

Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Dolau Primary School

Date	30 th September 2024
Time	15:45
Venue	Dolau Primary School

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director 21st Century Schools And Transformation.
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services.
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager.
Tim Britton	TB	Head of Achievement.
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21 st Century Schools Assistant Project Officer.
Ellen Williams	EL	Human Resource Senior Manager
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resource Senior Manager
Union Representatives		
Staff and governors of Dolau Primary School		

1. Welcome and Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

All attendees were encouraged to complete the online survey so that all views could be captured individually.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Dolau Primary School were invited to ask questions. The questions raised from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1.	Why do you think splitting Dolau Primary School would increase the number of pupils entering Welsh medium primary education? Being a dual-language primary school is the strength of Dolau Primary School.	PLASC data demonstrates that the English medium stream of Dolau Primary School is larger than the Welsh medium stream. To accommodate parent/carers choice and to comply with the WG's School

		<p>Admissions Code 2013 (005/2013), the numbers of pupils accessing English medium education may result in diminished Welsh medium capacity which cannot be protected under the WG's School Admissions Code 2013 (005/2013), in dual language schools.</p> <p>Should Dolau Primary School continue to be a dual language primary school, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) would not meet its targets set out within the WESP or contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050, as set out by the WG in Cymraeg 2050.</p>
2.	Why a new Welsh medium school when the numbers in Dolau Primary show a decline in Welsh medium pupils?	<p>Growth in Welsh medium education is a strategic target for both the WG and RCTCBC. Should the new school be an English medium primary school, RCTCBC would not meet its targets set out within the WESP or contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050, as set out in Cymraeg 2050.</p>
3.	Would RCTCBC look at cross-county admissions?	<p>Admissions to the new school, as with all schools, will be undertaken in accordance with the WG's School Admissions Code 2013 (005/2013); and in accordance with this, where there is space 'out of county' pupils are able to attend schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).</p>
4.	There is enough capacity in the three schools mentioned in the Consultation Document – where are the figures coming from to show the demand that justifies £15 million for a new school. RCTCBC should look at existing Welsh medium schools that have capacity.	<p>There is capacity in other neighbouring schools although these schools are not in the catchment area for the new development.</p> <p>There is a statutory duty placed on Councils to effectively manage their school places. All school places, capacities, admissions and projections are kept under constant scrutiny.</p> <p>Information on the capacity of all schools affected by proposals must be included within all Consultation Documents in compliance with the WG's <u>School</u></p>

		<p><u>Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018).</u></p> <p>Information on the capacity of all Welsh medium primary schools affected by the proposal is included within the Consultation Document. (Post meeting note: Information on the capacity of the neighbouring English medium primary schools is shown in the Consultation Report).</p>
5.	How many Welsh medium schools in RCT are oversubscribed?	<i>Please see answer to question 4.</i>
6.	More teachers will be needed for growth, but the numbers will be low for Welsh medium education if parents/carers choose to stay at Dolau Primary School regardless of English or Welsh education. Will jobs be safe in the Welsh medium department?	<p>Should the proposal proceed, it is our intention to recommend to the temporary Governing Body of the proposed new Welsh medium primary school and the Governing Body of Dolau Primary School, that any additional posts required as a result of the establishment of the new Welsh medium primary school and Dolau Primary School becoming an English medium primary school, below senior leadership level, are ringfenced to the existing staff employed at Dolau Primary School in the first instance. This process means that staff at Dolau Primary School would be given the first opportunity to apply for additional posts, prior to any posts being advertised externally. If they are successful, they would then simply transfer when the proposal is implemented.</p> <p>However, it was made clear that as this was a Governing Body responsibility this couldn't be guaranteed.</p> <p>RCTCBC has well established HR policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change. RCTCBC's HR Team will visit all staff in Dolau Primary School and make them are aware of the processes that may follow and the operational and personal support that is on offer.</p>
7.	There may not be a job in the new Welsh medium primary school if there is low capacity – where are staff left to go?	<i>Please see answer to question 6.</i>

8.	What will happen to the staff employed in the English medium stream at Dolau Primary School?	<i>Please see answer to question 6.</i>
9.	What is the plan for the immediate future?	Prior to the opening of the new Welsh medium primary school, a Headteacher and temporary Governing Body will be established.
10.	Why couldn't Dolau Primary School remain dual language?	<p>This was what was proposed for the original consultation, however the educational and strategic landscape has now changed.</p> <p>Should the new school be a dual language primary school, RCTCBC would not meet its targets set out within the WESP or contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050, as set out by the WG in Cymraeg 2050.</p> <p>Opening a new dedicated Welsh medium primary school will not only increase the Welsh medium primary education offer in the area but will also protect those Welsh medium primary education pupil places, which is not the case in a dual language school.</p>
11.	This will rip the heart out of Dolau Primary School, simply by focusing on language.	Should the proposal proceed, Dolau Primary School and the new Welsh medium primary school could work in partnership to ensure the history of Dolau Primary School is not forgotten.
12.	This is not about the Welsh language. There is passion in Dolau Primary School and the community, and the new Welsh medium primary school could accommodate a natural drift to being 100.0% Welsh medium education if there was demand.	Noted.
13.	Will RCTCBC safeguard jobs, or will we need to re-apply for our own jobs?	<i>Please see answer to question 6.</i>
14.	In the original consultation, the new school was noted as being Welsh medium but an extension to an English medium Dolau Primary – is this still an	<i>Please see answer to question 2 and question 10.</i>

	option, with the same Senior Management Team?	
15.	In the original consultation, the new school was noted as being Welsh medium but an extension to an English medium Dolau Primary – this would protect jobs in the interim.	<i>Please see answer to question 6 and question 10.</i>
16.	There is not a lot of time for staff to look at other opportunities.	<i>Please see answer to question 6.</i>
17.	When will staff know about the timescales?	<p>Should the proposal proceed, it is proposed that the new Welsh medium primary school will open no later than the 2027 academic year with Dolau Primary School becoming an English medium primary school at this time.</p> <p>Staff would be made aware of the timescales well in advance of this date. This process and the timescales will be defined by the temporary Governing Body.</p>
18.	Will the re-structure of Dolau Primary School staff happen before or after the new Governing Body is established?	<p>RCTCBC will look at what mitigations can be made for risks facing staff at the existing Dolau Primary School as a result of this proposal.</p> <p><i>See response above and also see answer to question 6.</i></p>
19.	What happens if all current staff choose to stay at Dolau Primary School for job security?	<p>Staff numbers depend on pupil numbers, and of course, staff could stay at Dolau Primary School. In the new Welsh medium primary school, there would be opportunities for staff in Welsh medium primary education. RCTCBC has opened three new schools recently, and all staff were kept aware of updates, and knew in advance to make any decisions that were best for them personally. RCTCBC understands that people need peace of mind and that periods of change can be concerning.</p> <p><i>Please also see answer to question 6.</i></p>
21.	Currently, the number of pupils in the Welsh medium stream of Dolau Primary School is decreased. Where will the additional pupils come from and where is the protection for staff?	<p>The proposal has been brought forward to cater for the number of new homes that are being built in the area.</p> <p>The proposal will ensure that the increased demand for both Welsh and English primary school pupil places, as a</p>

		result of the Llanilid housing development, will be met.
22.	If there are two schools then there are two budgets – in the first year, the budget may not protect the staff.	There will be a sufficient budget to support the pupil numbers in each school. RCTCBC will work with the schools on this to ensure any financial impacts are minimised in the short term during the transition period.
23.	Are there projected numbers for the new school?	There is information on this in the consultation document. All school places, capacities, admissions and projections are kept under constant scrutiny and reported to Welsh Government on an annual basis. The monitoring and management of school places is a statutory responsibility and will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.
24.	This is a big change for staff, who could move schools and work under management with which they are not happy. This proposal could result in two less successful schools than the existing Dolau Primary School.	<i>Please see answer to question 6.</i>
25.	Sharing facilities between schools doesn't work.	RCTCBC has experience of schools sharing facilities successfully. Members of the Governing Body and staff of Dolau Primary School are welcome to see these first-hand.
26.	There is no path between the two schools, meaning there is no connectivity. This proposal is positive for RCTCBC, but not for Dolau Primary School.	<p>Should the proposal proceed, Dolau Primary School and the new Welsh medium primary school could work in partnership in many areas.</p> <p>(Post meeting note: The pedestrian link between both school sites has been removed as a result of ecological planning challenges faced by the developer. There is reference to the path however on the planning drawings, and this will be revisited during the detailed design process pre-construction. The aspiration is to deliver the path).</p>
27.	This is a hard experience for people.	<p>All parties are in agreement. RCTCBC has a responsibility towards our staff to make the process as seamless as possible.</p> <p><i>Please also see answer to question 6.</i></p>

28.	Will a new Governing Body, or the existing Governing Body make decisions?	A new temporary Governing Body will be established for the new Welsh medium primary school. The current Governing Body of Dolau Primary would remain as it is.
29.	Will the new Headteacher have a choice in who is appointed?	<p>The Governing Body make staff appointments. The Headteacher appointment is a statutory position, and as such will be advertised externally.</p> <p>Once appointed, the Headteacher and Governing body will be making decision in relation to appointments.</p>
30.	Will the Governing Body look at current staff first, or will they look externally?	<p>This is the decision of the Governing Body. Historically, recommendations have been made for positions to be ringfenced where possible. However, no guarantees can be made.</p> <p><i>Please see answer to question 6.</i></p>
31.	Trade Unions will represent staff interests and make recommendations to the Governing Body for positions to be ringfenced for current staff.	Noted.
32.	The Community Impact Assessment refers to a closing of a maintained school.	<p>This is an error, RCTCBC will update this within the Community Impact Assessment.</p> <p>(Post meeting note: this was done immediately following the meeting).</p>

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged once more to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 17:10pm.