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**EQUITY** AND **EXCELLENCE** IN **EDUCATION** AND **ENHANCED WELLBEING** FOR ALL

**CONSULTATION RESPONSE REPORT  
ON THE PROPOSALS  
TO ENHANCE ADDITIONAL LEARNING  
NEEDS MAINSTREAM LEARNING  
SUPPORT CLASS PROVISION WITHIN  
RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

# Consultation Report

**Overarching Proposal: To enhance Additional Learning Needs (ALN) mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf.**

## 1. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the consultation held during the period 30<sup>th</sup> September and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 between all stakeholders and interested parties listed below.

## 2. Who did we consult?

A copy of a consultation document which fully outlined and explained our proposal was sent to the following stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council website at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

- The Governing Bodies, parents/carers and staff of the respective schools.
- Governing Bodies, parents/carers of pupils attending primary schools within the catchment area of the proposed host secondary school
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- The Governing Body of Coleg Y Cymoedd
- The Governing Body of the University of South Wales
- Welsh Ministers including Welsh Minister for Education and Skills
- Menter Iaith
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Flourish Cymru
- Assembly Members and members of Parliament for all constituencies and regional areas serving Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Estyn
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Local Health Board
- Teaching and Support staff trade unions
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- South East Wales Transport Association
- The local Communities First Partnerships
- The Welsh Language Commissioner
- Neighbouring local authorities
- SNAP Cymru

### 3. What did we consult on?

The proposals consulted on included:

#### Developing new LSC provisions

It was proposed that the following LSCs are established from September 2025:

- **Proposal 1:** One Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Cwmaman Primary School.
- **Proposal 2:** One Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Penyreglyn Primary School.
- **Proposal 3:** One LSC for pupils in Reception – Year 2 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Hirwaun Primary School.
- **Proposal 4:** One Complex Learning Difficulties LSC provision for pupils in Years 7–11 at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.

#### Relocating a LSC provision to ensure cross phase provisions on a single site within an accessible school building.

It was proposed that the following relocation is undertaken effect from September 2025:

- **Proposal 5:** The LSC for pupils Years 3-6 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Penywaun Primary School is moved to Hirwaun Primary School.

### 4. The consultation process

All stakeholders identified in Section 2 were sent electronic copies of the consultation documentation with the consultation proforma link and those that requested paper copies received them. Consultation meetings were held for the staff, parents and pupils of the affected schools, the details and dates of these meetings are attached as Appendix 1a. Summary notes taken during a range of consultation events are detailed in Appendix 1b. These provide a record of questions raised, comments and statements made, with responses provided where appropriate.

### 5. Summary of responses to consultation

It is noted that there have been limited responses to this statutory consultation process; 25 completed questionnaires and 3 letters/emails. 1 petition was also submitted with 434 signatories. Table 1 below reports the number of responses received to each element of the proposal.

**Table1: Responses to the proposed realignment of LSC provision within RCT**

Proposal	Communication Received			Nature of Responses		
	Online Questionnaire	Letter/ Email	Petition	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
To establish one Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Cwmaman Primary School.	24	0	0	20	1	3
To establish one Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Penyreglyn Primary School.	24	0	0	19	1	4
To establish one LSC for pupils in Reception – Year 2 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Hirwaun Primary School.	24	0	0	19	3	2
To establish one Complex Learning Difficulties LSC provision for pupils in Years 7–11 at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	24	0	0	20	1	3
To relocate the pupils Years 3-6 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Penywaun Primary School to Hirwaun Primary School.	25	3	1 (434 signatories)	15	9	3

*\*Please note each completed questionnaire provided responders with the opportunity to comment on all 5 proposals*

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the school organisation proposals, the consultation also included a question in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations asking 'how would the Council's proposal affect you? All those that responded to this question stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals.

In addition, the consultation survey, in accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, also included further questions in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations which asked could the proposals impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way, they treat the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language. Also asked were how

positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased. One responder raised a query in relation to increasing Welsh medium LSC provision. One responder raised a concern in relation to the possibility of their child regressing in Welsh language acquisition due to proposed relocation of their LSC. All other responders (23) stated that there would be a positive or no impact on the Welsh Language as a result of implementing the proposals.

## 6. Summary of Key Themes Raised and LA Responses

In accordance with the Code, a summary of the responses received are detailed in the table below and where issues have been raised, these have been responded to, where applicable, by means of clarification with supporting reasons. The key themes emerging from this analysis are detailed as follows:

- **Proposal 1:** One Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Cwmaman Primary School.

No issues were raised in relation to this proposal. In general responses recognised the need for additional LCS provisions within RCT, the proposal to open new specialist provision has been welcomed.

- **Proposal 2:** One Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Penyreglyn Primary School.

No issues were raised in relation to this proposal. In general responses recognised the need for additional LCS provisions within RCT, the proposal to open new specialist provision has been welcomed.

- **Proposal 3:** One LSC for pupils in Reception – Year 2 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Hirwaun Primary School

Comments/Issue raised	Response to comments/issued raised
The class could be placed at Penywaun Primary School.	All possible connotations of the proposals were considered prior to publication of the consultation report. The option presented is believed by officers to be the most appropriate use of resources to enhance LSC provision within RCT.
Enhanced provision	In general responses recognised the need for additional LCS provisions within RCT, the proposal to open new specialist provision has been welcomed.
Concerns regarding traffic management	Given the relatively low numbers that will be placed in the LSCs there are no immediate concerns that the additional vehicles

	generated cannot be accommodated. The schools will ensure that their individual traffic management plans are amended accordingly with support and advice provided from 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools will be available where required.
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- **Proposal 4:** One Complex Learning Difficulties LSC provision for pupils in Years 7–11 at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.

No issues were raised in relation to this proposal. In general responses recognised the need for additional LCS provisions within RCT, the proposal to open new specialist provision has been welcomed.

- **Proposal 5:** The LSC for pupils Years 3-6 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Penywaun Primary School is moved to Hirwaun Primary School to create a through provision in the Primary Phase.

Comments/Issue raised	Response to comments/issued raised
<p>Transition to Hirwaun Primary will cause disruption to the stability and routine of pupils currently attending the LSC.</p> <p>Pupils currently in Year 5 would only have one year at the new school before transitioning to secondary school, increasing stress.</p> <p>Negative impact of relocation on pupils with ASD - concerns about the emotional and educational impact of relocating the LSC on pupils with ASD.</p> <p>Advocacy for retaining existing LSC provision at Penywaun to ensure stability and minimise disruption for children already thriving there.</p>	<p>The proposed change in provision has some implications for a small number of pupils (currently 5 pupils (2 – yr 6, 1 – yr 5, 2 – yr 4) as at September 2025) should the proposal be actioned.</p> <p>All the required impact assessments have been undertaken, LSC re-alignment will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty for parents and pupils for a period of time, although experience from previous LSC realignments has been positive. Access &amp; Inclusion will provide support to eradicate or minimise any potential negative impact. This will involve collaboration between current LSC staff, Access and Inclusion staff, pupils and their families to ensure a person-centred approach is taken to support transition and meet the educational and emotional/wellbeing needs of pupils.</p> <p>The LA considers that reducing the number of schools transitions is in pupils’ best interests in the long term. However, we acknowledge there will be some short-term disruption to a small number of current pupils during the transition period.</p>
<p>The move would separate pupils from friends, trusted staff, and their current school community.</p>	<p>The LA has been delighted to receive such positive feedback on the LSC provision at Penywaun Primary School. It is evident that the class is considered part of the wider school</p>

<p>Teachers and parents express deep emotional connections to the current provision at Penywaun, describing it as a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment.</p> <p>The current LSC has allowed pupils to thrive under experienced staff and a proven support structure.</p>	<p>community, staff and pupils are valued and that parents are delighted with the progress pupils are making.</p> <p>However, the LA considers that reducing the number of school transitions is in the best interest of pupils in the long term. We acknowledge there will be some short-term disruption to a small number of pupils during the transition period.</p> <p>It is anticipated that current LSC staff will be moving with the pupils they will work with as they are employed centrally by the Access &amp; Inclusion Service. This will ensure there is continuity in staffing and support for pupils to support both their educational provision and wellbeing. The LSC will continue to be monitored collaboratively by school and the LA through its quality assurance protocol. No issues have been raised with the LA during previous relocations of LSCs have proven to be very successful. Hirwaun is recognised as an inclusive school by the LA and Central South Consortium.</p> <p>Access &amp; Inclusion will provide support to eradicate or minimise any potential negative impact. This will involve collaboration between current LSC staff, Access and Inclusion staff, pupils and their families to ensure a person-centred approach is taken to support transition and meet the educational and emotional/wellbeing needs of pupils.</p>
<p>Additional travel distances for pupils would add strain on families and create logistical and financial challenges.</p>	<p>This will not have a significant impact on travel time for pupils. The number and geographical distribution of the LSCs for Social Communication/ASD will mean that pupils who are placed in their nearest most suitable specialist provision will not have to travel unreasonable distances to access provision. Eligibility for home to school transport will continue to be determined in line with the Council's Learner Travel policy as is the case for mainstream pupils and those accessing specialist provisions.</p>
<p>Relocating the class to a newer building for minor improvements (e.g., better toilets) is not deemed a sufficient justification.</p>	<p>All possible connotations of the proposals were considered prior to publication of the consultation report. The option presented is believed by officers to be the most appropriate</p>

	<p>use of resources to realign LSC provision within RCT.</p> <p>The proposed relocation will ensure that pupils will have access to a through phase provision within an enhanced physical environment that is particularly suited to the needs of pupils accessing an LSC for Social Communication Needs/ASD.</p> <p>Hirwaun is recognised as an inclusive school by the LA and Central South Consortium.</p>
Challenges for families with multiple children in different schools if the relocation goes ahead, leading to logistical difficulties and potential lateness.	<p>We acknowledge the fact that having children in different schools can be challenging. This is the case for many families both within mainstream and specialist education provision. It is parental responsibility to ensure that their children attend school in line with statutory requirements.</p> <p>Eligibility for home to school transport will continue to be determined in line with the Councils Learner Travel policy.</p>
Suggestion to allow current pupils to complete their education at Penywaun while directing new pupils to Hirwaun Primary.	<p>Comment is noted.</p> <p>All possible connotations of the proposals were considered prior to publication of the consultation report. The option presented is believed by officers to be the most appropriate use of resources to enhance LSC provision within RCT.</p>

The following key themes were raised across all consultation responses:

<b>Comments/Issue raised</b>	<b>Response to comments/issued raised</b>
Questions were raised by 2 responders as to whether Welsh medium LSC provision for pupils will increase and whether the relocation of the LSC will impact on the provision of Welsh within the curriculum	<p>As required by Welsh Government and the ALNET Act 2018 that LA continuously reviews both the sufficiency of its Additional Learning Provision for both English and Welsh medium learners and is working proactively towards developing a fully bilingual ALN system over time.</p> <p>Welsh is a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales which all schools must comply with.</p>
Recommendation to phase the proposed changes over several years rather than implementing them abruptly to avoid disruption.	It is imperative to implement the proposed changes at the earliest opportunity in order to ensure there is sufficient specialist provision



	available for pupils as evidenced by the robust data analysis.
Feedback was positive regarding increasing LSC provision within RCT	It was pleasing to see that increasing LSC provision was deemed positive at all stakeholder meetings
Concern was raised regarding the Council saving money through these proposals and picking the least expensive option.	The proposals will increase LSC provision by creating 4 new LSCs and enhancing the physical environment available to pupils accessing specialist settings. This will require significant long term investment by the Council.

## 7. Estyn’s response to the proposal from Rhondda Cynon Taf regarding LSCs which will take affect from September 2025.

In compliance with the School Standards and Organisation 2018 School Organisation Code the Estyn’s response to the consultation has been provided in full in Appendix 1c. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and have produced a response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal. The response reports the following as a summary ***‘This detailed proposal sets out clearly the local authority’s plans to increase the provision for vulnerable pupils with additional learning need across the local authority. Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of provision in the area.’***

Additionally, an in accordance with the Code, the areas of the response that require clarification are documented in the table below:

<b>Estyn’s comment</b>
<i>“The proposal sets out some of the disadvantages and risks associated with the proposal and the mitigating actions to address these. For instance, some pupils who attend the LSC at Penywaun and staff who currently work at Penywaun Primary school will have to travel further to the new site at Hirwaun Primary. However, although the proposal states that additional travel costs will be met by the local authority, there is insufficient consideration of how the impact of extra travel could affect the well-being of vulnerable pupils.</i>
<b>Clarification</b>
In light of the requirements of the ALNET Act maintaining the status quo would mean that RCT would not be meeting its statutory duty to review the sufficiency of its ALN provision. This would result in the Council not meeting the needs of children and young people with ALN, increased pressure on parents/carers, increase in ALN tribunals and increase in cost in placing pupils in specialist out of county provisions.

Hirwaun Primary is 1.6 miles away from Penywaun Primary however this will not have a significant impact on travel time for pupils. The number and geographical distribution of the LSCs for Social Communication/ASD will mean that pupils who are placed in their nearest most suitable specialist provision will not have to travel unreasonable distances to access provision. Eligibility for home to school transport will continue to be determined in line with the Councils Learner Travel policy as is the case for mainstream pupils and those accessing specialist provisions.

**Estyn's comment**

*“Although the proposal states that the authority will work with parents and carers to put in place robust transition plans to relocate pupils to Hirwaun Primary School, there is too little detail about what this will include.”*

**Clarification**

At the time of the proposed implementation date in September 2025, based on the current intake, a total of 5 pupils will be potentially affected by the move, 2 of which will be in year 6. To mitigate risks, a person-centred approach will be adopted to support the transition.

Robust transition plans will be put in place for any pupils directly affected by the proposals, which will be planned collaboratively with parents and staff and involve additional support from specialist members of staff from Access and Inclusion. LSC re-alignment will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty for parents and pupils for a period of time, although experience from previous LSC realignments has been positive.

**Estyn's comment**

*“While the local authority sets out broadly the overall financial costs of the proposal, it gives too little detail in this area.”*

**Clarification**

Details regarding the financial implications of the proposal were provided to Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> September. The extract of which is below:

In order that the most efficient and effective use is made of resources, where possible, opportunities to address increased demand for specialist placements are maximised through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and the Council's School Modernisation Programme.

Secondary schools hosting LSCs for pupils with Complex Learning Needs are funded via the Council for 1 specialist teacher, 2 learning support assistants plus funding for workload and resources at an approximate cost of £133k per class. Primary schools hosting Early Years LSCs are funded for 1 teacher, 1 learning support assistant plus funding for workload and resources at an approximate cost of £104k. Primary schools hosting Social Communication Needs/ASD provision are funded 1 teacher, 2 learning support assistants plus funding for workload and resources at an approximate cost of £133k. The additional cost of the LSCs required

to meet the needs of ALN pupils, is approximately £474k and will be incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan updates.

The creation and relocation of the LSCs will incur a transportation cost in line with the Council's Learner Travel Policy, however, this increase in cost is seen as a necessity in order to enhance provision for RCT's most vulnerable pupils. Costs cannot be quantified at this time as placements are dependent upon pupils' home addresses. However, given that there will be a net increase in the number of LSC provisions, additional funding is likely to be required and incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan updates.

## 8. Assessment of Consultation

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation period the proposals have been revisited and the impact assessments have been updated with the following matters having been reassessed:

- The likely impact of the proposals on the quality and standards of education
- The likely impact on the community
- The likely effect of differing travelling arrangements
- The likely impact on Welsh language.

After further consideration, the proposals remain appropriate and as such no modifications have been made. The implementation date for all proposals remains September 2025.

## 9. Conclusion

The proposals to realign LSC provision will ensure that RCT has undertaken its statutory duty under the ALNET Act (2018) to review arrangements for supporting pupils with ALN within the county borough and has identified necessary steps to ensure the sufficiency of its provision for pupils with significant ALN who require specialist placement.

The proposals will ensure greater compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and access to significantly improved premises which have benefited from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Modernisation Programme and investment.

Following consideration of the responses to the consultation, it is recommended that Members agree to the immediate publication of the attached Consultation Report and agree to give officers approval to publish the appropriate Statutory Notices to progress with all Proposals as follows:

**Proposal 1:** To establish an Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Cwmaman Primary School.

**Proposal 2:** To establish an Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Penyreglyn Primary School.

**Proposal 3:** To establish a LSC for pupils in Reception – Year 2 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Hirwaun Primary School.

**Proposal 4:** To establish a Complex Learning Difficulties LSC provision for pupils in Years 7–11 at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.

**Proposal 5:** To relocate the LSC for pupils Years 3-6 with Social Communication Needs / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Penywaun Primary School to Hirwaun Primary School to create a through provision in the Primary Phase.

### Timetable of Consultation Events

School Affected	Group-Pupils/ Staff/Parents	Date
Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	School Council	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
	Staff	
	Parents	
Cwmaman Primary School	School Council	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
	Staff	
	Parents	
Penywaun Primary School	School Council	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
	Staff	
	Parents	
Hirwaun Primary School	School Council	7 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
	Staff	
	Parents	
Penyreglyn Primary School	School Council	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
	Staff	
	Parents	

## Notes of Consultation Events

<b>Learning Support Class Review Consultation Events 2024</b>			
<b>School Name:</b>	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School		
<b>Venue:</b>	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School		
<b>Date</b>	04/11/2024	<b>Number of School Staff:</b>	51
<b>Number of Pupils</b>	8	<b>Number of Parents:</b>	3
<b>Type of meeting:</b>	School Council, Staff/Governing Body, Parents	<b>Number of Governors:</b>	1
<b>Local Authority Officers in attendance:</b>	Ceri Jones (CJ), Lisa Carter (LC), Iwan Griffiths (IG), Helen Jenkins (HJ).		
<b>School Council</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Year 8 pupils, one Year 9 pupil, 3 Year 10 pupils, and 2 Year 11 pupils attended the School Council stakeholder event.</li> <li>• An introduction was provided to explain the service and offer an overview of Learning Support Classes (LSC) and Special Schools within RCT.</li> <li>• Background information on Additional Learning Needs and promoting inclusivity was shared.</li> <li>• An outline of the proposals and the associated process was provided.</li> <li>• The designation of Complex Learning Difficulties was explained.</li> <li>• Information about RCT's Placement Panel and the makeup of the proposed LSC at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School was presented.</li> <li>• The School Council believed the new class was a good idea as it would support more pupils needing additional help and ensure all children have access to suitable education.</li> <li>• The School Council agreed that the new class would provide opportunities for more pupils to take part in extracurricular activities such as the Eisteddfod, Year 11 prom, and sports day.</li> <li>• One member raised concerns about potential bullying of pupils in the class by others. It was acknowledged as a possibility, but the importance of addressing any concerns and promoting inclusivity was emphasised.</li> <li>• It was explained that pupils could come from outside of Mountain Ash and transport would be provided for LSC pupils.</li> <li>• The LSC's potential structure and operation were described, including how pupils might join mainstream classes with their teachers or assistants.</li> <li>• The School Council felt positively about the possibility of LSAs supporting other pupils.</li> </ul>			

- One member asked if LSC pupils would join mainstream classes for their GCSEs. It was clarified that LSC pupils may choose GCSE subjects and attend mainstream GCSE lessons while also accessing support from the LSC staff.
- A member noted that having an LSA in mainstream classes would be beneficial, as they could help others. This was acknowledged as a possibility.
- It was explained that pupils in the new class might also access a broader curriculum, which may then be accessible to some mainstream pupils if the class was established.
- A concern was raised that the new class would need to be engaging and fun to prevent behavioural issues. This point was agreed upon by other School Council members.
- It was discussed that some students with IDPs who are not accessing the LSC could also benefit from the new class.
- The example of Aberdare Comprehensive School having LSCs was mentioned.
- It was noted that if the proposed LSC is established, additional staff with expertise in ALN would be available to support the ALNCo and other staff in the school.

### **Staff/Governing Body**

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- It was explained that LSC staff are employed centrally by the Local Authority, and the makeup of the proposed LSC was described.
- It was reinforced that all children in LSCs have LA-maintained Individual Development Plans (IDPs), led by the LSC class teacher.
- **“How far will the pupils be coming from and how will they get there?”** It was explained that pupils within the Cynon catchment area could be placed in the LSC, though there are exceptions. The Placement Panel aims to place pupils in the most suitable specialist provision close to their home. Pupils would be transported by taxis unless they live close enough to the school in line with the LA Learner Travel Policy.
- **“Will the new pupils have been permanently excluded before?”** It was clarified that pupils attending the LSC would be those with Complex Learning Difficulties, not those with behavioural issues. It was noted that they are unaware of any Key Stage 3/4 CLD LSC pupils who have been permanently excluded.
- It was explained pupils may transition into the LSC pupils from Primary Phase LSCs or mainstream when moving to Year 7. Pupils may also transfer from other LSCs or Secondary Phase mainstream schools, based on their needs. All placements are referred by schools through the Placement Panel process.
- **“Could LSC pupils have access to mainstream classes?”** It was confirmed that, where possible, LSC pupils are integrated into mainstream classes. Examples were shared of LSC pupils joining mainstream classes a few minutes after the lesson begins and leaving a few minutes early to avoid disruption. LSC pupils generally complete numeracy and literacy lessons in the LSC, but their attendance in mainstream lessons would be based on individual needs. A Sports Day example demonstrated integration into the wider school community.

- **“Would an LSA go with the pupils to mainstream classes?”** It was clarified that LSAs can accompany LSC pupils where necessary, but some pupils may not need support in mainstream classes and can attend independently. The potential benefits of the LSC for the wider school community were described, including access to qualifications like ASDAN for mainstream pupils.
- An attendee asked about the financial implications of hosting an LSC. It was explained that the staffing and capitation costs for schools hosting LSCs are provided centrally.
- Regarding rooming and modifications for the LSC, it was stated that any necessary modifications would be funded centrally by the Local Authority. The specific room for the LSC has not yet been identified, but the school will collaborate with the LA to determine the most suitable space.
- **“Who has pastoral duties for the LSC pupils?”** It was explained that the main responsibility lies with the LSC teacher, though there will be a collaborative approach with mainstream staff. An example from another school demonstrated pupils registering with their mainstream year group before attending the LSC. Integration into the school would be gradual.
- In response to questions regarding how pupils would be placed into the class, it was explained that LSC pupils would be identified through the Placement Panel process, which assesses whether a child's needs can be best met in mainstream or LSC provision.
- Regarding training for mainstream staff, it was emphasised that the LA provides support to upskill mainstream staff, with examples of successful integration of LSCs in other schools. Ongoing support will be provided to upskill staff.
- **“Can LSC pupils be disciplined like mainstream pupils?”** It was confirmed that LSC pupils can be disciplined, but it is important to consider their individual needs. Approaches to discipline should be tailored to each child to ensure understanding and support.
- **“Can’t the class go in Aberdare Comp or Pontypridd High?”** It was confirmed that both Aberdare Comprehensive School and Ysgol Bro Taf already host LSCs.
- **“What type of uniform will they wear?”** It was confirmed that the LSC pupils will wear the standard school uniform, the same as their mainstream peers.
- Further details on the LSC consultation process were provided.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

### Parents

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- It was described how pupils outside of the Mountain Ash catchment area could attend the class.



- The makeup of the LSC was described, along with the integration and inclusion of LSC pupils into activities with their mainstream peers.
- Further details about the consultation process and the timeframes involved were discussed.
- An attendee asked about obtaining an IDP for their child and agreed to discuss the process further after the meeting.
- **“How many schools are in the catchment area for this new class?”** It was explained that the catchment area is area-led with pupils accessing their nearest suitable LSC. Pupils will be placed generally within 40 minutes’ travel time based on the RCT transport policy.
- It was stated that RCT currently has KS3/4 LSCs for CLD pupils in Rhondda and Taf. The proposal would create a CLD LSC in Cynon, addressing the identified need for additional specialist provision in the area through data analysis.
- **“Has the placement process been trialled and tested?”** It was explained that the Placement Process is used for all 48 current LSCs and Special School placements.
- Some parents discussed their individual child’s needs
- All attendees agreed that more support is needed for pupils with additional learning needs. One attendee highlighted the importance of specialist support in comprehensive schools to better integrate pupils with needs into mainstream environments. However, it was noted that integration can be challenging as pupils with additional learning needs often recognise their differences from other children.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

## Learning Support Class Review Consultation Events 2024

<b>School Name:</b>	Cwmaman Primary School		
<b>Venue:</b>	Cwmaman Primary School		
<b>Date</b>	05/11/2024	<b>Number of School Staff:</b>	7
<b>Number of Pupils</b>	12	<b>Number of Parents:</b>	8
<b>Type of meeting:</b>	School Council, Staff/Governing Body, Parents	<b>Number of Governors:</b>	3
<b>Local Authority Officers in attendance:</b>	Kate Hill (KH), Lisa Carter (LC), Iwan Griffiths (IG), Karen Pearson (KP).		

### School Council

- 4 Year 6 pupils, 2 Year 5 pupils, 2 Year 4 pupils, 2 Year 3 pupils and 2 Year 2 pupils attended the School Council stakeholder event.
- An overview of the service and proposal specific to Cwmaman Primary School was provided.
- The discussion covered how the new LSC pupils would integrate within the school, including travel arrangements for LSC pupils.
- The School Council believed the proposal was a good idea. One member said it's a good idea because they can learn certain things that help them. The member also said that the smaller class is good because it gives the pupils more attention.
- One member felt that the proposal "would make our school different and stand out."
- Two members discussed how the pupils could make friends with other pupils and make friends with others that have the same disabilities.
- One member felt the proposals would have a "good impact on families so they don't have to send 2 children to different schools." The catchment area process was explained, noting that this could be the case for some families but not all.
- **"Would the new pupils eat in the same dinner hall?"** It was explained that this would depend on the pupil's needs; some pupils may be able to do so straight away, whereas others may need to build confidence first. It was added that pupils in the new LSC may not have been in a school before – at first, it could be scary for them. Some stay in the classroom to eat their lunch; it's dependent on their needs.

- **“Would they take part in the eco community?”** It was explained that this depends on the pupils – some might not be able to communicate verbally but would be included where possible.
- **“Would they have their own playground?”** It was explained that they would have their own area but might join other classes during playtime. This would be determined by the school.
- An outline of the consultation process was provided.
- **“What happens to them as they get older?”** It was explained that the class supports LSC pupils when they are very young. The LA will work with the LSC class teacher and family to determine the best place for the pupil to move on to – they might stay in mainstream classes, move to a different LSC, or attend a Special School.
- The School Council queried how the LSC pupils will have their lessons. It was advised that their lessons would be similar to reception and nursery, focusing on play-based learning, which aligns with mainstream Nursery and Reception classes.
- **“Can the school ambassadors help in the LSC?”** It was advised that efforts would be made for LSC pupils to mix with mainstream classes as much as possible.
- One member of the School Council stated that pupils can learn and play at the same time. This concept was reaffirmed.
- **“Can they go on the school bus with us for school trips?”** It was stated that the pupils are very young. If they are able to go on trips, they should be included. Examples were provided of how this can be worked around, such as different trips.
- **“When they get older, can they go on the big yard?”** It was reinforced that LSC pupils should be included with mainstream pupils, although they may use separate yards based on age.
- It was queried whether the LSC pupils could eat with the mainstream pupils. It was agreed that they could.
- **“What if the children have autism and fall?”** It was stated that it would be the same process as for any other pupil – they will have the same treatment.
- Discussions were held regarding physical aids to assist LSC pupils in understanding their activities in lessons and outside of education, such as recycling.
- **“When they are too old to be in the class, when they go will another come?”** It was advised that when there is space in the class, it will be filled by others who need it.
- **“If they get better, will they go into a normal class?”** It was explained that pupils might move to a mainstream class, transfer to a different LSC, or attend a Special School depending on their needs.
- **“Would they all move out of the class at the same time?”** It was explained that LSC pupils move when they are ready; some stay for a short time, and others stay longer.

## Staff/Governing Body

- The A&I Service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- No objections were raised, but logistical queries were discussed:
- **“Will assessments be conducted to determine classroom location?”** The staff were informed that this would not be assessed until the consultation process has ended. No issues are anticipated, and timescales are expected to be met.
- **“Will governors/Headteachers (HT) have a say in classroom location?”** It was explained that a collaborative process will take place, with examples cited where schools identified classrooms meeting Early Years (EY) requirements, such as proximity to toilets and outdoor spaces.
- **“If suitable classroom spaces are unavailable, will they be developed?”** Necessary modifications are completed during the establishment of the class.
- Concerns were raised about needing time to clear classrooms. However, it was reminded that the process must follow due protocol, so pre-emptive actions cannot be taken.
- **“Will the Local Authority (LA) employ LSC staff, and how many Teaching Assistants (TAs) are required?”** The staff/governing body were informed that initial provision includes one LSA, with the possibility of adding a second. Recruitment will be a collaborative process between the school and the LA. Additional LSC staff would not impact existing school staffing.
- Funding for supply staff was discussed. It was explained that funding is provided by the LA, the Headteacher has responsibility for organising supply cover when necessary. Examples of agency supply working successfully were shared.
- Concerns over finding appropriate cover during staff absence were addressed.
- The full-time nature of the provision was confirmed.
- A query was raised around lunchtime supervision. It was suggested that arrangements such as staggered lunch breaks for staff and classroom-based eating for students will minimise disruptions. Schools must plan for adequate supervision.
- It was confirmed that LSC staff will align with school inset days, with occasional central training sessions in September.
- Queries were raised around transport. Issues related to transport will be managed through existing procedures. Class start and end times will be adjusted to minimise disruptions.
- **“Possibility of a Primary Phase class?”** It was confirmed that there are no current plans for a Primary Phase class. The EY class will serve as an assessment centre, with placements progressing to mainstream or specialist setting.
- A query was raised around the funding of the new LSC. It was confirmed that funding is allocated based on capacity rather than active enrolment, ensuring stability regardless of pupil numbers.
- A query was raised regarding the recruitment process and whether staff without ALN-based training could apply. The members were informed that recruitment processes would begin post-proposal approval, with teacher roles advertised first,

followed by LSAs. Training opportunities for teachers transitioning to LSC roles include Makaton and PECS, supported by the LA's EY LSC network. Experienced teachers are preferred, but training opportunities for those with potential were highlighted. LSC staffing and funding are separate from schools Additional Learning Needs (ALN) numbers and are maintained by the LA.

- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

### Parents

- In total, there were 11 attendees, including 3 parent governors.
- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- An attendee queried who would be teaching in the LSC and expressed concerns based on past experiences with teachers not being equipped to manage ADHD. It was reassured that the LSC will have staff with additional training to meet the ALN designation of the class and the needs of LSC pupils.
- **“Would the pupils in Early Years go into mainstream?”** It was explained that the proposed class would be for 8–10 Early Years pupils, who might be in the LSC for a short time and may not have attended school before. Once ready to move on, the Placement Panel would allocate places in the most suitable provision—this could be a mainstream class, another LSC, or a Special School.
- A member queried whether the LSC provision would be available for pupils in the school with existing IDPs. It was clarified that if pupils in the school have an IDP, it would be monitored and reviewed. If the school identifies a need for specialist provision, a PCR would be submitted to the placement panel for review.
- It was noted that specialist LSC staff could support other staff across the school in terms of expertise. It was further explained that pupils would initially start with a school based IDP, and if additional support from LSS still did not meet their needs, placement in specialist provision would be considered. All pupils in LSCs have LA-maintained IDPs led by the LSC teacher.
- **“Will they have provision after the Class?”** It was explained that Early Years LSC pupils could move to a mainstream class, a different LSC, or a Special School. Additionally, the proposed LSC would provide placements across the Cynon area, not just for those in the catchment area for Cwmaman.
- All members expressed support for the proposals and raised no concerns.
- It was agreed by all attendees that school's benefit from the establishment of LSCs. The school council was praised for their positive attitude toward the proposal and their commitment to inclusion.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

## Learning Support Class Review Consultation Events 2024

<b>School Name:</b>	Penywaun Primary School		
<b>Venue:</b>	Penywaun Primary School		
<b>Date</b>	06/11/2024	<b>Number of School Staff:</b>	13
<b>Number of Pupils</b>	9	<b>Number of Parents:</b>	9
<b>Type of meeting:</b>	School Council, Staff/Governing Body, Parents	<b>Number of Governors:</b>	3
<b>Local Authority Officers in attendance:</b>	Ceri Jones (CJ), Lisa Carter (LC), Iwan Griffiths (IG), Rachel Williams (RW).		

### School Council

- 4 Year 6 pupils, 2 Year 5 pupils, 1 Year 4 pupil and 2 Year 3 pupils were in attendance of the meeting.
- An overview of the service was provided, explaining the rationale for the proposals and the consultation process.
- The proposals were outlined, specifically the one affecting Penywaun Primary School, and the benefits of moving the class to Hirwaun.
- It was highlighted that: The proposed LSC in Hirwaun will benefit from a modern learning environment aligned with 21st Century Schools modernisation. Hirwaun Primary School's building is accessible to pupils with ALN and physical disabilities.
- A member stated that "It's not going to be easy for the Penywaun Primary School pupils to move from the school or for Hirwaun pupils to move here." It was clarified that no pupils from Hirwaun Primary School would move. Instead, the proposal involves relocating the current LSC pupils from Penywaun Primary School to Hirwaun Primary School. The importance of ensuring minimal disruption was outlined and an overview was provided of previous successful transitions. Support for parents and pupils will be provided to help ease the transition.
- School Council asked, "**Why does it have to move? There's space for another class here.**" In response, it was acknowledged that although Penywaun Primary has spare capacity Hirwaun Primary School already has a hygiene room, reducing time and costs associated with modifications. Geographical factors were considered to distribute LSCs more evenly across the valleys and the move aligns with the need to ensure sufficient LSC classes by September.
- **The School Council shared their views:**
- "The CDU is important because all the children are settled and happy."
- "Teachers are always kind to all pupils."
- "The pupils are helpful."

- “I moved from Rhigos Primary School and found it difficult to move but settled in now and happy in school.”
- “The children have been here their whole life, they don’t know anybody in Hirwaun, easier for people from Penywaun Primary School.”
- “The Teacher helps on duty and in the canteen.”
- “The children feel safe in Penywaun Primary School.”
- “I don’t want to get rid of their junior CDU. Could there be an infant one here?”
- “The CDU is already part of the school.”
- “People in CDU like it here and not in Hirwaun Primary School – children there might be naughty.”
- The School Council were reassured that Hirwaun Primary School is an inclusive and safe school with support systems that would ensure LSC pupils are happy and settled. The pupils would move together, providing familiarity, and opportunities to make new friends in the new school.

### **Staff/Governing Body**

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- Efforts to increase the number of through-provision LSCs and enhance overall provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) were highlighted.
- Attendees were reminded of the consultation closing date and the importance of feedback in shaping outcomes.
- It was reiterated that the Local Authority (LA) will maintain responsibility for LSC placements and that current processes will remain unchanged.
- Staff questioned why additional provision could not be implemented at the current site to avoid disruption to children.
- Concerns were raised about two Year 5 pupils having to move twice in quick succession.
- A staff member noted that siblings had recently been relocated to the same school by their parents, highlighting its inclusive environment and established staff relationships. In response it was noted that decisions have been based on geographical distribution across districts, meeting demand, and ensuring facilities (e.g., hygiene rooms and sensory areas) are in place. Past transitions were highlighted as successful despite initial concerns. The proposal to relocate the LSC is based on meeting the needs of pupils as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- Staff questioned the suitability of facilities at Hirwaun compared to the current site. It was explained that the setup at Hirwaun includes sensory rooms, separate outdoor areas for Foundation Phase and Primary Phase, and toileting arrangements particularly suited to the needs of the pupils accessing the provision.
- Concerns about maintaining independence for pupils and ensuring privacy in new facilities were addressed. It was assured that environments are designed to build on pupils’ independence while meeting significant needs.
- A staff member raised concerns about the potential loss of a key staff member, who also contributes significantly to mainstream pupils’ success as part of the

Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In response, it was emphasised that LSC teachers are employed centrally by Access and Inclusion and that the focus must remain on the needs of pupils.

- A teacher expressed uncertainty about how inclusive Hirwaun Primary School would be, given its new responsibility for LSC pupils. Reassurance was provided that Hirwaun Primary School has an inclusive ethos and that pupils would not be segregated from the wider school community.
- The need for additional capacity for ASD Foundation Phase provision was emphasised, necessitating proactive measures to establish further provision. The LA continuously analyses data regarding the sufficiency of its LSC provision.
- The consultation process was clarified, with encouragement to provide feedback through QR codes and online submissions.
- **“Didn’t one of the proposals fail recently?”** It was noted that most previous proposals have been successful, although some were amended based on feedback. It was reassured that the proposal is not finalised, and all comments will be included in a report for Cabinet consideration.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

### Parents

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- The following rationale for the LSC changes was provided: Minimise transitions for pupils (e.g., from Reception to Year 2 and beyond), allow pupils to access through primary provision without needing to transition to another school, and provision must be in place by September 2025 to meet demand, with the decision to be made by Cabinet.
- **“Will the children move?”** It was confirmed the children would move, and staff employed centrally would be redeployed to the new LSC site.
- Concerns were raised regarding the impact on pupils and whether staffing would be sufficient.
- Parents questioned why the class could not remain at Penywaun Primary School. It was explained one reason was that Hirwaun Primary has a hygiene room, reducing the need for costly adaptations, and has the capacity for two LSCs. Hirwaun Primary School has benefited from 21st Century Schools investments, providing a modern learning environment.
- Parents queried if a hygiene room could be added at Penywaun Primary School. It was clarified that the hygiene room at Hirwaun Primary School is already in place which would support the need for immediate additional capacity in September 2025.
- Parents expressed concern that frequent transitions disrupt pupils, particularly those with ASD, citing examples of regression and behavioural changes.
- Parents shared concerns about new staff understanding their children's specific needs. It was assured that robust transition plans would include collaboration between staff and visits to the new school. It was noted that LSC staff are



employed centrally by A&I and the posts would relocate to Hirwaun Primary School.

- Concerns about logistics for families with children in different schools were raised. It was confirmed that transport arrangements would consider catchment areas and ensure continuity.
- Parents argued that while the changes may benefit future pupils, the current cohort would face significant disruption. These concerns were acknowledged, noting that similar concerns had been raised by parents during previous consultation which had subsequently been very successful.
- Further reasons cited for the allocation were: The new classroom would be set up with instant access to outdoor space and toilets exclusive to LSC pupils. A sensory room would also be available, and measures to address noise concerns (e.g., quieter toilet facilities) would be implemented.
- **“Why can’t the pupils remain at Penywaun until they transition to secondary school?”** It was explained that this would significantly increase costs and delay meeting the identified need.
- **“Was Penywaun fully assessed for feasibility?”** It was stated that both Penywaun and Hirwaun sites were considered for suitability in collaboration with 21st Century Schools, concluding that Hirwaun was the more suitable option.
- **“Will Hirwaun staff be trained for ASD pupils?”** It was assured that Hirwaun is an inclusive school with staff having received training in supporting ASD pupils.
- **“Is Penywaun Primary likely to close?”** It was confirmed there are no plans to close Penywaun Primary School.
- It was explained that all feedback would be reviewed by Cabinet before any final decision.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

## Learning Support Class Review Consultation Events 2024

<b>School Name:</b>	Hirwaun Primary School		
<b>Venue:</b>	Hirwaun Primary School		
<b>Date</b>	07/11/2024	<b>Number of School Staff:</b>	8
<b>Number of Pupils</b>	33	<b>Number of Parents:</b>	1
<b>Type of meeting:</b>	School Council, Staff/Governing Body, Parents	<b>Number of Governors:</b>	2
<b>Local Authority Officers in attendance:</b>	Kate Hill (KH), Lisa Carter (LC), Iwan Griffiths (IG), Rachel Williams (RW).		

### School Council

- 13 Year 6 pupils, 7 Year 5 pupils, 5 Year 4 pupils, 3 Year 3 pupils, 3 Year 2 pupils, and 2 Year 1 pupils were in attendance at the meeting.
- The proposals were outlined, and information on the consultation statutory process was provided.
- The proposals relating to Hirwaun Primary were discussed in detail, including the benefits of having 2 LSCs for pupils with ASD, allowing LSC pupils to remain in the same school between Years 2 and 3 without needing to transition.
- Of the 33 members, 30 believed the proposals were a good idea, while 3 were unsure.
- One member felt the proposal specific to Hirwaun was a good idea stating that with autism “the teachers are good with children and can help.” It was explained that there would be more staff specific to the LSC who could also support everyone across the school with advice and guidance.
- Another member felt the proposals were positive as the school is a calm environment that would help with the social skills of LSC pupils attending.
- One member suggested that LSC pupils could learn differently and proposed a room for pupils with disabilities to support their learning.
- Another member felt the proposals were good because “Everyone should have the right to an education – even if they are disabled.” This sentiment was echoed by two additional members.
- A member shared that the proposals were beneficial as “If you have needs, it’s good to have help even if you don’t want it.” They also highlighted that the school has a thrive room where pupils can seek help.
- A member mentioned, “The new pupils could mix with pupils outside and make more friends.” This idea was supported, with an explanation that the new LSC pupils would be part of the school, wear the same uniform, and participate in all activities if the proposal is accepted.
- A member noted that people with autism may not like noises and that having pupils with autism in the school could help others understand autism better.

- The School Council proposed that other pupils in the school could introduce the LSC pupils to the rest of the school.
- One member queried what the document on the table was and was informed that these were Children-Friendly versions of the LSC Consultation Document, which pupils were encouraged to read.
- **“Where will the classroom be?”** It was explained that the location was not yet determined as the proposals are still at the proposal stage, and further collaboration would take place if approved.
- A member informed Access & Inclusion that “We have an ELSA teacher in the school that can help everyone with autism.”
- A member suggested that schools should consider the specific food preferences of pupils with disabilities due to texture sensitivities. This idea was acknowledged as important to consider.
- Another member suggested introducing a “buddy bench” on the yard to help pupils feeling upset find someone to play with. Reps would be needed to ensure all pupils understood how to use the buddy bench.
- An idea was proposed that LSC pupils could take fidget toys into the yard to help them settle and have more fun.
- A few members of the School Council thanked Access & Inclusion for discussing the topic with them.

#### **Staff/Governing Body**

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process. A successful transition of the ASD LSC from Abercynon Community Primary School to Perthcelyn Primary School was cited as a precedent for the proposals.
- An overview of the statutory consultation process, including the associated timelines and guidance, was provided.
- It was clarified that, as the proposals are still under consultation, it is not yet possible to confirm the exact location of the class in line with statutory requirements.
- The following expected capacities for the LSC were confirmed: Foundation Phase: 8 pupils, Primary Phase: 10 pupils.
- It was noted that the LSC might not reach full capacity immediately, with Penywaun pupils anticipated to transition in September 2025.
- **"How will the proposals affect numbers on roll or school capacity?"** It was explained that capacity would not be reduced. Projections account for future needs, and the school's capacity size would be reported alongside the LSC provisions.
- **"Were local housing developments considered in the proposal?"** It was confirmed that 21st Century Schools assess housing developments and deemed Hirwaun suitable for the proposed LSC.
- **"Would LSC provisions be reviewed in 5-10 years?"** It was confirmed that LSC placements are regularly reviewed, particularly if larger cohorts emerge. 21st Century Schools have conducted mapping to identify needs and distribution across Cynon.

- It was clarified that the new LSC provision would not significantly impact pupil numbers at Penywaun. The proposed LSC changes aim to reduce the number of transitions for ALN pupils, bringing their experience in line with mainstream pupils, who typically have only two transitions.
- It was confirmed that staff posts from Penywaun LSC would transition along with the pupils. Staff are centrally contracted but appointed collaboratively with the Headteacher. The importance of integrating LSC staff into the school community to ensure inclusivity was emphasised.
- It was highlighted that inclusion would be tailored to each LSC pupil's needs but encouraged interaction with mainstream pupils where appropriate.
- It was reiterated that the LSC class would function as part of the school, rather than being a separate entity.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

### Parents

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process. It was confirmed that the proposals include two LSC classes, one of which already exists and will be relocated.
- It was reiterated that placement into LSCs is managed through the Placement Panel, overseen by the Local Authority (LA).
- It was explained that the general catchment area for the proposed LSC is the upper Cynon Valley. Transportation for eligible pupils will align with the School Transport Policy.
- **"Would LSC pupils integrate with other pupils, given noise levels and stimulation concerns?"** It was clarified that LSC pupils are fully included in school activities such as trips, assemblies, and lunchtimes where appropriate. The approach is bespoke, ensuring each pupil's needs are met.
- **"How will transitions for ALN pupils be managed?"** It was highlighted that pupils will transition within the same school from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2, minimising disruption.
- It was accepted by all in attendance that having through provision for LSC pupils on the same site would allow the pupils to maintain familiarity with staff, the environment, and routines.
- **"Will the increased traffic affect school operations?"** It was noted that LSC pupils can arrive via shared transport, potentially reducing the number of vehicles. It was also mentioned that the school has undergone improvements to address traffic concerns.
- **"What criteria determine placement in the LSC?"** It was clarified that placements are based on individual pupil needs rather than strict criteria, with no requirement for an autism diagnosis. The focus is on meeting diverse needs, from pre-verbal to verbal pupils.
- Parents expressed positive sentiments regarding the proposals, emphasizing the importance of reducing transitions and keeping children in local communities.

- Concerns were raised about historical gaps in teacher training on autism, which affected pupil outcomes.
- Some parents expressed frustration that provision is often only made available when pupils reach a crisis point, leaving families feeling unsupported. These concerns were acknowledged, with an explanation that while there are challenges, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) hosts 48 LSCs, the highest in the region, and continues to open new provisions to meet demand. It was also noted that RCT prioritises keeping children in their communities, minimising transportation distances.
- The consultation process and timescales in line with the School Organisation Code were outlined.
- Attendees were reassured of the commitment to addressing pupil needs through integrated and inclusive LSCs.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

## Learning Support Class Review Consultation Events 2024

<b>School Name:</b>	Penyrenghlyn Primary School		
<b>Venue:</b>	Penyrenghlyn Primary School		
<b>Date</b>	13/11/2024	<b>Number of School Staff:</b>	9
<b>Number of Pupils</b>	8	<b>Number of Parents:</b>	2
<b>Type of meeting:</b>	School Council, Staff/Governing Body, Parents	<b>Number of Governors:</b>	2
<b>Local Authority Officers in attendance:</b>	Lisa Carter (LC), Kate Hill (KH), Iwan Griffiths (IG), Karen Pearson (KP).		

### School Council

- All 8 members of the School Council were from year 6.
- The proposal was introduced, explaining what the class would look like and emphasising that the pupils in the LSC would be included alongside mainstream pupils within the school.
- When asked if the proposal was good, all School Council members agreed and stated, "Our school is very sensible and always try our best." Prefects from Year 6 offered to assist, especially during assemblies, in looking after younger children.
- The proposal was discussed further, and members were asked if they had any concerns. All members responded that they were not worried.
- The role within the Local Authority was introduced.
- **"What type of activities would they do?"** It was explained that while the children may do some activities with the nursery class, they have specific needs. Activities may involve using symbols to communicate and learning behaviours from their mainstream peers when appropriate.
- **"Will the pupils stay for nursery and then move to another school?"** It was clarified that the children will remain in the class until their needs are assessed, typically after one year, at which point the Placement Panel will determine their next setting.
- **"Will they use the same yard as nursery?"** It was explained that while the class will have its own outdoor area, more able pupils may integrate with the main nursery yard under staff supervision.
- **"How many staff will there be? Will our teachers be involved?"** It was stated that there will be one LSC teacher and one LSA possibly two. The school's headteacher will decide how staff can assist across the school.
- **"Will the classroom need to be adapted?"** It was highlighted that the decision is subject to the proposal's approval. If necessary, adaptations, such as a hygiene room, will be funded by A&I.

- **“Will they use the same toilets?”** It was explained that the children may have their own toilets, as many may require nappies and personal care.
- **“Will they have the same dinner and playtime?”** It was explained that arrangements will depend on the children’s needs. Initially, meals may be taken in the classroom as they adjust to the school environment.
- **“Will it be just younger children?”** It was confirmed that the LSC at Penyrenglyn will cater to 3–5-year-olds, with separate provisions available for older pupils in other schools.
- **“What about older pupils with ALN?”** It was described that the broader provision of LSCs across RCT includes classes for ASD, Complex Learning Needs, SEBD, and more.
- **“Will the pupils be here part-time?”** It was confirmed that pupils in this LSC will attend full-time.
- Members acknowledged they may not see the new pupils as they transition to secondary school but suggested passing information to Year 5 pupils.
- It was noted that Year 5 students can be prepared through prefect elections in September.
- Members proposed creating an assembly presentation using the Child-Friendly Document to explain the new class.
- The benefits of the proposal were reaffirmed, and preparations over the summer were highlighted to align with the process.

#### **Staff/Governing Body**

- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- **“What happens if the LSC staff are not in/late?”** In the case of staff absences, it was explained that schools usually manage coverage internally. There are typically three staff members dependent on numbers in the class to ensure pupil safety. Absences are reported to the appropriate authority, and the same sickness policy applies as per RCT guidelines. Regarding iTrent and back-to-work interviews, it was confirmed that the process is handled appropriately.
- **“How will this fit into our school’s performance management?”** Performance management for LSC staff fits into the school’s cycle, with support provided from LSS. Differences in expectations due to the class environment were acknowledged.
- **“Would the school have some say in the hiring process?”** It was confirmed that headteachers would be involved in recruitment for LSC staff.
- **“Is the class and teaching staff going to be inspected?”** It was confirmed that LSCs are subject to inspections and observations by the Local Authority (LA). A Quality Monitoring Protocol will include reflective practices, such as identifying successes and areas for improvement.
- **“Will our ALNCo write the IDPs for the pupils?”** It was highlighted that all pupils in the LSC will have LA-maintained IDPs, with the class teacher responsible for PCP meetings and reviews.
- **“Is there any chance that the class might change in the future from an Early Years to something else based off need in the local area?”** It was clarified

that the designation of the class is not fixed and may change based on pupil needs following consultation.

- **“How long before this could happen?”** Changes to LSC provision is based off robust data analysis in collaboration with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and levels of provision is constantly monitored.
- **“If the class was to be moved, how much notice would the school have?”** It was stated that the statutory process for moving an LSC from a school would take a year.
- **“How will the pupils be transported to school?”** Pupils will primarily be transported by taxis, depending on their needs and the transport policy.
- **“What types of school activities can the pupils join in with?”** Efforts will be made to encourage inclusion, such as participation in assemblies and school trips, based on individual needs.
- **“Will the LSC staff have the same training that the rest of the school currently have such as Team teach?”** All LSC staff will be trained in Team Teach. Additional training will be arranged by the LA if renewal dates do not align. Access to A&I training resources was emphasised.
- **“Would modifications need to be made to the classrooms/outdoor areas to accommodate for the new class?”** It was explained that adaptations for the new class would be considered if proposals are approved. Work will be coordinated with the 21st Century Schools team, and the school.
- **“What type of modifications would be carried out and when would this be done?”** It was explained that the modifications would be dependent on what is needed. For example, a hygiene room and a sensory room could be developed if deemed appropriate. If the proposal was to be approved, building works would be planned for the summer and would be completed before the start of the school year in September.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

## Parents

- One parent governor and two staff members who were also parents at the school attended.
- The service was introduced including background on the other LSCs across RCT.
- The proposals were outlined in general with a more detailed description of the proposal affecting this school being provided.
- The consultation process was discussed in detail including the timescales for each phase of the process.
- It was explained that the purpose of the LSC is accessing and identifying children’s needs, which may not yet have been determined in school. It was explained that pupils can remain in the LSC for up to two years and may transition to a different LSC or Special School, depending on their needs.
- **“How many LSCs are there in RCT?”** Members were informed that there are currently 48 LSCs in RCT for various designations, including ASD, Deafness, SPLANG, SEBD, and CLD.
- **“How do children join the class?”** It was explained that pupils generally to come from the surrounding area, with placement requests submitted to the LA by professionals. Placement decisions are based on need and proximity. It was



confirmed that some children would be transported by taxi, funded by the Local Authority.

- **“How big will the class be?”** It was explained that the class will consist of 8–10 pupils.
- **“What happens if the teacher was absent?”** It was explained that if the teacher is absent, support staff, familiar with the class routines would support whilst supply cover is arranged by the school.
- **“Will changes need to be made to the school for the class?”** It was explained that upon approval, the LA would work with 21st Century Schools to determine the best location and adaptations required for the LSC. This could include facilities such as a sensory room, hygiene room, outdoor play areas, and toilets to mirror the nursery. All necessary adaptations and resources would be funded by the LA.
- **“When will the hiring process start?”** It was confirmed that recruitment would commence upon approval. Positions will be open to all applicants, including existing staff, with equal treatment for all candidates. However, staff employed by the LA would be required to move if the class relocates to another school.
- **“Will the school’s max capacity be affected by this?”** It was determined that school capacity will not change as a result of the LSC. Members were informed that capacity and predicted numbers are plotted with input from 21st Century Schools. Should an influx of pupils occur, the class’s location could be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.
- **“Will the LSC pupils affect attendance data?”** Pupils in the LSC are registered separately from the school, and attendance and absences are tracked as part of school data.
- **“Will the class be for older pupils also?”** It was explained that the class caters for 3–4-year-olds, with potential placement as old as five. Following their time in the LSC, pupils would return to the Placement Panel to determine the next appropriate setting which could be another LSC, mainstream or a Special School.
- Feedback was encouraged to be shared through the Consultation Response Proforma which could be found on the RCT website or by scanning the QR code provided.

**Estyn's response to the proposal to enhance additional learning needs mainstream learning support class provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf. This report has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.**

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

### **Introduction**

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) County Borough Council proposes to address capacity pressures in relation to pupils with significant Additional Learning Needs (ALN). They are proposing the development of new provisions to take effect from September 2025 including:

- One Early Years Intervention Learning Support Class (LSC) for pupils under statutory school age **with** significant presenting needs at Cwmaman Primary School.
- One Early Years Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Penyrenghlyn Primary School.
- One LSC for pupils in Reception to Year 2 with Social Communication Needs/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Hirwaun Primary School.
- One Complex Learning Difficulties LSC provision for pupils in Years 7-11 at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.

From September 2025, they propose to relocate the LSC for pupils Years 3-6 with Social Communication Needs/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) from Penywaun Primary School to Hirwaun Primary School to create a through provision in the Primary Phase.

RCT are consulting with a wide range of stakeholders. They will hold several consultation events within schools across the catchment for school councils, parents and governing bodies to attend.

## **Summary/ Conclusion**

This detailed proposal sets out clearly the local authority's plans to increase the provision for vulnerable pupils with additional learning need across the local authority. Estyn considers that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of provision in the area.

## **Description and benefits**

The local authority sets out a clear rationale for the proposal. They state that, following an in-depth data analysis exercise, they have identified the need to address the current gap in the provision for pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties, Early Years, and/or Social Communication Needs/ASD to ensure that the local authority complies with its legislative duty. They state the proposal will:

- enhance current primary phase provision to match the current profile of needs of children with ALN and reduce the number of transitions between placements for some of the most vulnerable pupils.
- enhance Early Years provision to meet the rising demands for early intervention and enhance secondary phase provision to meet the needs of older pupils requiring support with their learning.

The local authority has also set out clearly their rationale for relocating the LSC to Hirwaun Primary school from September 2025, including:

- a more accessible and better equipped new building which better meets the range of needs of pupils, thus a greater compliance with the equality act 2010.
- continuity for ALN pupils in their educational placements

The proposer appears to set out clearly the expected benefits of the proposal. They state this will improve pupils' life chances, access to the world of work and other education pathways by ensuring that the provisions are matched well to the needs of pupils. The local authority also considers that this proposal will ensure that pupils with ALN will have access to the best possible resources and will receive a more equitable continuum of provision. They state clearly in the proposal that any additional transport costs, for example from Penywaun to Hirwaun, will be met by the local authority. The proposal sets out clearly many of the risks which could impact the new host schools and how the authority will address these, including providing continued support to headteachers with the line management of the LSCs to ensure the quality of the learning provision is kept under review.

The proposal sets out some of the disadvantages and risks associated with the proposal and the mitigating actions to address these. For instance, some pupils who attend the LSC at Penywaun and staff who currently work at Penywaun Primary school will have to travel further to the new site at Hirwaun Primary. However, although the proposal states that additional travel costs will be met by the local authority, there is insufficient consideration of how the impact of extra

travel could affect the well-being of vulnerable pupils. Although the proposal states that the authority will work with parents and carers to put in place robust transition plans to relocate pupils to Hirwaun Primary School, there is too little detail about what this will include.

The proposal sets out clearly the alternatives to the proposal, including keeping the status quo. It gives detailed reasons as to why these have been discounted. It has effectively given details of any projected surplus places and adequate reasons for this.

The local authority has provided a Welsh Language Impact Assessment as part of this proposal. While the local authority sets out broadly the overall financial costs of the proposal, it gives too little detail in this area.

The local authority has provided a Community Impact Assessment as part of this proposal.

### **Educational aspects of the proposal**

The proposer has considered information from the most recent Estyn reports for each of schools likely to be affected and the quality of the leadership of the schools.

The local authority appears to have considered the impact the proposal will have on the standards of learning and pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning. It states that pupils will be able to access additional learning provision, which should enhance pupil progress in relation to their individual targets and starting points. It considers that having access to '21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments' will have a direct impact on pupil and staff wellbeing.

With regards to the impact on Teaching and Learning experiences, the proposal sets out that all of the LSCs will provide a balanced curriculum at all stages in line with the Curriculum for Wales. They will provide a range of strategies and interventions to meet the needs of individual pupils with significant difficulties, with access to a wide range of multi-sensory and digital resources to enhance their learning.

The proposal states that care, support and guidance for pupils will be met through a strong focus upon supporting pupils' emotional and social needs and opportunities to work collaboratively with mainstream peers in their host mainstream schools. This will include opportunities to access activities within their local community. Pupils will be supported to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyles and nurture pupils.

The local authority identifies that leadership and management of the LSCs will be undertaken collaboratively by the hosting headteacher and Learner Support Service Co-ordinators in the Access & Inclusion Service to ensure high expectations for pupils are achieved. This should be supported by a comprehensive quality assurance process and a local authority to school LSC

agreement that details the respective roles and responsibilities of the local authority, host schools and LSC staff.