

## **Minutes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Trallwng Infants School**

<b>Date</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2024
<b>Time</b>	15:45
<b>Venue</b>	Trallwng Infants School

<b>Attendance</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Title</b>
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Lisa Howell	LH	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Catrin Edwards	CE	Head of Transformation Admissions and Governance
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Assistant Project Officer
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Nicola Tilling	NT	Senior Human Resources Officer.

### **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.

### **3. Staff and Governor Questions**

The Governing Body and staff members of Trallwng Infants 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.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Question/Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
1.	There are big worries about job security, and we are hoping to hear some assurances.	RCTCBC's Human Resources (HR) team are here to help. We have done many consultations over the years and strive to assist where we can. We appreciate the impact this will have, and RCTCBC's HR team will do all they can throughout the consultation, including having meetings with staff. They have previously met all staff of a school to talk through options and to work with individuals to make personal decisions. RCTCBC's HR team can start helping as soon as staff want, and RCTCBC's Occupational Health Team can also be engaged with if necessary.

2.	The Consultation Document mentioned that jobs could be ringfenced – what does this actually mean for staff?	Each Governing Body hires their own staff, and they cannot be forced to take re-deployed staff. We would ask the Governing Body(GB) of Coedpenmaen Primary School to ringfence any positions should any become available but this will be the GBs decision.
3.	At Rhigos Primary School, staff didn't know until June that the closure was happening. This is worrying. Will we find ourselves in this situation?	This is a prescriptive process with specific timescales to follow. If the Consultation Report goes to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Cabinet in January 2025, the final date (after the Statutory Notice period) would be March/April 2025. The Rhigos Primary School proposal was called-in at every stage of the consultation process, which delayed the final decision by around six weeks.
4.	Could the proposal be called-in here like it was in Rhigos Primary School? It is a shame that there is nothing to safeguard staff when there is a lot at stake.	There are no guarantees that it won't be called-in – this is part of the democratic process so yes, the same thing could happen here as it did in Rhigos Primary School.
5.	It is unfair to wait until the last minute for jobs to be ringfenced. Staff will lose opportunities.	RCTCBC's HR team would work through the process on the basis that the proposal is going ahead so that any preparation work with staff that is required has already been done.
6.	A statement was made by the Ward Member that pupils from Trallwng Infants School will have to go to Coedpenmaen Primary School – is this correct? There are also rumours that pupils would go to Ysgol Bro Taf.	Parents/carers can apply to any school, this is down to parental choice. The school admissions criteria will be adopted if a school is full.
7.	Nothing seems aligned for a transformational process considering the tight timescales (redundancies, job vacancies etc.). Why are you not looking after people?	RCTCBC understands that this is an unsettling and challenging time. We have worked hard historically to help with staff re-deployments. This will be a decision for Cabinet and will be based on the outcome of the consultation. There is a statutory obligation to keep school places and surplus spaces under review to make the best use of public resources.
8.	RCTCBC has a statutory obligation to provide education. Getting rid of a school doesn't do that.	This proposal does not diminish the education available. This consultation is being rolled out in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. Stakeholder feedback will be included in the Consultation Report to RCTCBC's Cabinet.

9.	There are contradictions in the Consultation Document about investment (£227,000 on backlog of maintenance – no one has seen a list of what this money covers).	The condition survey of the building has a list of what works are required. This can be shared.
10.	Why have you recently spent money on Trallwng Infants School when this is a use of public money? When was the decision made to close Trallwng Infants School?	Over the last 2 years grant funding has been used to deliver kitchen improvements to enable the roll out of Universal Free School Meals that we have a statutory responsibility to deliver. RCTCBC cannot pre-determine that any school will close, and so will continue to maintain the school and undertake necessary works to ensure safe operation of the school and deliver WG policies. Kitchen improvements and the sensory room are examples of what the money was spent on. It is important that we deliver for the children's needs.
11.	It's really poor to invest in a building that will be made redundant.	There is a lot of equipment that can be re-used. A decision has not yet been made, and we have a duty to make sure all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) are fit-for-purpose for pupils and staff.
12.	In your experience, how many schools have won their consultations? It is frustrating to feel like we are just going through the motions because 99.0% of proposals do go ahead. It's unfair and we don't know what to do.	A number of schools across Wales have managed to oppose a consultation. In RCT, there was a school consultation a while ago that did not proceed following careful consideration by Cabinet. Sometimes there are variations made to the proposals (catchment changes, learning support classes etc.).
13.	The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data in the Consultation Document suggests that the proposal has developed over a period of time based on the decline in pupil numbers. What was the trigger point for this consultation?	We keep all of our schools under review, pupil numbers being one factor we regularly monitor.
14.	Previously, decisions had to be based on an educational position.	The Consultation Document covers all of the required information to bring forward the proposal in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code. We look at the effectiveness and efficiencies, the impact on the teaching and learning of small schools that have smaller budgets. Estyn have been consulted on this proposal – we are awaiting a response.

15.	Would RCTCBC's Education team and the Education Cabinet Members be able to say that Trallwng Infants School pupils will not receive a lower education provision?	This is something that Estyn will comment on in their response to the proposal.
16.	The timeframe (one year) was a shock. If we knew earlier, parents/carers and staff would have felt better. Was an amalgamation with Coedpenmaen Primary School ever considered?	The proposal is the option that we think was the best to put forward. Any alternative options or views can be put forward in the feedback forms.
17.	Is there a safe capacity at Coedpenmaen Primary School for all of Trallwng Infant Schools pupils?	Yes, there is capacity. The pupil numbers are included within the Consultation Document.
18.	The PLASC data in the Consultation Document is contradicted. You are using the data to write the narrative you want. The cost per child is also different to the WG data. The Consultation Document lacks provisional figures and costs of what will be saved.	The data in the Consultation Document is accurate. We are not in an easy financial climate, and we must consider the effectiveness of keeping small schools open. The Consultation Document has the information required as set out by the WG's School Organisation Code, but we can provide additional information relating to the cost savings in the Consultation Report if requested.
19.	Who will send their child to a school that is under consultation?	This is down to parent/carer choice. It is hard to make assumptions or to give absolutes as a decision has not been made.
20.	There is no strong rationale behind the proposal.	All of the relevant information is in the Consultation Document. It is up to RCTCBC's Cabinet to decide if they will proceed with the proposal. Any feedback received will be included in the Consultation Report.
21.	The claim that there is space in Coedpenmaen Primary School contradicts their last Estyn report recommendations.	The recommendations by Estyn have been addressed.
22.	Would extra building be needed at Coedpenmaen Primary School?	No extra space is needed at Coedpenmaen Primary School, there is capacity for all pupils. Some adaptations may be required to accommodate for the increase in younger pupils.
23.	Is it right that parents/carers can't apply for a place in another school until June 2025.	Parents/carers can apply for an in-year transfer at the required time. There are no capacity issues in schools in the area so this should not be an issue.
24.	Additional learning need (ALN) pupils will struggle with the	There are no certainties, and we understand it is challenging. We have to make sure that

	transition, which needs to start now. What support will be there? There is no room in specialist provision so they will have to apply to a mainstream primary school while decisions are made.	no child is disadvantaged by this decision. It is difficult as we cannot pre-empt the decision.
25.	Coedpenmaen Primary School is coming out of Estyn special measures. This proposal is putting pressure on them to fill the school. We have concerns as parents/carers and think that it is unfair to Coedpenmaen Primary School.	We have to accept that they are out of Estyn special measures – Estyn inspections reflect a point in time. It is a choice for parents/carers to make, but we are confident that Coedpenmaen Primary School will go from strength to strength.
26.	Once the decision is made, can we make admissions application for in-year transfers?	If a decision is made to proceed with the proposal that the Council's Admissions team will visit and talk to all parents/carers to support them through this process. We need to ensure that the transition process is robust.
27.	Is there a choice between re-deployment and redundancy? If we are unhappy with the redeployment, can we then consider redundancy?	RCTCBC's HR team will look for re-deployment that works for the staff. If unsuccessful, the redundancy figure won't change.
28.	When will the re-deployment phase end?	RCTCBC's HR team will issue the notice for teachers by the end of May 2025. Re-deployment positions will be looked at all the way up to the end of August 2025. The 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2025 is the end of the phase. The end of the redundancy phase is the 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2025. RCTCBC's HR team will work with staff, and the re-deployment positions can have trial-periods to ensure that all parties are happy with the situation.
29.	If we are unsuccessful by August 2025 and have to take redundancy, what will happen?	Staff have to have a break of employment for 28 days to retain their redundancy. There are different schemes with different rules attached. RCTCBC's HR team will support staff with this.
30.	When can we get redundancy figures?	Figures can only be given six months in advance, but an estimate can be given before. RCTCBC's HR team can work with staff to do this at the required time if required.
31.	When did RCTCBC request for the Consultation Document to be drafted?	In the early summer period. Writing Consultation Documents can be intensive, and the proposals are kept confidential, even within RCTCBC's 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools team.
32.	We would appreciate transparency on the proposal as it	These types of proposals don't happen very often – it all depends on the situation.

	would help us make decisions. The impact this could have on pupils is concerning to parents/carers.	RCTCBC's HR team work hard with schools to mitigate the negative impact. We understand it is unsettling, but we will work as best as we can in partnership with the staff at the school.
33.	<p>*This is a statement, not a question.</p> <p>One of our Teacher Leadership Responsibility (TLR) holders applied for both of the TLR positions at Coedpenmaen Primary School and, despite having good working and professional relationships with the senior leadership team and Chair of Governors at Coedpenmaen Primary School she was told yesterday that she was unsuccessful. I know that given the opportunity, she will be told that another candidate performed better on the day – an easy answer. Regardless of performance on the day, most on the interview panel have first-hand knowledge of the experience and qualities this member of staff could have brought to Coedpenmaen Primary School.</p> <p>Staff have been told that below leadership level jobs will be ring fenced at Coedpenmaen Primary School. However, in light of recent events the promise of ring fenced jobs and looking after the staff feel like empty words and to say the wellbeing of staff at Trallwng Infants School has been negatively impacted is very much an understatement.</p> <p>Staff at Trallwng Infants School feel like it has become a 'them' and 'us', rather than working together at what is an incredibly difficult and uncertain time for everyone here. I don't want a response, but I feel that everyone here should know the depth of</p>	Noted.

	<p>feeling and the disappointment that is felt at the moment.</p> <p><i>*Statement read out by the Chair of Governors and asked to be included in full.</i></p>	
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#### 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 to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to [schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk).

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 17:15.