

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15

**EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

3rd December 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item 2

**Improving Primary Education
Provision in Wattstown**

Author: Paul Lucas - Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Tel: 01443 424105

1. MEMBERS WILL FIND ENCLOSED:

- A. Copy of the Cabinet Report –(Pgs 3 - 26)**
- B. Copy Decision Notice of Cabinet - (Pgs 27 - 31)**
- C. Copy Extract of Overview and Procedure Rules re: Call-in (Pgs 33 – 37)**
- D. Copy of Prescribed Call-in Form; (Pgs 39 - 40)**

2. PROCEDURE

- 2.1** Each case for Call-in must be considered on its merits and there is no set procedure.
- 2.2** On the 20th November 2014 a meeting of Cabinet was held to consider the report 'Improving Primary Education in Wattstown' (Copy of the report is attached as Appendix A)
- 2.3** The Cabinet decision in respect of Aberllechau Primary School was published on Monday 24th November, 2014. (Copy of the decision is attached as appendix B.)
- 2.4** Rule 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules dealing with call-in is reproduced as Appendix C of this report.
- 2.5** A call-in form was received on 1st December, 2014, which complied with the relevant criteria. (A copy of the Prescribed call in form is attached as Appendix D)

- 2.6 Members will note that the Call-In Provisions were changed at the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2014, to enable any 3 Non-Executive Members (from either (i) at least 2 political groups or (ii) in the case of an unallocated Member(s) – that unallocated Member(s) and a Member(s) from a political group). **Of the three Members making the Call-in, two are Members of the Committee and therefore will be able to vote on the matter.**
- 2.7 The three Members who called in the decision will be invited to address the Committee, on a proposal that the decision relating to Improving Primary Education in Wattstown be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration with regard to the reasons set out in the Notice of the Call In form (as reproduced below)
- Reason for calling in decision: - "The Equality Impact Assessment and other information considered by Cabinet does not fully address issues raised in the consultation such as the impact of employment for parents (and in particular mothers) who might be unable to work due to the extra school distance needed to be travelled and the fact it is a deprived area. Also there does not appear to be any assessment of the impact on Looked After Children?"*
- 2.8 One of the three Members will be given the right to make a final address to the Committee membership immediately before a vote is taken on the proposal.
- 2.9 If the proposal to refer the matter to Cabinet for reconsideration is passed then the matter will be referred: If the proposal is lost then the decision will take effect from the date of this meeting i.e 3rd December 2014.
- 2.10 The relevant Cabinet portfolio holder will be invited to the meeting to answer any questions Members of the Committee may have with regards to the subject matter of the call in.

3. **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Committee adopt the procedure for the conduct of the meeting set out in paragraphs 2.7.and 2.8 above.

Appendix A

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2014

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Authors: Chris Bradshaw, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, tel 01443 744001, and Julie Hadley, Head of School Organisation, Planning and Governance tel: 01443 744227.

IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN WATTSTOWN

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise Members of the outcome of the recent publication of a statutory notice in respect of proposals to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer its pupils to Pontygwaith Primary School.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:-

- 2.1 Note that 24 statutory objections have been received by the published closing date in respect of the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer its education provision to Pontygwaith Primary School.
- 2.2 Agree to close Aberllechau Primary School on 31 December 2014 and transfer the pupils and the Learning Support Class to Pontygwaith Primary School.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 23rd September 2014, approval was given for the publication of a Statutory Notice to progress this proposal to the next stage. The Notice was published, as required by law, on 3rd October 2014 and the 28 day statutory period to receive objections subsequently ended on 30th October 2014.
- 3.2 The new School Organisation Code, which was introduced by Welsh Government legislation in July 2013 now requires local authorities to produce an Objections Report at the conclusion of the statutory notice period outlined above. This report must be published within 28 days of

the conclusion of the objection period and should outline the LA's responses to any objections received. These objections should then be considered by Cabinet when making their final decision as to whether to implement a statutory proposal, or not.

- 3.3 In the case of the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School, 24 objections were received as a consequence of the publication of the Statutory Notice. These objections have been appropriately responded to at length in the attached Objections Report, which was published on 13th November 2014, within the 28 day period indicated above.

4. HIGHWAYS ISSUES / CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 One of the key issues raised during the initial consultation process and included in the objections received was concerns about the safety of the walking route between Wattstown and Pontygwaith.

- 4.2 As part of the consultation process, the Council's Highways team undertook detailed assessments of the walking route and traffic patterns between the communities of Wattstown and Pontygwaith. Whilst this work concluded that the route should be classed as "available" and suitable for use, it was also used to determine whether improvements could be introduced that would enhance road safety.

- 4.3 The proposed improvements identified are as follows:-

- Two raised Zebra crossings with associated build outs and street furniture located along Margaret Street/Aberllechau Road.
- Appropriate traffic signs (including 2 vehicle activated signs) and road markings to compliment the above.
- Introduction of a 20mph speed limit along Madeline Street, in proximity to Pontygwaith Primary School.
- Informal pedestrian crossings – through the use of dropped kerbs.

- 4.4 At the open evening held on 30th June at Pontygwaith Primary, plans of these proposed improvements were displayed and LA officers were available to explain them in detail to any person who required this information.

- 4.5 Despite claims made that children will have to walk two miles, the accurately recorded walking distance from the outer limit of the catchment area to Pontygwaith Primary School is 1.37 miles; the distance between the two school sites is exactly 1 mile.

- 4.6 Where children are not eligible for home to school transport, it is the responsibility of parents to determine how children travel to school and what mode of transport is to be used; it is also the responsibility of parents to provide adequate and appropriate supervision as they see fit.
- 4.7 The aforementioned distance of 1.37 miles is below the limit at which this LA currently provides transport for Primary aged pupils, i.e. 1.5 miles and well within the limit provided for by legislation, namely 2 miles. There are many other examples of Primary schools in RCT where pupils have to travel similar distances to school; there are no recorded issues with either attendance or punctuality at these schools.
- 4.8 There is also a regular public bus service operating between the two communities.
- 4.9 The timescales for completing the highways improvements outlined above are short and with the risk of inclement weather there is a risk that all the road safety improvements required by the start of the new term on 5th January 2015 may not be completed. If this does occur, the Council will commit to install temporary traffic measures such as road-crossings and to provide appropriate levels of support to establish a “walking bus” in conjunction with the community to escort those pupils who wish to walk to and from Pontygwaith Primary School each day. It is proposed that support for this “walking bus” will continue until the Easter holidays when the community will take responsibility for organising the “walking bus”.

5 ESTYN REVISIT TO THE SCHOOL

- 5.1 In October 2014, Estyn visited Aberllechau Primary School to monitor the progress made since the Section 28 inspection in March 2014, when the School was placed in a category of requiring special measures. On 10th November 2014, Estyn wrote to the Chair of Governors of Aberllechau Primary School recognising the progress made, in particular in improving the quality of teaching, but has retained the School in the category of requiring special measures.
- 5.2 Subject to the decision of Cabinet, Estyn will revisit the School in three months from the date of the letter. A copy of the letter and follow up report from Estyn is appended to this report.
- 5.3 The good progress made by the School reflects well on the hard work of the Acting Headteacher and her staff and the support provided by the Council and Consortium. The staffing arrangements are currently temporary with two teachers seconded from other schools. In 2010 after the previous inspection, the School was in the same position, where the School improved after considerable support but once the support stopped the educational standards slipped. With small cohorts

and few teachers, consistently maintaining a high quality provision is difficult

6. SUMMARY

- 6.1 Elected Members are therefore requested to note the objections received in respect of this proposal and to confirm that the proposal, to close Aberllechau Primary School on 31st December 2014, with the pupils, including the Learning Support Class, transferring to Pontygwaith Primary School should be implemented as outlined.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OBJECTION REPORT

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

1. Purpose of the Objection Report

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 006/2013. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the publication of the statutory notice, which was published on 3rd October 2014 for a period of 28 days and to detail all objections received and the local authority's response to them.

2. The Statutory Notice

The Statutory Notice to progress this proposal, which was published on 3rd October 2014 is reproduced below:

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education Directorate, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon CF45 4UQ

Notice is given in accordance with sections 42 and 43 of the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, having consulted such persons as required, propose to discontinue Aberllechau Primary School, Victoria Terrace, Wattstown, Porth CF39 0PF. The school is currently maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

A prescribed alteration is also proposed to Pontygwaith Primary School, Graig Street, Pontygwaith CF43 3LY, with the creation of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) class at the school. This is the class currently accommodated at Aberllechau Primary School, which will transfer to Pontygwaith with the mainstream school provision. Transport will be provided to pupils attending this class in line with the Council's Transport Policy.

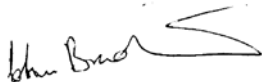
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and the views of Estyn is available on the Council's website at www.rctcbc.gov.uk.

It is proposed to implement the proposals on 1st January 2015.

It is proposed that pupils currently attending Aberllechau Primary School should transfer to Pontygwaith Primary School, on 1st January 2015, subject to parental preference. This school is an English Medium Community Primary School. No interim arrangements will be required as the school will be ready to receive the pupils on the aforementioned date.

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with the Council's Transport Policy. At present, the Council provides free transport for pupils who attend their relevant Primary, Infant or Junior School, if they reside beyond 1 ½ miles walking distance to that school. The relevant school is the catchment school or the nearest school. It must be noted that no address within the new catchment area of Pontygwaith Primary School (incorporating the former catchment area of Aberllechau Primary) will be more than 1 ½ miles from the school.

Within a period of 28 days after the publication of these proposals, that is to say by 30th October 2014 any person may object to the proposals. Objections should be sent to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, School Planning Section, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash CF45 4UQ, e-mail schoolplanning@rctednet.net.



Signed: _____

Chris Bradshaw
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Date: 3rd October, 2014

Explanatory Note of the Proposals

It is proposed to close Aberllechau Primary School on 1st January 2015, with its pupils transferring to Pontygwaith Primary School on this date, subject to parental preference. No actual modifications are required to the Pontygwaith Primary building as it is sufficiently large enough to accommodate all pupils who require a place. Works to improve the safety of the walking route between the two schools will be undertaken.

3. Details of Objections Received

A total of 24 objections were received by the close of the objection period, which was at 5 pm on Thursday, 30th October 2014. The objections were received from:

- 7 parents
- 14 local residents
- A former pupil (attended the school in the 1950's)
- The Chair of Governors/Vice Chair of the local Community Centre (2 separate objections submitted)

4. Summary of Responses to the Objections

The objections received are reproduced below with appropriate responses:

- **Lack of support provided by the local authority; support provided should have been made earlier**

School improvement is the responsibility of the school, its headteacher and governing body. The Council and Consortium have provided significant levels of support, but it is not the Council's or the Consortium's role to undertake the

work of the Headteacher and the staff. Governors also have a role to play through learning walks, visits to the School and seeking the views of pupils. It is also important to recognise that although the School is a small school, the Headteacher had an actual teaching commitment of only half a day. This in itself should have provided sufficient school improvement capacity.

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

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

Given the decline in performance, in September 2013 the Headteacher and Chair of Governors met the Director of Education to discuss the performance of the School and what we needed to do to address the decline. A statement of action setting out the planned response was agreed between the Headteacher and Systems Leader.

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

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

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

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

In addition, the Systems Leader for the Central South Consortium presented the Governing Body with the Annual Performance Report for the school in the Autumn Term of 2013, well before the inspection which took place in March 2014. The overall grading given to the school was a D, the lowest rating possible. Governors would have been fully aware of this situation long before Estyn inspected the school.

- **Educational standards at Aberllechau are good**

The outcome of the inspection undertaken by Estyn in March 2014 deemed the school to be in need of special measures. This is the first school in Rhondda Cynon Taf to be placed in to this category immediately following an inspection. Furthermore, the last statement in Estyn's report states that:

"the school provides unsatisfactory value for money".

Please also refer to the performance data produced overleaf.

- **Classes at Pontygwaith will be much bigger**

This will not be the case. All classes in the Foundation Phase at all schools in Wales are limited to 30 pupils or less by law; at Key Stage 2 this is a strong recommendation. Classes in Pontygwaith will be compliant with the law and they will not be larger than those currently at Aberllechau, there will be more classes. Currently, pupils are taught in mixed age groups. If the proposal proceeds, Pontygwaith Primary School will have greater than 170 pupils of statutory school age (excluding the SEN class) which will equate to 6 teachers for 7 age groups. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be taught in their own age group, which makes it considerably easier for the class teacher to provide an appropriate curriculum and support for all pupils. This should result in higher standards of teaching and learning and better educational outcomes.

- **Standards at Pontygwaith are lower than at Aberllechau; also standards at Aberllechau are improving**

Performance data does not show this to be the case, please see the tables denoting the published key performance indicators below:

School	FP Indicator 2012/13	FP Indicator 2013/14	Key Stage 2 CSI 2012/13	Key Stage 2 CSI 2013/14
Aberllechau	72.73%	71.43%	54.55%	60%
Pontygwaith	68.75%	77.78%	63.64%	70%

FP – Foundation Phase CSI – Core Subject Indicator

School	LLC 2012/13	LLC 2013/14	MD 2012/13	MD 2013/14	PSD 2012/13	PSD 2013/14
Aberllechau	72.73%	71.43%	90.91%	71.43%	90.91%	71.43%
Pontygwaith	68.75%	77.78%	75%	77.78%	68.75%	88.89%

*LLC – Language, Literacy and Communication MD – Mathematical Development
PSD – Personal, Social Development, Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity*

In all cases bar one, performance at Aberllechau has fallen between 2013 and 2014. All performance indicators for Pontygwaith have increased during the same period and all exceed Aberllechau in 2014.

- **Loss of the specialist SEN facility**

As clearly indicated during consultation and as stated in the statutory notice, this central LA provision will transfer to Pontygwaith Primary School. All staff employed within this class will automatically transfer also, along with the children.

- **Staff will lose their jobs**

The Council has robust HR procedures in place that will ensure that all staff are supported and assisted in securing alternative employment, if that is their wish as far as is practically possible, including identifying potential retirees in other schools that would allow the staff to remain in employment. HR officers, at the request of the staff themselves have already been to the school and this process has been discussed at length with the staff, should the decision

to close proceed. There will be opportunities available at Pontygwaith due to the additional children who will be attending this school and officers will work with the governing body to ensure that Aberllechau staff are given priority consideration for these posts.

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

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

Despite claims made that children will have to walk two miles, the accurately recorded walking distance from the address in the community of Wattstown that is at the outer limit of the catchment area to Pontygwaith Primary School is 1.37 miles; the distance between the two school sites is exactly 1 mile. Where children are not eligible for home to school transport, it is the full responsibility of parents to determine how children travel to school and what mode of transport is to be used; it is also the responsibility of parents to provide adequate and appropriate supervision as they see fit. This distance is within the limit at which this LA currently provides transport for Primary aged pupils, i.e. 1.5 miles and well within the limit provided for by legislation, namely 2 miles. There are many other examples of Primary schools in RCT where pupils have to travel similar distances to school; there are no recorded issues with either attendance or punctuality at these schools.

There is also a regular public bus service operating between the two communities.

- **House prices will fall**

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

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

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

There is also no documented evidence that parents will have to give up employment, nor is there any that indicates that local shops and businesses will suffer. This has not occurred on any previous occasion where a small school has closed and children have transferred to an alternative school that is located just one mile away.

- **Timing of the closure**

Although closing a school during an academic year is never ideal, this is being considered in this case due to the exceptionally poor standards of provision at Aberllechau, as evidenced in the Estyn report. The LA will ensure that appropriate transition and additional support is put in place for all children who will transfer schools, to assist the transfer and to ensure that no child is disadvantaged educationally.

- **No Community Impact Assessment was undertaken**

This statement is untrue. This assessment was undertaken using the guidelines laid down by the Welsh Government in their statutory School Organisation Code, document 006/2013, Annex D. The availability of this assessment was outlined in the original consultation document, in addition it was appended to the report presented to Cabinet on 23rd September 2014 (Appendix 2) which is publicly available on the Council's website.

In addition to the above, the following statements are placed on record:

- Flying Start provision will continue to be made in the community of Wattstown
- It is not the responsibility of the local authority to determine the reasons why pupil numbers at any school have fallen, this is purely as a consequence of parents expressing their right of preference.

5. Conclusion

All objections received were reported to the meeting of the Council's Cabinet held on 20th November 2014. The recommendation made to Elected Members was that the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School should be implemented, with effect from 31st December 2014.

Garry Williams
Chair of Governors
Aberllechau Primary School
Victoria Terrace,
Wattstown,
Porth,
RCT,
CF39 0PF

10 November 2014

Dear Mr Williams

Aberllechau Primary School

Schools requiring special measures following Section 28 inspection

As you know, a team of inspectors, led by Susan Davies, HMI, visited your school recently in order to monitor the progress made since the Section 28 inspection in March 2014.

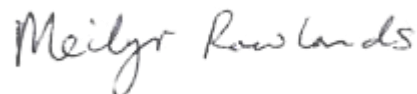
Outcome of inspection

I consider that this school should remain on the list of schools requiring special measures. Estyn will re-visit in about three months.

In order that further progress can be made, I have enclosed a written summary of the findings.

I am copying this letter to Rachel Evans, the acting headteacher, to Christopher Bradshaw, the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, and to the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely



Meilyr Rowlands
Strategic Director

cc the headteacher
cc the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning for Rhondda Cynon Taf County
Borough Council
cc Claire Rundle, Welsh Government



**Report of visit
Level of follow-up: special measures**

**Aberllechau Primary School
Victoria Terrace
Wattstown
Porth
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF39 0PF**

Date of visit: October 2014

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

© Crown Copyright 2014: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

The monitoring team

Susan Davies	Reporting Inspector
Kevin Davies	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring visit

Aberllechau Primary School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in March 2014.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is maintaining the level of follow-up activity.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school in about three months' time to inspect progress against the recommendations.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve pupils' standards in reading, writing and science

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

There is now more explicit teaching and systematic planning for the development of pupils' reading and writing skills across the school. This is beginning to support pupils' application of these skills across a broad range of experiences well.

Standards in writing are improving across the school due to a number of well-planned initiatives. There is a whole-school focus on improving opportunities for pupils to engage in writing in a range of contexts across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils have improved their writing skills. However, opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes are limited to a narrow focus of subjects at present as teachers' confidence in planning for a range of genres grows.

Many Foundation Phase pupils produce short pieces of independent writing.

They generally use their phonic knowledge to spell commonly used words correctly and are beginning to use basic punctuation suitably. Many key stage 2 pupils are beginning to write at length in a range of genres and writing styles. For example, pupils used their drafting and redrafting skills well in their recent letter to world leaders. However, this is at an early stage of development and older pupils that are more able do not always have suitable opportunities to write at length for a range of audiences using paragraphs and an extended range of interesting vocabulary. The quality of spelling, punctuation, presentation and the content of written work have steadily improved. Most pupils show great pride in their work.

Regular guided reading sessions and the support of parents has a positive impact on pupils' attitude to reading. The school's most recent reading data shows that many pupils have made improvements in recent months. As a result, a majority of pupils now have a reading age in-line with or just below their chronological age. A few pupils that are more able are reading above their chronological age.

Many Foundation Phase pupils read accurately, with suitable expression and understanding. They use phonic strategies to help them attempt unfamiliar words well. Most pupils are aware of basic punctuation and a few pupils understand the purpose of speech marks and punctuation marks. By the end of key stage 2, many

pupils read clearly and with understanding. However, only a few pupils read with appropriate expression and fluency. A majority of older pupils are beginning to show a suitable understanding of higher order reading skills. Guided reading sessions are supporting pupils' skimming and scanning for information skills well. Most pupils across the school enjoy reading and a few pupils can talk enthusiastically about their books and favourite authors.

The school's new science scheme of work is beginning to have a positive impact on improving pupils' science skills. There is an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and investigation skills and develop their scientific vocabulary. For example, when older pupils discuss and investigate the properties of materials. A majority of older pupils are beginning to use numeracy and problem solving skills effectively in science lessons. For example, they are able to plot their results on a line graph accurately following an investigation on which soils are the most permeable.

Recommendation 2: Improve pupils' skills in numeracy and ICT

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Following the inspection the school is focusing on raising standards in mathematics, through good quality focused teaching and raising teacher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have begun to carry out lesson observations and to model effective teaching to support staff in identifying the links to numeracy within other subjects. Current work in books and from lesson observations indicates that standards are improving.

The school is placing a strong emphasis on pupils' understanding of mathematical language. Teachers support this well through daily mental mathematics sessions and all staff model correct mathematical terminology consistently. Teachers in the Foundation Phase, use the outdoor learning environment well to develop appropriate numeracy skills. For example, most pupils can sort man-made and natural materials outside by one or more criteria and can move forwards and backwards along a number line to 10 painted on the yard, counting accurately.

The school has reviewed its topic planning to ensure that pupils have plenty of meaningful opportunities to practise and consolidate their numeracy skills across the curriculum. Leaders and teachers have mapped this planning carefully against the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework to ensure that pupils develop their numeracy skills year on year, building on prior learning experiences appropriately. The level of challenge in cross-curricular numeracy tasks is suitable.

The use of numeracy skills ladders is starting to support older pupils in developing their mental calculation strategies appropriately. This is allowing them to approach problem-solving and investigative activities more confidently. Pupils' data handling and measuring skills are developing appropriately. For example, key stage 2 pupils can plot results from a science investigation on which soil is the most permeable, onto a line graph accurately, with appropriately labelled axes and a suitable scale applied. Many older key stage 2 pupils are beginning to show evidence of using and applying their knowledge of place value to order dates in chronological order

correctly. Tasks set are developing pupils' independent application of numeracy skills in work across the curriculum effectively. However, this is at an early stage of development and as a result, only a minority of pupils can explain their methods clearly.

Teacher's planning for information and communication technology skills (ICT) is very comprehensive. It promotes a broader coverage of the full range of ICT skills across other subjects appropriately. For example, most key stage 2 pupils can create and present information, using images, graphs, and use word processing skills well to produce an information leaflet about World War 1. Standards in ICT are improving since the last inspection. However, pupils have limited access to a range of reliable ICT resources, which limits their opportunities to practise their skills regularly.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that learning experiences are progressive and meet all learners' needs

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has revised its planning of the curriculum. It is now broad and balanced and learning experiences are more progressive and meet the needs of all learners more effectively. Teachers make good use of a topic-based approach to support and develop pupils' skills across the curriculum. The choice of topics engages nearly all pupils in their learning. Long and short term planning focuses appropriately on the development of the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, the school's focus for improvement is on raising pupils' reading and writing skills. This is beginning to impact well on pupil outcomes.

Teaching plans across the school now include suitably differentiated activities that ensure progression, continuity and a more consistent application of skills across the curriculum. Weekly planning contains more relevant detail about what levels different groups of learners will work to and includes activities to meet the needs of all learners more effectively.

The recent use an electronic system to record and analyse pupil progress is helping teachers to use these outcomes well in order to identify pupils' individual learning needs and to inform future planning appropriately. However, this is a very recent development and is yet to fully impact on pupil outcomes. Teachers' adaptation of work in lessons to extend and challenge more able pupils is developing well. This is beginning to have a significant impact on the quality of written work in particular.

Recommendation 4: Improve the quality and consistency of teaching

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Since the inspection, the acting headteacher has involved all senior leaders and the local authority in reviewing teaching strategies across the school and observing lessons. As a result, leaders have a very clear picture of standards of teaching across the school. The new teaching and learning policy ensures all staff have a clear understanding of what good quality teaching should be. Teachers make good use of opportunities to share good practice within their own school. This is having a

positive impact on the standards and levels of consistency in the teaching observed. There are good working relationships between teachers, classroom assistants and pupils and these promote a supportive and engaging learning environment. Teachers provide classroom assistants with clear guidance for supporting pupils during focused tasks.

Nearly all lessons are well-planned and proceed with appropriate pace. All teachers share the learning objective and success criteria effectively. They explain what the pupils need to do clearly and use a range of assessment for learning activities, such as talking partners and thumbs up, to check pupils' understanding. In most lessons, the introduction is lively and direct teaching engages the interest of most learners. Senior leaders provide effective support to teachers in planning and delivering tasks suited to pupils' ages and abilities. The school has improved its monitoring procedures to ensure that teachers plan effectively for different groups of pupils, build on prior knowledge and match tasks to pupils' abilities more appropriately.

Teachers set regular challenges in all classes to extend pupils' learning, particularly in key stage 2. This is of particular benefit to more able pupils.

Nearly all teachers demonstrate suitable subject knowledge and are good language role models. They are developing high expectations concerning pupil behaviour, the presentation of work and what pupils can achieve. This is having a positive impact on raising pupils' standards.

Recommendation 5: Improve assessment of and assessment for learning

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Teachers across the school mark pupils work on a regular basis and provide pupils with appropriate written and oral feedback. As a result, many pupils' knowledge of what they need to do next in order to improve is developing well. In lessons, pupils receive useful ongoing feedback and positive praise. This engages and motivates pupils well. The introduction of skill ladders in literacy and numeracy is enabling pupils to peer and self-assess more meaningfully. However, this is at an early stage of development and has not yet had time to fully impact on pupil standards.

The school collects a wide range of data on pupils' progress. Leaders are beginning to analyse performance data to raise pupils' outcomes and to challenge underperformance. Regular pupil performance review meetings enables leaders and teachers to agree on the next steps for groups of pupils based on this analysis. As a result, they now have a better understanding of the progress pupils make over their time at the school and are setting clearer targets for improvement.

Teachers are more able to tailor lessons and activities to cater for the needs of pupils of different abilities more appropriately. However, senior management currently takes the lead roles in assessment of learning in relation to using data to inform future planning and to pupil progress at a cohort, group and individual level. Teachers are becoming more confident in looking at accurately assessing pupil progress within their class but this is at an early stage of development.

The school has developed appropriate procedures to standardise and moderate pupils' work at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. As a result, the work of levelling pupils' attainment is more accurate.

Recommendation 6: Stabilise the teaching team in order to provide continuity for pupils

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Under the current uncertainty regarding its' future, the school has addressed this recommendation to the best of its ability. There is now a more stable teaching team in place, which will remain in place until the future of the school is decided.

There is an acting headteacher, a seconded deputy head teacher, a permanent member of staff and a long- term supply teacher in place. This replaces the previous high turnover of teaching staff and gives greater stability for pupils and a more consistent approach to the presentation of work, planning approaches and teacher expectations. This is beginning to impact positively on raising pupils' standards and improving their wellbeing.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that rigorous monitoring by leaders at all levels results in improvements to pupils' outcomes

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The school has put in place more robust systems to gather a suitable range of first-hand evidence to give leaders a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders and teachers analyse tracking data in detail, review work in pupils' books and undertake lesson observations regularly. Teachers share monitoring findings at staff meetings and any areas for development inform staff training needs well.

Leaders share these reports and updates with governors appropriately and governors undertake 'Learning Walks' around the school regularly. This is giving the governing body a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and supporting their role as a 'critical friend' appropriately. Performance data is analysed accurately and honestly and leaders observe teaching and talk to pupils about their work on a regular basis. However, as this process is relatively new the self-evaluation process and monitoring systems are only just beginning to improve outcomes for pupils and to inform the school's provision appropriately. Whilst the head teacher is very adept at using performance data at a range of levels to inform areas for improvement and accurately measure pupil progress, teachers are just beginning to be confident to use this tracking data to inform future planning.

Leaders timetable regular monitoring of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy skills, which informs future planning and helps to identify pupils in need of additional support effectively. This is helping to raise standards in pupil's reading, writing and numeracy skills in particular. All staff have clearly identified roles and responsibilities for monitoring specific curriculum areas and are allocated time and support to

undertake these roles. As a result, monitoring reports are beginning to inform school self- evaluation processes and school improvement appropriately. However, the headteacher takes the lead role in producing and analysing these reports and any relevant data at present. Teachers are developing more confidence in undertaking this task and over time will take more of a lead role in this.

Evidence from book scrutiny, analysis of current data and lesson observations undertaken during this visit confirm this programme of more robust self-evaluation is starting to lead to an improvement in pupils' standards, levels of wellbeing and informing improved provision across nearly all curricular areas.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.

Appendix B



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

DECISION MADE BY: Cabinet DATE DECISION MADE: 20th November, 2014

Agenda Item 7

SUBJECT:

Improving Primary Education Provision in Wattstown

**Cabinet Members Present
County Borough Councillors:**

A.Morgan (Chairman), P.Cannon, R.Bevan, A.Crimmings, M.Forey,
E.Hanagan, G.Hopkins, K.Montague and M.Webber

**Other Members in Attendance
County Borough Councillors:**

C.Davies, L.Langford and E.Webster

1. DECISION MADE:

Agreed –

- To note the 24 statutory objections that have been received by the published closing date in respect of the proposal to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer its education provision to Pontygwaith Primary School.
- To close Aberllechau Primary School on the 31st December, 2014 and transfer the pupils and the Learning Support Class to Pontygwaith Primary School.

Note: With the permission of the Chairman, County Borough Councillor L.Langford spoke on this item and raised concerns about the closure of the school and the effects on the Community.

2. REASON FOR THE DECISION BEING MADE:

- The need to advise Members of the outcome of the recent publication of a statutory notice in respect of proposals to close Aberllechau Primary School and transfer pupils to Pontygwaith Primary School.

3. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO DECISION BEING MADE:

- Report to Cabinet – 23rd September, 2014.
- Statutory Notice to progress the proposal to progress to the next stage was published on 3rd October, 2014 and the 28 day statutory period to receive objections ended on 30th October, 2014.

4. PERSONAL INTERESTS DECLARED:

- In accordance with the Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor R.Bevan declared a personal and prejudicial interest – “I am a Governor of Pontygwaith Primary School which would be the receiving school if it was decided to close Aberllechau Primary” Councillor Bevan left the meeting when the matter was discussed and voted upon.

5. DISPENSATION TO SPEAK (AS GRANTED BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE):

N/A

6. (a) IS THE DECISION URGENT AND NOT TO BE THE SUBJECT OF ANY CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

YES NO ✓

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 5 clear working days after its publication i.e. **Wednesday, 3rd December, 2014** to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

6. (b) IF YES, REASONS WHY IN THE OPINION OF THE DECISION-MAKER THE DECISION IS URGENT:

N/A

6. (c) SIGNATURE OF MAYOR OR DEPUTY MAYOR OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE CONFIRMING AGREEMENT THAT THE PROPOSED DECISION IS REASONABLE IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR IT BEING TREATED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 17.2:

N/A

.....
(Mayor)

.....
(Dated)



.....
(Proper Officer)

24th November, 2014.....
(Dated)

Appendix C

17. Call-In

17.1 Rules

- (a) Where a decision is made by the Cabinet, an individual Member of the Cabinet or a Committee of the Cabinet or an Area Committee or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published by the Proper Officer, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within 2 clear working days of it being made. All Members of the Council will be sent copies of the records of all such decisions within the same time scale, by the person responsible for publishing the decision.
- (b) That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 clear working days after the publication of the decision, unless the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Service Scrutiny Committees objects to it and calls it in for review.
- (c) During that period the Monitoring Officer shall call-in a decision for scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Service Scrutiny Committee if so requested in the specified format by any 3 Non-Executive Members and, shall then notify the decision taker of the call-in. He/she shall convene a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or relevant Service Scrutiny Committee on such a date as he/she may determine, where possible after consultation with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or relevant Service Scrutiny Committee, and in any case the meeting will be held within 5 clear working days of the decision to call-in (only in exceptional circumstances will the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or relevant Service Scrutiny Committee consider extending this time limit).
- (d) As soon as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny or Service Scrutiny Committee signs a call-in form he/she shall cease to be the Chair for all purposes for the duration of the call-in process. If this situation arises then for the purposes of these Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules references to 'Chair' of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Service Scrutiny Committee should be read as a reference to the 'Vice-Chair' of that Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Service Scrutiny Committee.
- (e) If, having considered the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or relevant Service Scrutiny Committee is still concerned about it, then it may refer it back to the decision making body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or refer the matter to full Council. If referred to the decision maker they shall then reconsider within a further 5 clear working days, amending the decision or not,

before adopting a final decision.

- (f) If following an objection to the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or relevant Service Scrutiny Committee does not meet within the period set out above, or does meet but does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body, the decision shall take effect on the date of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or relevant Service Scrutiny Committee meeting, or the expiry of that further 5 clear working day period, which ever is the earlier.
- (g) If the matter was referred to full Council and the Council does not object to a decision which has been made, then no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective in accordance with the provision below. However, if the Council does object, the Council will refer any decisions to which it objects back to the decision making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Cabinet as a whole, or a Committee of it, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within 5 clear working days of the Council's request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within 5 clear working days of the Council's request.
- (h) If the Council does not meet, or if it does but does not refer the decision back to the decision making body or person, the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting or expiry of the period in which the Council meeting should have been held, whichever is earlier.
- (i) In order to ensure the call-in is not abused, nor causes unreasonable delay, certain limitations are to be placed on its use. These are:
 - (i) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and each of the Service Scrutiny Committees may only call-in a total of 3 decisions per 2 month period;
 - (ii) any 3 Non-Executive Members (from either (i) at least 2 political groups or (ii) in the case of an unallocated Member(s) – that unallocated Member(s) and a Member(s) from a political group) are needed for a decision to be called in;
 - (iii) once a Member has signed a request for call-in under paragraph 17 (call-in) above, he/she may not do so again until the period of 2 months has expired.
 - (iv) No Education Co-opted Members may report a decision be called in.
- (j) The Monitoring Officer may veto any request for call-in if it falls

outside the remit of this scheme.

- (k) Save in exceptional circumstances all Members requesting a matter be called in must attend the meeting at which the matter is being considered.

17.1A Reference to a 'clear working day' in these Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules is defined as the following:-

A complete period of 24 hours (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays), beginning and ending at midnight on the day in question.

Therefore, by way of example, for the purposes of these call-in rules it shall exclude the day on which the relevant Cabinet decision notice is published and the day on which the call-in meeting is held.

17.2 **Call-In and Urgency**

- (a) The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Cabinet is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would, for example, seriously prejudice the Council's or other public interests. The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public, shall state whether in the opinion of the decision making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in. The Mayor must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. In the absence of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor's consent shall be required. In the absence of both, the Head of Paid Service or his/her nominee's consent should be required. Decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported at the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.
- (b) The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually and a report submitted to Council with proposals for review if necessary.

Appendix D

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES – RULE 17**

SCRUTINY CALL IN FORM

THIS FORM MUST:

- (A) BE SIGNED BY AT LEAST THREE MEMBERS FROM AT LEAST TWO DIFFERENT POLITICAL GROUPS
- (B) BE DELIVERED TO PJ LUCAS, THE MONITORING OFFICER, THE PAVILIONS, CAMBRIAN PARK, CLYDACH VALE, CF40 2XX OR SENT BY FAX TO (01443) 424114 WITHIN THE TIMESCALE NOTIFIED WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION

DETAILS OF DECISION


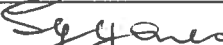

Decision of Cabinet/Cabinet Member/Other (Please delete as appropriate)

Date of Publication of decision:..... 24.11.14

Subject of Decision IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN WATTSTOWN.

Decision Called in (Please quote from the record of decision)

TO CLOSE ABERLLECHAU PRIMARY SCHOOL ON THE 31.12.14 AND TRANSFER THE PUPILS AND THE LEARNING SUPPORT CLASS TO PONTYGWAITH PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Reason for calling in decision		
THE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND OTHER INFORMATION CONSIDERED BY CABINET DOES NOT FULLY ADDRESS ISSUES RAISED IN THE CONSULTATION SUCH AS THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PARENTS (AND IN PARTICULAR MOTHERS) WHO MIGHT BE UNABLE TO WORK DUE TO THE EXTRA SCHOOL DISTANCE NEEDED TO BE TRAVELLED & THE FACT IT IS A DEPRIVED AREA. ALSO THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY ASSESSMENT		
Names	Signature	Group
LEWIS M. ADAMS		LABOUR
SYWIA J JONES		LABOUR
PAUL BACCARA		INDEPENDENT

OF THE IMPACT ON L.A.C?

Date:..... 01.12.14

For Office use only by the Monitoring Officer

1.12.14

Date & Time of Receipt... 10.53am Officer Receiving... K.M. Jones

To be submitted to Scrutiny Committee.....

Decision of Scrutiny Committee.....