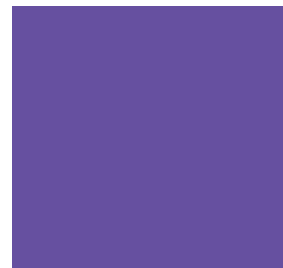
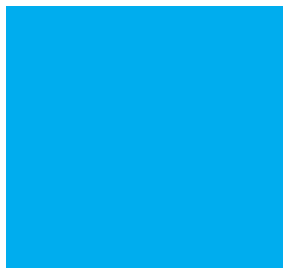
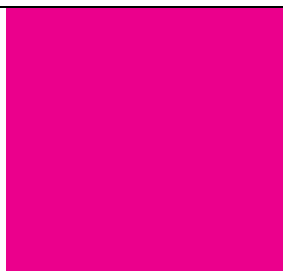


21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS**CONSULTATION REPORT****CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SIXTH FORM AT MOUNTAIN ASH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL WITH PUPILS TRANSFERRING TO ABERDARE COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

The Consultation Report and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg/This document is available in Welsh.

Table of Contents		
Content		Page
1.	Proposal	2
2.	Purpose of the Consultation Report	2
3.	Who Have We Consulted With?	2
4.	Consultation Process	4
5.	Summary of Consultation Responses	5
6.	Response from Estyn	21
7.	Assessment of Consultation	24
8.	Conclusion	24
Appendices		
1A.	Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	
1B.	Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Aberdare Community School	
2A.	Minutes of Meeting with School Council of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	
2B.	Minutes of Meeting with School Council of Aberdare Community School	
3.	Estyn Response	
4.	Feedback from Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee	

1. Proposal

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) wishes to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and amend the catchment area for post-16 education to place Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in the catchment area of Aberdare Community School.

It is proposed that the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School closes by no later than September 2026. To enable the closure of the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School by this date, no new year 12 sixth form pupils would be admitted in September 2025.

The consultation process is made in accordance with the Welsh Government's (WG's) School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018). Section 2.3 of the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) refers to elements of school organisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- Regulated alterations to community, foundation, voluntary schools and community special schools:
 - The introduction of, or ending of, sixth form education at a school.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:

[Proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School with pupils transferring to Aberdare Community School | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#)

2. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This Consultation Report is prepared in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018). Its purpose is to inform stakeholders of the outcome of the consultation held between 2nd December 2024 and 17:00 on 17th January 2025.

3. Who Have We Consulted With?

- The Governing Bodies of:
 - Aberdare Community School.
 - Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.
 - St John Baptist Church in Wales High.
 - Abercynon Primary School.
 - Aberdare Park Primary School.
 - Abernant primary School.
 - Blaengwawr Primary School.
 - Caegarw Primary School.
 - Capcoch Primary School.
 - Caradog Primary School.
 - Cwmaman Primary School.
 - Cwmbach Primary School.
 - Cwmdar Primary School.
 - Darrenlas Primary School.
 - Glenboi Primary School.

- Hirwaun Primary School.
- Llwydcoed Primary School.
- Miskin Primary School.
- Oaklands Primary School.
- Pengeulan Primary School.
- Penrhiwceibr Primary School.
- Penywaun Primary School.
- Perthcelyn Community Primary School.
- Ynysboeth Primary School.
- Parents/carers, prospective parents/carers (where possible), and staff members of:
 - Aberdare Community School.
 - Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.
 - St John Baptist Church in Wales High.
 - Abercynon Primary School.
 - Aberdare Park Primary School.
 - Abernant primary School.
 - Blaengwawr Primary School.
 - Caegarw Primary School.
 - Capcoch Primary School.
 - Caradog Primary School.
 - Cwmaman Primary School.
 - Cwmbach Primary School.
 - Cwmdar Primary School.
 - Darrenlas Primary School.
 - Glenboi Primary School.
 - Hirwaun Primary School.
 - Llwydcoed Primary School.
 - Miskin Primary School.
 - Oaklands Primary School.
 - Pengeulan Primary School.
 - Penrhiwceibr Primary School.
 - Penywaun Primary School.
 - Perthcelyn Community Primary School.
 - Ynysboeth Primary School.
- Pupils of:
 - Aberdare Community School.
 - Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.
- Neighbouring Councils.
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf constituencies.
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Menter Iaith.
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

- Children and Young People's Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.
- Coleg y Cymoedd.

4. Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified in Section 3 were sent a link to electronic copies of the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments, and those that requested paper copies received them. The table that follows also outlines the meetings that were convened with the Governing Body and staff members, and School Councils of both schools.

Making Your Views Known			
School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
School Council			
Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	School Council	8 th January 2025 13:30	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School
Aberdare Community School	School Council	8 th January 2025 13:30	Aberdare Community School
Governing Body and Staff			
Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	Governing Body and Staff	11 th December 2024 15:45	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School
Aberdare Community School	Governing Body and Staff	11 th December 2024 15:45	Aberdare Community School
Public Drop-in Session			
Parents/carers and members of the local community		8 th January 2025 15:30 to 17:30	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School
		8 th January 2025 15:30 to 17:30	Aberdare Community School

All meetings outlined in the previous table were held face-to-face.

Notes of the meetings with the Governing Body and staff members of both schools are attached at Appendix 1A and 1B. These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings along with the responses provided where appropriate.

Notes of the meetings with the School Councils of both schools were taken and are attached at Appendix 2A and 2B. These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meeting along with the responses provided where appropriate.

Two drop-in sessions were also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with officers from RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. The sessions were held face-to-face at both schools. At the drop-in sessions, all attendees were requested to sign in so that the level of attendance could be recorded. The attendance register indicates that 13 people signed in

at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and two people signed in at Aberdare Community School. Where appropriate, attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form. A record of the verbal comments made at each public drop-in session was made and has been included within the themes of this Consultation Report.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the questions raised at the Governing Body and staff and School Council meetings are summarised in the minutes of the meetings attached at Appendix 1A, 1B, 2A and 2B.

In total, 248 responses were received. One was received in writing and 247 were received via the online survey. Of the responses received, 6.9% agreed with the proposal, 87.9% disagreed with the proposal and 5.2% were not sure about the proposal. This is summarised in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	%
Agree	17	6.9%
Disagree	218	87.9%
Not Sure	13	5.2%
Total	248	100.0

In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018), a summary of the written responses received during the consultation period are detailed in the table that follows along with clarification (where required).

To confirm, all responses received during the consultation period have been made available and reviewed by RCTCBC's Cabinet Members.

Summary of Written Responses		
1.	<p>Close all sixth forms and open a sixth form centre.</p> <p><i>"If you are closing one sixth form, close them all."</i></p>	<p>This was an option considered within the Consultation Document, and the reason this option was discounted in included within the Consultation Document.</p> <p>The consultation process is made in accordance with the WG's <u>School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018)</u>.</p> <p>Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:</p>

		<u>Proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School with pupils transferring to Aberdare Community School Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council</u>
2.	<p>Closing the sixth form could have a detrimental impact on future intakes at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School from year seven onwards.</p> <p><i>“If I was a parent and I wanted my child to stay on [at] sixth form I wouldn’t send them to [Mountain Ash Comprehensive School in year seven.”</i></p> <p><i>I think that the proposed closure of 6th form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive will have a detrimental effect on future intakes from year seven upwards.</i></p> <p><i>As a result of this proposal is there an idea of how many pupils would transfer to other schools in RCT or college?</i></p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that this will be the case. Recent consultations to remove sixth form provisions undertaken in Rhondda Cynon Taf have not impacted upon pupil numbers at the schools affected by the proposals.</p> <p>Choosing a school is parent/carer/pupil choice. Applications will be dealt with in accordance with the WG’s <u>School Admissions Code 2013 (05/2013)</u>.</p> <p>No modelling has been undertaken as it is difficult to quantify which pupils will choose to continue their education at college or at one of the schools offering a sixth form offer in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Post-16 retention rates in schools have fallen across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) as pupils are exercising their right to continue their further education by choosing an option of study in either a college or a school that enables them to select a much more varied breadth of curriculum and study options which supports them in their chosen choice of future studies or aids them successfully into employment. For some, College is a more attractive or appropriate option, whilst others choose to go into employment.</p>
3.	<p>Closing the sixth form could have a detrimental impact on pupil achievement.</p> <p><i>Closing the sixth form will have a detrimental impact on pupil achievement in the area.</i></p>	<p>Understandably, some pupils may initially be daunted at the prospect of transferring to a new school. However, it is worth noting that 75.0% of pupils are already accessing provision across at least two school sites. Should the proposal proceed, there will be targeted support for all sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. A new package of support aimed at year 12 pupils, known as EVALUATE, will be focused initially on pupils transferring from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to Aberdare Community School.</p>

		<p>This will include enhanced Careers Advice and Guidance, mentoring and carefully monitored pastoral care.</p> <p>Meaningful and positive transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school setting with little disruption to their wellbeing and education. This is supported by providing effective pastoral and academic support and structured opportunities for pupils to become familiar with the new school environment and staff. Should the proposal proceed, an enhanced collaboration across all areas of the curriculum between both schools can begin to develop from year seven onwards, allowing both schools to foster a collegiate approach and a feeling of belonging across both school communities.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the proposed changes will not have a long term, adverse impact and it should be noted at this point in the consultation process that RCTCBC considers the overall impact of the proposal to be positive.</p> <p>As noted above, Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to improve the standard of post-16 provision within the area.</p>
4.	<p>Closing the sixth form could have a detrimental impact on staffing levels.</p> <p><i>“This will have [an impact] on [the] current staff who may have their jobs impacted or even lost due to losing valuable teaching experience.”</i></p> <p><i>“No teacher with ambition will want to teach in a school without a [sixth form].”</i></p>	<p>The qualifications to teach sixth form are no different from those of lower key stages and year groups, and staff deployed to teach 6th form can also be utilised lower down the school where required. It is recognised that some staff have a passion for teaching at 6th form level and may decide to seek opportunities elsewhere.</p> <p>RCTCBC has well established Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</p> <p>Officers from HR attended both meetings held with staff and governors from both</p>

		schools, and support will be available for all staff that require it to consider their options.
5.	<p>Cost implications to purchase new school uniforms.</p> <p><i>“Buying the uniform...will just take away from good learning time.”</i></p> <p><i>“Will have to spend money to buy new uniform.”</i></p> <p><i>“School uniform is a huge part of a school, and we are proud of ours and are now being asked to change and that is not cheap it takes money and pride away from people, I for one would not be happy being in someone else's uniform.”</i></p>	<p>RCTCBC acknowledges that, should the proposal proceed, there would be cost implications associated with sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School attending Aberdare Community School including the cost of purchasing new school uniforms. However, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School's sixth form uniform is different to the uniform for pupils in years seven to 11, so should pupils choose to continue post-16 education at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School a new uniform would be required regardless of the outcome of this proposal.</p> <p>To note, Aberdare Community School facilitates a school uniform exchange service, where good quality, pre-used school uniform can be accessed by those that need it.</p>
6.	<p>Could result in home to school transport implications.</p> <p><i>“For people who live around this area, it would be unfair for them to have to take a bus or train everyday just to attend school.”</i></p> <p><i>“Travel to any other location for my daughter would be impossible. Public transportation is poor and the fact that she would need to take this to attend rules her out of...attending further education.”</i></p>	<p>Information in relation to RCTCBC's Home to School Transport provision is available on the RCTCBC website.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, it is highly likely that all sixth form pupils living in the catchment area of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will be entitled to free home to school transport to attend post-16 education at Aberdare Community School.</p>
7.	<p>How will pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) be supported.</p> <p><i>“Having a child who is now in year seven who wants to stay on [at sixth form] plus add on his [ALN]...this will put stress on him.”</i></p> <p><i>“Pupils should have a choice of which sixth form they attend...especially...pupils with ALN.”</i></p>	<p>All pupils with ALN will continue to be supported. <u>The Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018</u> provides detailed guidance on the duties and responsibilities of Councils in meeting the ALN of children and young people.</p> <p><u>The ALN Code for Wales (2021)</u> recommends that early years and school settings adopt a graduated response to</p>

	<p><i>They have spent five years in a school, where they are used to the staff, the routine, the building and surrounding area and now you want to completely change the sixth form."</i></p>	<p>meeting the ALN of children and young people. A graduated response means that progressively greater expertise and support can be brought in to address the difficulties a child or young person may be experiencing. Additional or different provision should be made depending on the severity of the child/young person's level of need.</p> <p>This duty and responsibility in this regard will be met regardless of which school a child/young person attends.</p>
8.	<p>Impact on pupils.</p> <p><i>"The year group this is affecting is the very same year group that was affected during Covid-19! They had no transition from primary [school] into secondary school. The rolling affect this has had on their education is huge. It [has] taken years [for them] to settle in and get back on track in terms of where they should be for their age...it is unfair, and it is not in the best interests of the children."</i></p> <p><i>"I think taking children out of the environment they are used to and want to stay in at one of the most important and stressful times they have encountered is disgraceful."</i></p> <p><i>The transition for current pupils is going to massively impact their learning...having to learn new names, form new relationships with new teachers, form new relationships with pupils [etc]."</i></p> <p><i>"Pupils have a right to be educated in their own school...closing the sixth form will have a detrimental impact on pupils."</i></p> <p><i>"I think the option should remain for [pupils] to continue their education in the school they have attended from year seven. It is a big change having to travel to Aberdare daily for sixth form or college and some children are just not ready for that at the end of year 11."</i></p>	<p>The well-being of all pupils has been considered and is paramount to RCTCBC. We acknowledge that some pupils may find the changes more difficult than others.</p> <p>Life transitions are significant features in all young people's lives. All pupils receiving education will experience all periods of change and adaptation and many pupils are already accessing their education across more than one school site and have adjusted well to this. It could be argued that receiving post-16 education on a reduced number of school sites will bring greater stability to pupils and continuity in teaching and learning, and social relationships with staff and peers during their post 16 studies.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that some pupils will need additional support emotionally to adapt to a new school environment and encouragement to make new friends and relationships and to be part of a new social network.</p> <p>Should the proposal be implemented, RCTCBC will work with both schools to support the meaningful delivery of effective transition. The transition arrangements that will be delivered, will ensure there will be lots of opportunities to help pupils navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p>

		<p>An Equality Impact Assessment for the proposal has been prepared in line with the requirements of the WG's <u>School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018)</u>. In addition, RCTCBC considers that the proposal benefits the children and young people in accordance with the seven core aims set out within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>
9.	<p>Is there capacity at Aberdare Community School to accommodate all sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School?</p> <p><i>"[Aberdare Community School] is already packed with pupils so adding more will add on extra stress to an already stressful and overcrowded environment."</i></p> <p><i>"There are already far too many pupils at Aberdare Community School."</i></p> <p><i>"I am concerned with the issues regarding space, equipment, and funding for Aberdare Community School."</i></p>	<p>As outlined within the Consultation Document, there is sufficient capacity at Aberdare Community School to accommodate all prospective sixth form pupils of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. The current capacity of Aberdare Community School is 1574 and there is currently on roll 1238 pupils. Therefore, there is ample space to accommodate growth in numbers.</p> <p>Schools receive post-16 funding based on the number of post-16 pupils they have on roll. If Aberdare Community School has more sixth form pupils, their funding will increase, and they will have more money to spend on post-16 provision and to make any necessary changes to accommodate all pupils.</p>
10.	<p>Community Impact</p> <p><i>What does the RCTCBC see as the impact upon Aberdare Community School?</i></p>	<p>The impact for Aberdare Community School will be positive in terms of increased pupil numbers which will in turn increase the funding received for post 16 education. With additional resources, the school can plan a more cost effective and financially viable post 16 provision which will enhance the curriculum and vocational offer. Due to increased pupil numbers, this will impact on the financial stability for the school, greater curriculum choice and engagement from pupils leading to improved outcomes for pupils.</p> <p>The Community Impact Assessment is a live document and will be updated to explicitly reflect this information.</p>
11.	<p>May result in some pupils not continuing their post-16 education.</p>	<p>The Consultation Document outlines that the percentage of year 11 pupils returning to sixth form at Mountain Ash</p>

	<p><i>"I believe the prospect of changing schools will be enough to put some year 11 pupils off the idea of continuing their education. If even one [Mountain Ash Comprehensive School] pupil decides against continuing into sixth form altogether as a result of this proposal, then it would signify a massive failure in the educational system within [RCTCBC]."</i></p> <p><i>"The children of Mountain Ash [Comprehensive School] deserve the opportunity to attend sixth form in their area. This will prevent many children from continuing their education if it means travelling to Aberdare every day. The children of Mountain Ash [Comprehensive School] deserve better."</i></p> <p><i>Pupils may decide to go straight to college or another school to continue their education at post-16.</i></p> <p><i>"I...think that these potential sixth form pupils will decide to go straight to college or look towards Bryncelynog [Comprehensive School] instead of [Aberdare Community School] for their sixth form."</i></p>	<p>Comprehensive School over the past ten years has more than halved from 60.9% in 2014/2015 to 29.7% in 2023/24 whilst the percentage of year 11 pupils returning to sixth form at Aberdare Community School since the school opened has fallen significantly from 58.4% in 2015/2016 to 30.6% in 2023/2024. This means that the majority of pupils are already choosing to follow alternative pathways to remaining in school to continue post-16 education.</p> <p>Under current Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium arrangements, some post-16 pupils access their education across three school sites which impacts upon valuable study time. The extensive travel involved in accessing post-16 courses across multiple school sites could be a potential barrier to pupils progressing into post-16 education within the school setting, adversely impacting upon retention and progression into Further and Higher Education.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, transferring sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to Aberdare Community School would create a larger sixth form which would have more potential for economies of scale and financial efficiencies which can accrue and be reinvested for the benefit of all pupils. Larger sixth forms also enable a broad and balanced post-16 education to pupils that better meets the needs of individual pupils and as such could improve pupil outcomes.</p>
12.	<p>Mountain Ash Comprehensive School offers some subjects at post-16 that Aberdare Community School doesn't, will these subjects transfer?</p> <p><i>"Many popular subjects such as psychology are not available in [Aberdare Community School] while they are available at Mountain Ash [Comprehensive School]."</i></p>	<p>There is only one course currently offered in Mountain Ash Comprehensive School that is not currently offered by the other schools in the Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium. Should this proposal proceed, and should there be future demand for this course, then support will be offered to the schools in the consortium to provide this course to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the choices available to pupils.</p>

	<p><i>I currently teach level 3 engineering [at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School]... [Aberdare Community School]...haven't got the equipment or the staff with the appropriate skills and qualifications to deliver this subject."</i></p>	<p>Schools routinely review and revise their post 16 offer to meet need and demand.</p> <p>If there is a need for a specific course, then a potential arrangement to collaborate and share staff under a secondment arrangement could be an option that is explored. This will all depend on what the pupils want and existing staffing arrangements. Creative solutions will be supported where appropriate but until we have final pupil numbers it is difficult to project the potential demand for certain subjects. It is for school leaders to decide on the curriculum offer in their schools based on the demand for certain subjects. However, an increase in pupil numbers and funding will influence the capacity of a school to provide an extensive curriculum offer.</p>
13.	<p>Parents/carers of pupils have developed a relationship with the staff at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and these would have to be developed from scratch with staff at Aberdare Community School.</p> <p><i>"[The sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School] is a key part in the experience of attending the school, maintaining relationships with teachers that have been made for a number of years attending the school."</i></p> <p><i>"The children have spent five years [at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School] getting to know the staff and surroundings. I feel taking away the sixth form at [Mountain Ash Comprehensive School] may put children off staying on for sixth form if they are required to go to Aberdare Community School]."</i></p> <p>Schools know their pupils and often their families well, which helps them to offer targeted support and guidance post-16 – this could be lost.</p>	<p>Throughout the consultation process, comments received from the pupils at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School have been very complimentary and extremely positive about the support and guidance offered by the staff at the school. However, should the proposal proceed, we would hope that those positive relationships would be forged and continue to be developed between the pupils and the staff at Aberdare Community School.</p> <p>The transition arrangements that will be delivered to pupils will also be available to parents/carers too, and there will be opportunities for both parents/carers and pupils to visit the school prior to any changes being implemented. . This will help both the pupils, and their families navigate the change and happily settle into their new school as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Good transition inevitably entails effective information sharing about pupils, their skills and any support needs.</p>

	<p><i>“Schools know the pupils and often their families well. This helps them to offer well targeted support and guidance post-16. It is often easy for information on a pupil’s strengths and weaknesses to influence teaching and the support the school can offer without the need for screening and assessment on starting post-16 learning.”</i></p>	
14.	<p>Pupils could have a greater choice of subjects.</p> <p><i>“Pupils will still have access to a higher level curriculum.”</i></p> <p><i>“More choice for pupils in the long run.”</i></p>	<p>Larger sixth forms have more potential for economies of scale and financial efficiencies which can accrue and be reinvested for the benefit of all pupils. Larger sixth forms also enable a broad and balanced post-16 education to pupils that better meets the needs of individual pupils and as such could improve pupil outcomes.</p> <p>Transferring sixth form pupils from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to Aberdare Community School would create more social interaction opportunities have a potential positive impact on pupil wellbeing. There could also be greater flexibility for pupils due to an extended, more enhanced educational environment in which to learn and grow. These extended experiences will provide good preparation for life beyond school.</p>
15.	<p>Sixth form classes at Aberdare Community School could be too large.</p> <p><i>“Aberdare Community School...will also face larger class sizes at A level.”</i></p> <p><i>“Most [pupils] prefer the relatively small size and familiarity of their school sixth form [at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School].”</i></p>	<p>Schools receive post-16 funding based on the number of post-16 pupils they have on roll. If Aberdare Community School has more sixth form pupils, their funding will increase, and they will have more money to spend on post-16 provision and make any necessary changes to accommodate all pupils. This could include exploring a wider variety of post-16 subjects and could potentially mean there would be more choice for pupils as well as the opportunity to develop more post-16 pastoral care.</p> <p>Estyn’s thematic review on ‘<u>A Levels and Sixth Forms in Further Education Colleges</u>’ in November 2018, outlines:</p>

		<p><i>“Class sizes vary dramatically across centres, from one to about 30 [pupils]. In very small classes, it is difficult to hold productive discussions and for [pupils] to learn from each other.”</i></p> <p>Therefore, having larger sixth forms will benefit pupils, help build relationships, provide greater opportunities for student interaction, study groups and a wider experience of sharing knowledge and ideas. There will also be an opportunity for pupils to ‘buddy up’ providing each other with peer support with increased social interaction and well-being.</p>
16.	<p>The catchment area for Mountain Ash Comprehensive School is deprived, this could have a detrimental impact on pupils who are already disadvantaged.</p> <p><i>“I think a lot of children will be discouraged to [go] on to [post-16] education if they have to change school. Poorer members of the community will be even less likely to continue their education. Children [who are] anxious or of a shy, nervous disposition will be put off by attending another school. This is a definite step back...why do poorer communities need to suffer?”</i></p> <p><i>“Many areas within Mountain Ash are considered deprived areas where individuals within these areas are considered less likely to access [further and] higher education, making access to sixth form more difficult will increase this likelihood.”</i></p>	<p>All comments in relation to deprivation are noted.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that some pupils will need additional support and enhanced transition into a new environment, however it also provides an opportunity for pupils to grow and meet new people and have new experiences which will help some pupils mature and become more independent pupils for the next step in their lives.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment for the proposal has been prepared in line with the requirements of the WG’s <u>School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018)</u>.</p> <p>Section three of the Equality Impact Assessment sets out RCTCBC’s Socio-economic Duty in relation to this proposal. The socio-economic disadvantages relevant for the area are listed using data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Each disadvantage is considered within the context of this proposal, and the given impact of this proposal upon each disadvantage is listed, detailed and evidenced.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, it is highly likely that all sixth form pupils living in the catchment area of Mountain Ash</p>

		Comprehensive School will be entitled to free home to school transport to attend post-16 education at Aberdare Community School, which should remove one of the barriers for those from more deprived socio-economic backgrounds accessing post-16 education.
17.	<p>The Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium works well, why change it?</p> <p><i>Will there be any implications for the Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium moving from three school to two?</i></p>	<p>Should this proposal proceed, it would allow RCTCBC to replace two small, inefficient sixth forms with one larger, more sustainable sixth form offering a broader curriculum offer. This would have a positive financial impact on both schools.</p> <p>The Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium arrangements would continue between Aberdare Community School and St. John Baptist Church in Wales High School, to ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible course choice. However, it is anticipated that the need for pupils to travel between sites during the school day would be far reduced, given the wide range of courses that would be on offer at each school.</p>
18.	<p>The presence of sixth form pupils provides pre-16 pupils with good role models.</p> <p><i>“The sixth form pupils help out with a lot of key roles as part of the Prefect Team which helps to build strong [relationships] between staff and all school years.”</i></p> <p><i>“The presence of sixth form [pupils] provides pre-16 pupils with good role models.”</i></p>	<p>RCTCBC recognises this point, however, more opportunities could be made for year 11 pupils to take on this role which would be beneficial for both the younger and the older pupils at the school.</p>
19.	<p>This proposal would allow Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to focus on teaching years seven to 11.</p> <p><i>“Budgets will be freed up for Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think that it would be beneficial to both schools and pupils.”</i></p>	<p>All pupils at both schools would benefit from this proposal as resources currently used to subsidise post-16 education would be redirected for the benefit of 11 to 16 year old pupils accessing statutory education.</p> <p>The data provided within the Consultation Document demonstrates that sixth form pupil numbers at both schools have fallen drastically over the</p>

		<p>last decade, with fewer year 11 pupils choosing to return to both schools for post-16 education.</p> <p>Low sixth form pupil numbers restrict the range of post-16 courses that schools can offer, and often result in small class sizes. Delivering post-16 education in this way is not cost effective and results in schools diverting funding intended for the education of statutory age pupils (years seven to 11) to meet the shortfall of providing post-16 education.</p>
20.	<p>This proposal would result in pupils spending less time travelling between schools in the Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium.</p> <p><i>“[Would] stop the waste of time between lessons with [pupils] having to travel.”</i></p>	<p>Under current Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium arrangements, some post-16 pupils access their education across three school sites which impacts upon valuable study time. The extensive travel involved in accessing post-16 courses across multiple school sites could be a potential barrier to pupils progressing into post-16 education within the school setting, adversely impacting upon retention and progression into Further and Higher Education.</p> <p>In addition, pupils currently experience periods of self-study with schools having different inset days losing the opportunity for school based learning.</p> <p>Whilst pupils would need to travel further to attend school at the start and end of the school day, should the proposal proceed, there would be less travelling between sites would provide pupils with more time to engage in independent learning and promote a more positive post-16 experience and a greater sense of belonging.</p>
21.	<p>Is RCTCBC doing anything more to address the issues included in the consultation document such as lost study time, travel times and costs?</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this proposal will address the issues raised post closure. Positive transitional support for pupils and staff will ensure a successful future learning pathway for pupils with an improved curriculum offer, less travelling time for young people, an improved financial model for both schools with improved pupil engagement and increased retention.</p>

<p>22.</p>	<p>What modelling has been done to estimate the effect to Aberdare Community Schools pre/post-16 funding should the proposal go ahead?</p> <p><i>“The proposal would provide an opportunity to establish a cost effective provision, that is financially viable whilst offering a broad and balanced curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of all [post-16] pupils.”</i></p> <p><i>‘How many extra courses is it anticipated that Aberdare Community School will put on and has RCT modelled that there will be sufficient funding?’</i></p>	<p>At present, the total funding allocation per pupil is £5,709 at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and £5,676 at Aberdare Community School. Should the proposal proceed, the estimated allocation per pupil at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School would be £5,775 and £5,635 at Aberdare Community School.</p> <p>Post-16 provision is funded directly from the WG based on the programmes of study undertaken by pupils. A review has been undertaken of the programmes of study provided under current Cynon Valley Post-16 Consortium arrangements. Should the proposal proceed, Aberdare Community School will receive an increase in post-16 funding to reflect the additional pupil numbers plus it will benefit from economies of scale as there will be larger classes e.g. a potential increase from 12 to 15 in a history class which will reduce the cost per pupil of that class. This will have a positive financial impact as the potential financial economies of scale can be redirected to benefit the whole school.</p> <p>The number of courses will be led by the demand generated for the pupils so at this point in time the number of courses required cannot be quantified.</p>
<p>23.</p>	<p>Why can't RCTCBC invest more into Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to bring it up to the same standards as Aberdare Community School.</p> <p><i>“I have no doubt Aberdare [Community School] is an excellent facility...but [the sixth form at] Mountain Ash Comprehensive School is also a great facility and should be invested in and retained for future generations.”</i></p> <p><i>“Further investment in the facilities at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to bring it up to the standard at Aberdare</i></p>	<p>RCTCBC has invested significantly in the school over the last few years improving the facilities at the school internally and externally. RCTCBC has an obligation to ensure that its buildings are safe, watertight and warm, and that's what it has done and will continue to do.</p> <p>Mountain Ash Comprehensive School has received regular visits by RCTCBC's Corporate Maintenance Team and its contractors, and RCTCBC also undertakes cyclical maintenance checks and surveys of its mechanical and electrical equipment.</p>

	<i>Community School would be money well spent."</i>	All schools in RCTCBC buy into a Building Maintenance Service Level Agreement (SLA) and work is undertaken and managed through this Maintenance Service SLA.
24.	What, if any, resources will be transferred from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to Aberdare Community School?	We do not anticipate that any resources will be transferred. As previously stated, it is anticipated that the impact for Aberdare Community School will be positive in terms of increased pupil numbers which will in turn increase the funding received for post 16 education allowing additional resources to be procured as required.
25.	Will this proposal result in any changes to the sixth form at St. John Baptist Church in Wales High School?	This consultation does not propose any changes to the post-16 provision at St John Baptist Church in Wales High School.
26.	<p>Taff Ely and the Rhondda have similar arrangements in place already to what is proposed. What lessons have been learnt?</p> <p>Have these arrangements affected examination attainment?</p>	<p>Many positive lessons have been learned in terms of sixth form pupils from schools in Taff Ely and the Rhondda Valleys that now benefit from a much wider range of post-16 subjects.</p> <p>Good communication between schools has meant that pupils are well supported. Transition is a major factor in ensuring pupils are supported to adapt to the change and pastoral care in sixth forms is important to ensure pupils transitioning from pre-16 education feel supported and develop a sense of belonging to their post-16 education provision.</p> <p>It is very difficult to ascertain if attainment has been affected. This is due to the reasonable adjustments that have been undertaken for GCSE or equivalent, and A Level or equivalent examinations, over the past five years due to the pandemic. However, gaps in the key performance indicators between RCTCBC averages and Wales averages, in the main are decreasing.</p>
27.	A number of comments received during the consultation process relate to the perception that Aberdare Community School has a negative reputation.	RCTCBC cannot comment on personal opinions that have been shared during this process. There are processes for raising any concerns with any schools within RCTCBC and they sit outside of this statutory process. Aberdare

		<p>Community School is not a school that causes concern and does not access enhanced school improvement support.</p> <p>The Consultation Document sets out the Educational Case for this proposal. Within the Consultation Document, the most recent Estyn inspection information is outlined for both schools.</p> <p>Estyn are a statutory consultee and have been consulted as a part of this process. Estyn's responses is included in full as an appendix to this report, however in summary Estyn considered that the proposal is likely to improve the standard of post-16 provision within the area.</p>
--	--	--

In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with RCTCBC's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The table that follows provides a summary of the responses received from those respondents that answered the questions. As a result of the responses received, the Welsh Language Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal has been updated accordingly.

Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015: Summary of Consultation Responses				
Questions	Responses			
How do you feel the proposal could impact on opportunities for pupils to use and promote the Welsh Language?	Negatively	Don't Know	Positively	Not Sure
	%			
	46.0%	26.0%	5.0%	23.0%
How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased.	Positive Effects Increased	Negative Effects Decreased	Not Sure	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make learning Welsh fun, adapt the way it's taught so it caters to everyone as not all pupils 	None.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop focusing on the Welsh language it has no impact on the pupils attending either 	

	learn in the same way. • Promoting basic skills [in the Welsh language] to parents/carers, grandparents etc.		of these schools. • [There would be no] effect whatsoever, but the Welsh language should be promoted.
Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	%		
	36.0%	18.0%	46.0%

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, RCTCBC 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 proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1. How would the proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex.
- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Sexuality.
- Religion/Belief.
- Gender Identity.
- Relationship Status.
- Pregnancy.
- Preferred Language.

Of those respondents that answered this question, the majority, 60.0%, commented that the proposal would have an impact on the age characteristic and 51.0% commented that the proposal would have an impact on the disability characteristic.

Of those respondents that commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their age, reasons for the negative impact included:

- “I have a daughter, who is keen to finish her education within Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.
- “We are asking pupils to make an even greater decision at 16 years of age. Not only are [we] asking them to choose subjects that will affect future life choices, but they will be making this decision on the venue too.”

Of those respondents that commented that the proposal could negatively impact them due to their disability, reasons for the negative impact included:

- “[My] child has [ALN], changing school at that stage would be impossible for her.”

- “[My child has ALN], would mean completely changing routine and familiarity and also putting [them] at danger due to increased travelling and being in a busy town centre with main roads and more people.”
- I have autism like many others who still attend [Mountain Ash Comprehensive] School. The closing of the sixth form would cause me to end my education because I wouldn't be able to cope with the change in environment.”

As a result of the responses received, the Equality Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal has been updated accordingly.

6. Response from Estyn

In compliance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix 3. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 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 considered that the proposal is likely to improve the standard of post-16 provision within the area. In accordance with the WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018), the areas of the response from Estyn that require clarification are documented in the table that follows.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
It appears that [RCTCBC] has not considered this decisions impact on 11 to 16 provisions sufficiently well at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. For example, siblings may decide to go to Aberdare Community School even though they live in the Mountain Ash Comprehensive School area.	<p>The data within the consultation document demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity in Aberdare Community School to cater for additional pupils should parents make this choice.</p> <p>There are currently 32 pupils residing in the Mountain Ash Comprehensive School catchment area attending Aberdare Community School, and so this is already a choice that is available for parents and pupils in the Cynon Valley. Choosing a school is a parent/carers choice and applications will be dealt with in accordance with the WG's School Admissions Code 2013 (05/2013).</p> <p>Also to note, following a number of school organisational changes affecting post-16 provision implemented by the Council over the last few years, there is no evidence to demonstrate the changes have had a negative impact upon pupil numbers on the schools that have lost their post-16 provision. In addition, the data contained within the consultation</p>

	<p>document demonstrates that 75% of post-16 pupils on roll at Mountain Ash Community School already attend Aberdare Community School for elements of their learning as part of the Cynon Valley Consortium.</p> <p>Should the proposal proceed, sixth form pupils living in the catchment area of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will be entitled to free home to school transport to attend post-16 education at Aberdare Community School. This provision will not be available for those statutory aged pupils that wish to attend out of catchment schools.</p> <p>An enhanced collaboration across all areas of the curriculum between both schools can begin to develop from year seven onwards, allowing both schools to foster a collegiate approach and a feeling of belonging across both school communities. This will strengthen the delivery of meaningful and positive transition ensuring that pupils settle into their new school setting with little disruption to their wellbeing and education.</p>
<p>[RCTCBC] has appropriately outlined the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal. These risks include a reduction in staff at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School due to some roles no longer being required, an increase in traffic on the road network and the negative impact on the Mountain Ash Comprehensive School community with the removal of the sixth form. Whilst [RCTCBC] has presented suitable mitigation to these risks, there is no information regarding how many staff would be affected by these changes. However, [RCTCBC] considers the possible loss of employment to be a medium impact as opposed to a high impact.</p>	<p>It is difficult to definitively respond to how many staff would be affected by this change until the number of pupils are confirmed due to the financial situation. RCTCBC aims to successfully redeploy staff. If there is a need for a specific course, then a potential arrangement to collaborate and share staff under a secondment arrangement could be an option that is explored. This all depends on what the pupils want. Creative solutions will be supported but we are unsure at the moment until we have final pupil numbers.</p> <p>RCTCBC has well established HR policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.</p> <p>There are significant impacts on transport at present due to the fact that most pupils access education across more than one school site. The proposal will allow pupils to be transported twice only during a school day, to and from school which will minimise lost study time.</p>

<p>[RCTCBC] has indicated how the proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School with pupils transferring to Aberdare Community School by no later than September 2026 could have a major positive impact on all five Estyn inspection areas. Whilst these reasonably outline the potential benefits for Aberdare Community School, they do not consider the impact on Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. Hence, they do not provide a balanced viewpoint.</p>	<p>Noted. It is also recognised that there is now a new inspection framework for schools.</p> <p>It is RCTCBC's view that the proposal to close the sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School with pupils transferring to Aberdare Community School by no later than September 2026, could have a major positive impact on a range of school improvement areas in Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, as detailed below:</p> <p>Standards (Learning) (Teaching and Learning) – Small sixth forms are financially unviable and, where they exist, resources intended for the benefit of 11 to 16 year old pupils accessing statutory education are redirected to subsidise the post-16 provision. This is unsustainable and impacts upon the educational offer for younger pupils and presents schools with significant budgetary challenges. This proposal will improve the 11 to 16 provisions at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School as the resources available for statutory aged pupils will be increased given the improvements to the financial viability of the school.</p> <p>Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning (Wellbeing, Care, Support and Guidance) – This proposal will improve the 11 to 16 provisions at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School as the resources available for statutory aged pupils will be increased given the improvements to the financial viability of the school.</p> <p>Teaching and Learning Experiences (Teaching and Learning) – The data provided within the Consultation Document demonstrates that sixth form pupil numbers at both schools have fallen drastically over the last decade, with fewer year 11 pupils choosing to return to both schools for post-16 education.</p> <p>Low sixth form pupil numbers restrict the range of post-16 courses that schools can offer, and often result in small class sizes. Delivering post-16 education in this way is not cost</p>
---	--

	<p>effective and results in schools diverting funding intended for the education of statutory age pupils (years seven to 11) to meet the shortfall of providing post-16 education.</p> <p>Care, Support and Guidance (Wellbeing, Care, Support and Guidance) – It is anticipated that this proposal will improve the 11 to 16 care, support and guidance provisions at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School as the resources available for statutory aged pupils will be increased as a result of the positive impact upon the financial viability of the school.</p> <p>Leadership (and Management) (Leading and Improvement) – It is important that leadership in schools is supported by fit for purpose resources that are appropriate for education in the 21st century. All pupils at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School would continue to benefit from suitable and stimulating areas in which to learn and the appropriate resources and equipment a 21st century learning environment offers.</p> <p>This proposal will improve the 11 to 16 provisions at both schools as the resources available for the statutory aged pupils will be increased given the improvements to the financial viability of both provisions.</p>
--	---

7. Assessment of Consultation

In accordance with WG's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018), a further assessment of the proposal has been undertaken. This involved a review of the same matters assessed in formulating the proposal, in conjunction with giving consideration to the responses received during the consultation period.

After further consideration of the proposal, and consciously considering the responses received to the proposal, the conclusions that have been reached are below.

8. Conclusion

No information that has been presented during the consultation is deemed to necessitate a change to the Consultation Document, as such the information contained within it remains unchanged. Therefore, the recommendation of this report is that a Statutory Notice be published, to reflect the proposal as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress the implementation of this proposal.