

# 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



## CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE CEFN AND CRAIG-YR-HESG PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL ON A NEW SITE

This consultation document and appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on the Council website.

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

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## Introduction

The Council wishes to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

The new school building will be built on the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit). It is proposed that the two existing schools will close with the pupils transferring to the new school no later than September 2026.

This proposal is made in accordance with the School Organisation Code – 2018 (011/2018). Section 2.1 of the School Organisation Code – 2018 refers to elements of school reorganisation that require the publication of proposals, including:

- The opening of a maintained school.
- The closing of a maintained school.

### Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The federated Governing Body of Cefn Primary School and Craig yr Hesg Primary School.</li><li>• Parents/carers, prospective parents/carers where possible, and staff members of Cefn Primary School and Craig yr Hesg Primary School.</li><li>• Pupils of Cefn Primary School and Craig yr Hesg Primary School.</li><li>• Other governing bodies of neighbouring primary schools.</li><li>• Neighbouring local authorities.</li><li>• The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities.</li><li>• Welsh Ministers.</li><li>• Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies.</li><li>• Estyn.</li><li>• Teaching and staff trade unions.</li><li>• Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.</li><li>• Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.</li><li>• Childcare providers.</li><li>• Mudiad Meithrin.</li><li>• Menter Iaith.</li><li>• Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.</li><li>• Children and Young People's Partnership.</li><li>• Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.</li><li>• Welsh Language Commissioner.</li></ul>
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## **What will the consultation process entail?**

The consultation will start on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and will be completed at 5pm on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet during March 2022. This consultation report will be available for all persons to view on the Council's website and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on page 3 of this document.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the report and will decide, based on the feedback, whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not to proceed with the proposal. If the Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal.

If the Cabinet decides to proceed with the proposal, a statutory notice will be published providing a 28-day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 requires that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections **must** be made in writing or by email, and sent to the Council within 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the outcome of the statutory notice at the next available Cabinet meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal.

If there are objections, the Council's Director of Education and Inclusion Services will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their response to them within 7 days of the day of the determination of the proposal. This report will also be available for all persons to view on the Council's website and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on page 3 of this document.

If the Council's Cabinet approve the proposal, the proposal will be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice or any subsequently modified date. In the case of this proposal, the implementation date will be no later than September 2026.

## **What do you have to consider?**

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposed change to primary education in Glyncoch. We would like you to consider the information contained within this document and to hear your views as to whether you support the proposal to amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. A new school building to accommodate all children from the village who require a place at the new school will be built on a new site, to include the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and land adjacent to it (the former site of the former Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit).

## How do you make your views known?

As a result of recent developments in the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face meetings will not be arranged. However, virtual sessions with the staff, School Councils and the federated Governing Body of both schools will be organised, as follows:

School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools	Federated Governing Body and Staff	4:30pm, Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup> January	Microsoft Teams
Cefn Primary School	School Council	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> January, time TBC	Microsoft Teams / Zoom
Craig yr Hesg Primary School	School Council	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> January, time TBC	Microsoft Teams / Zoom

A consultation questionnaire is attached on page 31 of this document. The questionnaire will also be available at the drop-in session detailed above, and on the Council's website on the 'Get Involved' page.

The questionnaire also enables consultees to indicate if they wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report once presented to the Council's Cabinet.

You are also welcome to put your views, comments and any questions you may have in writing to:

Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools  
Ty Trevithick  
Abercynon  
Mountain Ash  
CF45 4UQ

E-mail: [schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk)

**All correspondence should be received no later than 5pm on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022.**

Please note that responses to the consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal unless expressly requested. Objections can only be forwarded following the publication of the statutory notice.

## **The views of children and young people**

The Council has acknowledged that the voice of young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management, and improvement of their educational and student experience.

Young people have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and given due consideration in accordance with their age and maturity. As such, the 21st Century Schools Team will ensure that suitable arrangements are made to involve pupils as active participants throughout this consultation process, and if a decision is made to progress the proposal, throughout the implementation process.

The Council will consult with pupils who attend Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools by producing a children and young people's version of the consultation document and consultation response form. As detailed on page 3 of this document, we will hold a meeting with both school councils to discuss the proposal with pupils at the school and guide them through the child friendly version of the consultation document. Notes from this discussion will be included in the documentation forwarded to the Council's Cabinet for consideration once the consultation period has ended.

## **Community, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments**

As set out in the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018, it is a requirement to publish Community Impact, Welsh Language Impact and Equality Impact Assessments. These have been produced as an annex to this document and are also available on the Council's website.

## Background to the proposal

### **Cefn Primary School – Where we are now...**

Cefn Primary School is an English medium community primary school located at Greenfield Avenue, Glyncoch. The school site includes a 1970s single storey steel frame school building, split over two levels due to the sloping topography of the site. The school is in an enclosed area, surrounded by boundaries consisting of natural vegetation, fencing and brick walls.

The exterior of the building is precast concrete panels finished in pebble dash. Over time, areas have been over-clad in plastic coated chipboard, metal profile sheeting, vertical UPVC and timber strips. The mixture of materials visible on the external views of the building indicate that frequent incidental repairs have been required to enable the school building to continue to function.

According to the condition survey of the school carried out by the Council in 2020, Cefn Primary School is graded D for condition and D for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively. The building is in extremely poor condition with many elements adjudged to be beyond life cycle and past economical repair. Major refurbishment is required to the walls, roof, doors, and windows. The backlog maintenance figure for the school is circa £588,000. This figure represents the total cost of all maintenance work identified as being required at the school. It does not include costs of further improvements to enable the school to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools standards. The condition survey also notes the presence of asbestos within the fabric of the building. It is acknowledged that Cefn Primary School is amongst the worst schools in the Council's education portfolio in terms of condition and suitability.

The site itself and the school building is not accessible and does not comply with the Equality Act 2010. The low-level perimeter fence to the front of the school site is insufficient to stop individuals accessing the school grounds out of school hours. The location of the school, in a residential cul-de-sac, makes drop off and pick up times challenging, with inadequate parking and turning arrangements available for parents.





The main sloping entrance to Cefn Primary School.



View of the school building from the Junior yard.



The pupil numbers in Cefn Primary School over the past five years are shown in the following table. They were obtained from the statutory Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. The number of nursery age pupils for each year is shown separately, as required by the Welsh Government’s statutory School Organisation Code (2018).

<b>Cefn Primary School – Pupil Numbers</b>					
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Total statutory aged pupils</b>	108	113	127	126	125
<b>Total nursery pupils</b>	24	26	19	21	21

Over the next five years, the pupil forecasts for Cefn Primary School, which are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government, are provided below. As the table shows, pupil numbers are expected to fall quite considerably over this period.

<b>Cefn Primary School – Pupil Forecasts</b>								
	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>2020/21 Actual</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>% surplus places in 2025/26</b>
<b>Statutory aged pupils</b>	141	125	118	112	112	106	92	34.8%
<b>Nursery pupils</b>	20	21	19	18	17	18	17	15%

## Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Where we are now...

Craig yr Hesg Primary School is an English medium community primary school located at Cefn Lane, Glyncoch. The school site consists of a 1950s single storey flat roof building of brick and block construction, which was extended during the 1990s. The school building is surrounded by level grassed areas and tarmac play areas. The site is enclosed by galvanised metal railing boundary fencing, which is of low level to the front of the site.

According to the condition survey of the school carried out by the Council in 2019, Craig yr Hesg Primary School is graded C for condition and C for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively. Significant investment is required to replace the roof covering in its entirety and to replace the boiler system. The backlog maintenance figure for the school is circa £196,000. This figure represents the total cost of all maintenance work identified as being required at the school. It does not include costs of further improvements to enable the school to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools standards. The condition survey also noted the presence of asbestos within the fabric of the building.

The accessibility of the site itself and the school building requires improvement to comply with the Equality Act 2010. The low-level perimeter fence to the front of the school site is insufficient to stop individuals accessing the site outside of school hours.



The main entrance to Craig yr Hesg Primary School



View of school building from rear of site.

The pupil numbers in Craig yr Hesp Primary School over the past five years are shown in the following table. They were obtained from the statutory Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. The number of nursery age pupils for each year is shown separately, as required by the Welsh Government’s statutory School Organisation Code (2018).

<b>Craig yr Hesp Primary School – Pupil Numbers</b>					
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Total statutory aged pupils</b>	124	122	125	144	149
<b>Total nursery pupils</b>	22	29	36	23	29

Over the next five years, the pupil forecasts for Craig yr Hesp Primary School, which are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government, are provided below. As the table shows, pupil numbers are forecast to consistently exceed capacity over this period.

Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Pupil Forecasts								
	Capacity	2020/21 Actual	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	% surplus places in 2025/26
Statutory aged pupils	150	149	158	157	156	156	153	-2%
Nursery pupils	21	29	17	20	18	18	19	9.5%

### What is the basis for this proposal?

Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary schools formed a federation in September 2012 under a single Executive Headteacher and a federated governing body. The schools are known collectively as the ‘Fern Federation’. Estyn noted in its most recent reports that the Federation is beginning to operate more effectively, with both schools working collaboratively to establish a consistent approach to, and strengthen the quality of, teaching and leadership across the Federation. This proposal seeks to build on this positive work and enable the Federation to achieve its vision of meeting the wellbeing and educational needs of pupils and developing the professional learning of staff, through amalgamating the existing schools and providing a single English medium community primary school for the village of Glyncoch.

The current split of English medium primary education provision in Glyncoch between two schools, situated just 0.6 miles apart, is unsustainable. This is evidenced by the pupil number projections, which show Cefn Primary School having a significant percentage of surplus places (34.8%) by the 2025/26 academic year. Reducing surplus places is a key priority for the Council, with schools with surplus places of more than 25% being prioritised for review. Conversely, Craig yr Hesg Primary School is projected to consistently exceed its current capacity of 150 pupil places from the 2021/22 academic year onwards. This demonstrates that, separately, the schools are not suitable to meet projected local demand for English medium primary education in the coming years and supports the case to replace with a larger, more educationally viable primary school of appropriate size.

The existing school buildings at Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools require significant repairs and are no longer fit-for-purpose, with collective outstanding maintenance costs of more than £783,000. The age and construction of the buildings prevent either school from receiving any significant upgrades which would allow them to be deemed a 21st Century Schools’ provision.

It is the Council’s view that a new, purpose-built 21<sup>st</sup> Century School building will help the new school to cultivate a learning environment which nurtures and supports pupils and staff and will have a positive impact on the local community. Due to the limitations of the existing school sites, neither site is suitable to accommodate the new school in its current format. A new school is therefore required for Glyncoch which must be built on a new site.

The Council believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard educational standards for the future and provides a platform for improvement through significant investment in permanent and fit-for-purpose facilities. This investment will create a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21st Century facilities including improved ICT provision, creative outdoor play areas and access to community facilities. The design will be focused on creating a flexible environment that fosters pupils' personal growth in communication, collaboration, creativity, and leadership skills.

Improved school buildings and improved school performance will potentially lead to pupils who currently access provision out of catchment returning to their in-catchment school, increasing the critical mass and providing more professional teaching opportunities for teachers. A new 21<sup>st</sup> Century school environment will have a positive impact on both pupil and staff wellbeing and will provide strengthened opportunities for developing a community-focused school.

### **What alternative options have been considered?**

Given the limitations of both existing school sites, and the challenging topography of the catchment areas, the number of alternative options available for consideration were limited.

Searches of the catchment areas of Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools were undertaken to identify a suitable site which met the following criteria:

- Have an adequate site area.
- Have satisfactory access which is capable of being improved.
- Be free from any visual incumbents.
- Be in close proximity to the current schools.
- Be a viable development opportunity subject to a detailed feasibility study.

Following this assessment, the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit) was identified as the only suitable location for the new school. It is felt that this combined site, which is in Council ownership, is of a suitable size to accommodate a larger school building with appropriate external space and facilities, has good access arrangements that could be improved further through the consideration of a dedicated drop off facility (subject to further surveys and the transport and traffic assessment), has good existing infrastructure, and is in a prominent position in the village, close to both existing schools.





Land adjacent to Craig yr Hesg Primary School - former site of Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit



View of adjacent land from the Craig yr Hesg Primary School site

In accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018, further alternative options were also identified and consciously considered. Some of the benefits and disadvantages of each of the discounted options are listed in the table that follows:

Option	Benefits	Disadvantages
Retain the status quo.	<p>No 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools &amp; Colleges Programme investment required.</p> <p>No disruption to the pupils, parents/carers and staff.</p> <p>No impact on home to school transport.</p>	<p>Aspects of both school buildings have reached the end of their usable life and are now beyond economic repair.</p> <p>The school buildings are not of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools standard. As such, delivering the New Curriculum for Wales would be a challenge.</p> <p>Cefn Primary would remain an inaccessible site that is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Backlog maintenance of £783,000 across both schools would remain.</p> <p>Parking issues at Cefn Primary would not be resolved.</p> <p>Surplus places at Cefn Primary and lack of places at Craig yr Hesg Primary would not be addressed.</p> <p>The benefits of creating a single, larger more educationally viable primary school would not be realised.</p>
Continue with the Federation and build two separate new schools on the Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary School sites	<p>No long-term change for pupils, parents/carers and staff.</p>	<p>Significant 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools &amp; Colleges Programme investment would be required, that would be unaffordable and not achieve best value for public money.</p> <p>The limitations of the existing sites would be challenging and possibly prohibitive.</p> <p>Access and parking issues at Cefn Primary would not be addressed.</p> <p>The benefits of creating a single, larger more educationally viable primary school would not be realised.</p>



<p>Build a single new school on the Cefn Primary School site.</p>	<p>No impact on Cefn Primary pupils in terms of travel distances.</p> <p>The benefits of creating a single, larger more educationally viable primary school would be realised.</p>	<p>Significant 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme investment would be required.</p> <p>The site is inaccessible and is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The topography of the site would restrict the potential size and location of the school building.</p> <p>Temporary classrooms would need to be utilised for the duration of the construction and given the site restrictions, may need to be located elsewhere.</p> <p>The topography of the site would restrict the ability to build a fully accessible school fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with appropriate outdoor facilities.</p> <p>Access to the site, in a residential location, is unsatisfactory. Existing parking issues would be exacerbated.</p> <p>Some Craig yr Hesg Primary pupils may have further to travel to school.</p>
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<p>Build a single new school on the Craig yr Hesg Primary School site.</p>	<p>No impact on Craig yr Hesg Primary pupils in terms of travel distances.</p> <p>The benefits of creating a single, larger more educationally viable primary school would be realised.</p>	<p>Significant 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme investment would be required.</p> <p>Temporary classrooms may need to be utilised for the duration of the construction and given the site restrictions, may need to be located elsewhere.</p> <p>The size of the existing site would be insufficient to accommodate a larger school building and appropriate external space/facilities.</p> <p>Increased vehicular traffic to the existing site, without the capacity to provide a drop off facility, would increase parking issues.</p> <p>Some Cefn Primary pupils may have further to travel to school.</p>
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## Benefits and Disadvantages, Risks and Mitigation Factors

Any proposals involving school reorganisation will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty, although experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum through meaningful engagement throughout the consultation process, and if a decision is made to progress with the proposal, during the implementation phase.

The benefits and disadvantages of the proposal are highlighted below, along with information on how any identified risks can be managed by the Council and the school.

<b>Benefits</b>
A new 21 <sup>st</sup> Century standard school will deliver a significant improvement in the quality of the educational provision in Glyncoch, having a significant positive impact upon the educational performance of the pupils and staff morale.
Building on progress made by the Fern Federation, a single larger, more educationally viable community primary school will offer enhanced and consistent educational opportunities for staff and pupils in Glyncoch.
The school will be designed to be energy efficient and will include renewable energy systems including photovoltaic panels and rainwater harvesting. The school will be built to BREEAM Excellent standards, and will be Net Zero Carbon in operation, contributing to the delivery of the Council's emerging Tackling Climate Change Strategy for 2021-2025 and the ambitious goal of being a carbon neutral Council by 2030, and as close as possible to being carbon neutral as a County Borough by 2030. This proposal will also support Welsh Government's Delivery Plan for a Low Carbon Wales and its 'Route Map' to decarbonise the public sector in Wales.
Traffic arrangements, particularly for current Cefn Primary School pupils, will be improved, with consideration also given to a dedicated on-site drop off area on the new school site (subject to further surveys and the transport and traffic assessment).
The school will be designed to be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area will be included within the school, enabling the local community to safely utilise the facilities at the school, both during and after the school day.
The new school will meet 'Secured by Design' standards. The site will be enclosed by perimeter fencing over 2 metres in height, deterring antisocial behaviour and preventing unauthorised individuals from accessing the site out of school hours.
The 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools external facilities, including a Multi-Use Games Area, will allow staff, pupils, and the community to benefit from a greater breadth of teaching and learning experiences.

Given the proposed location of the new school, it is anticipated that there will be no additional transport costs. These costs are in relation to the Learning Support Class provision currently based at Cefn Primary School.

The proposed site is in a prominent position at the heart of the community. There will be very little location change for current Craig yr Hesg pupils, staff and parents/carers, whilst changes for current Cefn Primary pupils, staff and parent/carers should be kept to a minimum given the close proximity of the new site.

### Disadvantages

The cost of the new school, to be funded via the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools & Colleges Programme, will be significant.

Some current Cefn Primary pupils and staff will inevitably live further from the new school site.

Moving to a new school site could cause some anxiety for some pupils, staff, and parents/carers.

There may be staffing implications in that, for example certain roles that are currently replicated in the existing schools will only require one post in the new school's staffing structure. Staff will be concerned about the security of their jobs which is why the temporary governing body will, as soon as possible, and once the statutory processes are complete, address the staffing issues.

Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Parents choose to send their children to another school	Low	Low	Engagement with parents/carers will continue throughout the consultation period, and if a decision is taken by Cabinet to implement the proposal, this engagement will continue as the proposal progresses.

### New Community Primary School – Where we'd like to be...

It is being proposed that Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools are amalgamated. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing schools and opening a new community primary school to replace them. The new school will be built on Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit). The new school will cater for children aged between 3 and 11 years of age who require English medium education. It will have a proposed admissions number of 51 pupils per year group, and an overall capacity of 360 (plus nursery).

The new school will be built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 and will be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

The accommodation will consist of:

- Modern, flexible learning environments for all pupils, a large hall/dining area, a multi-purpose learning resource area and fully accessible facilities.
- Internal and external areas for use by the local community.
- Some additional capacity and space for additional learning needs interventions.
- Enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities, including an outdoor classroom and a 'forest schools' area.
- Improved traffic management.



A multi-purpose learning resource area or 'heart space' at a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School delivered by the Council.



Typical junior classroom in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School delivered by the Council.



Typical foundation phase classroom in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School delivered by the Council.

The school will be built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 which requires new primary schools to include provision for team sports, including a playing field area suitable for team games for pupils aged 8 and over and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for sports such as basketball and netball. New schools are also required to include soft play areas, commonly made up of grassed space for pupils to sit and socialise, alongside hard surfaced playgrounds and sheltered space to complement the soft play areas around the school site. The new school will also include a habitat area which will act as a space for outdoor learning and provide a valuable teaching and learning resource.





External view of Cwmaman Primary School opened by the Council in 2018.



Example of Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Tonyrefail Community School.





Example of outdoor learning area at Cwmaman Primary School.

There will be on-site provision for staff parking as well as consideration of an on-site drop-off facility for pupils (subject to further surveys and the transport and traffic assessment).

## **Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision**

Two local authority resourced Learning Support Classes for pupils with social and emotional needs and behavioural difficulties are currently based at Cefn Primary School. This provision will transfer to the new school and will be enhanced by the state-of-the-art facilities and additional resources available in the new school.

## **The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)**

All Local Authorities in Wales must produce a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The WESP is a long-term language planning tool which sets the direction for the strategic planning, delivery and growth in Welsh medium and Welsh language education. Through the WESP, and effective strategic planning and investment, the Council aims to contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050. The Council's current WESP can be viewed and downloaded from the Council website via the following link:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/WelshServices/Relateddocs/WelshinEducationStrategicPlan201720.pdf>

A statutory consultation on the new ten-year WESP for the period between 2022 to 2032 was undertaken in 2021 and is now complete. The Council will be submitting the new WESP to the Welsh Government for consideration at the end of January 2022.

Included amongst the list of strategic developments, actions and outcomes the Council will undertake to help achieve the targets set out in the current WESP is a commitment to:

- Provide more opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.

The Council aims to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning to promote the informal use the Welsh language amongst learners inside and outside school. Both existing schools currently support this aim by using incidental Welsh wherever possible and employing initiatives such as 'Helpwr Heddiw', 'Seren yr Wythnos' and 'Criw Cymraeg'. The new school will continue to do so and will build upon this by committing to achieve the 'Cymraeg Campus' Language Charter, a framework to promote and increase the use of Welsh across the school.

## Admission arrangements

The catchment area for the new school will be an amalgamation of the current catchment areas for Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The school will cater for children aged between 3 to 11 years of age requiring English medium primary education. It will have a proposed admissions number of 51 pupils per year group, and an overall pupil capacity of 360 (plus nursery).

In the case of oversubscription at any school, published admissions criteria are applied to all applications received for places, to determine which pupils are successful in obtaining the places available. These criteria, which are outlined in our school admission policy booklet entitled 'Starting School' are listed in priority order below:

- Category One – 'Looked after' children (children in public care) and previously 'looked after' children.
- Category Two – Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, who will continue to attend that school on the expected date of admission of the younger child.
- Category Three – Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.
- Category Four – Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, who will continue to attend that school on the expected date of admission of the younger child.
- Category Five – Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.

The term 'home' in the categories above refers to the actual location of the residential dwelling in which the child lives.

Children will be admitted up to the Published Admission Number in the order of priority as outlined above. If, within any one of the priority categories listed, all applicants cannot be offered a place, preference will be given to children living nearest to the school. Distance will be measured using the shortest, safe walking route between the home address and the nearest open school gate. In areas where no safe walking route has been identified, the shortest driving route between the home address and the nearest open school gate will be used. This distance will be measured using the 'MapInfo System' only. Measurements calculated by any other system will not be considered. The home address in instances where parents/carers have shared responsibility for children, will be the address to which Child Benefit is paid.

## The likely impact of the proposal

### The educational case for the proposal

This proposal forms a part of the Council's wider 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Investment Programme and contributes to the delivery of sustainable schools fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and supports the better strategic management of the Council's education estate.

In addition to this objective, school organisational proposals should highlight the educational benefits that any change will offer, particularly in relation to overall improvements in standards, but also in terms of the social and emotional development of children, which would usually impact beneficially on their overall achievement and outcomes.

Both Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools were inspected by Estyn in September 2018.

Cefn Primary School's performance in the five inspection areas was as follows:

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and Learning Experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, Support and Guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and Management	Adequate and needs improvement

Estyn also set out recommendations for the school to implement in order to make improvements to the quality of education provision on offer. Estyn's recommendations were as follows:

- R1** Establish stable and effective leadership and teaching teams.
- R2** Improve monitoring and school improvement processes to ensure they focus on raising standards for pupils.
- R3** Improve the quality of teaching and ensure any grouping arrangements across classes enable pupils of all abilities to make effective progress.
- R4** Raise standards in writing.
- R5** Ensure all teachers give pupils appropriate opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively across the curriculum.
- R6** Improve pupils' attendance.

Craig yr Hesg Primary School’s performance in the five inspection areas was as follows:

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and Learning Experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, Support and Guidance	Good
Leadership and Management	Adequate and needs improvement

Estyn also set out recommendations for the school to implement in order to make improvements to the quality of education provision on offer. Estyn’s recommendations for Craig yr Hesg Primary School reflected those for Cefn Primary School, with the exception of **R6** – Improve pupils’ attendance, which was omitted from the recommendation list for Cefn Primary School.

In response to the outcome of the core inspections of Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools, the Fern Federation was required to draw up an action plan to address the recommendations, subject to review by Estyn. In January 2020, a follow up visit was undertaken which judged that insufficient progress had been made in relation to the recommendations. As a result, Estyn placed both schools in the reported category of ‘Significant Improvement’, which requires increased follow-up activity.

Subsequent to being placed in the reported category of ‘Significant Improvement’, both schools were regularly monitored, each half term, by the school improvement service (Central South Consortium - CSC). All the progress reports prepared and produced by the Improvement Partner from CSC showed that the schools had, over time, made improvements. A further follow-up visit was undertaken by Estyn in November 2021, who were satisfied that significant progress had now been made in relation to the recommendations. As a result, both schools were removed from the list of schools requiring ‘Significant Improvement’.

It is the Council’s view that the closure of both schools and the opening of a single new, purpose-built school fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century on a new site will have a major positive impact on all five Estyn inspection areas, as detailed below:

1. **Standards** – Bringing all teachers and pupils together by creating one school on a single site will build upon the emerging effective cross-school working and collaboration noted by Estyn and facilitate consistency and further improvements in standards. A new school building fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will provide staff and pupils with enhanced teaching spaces, dedicated resource areas, stimulating learning environments and state-of-the-art information and communication technology equipment, all of which will support the school to raise standards, and make progress against Estyn’s recommendations.
2. **Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning** – A new school site with first class facilities will have a positive impact on both pupil and staff wellbeing. Extensive outdoor space will provide a diverse and engaging environment for pupils to learn and play in. A single new school with an engaging vision and ethos will inspire pupils and staff and have a positive effect on attitudes to learning. A larger school, with more competition, will encourage pupils to stretch themselves and fulfil their potential.

3. **Teaching and Learning Experiences** – Estyn recognised that collaborative work across the federation, including the use of an agreed planning format, is beginning to establish a consistent approach to teaching. Further, movement of staff between schools was noted as having strengthened the quality of teaching. Amalgamating both schools to create one larger staff team on a single site will increase opportunities for interaction, coordination and the sharing of expertise and experience, and ultimately improve the quality and consistency of teaching. A fit-for-purpose school building will ensure that staff are able to provide a balanced curriculum at all key stages in line with the new Curriculum for Wales – 2022, whilst a 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment will provide greater flexibility and therefore greater choice and variety in pupils’ learning experiences.
4. **Care, Support and Guidance** – The existing schools are recognised as inclusive communities who support pupils’ wellbeing effectively. A new 21<sup>st</sup> Century school building will enable the new school to build upon the good working practices and initiatives that the existing schools have in place. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century environment will provide opportunities to further develop a wide range of extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyles and nurture pupils. A fully accessible building and the provision of flexible spaces will allow the school to extend its good practice and facilitate further interventions and engagement with families and the local community.
5. **Leadership and Management** – Replacing two federated schools with a single new school on one site will build upon the progress already made by the Fern Federation and enable the governing body and senior management team to implement consistent policies and practices more seamlessly. Since taking up post, the Executive Headteacher has provided stable leadership across both schools. Replacing two separate schools in poor condition with a single state-of-the-art school on a new site will enable the Headteacher and senior management team to be more efficient and effective and focus fully on working towards achieving Estyn’s recommendations.

### **What is the likely impact of the proposals on pupils?**

It is anticipated that the proposed changes will not adversely impact upon pupils. Some pupils may initially be daunted at the prospect of moving to a new, larger school on a new site, however the Headteacher and staff team will ensure they are appropriately supported through this transition period. Whilst there may be some staff changes, provided that pupil numbers remain at current levels, it is anticipated that the large majority of staff currently employed at Cefn and Craig-yr-Hesg Primary Schools will ‘slot’ into similar positions in the new school if they wish to do so.

The proposed changes will have many benefits for all pupils. Being taught in a new, state of the art, purpose-built school building with first class facilities should have a significant impact on the quality and variety of the learning experience and the educational performance of pupils.

11 children currently attend the Learning Support Classes in Cefn Primary School and both classes will be moved to the new school and all pupils will experience the benefits that a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century School will bring.

Being part of a larger school will mean that pupils are more likely to be taught in classes with predominantly their own age group, enabling teachers to offer pupils a wider and more varied curriculum to support all learners, including the least and most able. It will also provide pupils



with more competition, which improves educational outcomes, and the opportunity to engage in a wider range of extra-curricular activities.

The catchment area of the new school will combine the current catchment areas for Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. Whilst inevitably some pupils who currently attend Cefn Primary School will live further away from the new site, others will, in fact live, closer to it. Overall, the impact on pupil travel arrangements is considered to be minimal.

The Welsh Government and the Council has adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which is expressed in seven core aims that all children and young people:

1. Have a flying start in life.
2. Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.
3. Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation, and exploitation.
4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting, and cultural activities.
5. Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
6. Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing.
7. Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

The Council considers that this proposal benefits the pupils currently attending Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools in accordance with the seven core aims set out above.

Further information relating to the likely impact of the proposals on pupils, including how the proposal contributes to all seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and an assessment of the proposal on the Five Ways of Working, can be found in the Equality Impact Assessment.

### **What is the likely impact of the proposal on staff?**

As with any major change, there could be some short term and possibly longer-term changes in the staffing structure. As this will be a new school provision, a temporary governing body will be established if a decision to proceed with the amalgamation is agreed. The current federated governing body could fulfil this function. The main role of this temporary governing body will be to establish a staffing structure for the new school, appoint its senior management team and make decisions about the method of 'slotting in' of all other staff to the posts that are available in the new school. The Council has well established Human Resource policies and procedures that give reassurance to staff and employers about the management of organisational change.

A new permanent governing body will be appointed for the new school when it opens no later than September 2026. The temporary governing body will remain in place until all governor appointments are made. The existing federated governing body of the two schools will also remain in office until the new school opens.

There will be many benefits for teaching staff, which should improve teaching standards within the school. A larger staff team will increase opportunities for interaction, coordination and the sharing of expertise and experience, and ultimately improve the quality and consistency of teaching. Further, many pupils are currently taught in mixed age groups. If the proposal proceeds and a larger school is created, pupils are more likely to be taught in classes with predominantly



their own age group, which makes it considerably easier for the class teacher to provide an appropriate curriculum and support for all pupils, including the least and most able. This should result in higher standards of teaching and learning and better educational outcomes.

Teaching and support staff will also benefit from improved opportunities for staff development in the new school. The creation of a larger school will also provide staff with the opportunity to specialise in specific areas of the curriculum. Smaller schools with fewer staff require staff to take on multiple roles, which can lead to greater workloads and less opportunities to specialise. A larger school with more staff provides the opportunity for such specialism, with the ability to share workload more effectively, giving staff more opportunities to progress their careers.

The state-of-the-art new school will provide staff and pupils with enhanced teaching spaces, dedicated resource areas, stimulating learning environments and first-class outdoor facilities. Such improvements in the quality of the educational setting and the working environment will have a huge impact on the quality and variety of learning experiences teachers are able to offer pupils and is likely to have a significant positive impact on staff morale, wellbeing and retention.

## Financial implications of the proposal

The proposal to amalgamate Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools will have significant financial implications. A move from a position of two separate schools with two separate budgets to a single school with a single budget will result in some budget lines being removed or reduced. However, as the schools are already federated and share an Executive Headteacher, the impact on staffing costs would be minimised. It is anticipated that some savings would be achieved as the new school would be maintenance-free and Net Zero Carbon in operation, however other costs are likely to increase, for example, the rates payable for the new school building.

Although it is not possible to be precise about future revenue costs or savings, as much will depend upon the future decisions of the Governing Body, a summary of the known budgetary impacts is set out below.

	<b>Cefn Primary (Current)</b>	<b>Craig y Hesg Primary (Current)</b>	<b>New Primary (Future)</b>	<b>Revenue Savings</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Annual Revenue Budget based on 2021/22	699	562	1261	78

In addition, the proposal will remove a significant backlog maintenance figure of more than £783k and eliminate day-to-day costs associated with the failing buildings. It is not anticipated that the proposal will lead to increased home to school transport costs.

This proposal will replace Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools with a single newly constructed school at an estimated cost of £9 million. The new school will be funded by the Council and Welsh Government via the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Colleges Programme. Project costs will be

developed alongside the consultation process and approvals sought in line with the Council's decision-making procedures.

## **Home to School Transport provision**

There is a statutory duty placed upon all Local Authorities in Wales to provide pupils 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 English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate. The law relating to safe 'walking distance' is defined as two miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving secondary education.

The Council has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 to make a more generous provision to pupils. The relevant information in relation to Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools, which will also apply to the new school, is set out below:

- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1½ miles, instead of 2 miles as required by the Measure.
- Free transport to their nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to pupils who meet the 1½ mile eligibility criterion from the start of 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) as required by the Measure.
- The term suitable school applies to the catchment area English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate.

The full information in relation to the Council's Home to School transport provision viewed and downloaded from the Council website via:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/SchoolandCollegeTransport/SchoolandCollegeTransport.aspx>

Currently, the only pupils attending either of the existing schools who access Home to School Transport provision attend the Learning Support Class provision at Cefn Primary School. At present, 10 pupils access Home to School Transport provision for this purpose.

## **Land and buildings information**

If the proposals outlined in this document are implemented, the existing Cefn Primary School site will become redundant. As this is an initial consultation process, no decisions have yet been made in respect of the future of this site and building. This issue will be managed in accordance with the agreed Council Policy on Surplus Land and Buildings.

# Consultation Response Pro-forma

In order to comply with its legal duty under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and help the Council reach a decision on the proposal below, it would be very helpful if you could answer the following questions. Please note, any personal information given by you will not be shared and only used to provide you with feedback, should you request it. Any comments that could identify you will be anonymised in the consultation report produced. Completed questionnaires should be returned to:

Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
21st Century Schools Team  
Ty Trevithick  
Abercynon  
CF45 4UQ

Or

Email: [schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk)

## The Proposal

To close Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools and transfer all pupils to a new English medium community primary school for Glyncoch. The new school will be built on a new site, to include the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit).

Do you agree with the proposal?      Yes      No      Not sure

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

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● Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh language (positive or negative)?

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● Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh language less favourably than the English language?

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● How do you think positive effects on the Welsh language could be increased, or negative effects decreased?

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● Please state any additional views or points which you would like to be considered (attach additional sheets if necessary).

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● Please indicate who you are (e.g. parent/carer of a pupil at named school, governor at named school, etc.)

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● Name (optional):

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Please provide contact details if you wish to be notified of publication of the consultation report.

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Please forward completed questionnaires to the above address no later than Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022.

The Council is committed to keeping your personal information safe and secure and keeping you informed about how we use your information. To learn about how your privacy is protected and how and why we use your personal information to provide you with services, please visit our Consultation privacy notice:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/DataProtectionandFreedomofInformation/DataProtection/serviceprivacynotices/ChiefExecutives/ConsultationPrivacyNotice.aspx>

And

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/DataProtectionandFreedomofInformation/DataProtection/DataProtection.aspx>





