

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

30th OCTOBER 2014

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

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**PROPOSED REALIGNMENT OF LEARNING SUPPORT CLASSES FOR
PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the progress made in relation to the realignment of mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an opportunity to re-consider proposals for Year 3 of the realignment of mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider the next stage of the realignment of mainstream LSC provision within the context of the new School Organisation Code 2013, as set out in paragraph 4.2 of this report.
- 2.3 Consider whether any further information relating to the realignment is required.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet approved the proposal to realign LSC provision within RCT. The Authority has an excellent range of SEN provisions attached to mainstream schools. However, it had become apparent that there was an imbalance between primary and secondary provisions. In addition, the range of LSC provisions available did not match the level of increasing need in some areas (e.g.

Autistic Spectrum/Social Communication Difficulties and Complex Needs at Key Stage 3/4). In view of this, an in-depth data analysis exercise was undertaken to inform proposals for change in relation to LSC provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3.2 On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet approval was given to begin a process of consultation for proposed changes to take effect from 31st August 2014. Since this date a number of significant actions have been implemented:

- a. Formal consultation was undertaken on year 1 and year 2 of the proposals with the findings reported back to Cabinet on 19th February 2014;
- b. Statutory notices were issued on the 3rd March 2014 in order to close the following LSCs:
 - i. Capcoch Primary (Primary Provision - Hearing Impairment);
 - ii. Tonypandy Primary (Key Stage 2 – Autistic Spectrum Disorder)*;
 - iii. Tonypandy Primary (Primary Provision – Hearing Impairment)*;
 - iv. Alaw Primary (Foundation Phase – Complex) x 2 classes*;
 - v. Llantrisant Primary (Foundation Phase – Complex);
 - vi. Parclewis Primary (Foundation Phase – Complex);
 - vii. Tonysguboriau Primary (Key Stage 2 – Complex);
 - viii. Tonypandy Community College (Key Stage 3/4 – Hearing Impairment)*;

* Please note that these provisions had no children attending (but with the exception of 1 class in Alaw Primary).

- c. Statutory notices were issued on the 3rd March 2014 for the following LSCs in order to open new provisions:
 - i. Ferndale Comprehensive (Key Stage 3/4-Complex Learning Difficulties);
 - ii. Tonyrefail Comprehensive (Key Stage 3/4–Complex Learning Difficulties);
 - iii. Aberdare Community School (Key Stage 3/4 – Communication Disorder);
- d. Statutory notices were issued on the 3rd March 2014 for the following LSCs in order to re-designate the provisions: (change in the nature of existing provisions):
 - i. Oaklands Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties to become Foundation Phase Communication Disorder);
 - ii. Llantrisant Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties to become Observation Class);
 - iii. Maesybryn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex to become Key Stage 2 Communication Disorder);

- iv. Gwaunmeisgyn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex Learning Difficulties to become Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties Class);
 - v. Penrhiwceiber Primary School (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties LSC to Foundation Phase Observation and Assessment Class)
- e. Statutory notices were issued on the 3rd March 2014 for the relocation of the Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties Class currently at Parclewis Primary School to Heol Y Celyn Primary School.
- f. No objections were received following the issuing of the statutory notices. Cabinet was subsequently advised and Cabinet approval was provided on the 8th April 2014.
- 3.3 These statutory notices have been implemented with effect from either 31st August 2014, 1st September 2014 or will be implemented on 1st September 2015. This concludes years 1 and 2 of the realignment plans.
- 3.4 The changes have been implemented with minimal impact on pupils, with only 2 pupils being required to change their placement one year earlier than usual. There has been no impact on staff contracts as all staff are now employed within other LSC settings. The changes have also provided redeployment opportunities for 3 members of Local Authority/school staff who were facing redundancy from their previous roles.

4. CONSULTATION ON YEAR 3 OF THE REALIGNMENT PLAN

- 4.1 As outlined in the original Cabinet report of the 18th November 2013, the realignment proposals were incorporated into a three year plan. As both years one and two are now either completed or underway it is now necessary to seek Cabinet approval to consult with stakeholders regarding year three of the plan.
- 4.2 Four schools remain to be consulted upon in year 3 and consultation documents are provided in the attached appendices. Proposals relate to:
- a. The closure of the following LSCs:
 - Aberdare Park Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties);
 - Perthcelyn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex Learning Difficulties)
 - Capcoch Primary (Primary Provision Speech and Language Difficulties).
 - b. The opening of a LSC provision at Pontypridd High School (Key Stage 3/4–Social, Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties).

5. THE NEED FOR CHANGE

5.1 As previously reported, a considerable resource is allocated to the provision of mainstream LSCs but it would appear that:

- The level of primary LSC provision is high but not matched by Key Stage 3/4 provision. This imbalance needs redressing as pupils who have been successfully placed in mainstream LSC contexts are inappropriately transitioning into special school or pupil referral unit settings when they could remain in mainstream. This also increases the demand for statutory assessments of special educational needs which has been significant in recent years.
- The diminished demand for speech and language placements at primary level and the success of more inclusive support packages is such that there is a need to rationalise the Council's specialist provisions for this area of SEN.

5.2 The table below highlights the surplus capacity within the LSCs proposed for closure in year 3 of the plan:

School Name/LSC	Number of placements available	Current Placements	Placements as at proposed date of closure	% of surplus placements as at closure
Aberdare Park Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties)	8	3	2	75%
Perthcelyn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex Learning Difficulties)	10	7	4	60%
Capcoch Primary (Primary Provision Speech and Language Difficulties)	8	4	2	75%

5.3 As highlighted above it is anticipated that there will be surplus places in all 3 of the classes proposed for closure. Members will be aware that in the current financial climate there is a need to ensure that our resources are used as efficiently as possible. The 3 year plan has redirected any savings from closures back into the Service in order to establish provision in areas of identified need. This will ensure that the range of SEN provision available locally will promote the inclusion of learners with SEN in their local community. The pupils that remain in the provisions proposed for closure will be transferred to an alternative provision closest to their home.

- 5.4 At the Cabinet meeting on 19th February 2014, Members decided to not issue a statutory notice on the Capcoch Primary Speech and Language Difficulties class but to maintain the provision and assess the demand for the provision. The table above evidences that the Capcoch Primary LSC will continue to be under-utilised, and its future should be reconsidered.
- 5.4 A recent evaluation and audit of Additional Needs Funding (ANF) highlighted that 23.9% of funds were allocated to support pupils with the primary need of Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). This highlights the growing need to support pupils with SEBD and to ensure that provision is available throughout both the primary and secondary phases. The proposed development of the Key Stage 3/4 provision in Pontypridd High School will ensure that pupils who cannot cope in mainstream settings will access more specialist provision thus ensuring a better match to pupil need.
- 5.5 Improving the quality of education and raising standards is one of the Council's key priorities. It is considered that improving standards of literacy and numeracy and educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable learners is likely to improve their life choices and access to the world of work and other education pathways.
- 5.6 Whilst the quality of SEN provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is good, there is a need to modernise and improve the range of SEN provision so as to further enhance opportunities for mainstream inclusion.
- 5.7 There is a clear risk that should Rhondda Cynon Taf not re-model its range of SEN provision, some pupils with significant SEN will not have their needs met. This would result in significant disadvantages for certain groups of learners and could result in:
- An increase in demand for inappropriate requests in for special school placements;
 - Potential over crowding in special school settings;
 - An increase in requests for statutory assessments and SEN Tribunals due to parental/carers dissatisfaction with the LA;
 - A reduction in mainstream inclusion opportunities due to insufficient LSC provision in key phases/stages;
 - Poor educational outcomes due to a mis-match between primary needs and available provision;
 - An increase in exclusion and poor attendance due to pupils' SEN not being met, disaffection and disengagement;
 - Enhanced costs due to increased demands for more highly specialist placements than is required;

- An increase in more costly heavily supported mainstream placements due to the lack of appropriate learning support class placements.

5.8 The advantages of implementing the proposed changes include:

- Appropriate placements which are well matched to pupil's primary needs;
- Improved educational outcomes and pupil engagement due to the effective meeting of pupil needs;
- Greater opportunities for mainstream inclusion in local community schools;
- A decrease in requests for statutory assessment due to a reduction in parental/carers and professional concern about not accessing the most appropriate placement;
- Reduced demand for costly packages of support in mainstream setting when what is required is a more specialist learning support class placement;
- Decrease in inappropriate requests for more costly special school placements when what is required in the correct learning support class placement;
- Improved learning provisions which provide better value for money and improved life chances for our most vulnerable learners;
- Reduction in surplus places in some specialist provisions whilst enhancing capacity in key areas of SEN;
- Providing effective local solutions and provisions for pupils with significant SEN thus reducing transport costs and the LAs carbon footprint.

5.9 In accordance with the School Organisation Code 2013 all relevant identified factors have been considered and this information was brought to Elected Members attention in the Proposed Realignment report presented on the 18th November 2013 (sections 10.6 - 10.8). This information remains unaltered.

6. THE STATUTORY PROCESS/NEXT STEPS

6.1 The formal consultation process, as previously undertaken for years 1 and 2 of the plan, will now need to be followed as set out by Welsh Government New Schools Organisation Code 2013. These and the possible timescales are outlined as follows:

Process	Deadline Date
Cabinet considers proposals	30 th October 2014
If approval to the proposals is granted by Cabinet, the consultation process should commence by providing relevant consultees with a consultation document.	10 th November 2014 - 5 th January 2015

Process	Deadline Date
<p>Responses to the consultation document should be made within 42 days, with at least 20 of these being school days.</p> <p>If appropriate, the Access and Inclusion Service should consider convening a meeting with the stakeholders during the consultation period.</p>	
<p>Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Access and Inclusion Service. The summary together with the Access and Inclusion Services' responses to the comments should be published in a consultation report within three months of the end of consultation period. The consultation report should then be published and reported back to Cabinet.</p>	19 th February 2015
<p>If agreement is granted by Cabinet to proceed with the proposals (this should be within 6 months of the end of the consultation period), the publication of a statutory notice for a one month consultation period should follow. This notice must be published on a school day and within 15 school days (not including the day of the publication) in the notice period.</p>	<p>19th February 2015</p> <p>2nd March 2015</p>
<p>At the end of a one month statutory notice period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If objections are received, an objection report should be drafted outlining the objections and their responses to them and available to the objectors within 28 days of the end of the objection period. • If no objections are received, a Cabinet decision will be needed to ratify the proposal. 	<p>2nd March 2015 – 6th April 2015</p> <p>April/May 2015</p>
<p>If the proposal does not require approval by the Welsh Ministers or the local authority, it must receive final determination by proposers within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period (deadline 19th June 2014).</p>	April/May 2015
<p>If proposals receive approval or the proposer determines to implement them, they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date</p>	<p>If Cabinet approve the proposed closures year 3 of the plan will be implemented in a phased manner from Sept 2015</p>

- 6.2 Access and Inclusion Service staff will continue to work closely with Human Resources, Trade Unions, Headteachers, Governing Bodies, members of staff and parents in order to ensure the smooth implementation of year 3 of the plan.

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1 Members will note that this report is an update on the reports presented to Cabinet on the 18th November 2013, 19th February 2014 and 8th April 2014 and is part of three year realignment plan of Learning Support Classes.
- 7.2 The proposed closure of the 3 LSCs and the opening of another are pivotal to the successful and final implementation of the proposals to realign the LSC provision across RCT.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The priority for the Council is to continue to focus on driving up standards in schools and early years settings, and to improve the outcomes for all children and young people. If the cycle of deprivation and underachievement is to be broken, a top quality education that meets the needs of all children and young people is essential. There are considerable benefits to be gained from the further realignment of mainstream LSCs in ensuring the SEN of all children and young people are met and outcomes for pupils are improved.
- 8.2 It is recommended that approval is given to continue to investigate the proposed realignment of SEN mainstream LSC so that we can urgently address and resolve some of the challenges we currently face within the Council.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate



Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes October 2014

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information as to why a realignment of Learning Support Classes is being proposed in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet considered a report on the Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes (LSCs) for Pupils with Special Educational Needs. Approval was given by Cabinet for the proposals to be consulted on, in accordance with the new School Organisation Code 2013. Following the consultation period and Cabinet approval, years 1 and 2 of the 3 year realignment plan were implemented from August 2014 with some minor adjustments.

This document provides an outline of progress achieved during years 1 and 2 of the plan, and year 3 proposals across a range of mainstream settings within RCT. This is the final phase of the realignment plan. Consultation reports for each individual school are attached, so that relevant information can be taken into consideration as part of the consultation process. Proposals include the opening of one LSC in Pontypridd High School and the closure of 3 LSCs in Aberdare Park Primary, Capcoch Primary and Perthcelyn Primary.

There will be an opportunity for all affected parties to contribute their views on the proposals outlined in the individual consultation reports. This will include governors, parents, carers, and staff of all relevant schools that may be losing or gaining a provision. Other interested parties will also be included in the consultation process.

The consultation will commence on the 10th of November 2014 and close on 5th January 2015. A report on the outcome of this consultation will be submitted to the Council's Cabinet for consideration and they will consider, based on the feedback, whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not proceed with the proposal. Further details relating to the consultation process are provided in the each school's consultation proposal.

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of all schools affected
- Pupils of affected schools
- Parents, carers, guardians, and staff members of affected schools
- Other governing bodies of neighbouring primary schools
- Members of Parliament for Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- Central South Education Consortium
- South East Wales Transport

- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members for Rhondda Cynon Taf and regional Assembly Members for the area
- Association
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The local Communities First Partnership
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership (Fframwaith)

Background to the Proposal

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice for Wales 2002 provides detailed guidance on the duties and responsibilities of Local Authorities in meeting the SEN of children and young people. Children and young people have SEN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A learning difficulty is evident when children and young people have:

- significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children and young people of the same age; or
- a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children and young people of the same age in schools within the area of the locality.

The Code of Practice recommends that early years and school settings adopt a graduated response to meeting SEN. A graduated response means that progressively greater expertise and support can be brought in to address the difficulties a child or young person may be experiencing. This additional or different support can be provided through School/Early Years Action, School/Early Years Action Plus or a Statement of SEN depending on the severity of the child/young person's level of need.

For those children and young people with significant SEN in mainstream schools, a further application for funding can be made. Requests for Additional Needs Funding (ANF) to school clusters can be made so as to enhance the support already provided by schools at Early Years Action Plus or School Action Plus. For those pupils who have very significant needs, more specialist placements are required and this might result in a placement in one of our many Learning Support Classes (LSCs), Pupil Referral Units or Special Schools. These placements are agreed by Access and Inclusion Service panels.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has an excellent range of SEN provisions attached to mainstream schools which can be accessed without a Statement of SEN. Data analysis exercises undertaken in 2012/13 suggested that there were some gaps in existing provision and this informed the detailed Cabinet proposal and the 3 year realignment plan that was considered in November 2013. The plan included proposals to enable the Local Authority (LA) to:

- further develop Key Stage 3/4 provision. The level of primary phase provision was high and was not matched by appropriate provision at secondary level. Proposals included changes which would address this imbalance thus enabling pupils who had been successfully placed in mainstream LSC contexts at primary level to transition into mainstream secondary LSC settings as opposed to special school settings and/or mainstream classes with support
- expand Autistic Spectrum/Communication Disorder provisions to address the growth in demand across all phases/key stages

- develop early years provision so that capacity for observation and assessment placements could be enhanced. This would also help to improve the appropriate assessment of primary needs and possible placements, and/or individualised intervention programmes and packages of support in mainstream settings thus diminishing the risk of inappropriate specialist placements
- reduce the level of provision for pupils with hearing impairments to reflect the decrease in demand for specialist placements and the success of more inclusive approaches for this area of SEN
- rationalise specialist provisions for speech and language difficulties due to reduced demand for placements and the progress made in whole school approaches to meeting needs and the success of speech link and language link interventions in schools.

Following Cabinet approval in November 2013, formal consultation was undertaken on year 1 and year 2 proposals with the findings reported back to Cabinet on 19th February 2014. Approval to proceed to statutory notices was provided and these were subsequently issued on the 3rd March 2014 in order to

- close LSCs in:
 - i. Capcoch Primary (Primary Provision – LSC for Hearing Impairment) on the 31st of August 2014
 - ii. Tonypandy Primary (Key Stage 2 – LSC for Autistic Spectrum Disorder) * on the 31st of August 2014
 - iii. Tonypandy Primary (Primary Provision – LSC for Hearing Impairment) * on the 31st of August 2014
 - iv. Alaw Primary (Foundation Phase – LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties) x 2 classes * on the 31st of August 2014
 - v. Llantrisant Primary (Foundation Phase – LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 31st of August 2015
 - vi. Parclewis Primary (Foundation Phase – LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 31st of August 2015
 - vii. Tonysguboriau Primary (Key Stage 2 – LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 31st of August 2015
 - viii. Tonypandy Community College (Key Stage 3/4 – LSC for Hearing Impairment) * of August 2014

** Please note that these provisions had no children attending (with the exception of 1 class in Alaw Primary)*

- open new provisions in:
 - ix. Ferndale Comprehensive (Key Stage 3/4 - LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 1st of September 2014
 - x. Tonyrefail Comprehensive (Key Stage 3/4 – LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 1st of September 2014
 - xi. Aberdare Community School (Key Stage 3/4 – LSC for Communication Disorders) on the 1st of September 2014
- re-designate and change the nature of existing provisions in:
 - xii. Oaklands Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties LSC to become Foundation Phase LSC for Communication Disorder) on the 1st of September 2014
 - xiii. Llantrisant Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties LSC to become an Assessment and Observation Class) on the 31st of August 2014

- xiv. Maesybryn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex LSC to become Key Stage 2 Communication Disorder LSC) on the 1st of September 2014
- xv. Gwaunmeisgyn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex Learning Difficulties LSC to become Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties LSC) on the 1st of September 2014
- xvi. Penrhiwceiber Primary School (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties LSC to Foundation Phase Observation and Assessment Class) on the 1st of September 2014
 - Relocate the following provision in:
- xvii. Parclewis Primary School (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties LSC) to Heol Y Celyn Primary School on the 1st of September 2015.

Cabinet was advised of the response to the statutory notices and further approval provided on the 8th April 2014 to proceed. Statutory notices have since been implemented with effect from either 31st August 2014, 1st September 2014 or will be implemented on 1st September 2015. These actions conclude years 1 and 2 of the realignment plans.

The changes detailed above have been implemented with minimal impact on pupils, with only 2 pupils being required to change their placement one year earlier than usual. There has been no impact on staff contracts as all staff are now employed within other LSC settings. The changes have also provided redeployment opportunities for 3 members of Local Authority/school staff who were facing redundancy from their previous roles.

What is the basis for this proposal?

As outlined, the realignment proposals were incorporated into a three year plan. As both years 1 and 2 are now either completed or underway, it is now necessary to consult with stakeholders on year 3 of the plan. Four schools now need to be consulted on to finalise the realignment plan and to ensure that LSC provision in RCT adequately addresses learner needs and is fit for purpose. The changes will improve the quality and range of special educational provision within RCT.

What are the proposed changes?

The sustainability of the changes already implemented during years 1 and 2 are reliant on the successful implementation of year 3 of the realignment plan. Year 3 proposals to be implemented during 2015/16 includes the:

- closure of the following LSCs:
 - i. Aberdare Park Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 31st of August 2015
 - ii. Perthcelyn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex Learning Difficulties) on the 31st of August 2016
 - iii. Capcoch Primary (Primary Provision Speech and Language Difficulties) on the 31st of August 2015
- opening of the following LSC provision:
 - iv. Pontypridd High School (Key Stage 3/4 LSC for Social, Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties) on the 1st of September 2015

What do the proposals mean in practice for the schools in question?

Individual consultation documents detail the specific considerations for each school so that all affected parties will be able to make informed judgments in relation to the proposals. Three settings will lose their existing LSCs and Pontypridd High School will have a new LSC established. These changes will enable the LA to fully implement and complete the 3 year realignment plan. If the proposals are agreed, the changes will be implemented from the 31st of August 2015, with the exception of the Perthcelyn Primary proposal will be implemented from the 31st of August 2016.

The number of learners and staff affected will be very small and this will not impact adversely on the numbers on roll or the quality of outcomes in the provision.

What is the educational case for the proposals?

The 3 year plan has been devised to improve the quality of SEN specialist provision in RCT and to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet need. Table 1 clearly highlights that there is surplus capacity within all 3 of the LSCs which are proposed for closure.

Table 1: LSC Placements

School Name/LSC	Maximum Number of placements available	Current Placements Utilised	Placements as at proposed date of closure	% of surplus placements as at closure
Aberdare Park Primary (Foundation Phase Complex Learning Difficulties)	8	3	2	75%
Perthcelyn Primary (Key Stage 2 Complex Learning Difficulties)	10	7	4	60%
Capcoch Primary (Primary Provision Speech and Language Difficulties)	8	4	2	75%

Within the current financial climate there is a need to ensure that our resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. The 3 year plan ensures that any savings from closures are redirected into the further development of SEN provision in areas of identified need.

At the Cabinet meeting on 19th February 2014 when formal consultation outcomes were considered, it was agreed to not issue a statutory notice on Capcoch Primary Speech and Language Difficulties LSC but to maintain the provision and assess future demand. Table 1 evidences that the Capcoch Primary LSC continues to be under-utilised, and its future should now be reconsidered.

A recent evaluation and audit of Additional Needs Funding (ANF) highlighted that 23.9% of funds were allocated to support the mainstream inclusion of pupils with a primary need of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). This highlights the growing need to support pupils with SEBD and to ensure that provision is available throughout both the primary and secondary phases. The proposed development of the Key Stage 3/4 provision in Pontypridd High School will ensure that pupils who cannot cope in mainstream settings will access more specialist provision thus ensuring a better match of provision to pupil need and a possible reduction in incidents of exclusions in mainstream settings.

All the children and young people in RCT will ultimately gain and benefit from the proposals. Whilst the quality of SEN provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is good, there is a need to modernise and improve the range of SEN provision available so as to further enhance outcomes for pupils with significant SEN and opportunities for mainstream inclusion. By ensuring that our provisions are better matched to the needs of learners we will provide some of our most vulnerable learners with the best possible chance of achieving success. Enhanced access to highly specialist staff with expertise in key areas of SEN in supportive, well resourced and appropriate learning environments will only help overcome a range of potential barriers to learning, including health, safety and welfare issues. The plan is a 3 year plan and the successful implementation of the last and final phase of the plan is essential in ensuring the long term viability and sustainability of the changes implemented to date in years 1 and 2 of the realignment plan. The benefits of successfully completing the final phase of the realignment plan cannot be seen in isolation and have to be viewed within the context of all other changes implemented to date. The benefits of the 3 year plan includes:

- **Increased opportunities for inclusion** - If the proposals are agreed there will be enhanced opportunities for effectively meeting the needs of learners in their local communities. Placements in LSCs will provide a secure and supportive base for addressing a child or young person's SEN, alongside opportunities for mainstream inclusion. If there is a better match between learners' SEN and the specialist LSCs attended then outcomes and mainstream inclusion opportunities will be improved. Enhanced opportunities for placing learners with SEN in more local community based provisions will only seek to enhance inclusion and a sense of belonging to local communities.
- **A positive impact on other SEN provision within the immediate and wider local authority area** - The changes suggested will ensure that inappropriate placements will diminish as there will be enhanced opportunities for ongoing assessments and accurate identification of SEN in the early years. In addition, there will be increased Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Communication Disorder provision to address the increasing demand for placements of this nature. There will be enhanced opportunities for pupils who have coped well in Key Stage 2 LSC placements for Complex Learning Difficulties to transition into similar provision at Key Stage 3. The absence of appropriate Key Stage 3/4 placements for Complex Learning Difficulties has in the past resulted in requests for special school placements when perhaps a LSC would have been more appropriate. By developing Key Stage 3/4 provision in mainstream settings special school placements can now be retained for pupils with more significant needs. This change will not have a detrimental impact on the numbers of placements within special schools as there are increasing numbers of pupils with complex health and medical needs who require placements in these settings. By developing provision that addresses growing areas of SEN in RCT the demand for out of county placements and more costly placements will diminish.
- **The proposals address the growth in particular types of SEN provision in the area** - The changes proposed address all the issues identified from the data audit. Namely, the need for increased ASD/CD placements, Key Stage 3/4 provisions; and early years observation and assessment classes. The plan for remodelling LSC provision in RCT will ensure that we have a more balanced and diverse range of provisions within the Council.
- **Surplus SEN provision will be rationalised** - Growth in certain areas of SEN is such that there is currently an imbalance in provision. We have surplus specialist primary provision which needs to be addressed as part of the plan to enable us to develop provisions in areas of growing need. By making the suggested adjustments, specialist LSC provision within RCT will be more 'fit for purpose'.
- **Improved learning provisions which provide better value for money** - By eradicating surplus places and closing provisions which do not meet the areas of need the LA is able to re-

direct funding to address priority areas. Data analysis has identified key areas for development and re-investment. These proposals are not intended to be a cost cutting exercise as any potential savings will be re-invested to develop specialist provisions for pupils with SEN.

- **Positive impact on other services provided for pupils with disabilities and/or SEN** - The changes suggested will have a positive impact on the Access and Inclusion Service and schools as it will mean that more pupils will be placed in the right setting for their needs; inappropriate requests for special school placements will diminish; placements or packages of support in mainstream settings will be better informed and matched to pupil need in the early years. There will also be a positive impact for parents as the lack of available provision in key areas of SEN is a current source of parental concern and anxiety. It is anticipated that if the range of provisions are more appropriate to needs there will be a decrease in requests for statutory assessments due greater parental/carer satisfaction. A reduction in statutory assessment work will create more enhanced opportunities for Access and Inclusion Service staff to engage in early intervention work.

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

The final phase of the plan will ensure that all changes undertaken as part of the 3 year plan are sustained in the longer term. These planned improvements in SEN provision will have significant benefits for pupils with SEN in RCT. These include

- Enhanced availability of specialist placements for pupils with specific SEN in their local communities thus enhancing inclusion and a sense of belonging to the local community.
- Reduced travel time to specialist provisions due to more localised provision.
- Improved educational outcomes and pupil engagement due to a better match between pupils' primary needs and provision.
- Children with complex and diverse needs in the early years will be able to have their needs assessed over time which will inform what provision is required to best meet needs.
- A reduction in the number of pupils placed in settings which are not appropriate to their primary needs.
- A reduction in inappropriate requests for special school and out of county placements as the provision within RCT will be better matched to growing areas of need.

Due to surplus capacity with the settings, the proposals impact on a very small number of pupils. In the event of provision closure, future pupil and placement needs will be discussed with the child/young person, the family, school staff and external agencies. Should a further specialist placement be needed this would be provided in the nearest available specialist setting and support provide to successfully transition into the placement. The impact on families would be minimal as the vast majority of pupils requiring specialist placement meet criteria for receiving home to school transport.

What will be the likely impact of the proposals on staff?

Every attempt will be made to redeploy staff during the implementation of the plan. The implementation of the first two phases of the realignment process has resulted in the successful redeployment of staff. The LA will continue to require a highly skilled and experienced workforce and will seek to redeploy staff where possible. Training will be provided where needed to ensure that staff are appropriately equipped to manage and meet pupil needs.

What will be the likely impact of the proposals on local communities?

A community impact assessment and equality impact assessment has been completed for this proposal. These will be updated after the consultation has been completed to ensure that they include pertinent issues that have arisen and need to be taken into account. The community impact assessment and equality impact assessment will be presented to the Council's Cabinet in the report that sets out the consultation feedback received in respect of this proposal. The proposals do not have a negative impact on other schools and educational institutions in the area.

What are the financial implications of the proposals?

The 3 year plan was calculated to generate annual savings of £27,367.28. Any savings will be re-invested into the development of SEN provision within RCT so as to improve outcomes and the life chances of some of our most vulnerable groups of learners.

What are the transport implications of the proposals?

The proposals, if agreed, will provide more enhanced opportunities for meeting the needs of learners in their local communities. This should minimise and not enhance transportation costs. The Local Authority will however continue to provide transport in accordance with the Local Authority's Learner Travel Policy. We will always seek to place in the nearest available school and avoid excessive travel times where possible.

What are the disadvantages of the proposal?

There is a clear risk that should Rhondda Cynon Taf not re-model its range of SEN provision, some pupils with significant SEN will not have their needs met. This final stage of the 3 year realignment plan is critical to the success of the proposals already implemented during year 1 and 2 of the implementation programme. The realignment plan will result in significant advantages for a wide range of vulnerable learners with additional learning needs. However, if not implemented this could result in:

- A reduction in mainstream inclusion opportunities due to insufficient LSC provision in key phases/stages.
- Poor educational outcomes due to a mis-match between primary needs and available provision.
- An increase in exclusion and poor attendance due to pupils' SEN not being met, disaffection and disengagement.
- Enhanced costs due to increased demands for more highly specialist placements than is required.
- An increase in demand for inappropriate requests for special school placements and potential overcrowding in these settings.
- An increase in requests for statutory assessments and SEN Tribunals due to parental/carer dissatisfaction with the LA.
- An increase in more costly heavily supported mainstream placements due to the lack of appropriate learning support class placements.

The disadvantages of the proposals could possibly include a change in schooling for a very small number of learners. However, this will be addressed through effective transition and good liaison to ensure continuity in learning and socialisation. Support would also be provided for the families to ensure that they are also given advice and guidance where needed.

What alternative options have been considered?

Alternative options are minimal and have been discounted. These include

- Out of County Placements: securing places for pupils out of county when there are insufficient placements available within the County Borough has been considered but discounted due to cost implications. This does not provide good value for money and transporting pupils and young people out of county for extensive periods is not good practice. As a LA we are committed to developing local provision so that opportunities for maximising inclusion can be enhanced; access to local services maximised; and the carbon footprint reduced.
- Closing provisions and further delegating funding to schools for them to meet SEN requirements within mainstream schools. The LA annually delegates £2.7 million to schools to promote mainstream inclusion opportunities for SEN. Our data suggests that pupils make good progress in specialist provisions and feedback from parents, carers and schools clearly indicates the need to resource specialist provisions attached to mainstream schools.

The LAs most recent Estyn inspection reported that RCT's provision for SEN is good. It is hoped that by realigning specialist provisions to better address need that pupils with SEN in RCT will have access to excellent SEN provision in future.

What do you now have to consider?

Individual proposals and consultation reports relating to specific schools are attached. A clear consultation process is outlined in the attached documents and views will be sought and considered in relation to each specific proposal.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate



Consultation on the Proposal to Close Foundation Phase Learning
Learning Support Class for Pupils with Complex Needs
at Aberdare Park Primary School

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to close the Learning Support Class (LSC) for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties in Aberdare Park Primary School.

Aberdare Park Primary School currently has a Foundation Phase LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties. It is proposed that this class is closed. There are currently a total of 3 pupils attending the Foundation Phase provision which has a maximum capacity of 8 places in total.

It is proposed that the LSC will close on the 31st August 2015 when there will be only 2 pupils attending this provision. Alternative specialist placements or support packages in a mainstream setting will be identified for the children currently attending this provision.

This consultation report should be read in conjunction with the 'Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes' which provides further information relating to the Local Authority's (LA) plan for implementing changes across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

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

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 10th November 2014 and will be completed at 5pm on 5th January 2015. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in February 2015.

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 will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The statutory notices will be published on the 2nd March 2015 for a one month statutory notice period until the 6th April 2015.

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.

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 28 days of the end of the objection period.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the objection report at the next available Cabinet meeting to determine the outcome of the statutory notice.

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 the 31st of August 2015.

What do you now have to consider?

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposed closure of the Foundation Phase LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties in Aberdare Park Primary School. 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 the Foundation Phase Learning Support Classes (Complex Learning Difficulties) at Aberdare Park Primary School.

How do you make your views known?

A consultation questionnaire is attached, and is also available on the Council's internet site at www.rctcbc.gov.uk. The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report to the Council's Cabinet. Schools will also be offered opportunities to consult with pupils and are advised to consult with School Council representatives to seek pupil views. You are also welcome to put your views in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Access and Inclusion Service, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Telephone: (01443) 744364 E-mail: A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk Fax: (01443) 744340

All correspondence should be received no later than 5pm on 5th January 2015

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

As Aberdare Park Primary School is an English medium school and is the only school affected by this proposal 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

On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet considered the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning's Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Approval was given by Cabinet for the proposals to be consulted on in accordance with the new School Organisation Code 2013.

Improving the quality of education and raising standards is one of the Council's key priorities. It is considered that improving standards and educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable learners will improve their life chances, access to the world of work and other education pathways. Ensuring that our provisions are well matched to the needs of learners is central to learners achieving positive outcomes.

Whilst the quality of SEN provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is good, there is a need to modernise and improve the range of SEN provision so as to further enhance opportunities for mainstream inclusion and to further improve outcomes for vulnerable groups of learners.

Information on Aberdare Park Primary School

Aberdare Park Primary School is located at Hirwaun Road, Trecynon, Aberdare Park, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school is an English medium provision and is situated in a Victorian style building, outside the village of Aberdare. It is in good repair. The Learning Support Class (LSC) is designated to support 8 Foundation Phase pupils with complex needs

The pupil numbers and forecast information for Aberdare Park Primary School from 2009-2018 are shown below and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which is undertaken in January each year. The pupil forecasts for Aberdare Park Primary School are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government. 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 capacity separately.

Pupil Numbers and forecast information:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Aberdare Park Primary	262	255	260	278	280	287	302	303	296

Capacity of the school: 337

Nursery places: 48

Please note there are currently 3 pupils attending the LSC for pupils with complex needs.

Aberdare Park Primary School was last inspected by Estyn in April 2011. The inspection gradings are summarised as follows:

Summary	Grade
The School's Current Performance	Good
The School's Prospects for Improvement	Good

The overall judgement suggests that Aberdare Park Primary School is a good school with good prospects for improvement. Inspectors reported that "provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs is good." The Local Authority in conjunction with Central South Consortia categorises schools according to their support needs (from A-D, where category A schools require the least amount of support). Aberdare Park Primary School is a category B school.

What is the basis for this proposal?

It is proposed that the Foundation Phase Learning Support Class for Complex Learning Difficulties is closed on the 31st of August 2015 due to the surplus places evident.

The number of pupils attending this provision has fallen in recent years and it is projected that only 2 pupils will be attending this class at the proposed date of closure. If these pupils continue to require a placement at another LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties following the closure of this setting the nearest LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties is in Caradog Primary School. Transport will be provided for these learners in line with the Learner Travel Policy. Alternatively, a package of support will be provided in the mainstream if this is in accordance with the child's needs or parental preference.

The LSC in Aberdare Park only takes pupils for the Foundation Phase of primary education. Pupils transfer to another local LSC for their Key Stage 2 education if appropriate. This can entail additional transition for some of our most vulnerable learners at the end of the Foundation Phase. In most cases, the majority of mainstream pupils have the opportunity to remain in the same setting for the full primary phase and the LA's plan takes into account the importance of continuity in education on the same school site where possible.

For pupils with significant and complex needs school based support is provided at Early Years/School Action and Early Years Action Plus/School Action Plus in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN for Wales 2002. For those children and young people with significant SEN in mainstream schools, the delegation of £2.7 million Additional Needs Funding (ANF) to school clusters has enhanced the opportunity for providing additional support at Early Years Action Plus or School Action Plus. Clear threshold criteria have to be met for funding to be agreed and children and young people with complex needs can access this additional support whilst remaining in their own community school. Some pupils attending the LSCs could potentially be placed in a mainstream school with a package of support should this be in accordance with parental preference and the child's needs.

The two children currently attending the provision will be transferred to the nearest LSC placement should this continue to be required. The LA will be retaining 13 LSCs for Complex Learning Difficulties as part of the proposed plan.

What is the educational case for closing the LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties in Aberdare Park Primary School?

At the proposed date of closure there will be a very small number of pupils [2] in the LSC. This does not provide a viable teaching or social group within the class.

The closure will have no impact on the current school arrangements for SEN.

The advantages of implementing the proposed changes includes:

- greater opportunities for mainstream inclusion in local community schools for pupils with complex learning difficulties
- better targeting of resources for areas of greatest need within the LA
- reduction in surplus places in some specialist provisions whilst enhancing capacity in key areas of SEN
- improved learning provisions which provide better value for money and improved life chances for our most vulnerable learners.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on school pupils?

There will be minimal impact on existing pupils as the LSC will only have 2 pupils requiring a place after closure. Suitable arrangements will be put in place in consultation with all involved to ensure appropriate provision is made minimising the impact on the pupil and their families. This could involve additional support in a mainstream setting of parental choice or alternative specialist provision appropriate to individual need. The nearest LSC to Aberdare Park Primary School is in Caradog Primary School (which is 1.1 miles away). Transportation will be provided in line with the Council's Learner Travel policy and placement will be made in the nearest and most appropriate specialist setting.

Should there be children or young people with significant learning difficulties in the local community in future, an inclusive education with packages of support in the mainstream setting will be provided whenever possible. Support provided will be from school resources enhanced with Additional Needs Funding and/or specialist support from the Access and Inclusion Service. In future, pupils requiring placements in a LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties will attend other settings.

What is the likely impact of the proposal on the staff of the LSC in Aberdare Park Primary School?

All LSC staff are appointed by the LA and are contracted to work in any appropriate LSC provision. This is subject to the needs of the LA and the skills set of the staff in question. Only 1 LSC teacher and 2 Learning Support Assistants (job share post) are currently based at the school. Staff based in LA provision will be offered redeployment to appropriate alternative LSC settings wherever possible. The proposal will not have any measurable impact on Aberdare Park Primary School.

What are the financial implications of the proposal?

The change suggested will have a positive impact on pupils with SEN in the LA as it will mean that the funding will be re-directed to establish provisions that address growing areas of need. These include learners with complex and diverse needs in early years, Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Communication Disorder (ASD/CD – Foundation Phase - post 16) and Complex Needs (Key Stages 3/4).

As there are 3 pupils currently attending this provision, and 2 at the proposed date of closure, there will be minimal impact on pupils, transport costs or school budget. Where the LA maintains a LSC additional funding is delegated to schools to fund the provision.

In the case of Aberdare Park Primary this is £65,095.

The proposal does not involve any transfer or disposal of land. The proposed closure of the class will not impact on overall capacity of Aberdare Park Primary School to deliver an appropriate curriculum.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on Aberdare?

This proposal will not have any significant impact on Aberdare. There are a low number of pupils currently attending the LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties in Aberdare Park Primary School which will reduce further by the date of closure.

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 on request.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

The closure of the LSC class enables the LA to re-direct much needed resources to areas of greater need. Without closing this provision, the LA will not be able to implement the plan for the proposed re-alignment plan for Learning Support Classes across the LA. Implementing this plan will be of benefit to all learners with SEN across RCT and will ensure greater equality and access to specialist provision for pupils with significant SEN.

There is a clear risk that should RCT not re-model its range of SEN provision, some pupils with significant SEN will not have their needs met. This will result in significant disadvantages for certain groups of learners and could result in:

- A reduction in mainstream inclusion opportunities due to insufficient LSC provision in key phases/stages
- Poor educational outcomes due to a mis-match between primary needs and available provision.
- An increase in exclusion and poor attendance due to pupils' SEN not being met, disaffection and disengagement
- An increase in demand for inappropriate requests in for special school placements and potential overcrowding in some settings
- An increase in requests for statutory assessments and SEN Tribunals due to parental/carer dissatisfaction with the LA
- Enhanced costs due to increased demands for more highly specialist placements than is required

What alternative options have been considered other than the closure of the LSC in Aberdare Park Primary School?

As the Foundation Phase LSC in Aberdare Park Primary School has seen a dramatic decrease in the number of pupils, and provides places for only part of the full primary age range, the suggested course of action is the only logical solution.

What is the statutory process to close the LSC?

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 1st

October 2013 and applies in respect of all school proposals published by way of a statutory notice after that date. Proposals to close a school have to follow the following process:

1. The Council's Cabinet considers the Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
2. At the start of the consultation period the Council **must** provide consultees with a consultation document and give them at least 42 days in which to respond, with at least 20 of these days being school days. If the Council considers it appropriate meetings are held with stakeholders during the consultation period;
3. Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council's officers own responses is published in a consultation report within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration;
4. The Council's Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 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;
5. Statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The notice **must** be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) in the notice period;
6. If objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 28 days of the end of the objection period;
7. The Council's Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
8. If the proposals receive approval they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date.

Questionnaire

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

Access and Inclusion Service

Ty Trevithick

Abercynon

CF45 4UQ

Or by fax to 01443 744340, or e-mail to A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk

The Proposal

The proposal is to close the Foundation Phase Learning Support Class for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties at Aberdare Park Primary School.

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

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

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

3. Please indicate who you are (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 5 pm on the 5th January 2015

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate



Consultation on the Proposal to Close the
Primary Learning Support Class for Pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties
at Capcoch Primary School

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to close the Learning Support Class (LSC) for pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties at Capcoch Primary School.

Capcoch Primary School currently has one class for pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties which currently has 4 pupils attending the provision. It is proposed that the Learning Support Class for pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties (Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2) is closed on the 31st August 2015.

There are currently 4 pupils attending the Speech and Language Difficulties LSC. There will be only 2 pupils attending the LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties at the point of closure in August 2015.

This consultation report should be read in conjunction with the 'Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes' which provides further information relating to the Local Authority's (LA) plan for implementing changes across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

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

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 10th November 2014 and will be completed at 5pm on 5th January 2015. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in February 2015.

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 will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The statutory notices will be published on the 2nd March 2015 for a one month statutory notice period until the 6th April 2015.

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.

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 28 days of the end of the objection period.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the objection report at the next available Cabinet meeting to determine the outcome of the statutory notice.

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 the 31st of August 2015.

What do you now have to consider?

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the closure of the Learning Support Class for pupils and Speech and Language Difficulties (Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2)

It is proposed that this LSC in Capcoch Primary School will close on the 31st August 2015.

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 the primary age range Learning Support Class for pupils Speech and Language Difficulties at Capcoch Primary School.

How do you make your views known?

A consultation questionnaire is attached, and is also available on the Council's internet site at www.rctcbc.gov.uk. The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report to the Council's Cabinet. Schools will also be offered opportunities to consult with pupils and are advised to consult with School Council representatives to seek pupil views. You are also welcome to put your views in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Access and Inclusion Service, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Telephone: (01443) 744364 E-mail: A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk Fax: (01443) 744340

All correspondence should be received no later than 5pm on 5th January 2015

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

As Capcoch Primary School is an English medium school and is the only school affected by this proposal 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

On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet considered the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning's Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Approval was given by Cabinet for the proposals to be consulted on in accordance with the new School Organisation Code 2013.

Improving the quality of education and raising standards is one of the Council's key priorities. It is considered that improving standards and educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable learners will improve their life chances, access to the world of work and other education pathways. Ensuring that our provisions are well matched to the needs of learners is central to learners achieving positive outcomes.

Whilst the quality of SEN provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is good, there is a need to modernise and improve the range of SEN provision so as to further enhance opportunities for mainstream inclusion and to further improve outcomes for vulnerable groups of learners.

Information on Capcoch Primary School

Capcoch Primary School is located at School Street, Abercwmboi, Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school is an English medium provision and is situated in the Cynon Valley between Aberdare and Mountain Ash. It consists of a 1950s brick construction and the buildings are in a good state of repair.

The Learning Support Class (LSC) is designated to support a total of 8 primary aged pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties.

The pupil numbers and forecast information for Capcoch Primary School from 2009-2018 are shown below and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which is undertaken in January each year. The pupil forecasts for Capcoch Primary School are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government. 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 capacity separately.

Pupil Numbers and forecast information:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Capcoch Primary School	109	106	104	104	97	102	104	110	117

Capacity of the school: 170

Nursery places: 24

Please note: There are 4 pupils attending the primary range LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties currently and 2 will be attending at the point of closure.

Capcoch Primary School was last inspected by Estyn in February 2013. The inspection gradings are summarised as follows:

Narrative	Grade
School's Current Performance	Good
The School's prospects for Improvement	Excellent

The overall judgement suggests that Capcoch Primary School is a good school with excellent prospects for improvement. Inspectors reported that “the provision for all pupils with additional learning needs is effective and they make good progress in school. Well-trained support staff offer a high level of help to individuals and small groups of pupils”. In addition, it was also commented that “the resource provision classes and mainstream classes benefit from good opportunities to work alongside each other”. The Local Authority in conjunction with Central South Consortia categorises schools according to their support needs (from A-D, where category A schools require the least amount of support). Capcoch Primary School is a category B school.

What is the basis for this proposal?

It is proposed that the primary phase LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties is closed in August 2015. It is proposed that these pupils are either placed in an alternative specialist LSC, or are placed in a mainstream setting of parental preference with support. The nearest LSC is in Llwyncrwn Primary School. Transport would be provided in accordance with LA Learner Travel policy.

The LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties is now only half full and low numbers have been evident for a number of years. Increasingly pupils with significant speech and language difficulties have also been very successfully placed in mainstream settings with packages of support in place.

For pupils with significant speech and language difficulties school based support is provided at Early Years/School Action and Early Years Action Plus/School Action Plus in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN for Wales 2002. For those children and young people with significant SEN in mainstream schools, the delegation of £2.7 million Additional Needs Funding (ANF) to school clusters has enhanced the opportunity for providing additional support at Early Years Action Plus or School Action Plus. Clear threshold criteria have to be met for funding to be agreed and children and young people with severe needs can access this additional support. Furthermore, specialist input is provided by the Access and Inclusion Services peripatetic Speech and Language Team, to support mainstream inclusion and curriculum access for pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties.

What is the educational case for closing the primary phase LSC for pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties in Capcoch Primary School?

The LA has seen a reduction in the demand for LSC placements for pupils with speech and language difficulties. This is largely due to the inclusion agenda. The success of school based support coupled with Additional Needs Funding and packages of support from Access and Inclusion Service staff in mainstream settings has resulted in positive outcomes for pupils with often severe SEN. In addition, school staff are successfully implementing speech and language therapy programmes in the school setting with very positive outcomes.

The surplus spaces in the LSC suggests that this provision is not being fully utilised and there is now a need to rationalise provision to make more effective use of resources.

The closure will not have a significant impact on the current school arrangements for SEN and will ensure the efficient use of scarce resources being re-directed to areas of greater need. The LA will continue to have specialist LSCs elsewhere in RCT to ensure that the pupils who cannot progress with specialist packages of support in a mainstream context will still be able to access a LSC placement should they require one.

The advantages of implementing the proposed changes includes:

- greater opportunities for mainstream inclusion in local community schools for pupils with speech and language difficulties
- better targeting of resources to areas of greatest need within the LA
- reduction in surplus places in some specialist provisions whilst enhancing capacity in key areas of SEN
- improved learning provisions which provide better value for money and improved life chances for our most vulnerable learners.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on school pupils?

There are currently 4 pupils (2 at point of closure) attending the LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties. Suitable arrangements will be put in place in consultation with all involved to ensure appropriate provision is made for the pupils concerned following closures. This could involve additional support in a mainstream setting of parental choice, or alternative specialist provision appropriate to the pupils' individual needs. The nearest specialist provision is the LSC in Llwynyrwn Primary School, which is approximately 13.6 miles from the current provision. For the 2 remaining pupils, who will be in years 4 and 6 at the suggested point of closure, the distance from their homes to Llwynyrwn Primary School is approximately 17 miles. In view of this distance, interim arrangements could be put in place to maintain continuity in the existing school if this was deemed preferable. This could include comparable access to a specialist teacher and LSA input to support mainstream inclusion at Capcoch Primary School. This could be put in place until the need for specialist provision at primary level ceases. Such provision would be made following full consultation with parents and relevant professionals if this was appropriate to the children's needs thus minimising the impact on the pupils and their families. Alternatively, transportation could be provided to Llwynyrwn Primary School if this was in accordance with the wishes of the children and their families and was appropriate to the needs of the children in question.

However, the proposals if agreed, would mean that any local child or young person requiring a highly specialist placement due to severe speech and language difficulties in future, would require placement at the LA's speech and language provision at Llwynyrwn Primary School if this was in accordance with parental wishes.

Transportation would be provided in line with the Council's Learner Travel policy and placement made in the nearest and most appropriate specialist setting.

What is the likely impact of the proposal on the staff of the LSC in Capcoch Primary School?

All LSC staff are appointed by the LA and are contracted to work in any appropriate LSC provision. This is subject to the needs of the LA and the skills set of the staff in question. Staff currently based in these settings will be redeployed where possible to alternative settings. The proposal will not have any measurable impact on Capcoch Primary School.

What are the financial implications of the proposal?

The change suggested will have a positive impact on pupils with SEN in the LA as it will mean that the funding will be re-directed to establish provisions that address growing areas

of need. These include learners with complex and diverse needs in early years, Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Communication Disorder (ASD/CD – Foundation Phase - post 16) and Complex Needs (Key Stages 3/4).

There are a small number of pupils currently attending this provision, and it is intended that these pupils will receive packages of support in mainstream settings to address their needs, or consideration will be given to placing them in an alternative setting if a more specialist placement is required. These changes will have a small impact on transport costs if an alternative specialist placement is required but this will of course be dependent on a number of factors. It will not impact adversely on the school budget as these staff are centrally employed and delegated funding covers the cost of running the provision. Where the LA maintains a LSC additional funding is delegated to schools. In the case of Capcoch Primary School this is £60,685 for the speech and language provision.

The proposal does not involve any transfer or disposal of land. The proposed closure of the class will not impact on overall capacity of Capcoch Primary School to deliver an appropriate curriculum.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on Abercwmboi?

This proposal will not have any significant impact on Abercwmboi. There are only a total of 4 pupils (2 at point of closure) currently attending the LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties in Capcoch and the provision has had a high number of surplus places for a significant period of time. The diminishing numbers has been due to an increasing number of pupils with speech and language difficulties being very successfully placed in mainstream settings. It is likely that children from the local community will continue to attend Capcoch with packages of support to facilitate their inclusion and progress.

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 on request.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

The closure of the LSC enables the LA to re-direct much needed resources to areas of greater need. Without closing this provision, the LA will not be able to implement the plan for the proposed re-alignment for Learning Support Classes across the LA. Implementing this plan will be of benefit to all learners with SEN across RCT and will ensure greater equality and access to specialist provision for pupils with significant SEN.

There is a clear risk that should RCT not re-model its range of SEN provision, some pupils with significant SEN will not have their needs met. This will result in significant disadvantages for certain groups of learners and could result in:

- A reduction in mainstream inclusion opportunities due to insufficient LSC provision in key phases/stages
- Poor educational outcomes due to a mis-match between identified needs and available provision.
- An increase in exclusion and poor attendance due to pupils' SEN not being met, disaffection and disengagement
- An increase in demand for inappropriate requests in for special school placements and potential overcrowding in some settings

- An increase in requests for statutory assessments and SEN Tribunals due to parental/carer dissatisfaction with the LA
- Enhanced costs due to increased demands for more highly specialist placements than is required.

Clearly, there will be changes for some of the pupils attending the existing provision and the needs of these learners will be fully taken into account in planning appropriate provision to meet their needs. This may consist of supported mainstream placements or in some cases a possible alternative placement in other specialist settings. Transport will be provided where this is needed in line with LA Learner Travel policy.

What alternative options have been considered other than the closure of the LSC in Capcoch Primary School?

As the LSC in Capcoch School has not been full for a number of years this suggested course of action is the only logical solution which will enable the LA to make more effective use of scarce resources. Demand for specialist provisions for Speech and Language across RCT have reduced significantly due to the increasing emphasis on inclusive mainstream education for pupils with SEN. For pupils with speech and language difficulties, the LA has an excellent peripatetic service which provides support to enhance mainstream inclusion experiences. In addition, there continues to be an established LSC for Speech and Language Difficulties in Llwynocrwn Primary School should the need for a specialist placement arise.

What is the statutory process to close the LSC?

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 1st October 2013 and applies in respect of all school proposals published by way of a statutory notice after that date. Proposals to close a school have to follow the following process:

1. The Council's Cabinet considers the Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
2. At the start of the consultation period the Council **must** provide consultees with a consultation document and give them at least 42 days in which to respond, with at least 20 of these days being school days. If the Council considers it appropriate meetings are held with stakeholders during the consultation period;
3. Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council's officers own responses is published in a consultation report within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration;
4. The Council's Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 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;
5. Statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The notice **must** be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) in the notice period;
6. If objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 28 days of the end of the objection period;
7. The Council's Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
8. If the proposals receive approval they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date.

Questionnaire

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

Access and Inclusion Service

Ty Trevithick

Abercynon

CF45 4UQ

Or by fax to 01443 744340, or e-mail to A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk

The Proposal

The proposal is to close the primary range Learning Support Class for pupils with Speech and Language Difficulties at Capcoch Primary School.

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

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

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

3. Please indicate who you are (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 5 pm on the 5th January 2015

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate



Consultation on the Proposal to Close the
Key Stage 2 Learning Support Class for Pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties
at Perthcelyn Primary School

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to close the Learning Support Class (LSC) for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties in Perthcelyn Primary School.

Perthcelyn Primary School currently has a Learning Support Class for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties in Key Stage 2. There are currently 7 pupils attending this provision which has a maximum capacity of 10 places in total.

It is proposed that the LSC will close on the 31st August 2016, when there will be only 4 pupils attending this provision. Alternative specialist placements or support packages in a mainstream setting will be identified for the children currently attending the provision.

This consultation report should be read in conjunction with the 'Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes' which provides further information relating to the Local Authority's (LA) plan for implementing changes across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

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

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 10th November 2014 and will be completed at 5pm on 5th January 2015. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in February 2015.

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 will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The statutory notices will be published on the 2nd March 2015 for a one month statutory notice period until the 6th April 2015.

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.

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 28 days of the end of the objection period.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the objection report at the next available Cabinet meeting to determine the outcome of the statutory notice.

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 the 31st of August 2016.

What do you now have to consider?

It is proposed that the Key Stage 2 Learning Support Class for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties in Perthcelyn Primary School will close on the 31st August 2016.

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposed closure of the LSC in Perthcelyn Primary School. 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 the Learning Support Class (Complex Learning Difficulties) at Perthcelyn Primary School.

How do you make your views known?

A consultation questionnaire is attached, and is also available on the Council's internet site at www.rctcbc.gov.uk. The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report to the Council's Cabinet. Schools will also be offered opportunities to consult with pupils and are advised to consult with School Council representatives to seek pupil views. You are also welcome to put your views in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Access and Inclusion Service, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Telephone: (01443) 744364 E-mail: A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk Fax: (01443) 744340

All correspondence should be received no later than 5pm on 5th January 2015

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

As Perthcelyn Primary School is an English medium school and is the only school affected by this proposal 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

On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet considered the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning's Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Approval was given by Cabinet for the proposals to be consulted on in accordance with the new School Organisation Code 2013.

Improving the quality of education and raising standards is one of the Council's key priorities. It is considered that improving standards and educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable learners will improve their life chances, access to the world of work and other education pathways. Ensuring that our provisions are well matched to the needs of learners is central to learners achieving positive outcomes.

Whilst the quality of SEN provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is good, there is a need to modernise and improve the range of SEN provision so as to further enhance opportunities for mainstream inclusion and to further improve outcomes for vulnerable groups of learners.

Information on Perthcelyn Primary School

Perthcelyn Primary School is located at Glamorgan Street, Perthcelyn, Mountain Ash, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school is an English medium provision and is situated in a contemporary style building, in the town of Mountain Ash. It is in excellent repair. The Learning Support Class (LSC) is designated to support 10 primary aged pupils [Key Stage 2] with Complex Learning Difficulties

The pupil numbers and forecast information for Perthcelyn Primary School from 2009-2018 are shown below and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which is undertaken in January each year. The pupil forecasts for Perthcelyn Primary School are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government. 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 capacity separately.

Pupil Numbers and forecast information:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Perthcelyn Primary	143	139	140	130	116	113	114	112	114

Capacity of the school: 151

Nursery places: 21

Please note there are currently 7 pupils attending the Key Stage 2 LSC for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties and 4 at the proposed time of closure.

Perthcelyn Primary School was last inspected by Estyn in November 2010. The inspection gradings are summarised as follows:

Summary	Comment
The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

The overall judgement suggests that Perthcelyn Primary School is a good school. Inspectors reported that "the quality of provision for ALN pupils is good within the mainstream classes and in the ASD and CLD classes." The Local Authority in conjunction with Central South Consortia categorises schools according to their support needs (from A-D, where category A schools require the least amount of support). Perthcelyn Primary School is a category B school.

What is the basis for this proposal?

It is proposed that the Key Stage 2 LSC for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties is closed from the 31st August 2016.

The number of pupils attending this provision has fallen in recent years with 4 pupils projected for the class at the proposed date of closure.

The class at Perthcelyn receives pupils for only Key Stage 2 of primary education. Pupils are usually placed here from other Foundation Phase LSC (Complex Learning Difficulties). This can entail additional transition for our most vulnerable learners at the end of the Foundation Phase. In most cases, the majority of mainstream pupils have the opportunity to remain in the same setting for the full primary phase.

For pupils with significant and complex learning difficulties school based support is provided at Early Years/School Action and Early Years Action Plus/School Action Plus in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN for Wales 2002. For those children and young people with significant SEN in mainstream schools, the delegation of £2.7 million Additional Needs Funding (ANF) to school clusters has enhanced the opportunity for providing additional support at Early Years Action Plus or School Action Plus. Clear threshold criteria have to be met for funding to be agreed and children and young people with Complex Learning Difficulties can access this additional support whilst remaining in their own community school.

Should a RCT pupil with significant complex learning difficulties require a LSC placement, then the LA will seek to place in a specialist provision at a school retaining a Complex Learning Difficulties class or in other appropriate LA specialist provision in accordance with the pupil's primary need. The nearest LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties is in Caradog Primary School which is very close proximity. Transport will be provided for these learners in line with the Learner Travel Policy.

What is the educational case for closing the LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties in Perthcelyn Primary School?

At the proposed date of closure there will be a very small number of pupils [4] in the LSC. This does not provide a viable teaching or social group within the class.

The closure will have no impact on the current school arrangements for SEN.

The advantages of implementing the proposed changes includes:

- greater opportunities for mainstream inclusion in local community schools for pupils with complex learning difficulties
- better targeting of resources for areas of greatest need within the LA
- reduction in surplus places in some specialist provisions whilst enhancing capacity in key areas of SEN
- improved learning provisions which provide better value for money and improved life chances for our most vulnerable learners

Key Stage 2 LSC pupils in this setting do not have continuity in their education as the school does not currently have a Foundation Phase LSC. Where possible, the LA is seeking to establish LSCs which have Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 provision on the same school site to ensure continuity and seamless transition across phase/key stage.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on school pupils?

There will be minimal impact on existing pupils as the LSC would have only 4 pupils requiring a place post closure on the 31st August 2016. Suitable arrangements will be put in place in consultation with all involved to ensure appropriate provision is made. This would involve additional support in a mainstream setting of parental choice, or alternative specialist provision appropriate to individual need (e.g. the LSC in Caradog Primary School which is 5.9 miles distance from the school and Cwmbach Primary School which is 4.7 miles). For the 4 remaining pupils specialist placement will be made in an alternative setting, if still required, this will be following full consultation with parents and relevant professionals to ensure minimum impact on the pupil and their families.

Should there be children or young people with significant learning difficulties in the local community an inclusive education with packages of support in the mainstream setting will be provided whenever possible. Support provided will be from school resources enhanced with Additional Needs Funding and/or specialist support from the Access and Inclusion Service.

Should a local child or young person require a highly specialist placement, provision will be made at an alternative local setting support will be provided to ensure successful transition. This could include the LSCs in Caradog or Cwmbach Primary Schools. Transportation will be provided in line with the Council's policy and placement will be made in the nearest and most appropriate specialist setting.

What is the likely impact of the proposal on the staff of the LSC in Perthcelyn Primary School?

All LSC staff are appointed by the LA and are contracted to work in any appropriate LSC provision. This is subject to the needs of the LA and the skills set of the staff in question. Permanent staff based in this setting will be offered redeployment to an appropriate alternative setting if at all possible. The current teacher is employed on a temporary basis. The proposal will not have any measurable impact on Perthcelyn Primary School.

What are the financial implications of the proposal?

The change suggested will have a positive impact on pupils with SEN in the LA as it will mean that the funding will be re-directed to establish provisions that address growing areas of need. These include learners with complex and diverse needs in early years, Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Communication Disorder (ASD/CD – Foundation Phase to post 16) and Complex Learning Difficulties (Key Stages 3/4).

As there are 7 pupils currently attending this provision, and 4 at the proposed date of closure, 2 of whom will be Year 6 pupils, there will be minimal impact on pupils, transport

costs or school budget. Where the LA maintains a LSC additional funding is delegated to schools.

In the case of Perthcelyn Primary this is £72,894.

The proposal does not involve any transfer or disposal of land. The proposed closure of the class will not impact on overall capacity of Perthcelyn Primary School to deliver an appropriate curriculum.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on Perthcelyn?

This proposal will not have any significant impact on Perthcelyn. There are a low number of pupils currently attending the LSC for Complex Learning Difficulties in Perthcelyn which will reduce further by the date of closure.

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 on request.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

The closure of the LSC class enables the LA to re-direct much needed resources to areas of greater need. Without closing this provision, the LA will not be able to implement the plan for the proposed re-alignment plan for Learning Support Classes across the LA. Implementing this plan will be of benefit to all learners with SEN across RCT and will ensure greater equality and access to specialist provision for pupils with significant SEN.

There is a clear risk that should RCT not re-model its range of SEN provision, some pupils with significant SEN will not have their needs met. This will result in significant disadvantages for certain groups of learners and could result in:

- A reduction in mainstream inclusion opportunities due to insufficient LSC provision in key phases/stages
- Poor educational outcomes due to a mis-match between primary needs and available provision.
- An increase in exclusion and poor attendance due to pupils' SEN not being met, disaffection and disengagement
- An increase in demand for inappropriate requests for special school placements and potential overcrowding in some settings
- An increase in requests for statutory assessments and SEN Tribunals due to parental/carer dissatisfaction with the LA
- Enhanced costs due to increased demands for more highly specialist placements than is required

What alternative options have been considered other than the closure of the LSC in Perthcelyn Primary School?

As the LSC in Perthcelyn Primary School has seen a decreasing number of pupils, and provides places for only part of the full Primary age range, the suggested course of action is the only logical solution.

What is the statutory process to close the LSC?

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 1st October 2013 and applies in respect of all school proposals published by way of a statutory notice after that date. Proposals to close a school have to follow the following process:

1. The Council's Cabinet considers the Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
2. At the start of the consultation period the Council **must** provide consultees with a consultation document and give them at least 42 days in which to respond, with at least 20 of these days being school days. If the Council considers it appropriate meetings are held with stakeholders during the consultation period;
3. Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council's officers own responses is published in a consultation report within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration;
4. The Council's Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 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;
5. Statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The notice **must** be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) in the notice period;
6. If objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 28 days of the end of the objection period;
7. The Council's Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
8. If the proposals receive approval they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date.

Questionnaire

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

Access and Inclusion Service

Ty Trevithick

Abercynon

CF45 4UQ

Or by fax to 01443 744340, or e-mail to A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk

The Proposal

The proposal is to close the Key Stage 2 Learning Support Class for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties at Perthcelyn Primary School

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

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

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

3. Please indicate who you are (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 5 pm on the 5th January 2015

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate



Consultation on the Proposal to Establish a New Key Stage 3/4
Learning Support Class for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in
Pontypridd High School

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to establish a Key Stage 3/4 Learning Support Class (LSC) for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Pontypridd High School.

There is no Learning Support Class currently in Pontypridd High School. It is proposed that a Learning Support Class for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in Key Stage 3/4 is established in September 2015.

This consultation report should be read in conjunction with the 'Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes' which provides further information relating to the Local Authority's (LA) plan for implementing changes across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Body of Pontypridd High Community School
- Pupils of Pontypridd High Community School
- Parents, carers, guardians, and staff members of Pontypridd High Community School
- Other governing bodies of neighbouring Primary Schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Member for the Taff Ely and regional Assembly Members for the area
- Member of Parliament for the Taff Ely area
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- Central South Education Consortium
- South East Wales Transport Association
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The local Communities First Partnership
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on the 10th November 2014 and will be completed at 5pm on 5th January 2015. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in February 2015.

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 will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The statutory notices will be published on the 2nd March 2015 for a one month statutory notice period until the 6th April 2015.

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.

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 28 days of the end of the objection period.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the objection report at the next available Cabinet meeting to determine the outcome of the statutory notice.

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 the 1st of September 2015.

What do you now have to consider?

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposal to establish a Key Stage 3/4 LSC for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Pontypridd High School. 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 establish a Learning Support Class (SEBD) at Pontypridd High School.

How do you make your views known?

A consultation questionnaire is attached, and is also available on the Council's internet site at www.rctcbc.gov.uk. The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report to the Council's Cabinet. Schools will also be offered opportunities to consult with pupils and are advised to consult with School Council representatives to seek pupil views. You are also welcome to put your views in writing to:

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Access and Inclusion Service, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Telephone: (01443) 744364 E-mail: A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk Fax: (01443) 744340

All correspondence should be received no later than 5pm on 5th January 2015

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

As Pontypridd High School is an English medium school and is the only school affected by this proposal 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

On the 18th November 2013 Cabinet considered the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning's Proposed Realignment of Learning Support Classes for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Approval was given by Cabinet for the proposals to be consulted on in accordance with the new School Organisation Code 2013.

Improving the quality of education and raising standards is one of the Council's key priorities. It is considered that improving standards and educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable learners will improve their life chances, access to the world of work and other education pathways. Ensuring that our provisions are well matched to the needs of learners is central to learners achieving positive outcomes.

Whilst the quality of SEN provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is good, there is a need to modernise and improve the range of SEN provision so as to further enhance opportunities for mainstream inclusion and to further improve outcomes for vulnerable groups of learners.

Information on Pontypridd High Community School

Pontypridd High School is located at Albion Community Campus, Clifffynydd, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school is an English medium provision. The school building is in contemporary style, and in good repair.

The pupil numbers and forecast information for Pontypridd High School from 2009-2018 are shown below and are obtained from the statutory annual pupil count (PLASC) which is undertaken in January each year. The pupil forecasts for Pontypridd High Community School are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government.

Pupil Numbers and forecast information:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Pontypridd High School	954	1007	1014	1022	1020	1049	1053	1047	1026

Capacity of the school: 1323

Pontypridd High School was last inspected by Estyn in November 2010. The inspection gradings are summarised as follows:

Key Question	Narrative	Grade
1	How well do learners achieve?	1
2	How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3	How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interest of learners and the wider community?	1

4	How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5	How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6	How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

The overall judgement suggests that Pontypridd High School was an excellent school at the time of the inspection. The report highlights that the school's "established, coherent pastoral structure enables the pastoral team to provide support and guidance of high quality". Provision for pupils with a range of ALN is good. Pupils' behaviour both in and out of classrooms is very good and a significant strength of the school. The Local Authority in conjunction with Central South Consortia categorises schools according to their support needs (from A-D, where category A schools require the least amount of support). Pontypridd High School is a category C school. Pontypridd High School is a Challenge Cymru School.

What is the basis for this proposal?

There are currently 2 LSCs in Key Stage 3/4 for complex learning difficulties in the LA and none for learners with SEBD at KS3/4. This is a priority for development and it is therefore proposed that a class is established in Pontypridd High School for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

It is proposed that the LSC will have places for 10 Key Stage 3/4 pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Placements will be agreed by LA panels. It will be staffed by a Specialist Teacher and two Learning Support Assistants who will be centrally funded.

The LA currently has 5 Key Stage 2 LSCs for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. It is proposed that a Key Stage 3/4 Learning Support Class is established to enable pupils who have coped well in these settings to transition into for Key Stage 3/4. As the LA currently has no mainstream provisions of this nature in Key Stage 3/4 this presents as a gap in existing provision. Currently pupils transition from Key Stage 2 Learning Support Classes into mainstream settings with packages of support or they are placed in a more specialist SEBD setting. Of these pupils, there will undoubtedly be a high number of pupils who would benefit from placement in a LSC for Key Stage 3/4.

Establishing this provision will have a positive impact on the current school arrangements for SEN and this LSC will enhance the range of support available to pupils within the school.

The advantages of implementing the proposed changes includes:

- providing a secure base for vulnerable groups of pupils to access intensive interventions and specialist input to address their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- greater opportunities for mainstream inclusion in local community schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- effective targeting of resources in an area where there is a high level of need and a demand for provision of this nature
- the development of local provision that addresses the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties across primary and secondary settings thus ensuring a seamless transition and continuity in friendship groups

- improved learning provisions which effectively targets needs and improved life chances for our most vulnerable learners

What is the educational case for establishing a Key Stage 3/4 LSC for Complex Learning Needs in Pontypridd High Community School?

The LA is proposing to establish 1 Key Stage 3/4 LSC provision for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. As one out of the five feeder primaries for Pontypridd High School has LSCs for Nurture and SEBD there is a clear local need to establish a provision of this nature in this setting.

Many pupils currently transition into Pontypridd High Community School from LSCs with packages of support in mainstream. Others transition into a more specialist provision context due to the current absence of LSC provision for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in the LA. It is indeed also likely that some of the young people who have transitioned into a special school and pupil referral unit context from a Key Stage 2 provision in the past would not have done so had there been suitable LSC provision in a mainstream setting at Key Stage 3/4 to meet their needs.

Many young people transition into mainstream with packages of support and Pontypridd High School has a long standing track record of successfully including pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in mainstream settings. This will undoubtedly continue but by establishing a LSC for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Pontypridd High School this will enable the LA to meet the needs of learners who would benefit from the intensive support of a LSC alongside more inclusive approaches. In view of the fact that one of Pontypridd High School's feeder primaries have LSCs for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and Nurture, this school is an ideal choice.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on school pupils?

The proposal to open a LSC at Pontypridd High School will provide 10 placements for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in Key Stage 3/4. There will be a significant impact on existing pupils as the LSC will provide a supportive placement for existing pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who require daily access to specialist teaching and intensive interventions. In addition, pupils who will be transferring from local LSCs will be able to transition into a similar provision in Key Stage 3/4 with their peer group if criteria for placement continues to be met. This will enhance a sense of belonging to the local community and minimise the need for travelling to specialist provisions further afield.

The LSCs teacher will also be able to work closely with school staff on improving SEN provision and interventions within the school and will be well placed to provide support and training to mainstream staff. This will have a positive impact on all learners with ALN. Outcomes should be improved as the match between pupils needs and provision will be improved for some of our most vulnerable pupils.

What is the likely impact of the proposal on the staff of Pontypridd High School?

All LSC staff will be appointed by the LA and in conjunction with the school. LSC staff are contracted to work in any appropriate LSC provision and it is likely that the members of staff appointed to the school will be redeployed from an existing LSC provision. The LSC will have a positive impact on staff as children with high levels of SEBD will be able to access specialist provision on site and there will be enhanced staffing available to support LSC pupils in mainstream settings during periods of inclusion. In addition, there will be further expertise in the school in relation to meeting the needs of learners with SEBD. The impact on staff will be a positive one.

What are the financial implications of the proposal?

The LA proposal if agreed will have a positive impact on pupils with SEN across RCT as it will mean that the funding will be re-directed to establish provisions that address growing areas of need. The school will be delegated funding of approximately £100,000 to fund the establishment of the proposed provision. These costs will cover staffing (one Specialist Teacher and two Learning Support Assistants) and capitation.

The proposal does not involve any transfer or disposal of land. The proposed establishment of a class will enhance the overall capacity of Pontypridd High School to deliver an appropriate curriculum as there will be further specialist SEN expertise within the school.

What will be the likely impact of the proposal on Pontypridd High?

Local children will be able to access specialist provision within their local community. There will be less demand for transporting children out of area to receive their education and this should impact positively on the environment. The school will make effective use of any surplus space within the school and develop a resource that will be of benefit to vulnerable children and young people, and their parents/carers.

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 on request.

What are the disadvantages of this proposal?

There are significant advantages to developing this provision and no significant disadvantages. As the school has historically placed children who have transitioned from Key Stage 2 LSC (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) into mainstream it is possible that this will raise parental expectation that their child should be prioritised for placement. It is possible that demand for placements might exceed the number of placements available but this will be managed by the Access and Inclusion Service as they will be responsible to administering all placements in consultation with the school.

There is a clear risk that should this proposal not be agreed that certain groups of learners will be disadvantaged. The lack of appropriate provision for Key Stage 3/4 learners with social, emotional and behavioural needs could result in

- poor educational outcomes due to a mis-match between needs and available provision
- an increase in exclusion and poor attendance due to pupils' SEN not being met, disaffection and disengagement
- an increase in inappropriate requests for special school placements and potential overcrowding in these settings
- an increase in requests for statutory assessments and SEN Tribunals due to parental/carer dissatisfaction with the LA
- enhanced costs due to increased demands for more highly specialist placements than is required.

What alternative options have been considered other than the opening of the LSC in Pontypridd High School?

An alternative secondary school could be approached to establish a provision of this nature. However, Pontypridd High School was selected because of its inclusive practice and success in supporting pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the mainstream. There is sufficient specialist primary provision in the locality to ensure that the secondary provision would be well utilised and it is good practice for children to transition from specialist Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 provisions in the same locality. This ensures continuity in friendships for some of our most vulnerable learners.

Establishing this provision will reduce the demand for special school placements which can then be safeguarded for pupils with greater complexity of need, and medical and physical barriers to learning.

What is the statutory process to open the LSC?

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 1st October 2013 and applies in respect of all school proposals published by way of a statutory notice after that date. Proposals to close a school have to follow the following process:

1. The Council's Cabinet considers the Code and authorises a consultation on the changes to the schools;
2. At the start of the consultation period the Council **must** provide consultees with a consultation document and give them at least 42 days in which to respond, with at least 20 of these days being school days. If the Council considers it appropriate meetings are held with stakeholders during the consultation period;
3. Consultation comments are collated and summarised by the Council. This summary together with the Council's officers own responses is published in a consultation report within 13 weeks of the end of the consultation period and presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration;
4. The Council's Cabinet decide whether to proceed with the changes within 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;
5. Statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The notice **must** be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) in the notice period;
6. If objections are received, the Council **must** publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their responses to them within 28 days of the end of the objection period;
7. The Council's Cabinet must decide to issue its decision on the proposal within 16 weeks of the end of the objection period;
8. If the proposals receive approval they should be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice, or any subsequent modified date.

Questionnaire

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

Access and Inclusion Service

Ty Trevithick

Abercynon

CF45 4UQ

Or by fax to 01443 744340, or e-mail to A&IService@rctcbc.gov.uk

The Proposal

The proposal is to open a Key Stage 3/4 Learning Support Class for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties pupils at Pontypridd High School

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

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

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

3. Please indicate who you are (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 5 pm on the 5th January 2015