvement in their work. One reason for schools being placed in this category is that inspectors have found low standards and poor teaching and learning.

The inspectors found that the current performance of the school is unsatisfactory with prospects for improvement also unsatisfactory. The term 'unsatisfactory' in the context of school inspections means that important areas for improvement outweigh strengths.

The current performance of the school is considered to be unsatisfactory because:

- many pupils do not have good enough skills in reading, writing, numeracy, science, Welsh and information and communication technology (ICT);
- trends in data on pupils' outcomes are declining and there is insufficient progress in addressing underperformance, particularly at key stage 2;
- teachers' planning takes insufficient account of pupils' starting points, and as a result less able pupils are unable to access the work planned and more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently; and
- over time, teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements have been inaccurate.

Prospects for improvement are considered to be unsatisfactory because:

- high levels of staff turnover and absence have prevented the school from improving at an appropriate rate in recent years;
- leaders do not address the shortcomings in pupils' progress and teachers' performance with enough urgency;
- self-evaluation processes do not improve outcomes for pupils or the school's provision well enough; and

- leaders have not addressed many of the recommendations of the last inspection report.

Estyn has stated that, in order to make the required improvements that are necessary to raise standards of teaching and learning the school should:

- R1** Improve pupils' standards in reading, writing and science
- R2** Improve pupils' skills in numeracy and ICT
- R3** Ensure that learning experiences are progressive and meet all learners' needs
- R4** Improve the quality and consistency of teaching
- R5** Improve assessment of and assessment for learning
- R6** Stabilise the teaching team in order to provide continuity for pupils
- R7** Ensure that rigorous monitoring by leaders at all levels results in improvements to pupils' outcomes

The tables overleaf set out the performance of Aberllechau 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 32.5%.

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*
Foundation Phase Indicator	33.3%	4	72.7%	4
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	41.7%	4	90.9%	3
Language literacy and communication skills English	50.0%	4	72.7%	4
Mathematical development	66.7%	4	90.9%	2

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

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

	2011	2011 Benchmark Quartile	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile
Core Subject Indicator	83.3%	1	75.0%	4	54.6%	4
English	83.3%	1	75.0%	4	63.6%	4

Maths	83.3%	2	87.5%	2	72.7%	4
Science	83.3%	2	87.5%	3	54.6%	4

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

	2011	2011 Benchmark Quartile	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013 (Provisional)
% attendance	90.97%	3	90.92%	4	91.70%

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. The Consortium categorises the performance of each school in the region and considers that: *“Aberllechau is in Category D within the Central South Consortium’s system of categorisation of effectiveness (A-D). This is because overall performance does not compare well with that of similar schools; too much teaching has been of an adequate quality; standards in pupils’ books and teachers’ expectations of achievement vary widely; a consistently used approach to assessment and pupil tracking is yet to be embedded; and senior leaders do not yet have a strong enough impact on improving pupil outcomes”*.

Information on the Schools – Pontygwaith Primary School

Pontygwaith Primary School (“Pontygwaith”) is a Community Primary School located at Graig Street, Pontygwaith, just one mile from Aberllechau. It also consists of two, traditional Victorian buildings, constructed in 1896. Over the last few years, there has been considerable capital investment in this school, part funded by the Governing Body and match funded by the Council, including major roof repairs, renewal of external doors and windows, toilet refurbishment, improved security, new reception and administrative areas, refurbished play areas and installation of dedicated kitchen and dining facilities. Welsh Government approved building grades are B for both suitability and sufficiency. However, the backlog maintenance figure is still £435k (which consists mainly of future works required to mechanical and electrical services) and this does not include costs of improvements to meet the 21st Century School criteria. .

The pupil numbers in Pontygwaith over the past four years is shown below based on the statutory annual pupil count 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.

Pontygwaith Primary School				
No on roll in January	2011	2012	2013	2014

Total	107	97	107	102
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	23	24	20	21

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

Pontygwaith Primary School							
Projected No on roll in January	Capacity of the School	2014 (Actual)	2015	2016	2017	2018	% surplus places in 2018
Total	188	102	109	109	105	105	45%
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	26	21	23	23	23	23	-

If the proposal was to be implemented in the future and the parents/guardians of the Aberllechau pupils choose to transfer their pupils to Pontygwaith the five year forecasts will be as follows:

Pontygwaith Primary School (including the pupils transferred from Aberllechau Primary School)							
Projected No on roll in January	Capacity of the School	2015	2016	2017	2018	% surplus places in 2018	
Mainstream pupils	188	176	176	171	172	9%	
SEN Class	8	4	4	4	4	50%	
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	26	37	38	37	37	-	

If pupils numbers from within the revised catchment area of Pontygwaith increase above the existing capacity of the School, there are opportunities to reconfigure the interior of the School to accommodate a further 30 pupils at least, including additional Nursery capacity . This can be achieved by minor internal remodelling, and converting the spare classroom currently used as an Intervention Room back to its original use, ie a teaching base classroom. This work will be undertaken before any transfer of pupils occurs to accommodate all pupils, including those of Nursery age.

Pontygwaith Primary School was inspected in March 2011. Estyn judged the school's current performance to be Good and the school's prospects for improvement also to be Good.

Estyn reported that the school is good because:

- most pupils make effective progress and achieve good standards;

- most pupils' behaviour and motivation for learning are good;
- the quality of teaching and assessment is good;
- there is a good range of exciting learning experiences; and
- there is an inclusive school ethos.

Furthermore, also Estyn also concluded that the school has strong prospects for improvement because the recently appointed headteacher provides very effective leadership and vision for improvement. The school's comprehensive self-evaluation process leads to accurate judgements about performance. Plans for improvement focus well on key priorities. Recent work by staff has already brought about improvements in pupils' oracy skills and behaviour.

In order to improve further, Pontygraith Primary School needs to:

R1 - raise standards for more able and talented pupils;

R2 - improve attendance and punctuality; and

R3 - ensure that marking regularly includes constructive comments to help pupils make progress.

The tables below set out the performance of Pontygraith 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 43.2%.

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*
Foundation Phase Indicator	80%	1	68.75%	3
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	90%	2	68.75%	4
Language literacy and communication skills English	80%	3	68.75%	4
Mathematical development	80%	2	75.0%	3

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

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

	2011	2011 Benchmark Quartile	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile
Core Subject	75%	2	70%	3	55.6%	4

Indicator						
English	75%	3	70%	4	55.6%	4
Maths	72.7%	3	70%	4	66.7%	4
Science	69.7%	4	70%	4	66.7%	4

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

	2011	2011 Benchmark Quartile	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013 (Provisional)
% attendance	91.17%	3	90.86%	4	91.08%

The Central South Consortium School Improvement Service considers that: *“Pontygwaith is currently in Category B within the Central South Consortium’s system of categorisation of effectiveness (A-D). This is because: although educational standards have generally been variable when compared to similar schools, the school is the most deprived in the family of schools and has cohorts of less than 10 pupils. When individual value added is tracked, the school gives value to all pupils. Teaching is usually good and leadership is effective”.*

Information on the Schools – Ynyshir Primary School

Aberllechau’s catchment area also borders that of Ynyshir Primary School (“Ynyshir”) which is located at Llanwonno Road, Ynyshir, just 1.4 miles from Aberllechau. Ynyshir is housed in a new 21st Century School building, opened in 2010. Whilst, in the future, Aberllechau will be within Pontygwaith’s catchment area, parents may wish to choose to apply for a place for their child at Ynyshir, if there are spaces available in the relevant year groups. As Ynyshir Primary School may be affected by this proposal, it has been included within the consultation to provide information to parents and carers.

The available forecast spaces at Ynyshir are as follows:

Ynyshir Primary School							
Projected No on roll in January	Capacity of the School	2014 (Actual)	2015	2016	2017	2018	% surplus places in 2018
Total	270	212	203	216	224	229	15%
Pre-nursery and Nursery pupils	38	30	41	43	41	41	-

(spare capacity within the school overall can be utilised to accommodate the potential additional Nursery age pupils)

Estyn inspected Ynyshir in May 2009 and concluded that Ynyshir is a good school, which is purposefully led. Pupils are well taught and they make good progress. Estyn recommended that in order to improve the school in the areas inspected, the staff and governing body need to:

- R1** rationalise the roles of subject co-ordinators and the distribution of responsibilities across the senior management team;
R2 improve the access to the equipment to teach ICT;
R3 strengthen provision so that all pupils have greater opportunities to experience a sense of awe and wonder;
R4 extend the role of the governing body in calling the school to account; and
R5 raise levels of attendance.

The tables overleaf set out the performance of Ynyshir 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 32.8%.

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*
Foundation Phase Indicator	78.6%	3	63.3%	4
Personal and social development wellbeing and cultural diversity	100%	1	100%	1
Language literacy and communication skills English	85.7%	4	70%	4
Mathematical development	78.6%	2	78.3%	4

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

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

	2011	2011 Benchmark Quartile	2012	2012 Benchmark Quartile	2013	2013 Benchmark Quartile
Core Subject Indicator	69.7%	3	75.8%	4	83.3%	2
English	72.7%	3	84.8%	3	86.7%	2
Maths	72.7%	3	75.8%	4	83.3%	3
Science	69.7%	4	75.8%	4	83.3%	3

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

2011	2011	2012	2012	2013
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		Benchmark Quartile		Benchmark Quartile	(Provisional)
% attendance	89.7%	4	91.8%	4	92.62%

The Central South Consortium School Improvement Service considers that Ynyshir is *“in Category C within the Central South Consortium’s system of categorisation of effectiveness (A-D). This is because: standards are variable year on year, however teaching is generally good and leadership is beginning to have a positive impact on standards at key stage 2 and provision generally”*.

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.

Estyn’s conclusion in March 2012 on the quality of education services for children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf was:

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 eighteen months 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. Where there is little evidence of significant progress, the Council is intervening using a range of its powers. One of the powers is to close schools that over an extended period continue to under-perform providing an education to children that is not good enough.

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;
- 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.

Aberllechau Primary School and Pontygwaith Primary School have been assessed against the aforementioned criteria:

- Both schools have surplus places in excess of 25%;
- Aberllechau is a "small" school with less than 90 mainstream pupils;
- Aberllechau has a maintenance backlog of £539k, which equates to £7,926 per pupil;
- Pontygwaith has a maintenance backlog of £435k, which equates to £4,065 per pupil;
- Both schools have mixed aged classes, Aberllechau has 3 (which includes a mixed Key Stage class) and Pontygwaith has 5. Please see details below:

Aberllechau Primary School	
Nursery/Reception	6 Nursery, 13 Reception
Year 1/2/3	10 Pupils Year 1, 6 Pupils Year 2, 8 Pupils Year 3
Year 4/5/6	9 Pupils Year 4, 9 Pupils Year 5, 11 Pupils Year 6
Pontygwaith Primary School	
Reception/Year 1	15 Reception, 7 Year 1
Year 1/2	15 Pupils Year 1, 11 Pupils Year 2
Year 3/4	15 Pupils Year 3, 8 Pupils Year 4
Year 4/5	10 Pupils Year 4, 7 Pupils Year 5
Year 5/6	6 Pupils Year 5, 17 Pupils Year 6

The educational performance and pupil attendance of both schools is consistently in the third and fourth quartiles when compared to similar schools in Wales.

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

What is the educational case for closing Aberllechau Primary School and transferring the pupils to Pontygwaith 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 school for the communities of Wattstown and Pontygwaith will:

- **Improve educational outcomes;**
 - Create larger Foundation Phase and KS2 departments 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 move between key stages and 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 the buildings and in improving standards of teaching and learning, which otherwise would not have been available;
- **Improve leadership and management;**

- Provides the opportunity for Headteacher's 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;
- The opportunity to teach across a wider age range;
- An increased range of expertise;
- Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination.

These benefits apply equally to the mainstream and the SEN pupils in the schools. This argument is supported by Estyn in its recent report "School Size and Educational Effectiveness", that stated "*Pupils' standards are good or better in a higher proportion of large primary schools than small and medium-sized primary schools. This may be because large schools tend to have more expertise and capacity to address the needs of more vulnerable pupils and the more able and talented pupils.*"

There is sufficient space at Pontygwaith Primary School to accommodate all the pupils of Aberllechau, including the SEN Class, and encompass the catchment area of Wattstown, and to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced and secure financial situation. By being larger the School can provide a greater degree of stability at all levels and provide the ability to employ more teaching and support staff. This will allow the School to cover a wider range of curriculum expertise. Overall, the single, larger Primary School will be more financially viable than those it will replace.

There are also teaching staff benefits, which should improve teaching standards within the School. Currently, pupils are taught in mixed age groups. If the proposal proceeds, Pontygwaith Primary School will have greater than 170 pupils of statutory school age (excluding the SEN class) which will equate to 6 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.

If parents and carers from Aberllechau Primary School and its catchment area exercise their right to choose Ynyshir Primary School for their child in the future, the educational impact that this may have on Ynyshir Primary School will be similar to that above. Ynyshir, has just over 200 pupils on roll, with a capacity for 270. Subject to the Council's admissions criteria, Ynyshir is able to accommodate additional pupils up to the admissions limit of the School.

What is the likely impact of the Proposal on the school pupils?

In making the proposed change, many things will be different for the pupils from Wattstown, Pontygwaith and Ynyshir, depending on parents' exercising their right of choice, but some things will remain the same:

- Some may have a longer or a different route to school, and some may be transported to school by bus;
- 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;
- For those pupils in the Special Educational Needs Class, the teachers and teaching assistants will be the same and will transfer with the pupils;
- The teachers and teaching assistants may be different, however, the majority of teachers and teaching assistants should, with the agreement of the Pontygwaith 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 run school sports teams, debating team etc. The children attending the SEN Class will also have the opportunity to engage in a wider range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.

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.

For those children from Aberllechau Primary School, that live in Wattstown, who opt to attend Pontygwaith, the Council's policy regarding free school transport will continue to apply. It is estimated that all the pupils living in the revised catchment area of Pontygwaith (encompassing the current Aberllechau catchment) will be within 1.5 miles of this school. The Council has assessed the safety of the route between Wattstown and Pontygwaith and consider it to be a safe route to school. Nevertheless, the Council will seek to further improve the safety of the route through additional crossing points, wider pavements, and measures to reduce the speed of the traffic. Pupils that attend the SEN Class will continue to be transported from their home to the class relocated to Pontygwaith.

Parents of pupils at Aberllechau Primary who express a preference for Pontygwaith Primary as the alternative school should this proposal be accepted will automatically be granted a place at this school. If a preference is expressed for any other school in the area every effort will be made to allocate a place, but published admissions criteria will be applied in the case of oversubscription, so admission cannot be guaranteed.

If parents/carers opt to attend Ynyshir Primary School and are successful in obtaining a place at this school, as Wattstown is not in the Ynyshir catchment area, no home to school transport will be provided.

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:

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

We consider that this proposal benefits the children in the communities of Wattstown, Pontygwaith and Ynyshir 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 Pontygwaith Primary School would determine any changes.

As this is not creating a new school provision, the senior management and governing body of Pontygwaith Primary 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 Aberllechau Primary, 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.

If parents/carers exercise their choice and decide to attend Ynyshir Primary School, any changes to the numbers of children attending the School will be reflected in the funding allocated to the School. If additional staff are required, the Governing Body of Ynyshir will fill the vacant posts. We will request that the Governing Body give consideration to existing staff of Aberllechau Primary School, should they make applications.

What will be the likely impact of the Proposal on Wattstown?

Wattstown, Pontygwaith and Ynyshir are Communities First Areas and Wattstown is also a Flying Start Area. Wattstown is part of the new Porth Communities First region and Pontygwaith is part of the new Ferndale Communities First region. The two new regions already work collaboratively together and have recently secured Communities Funding matched with Pupil Deprivation Grant funding across the two regions to support educational improvement across the secondary school clusters of Porth and Ferndale.

Within Wattstown the Community Centre adjacent to Aberllechau Primary School will continue to offer a wide range of provision to young people and the community in partnership with other agencies including the Council.

The English medium element of Flying Start is based at Aberllechau Primary School. If the proposal proceeds, it is proposed that the English medium Flying Start provision is transferred to the Community facility at the Recreation Ground which houses the Welsh medium Flying Start provision for Wattstown. Currently, fifteen children access the English medium Flying Start in Wattstown and the Council's Flying Start team consider that the provision can be comfortably accommodated at the Recreation Ground.

If the proposal was to proceed, the Council would consider any offers to lease Aberllechau Primary School for an alternative purpose from any community organisation, and if no offer was forthcoming, the Council's preferred option would be to sell the site for redevelopment.

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.

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 Pontygwaith Primary School Governing Body, a summary of the known budgetary impacts is set out below.

	Pontygwaith Primary (Current) £'000	Aberllechau Primary (current) £'000	Pontygwaith Primary (future) £'000	Revenue Savings £'000
Annual Revenue Budget based on 2013/14 budget	493	385	732	146

Improvements will be made to Pontygwaith Primary School to address the future mechanical/electrical maintenance upgrades and further develop the accommodation at the School. It is estimated that the total cost of this work will be in the region of £450k, and will be funded as a three year rolling programme of investment from within existing capital resources.

Any capital receipts from the future sale of Aberllechau Primary School site will be used by the Council to invest in capital projects across the County Borough.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

Increasing the intake into Pontygwaith Primary School and closing Aberllechau Primary School will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty for a period of time, although experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum and the children's education does not suffer. For some pupils, there will be further to travel to get to school; the Council's policy regarding free school transport will continue to apply.

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. However, there are large, very successful primary schools in the County Borough that overcome the issues with starting school for the first time.

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 Pontygwaith 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 and the additional distance for Wattstown pupils to go to school.

What alternative options have been considered other than the closure of Aberllechau Primary School?

The current position is that we have two small schools a mile apart, 110 surplus places between the two schools, low levels of attendance and educational standards when compared to similar schools in Wales, and both schools housed in Victorian buildings that are expensive to maintain.

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

- Close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer the pupils to Pontygwaith Primary School – the proposal;
- Close both schools and build 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.

We have explored opportunities for a suitable site for a new school in Pontygwaith and Wattstown and no site is available to build a new school. Furthermore, the costs of building a new school will be in excess of £6m and the Council has no capital budget available, for the foreseeable future, for such an investment.

In respect of the option to federate the governing bodies, which would create a two-site school under one Headteacher and one governing body, this option would not remove the surplus places that currently exist, or enable the educational benefits that accrue from creating larger year groups and improving the standards of teaching and learning that arise from creating a single school. It would also not allow us to improve the learning environment for all pupils by being able to rationalise the building stock and upgrade one of the two sites to a high standard, as opposed to having to undertake costly work at both.

Therefore, these two 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:

- The Council’s Cabinet considers the Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
- 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;
- Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council’s officers own responses and Estyn’s views of the proposal 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;
- The Council’s Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 6 months 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;

- 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;
- The Council's Cabinet must issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
- If written or e-mailed objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 7 days of the determination of the proposal (where the Council is determining its own proposals); or, in all other cases, within 28 days of the end of the objection period;
- If the proposals receive approval/the Council determine to implement them, 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@rctcbc.gov.uk

The Proposal

The proposal is to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer all the pupils, including the Council's special educational needs class, to Pontygwaith Primary School. It is proposed that Aberllechau Primary School would close on 31 December 2014 with the pupils transferring to Pontygwaith Primary School on 1 January 2015.

1. Do you agree with the proposal? Yes No e

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 (e.g. parent of a pupil at named school, governor at named school etc.)

4. Name (optional)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Please forward completed questionnaires to the above address no later than 18 July 2014.

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Appendix 2

Notes of a meeting held with members of the School Council of Aberllechau Primary School, 17th June 2014.

Present: Mrs Sue Walker, Head of Primary Achievement
Mrs Julie Hadley, Head of School Organisation, Planning and Governance
Miss R Evans, Acting Headteacher, Aberllechau Primary
Six pupils, members of the School Council (from Years 1 to 6)

Mrs Walker explained why this meeting had been arranged, which was to talk with the children about the possible closure of the school and to ask them how they felt about this. The children presented a list of questions to the officers that they had prepared in conjunction with their classmates. They also presented a more detailed file of other questions asked by pupils in each class which included the ones already put forward. Mrs Walker agreed that she and Mrs Hadley would attempt to answer the questions in turn:

- Can you explain out of all the schools in the Rhondda why you have chosen our school to close? Mrs Walker referred to the fact that if a school has too many empty places compared to the number of children attending, the Council has to look at these schools, who have what are referred to as 'surplus places'. Aberllechau is one such school.
- Do you know how dangerous the walk that we will need to take each day twice a day is? What can you do to help us stay safe? Mrs Hadley explained that children's safety is our top priority and everything possible will be done to make the road as safe as possible. Information on the traffic survey being carried out and possible ways to improve road safety, including new crossings was given.
- We are planned to move after Christmas. Have you thought about how it will disrupt our learning? Mrs Walker said that there will be a lot of transition work between the two schools, teachers will talk and discuss pupils' work and hand over books etc. They will look at where all children are with their work and will share information. You will start at the same point with your work as where you left it at Aberllechau.
- Do you know how difficult it will be for the teachers to find new jobs? Mrs Walker replied that other schools will need teachers and will be asked to consider the Aberllechau staff when filling their vacancies. The Council will work with all staff to try wherever possible to find them new jobs.
- I'm really enjoying my time at Aberllechau and all of my friends are here. Have you thought about the effects (*sic*) on us if we move to a new school? Mrs Walker advised that your friends will be moving with you, this is also a chance for you to meet new friends as well.

- At our school we are given the independence to walk home from school ourselves from year 3. If we have to move to Pontygwaith Primary School how will we be able to have our own independence? Mrs Walker advised that this will vary from child to child and it will be up to your parents to choose and decide this. You can be independent in different ways, for example you could walk to school with a group of friends.

Mrs Walker asked the children how they felt about moving school. They replied they will be sad as they will not see their teachers any more.

The children stated that they play summer sports on Tuesdays, this will not be possible at Pontygwaith as there is no space. Mrs Walker advised that this is not true, Pontygwaith has a larger yard with more space to play, not less. There is also a lot of equipment in the Infant yard at Pontygwaith for pupils to play with. There will be a meeting at Pontygwaith on 30th June and anyone can go and visit Pontygwaith to see these facilities for themselves.

Pupils asked if there is there after-school provision at Pontygwaith? Mrs Walker replied that she was unsure but could check. If there was no provision they could be asked to consider it.

Pupils stated that 'we have PE and 'golden time' here, they may not do this in Pontygwaith'. Mrs Walker advised that all schools have PE, they have to do this as part of the national curriculum. Some schools have 'golden time' and others don't, but Pontygwaith will have something very similar eg rewards for good behaviour. The pupils were asked to explain what they do during 'golden time', they gave information. They were also told that they would be able to apply to go on the school council at Pontygwaith where they would be able to get their views across.

A pupil said that he had been attending this school since he was small, he doesn't want to move in his last year. He was told that it could be an opportunity to meet new friends who would also be going to Secondary school with him earlier.

Another pupil said that his sister is attending Flying Start at Aberllechau and that he would miss her. He was told that she will be able to join him at Pontygwaith in September 2015.

A pupil stated that people will move out of Wattstown and it will become a ghost town. He was advised that there are lots of things going on in the village and plenty of opportunities to undertake activities as a community.

A pupil stated that it will be difficult for his mother to take his sister to Flying Start and himself to Pontygwaith. He was advised that start times for both are different.

Mrs Walker and Mrs Hadley thanked the children for coming to talk to them, and said that they would be remaining in the school - if anyone thought of any more questions they could come back and ask. The children also thanked the officers for coming to see them in their school.

Notes of a meeting held at Aberllechau Primary School on 17th June 2014, to discuss the proposal to close the school on 31st December 2014.

Present : Mr Chris Bradshaw, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Mrs Sue Walker, Head of Primary Achievement
Mr R Evans, HR Manager
Mrs Julie Hadley, Head of School Organisation, Planning and Governance
17 members of staff and governors.

Mr Bradshaw opened the meeting by introducing all of the officers present. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School, as detailed in the consultation document that had been widely circulated. He outlined the reasons that this proposal is being considered at this time, and went through the statutory process that is to be followed.

The meeting was then opened for any questions, comments or statements:

- How will moving to Pontygwaith half way through the school year be of benefit to the children's education? CB advised that the recent Estyn report has been a cause of great concern, with Aberllechau being the first school in RCT to go directly in to the category of Special Measures. Dealing with this matter sooner rather than later is in the best educational interests of the children.
- Standards at Pontygwaith have been falling over the last 3 years. How will this improve prospects for our children? CB advised that Pontygwaith is making significant progress in improving outcomes for its pupils, Estyn identified that Aberllechau is not making such progress.
- How would Pontygwaith fare if they had an inspection tomorrow? CB advised that this school can demonstrate that progress is being made.
- Data suggests that transferring to Pontygwaith will not benefit our children. There will be larger classes and less personal teaching. CB advised that the Estyn report identified that teaching is unsatisfactory at Aberllechau. The Chair of Governors responded that this was because the school had been forced to employ a supply teacher, the LA had been asked to provide the school with a good teacher. CB responded by stating that it was not appropriate to share discussions he had held previously with the Chair on these matters in an open meeting such as this.
- Questions were raised as to the level of LA support that had been provided to the school. CB advised that the LA does not put additional support in to schools prior to inspection unless it is deemed to be required.
- The Governing Body were unaware of problems in this school until they received a pre-formal warning letter from the Director in the Autumn of 2013. The LA should have put support in. SW advised that support had been given by the Systems Leader and LA School Improvement Officers to assist leadership, she provided further details of this support.
- CB stated that the school had already been informed that it had been graded a D for performance. Governors would have been aware of this.
- We have been penalised because of staffing problems in the school, we were unable to remove problem staff.

- Why didn't the LA step in earlier to address issues? CB advised that the school did show improvement following the 2009 inspection, but that standards started to fall again in 2012. The LA did intervene again, as demonstrated by the warning letter issued last year..
- Our children are being penalised for this.
- Our children will not be able to take part in after school activities in Pontygwaith. The road is atrocious – have you walked it? It has been declared unsafe for a crossing to be installed. CB advised that this statement is not true, the Council's Highways Division have been undertaking detailed surveys of the road and traffic numbers and are devising plans to install two crossings along the route. Details will be available at the open evening to be held on 30th June.
- Why is the 'lollipop lady' post at Pontygwaith being lost? CB advised that education officers have no knowledge of this issue.
- Why weren't problems with management of the school addressed? If you knew there were problems, you should have informed the whole Governing Body rather than the Chair of Governors alone. This matter has been kept as a closed shop. CB advised that the LA had provided support to the school on this issue following the issue of the pre-formal warning letter. RE outlined the HR policy and processes regarding such matters and reminded those present that employment law must be adhered to. The Chair of Governors again questioned the level of support provided. SW again outlined details of the considerable amount of support given.
- There has been a lack of communication with the Governing Body on staff capability procedures. Advice given that such issues are confidential in nature and cannot be discussed in open governors meetings.
- CB asked whether the Governors had made any challenge in respect of standards at the school and what measures had they undertaken to assess standards, for example did they undertake 'learning walks'? Governors again criticised the level of support given by the LA, which they considered to be restricted to management level only.
- CB advised that it is not the responsibility of the LA to support teaching at a school, this is down to school senior management. The LA cannot undertake immediate intervention if a problem is identified as it takes time to monitor and evaluate the situation. The warning letter was sent to prompt engagement in this process.
- The Chair of Governors stated that the school's staffing structure was stable until last year, then it changed almost overnight, causing problems. The LA was aware of these problems, so why didn't they intervene earlier, why didn't alarm bells ring? We must all take a share of the blame, but new staff have not been given enough time to prove themselves.
- CB responded to this by advising that the previous inspection of the school in 2007 had placed it in to a category of requiring significant improvement. The 2014 inspection had placed it in to special measures. It is a small school, with mixed ability, mixed age and even mixed key stage classes. Evidence suggests that larger schools perform better. RCT has too many small schools that have to be provided with more support. The original closure proposal for this school put forward in 2009 was not progressed as the LA recognised that the school had made progress following the 2007 inspection. Now, in 2014, it

is in special measures. We are now trying to address this. The Estyn report recently received is one of the worst I have ever seen.

- SW outlined the report of the Systems Leader on the school performance review, which had been prepared in October 2013 and presented to the Governing Body in the Autumn Term. There were clear discrepancies between the views and opinions of the school staff on certain aspects of performance and those of the Systems Leader, these were highlighted in the report.
- The Chair of Governors stated that staff have done a significant job under considerable adversity, which only certain governors were aware of. The LA should have intervened earlier.
- CB stated that Governors must take some responsibility for the situation the school is now in. The response from governors was that they did not know about this and that staff and governors should have been informed earlier.
- A governor stated that the report indicates that the school is 'adequate – I read that as meaning ok'. SW provided some clarification in respect of the terminology used and went through the school performance review report again, which graded the school as category D, the lowest rating of all.
- A query was raised as to the reason for a police presence when pupils undertook a walk to Pontygwaith on the first day of term. Questions were asked as to why they couldn't appear to deal with the issue of illegal parking at the garage which prevents safe crossing of the road at that point.
- No costs have been provided for the road safety works you claim will be undertaken, why is this? CB advised that this information will be provided at the forthcoming open evening. There will be savings made by closing the school and these can be re-invested towards the cost of these works. The Highways Division are preparing plans to address safety concerns and identifying ways to improve road safety. It must be noted however that the route does not meet nationally agreed criteria that deems it unsafe for children to walk to school.
- Our children can walk to school safely and independently from Year 3. We would not let them walk to Pontygwaith, the road is not safe and the walk takes 45 minutes. CB advised that there are many schools in RCT where distances from home to school are similar to this, how children travel to school is a parental responsibility. The address in Wattstown that is the furthest point from Pontygwaith Primary is less than the 1.5 mile limit at which this Council provides home to school transport (*actual measurement is 1.37 miles*).
- Statement made – children will not be able to participate in after school activities. Children will suffer and attendance rates will go backwards. They will not be able to walk to school in poor weather, so parents will keep them home. Children will become tired if they have to walk. The local buses will not be able to accommodate all the pupils of this school and three buses are required to get to Pontygwaith school. What about school uniform – children need new clothes for September then parents will have to purchase new uniform in January. You have not looked at safety issues in relation to the river (*Highways Division are in fact looking at this*). What are the costs of all of this? This proposal will destroy this community, we will not be able to sell our houses as no one will want to move here.

- Is this proposal being considered solely as a result of the outcomes of the Estyn inspection report? CB advised that this is just one of several factors considered, albeit the report was one of the worst he had seen. The small size of the school was a key factor, a merger with Pontygwaith to create a larger school will bring benefits as outlined in the consultation document.
- Is there room for Pontygwaith to 'grow'? CB advised that Pontygwaith had sufficient accommodation available to cater for both its current pupils and those attending Aberllechau.
- Can you guarantee that the education provided at Pontygwaith will be better? CB advised that taking in to account the inspection report outcome and looking at where both schools are at present, the answer to this would be yes.
- Pontygwaith's data shows the school's results going down, our data is better. SW advised that the Systems Leader for Pontygwaith has indicated that standards at this school are good.
- Numbers are falling at Pontygwaith, many children are leaving the school as their parents are not happy with standards (*post meeting note – data on in year transfers was checked and this statement was found to be inaccurate*)
- It is not good for the children of Wattstown to have to leave their village for their education. You need to consider the psychological effect on children. CB advised that there have been many school closures implemented in RCT in recent years and no evidence of this issue has been seen, no subsequent complaints have been received following school closures.
- Community feeling here is strong, you are ripping the heart out of this community.
- We are being penalised for matters we have no say in. Dealing with staff problems will lead to trade unions becoming involved. The new staff have not been given enough time to prove themselves. We understand protocol, but if we can be given a chance, with the current team at the school we can turn things around. CB advised them to refer to comments made in the Estyn report – some of the children referred to as having poor skills have been in this school for many years and this has come too late for them already.
- There have been too many supply teachers employed over the years, we can now see the improvements made by the current team. We have seen improvements in our children in the last 6 months, they now want to learn.
- There has been no real stability at this school since 2007. The previous Headteacher left in 2007 and was not replaced until 2010.
- This closure decision was being spoken about 6 months before the inspection, I have this information from a senior Council source who I am not prepared to name. Why have you allowed us to employ staff if you knew you were going to close the school? CB advised that this is a consultation process and no decisions have been taken; no decisions were in place prior to the inspection either despite the claims made.
- We have been trying to get road crossings installed for many years – how are you going to achieve this in just a few months? How long does it take to obtain planning permission? Information was provided.
- What will happen to the school staff, they have given up a lot.

- When you use the term Elected Members, are you referring to Cabinet? Advised yes.
- Will responding to this consultation make any difference to the outcome? CB outlined the process to be followed and indicated that all correspondence received will be referred to in the consultation report that will be presented to Cabinet.
- Are there minutes available of meetings that were held between officers and the Chair of Governors? Advised no. Comment made that no evidence of these meetings therefore exists.
- A statement was made that 'Education in Wales is a shambles'.
- There has been a lack of investment in this school for a long time, but money has been spent on Pontygwaith and Ynyshir. We do not get any support unless we fight for it. The LA should have intervened sooner. SW advised that targeted support will be identified in the near future and will be put in place. CB also outlined the considerable sums of money that had been spent on capital repairs and maintenance at Aberllechau in recent years.
- You are not giving staff time to raise standards. CB stated that the previous closure proposal was withdrawn in 2009 for this reason, but that standards at the school have gone backwards since then.
- A query was raised regarding entitlement to transport provision. Information was provided.
- RE advised that HR staff can arrange to visit the school to discuss various issues with staff, He gave information on processes that will be followed.
- Is there going to be a meeting held for the parents in Aberllechau? CB advised that we do not hold public meetings to discuss closure proposals, we have no obligation to hold such meetings and have not done so for many years now.
- Why is the open evening being held in Pontygwaith instead of Aberllechau? CB advised that the open evening is an opportunity for the plans for road safety to be displayed and more importantly for persons to see the facilities available at that school. 'Guided tours' will be offered and Pontygwaith school staff will accompany any person who wants to see the school around the site. JH also explained that the process for school reorganisation proposals has now changed since new legislation was introduced in 2013. A consultation report now has to be prepared, with all documented evidence of consultation contained within it. This is why all persons are now encouraged to put their views in writing; it is also one of the reasons that parents meetings are no longer held as it is virtually impossible to accurately record these meetings.

The Acting Headteacher thanked all persons for attending and formally closed the meeting.

Notes of a meeting held with members of the School Council of Pontygwaith Primary School, 18th June 2014

Present: Mrs Sue Walker, Head of Primary Achievement
Mrs Julie Hadley, Head of School Organisation, Planning and Governance
Mrs Martin, Teacher, Pontygwaith Primary
Ten pupils, members of the School Council

Mrs Walker explained why this meeting had been arranged, which was to talk with the children about the possible closure of Aberllechau Primary School, with the pupils transferring here to Pontygwaith and to ask them if they knew about the plans and how they felt about this. The pupils replied that they were all aware of what is being proposed.

The pupils said that the Aberllechau children would not need a bus to get to school, but having to walk may make them late.

The pupils suggested that the Aberllechau pupils could behave differently if their school has different rules to Pontygwaith. Mrs Walker asked them what happens now if a new child joins Pontygwaith – they replied that they are shown around the school and have the school rules explained to them. Mrs Walker said that this would be what would happen if Aberllechau children were to come to this school.

One pupil said that we would become one community school and we will welcome all pupils who want to come to our school.

Mrs Walker asked the children how the joint sports day with the Aberllechau pupils works. The pupils explained that the Aberllechau children walk over to Pontygwaith and the joint team then travels up to Darran Park Primary to take part in the competition. This had taken place last week. One pupil said that this will be much easier if all the children are attending one school.

The pupils said that they are all looking forward to having more children attending their school. They told Mrs Walker about the 'playground buddies' system at the school, where pupils will go and play with children who seem to be on their own or are feeling sad.

The pupils said that the Aberllechau children will have to wear our school uniform, but perhaps we could have a new one for us all, with a different colour and logo.

A pupil commented that their school is over 100 years old.

Mrs Walker asked the children what they enjoyed most about Pontygwaith Primary. They said that they like Maths, PE and Welsh. They also said that there is no bullying here, we are all friends. We have a football club after school for the Juniors and take part in a rugby tournament on Mondays. We also have volleyball and Dragon Sports. We would like more activities. We also have a breakfast club.

A pupil asked whether the Aberllechau teachers would come to Pontygwaith. Mrs Walker replied that this will depend on the numbers of children that may transfer here and how many more staff will be needed for these children. A question was asked on what changes will be made to Pontygwaith – Mrs Walker replied that there will be very few, if any, there has already been a considerable amount of building work done at this school.

A pupil asked if they could have more I Pads and climbing equipment – Mrs Walker replied that this will be a matter for the Headteacher to decide. Another pupil said that the school will need more classrooms. Mrs Walker replied that this will be looked at before any new pupils join, but that there is plenty of room at Pontygwaith and more classrooms probably won't be needed, the school will still not be full.

Mrs Walker and Mrs Hadley thanked all of the children for agreeing to meet with them and talk about their school, the meeting had been very informative and helpful.

Notes of a meeting held at Pontygwaith Primary School on 18th June 2014, to discuss the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School on 31st December 2014, with pupils transferring to Pontygwaith on 1st January 2015.

Present : Mr Chris Bradshaw, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Mrs Sue Walker, Head of Primary Achievement
Mrs Julie Hadley, Head of School Organisation, Planning and Governance
24 members of staff and governors.

Cllr M Adams, Chair of Governors opened the meeting by welcoming the LA officers and outlined the purpose of the meeting, which forms part of the formal consultation on the LA's proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School. Mr Bradshaw explained that the proposal was as detailed in the consultation document that had been widely circulated. He outlined the reasons that this proposal is being considered at this time, and went through the statutory process that is to be followed.

The meeting was then opened for any questions, comments or statements:

- What is the latest date that a decision will be made on this proposal? CB advised that a decision is anticipated by November 2014.
- The Chair of Governors referred to previous discussions held on the pertinent issues regarding this proposal, including safe walking routes, local bus service provision and potential capital investment in this school. CB advised that all of these issues are being looked at and he will arrange for Andrea Richards to discuss them in more detail with the Headteacher.
- CB advised that there will be investment made in the local highways infrastructure to improve safety, which will include new road crossings and other traffic calming measures. Fencing adjacent to the river is also to be examined.
- The Chair of Governors advised that the crossing at Pontygwaith, manned by a school crossing patrol needs to be looked at, as does the turning area for cars at the top of the hill outside the school site.
- Will transport be provided for the Aberllechau pupils? CB advised no and outlined the policy for transport provision. Governors questioned the safety of the route and the fact that parents will not be able to afford bus fares. CB advised that the route had been formally assessed using nationally agreed criteria and was not deemed to be unsafe. Governors expressed their dissatisfaction at this and asked that the analysis of the route be checked. They felt that travelling to Pontygwaith from the top of Wattstown, especially in poor weather would be problematic. CB advised that parents would also have the option of applying for places at Ynyshir Primary if they so wished.
- A query was raised regarding the composition of the governing body. JH advised that this would not change, but the governing body could review its Instrument of Government and request an increase to the number of governors if they see fit.
- If part time staff are required to become full time, will they have to be interviewed with the Aberllechau staff? Information was provided, staff were informed that HR staff could attend the school to provide further information and advice to staff on such matters. The school's staffing structure would

need to be looked at once the number of pupils transferring was known and the governors would need to consider options.

- A teacher asked a question relating to new children entering class mid- year and how this would impact on her data. SW gave information and advised that the children would join the school in January, there would be a need for good communication between the two schools prior to this. Concern was expressed that the decision will not be made until late in the Autumn term, which leaves only a short period for transition.
- What will be the likely impact on ancillary staff? CB advised that there may be a need to increase staff numbers. It was noted that the hours and numbers of caretaking and cleaning staff were calculated according to the size of the building, not on pupil numbers.
- What will be done about the backlog of building maintenance? Advised that routine maintenance works are going to be undertaken during the forthcoming summer holidays. It was pointed out that the school underwent extensive refurbishment work just 6 years ago and was in a good condition as a result.
- Concern was expressed that work will be required in order to accommodate the additional children. CB stated that the school has more than adequate accommodation available, but that some re-organisation of classrooms will be needed, especially to accommodate the SEN class. Andrea Richards and Gaynor Cynan Jones will be asked to visit the school with regard to the SEN provision location.
- A member of staff enquired about her position. CB responded that it will be a matter for the Governing Body to set a revised staffing structure for this school.
- A statement was made that governors at Aberllechau will be welcome to apply for vacancies on the Pontygwaith governing body as and when they arise.
- A query was raised regarding admissions, what will be the position should parents decide to transfer their children earlier, possibly in September? JH gave information on the admissions process. It was suggested that some disruption will be inevitable in January should this proposal be confirmed, but this could be assisted by reorganising classes beforehand in readiness for the transfer of pupils.
- A statement was made that the name of this school is Pontygwaith Primary School and this governing body will not accept any change being made to this. CB reassured them that this will not be the case here. No change is being proposed for this school, this has only happened elsewhere when new schools have been created through amalgamations, or where schools have physically relocated to new sites.
- Surplus rooms we currently have will be utilised, there will be no room for interventions. CB replied that this issue will be looked at when the exact numbers of children to transfer is known. This school has more than enough accommodation for all pupils who may require places. Having more pupils will make this school more financially viable.
- Will there be more hours allocated to catering staff? Advised that this issue will also be subject to the actual numbers of children who may transfer.

- A query was raised as to whether Pontygwaith's data was challenged at Aberllechau at the meeting held the previous evening. CB gave information, he also explained that there is good evidence of progress at Pontygwaith which has been verified.
- Will we have 'first call' on the resources of Aberllechau if the school closes?
Advised yes.

Mr Bradshaw closed the meeting and thanked all persons for attending, he also advised of the forthcoming open evening to be held on 30th June and encouraged everyone to attend.

Appendix 3

Agree with Proposal	Completed by	Other interested party	Comments	Additional Views
No	Member of Staff Aberllechau		See attached sheet for full feedback but mainly refers to: statistics on school performance, that Pontygwaith has higher surplus places than Aberllechau, parental attendance likely to reduce if parents/grandparents have to make an additional journey to the school which will impact on the learning and well being of the children.	
No			Personal reasons having been taught at Wattstown School	Appointment of teacher with years of experience to bring the school to required standards (see attached sheet)
Yes	NASUWT RCT Federation Secretary		See attached sheet for full feedback but mainly accepts and agrees with the points raised in the proposal.	
No	Parent		I know the children will not walk to Pontygwaith every day	I Fear for the children's safety (see attached sheet)
No	Old school pupil		Wattstown school should be kept as Wattstown and not moved to Pontygwaith	
No			Its dangerous for small children to walk all the way to Pontygwaith school	That this is the end of the village of Wattstown and community
No	A very concerned resident of Wattstown		Without a school in the village how would you expect any families to come here if they have to walk over a mile to get to school this would have a devastating effect on our community	If you had to walk a mile to school with your child, you would go to another community with a school on your doorstep as would every other parent. This is a deprived area now, when we have a school, it will certainly get worse without one. There is nothing here for the children now as the youth clubs are gone, the park unmanned so parents won't allow their children to go there as they feel it is not safe, the cutbacks affect us all but this is going too far. We need a school here it is very important to the community so please leave it alone.

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Parent		It is dangerous for the children to walk to Pontygwaith Primary School and for some of the parents getting there twice a day is going to be extremely difficult due to many issues, two examples ;cost and having other children in secondary school	
Yes	Ynyshir School Governor			
No	Parent Pontygwaith		It's not fair on all pupils that will be attending Pontygwaith School in the future. I don't want to find another school for my child	The school is not big enough to take on extra pupils from Aberllechau School. The kids education will suffer
No			Without the school there is no community	It won't be safe for the children to walk the long distance on such busy roads
No	Grandparent		Our primary school is the heart of our community without it there will be no community	My grandchildren attend this school, moving the school would mean my daughter would have to give up work. At the moment I take them to school to enable my daughter and son-in-law to work. As I do not drive, I would not be able to take them. The safety and well being of the children must surely take priority over anything else when considering the fate of Aberllechau. Closure will not be conducive to the safety of our children.
No	Great Grandfather of pupil		Four generations of my family have attended this school my great grandchildren being there now	Not all parents have transport to get their children to school for some that means 4 journeys a day (See additional sheet)
No`			My seven year old daughter attends this school and she has come on leaps and bounds	We need the school our children are safe and looked after in Aberllechau School and is are to travel back and fore school every day without any worry we all pull together
No	Parent		Because my daughter goes to Aberllechau School	My daughter is settled in the school

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Parent		Because it is a really good school and my daughter goes there	My daughter is very settled in the school (also see additional sheets that mainly refers to: the route being extremely dangerous as people drive on that road like a race track, no parking for parents and believes that attendance will suffer especially in bad weather).
No	Parent		See attached letter which refers to: personal childcare related issues, personal financial issues if parent has to give up work and the numerous dangers that children from Wattstown will face on a daily journey from Wattstown to Pontygwaith and as the route runs along the river the safety measures are extremely lacking and dangerous.	
No	Grandparent		The school is part of our village and do not wish to lose it	There is no need for the children to go to Pontygwaith as they have a good school in Wattstown
No	Parent		Wattstown school is an asset to our community we do not wish for it to be closed	It would be too far for the children to go and dangerous
No	Resident		I live in Wattstown privately own my own house closure will seriously decrease my house value plus my foster children will attend Aberllechau primary school	You will be putting these children's education or even lives in jeopardy by making this closure happen
No			Not all parents have their own transport and not all parents are working so the cost of taking children up there will be expensive unless there is a bus put on grand parents cannot go up there with children as some do if parents working	
No	Parent of former pupil of Aberllechau		It would ruin the community safety aspect is also dangerous	Safety issues, transport

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Parent		I am concerned for the welfare of my child the main road is dangerous and too far for a child to walk. I would have to give up my job because I would have to take her	Weather conditions will have an effect on the health of my child and her education could suffer due to illness . Also every community should have a school its the heart of the community
No	Concerned Resident & Mother of former pupils		Every child deserves to have an education close to the home in the valleys a village school is a legacy our forefathers fought for	The distance to Pontygwaith from Wattstown is quite far for a young child in inclement weather. Also the main road is dangerous for an adult to cross let alone a young child - are crossing patrols being provided
No	Grandparent & former pupil		I fear for my grandchildren's safety and all the other pupils to take their school off them is most definitely going to cause unwanted very bad problems etc	Safety is a massive issue as the roads leading all the way to Pontygwaith school are so dangerous if anything was to happen to a pupil on your heads it will be (fact)
No	Parent		One of the many reasons is the distance my children have to walk and how dangerous the journey is for them	Pontygwaith school may not be able to see to my youngest child's needs as well as current school (see attached sheet which refers to: having 3 children which would have to walk the distance twice a day in bad weather conditions as parents do not drive and the oldest child has asthma which the walking will affect their health, the classrooms will be overcrowded, the dangerous route from the house to Pontygwaith and the school is a big part of the community and if the school closes nobody with a family will want to buy or rent houses there).
No	Parent		See attached sheet which refers to: the community having the heart taken out of it, the distance and the safety of the route that children have to walk everyday in bad weather conditions, no crossing for children to cross the road which makes the route not safe, children will have to walk passed a very busy garage with parked cars on the pavements and very dangerous road to cross with the amount of cars, buses and lorries.	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No			See attached sheet which refers to: personal family history to the school so doesn't want it closed.	
No	Grandparent		See attached sheet which refers to: as a grandparent not being able to walk their grandchildren to the alternative school 1.5 miles away in bad weather, there are no zebra crossings or lollipop lady which is a health safety issue and a dangerous route, mothers are going to have to give up work as childminders will not be prepared to walk the route due to the safety of other people's children, they also have to cross busy main road which is a bus route four times a day, eight in all there and back and it is not humanly possible to do that walk with small children without someone getting hurt. Also, closing the school will make the houses in Wattstown unsaleable.	
No	Grandparent		See attached sheet which refers to: classes being too big for teachers to keep their eye on all the children, the distance children will have to walk and cross roads and the amount of empty council houses as no one will want to move there if there is no school.	
No			Not safe for these children to walk to Pontygwaith too many hazards on the journey what about health and safety	There are no crossings for these children to cross the roads these children will be at danger and soaking wet if it rains how can you let 3yr olds walk over a mile to school
No			This school has served the village all of my life and I don't see any cause to close the school. Too dangerous for these children to walk to Pontygwaith	Pavements are blocked by parked cars and the children would have to walk into the road to pass. This is dangerous and not safe. What happens in the bad weather if rain or snow. We cannot let the children get soaked. They will have to be kept home.

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Grandparent		Health and Safety it is not safe for our children to walk this distance to school	If the school goes it is the end of Wattstown
No	Grandparent		Its unacceptable to make children under the age of 11 years to cross the main road three times	The parents of Wattstown have a duty of care to their children (Health & Safety)
No	Parent		How can you accept mothers having to walk with baby in pushchairs to take their children all this way	Unacceptable
No	mother		I have 2 daughters attending Aberllechau Primary and they are doing really well	I consider it far too dangerous for my children to walk to Pontygwaith every day
No	Father		Due to the fact I got kids in the school who are doing well and my oldest has left now	I also own my own property which I bought and moved to due to location of school
No	Grandparent		Mothers are unable to take their children to school while looking after babies	Roads too dangerous for our children to walk this distance
No	Grandparent		Aberllechau school is a good school my daughter went there and if it closes it will affect the community	The route to Pontygwaith is too dangerous and too far Pontygwaith is no better than Aberllechau
No	Grandparent of Pupil		The school is the heart of the community and the village will suffer if it closes	The children will be endangering themselves by walking that route daily, no crossings, riverbank, cars on pavements, double-parked
No	Parent		I think the route is too dangerous for my children to cross main road 3 times (Please see attached sheet)	We are a close knit community and moving us up to Pontygwaith will rip the community apart
No	Former Parent		See attached very lengthy response which refers to : safety, health, standard of education, student numbers and attendance, enhanced friendships and after-school clubs, financial implications, freedom of choice, timing of the closure, further worries and an appendix of school comparisons	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Resident		The children would have to go to Pontygwaith school which is quite a way and hard for parents without cars and dangerous	The school is near for everyone and if there is an emergency with a child the parents are on hand
No	Parent		Safety is my main concern also my child is doing very well in this school and any disruption might knock her back	My mother has my daughter for me to work she could not walk to Pontygwaith because she has arthritis in her knees (See additional sheet which refers to: main concern of child's safety walking on the road which is extremely dangerous, the school is the heart of the community which will be destroyed if school closes and due to the fact that grandparent takes child to school which could not be possible if she had to go to Pontygwaith so would have to give up work.
No	Parent		Safety. Disruption to my daughter's education. My wife will have to give up work due to the fact my mother in law cannot walk to Pontygwaith	I also own my own home which will mean property value will go down as no one will want to move here with no school
No	Parent		The school is the heart of the community and closing the school would just affect the kids but everyone	See attached sheet which refers to: walking further distance in bad weather, could not attend breakfast club as would have to leave too early, traffic on main road very heavy and parked cars on pavements and no public transport from the top of Wattstown to Pontygwaith.
No	Past Pupil		The walking route is too dangerous my two kids education has progressed loads and I don't see why our kids shout go to a school outside Wattstown	Try walking the route yourself if you think it's safe start questioning your thinking would you send your kids that route twice a day if you would you shouldn't have kids
No	Parent		My children have settled well in the school and love it there and the teachers They're education is good we need our school in our village	The route is dangerous I would have to walk up to Pontygwaith and back with a 3 and 8 year old in all weather

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Parent		I wholeheartedly do not agree with the proposal its so wrong to close a school in such a close knit community, the school is the heart of the community (see attached which refers to : dangerous walk up a busy road having to cross more or less 4 times past a busy garage, bad weather which will soak children's uniforms)	
No	Grandparent		The roads are too dangerous and busy no zebra crossings too far for my 4 year old grandson to walk	
No	Grandparent		I do not wish the school to close because it is too far for the children to walk to especially in winter time	
No	Resident		I think it is very dangerous for the children to walk to new school	I own my home but the value would drop if there's no school in the village
No	Parent		I total disagree please see attached sheet which refers to: full time working parents that would have to give up work, safety of the walk to school which is dangerous and thinks a smaller school is better education.	
No	Parent		I feel that my child's safety would be jeopardised and my child's education would suffer	Please see attached sheets which refers to: the route which her child would have to walk twice a day for 5 days which is extremely dangerous pushing a pram and also have to cross the road many times with no crossings putting her child's lives in danger, child's education would suffer as there will more children per class and the earlier time the children would have to get up would make them tired in class, also people with disabilities or health issues and how in wheelchairs they are expected to walk children up a dangerous route.
No	Grandparent`		Walk to Pontygwaith School is unsafe route- traffic on main road	During winter children will have to be educated sitting in wet clothes causing

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
			no crossings	health problems
No	Member of Community		I live in the village we are a close knit community no school no more residents with children going to live in Wattstown	Children's Safety
No	Parent		Unsafe route main road	Weather in winter
No			Children's safety school has been there far too long to close now	
No	Resident of Wattstown		Safety of the children and affect it will have to our community	I think with no school in the area it will have a great affect on house prices
No	Parent		Children's safety walking to Pontygwaith	House prices will go down if there is no school
No	Grandparent		Safety	Disruption to the children moving to new school
No	Community Volunteer/ Sports Coach		I believe that the team of staff have not had a fair chance to fulfil your targets. Let's be honest how many heads have been there on a temporary basis and staff on sick. This is your role to support the staff and school and I would ask where have you been?	So how is the education of these pupils going to be bettered when the ratio of pupils to teachers will increase when and if they go to Pontygwaith
No	Previous Pupil		This is a good school and did my education no harm I secured A levels and going into university. You are doing the pupils, parents and community an injustice	Safety - I walk along the route from Wattstown to Pontygwaith many times a week and there traffic is very heavy with many cars speeding, should an accident happen for sure people will be looking to RCT for answers
No	Parent of 3 former and 2 current pupils		We are a community we are one I'm happy with my kids education, they love their school and teachers to lose out school would devastate us, value of houses would go down, houses will be empty village would become a shell and it will severely disrupt our kids to try and have them to move and mix with new kids and new school	Roads are dangerous no crossings, lights, cars doubled parked, traffic, the weather, small kids in prams, walking up and down all weather, dark nights is not acceptable, they will have to sit in wet clothes all day, working parents would have to come out of work to make sure kids could get to school its not acceptable on any level at all

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Grandparent		The distance the young children will need to walk in bad weather also the parking of cars on main roads they will need to cross 3 times to get there	As a grandmother of one of the children in the school and not started yet I am very concerned for the safety and wellbeing you will not be closing a school but ending a community`
No	Member of the Community		We are a small enough community as it is you take the school we lose our community. It is not acceptable that you expect to close our school and make small children take such a dangerous route to walk to school	We are more than happy with our school its Wattstown school and had been for years. If we lose our school we will all find other places unacceptable for our kids
No	Uncle		Unsafe for children crossing road 3 times with no crossing. Education will become loss	No school - no new opportunities for the community
No	Auntie		Not safe for children to walk to the school weather conditions will affect people who can't drive	Value of properties go down working families will struggle
No	Grandparent		Unsafe for young children to walk crossing the main road 3 times and with cars parked on pavement in Margaret Street and they will be wet going into school in adverse weather	Working families, property values falling because no school in the town
No	Grandparent		Unsafe main road with no pavement most of the way, distance and steep hill in bad weather and return walk home	Working families and 3yr old children walking home uphill on some of the steepest hills in RCT
No	Parent of 3 ex and 2 current Pupils		Because all my children have gone to the school, they are settled there and it's a very big part of the community	If the school shuts it will have a massive knock on effect to the whole village. House prices , people not wanting to move to the area and also people moving out, turning Wattstown into a ghost town
No	Parent		My children's education standard is more than I had hoped for they are doing well above average/ How can they be expected to walk in all weathers, dark nights, rain its not feasible it so dangerous to kids and adults would you like to take your kids and grandchildren on a walk to the school with no	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
			crossings or lights	
No	Parent of 3 ex and 2 current pupils		This is a good school myself, parents and grandparents went to Aberllechau school and my 5 children have all gone to it as well. I think children's education and safety and happiness should come before all you people trying to make cut backs no matter to anyone else's feelings and once the school goes it will destroy our community and our children's grades will go down	When they are put into a bigger classrooms it's a massive upheaval for children there's no way they would have to take such a dangerous route to school. I would like you to realise we are a close community with our kids feelings and safety coming first when something happens to one of the kids are u going to take the blame?
No	Parent of Pupil - Aberllechau		I don't believe that closing the school is the best option but more support to raise standards (See attached)	I believe that the safety issues are a major part of a serious problem
No	Grandparent		The only route the children can take to Pontygwaith is an exposed busy road during the winter months it would be dreadful	Without the assurance of travel arrangements no young children should have to make such a journey at any time. Without a school in the village the community will be deprived of yet another resource, destroying the very place which is the foundation of young lives
No	Parent		Won't be good for the community	
No	Parent		Won't be good for the community	
No	Resident		Children need this school, unsafe route community off Wattstown will be at a big loss if this goes ahead	Massive loss to our community/children
No	Former Pupil		We all need this school as a community and so does the children. Unsafe route for the children to walk. Massive loss if this goes ahead	It will be a massive loss for the community and children., Did my year 11 work experience there it's a fantastic school

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Resident		If the school closes then Wattstown would wither away	Its sad that the children will have a long dangerous walk to school
No	& Family - Ex Pupil		The school is the heart of the village	
No	Wattstown Resident		I attended Aberllechau School 70 years ago why close it now	There is nothing in Wattstown we've never had a zebra crossing leave our school alone
No	Former Parent		I'm a former parent of the school and I think that the closure of the school will affect the children and the community	The dangerous walking conditions for the children
No	Former Pupil		Child Safety (Busy main Road) Children have the right to be educated locally, If school standards need improving change the staff not the school	RCT have cut the local youth club as well as removing services for OAP's, by taking the school there will be nothing left in Wattstown. Labour of old would never have accepted this
No	Resident/Former Pupil		The school is in the heart of the village and is a dangerous walk for the children	Wattstown School has a higher grading than Pontygwaith
No	Grandfather		It will be dangerous for the children to walk to the new school	Nothing in the village - Wattstown school has a better grade rate
No			The school is the heart of the community and without the school you lost the community (but the main thing is the safety of the children)	Without a school people move and people will not move in to the community and then house left empty
No			The school is the heart of the community plus safety of children going to Pontygwaith	
No	Former Parent		There are plenty of reasons not safe to take children to Pontygwaith, it will kill the village	Safety is one of the biggest points as parents and children would have to cross to many roads to get to school
No	Member of Public		The distance the children would have to travel on dangerous roads in all kinds of weather	I am 82 years of age, lived in the area all my life so I do know what I am talking about
No	Resident/Ex Pupil		The school is the heart of the community and it will be a great loss to the community	The distance and route is totally unacceptable. I walk the route regularly and in bad weather the road between Lewis Terrace and Margaret Street is so open to the elements the children will not be able to stay in school after

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
				walking to school
No	Uncle		I attended this school and I think it would be a shame for Wattstown to lose their school. Also I sometimes pick up my nephew after work and I would not be able to do so if they go to Pontygwaith	I am concerned about the safety of the children walking to and from Pontygwaith
No	Grandmother		My reason for my choice is Wattstown is a little community and we need our school as children should not be made to walk all the way to Pontygwaith. I have done this walk with my grandchildren and they could not cope with it	The safety of the route they have to walk. The affect on the children's education this will have after walking to school
No	Grandfather		My reasons for saying no is I am concerned about my grandchildren's safety and the affect closing the school is going to have on the families living in the community	Children getting late marks because of the walk they have to do also children's safety getting to and from school
No	Lifelong Resident		The school is and always has been the hub of the community. To close it is not only impractical but another nail in the coffin of the village	The school has always provided a high level of education. To send these very young pupils to Pontygwaith is not only ridiculous but also dangerous if one is to consider busy roads
No	Resident		The school is the lifeblood and future of the village it is scandalous that the council has even considered closing it	The level of education and quality of such is far superior to neighbouring village schools. To close it is absolutely ridiculous
No	Grandparent		Aberllechau Primary is the heart of the community and without it the town of Wattstown and its resident are going to suffer	It is far too dangerous for the children to walk to Pontygwaith Primary its very congested now and if some people do take their cars it would be even more dangerous (parking)
No	Parent		If the school closes there's nothing to encourage people to come and live in Wattstown	It's the heart of the community/ It's too far children to travel to Pontygwaith. Think of the winter months

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Great Grandparent		It would be a shame if the school closes as 5 generations of my family has attended Aberllechau School	
No	Parent & Grandparent		My son and grandchildren have attended and still attend this school and I believe children should have an education on their doorstep	No child should have to travel miles in all weather's to get and education
No	Parent & Grandparent		Myself and my children have attended this school and all children should have the right to an education on their doorstep	Children shouldn't have to travel miles in all weathers to get an education
No	Past Pupil		I would like my children in the future to attend the same as me all my family	I also believe all children have the right to an education on their doorstep. Not have to walk miles to get one.
No	Future Parent		School is the reason we moved here	The school is very important for our children
No			I and my wife plan to have children and we moved from Cardiff and chose Wattstown because of school	If the school closes and giving my life situation I will have to move house again
No			Unsafe for young children to be crossing main roads numerous times	If a child has an accident will the council take responsibility for this(sooner Wattstown will be the forgotten village)
No			The children would have to cross the main road several times	
No	Ex Parent		It is an important part of our community. Myself, sisters brother plus my two boys went to this school	It is nonsense to expect children to walk to Pontygwaith it is a busy road with no crossing and winter months will be a nightmare
No	Grandmother of children in the school		I don't agree as it will affect all of Wattstown if the school closes and I think it's not fair why our children have to walk so far to school	My mother were there, me my brothers and sisters my children went there now my grandchildren go there the staff are lovely and helpful please don't close our school it's the heart of Wattstown
No	Grandparent		Because I feel it is disgusting what you plan doing to the school (Simple)	Whoever decided this should be sacked

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Former Pupil		Closing the school will close the village who is going to move with no school	How children will be expected to walk summer and winter is beyond comprehension. Senior Education bosses must be taken to task over this decision
No			Not everybody has a car - has anybody done a risk assessment? It cannot be safe to walk a mile along a main road with small children-Also there are no safe crossing places as there are no zebra or panda crossings	Are parents expected to take their children back and forth four times a day? If children stay in school for lunch are there sufficient facilities to cater for everybody? Questions need to be asked and answered. Transferring the children in the middle of winter seems a little short-sighted. I am ware the council may need to save money-perhaps councillors should look to taking lees from community funds by claiming less expenses
No	Parent		The school is needed, for the community and children of Wattstown	Our house prices will diminish
No	Parent		Wattstown need its own school	It is too dangerous for children to walk to Pontygwaith
No	Parent		I have children in the school	Too dangerous route to walk
No	Parent		The children are settled and would be set back if moved	Not safe for children to walk
No	Parent		For the safety of the children	It is very dangerous route
No	Ex Student		Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure schools are the right type, size and in the right locations exist	See attached lengthy summary which refers to dangerous route, parked cars, in winter becoming more dangerous, long distance to walk, houses will become empty with no school, people would have to give up jobs, school is only thing left in the community, don't think they will be welcomed by Pontygwaith staff and community as there is a petition to stop Aberllechau children going there.
No	Resident		I disagree with parents having to take their children to Pontygwaith Primary on grounds of road safety	Would you allow your children to cross a busy death trap road six times a day where is the health and safety

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Resident of Wattstown		I do not agree that our children go to Pontygwaith school for one big reason these children would have to cross the main road 3 times to reach the school and 3 times to come home. Do you know the area you want there will be more school days lost because of illness during the winter and also these children & parents would have to travel? I doubt it in wet weather they would be soaking wet in winter freezing cold or will you be providing warm dry clothing & footwear for them? Our school has never had a crossing on the main road or outside the school no one has been outside to watch the children cross	I am one of five generations that attended this school and proud to say it with your idea to close our school it will be in my opinion like Hitler done to the poor Jews sending them to the gas chamber. Can anyone tell me who is so hell bent on closing our school? As I stated above there's never been outside expense use for our children. Where is our council tax going to and it will be the same hazard for Pontygwaith children coming to Wattstown p.s I thought Hitler lost the last war
No	Resident of Wattstown		Why should our children & future children of Wattstown be deprived of being educated locally? They way you are going about things we will end up with gates as traffic turn off at Wattstown main road for you to keep us in. Like a flock of sheep	What will be your next idea? You are acting like the mad hatter in Alice in Wonderland
No	Parent Aberllechau		It is unsafe and too far for the children to walk Ridiculous idea!!	If this proposal goes ahead I will have to give up my full time job as I rely on family members to take my son to and from school (see attached which refers to: route too dangerous, no crossings but busy road has to be crossed 3 times and cars parked on pavements which are danger hazards and if a risk assessment was carried out it wouldn't be deemed safe for children to walk)
No	Parent Aberllechau		Too dangerous!! Messing with our children's education	My partner will have to give up work if this happens
No	Parent		Wattstown needs a school	Pontygwaith school is too far to travel for parents and children every day and isn't a safe route
No	Parent		Wattstown needs a school	Pontygwaith school is too far to travel for parents and children every day and isn't a safe route

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Wattstown Resident		Why should the children have to walk to another village when they have a perfectly adequate school in Wattstown	To expect young children to walk to Pontygwaith every day is unacceptable and dangerous. If the school is underperforming then maybe its time to get new staff instead of making the pupils pay for poor teaching standards
No	Local Resident		The school is the heart of the community and the fact that small children will need to travel to go to school is not right	
			Blank Form	
			Blank Form	
No	A concerned member of the Community		Lots of children from the local community go to this school has new roof and new fibre optic broadband installed	Nice building convenient for local children, the school is an important focal point for the local community
			Blank Form	
No	Mother		Wattstown is so much a good school as there has been a lot of money spent on it, local to everybody in Community	For pupils travel to other schools in my opinion it is dangerous and unsafe
No			School is brilliant its been there so long	Dangerous and unsafe for children to get to school
No	Ex Pupil		Closing the school will take the heart out of the community also very dangerous for children and parents to travel back and from the new school in winter	You might as well turn Wattstown into a old age centre as young families will reside elsewhere
No	Ex Pupil		The community will suffer - the attendance rate will decrease due to the new location. Local job losses resulting in more people claiming	How is the council promoting lifelong learning by doing this? It is creating a lack of motivation and trust in the council
No	Ex Pupil		The school keeps the community together without it there would be nothing left in Wattstown	Loss of jobs, parents may struggle to get up to Pontygwaith in the mornings, children may not be able to adjust to the changes the new school will bring
No	Parent of Ex Pupil		Why don't you just close Wattstown because this village won't have much else left except	Let's all be proud of our little school my two daughters went there are both going to be qualified teachers in March

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
			for tumble weed	
No			See attached which refers to: family all attended school, distance young children will be expected to walk along a route which is not safe with no crossing and a garage which parks cars on the pavements and also the impact for the elderly who take grandchildren to school.	
No			Too far for children to walk no zebra crossing lots of cars by the garage in Margaret Street	
No	Resident		Too far for small children to walk in wind and rain and snow plus the cars	Put on buses
No			See attached which refers to dangerous walk especially in bad weather and Assembly funding being wasted on other projects but council have to close libraries, leisure centres and schools etc.	
No	Parent		If the school closed the heart of the village would go	also it's a very difficult and dangerous journey for children to take
No	Parent		It's a very good village school	Dangerous and difficult journey for children to take
No	Parent of Ex Pupil		The school is a vital part of our community dangerous walk to proposed school	My 3 eldest children attended this school and have done amazingly well. The eldest went on to gain 12 GCSE's and I believe Aberllechau was pivotal in this
No	Parent of future pupil		I believe the school to be the heart of the community	Dangerous walk to next school, suffering house prices, local business will suffer
No			Wattstown children should attend their own school	
No			It is too dangerous for the children walking to and from school	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Auntie		See attached which refers to: family with ill health having to take children to school which will be further, route very dangerous which is a bus route with no zebra crossings or lollipop lady	
No	Parent		See attached which refers to: school being the heart of the community which will have devastating effect on the children, dangerous route especially in bad weather leading to higher absenteeism and educational needs of children will suffer.	
No	Neighbour of school		Parents affected by taking children extra distances may lose work themselves. Children too young to travel alone	
Yes	Grandparent		The danger to kids is too much to bear	The big boys want to close the school means more monies in their pocket
No	Auntie		Children's safety on roads try walking it 4 times a day health	Have they done a survey with parents from Pontygwaith what do they think they have an opinion
No	Grandparent		Safety of children, health issues ie walking to school in all kinds of weather	If there's not enough room in Pontygwaith school how would they split children up, siblings
No	Grandparent		Children safety, traffic	Teachers in Wattstown have jobs what happens if the school closes
No	Grandmother of pupil		They are young to go to Pontygwaith and walk on a dangerous route	At the moment there is a number of children from Pontygwaith attending this school. Why it speaks for itself
No	Parent		Aberllechau school is the heart of the community that is the only thing we have	Alarm bells should be ringing as to why so many children have been removed from Pontygwaith - See Attached
No			See attached which refers to: longer journey to school which is unsafe and dangerous having to cross the road etc numerous times and cars parked on pavements	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Parent of past pupil		School is the heart of the village, travelling to Pontygwaith by foot for majority of children is fraught with danger. No attraction for young families to bring up a family in the area. Property values decrease because of this	Young families would not purchase in the area if there was no school available within the vicinity
No	Parent of past pupil		I have lived here all my life and attended this school my parents and also my children. I just think it is dangerous for these children to have to walk to another school	We have nothing in this village as it is you take away this school and that will be the end for lots of people
No	Non Parent		Unfair to parents and children	Bankers and multinationals should be bought to book and make a fair contribution like ordinary people
No	Non Parent		Too much inconvenience for parents and children	Savings could be made elsewhere millions are wasted on stupid projects, multinationals tax etc
No	Resident		Because we have a good school in Wattstown	
No	Wattstown Resident		It is too far and dangerous for young children to travel to Pontygwaith more so in the winter	
No	Parent		Pontygwaith is too far away from Aberllechau School. The route to school is unsafe for the children to walk	
No	An Old Student of Aberllechau		Its unsafe to have Wattstown children walk that distance especially in the winter	How would the children who do not have transport get there on time?
No	Grandparent		The safety of my grandchildren being forced to walk to Pontygwaith in all weather conditions	Close the school and you take away the heart of the village
No	Wattstown Resident		I think it is very sad and will have a great affect on the village	I think its the heart of the community
No	Resident		Safety of the children walking to Pontygwaith School	House prices will decrease

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Resident of Wattstown		Unsafe roads for children to walk to Pontygwaith. Closure of the school would mean closure of our community	House Owners - house prices reduce
No	Ex pupil		I think it will effect the whole community	It is a big part of the community and will have a big effect on future families
No	Wattstown Resident		I think it will ruin the village	I also don't think it safe to walk to Pontygwaith Primary School
No	Concerned Villager		It would rip the heart out of the village and it wouldn't be safe for children to walk to Pontygwaith everyday	
No	Resident		Distance from Wattstown along a busy main road without available transport	A long walk in wet, windy winter weather is of no advantage to the long term education of young children
No	Parent		I do not agree because of the safety of our children having to walk as the route isn't safe	As I have 2 children one that is in flying start and one attending the school which means I'd have to get them in 2 different places at the same time
No			Nothing in the community - My own children went to the school	
No	Grandmother		As I have grandchildren that attend the school and the route for them isn't safe to walk as I look after them for my daughters to work I would not be able to walk it	I think this would be a great loss to the community if this was to go ahead
No	Wattstown Resident		children would have to get up earlier and travel dangerous route	Wattstown school is an important part of the community and should remain so
No	Parent of Ex Pupils		Apart from destroying the community the dangers etc facing the children walking to Pontygwaith would be detrimental to their health and well being	Fit adults would have trouble travelling this route twice a day/5 days a week, Aberllechau school has kept this community together and served our children well form many years and I and everyone in Wattstown want it to continue to do so
No	Grandparents		One and a half miles to Pontygwaith for children to travel and walk	Wattstown school have served pupils for over one hundred years and a lot of scholars have come out of Wattstown

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Grandparent		The school in Pontygwaith is so far away not only could there be bad weather it is dangerous to get to	Not only has Wattstown lost its industry it has lost its surgery its pubs and churches and if the school shuts everything
No	Ex Pupil - living in the Community		Children will have to walk (if parents don't drive) in bad weather conditions (winter) leaving them ill (attendance will drop) Risk for children when walking Aberllechau Road as there is not a pavement in parts. Classes will be too big therefore children won't be having the best education. Transition will/can be difficult for some children to deal with	
No	Member of Community		Community Safety	The future of our community/ children
No	Resident		1) Huge safety issues along the route needed to be walked 2) Human Rights of child- surely it isn't acceptable to walk a child so far in all kinds of weather 3) Detrimental effect on the community - Please see attached sheet which refers to punctuality and attendance suffering, parking availability, increased staff pupil ratios etc	With re-instatement of full time education for 3 year olds after the judicial review how can one school cope with the intake of so many 3 year olds? Again back to surplus places
No	Grandmother		Do not close our school our children are entitled to be educated in our community	Detrimental to the health and safety of our children
No	Former Pupils		If the school closes it will not only affect the children and teachers it will affect the whole community	It is a big part of the village and if it does close a lot of history will go with it
No	Former Pupil		We have precious little in Wattstown, take the school and children away there will be nothing left	How will the children get to Pontygwaith too far for little ones to walk also why revamp the roof what a waste of money
No	Former Pupil		The school is and always had been a fabulous example of our wonderful community	Besides uprooting our children and making them travel so far by foot, our school has a marvellous record of educating our families

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Ex Pupil & Resident		I feel that is unacceptable for any community not to have a local school where the children of its residents can be educated (See attached which refers to: young children will struggle with the long walk to Pontygwaith, class sizes will be larger so will have less 1:1 time with the teacher which will be detrimental to their education)	
No	Residents		The dangerous route to Pontygwaith the children will be cold and in wet clothes in class as not everyone has a car	If the proposal goes ahead it would be letting the children down and would rip the heart out of the village. It would also effect working mam's greatly and could force them to give up work the feeling of community would slowly drain away
No	Former Pupil		Too dangerous for children, no type of crossing on roads, I wouldn't want my children going to Pontygwaith, If accidents happen on your head be it	Every village should have a school for children aged between 3yrs to 11 yrs some mothers will have to give their part time jobs up and some mothers have 2 age groups
No	Grandparent		I look after my grandchildren for my daughters to work. There is no way I can walk to Pontygwaith 4 times a day/ I don't drive and suffer with bad arthritis	Think you should take a good look at what's going to happen. Its going to devalue people's houses, my daughters will have to give up their jobs
No	Grandparent		There is 4 generations of my family that has been going to Aberllechau Primary. I have a granddaughter that will attend there the end of this year plus it will devalue people's homes	If the School closes then my daughter in law will have to pack in her job cause I can't walk to Pontygwaith plus it's not safe
No			I think shutting Wattstown primary is a very bad idea. My son attends there I went there my parents went there plus grand parents	Not happy at all for my child to be walking to Pontygwaith it is very unsafe plus I will have to pack in my job as my mother got my son for me to work. No way she can walk it
No	Relative of Pupils in Aberllechau		Children's education and safety needs to come first	Council needs to stop wasting money on things which are not needed our school is!
No			Safety for the children	Very unfair to all concerned

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Member of community		The route isn't safe for our children to walk every community should have a school	
No	Grandparent - Resident		There is a lot of families within our community who rely on the support of family and carers to maintain independent and good standards of quality of life for family members. Closing the school will strain these bonds	Local community supported by well known local residents will support and maintain safe and stable environment for successful learning
No	Resident		Numerous reasons please see attached sheet which refers to: dangerous route, too far, no bus service from top of Wattstown and Pontygwaith, effect on house prices, by closing the school there will be nothing left	
No	Grandmother		Pupils having to walk to Pontygwaith in bad weather, traffic parking, both sides of the road, safety issues	Aberllechau is the heart of this community without it Wattstown would be a dead village. Pontygwaith school is underachieving as well
No			Pupils have to walk to Pontygwaith along a dangerous road which is difficult to cross cars parked on both sides not safe	Aberllechau school is the heart of the community without it Wattstown will be a dead village
No	Resident former pupil		Concerned about the dangers of young children having to walk almost 2 miles everyday across busy roads to the nearest school	I am also concerned as a homeowner that a village without a school would have a devastating effect on house prices
No			Parents and Children will have to travel 2 miles to nearest school parents without transport will have to walk (dangerous)	Who would like to buy a house in a village with no school?
No	Parent		The school is important for the safety of children as opposed to having a 2 mile walk to the nearest school via busy main roads	Wattstown primary is a part of Wattstown heritage the village wouldn't be the same without it I also think property prices would drop without a school present
No	Resident		The school has been a major part of the village for many years and to close it would make families and children suffer	To expect young children to travel a mile each way on bad roads in bad weather not only dangerous but also irresponsible and open to claims for

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
				injury
No	Ex Pupil		Aberllechau school is at the centre of the community. As it stands it is the only thing of value left to the children and people	You should not have to be told how dangerous the transition to Pontygwaith School would be with the traffic situation above
No	Parent		Disruption to Education, Unsafe journey to school, Loss of village focus	Due to increased journey/transit time to school I will have to give up my job to transport my children as grandparents are unable to walk the extra distance
No			It's to far for the children to walk. Dangerous roads not to mention the severe winters we have, rain, rain, rain. The children will be off school with colds etc shouldn't be allowed!	
No	Ex-Pupil		5 generations of my family have attended the school and I would like to see the next generation have the option to go there	Born and bred in Wattstown I feel the village would not re-generate without a local school
No	Ex-Pupil		Without transport it's a long way for parents to walk young children (especially in winter)	No young families will buy houses in Wattstown with no school. Thus devaluation of properties
No	Ex-Pupil		No school no village no community	For children to travel back and forth Pontygwaith with no zebra crossing would be dangerous for these children
No	Ex Pupil Ex Parent		No school means no village no community	For children so young to travel to Pontygwaith would be dangerous because of the traffic
No	Person living in community		Not fair to walk young children on main roads and in bad weather conditions	Property sales would go down with no school in community
No	Resident		Road safety to be considered plus the bus service to the top of Wattstown to cease	Making it difficult for children and parents
No	Parent of Past Pupils		Distance to travel to Pontygwaith	
No			Community is key and having our young ones go to school within	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
			the town that they live I feel is vital	
No			To lose this vital part of Wattstown community would forever be a loss to our village	
No	Parent		Wattstown needs Aberllechau fantastic school and teachers	Outrageous to make babies walk 1.5 miles to school
No	Parent Past Pupil		Community will be broken children's safety at risk walking 1.5 miles to and from Pontygwaith school	No school no community - safety of children Pontygwaith nearly 2 miles Aberllechau higher educational score than Pontygwaith
No	Pupil		We love our school, teachers and friends	Too far too dangerous
No	Pupil		Like our school and teachers	walk is too far, we are only young
No	Resident		Not safe for children to walk not everyone got cars	
No	Grandparent		I cannot see any safe route to Pontygwaith Primary School	Our community needs its own school
No			The route is unsafe with so many roads to cross	
No	Great Grandmother		The route to Pontygwaith school is unsafe at there are so many roads to cross	Wattstown needs this school. What is this labour council doing to this village. It will be like a ghost town
No	A member of the community		Child safety is at risk and there's no way 3-11 year olds can walk that distance	Children's education will be affected and they'll be too tired to work
No			It's not fair on the parents to walk the children up in all weathers. And if the snow comes it is impossible for the children to walk up to Pontygwaith and back again	I think that It will affect the children's education in the long run
No	Part of Community		If there's no school there will be no community	Danger for children to walk, nearly 2 miles to walk, weather unpredictable all year round
No	A member of the community		Children's safety is at risk, walking that kind of distance is not acceptable	There's nothing wrong with Aberllechau so why close it

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No			I think it's ridiculous to expect young children to walk the distance proposed!	
No			House price value will decrease. Dangerous route for children to walk	
No			New school is dangerous route for children. Loss of village focus	
No			The school supports the local area - We are a deprived area we need our school	A lot of parents who work will have to decrease hours or give up work if the move goes ahead
No	Community Member		Only school in area & supports the local community	The school is part of the community and has better grades than the other school
No	Community Member		It will affect the children in moving to another school and affect community	The school has good grades and this will affect the children by moving them
No	Future Parent		I believe that the children will be losing out also danger for the children on the way home from Pontygwaith school	The children will have to walk far in all weathers
No	Resident		Attracts families to live in the village, Village will become a ghost town without the school	Route to new school is dangerous. Busy road with limited pavement access due to parked cars
No	Resident		Small community, the school is at the heart of the village and attracts families to live in the area	House prices will drop, route to alternative school is dangerous
No	Ex Pupil		The school is the hub of the community it is the one thing in the village we have left to fight for. The one thing we all have memories of	We pay council tax!! What have we got to show for it?? If you shut the school you might as well close the village
No	Ex Pupil		If the school closes no families will want to move to Wattstown it will be a village of old people	House prices will drop dramatically and what we have worked for all our lives will be worthless
No	Wattstown Resident looking to have a family		Removal of village focus and from recent newspaper reports the danger of walking route	

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Agree	Completed by	Other interested	Comments	Additional Views
No	Resident		Too far for children to walk on a very dangerous route, there are no zebra crossings, no ramps to slow traffic down, children having to cross dangerous roads at least 3 time day on route to Pontygwaith	Surely RCT must realise first years of a Childs education are most important and to expect very young children to walk that far on a dangerous route is unbelievable and in all weather conditions parents with young children will be travelling on foot 4 times a day
No	Parent		Disruption to my Childs education she is currently thriving at Aberllechau Primary School and the move is unjustified and would be loss of community and possibility of losing my job to due to grandparents unable to walk the extra distance	
No			The route to Pontygwaith School is dangerous with too many roads to cross	Spending £1000's pounds on bridges for mice to cross road in Church Village. Children's safety should come first
No	Auntie to 3 pupils and Ex Pupil		The route to Pontygwaith is dangerous and hazardous in extreme weather conditions. It is a very long route for young children to walk. It will have a huge impact on the community as the primary school is at the heart. Many generations of family have attended Aberllechau	It will also impact greatly on the children's well being especially for the nursery school age due to attachment. It would have taken time for them to settle there and will be uprooted and will take time to settle in a new school. For new children and the transition and settling period will be made difficult for parents having to travel numerous times through the day
No	Ex Pupil		The danger for the pupils when they have to cross the roads a number of times	in bad weather pupils would have to sit in wet clothing because no facilities would be available for them to change

Appendix 4

Estyn response to the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer all the pupils, including the Council's special educational needs class, to Pontygwaith Primary School.

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.

Introduction

This consultation proposal is from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The proposal is to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer all the pupils, including the Council's special educational needs class, to Pontygwaith Primary School.

Summary/ Conclusion

Are the proposals likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area?

Although Estyn has concerns about the outcomes in both Aberllechau and Pontygwaith schools, it would seem that the proposal is likely to improve the present standard of education provision in the area. This premise is based on the fact that Aberllechau is currently in Special Measures and it would seem that bringing both schools together would provide a stronger base from which to bring about improvements. Moreover, Pontygwaith is currently in Category B within the Central South Consortium's system of categorisation of effectiveness (A-D). This is because 'although educational standards have generally been variable when compared to similar schools, the school is the most deprived in the family of schools and has cohorts of less than 10 pupils. When individual value added is tracked, the school gives value to all pupils. Teaching is usually good and leadership is effective'. Also Pontygwaith's 2014 data is stronger than 2013 for nearly all measures, and in nearly all cases, significantly so.

What effect do the proposals have on other schools and educational institutions in the area?

As the proposal is for the pupils at Aberllechau Primary to attend Pontygwaith Primary, the proposal will increase pupil numbers of Pontygwaith significantly. The local authority has considered this appropriately and confirms that, 'there is sufficient space at Pontygwaith Primary School to accommodate all the pupils of Aberllechau.'

As Aberllechau's catchment area also borders that of Ynyshir Primary School, the proposer also recognises that parents may wish to choose to apply for a place for their child at Ynyshir Primary, if there are spaces available in the relevant year groups.

Description and benefits

How well has the proposer:

- **Given a clear rationale for the proposals and set out clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo?**

The local authority has given a clear rationale for the proposed expected benefits when compared with the status quo in relation to finance, buildings and pupil places. The proposer also explains clearly how the proposal fits with the local authority's broader plan.

The proposer has identified disadvantages to the current proposal but states that it, 'considers that the educational advantages of the proposal outweigh the short-term impact of the changes for pupils and parents and the additional distance for Wattstown pupils to go to school.'

- **Managed any risks associated with the proposals?**

The proposer has provided no risk and counter measure study.

The proposer has set out disadvantages to this proposal. It states that the proposal 'will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty for a period of time.' However, it does not detail what it considers these will be or what actions it will take to minimise/deal with these issues.

- **Considered suitable alternatives and given good reasons as to why these have been discounted?**

The local authority has provided evidence to show that it has considered other alternative to this current proposal. These include:

- federating Aberllechau and Pontygwaith Primary Schools; and
- closing both schools and building a new school.

They have shown advantages and disadvantages of each option and the reasons for their preferred option. The current proposal removes surplus places and would allow the authority to rationalise the buildings and upgrade one of the two sites.

- **Considered the impact of the changes on learner travel arrangements and on accessibility of provision.**

The local authority states that: 'there will be further to travel to get to school; the Council's policy regarding free school transport will continue to apply.' They estimate that all the pupils living in the revised catchment area of Pontygwaith (encompassing the current Aberllechau catchment) will be within 1.5 miles of this school. The local authority states that it has assessed the safety of the route between Wattstown and Pontygwaith and consider it to be a safe route to school and is also considering extra safety measures for pupils. The proposer states 'that pupils that attend the SEN Class will continue to be transported from their home to the class relocated to Pontygwaith.'

- **Effectively show how surplus places will be affected? If surplus places will be increased, does the proposer give adequate reasons for this?**

The current proposal creates no new nursery or school places. Based on the figures provided by the local authority, Aberllechau nursery will be oversubscribed from September 2015. The nursery at Pontygwaith School has a very few spare places, and not enough to accommodate the pupils from Aberllechau. The proposal does identify an 'intervention room' at Pontygwaith that may be reconfigured for other use. However, the proposal does not provide information on how the loss of this facility may affect current provision in Pontygwaith, nor how altering this room will remedy the situation in the nursery.

- **Where relevant, taken sufficient account of the impact of the proposals on Welsh medium provision within the local authority?**

Neither the school proposed for closure nor the schools to which pupils would be likely to transfer, provide education through the medium of Welsh, except where Welsh is taught as a second language. There would therefore appear to be no impact on the Welsh language arising from this proposal.

Educational aspects of the proposal

- **Considered the impact of the proposals on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management?**

The local authority has provided an analysis of the impact of the proposals on the quality of the outcomes, provision and leadership and management. It quotes the outcomes of the most recent inspection reports for both schools.

Aberllechau Primary schools was placed in Special Measures by Estyn in March 2014. This means that the school has many important areas requiring improvement. Estyn judged the school's current performance to be unsatisfactory because:

- Many pupils do not have good enough skills in reading, writing, numeracy, science, Welsh and information and communication technology (ICT);
- Trends in data on pupils' outcomes are declining and there is insufficient progress in addressing underperformance, particularly at key stage 2;
- Teachers' planning takes insufficient account of pupils' starting points, and as a result less able pupils are unable to access the work planned and more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently; and
- Over time, teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements have been inaccurate.

Estyn also judged the school's prospects for improvement to be unsatisfactory because:

- High levels of staff turnover and absence have prevented the school from improving at an appropriate rate in recent years;
- Leaders do not address the shortcomings in pupils' progress and teachers' performance with enough urgency;
- Selfevaluation processes do not improve outcomes for pupils or the school's provision well enough; and
- Leaders have not addressed many of the recommendations of the last inspection report.

Pontygwaith was last inspected in March 2011. Current performance and prospects for improvement were judged to be good. The Central South Consortium School Improvement Service considers that: "Pontygwaith is currently in Category B within the Central South Consortium's system of categorisation of effectiveness (A-D). This is because: although educational standards have generally been variable when compared to similar schools, the school is the most deprived in the family of schools and has cohorts of less than 10 pupils. When individual value added is tracked, the school gives value to all pupils. Teaching is usually good and leadership is effective".

Performance at Pontygwaith has improved in 2014 at both Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

The proposer considers the impact on provision appropriately. However, in a very few cases the proposer gives no evidence to back these assertions. For example, the local authority states that the proposal will, 'enable greater continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils.' However, there is no evidence to support this statement.

The proposer considers the impact on leadership appropriately.

Overall, it is reasonable to assume that the proposal is likely to improve the educational provision in the area because of the serious concerns about the current provision in Aberllechau.

- **How well has the proposer considered the likely impact of the proposals to ensure delivery of the full curriculum at the Foundation Phase and at each key stage?**

The local authority has provided information in its proposal on the delivery of the full curriculum at the Foundation Phase and at key stage 2. As both Pontygwaith and Ynyshir schools are well established, it would seem likely that both schools would provide the full curriculum at Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

- **How well has the proposer considered the impact of the proposals on vulnerable groups, including children with Special Educational Needs?**

Aberllechau Primary School hosts a council Special Educational Needs class, which provides places for children from across the county, and which does not provide a specific provision to the children in the Aberllechau catchment.

The local authority has provided limited information on the nature of this class or how it has considered the impact of the move on this group of pupils. However, it does state that, 'there is sufficient space at Pontygwaith Primary School to accommodate all the pupils of Aberllechau, including the SEN Class'. The local authority also states that. 'For those pupils in the Special Educational Needs Class, the teachers and teaching assistants will be the same and will transfer with the pupils.'

The local authority states that it has undertaken an equalities impact assessment and community impact assessment

How well has the proposer ensured that the disruption to learners is minimised?

This proposal recognises that 'in making the proposed change, many things will be different for the pupils from Wattstown, Pontygwaith and Ynyshir.' Insufficient evidence is provided as to how the disruption to learners will be minimised apart from the statement that: 'The teachers and teaching assistants may be different, however, the majority of teachers and teaching assistants should, with the agreement of the Pontygwaith governing body, be able to transfer between the schools, if they wish to do so.'

APPENDIX 2

Proposal to close Aberllechau Primary 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 to be consulted on between 2nd June and 18th July 2014. 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. The consultation document clearly focuses on the education argument and case for change and this report was not incorporated in to it as we were mindful of the size and complexity of the consultation document. We did however clearly indicate that this report had been prepared and was available to any person on request.

At the current time, the percentage of pupils attending Aberllechau Primary School that reside within the catchment area is 84%. Of the total number of pupils on roll in January 2014 (date of the PLASC return), including non-statutory Nursery and pre-Nursery pupils (7 in total) 11 children lived outside of the catchment area. It must be noted that this percentage reflects the fact that the children attending the SEN class mostly reside out of catchment. The figures for Pontygwaith Primary are very similar; 87% of the children in attendance reside in the school's catchment area.

Both Aberllechau and Pontygwaith Primaries offer breakfast clubs to all pupils; this provision will continue in Pontygwaith should this proposal be agreed. There are no after school clubs at Aberllechau; Pontygwaith has a sports club on one evening a week throughout the year, plus additional clubs organised on a seasonal basis.

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. This is not uncommon in small Primary schools such as these.

There is currently Flying Start provision (English Medium) that utilises part of the accommodation at Aberllechau Primary School. If these proposals are agreed, the intention is for this facility to transfer to the local sports pavilion, which already hosts the Welsh Medium Flying Start provision for the Wattstown community. This facility has sufficient suitable accommodation to accommodate both groups and this will result in a fully bilingual service being offered in one place.

This proposal seeks to enhance the accommodation and facilities of Pontygwaith Primary School, to cater for all children who may attend the school in the future from its proposed extended catchment area (encompassing Aberllechau). Pontygwaith Primary School was fully refurbished and remodelled only five years ago, so its accommodation is already in a very good condition. 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 one mile which takes less than 5 minutes by car or bus. 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 Pontygwaith Primary School in the future; all pupils will be given equal access and encouragement to participate in as many activities as they wish.

The route between the two schools involves the negotiation of a steep hill, but it has been assessed using Road Safety GB criteria and is not considered to be a dangerous route. It has pavements and street lighting along the full length of the route, and a regular, frequent public bus service is in operation. The Council has however already put proposals in place to further enhance the safety of the walking route, these plans were put on display at the open evening held during the consultation process for all persons to view. The road safety improvements will include the installation of two zebra crossings along the route, with associated 'traffic calming' measures being introduced at these crossings also.

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 June 2014

1. Name of policy/procedure/practice/project: **Closure of Aberllechau Primary School**

The Project is to:

Close Aberllechau Primary School, and transfer its Primary Education provision to Pontygwaith Primary School.

2. Policy Aims, you need to consider why is the policy needed? What does the Council hope to achieve by it?
How will the Council ensure it works as intended?

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.

Estyn's conclusion in March 2012 on the quality of education services for children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf was:

- 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 eighteen months 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. Where there is little evidence of significant progress, the Council is intervening using a range of its powers. One of the powers is to close schools that, over an extended period, continue to under-perform providing an education to children that is not good enough. Aberllechau Primary School is such a school.

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.

Aberllechau Primary School meets several of the above criteria, including the fact that it currently has a surplus places level of 39% and it has less than 90 pupils of statutory school age (just 59 on roll), meaning that it is considered to be a small school. It also has two classes out of just three in the school with three age groups in each; one is also a mixed key stage class. However, the prime reason for consideration of this proposal is that Aberllechau Primary School was inspected by Estyn in March 2014, and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that **special measures** are now required in relation to the school. Schools in special measures are likely to have many important areas for improvement in their work. One reason for schools being placed in this category is that inspectors have found low standards and poor teaching and learning.

The inspectors found that the current performance of the school is unsatisfactory with prospects for improvement also unsatisfactory. The term 'unsatisfactory' in the context of school inspections means that important areas for improvement outweigh strengths.

The current performance of the school is considered to be unsatisfactory because:

- Many pupils do not have good enough skills in reading, writing, numeracy, science, Welsh and information and communication technology (ICT);
- Trends in data on pupils' outcomes are declining and there is insufficient progress in addressing underperformance, particularly at key stage 2;

- Teachers' planning takes insufficient account of pupils' starting points, and as a result less able pupils are unable to access the work planned and more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently; and
- Over time, teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements have been inaccurate.

Prospects for improvement are considered to be unsatisfactory because:

- High levels of staff turnover and absence have prevented the school from improving at an appropriate rate in recent years;
- Leaders do not address the shortcomings in pupils' progress and teachers' performance with enough urgency;
- Self-evaluation processes do not improve outcomes for pupils or the school's provision well enough; and
- Leaders have not addressed many of the recommendations of the last inspection report.

Estyn has stated that, in order to make the required improvements that are necessary to raise standards of teaching and learning the school should:

- R1** Improve pupils' standards in reading, writing and science;
- R2** Improve pupils' skills in numeracy and ICT;
- R3** Ensure that learning experiences are progressive and meet all learners' needs;
- R4** Improve the quality and consistency of teaching;
- R5** Improve assessment of and assessment for learning;
- R6** Stabilise the teaching team in order to provide continuity for pupils;
- R7** Ensure that rigorous monitoring by leaders at all levels results in improvements to pupils' outcomes.

The opportunity therefore exists to bring the two schools together to create a larger, more educationally viable 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 communities of Wattstown and Pontygwaith will:

- **Improve educational outcomes;**
 - Create larger Foundation Phase and KS2 departments 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 move between key stages and 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;
 - Benefit future capital investment projects 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 the buildings and in improving standards of teaching and learning, which otherwise would not have been available;
- **Improve leadership and management;**
 - Provides the opportunity for Headteachers 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;
 - The opportunity to teach across a wider age range;
 - An increased range of expertise;
 - Improved opportunities for staff interaction /co-ordination.

These benefits apply equally to the mainstream and the SEN pupils in the schools. This argument is supported by Estyn in its recent report “School Size and Educational Effectiveness”, that stated *“Pupils’ standards are good or better in a higher proportion of large primary schools than small and medium-sized primary schools. This may be because large schools tend to have more expertise and capacity to address the needs of more vulnerable pupils and the more able and talented pupils.”*

There is sufficient space at Pontygwaith Primary School to accommodate all the pupils of Aberllechau, including the SEN Class, and encompass the catchment area of Wattstown and to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced and secure financial situation. By being larger the School can provide a greater degree of stability at all levels and provide the ability to employ more teaching and support staff. This will allow the School to cover a wider range of curriculum expertise. Overall, the single, larger Primary School will be more financially viable than those it will replace.

There are also teaching staff benefits, which should improve teaching standards within the School. Currently, pupils are taught in mixed age groups. If the proposal proceeds, Pontygwaith Primary School will have greater than 170 pupils of statutory school age (excluding the SEN class) which will equate to 6 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.

If parents and carers from Aberllechau Primary School and its catchment area exercise their right to choose Ynyshir Primary School for their child in the future, the educational impact that this may have on Ynyshir Primary School will be similar to that above. Ynyshir, has just over 200 pupils on roll, with a capacity for 270. Subject to the Council’s admissions criteria, Ynyshir is able to accommodate additional pupils up to the admissions limit of the School.

Demand for School Places - The table overleaf sets out the capacity (excluding non statutory nursery places) of the schools in Aberllechau and Pontygwaith and the forecast pupil numbers in 2018.

	Capacity	Number On Roll 2014	Total Surplus Places 2014	Estimated NOR 2018	Total Surplus Places 2018	Surplus Places 2018 %
Aberllechau Primary	97	59	38	67	30	31%
Pontygwaith Primary	188	102	86	105	83	44%
Combined	264	161	124	172	83	31%

The above figures clearly demonstrate that, with a capacity of 188 pupils, Pontygwaith Primary School is sufficiently large to accommodate all children within the Wattstown and Pontygwaith catchment areas who require places both now and in the future. If the two schools were to merge, forecasts show that in 2018 there will be 172 children on roll, meaning that Pontygwaith would still have 16 surplus places available.

For those children from Aberllechau Primary School, that live in Wattstown, who opt to attend Pontygwaith, the Council's policy regarding free school transport will continue to apply. It is estimated that all the pupils living in the revised catchment area of Pontygwaith (encompassing the current Aberllechau catchment) will be within 1.5 miles of this school. The Council has assessed the safety of the route between Wattstown and Pontygwaith and consider it to be a safe route to school. Nevertheless, the Council will seek to further improve the safety of the route through additional crossing points, wider pavements, and measures to reduce the speed of the traffic. Pupils that attend the SEN Class will continue to be transported from their home to the class relocated to Pontygwaith.

School Buildings –

Aberllechau Primary School (“Aberllechau”) is a Community Primary School located at Victoria Terrace, Wattstown, and the school site consists of two, traditional Victorian buildings, constructed in 1887. The Council has invested £292k in the school buildings since 2009, however the backlog maintenance figure is still £539,000 and this does not include costs of improvements to meet the 21st Century School criteria. Based on the results of the Welsh Government commissioned building survey of all schools, Aberllechau is graded a C for suitability, and C for sufficiency, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively.

Pontygwaith Primary School (“Pontygwaith”) is a Community Primary School located at Graig Street, Pontygwaith, just one mile from Aberllechau. It also consists of two, traditional Victorian buildings, constructed in 1896. Over the last few years, there has been considerable capital investment in this school, part funded by the Governing Body and match funded by the Council, including major roof repairs, renewal of external doors and windows, toilet refurbishment, improved security, new reception and administrative areas, refurbished play areas and installation of dedicated kitchen and dining facilities. Welsh Government approved building grades are B for both suitability and sufficiency. However, the backlog maintenance figure is still £435k (which consists mainly of future works required to mechanical and electrical services) and this does not include costs of improvements to meet the 21st Century School criteria.

3. Who does it apply to? Please indicate by highlighting or deleting as appropriate

Members of the public Staff Both Other Please state: children aged 3-11years in the communities of Wattstown and Pontygwaith, parents and carers of the children.

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

New Review Cessation

All 3.

5. Identifying Impacts – Please choose whether the policy/practice will have a positive, negative or neutral effect on **each** issue below: Think about the key questions included in the managers guidelines.

People / issues to consider	Impact policy / practice will have			If a positive or negative impact is identified, explain why:
	Positive	Negative	Neutral (No impact)	

People / issues to consider	Impact policy / practice will have			If a positive or negative impact is identified, explain why:
	Positive	Negative	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 larger Primary school 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 Primary schools are geared towards the needs of very young children and are, as such not always suitable for use by older persons.
Disability (remember to consider the different types of disability)	Yes			<p>The existing facilities at Pontygwaith Infants School are disabled access compliant where it has been possible to make reasonable adjustments and can be further improved to make them more so.</p>

People / issues to consider	Impact policy / practice will have			If a positive or negative impact is identified, explain why:
	Positive	Negative	Neutral (No impact)	
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 - May 2014.
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 that could be identified is that Primary Schools are, in the main unsuitable for community or other similar usage by older persons. This is because the facilities and services are specially geared towards use by very young children and as such do not lend themselves, or cater for use by adults. In addition, there is Flying Start provision accommodated within this school site. However, this negative impact can be easily mitigated as there is a Community Centre located immediately opposite the school site, which can provide community facilities for adults. There is also a Welsh Medium Flying Start provision in Wattstown, located in the local Bowls Pavilion and this setting has sufficient accommodation available to be able to accommodate the English Medium Flying Start provision from Aberllechau Primary School also.

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
Aberllechau Primary	Governors and Staff Meeting	17 th June 2014, 4pm – 6pm	Aberllechau Primary School
Pontygwaith Primary	Governors and Staff Meeting	18 th June 2014, 4pm – 6pm	Pontygwaith Primary School
Aberllechau Primary	School Council	17 th June 2014, 2pm – 3pm	Aberllechau Primary School
Pontygwaith Primary	School Council	18 th June 2014, 2pm – 3pm	Pontygwaith Primary School

Both Schools and members of the local community	Parents/carers and public drop in session and exhibition	30 th June 2014, 4pm – 6pm	Pontygwaith Primary School
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Schools were also offered opportunities for consultation with pupils, via meetings of their School Councils as detailed in the table overleaf.

Details of the proposal were displayed at Porth 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 will be fully engaged in supporting the head teacher and governing body during the first year or so, or for however long 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 any repairs and maintenance works required at Pontygwaith Primary School to	Colin Atyeo Director of Corporate Estates	By September 2014		

facilitate the additional pupils that will attend this school				
To undertake any highways works that are identified as required to improve the walking route between Wattstown and Pontygwaith	Nigel Brinn, Director of Highways and Transportation	By December 2014		

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: 2/6/14
Job Title: Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

