

Appendix 2:

Equality Impact Assessment (with Socio-Economic Duty) for the draft Education Strategic Plan 2026-2030

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An Equality Impact Assessment must be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the:

- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The 'A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties' guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Nicola Goodman, Lead for Strategic Planning and MIM
Director: Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Directorate: Education and Inclusion Services
Date: 17th November 2025

1. a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/ Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
X				

1. b) What is the name of the proposal?

Draft Education Strategic Plan for 2026-2030.

1. c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

As an Education and Inclusion Services Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose.

The draft Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for the next four years, describing our vision and ambition for all of our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan for 2024-2030¹. As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve their aspirations is of critical importance.

The Strategic Plan focuses on the need for effective collaboration to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all. The draft Plan is underpinned by a strong moral imperative and aspiration to tackle the attainment gap (between children and young

¹ [The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2030 - Working with our Communities](#)

people living in poverty and those who do not) and ensure all learners access high quality teaching and learning in excellent schools and receive timely support to enable them to fulfil their potential.

The draft Plan contains a clear strategic direction for the next four years and contains a shared vision and priorities to deliver that vision.

Our new vision is:

‘Effectively collaborating to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all’.

Our new draft Strategic Plan for 2026-30 prioritises the areas identified from robust service self-evaluation, Estyn feedback and early stakeholder feedback gathered in the spring and summer terms 2025. They are also reflective of our corporate priorities as outlined in the Council’s [Corporate Plan 2024-30](#), ‘Working with our Communities’. The four strategic priorities of the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for 2026-30 which will enable delivery of our vision are:

Strategic Priority 1: Securing strong leadership, governance, and continuous improvement through effective collaborations

Strategic Priority 2: Embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all

Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation

Strategic Priority 4: Delivering safe and sustainable communities for learning

The main strategies and policies that are linked with the draft Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 are:

National:

- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Qualified for Life: An Education Improvement Plan for 3-19 Year Olds in Wales
- The Programme for Government: update
- Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers
- Cymraeg 2050 : Welsh language strategy action plan 2024 to 2025
- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
- The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing the Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013

- The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025
- Welsh Government's Net Zero Carbon Strategic Plan: 2022
- The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021
- Curriculum for Wales – 2022
- A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings - 2022
- Welsh Government's Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all – 2022
- Welsh Medium Capital Grant
- Childcare Act 2006
- Welsh Government Childcare Offer
- Reducing Infant Class Sizes
- The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales
- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Amendment of the 2050 Emissions Target Regulation 2021)

Regional:

- Cwm Taf Public Services Board: Wellbeing Assessment 2022

Local:

- RCTCBC Corporate Plan – 2024 to 2030: 'Working with our Communities'.
- RCTCBC Local Development Plan – 2006 to 2021 (and in turn the revised LDP 2022-2037 which has been submitted to Welsh Government).
- RCTCBC Welsh Language Promotion Strategy – 2022 to 2027.
- RCTCBC WESP – 2022 to 2032.
- RCTCBC Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – 2022-2027
- RCTCBC Strategic Equality Plan – 2024-2028

There are many links to the Council's Corporate Plan for the period 2024 to 2030, as the Corporate Plan contains a range of actions to address its well-being objectives, many of which specifically relate to our children and young people, our schools and the work of the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate, as detailed below:-

- RCTCBC's Corporate Plan – 2024 to 2030: 'Working with our Communities' includes the wellbeing objective of **'People and communities'** and one of the priorities within this objective is that **'children and young people have the best start in life and can grow and learn quickly'**, with some of the actions under this priority being:
 - Supporting children and families to have the best opportunities to develop, be healthy, and enjoy activities in libraries and community hubs;
 - Helping children of all abilities and backgrounds to do the very best they can in school, focussing on continuous improvement and high standards;
 - Identifying and meeting the needs of our learners and their families as quickly as possible;
 - Providing great learning environments through new and improved early years settings and schools, including a new Special school and making Welsh medium education accessible to all;
 - Supporting children and young people of all abilities and backgrounds to overcome barriers to learning, including those experiencing poverty, so that they can achieve their best educational outcomes;
 - Ensuring that children, young people and their families have a voice and help us to shape and further improve our services and educational experiences.

- Another priority under the wellbeing objective of **'People and communities'** is that **'residents can take care of their health and wellbeing so that they can live healthy, independent and fulfilling lives'**, with some of the actions under this priority being:
 - Tackling health inequalities and wider health determinants that directly affect the life chances of our residents through the Health Determinants Research Collaboration;
 - Developing community focused schools that provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community.

- Another priority under the wellbeing objective of **'People and communities'** is **'safeguarding our most vulnerable residents of all ages, providing protection, care and support when they need it most so that they can maximise their potential'**, with some of the actions under this priority being:
 - Protecting children, young people and adults at risk from harm, neglect and exploitation;
 - Giving vulnerable children and young people the best possible opportunities in life and ensuring access to safe and supportive environments suitable to their needs, to improve their wellbeing.

- RCTCBC's Corporate Plan – 2024 to 2030: 'Working with our Communities' also includes the wellbeing objective of **'Nature and the Environment'** and one of the priorities within this objective is **'protecting and enhancing the natural environment'**, with some of the actions under this priority being:
 - Protecting, supporting and working with nature to tackle both the climate and nature emergencies;

- Managing public sector land to support sustainable projects including producing 'green energy' storing carbon, managing flood risk and increasing biodiversity and community growing food.
- Another priority under the wellbeing objective of **'Nature and the Environment'** is **'using nature's assets to benefit people and communities'**, with some of the actions under this priority being:
 - Continuing to invest in solar energy across our schools and Council buildings;
 - Providing a range of quality green spaces for people and communities to enjoy.
- RCTCBC's Corporate Plan – 2024 to 2030: 'Working with our Communities' also includes the wellbeing objective of **'Culture, heritage and Welsh language'** and one of the priorities within this objective is **'An RCT where culture and heritage is vibrant and difference is celebrated in strong communities that enhance well-being'** with some of the actions under this priority being:
 - Continuing to grow the use of the Welsh language so that it thrives in our homes, communities and work;
 - Recognising and improving our awareness of diversity in our communities so that we strengthen community cohesion and better meet the needs of our residents of all backgrounds.

The Education and Inclusion Service Directorate's Strategic Plan reflects these overarching priorities and specific actions and a golden thread runs through the Corporate, Directorate and Service Plans to ensure alignment of strategic developments.

1. d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.
Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

1. e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users: ☒
- Employees: ☒
- Wider community: ☒

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required. Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative but may impact upon a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

Protected Characteristics	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups, i.e., young people or older people</i>).	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages, as well as staff, parents/carers, governors and the wider community. The Strategic Plan will support the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate as we seek to achieve our vision of ‘Effectively collaborating to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all’, by delivering our strategic priorities of: Priority 1: Securing strong leadership, governance, and continuous improvement through effective collaborations.	<u>Young people (i.e. of school age)</u> The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate will deliver our vision by supporting children and young people to have the best start in life and be ready for learning through an improved early years’ system, multi-agency/collaborative working, and by investing in new and significantly improved school and community facilities. Ensuring strong leadership and governance in our schools and services will be essential in ensuring continuous school and service improvements and high-quality teaching, learning and assessment approaches.

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		Priority 2: Embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all. Priority 3: Ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation. Priority 4: Delivering safe and sustainable communities for learning This strategic plan will focus on learners from 0-25 in the case of ALN. For all other learners it will relate to 0-19 year olds. The Strategic Plan focuses on the need for effective collaboration to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all learners of all ages. However, there are potential benefits to the wider community too in terms of access to community buildings on school sites; as well as access to key services aimed at supporting parents / carers / families with particular needs (e.g. Attendance and Wellbeing Services, Access and Inclusion Services).	Ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation can be evidenced by the investment in early years provision, ALN provision, Welsh language provision and new school buildings which are fully accessible. Investment in schools and early years provision is outlined in a report to Cabinet on 22nd September 2025 (Update on the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme  PDF 159 KB) which demonstrates that over the last 10 years nearly £505M has been invested in schools which includes the Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) Band A programme, the Band B programme, as well as early investment costs for design development to facilitate the new 9-year rolling programme. This investment, along with the new 3-year capital programme for education 2025/26 to 2027/28 totalling £87M, the remaining SCfL new 9-year Rolling Programme committing a further investment of £393M, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Capital Grant and Community Focused Schools (CFS) Grants we have received this financial year, as well as the continued capital programme investment that will be delivered beyond 2027/28, will mean that on completion of the new 9-year Rolling Programme in March 2033, it is expected that the cumulative investment delivered in RCT schools since

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		Ongoing investment in professional learning and training for staff and governors will ensure delivery of continuous improvement and provide the highest quality of teaching, learning and support in our schools. The attainment gap between children and young people living in poverty and those who do not remains far too wide, hence underpinning the Strategic Plan is a strong moral imperative and aspiration to tackle this attainment gap and ensure that all learners (irrespective of their individual circumstances) access high quality teaching and learning in great schools and timely support to enable them to fulfil their potential. The Strategic Plan seeks to ensure that all learners have the best start in life and have access to the right support at the right time so that they become successful lifelong learners. It identifies the need to intervene early and effectively, as this is critical so that the inequalities are tackled early and greater equity is achieved for our most vulnerable learners. The local authority's Senior School Improvement Officer and Head of Achievement work collaboratively with colleagues across	2014 will amount to over £988 million, demonstrating continued commitment to deliver Strategic Priority 4 'delivering safe and sustainable communities for learning'. The Strategic Plan also aims to ensure an excellent continuum of additional learning needs (ALN) provision – in particular, strategic priorities 3 and 4, namely 'ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation' and 'delivering safe and sustainable communities for learning' are already being implemented with growth in ALN provision being seen via several ALN projects recently completed or currently progressing, including:- - Additional early years accommodation for Ysgol Hen Felin opened in April 2025 ; - 5 new Learning Support Classes opened in September 2025 - Proposals to enhance additional learning needs mainstream learning support class provision; - An extension to Maesgwyn Special School opened in September 2025; - A new ALN school currently under construction in Clydach Vale - due to open in 2026. - An extension to Ysgol Ty Coch (Buarth-y-Capel site) currently in the design development stages - for delivery in 2026.

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		neighbouring authorities, ensuring best practice is shared and available funding is used effectively and appropriately, for example, when developing RCT's new approach to school improvement and collaboratives. The Strategic Plan seeks to build upon excellent work that is already happening within the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and with our schools and partners to deliver our vision of 'effectively collaborating to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all'. School Improvement Officers (SIOs) undertake regular school improvement activities, viewing first-hand the impact on the most vulnerable learners. The local authority provides opportunities for SIOs to work in collaboration to view and share good practice in this area which is in direct support of the local authority's new school improvement model and collaboratives.	- A new satellite base for Ysgol Hen Felin opened in April 2025. The extent of support in RCT in relation to ALN is further detailed in a report to Scrutiny Committee on 9th April 2025 - additional learning needs - the continuum of support in rhondda cynon taf county borough council There is a focus on improving outcomes for all learners, especially those learners facing socio-economic challenges and a priority to provide 'the right support to overcome barriers to participation and learning' (Strategic priority 3). Some examples include :- - The appointment of Family Engagement Officers who work out of individual schools and continue to provide invaluable support to families. The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate has secured funding and the provision of Family Engagement Officers for 34 schools with plans to expand this further in 2025/26; and - The Food and Fun Programme which continues to be provided through each summer holiday period, providing healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to a number of schools in areas of our most socially deprived communities in the County Borough. During the summer of 2025, this was delivered in 14

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			settings (including ALN schools and Welsh medium schools). Support of vulnerable learners, attendance and well-being and the multi-agency approach was commented upon in the most recent Estyn Inspection of the education services in RCTCBC in 2023 Estyn inspection (2023) which reported that: <i>‘... attendance and well-being officers can access live attendance data when visiting schools, which enables them to challenge and support schools appropriately. In addition, officers generally value the voice of vulnerable learners and their families and use their views to help evaluate and shape the development of services.</i> <i>There is a strong focus in the local authority on supporting children and their families before they reach statutory school age. Through a multi-agency approach with health partners and others, all children are offered a developmental screening check at around 20 months old. Following this, parents are supported well to promote their child’s speech and language through one-to-one and community programmes. Through the local authority’s Resilient Families Service, these parents are also offered a range of other helpful support to meet their needs.</i>

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			<i>The local authority provides a range of valuable support services to meet the needs of vulnerable learners. For example, each cluster of schools is able to request a home visit for any absent learner that they feel is vulnerable without the need for attendance to be below a particular threshold. This encourages a preventive approach and allows support to be provided in a timely way. This approach is usually successful in supporting the learner to return to school by an agreed date’.</i> Working in conjunction with CSC PL and ‘Dysgu’, support is underpinned by ‘Our national mission: High standards and aspirations for all’ and the document ‘Enabling Equity and Excellence’ (EEE). The enabling equity and excellence document supports a focus on high quality teaching and curriculum, strong leadership, well-being, and inclusive classrooms as the key elements to ensure equity and excellence for all learners. All RCT’s school improvement staff will develop and drive their support for schools whilst considering the needs of vulnerable learners. A strong focus on delivering the Welsh in Education Strategic plan (WESP) will ensure that more learners will be accessing Welsh medium education with progress reported against the WESP. There is regular Scrutiny Committee reporting on this, with the latest report available here, demonstrating the progress made over 2024-25:

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			WESP update report to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee The positive impact that the achievement of our strategic priorities will have upon children and young people of all age groups will be evidenced by learner progress, exclusion/attendance data, inspection outcomes and the evaluation of school performance by School Improvement Officers (SIOs). Since 2020, the local authority has invested nearly £5M in step 4 provisions enabling schools to deliver more inclusive, personalised teaching for learners with behavioural or emotional challenges. This has resulted in improved exclusion, attendance, engagement and learner qualifications for targeted groups of learners. Improved GCSE and A-Level outcomes (unverified summer 2025 data) on many measures, show a narrowing of the gap between RCT learners and all Wales datasets. Although attendance at both primary and secondary phase remains below the Welsh average, primary attendance has increased 1.3 percentage points between 2022/23 and 2024/25 and secondary attendance has increased 2.2 percentage points in the same period. Secondary

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			attendance has outperformed the Welsh average increase of 1.5 percentage points in the same time frame. Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, permanent exclusions have dropped by 51.7%. The number of days lost to exclusion across the local authority in the same time period has reduced by 23.5%. <u>Older People (i.e. Staff / Parents/Carers and the Wider Community)</u> The investment in professional learning and the development of a highly skilled and trained workforce with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to continue to deliver on the Curriculum for Wales and ALNET Act (2018) will ensure the highest quality of teaching and learning in our schools. During the 2024-25 academic year, the local authority commissioned CSCJES to support professional pathways for senior and aspiring leaders. During this time the following support was provided to RCT's educational workforce: • 34 practitioners commenced the Middle or Senior Leaders Development Programmes.

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			• Nine new or acting headteachers commenced their participation in the New and Acting Headteacher Programme from December 2024. • Nine school leaders engaged in the new Leadership of Vulnerable Learners Professional Learning programme. • 52 schools support student teachers in partnership with the five ITE providers. 4 of these schools are working with more than one ITE provider. • 55 teaching assistants (TAs) from up-to 19 schools engaged in the teaching assistant learning pathways programmes (TALP). 12 TAs who have participated in the Aspiring Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) Programme were assessed, with all 12 awarded HLTA status. • Five senior leaders in RCT were supported by System Leaders. • 12 RCT schools were supported by Regional Leads for Governance. Such investment in professional development contributes greatly to Strategic Priorities 1 and 2, namely: <i>Priority 1: Securing strong leadership, governance, and continuous improvement through effective collaborations</i>

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			<i>Priority 2: Embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all</i> Since September 2025, and following Welsh Government's mandate to reorganise regional consortia, RCT now has a dedicated, local authority based school improvement team of 10 School Improvement Officers (SIOs) and one Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO). Bespoke support continues to be provided to senior leaders and governing body members, as and when required, through a coaching and mentoring approach. The local authority continues to operate its 'Aspiring Leaders' programme, with 16 practitioners accessing the programme in 2024/25 and another full cohort of 16 practitioners accessing this programme in 2025/26. CSC PL and 'Dysgu', the new national PL body, are currently devising programmes that will be utilised to support the development of senior leaders and aspiring leaders across the local authority, this includes the NPQH programme. A well-planned professional learning programme for School Improvement Officers (SIOs) ensures clear and timely

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			communication and professional updates are provided on a weekly and half termly basis, enabling them to better support schools. The local authority continues to work in partnership with Central South Consortium Professional Learning (CSC PL), Welsh Government and other key stakeholders to support the development of educational professionals across the local authority. This includes subject/AOLE specific support, networks, peer enquiry support, collaboratives and lead practitioners. Strong governance is essential for school improvement, effective leadership and ensuring compliance with statutory duties. Governors play an essential role in holding leaders to account and high quality training and support is required hence the local authority now undertakes all mandatory and non-mandatory professional learning for governors, including induction training for new governors and Chairpersons and further training on how governors can utilise school data to drive improvement. Since September 2025, the local authority has developed a bespoke programme of support which is delivered by School Improvement Officers utilising a hybrid approach. In a perception survey undertaken in March 2025 with 85 school leaders in RCT who were asked to provide their

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			views on strategic leadership and the quality of support and services, very positive feedback was received (as outlined in the Strategic Plan) with support and services being rated as good or excellent across the majority of the evaluation categories. A thread is evident through strategic priorities 1, 2 and 3, with strong leadership and high-quality teaching and learning contributing towards positive outcomes for all learners. This Strategic Plan will build on the successes of the Education Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 and the successful local authority Estyn inspection (2023) of education services. One of the best practice case studies identified by the inspectorate was: ‘The development of future leaders in education through a strong professional learning offer and effective succession planning’, with the inspectorate finding that: <i>‘There is a strong culture in the Council of investing in the professional development of its staff. Planning for professional learning and development is directly linked to the delivery of the Council’s priorities, including the Corporate Plan and Education Strategic Plan.</i>

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			<i>The local authority supports the development of aspiring school leaders well. They ensure that middle and senior leaders are offered a wide range of opportunities to develop and improve their leadership skills. The local authority's Aspiring Leaders Programme is a particular strength. These programmes are planned and evaluated effectively to meet aspiring leaders' expectations and needs and are routinely adapted to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The RCT Aspiring Leaders Programme is unique in both its design and delivery. The programme is planned in response to the specific needs of the cohort and local and national priorities. It has been particularly successful in promoting both the personal and professional growth of participants. It has supported effectively not only newly appointed leaders, but also the succession planning of senior leaders in all schools in RCT for the last decade'.</i> The Strategic Plan will continue to focus on securing strong leadership, governance, and continuous improvement and embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all (priorities 1 and 2) which will positively impact staff and learners of all ages. Newly established school improvement services, with the local authority now having its own School Improvement Officers, will further assist with delivery of the strategic

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			priority of ‘embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all’. The following report to Cabinet in November 2024 outlines the outcome of the ‘Middle Tier Review’ which resulted in the changes to the school improvement services in Rhondda Cynon Taf: <u>Responding to Welsh Government's Middle Tier Review - Future Direction for School Improvement Services</u> Many positive Estyn inspection outcomes are achieved in schools. At October 2025, 96.4% of our schools, are not in any Estyn follow up category, but there are three schools in the statutory category of special measures and one school requiring significant improvement. When schools are placed in a statutory category, the Local Authority School Improvement Officer (SIO) has a key role in brokering and providing the support required to meet needs, achieve stability and accelerate improvement. The SIO works closely with the headteacher, chair of governors, senior leaders, Senior School Improvement Officer, Regional Professional Learning team and local authority officers in: · planning and implementing interventions · brokering and providing the support required · monitoring and reporting of progress

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			It is vital that those providing external support and challenge follow clear procedures when working with the school. At all times, there is a strong focus on: · identifying what success will look like at the end of the process · agreeing the key actions to be taken by the school's leaders and practitioners and those supporting the school · developing an action plan with clear milestones and identification of responsibilities · supplying evidence that demonstrates the impact of support · agreeing next steps to maintain momentum on the priorities Such support ensures that collaborative working will drive the required improvement (Strategic Priority 1). <u>All ages</u> The Community Focused Schools (CFS) agenda is a key investment programme for Welsh Government. Its objective is to invest in learning environments and facilitate the co-location of key services to secure stronger engagement with parents and carers, and the wider community. It is an integral part of Welsh Government

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			policy on tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment to ensure high standards and aspirations for all. A report to the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on 9th April 2025 (Community focused schools - family engagement in learning) provided an update on the Community Focused Schools approach in RCT outlining (amongst other things): - the investment in Family Engagement Officers to assist with improving attendance in some of the most deprived communities; - the appointment of a lead officer for Community Focused Schools; and - the use of Welsh Government, Cabinet and Capital Grant funding to support community focused schools initiatives. Welsh Government's Community Focused Schools Capital Grant (CFS grant) funding supports the delivery of capital improvements to create or improve spaces on our school sites to enable more meaningful family engagement, strengthen community engagement and allow multi-agency engagement and the co-location of support services. As reported to Cabinet on 22nd September 2025 (Update on the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme  PDF 159 KB) over £3M CFS grant funding has been spent on our school sites over the last three

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			years creating and improving facilities, allowing more schools to engage and deliver more services in collaboration with local community groups and multi-agency partners. Another £1.65M has been secured to deliver further enhancements in nine schools across the county borough this financial year, which will create safe spaces within our schools where education, leisure, health, social care, and community development partners can collaborate and provide holistic support to families in trusted, familiar, school settings. The Community Focused School agenda spans beyond schools and the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and we engage with partners on a strategic level to support potential opportunities such as co-location, in support of our vision our vision of ‘Effectively collaborating to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all’.
Disability (<i>People with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions</i>)	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions, as well as staff, parents/carers, governors and the wider community. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALNET Act 2018)	The Strategic Plan aims to ensure an excellent continuum of ALN provision – in particular, strategic priorities 3 and 4, namely ‘ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ and ‘delivering safe and sustainable communities for learning’ are already being implemented with growth in ALN

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		was introduced in January 2018. The ALNET Act 2018 requires local authorities to keep the arrangements for supporting learners with ALN under review and consider whether these arrangements are sufficient. The ALNET Act 2018 is supported by new regulations, including secondary legislation and a new statutory ALN Code (The New Code). The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity of access and outcomes to all learners, irrespective of deprivation, gender, sexuality, adverse childhood experiences, ethnicity, additional learning needs or disability. The focus is on ‘good progression and outcomes for all’ (Strategic Priority 2) and ‘ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ (Strategic Priority 3), as well as ‘delivering safe and sustainable communities for learning’ (Strategic Priority 4). All of these strategic priorities will work together to contribute towards ensuring learners with disabilities are impacted positively.	provision being seen via several ALN projects recently completed or currently progressing, including:- - Additional early years accommodation for Ysgol Hen Felin opened in April 2025; - 5 new Learning Support Classes opened in September 2025; - An extension to Maesgwyn Special School opened in September 2025; - A new ALN school - currently under construction in Clydach Vale - due to open in 2026. - An extension to Ysgol Ty Coch (Buarth-y-Capel site) - currently in the design development stages for delivery in 2026. It is a funding condition of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme that all new school facilities delivered under the Programme must be compliant with the Equality Act 2010. All new school build projects are constructed with accessibility at the heart of the design and all projects are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 thus offering full access to mainstream schools for disabled staff and learners. In addition, enhanced capacity funding is available to mainstream primary and secondary schools to ensure robust, inclusive provision for learners who attend

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		Collaborative approaches and targeted support are critical to ensuring that we deliver high quality educational provision for all, including vulnerable learners. The effective implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALNET Act) is reliant on collaboration so that learners with ALN receive early and effective support through improved information sharing and joined-up services. Continued working in close collaboration with key partners is vital for creating a simpler, more transparent, and less adversarial system that fully involves children and their parents/carers in decision-making processes that affect them. Joint planning is routinely undertaken between Access and Inclusion and 21st Century Schools Teams to ensure that grant and core funding is appropriately prioritised to enhance accessibility of all school buildings. This work will be in support of In view of data in relation attendance and exclusions for vulnerable groups of learners, it is evident that further improvements are needed and the Strategic Priorities will ensure that this is a focus over the next four years.	mainstream primary and secondary schools with severe and persistent ALN. Robust plans and reasonable adjustments are put in place to ensure that all learners with disabilities have accessible learning environments and physical adaptations are made to school buildings to ensure they are suitable to their needs. There is also a Youth Forum in RCT which supports neuro diverse learners. There is an Accessibility Action Plan in place to ensure the successful implementation of the Directorate's strategy for 2023 to 2026. Outcomes for learners with ALN are routinely analysed to ensure learner progress and outcomes of vulnerable groups are improved, including exclusion and attendance data. Summary information was recently provided in Table 4 of a report to the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2025: Education Scrutiny Committee report. In relation to attendance, it is evident that improvements have been made across most groups of learners in 2024/25 compared to the previous academic

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			year. However, there remains considerable challenge particularly at secondary phase and for eligible Free School Meal learners and SEN/ALN learners. We believe the data set for SEN/ALN learners may also be slightly different to those previously recorded due to a change in MIS systems. Table 8 of the abovementioned report highlights the exclusions data for our vulnerable groups across all schools. It is evident that progress has been made on all measures when comparing 2023/24 and 2024/25 data, with the exception of data for learners with ALN for fixed term exclusions. However, this data should be interpreted with caution as there have been significant changes in how we categorise learners with ALN due to the phased implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Educational Tribunal Act 2018 over a four-year transitional period. Moving forward, the data should be more directly comparable as all learners with ALN will have statutory plans following the phasing out of the old SEN system. The data also highlights that whilst improvements have been made in our rates of exclusion for eFSM learners, they are still over-represented in our exclusion data, and this requires further targeted improvement.

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Gender Reassignment <i>(Anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people who may have undergone / be undergoing gender reassignment. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity of access and outcomes for all learners. Bullying data does not highlight significant bullying issues in our schools, but we are mindful that this may not accurately reflect school-based issues experienced as learners may not wish to disclose some of the challenges faced. Strategic Priority 3 – ‘Ensuring all learners have access to high quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ identifies this as an area for improvement and seeks to ensure that statutory anti-bullying policies and strategies are effective and keep learners safe. An identified action within the Strategic Plan is the provision of effective support to schools on developing positive anti-bullying cultures and practices in schools. All schools are encouraged to have inclusive policies and practices that are respectful of diversity and promote acceptance.	Strategic Priority 4 is the ‘delivery of safe and sustainable communities for learning’. Projects delivered via the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme are built in accordance with the current requirements of planning and building control legislation and will be fully accessible and compliant with the <u>Equality Act 2010</u>, and <u>The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999</u>. In line with <u>The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999</u>, gender neutral toilet facilities (washrooms) are included in the designs, along with same sex facilities. Data is collated regarding prejudice related bullying incidents. Of the 424 reported incidents of bullying in RCT in 2024/25, 101 (23.8%) were recorded as prejudice related incidences and these are broken down below:- <table><tr><th>Prejudice-related incidents 2023/2024</th><th>Number of Incidents</th><th>% of Incidents</th></tr><tr><td>Race</td><td>52</td><td>51.49%</td></tr><tr><td>Religion</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Culture</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Homophobic</td><td>10</td><td>9.90%</td></tr><tr><td>Biphobic</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Transphobic</td><td>1</td><td>0.99%</td></tr><tr><td>Sexist and/or sexual</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Gender identity</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr></table>	Prejudice-related incidents 2023/2024	Number of Incidents	% of Incidents	Race	52	51.49%	Religion	0	0.00%	Culture	0	0.00%	Homophobic	10	9.90%	Biphobic	0	0.00%	Transphobic	1	0.99%	Sexist and/or sexual	0	0.00%	Gender identity	0	0.00%
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			Age	0	0.00%	
			ALN or disability	7	6.93%	
			Family status or looked after child (CLA) status	4	3.96%	
			Disadvantage	3	2.97%	
			Focused on appearance	24	23.76%	
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(People who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral.	We do not expect an impact on this protected characteristic, however, should an impact be identified throughout the consultation process, this will be updated.	There are no reported incidents reported to date.			
Pregnancy or Maternity <i>(Women who are pregnant/ on maternity leave)</i>	Positive.	The Education Strategic Plan focuses on supporting the wellbeing of all learners and staff, and this would include those staff / learners who are pregnant or on maternity leave.	EOTAS provision is made available for pregnant learners or learners with post-partum related issues if they are unable to access education in a mainstream setting and have supporting medical information. This group is explicitly referenced in the EOTAS policy. HR has many supportive policies relating to pregnancy and maternity and these would be fully implemented by the Directorate.			
Race <i>(Ethnic and racial groups i.e., Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all races. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity between the outcomes of all learners, irrespective of ethnicity or racial group. Strategic Priority 3 – ‘Ensuring all learners have access to high quality inclusive education and the	Of the 2,744 children who sat Key Stage 4 exams, 169 identified as being non-British (PLASC return information). and their average capped score is 401.97 (which is higher than the British average of 365.45). Examples of positive impacts include:-			

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		right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ The Strategic Plan seeks to ensure that statutory anti-bullying policies and strategies are effective and keep learners safe. An identified action within the Strategic Plan is the provision of effective support to schools on developing positive anti-bullying cultures and practices in schools. All schools are encouraged to have inclusive policies and practices that are respectful of diversity and promote acceptance. Bullying data does not highlight significant issues, but this may not accurately reflect school-based issues experienced as learners may not wish to disclose some of the challenges faced. Steps are taken to ensure accurate recording of incidents. Many race equality related activities are undertaken, including:- • Anti Racism Reflection Groups for LA staff (half termly) • Anti Racism Reflection Groups for school staff (half termly)	- A set of library books has been funded for all primary schools within RCT from prominent Gypsy, Roma or Traveller authors with stories relating to Gypsy, Roma or Traveller culture to raise awareness. - Liaison between the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the organisation Travelling Ahead who highlight any families they are working with from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families who may need additional support. Race awareness is a mandatory part of the Curriculum for Wales and this aspect of a school’s performance will be supported through the delivery of high quality School Improvement Services and professional learning. The Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) supports RCT schools to carry out their responsibility to ensure that EAL (English as an additional language) learners access the Curriculum and reach their academic potential. The MEAS team support schools to ensure that all EAL learners participate in, gain access to and attain in Curriculum provision, appropriate to their intellectual ability. Data is collated regarding prejudice related bullying incidents. Of the 424 reported incidents of bullying in RCT in 2024/25, 101 (23.8%) were recorded as prejudice

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		- Interactive Anti Racism Cynefin Project for Schools in collaboration with the RCT Heritage Service - Racism Monitoring Form being developed and trialled in schools - Pilot projects for schools working to achieve Leeds Beckett Anti Racism Award. - Termly Anti Racism Newsletter established and circulated - Centralised resource bank for schools and LA staff via PADLET - Collaboration with Darpl to develop effective training for schools and LA staff	related incidences and these are broken down below, with the majority relating to race:- <table><tr><th>Prejudice-related incidents 2023/2024</th><th>Number of Incidents</th><th>% of Incidents</th></tr><tr><td>Race</td><td>52</td><td>51.49%</td></tr><tr><td>Religion</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Culture</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Homophobic</td><td>10</td><td>9.90%</td></tr><tr><td>Biphobic</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Transphobic</td><td>1</td><td>0.99%</td></tr><tr><td>Sexist and/or sexual</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Gender identity</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Age</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>ALN or disability</td><td>7</td><td>6.93%</td></tr><tr><td>Family status or looked after child (CLA) status</td><td>4</td><td>3.96%</td></tr><tr><td>Disadvantage</td><td>3</td><td>2.97%</td></tr><tr><td>Focused on appearance</td><td>24</td><td>23.76%</td></tr></table> The Education Strategic Plan will place continued focus on Providing effective support to schools on developing positive anti-racist and anti-bullying cultures and practices in our schools.	Prejudice-related incidents 2023/2024	Number of Incidents	% of Incidents	Race	52	51.49%	Religion	0	0.00%	Culture	0	0.00%	Homophobic	10	9.90%	Biphobic	0	0.00%	Transphobic	1	0.99%	Sexist and/or sexual	0	0.00%	Gender identity	0	0.00%	Age	0	0.00%	ALN or disability	7	6.93%	Family status or looked after child (CLA) status	4	3.96%	Disadvantage	3	2.97%	Focused on appearance	24	23.76%
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Religion or Belief <i>(People with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all religions and beliefs. The Plan extends to all children and young people and all schools. There are eight voluntary aided (church schools) in RCT (across the primary and secondary education sectors) which are financed largely by the Local Authority, but run by either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Authority in partnership with the Local Authority	Awareness of different faiths / religions is a mandatory part of the Curriculum for Wales and this aspect of a school's performance will be supported through the delivery of high quality School Improvement Services and professional learning, and a review of inspection outcomes.
Sex <i>(Women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all sexes. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity of access and outcomes of all learners. All outcome data is analysed according to gender differences and to ensure that schools provide appropriate strategic support to drive improvement and to narrow the gap. Strategic Priority 2 of the Strategic Plan focuses on 'embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all' and key to this is working in collaboration with many parties.	Local Key Performance Indicators for statutory aged learners are not published nationally, however, local analysis of verified data from the summer examinations 2024 demonstrates that a difference in the capped score of 16.52 between boys and girls is present and girls out-perform boys on all performance indicators, with the exception of numeracy. Fixed term exclusions are consistently higher for boys than girls (2023/24: 61.4% male, 38.6% female; 2024/25: 58.7% boys, 41.3% girls).

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		There is a slight narrowing of the gap between boys and girls in fixed term exclusions in 2024/25 and more work needs to be undertaken to continue this trajectory. Some schools have successfully reduced their exclusion rates by adopting a more bespoke curriculum offer and strengthening their whole school approach to managing pupil behaviour. The Strategic plan identifies (as an outcome for Strategic Priority 3) a 15% reduction in fixed term exclusions per 1,0000 learners and a 15% reduction in the number of permanent exclusions by 2030.	Permanent exclusions also show a higher proportion for boys (2023/24: 65.5% boys, 34.5% girls; 2024/25: 64.3% boys, 35.7% girls).
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all sexual orientations. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity of access and outcomes of all learners. Furthermore, Strategic Priority 3 seeks to ensure 'all learners have access to high quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation'.	The Curriculum for Wales incorporates LGBTQ+ through mandatory Relationships Sexuality Education (RSE) and an emphasis on LGBTQ+ experiences and identities. Data is collated regarding prejudice related bullying incidents. Of the 424 reported incidents of bullying in RCT in 2024/25, 101 (23.8%) were recorded as prejudice related incidences and these are broken down below:-

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		Bullying data does not highlight significant issues, but this may not accurately reflect school-based issues experienced as learners may not wish to disclose some of the challenges faced. Strategic Priority 3 – ‘Ensuring all learners have access to high quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ identifies this as an area for improvement and seeks to ensure that statutory anti-bullying policies and strategies are effective and keep learners safe. An identified action within the Strategic Plan is the provision of effective support to schools on developing positive anti-bullying cultures and practices in schools. All schools are encouraged to have inclusive policies and practices that are respectful of diversity and promote acceptance.	<table><tr><th>Prejudice-related incidents 2023/2024</th><th>Number of Incidents</th><th>% of Incidents</th></tr><tr><td>Race</td><td>52</td><td>51.49%</td></tr><tr><td>Religion</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Culture</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Homophobic</td><td>10</td><td>9.90%</td></tr><tr><td>Biphobic</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Transphobic</td><td>1</td><td>0.99%</td></tr><tr><td>Sexist and/or sexual</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Gender identity</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>Age</td><td>0</td><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>ALN or disability</td><td>7</td><td>6.93%</td></tr><tr><td>Family status or looked after child (CLA) status</td><td>4</td><td>3.96%</td></tr><tr><td>Disadvantage</td><td>3</td><td>2.97%</td></tr><tr><td>Focused on appearance</td><td>24</td><td>23.76%</td></tr></table>	Prejudice-related incidents 2023/2024	Number of Incidents	% of Incidents	Race	52	51.49%	Religion	0	0.00%	Culture	0	0.00%	Homophobic	10	9.90%	Biphobic	0	0.00%	Transphobic	1	0.99%	Sexist and/or sexual	0	0.00%	Gender identity	0	0.00%	Age	0	0.00%	ALN or disability	7	6.93%	Family status or looked after child (CLA) status	4	3.96%	Disadvantage	3	2.97%	Focused on appearance	24	23.76%	Information and advice / guidance sessions at schools in RCT are delivered by the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS). Lunchtime and after school provision is available to support LGBTQ+ learners. YEPS have also run art projects promoting the work of influential members of the LGBTQ+ community.	
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In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

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Armed Forces Community <i>(Anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people from armed forces families.	The proposal should have a positive impact on families who might require targeted support to assist with their swift and supported transition into a new school setting and continuity in learning, with strategic priority 3 seeking to ensure ‘all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’. We continue to work with SSCE Cymru to provide support to children and families of the armed forces community. Data regarding the number of children from armed forces families in RCT was not available at the time of writing this report, but will be added when it becomes available.
Carers <i>(Anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i>	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people who are young carers. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity of access and outcomes of all learners. There was a presentation to schools on Young Carers, the service and ID card	Young carers are a designated vulnerable group and as such outcomes should be closely monitored by school staff. All secondary schools within RCT have a designated Young Carers Champion. Action for Children’s RCT Young Carers and Sibling Carers Service supports young carers within the school environment and works closely with them to ensure that schools meet the young carer’s needs. Drop-in sessions, assemblies, teacher talks and PSE lessons are offered. Work is also

Protected Characteristics	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		scheme on 12/11/2025 as part of the Community Focused School Conference. There have been 36 referrals from schools/colleges in the last 12 months to the RCT Carers Service. The Attendance and Wellbeing Service support the Carers Service with rolling out their message and making schools aware of what they offer. The ID scheme enables Young Carers to show their status in schools (to demonstrate why they are possibly late or need to make calls home).	undertaken with primary schools offering support to those who are transitioning from primary school to secondary school and lack the confidence or may need that extra support due to their caring roles. All schools within RCT can work on achieving their Young Carers Award, we have several schools who are on Tier 1: Bronze and one school on Tier 2: Silver Award. The end of year project report for Action for Children's RCT Young Carers and Sibling Carers Service 2024/25 can be accessed here - Action for Children's RCT Young Carers end of year report There are a number of identified young carers in RCT:- - Young Carers Service – 160 open to the service - Young Carers ID Card – 282 signed up (unlike working with the service, there is no need to undertake an assessment to access the ID card) As part of the new strategic plan, a continued focus on improving the experiences of young carers will be included under Strategic Priority 3.

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (section 4) must be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant, please provide an adequate explanation below:

No negative impacts have been identified. Therefore, the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate will continue to consult on the draft Strategic Plan for 2026-2030, subject to Cabinet approval. The evidence to support these conclusions is fully outlined in the draft Strategic Plan and the Cabinet report dated 24th of November 2025. This Equality and Socio-economic Impact Assessment is a live document and as such it will be reviewed by the Education and Inclusion Services on a continual basis and will form part of annual Service Self Evaluations.

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes: ☒

No:

Name: Gaynor Davies

Position: Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Date: 12th November 2025

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals. Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a ‘strategic nature’ is available on page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low-income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

• Single parents and vulnerable families. • Pensioners. • Looked after children. • Homeless people. • Students. • Single adult households.	• People living in the most deprived areas in Wales. • People with low literacy and numeracy. • People who have experienced the asylum system. • People misusing substances. • People of all ages leaving a care setting. • People involved in the criminal justice system.
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Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Low-income/ income poverty <i>(Cannot afford to maintain payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport, etc.)</i>	Positive.	The implementation of this strategy will see the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate continue to support low-income families across the county borough. It also commits to continuing to improve the quality of targeted support so that the educational outcomes of all vulnerable groups, including learners eligible for free school meals are improved. The gap between disadvantaged learners and their peers remains too wide and improving	The average capped score in RCT for Key Stage 4 results in 2024 is 367.7. This equates to an average score of 40.86 (Constituting a Grade C). For Free School Meal learners, the capped score is 311.18. This equates to an average score of 34.58 (Constituting a Grade D). For non-Free School Meal learners, it is 380.94, a gap of 69.76. This equates to an average score of 42.33 (Constituting a Grade C). The number of learners across the county borough that are eligible for free school meals is 19.9%, (equating to 1 in every 5 learners). This Strategy commits to the continued promotion of access to breakfast clubs and can be noted

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		this remains a strategic priority for the authority across all outcome measures. The new Strategic Plan sets out that supporting all learners to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their potential will be achieved by all partners successfully collaborating to tackle the aspiration and attainment gap. Each of the strategic priorities if effectively achieved, will impact positively on those living on low incomes: Strategic Priority 2: ‘embedding excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for all’ identifies the need to supporting schools to effectively self-evaluate and deliver robust school improvement practices that secure strong learner progression and narrow the attainment gap as an area for improvement. Strategic Priority 3: ‘ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ identifies an action of ensuring that there is a	that the local authority rolled out the Welsh Government’s Universal Free School Meals offer ahead of Welsh Government’s programme, and active promotional campaign to ensure that all eligible families are encouraged to apply for eFSM status due to it access to wider benefits. The community focused schools strategy will continue to target strategies aimed at supporting vulnerable families including those experiencing low income poverty. The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (the Measure) places a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide learners with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond safe walking distance to that school. The term suitable school applies to the catchment area for English and Welsh medium, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream primary, secondary, special school/class or PRU as appropriate. The law relating to safe walking distance is defined as two miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving secondary education. Although the local authority recently made the decision (effective September 2025) to increase the secondary education age safe walking distance to three miles (from its previous discretionary offer of two miles), the local authority has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		co-ordinated strategic approach to supporting learners living in poverty so that barriers are overcome and the attainment gap closed. Strategic Priority 4: 'focuses on delivering safe and sustainable communities of learning' which will continue to promote the development of a community focused schools strategy.	the Measure to make a more generous provision to primary school learners, with the distance being set at one and a half miles (as opposed to two miles). (Free transport to the nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to learners who meet the one-and-a-half-mile eligibility criterion from the start of the Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than from the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday)). Free transport is also provided to post-16 learners who meet the three-mile eligibility criterion for two years after the end of compulsory education, rather than until the end of compulsory education (the last Friday in June of the school year in which a learner reaches the age of 16). This provision applies to full time attendance at the nearest school or college to the learner's home at which the approved course of study that they wish to pursue is offered. The Food and Fun Programme which provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children in some of the most deprived communities in the county borough throughout the summer holiday period is well attended; and breakfast club provision and free school meal provision helps to support families in need. The Food and Fun Programme was delivered in 14 school settings (including ALN schools and Welsh medium schools) during the summer holiday period of 2025.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			The local authority has also supported the setup of 10 Big Bocs Bwyd facilities in our schools which offer a pay-as-you-feel shop facility for families in the school communities.
Low and/or no wealth (<i>Enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with an unexpected spends and no provisions for the future</i>)	Positive.	This Strategy commits to continuing to improve the quality of targeted support so that the educational outcomes of all vulnerable groups, including learners eligible for free school meals or living in poverty or financial hardship continues to improve. The Strategy will ensure that there is the right support to all learners to overcome barriers to learning and participation (Strategic Priority 3). As set out in above, intervention and support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, along with ensuring a co-ordinated approach to supporting learners is key to delivering on this priority. Achieving our strategic priorities will ensure strong leadership and professional practice is in place across our schools resulting in the improved educational attainment, attendance, and exclusion rates of learners, particularly in targeted cohorts of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.	The average capped score in RCT for Key Stage 4 results in 2024 is 367.7. This equates to an average score of 40.86 (Constituting a Grade C). For Free School Meal learners, the capped score is 311.18. This equates to an average score of 34.58 (Constituting a Grade D). For non-Free School Meal learners, it is 380.94, a gap of 69.76. This equates to an average score of 42.33 (Constituting a Grade C). The number of learners across the county borough that are eligible for free school meals is 19.9%, (equating to 1 in every 5 learners). It is unclear what percentage of families with children experience low or no wealth. This Strategy commits to the continued promotion of access to breakfast clubs and can be noted that the local authority rolled out the Welsh Government's Universal Free School Meals offer ahead of Welsh Government's programme. The Food and Fun Programme which provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children in some of the most deprived communities in the county borough throughout the summer holiday period is well attended; and breakfast club provision and free school meal provision helps to support families in need. The Food and Fun Programme was delivered in 14

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		The local authority is committed to reducing exclusions and invests in a range of approaches in partnership with schools and wider local authority services to provide alternative approaches to addressing challenging behaviour.	school settings (including ALN schools and Welsh medium schools) during the summer holiday period of 2025. Subject to continued grant funding, this Programme will continue as it brings many benefits to the most deprived communities. The local authority has also supported the setup of 10 Big Bocs Bwyd facilities in our schools which offer a pay-as-you-feel shop facility for families in the school communities. Close links are also maintained with partners such as Citizens Advice Bureau and we have recently supported the rollout of their Family Advice programme. Over the last five years, the Council has significantly invested in family engagement officers (34 school settings to date) which has enhanced the capacity of schools to strengthen their engagement strategies and support for the most vulnerable. Schools have also extended their family learning offer. Improved educational outcomes continue to be supported by the commitment of the local authority and the Education and Wellbeing Service to improving attendance rates, in particular supporting schools in our most deprived areas. A report to the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2025 provides an update on school attendance data and the actions of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service to increase attendance levels, along with a summary of the barriers to attendance:

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<u>Attendance and barriers to engagement in schools</u> Although attendance at both primary and secondary phase remains below the Welsh average, primary attendance has increased 1.3 percentage points between 2022/23 and 2024/25 and secondary attendance has increased 2.2 percentage points in the same period. Secondary attendance has outperformed the Welsh average increase of 1.5 percentage points in the same time frame. Learners entitled to Free School Meals have lower attendance rates than non-FSM learners: 88.2% FSM / 93.5% non-FSM in 2024/25 at primary school level. 79.5% FSM / 90.0% non-FSM in 2024/25 at secondary school level The Strategic Plan aims to support further improvements in this area, with Strategic Priority 3 being to ensure that ‘all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’. Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, permanent exclusions have dropped by 51.7%. The number of days lost to exclusion across the local authority in the same time period has reduced by 23.5%.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Material deprivation <i>(Unable to access basic goods i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Positive.	Material deprivation of some learners in RCT has become more pronounced during the cost-of-living crisis due to financial hardship and other adverse experiences. The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate will continue to support these learners through multi-agency working between families, schools and the Resilient Families Service.	This Strategy commits to strengthening our efforts to support these families through Family Engagement Officers. These family engagement roles strengthen the capacity of schools to engage with families beyond the school gate, promoting multi-agency working and access to timely family support to overcome hardship and any barriers to learning and engagement. The Council currently supports 34 schools to employ a Family Engagement Officer with plans to expand this further in 2025/26. Good access to school uniform grants has been secured and is actively promoted. The local authority has also supported the setup of 10 Big Bocs Bwyd facilities in our schools which offer a pay-as-you-feel shop facility for families in the school communities. The Food and Fun Programme which provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children in some of the most deprived communities in the county borough throughout the summer holiday period is well attended; and breakfast club provision and free school meal provision helps to support families in need. The Food and Fun Programme was delivered in 14 school settings (including ALN schools and Welsh medium schools) during the summer holiday period of 2025. Subject to continued grant funding, this Programme will continue as it brings many benefits to the most deprived communities.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Area deprivation <i>(Where you live (rural areas) where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i>	Positive.	The Strategy will support learners and their families living in the most deprived areas of the County Borough through enhanced engagement with families through Family Engagement Officers (FEOs). WIMD is used in conjunction with attendance data to determine which schools receive FEO funding. Looking at deprivation alone, the 18 most deprived primary schools all receive funding and the 8 most deprived secondary/through schools all receive funding. We measure this based on the percentage of children who live in the top 20% most deprived areas. The WIMD data is also used as a proxy indicator for the delegation of the Enhanced Capacity Funding (ECF) for all mainstream schools to support learners with significant ALN. The Pupil Deprivation Grant (now called the Pupil Development Grant) (PDG) provides funding to schools to help overcome barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, especially those eligible for free school meals and looked after children.	The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas, also known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). There are 1,909 LSOAs. Based on 2025 data, 18.0% of LSOAs in the County Borough are in the most deprived 10.0% of LSOAs in Wales. Family Engagement Officers who work out of individual schools and continue to provide invaluable support to families. The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate has secured funding and the provision of Family Engagement Officers for 34 schools with plans to expand this further in 2025/26. Positive feedback has been received from Welsh Government regarding our PDG Plan for 2025/26 – extracts below: <i>The strengthening of family engagement through Community of Practice meetings with Family Engagement Officers and nominated school staff is a clear strength. Sharing best practice in this way should help drive consistent improvements across schools.</i> <i>We want to highlight RCT LA's strong systems for identifying and supporting schools in need, including the 'Enhanced Monitoring and Schools Causing Concern Intervention Strategy'. The use of notes of visit and internal monitoring to track support for vulnerable learners, alongside a clear focus on high-quality teaching and wellbeing, is very positive. It's</i>

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<i>good to see accountability built in, with PDG statements discussed during SIO visits and comprehensive impact evaluations completed with schools each year. These approaches should help drive improved outcomes and leadership for FSM learners.</i>
Socio-economic background <i>(Social class, i.e., parents' education, employment and income)</i>	Positive.	Increased multi-agency working between families, schools and the Resilient Families Service will improve engagement with families in this category to ensure they have the necessary support to overcome barriers to their child achieving their potential and achieving positive outcomes. The EPS, AWS and YEPS have integrated wellbeing pathways thus ensuring effective partnership approaches to meeting need. Collaboration is at the heart of the new Strategy as is the need to close the attainment gap between those living in poverty and those that do not.	Families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social and emotional development from birth through adolescence. Many families require support to develop resilience and to overcome the multiple stress factors commonly associated with financial hardship, so they are better placed to support their child's learning and engagement in education. Family engagement roles are instrumental in supporting socio-economic barriers to engagement in education. The Education Appraisal function for the Resilient Families Service sits within Attendance and Wellbeing Service ensuring strong connections and collaborative working between the two Directorates. A significant amount of work has been undertaken in relation to enhancing community focused approaches and improvement is being made across the system. Community Focused Schools report (April 2025) The new Strategy places a continued focus on community focused schools initiatives moving forward (Strategic Priority 4). YEPS undertake rights-based works in many secondary schools in RCT, including sessions around democracy and voting processes.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i>	Positive.	The Strategy will support learners and their families living in the most deprived areas of the County Borough through enhanced engagement with families through Family Engagement Officers and multi-agency working. The use of the PDG will continue to be monitored to ensure that it delivers positive outcomes for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity between the outcomes of all learners, irrespective of deprivation and the focus is on ‘good progression and outcomes for all’ (Strategic Priority 2) and ‘ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ (Strategic Priority 3).	The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas, also known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). There are 1,909 LSOAs. Based on 2025 data, 18.0% of LSOAs in the County Borough are in the most deprived 10.0% of LSOAs in Wales. The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate has secured funding and the provision of Family Engagement Officers for 34 schools with plans to expand this further in 2025/26. These family engagement roles strengthen the capacity of schools to engage with families beyond the school gate, promoting multi-agency working and access to timely family support to overcome hardship and any barriers to learning and engagement. Delivery of the Food and Fun Programme in 14 school settings (including ALN schools and Welsh medium schools), throughout the summer holiday period of 2025 provided food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children in some of the most deprived communities in the county borough. This Programme is delivered annually. The local authority has supported the setup of 10 Big Bocs Bwyd facilities in our schools which offer a pay-as-you-feel shop facility for families in the school communities.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			Close links are also maintained with partners such as Citizens Advice Bureau and the local authority has recently supported the rollout of their Family Advice programme.

SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

4. a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate for each group identified. Attached a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a disproportionate/negative/adverse impact on a protected group.

4. b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a disproportionate/negative/adverse impact on a protected group.

4. c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

- Key Stage 4 results (average capped scores, attainment gaps for FSM learners)
- Attendance and exclusion data (including trends and percentage changes)
- Bullying incident data (including prejudice-related breakdown)
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) for area deprivation
- PLASC return information for ethnicity and performance
- Young Carers data (referrals, ID card uptake)
- Investment figures (e.g., £988M cumulative investment in schools since 2014)
- Estyn Inspection Report (2023) for RCTCBC education services
- Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee reports:
 - *Update on Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme*

- *Proposals to enhance ALN provision*
- *Attendance and barriers to engagement in schools*
- *Community Focused Schools – Family Engagement in Learning*
- Welsh Government feedback on PDG Plan

4. d) Give details of how you engaged with services users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.

Extensive stakeholder engagement has taken place specifically to inform the co-construction of the draft Education Strategic Plan for 2026-30. Key sources of engagement have included:

Education Colleagues

- School Leaders: headteacher perception survey outcomes (March 2025) and workshop outcomes (June 2025).
- Education and Inclusion Services Directorate staff: workshop sessions (July 2025).
- RCT's Governors Association: workshop session (July 2025).

Community Engagement

- Focus groups with parents/carers (June 2025).
- Focus groups with children and young people (June 2025).

Trade Unions

- Joint Consultative Committee (October 2025).

Elected Members

- Cabinet: Elected member feedback in meetings, including senior officer briefings (ongoing).
- Education and Inclusion Services Scrutiny Committee: members' feedback in meetings (ongoing).

Council Directorate

- Senior Leadership Team (SLT): Chief Executive and Director feedback in SLT meetings and senior officer briefings (ongoing).

Emerging themes from stakeholder engagement have been captured in our strategic vision and priorities for improvement for 2026-30.

This Impact Assessment accompanies a draft Education Strategic Plan which is being put before Cabinet with a request to commence a non-statutory consultation. Should approval be given at the Cabinet meeting on 24th November 2025, a non-statutory consultation with a range of stakeholders, including our communities, education workforce, governing bodies, elected members and key partners will be undertaken from 28th November 2025 until the 23rd January 2026.

The Education and Inclusion Services Scrutiny Committee will also scrutinise the Strategic Plan for 2026-30 on 9th December 2025.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period, the Strategic Plan for 2026-30 will be amended by the new Director of Education and presented to Cabinet in February or March 2026 for further consideration. If approved, the new Education Strategic Plan for 2026-30 will be implemented from 1st of April 2026.

4. e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes: ☒ No:

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

5. a) Please outline how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate will keep the Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 under continuous review throughout the duration of the four year plan through self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback.

The Strategic Plan will also be subject to annual review as part of the Education and Inclusion Services annual Service Self Evaluation.

5. b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

Following the non-statutory consultation period and any associated amendments.

Annually thereafter following Cabinet approval.

The Strategic Plan is intended to set out the progress we will achieve over the next four years and will be subject to continuous monitoring and review, with annual reviews taking place as part of the Service Self Evaluation.

5. c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services.

5. d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

The Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. The results of the monitoring of our Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 will be used to develop future strategies and will give priority to those areas proven to be effective during the course of this current Strategic Plan.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the determination of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a ‘Key Decision’ please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqIA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below:

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Summary of Review Panel comments:- Overall Assessment: The strategy is well-structured and demonstrates clear priorities. References to effective collaboration are evident but need stronger integration into the Impact Assessment. Impact Assessment Observations: ○ Reference needed to the Strategic Equality Plan. ○ Several sections require alignment between statements and relevant protected characteristics (e.g., Disability, Gender Reassignment, Race). ○ Sections marked “N/A” (e.g., Marriage/Civil Partnership, Pregnancy/Maternity) should be re-visited as impacts can be noted. ○ Sex and sexual orientation sections require more work to recognise attainment gaps and support available.	12/11/25	References to collaborative working strengthened throughout the Impact Assessment. Strategic Equality Plan reference added. Sections updated to ensure the impact relates specifically to the individual protected characteristic. Impact information added against Marriage/Civil Partnership, Pregnancy/Maternity. Data added regarding: attainment gaps; attendance; exclusions; bullying.

○ A lot of the positive work identified in the Strategy needs to pull through to the Impact Assessment in relation to the low income / income poverty section. ○ Positive initiatives (e.g., ALN support, poverty reduction measures, Food and Fun Programme, Big Bocs Bwyd) should be referenced in multiple parts of the document, not just the one area. ○ Additional data required for young carers, Armed Forces families, and religious schools. ○ Bullying information / data should be included where relevant. ○ Correct placement of narrative within IA columns and inclusion of citations/statistical sources needed in Sections 4C and 4D.		Further WIMD data added to the socio-economic disadvantage and area deprivation sections. Positive initiatives (e.g., ALN support, poverty reduction measures, Food and Fun Programme, Big Bocs Bwyd) referenced in multiple parts of the document. Additional information included in relation to young carers, Armed Forces and religious schools. Sections 4C and 4D updated to include relevant information from document.
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

SECTION 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the Equality Impact Assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The Equality Impact Assessment should be published alongside the report.

In summary, this Equality and Socio Economic Impact Assessment identifies positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon the protected characteristics.

As an Education and Inclusion Services Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose.

The draft Plan contains a clear strategic direction for the next four years and contains a shared vision and priorities to deliver that vision.

As the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate looks to the future, our vision is:

‘Effectively collaborating to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all’

This vision will be delivered by ensuring that there is strong leadership at all levels; effective partnership working which benefits all; tackling of inequalities and the attainment gap by ensuring that the highest quality inclusive education opportunities are afforded to all learners; and continued investment in new and significantly improved school and community facilities through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and Community Focused Schools agenda.

The draft Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 focuses on the need for effective collaboration to secure excellence, equity and inclusion for all. The priorities to ensure ‘excellent teaching, learning and assessment practices that deliver good progression and outcomes for **all**’ (Strategic Priority 2) and to ensure that ‘**all** learners have access to the highest quality inclusive education and the right support to overcome barriers to learning and participation’ (Strategic Priority 3) reinforce the commitment for the Strategy to have a positive impact on **all** children and young people. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity between the outcomes of all learners, irrespective of age, deprivation, gender, sexuality, adverse childhood experiences, ethnicity, additional learning needs or disability.

In developing this Strategy, all current and relevant local, regional and national legislation, strategies, policies and action plans have been taken into consideration in order to encourage and facilitate a Strategy that is fit for purpose.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Nicola Goodman

Position: Lead for Strategic Planning and MIM

Date: 17th November 2025

I recommend that the proposal:

Is implemented with no amendments.

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Gaynor Davies

Position: Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Date: 17th November 2025

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet reports.

