

# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS



## CONSULTATION REPORT

### CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO OPEN A NEW 3 TO 19 SPECIAL SCHOOL IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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

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

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## 1. Proposal

The proposal is to open a new English medium 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) for 180 pupils, however, this will be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new school. The new special school will provide education for pupils with a range of additional learning needs (ALN) including autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, and sensory impairment.

It is proposed that the new school will be built in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, and it will open no later than the 2026 academic year. The new school is in addition to the four special schools already open in RCT.

It is also proposed to introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT, these are:

- Park Lane Special School.
- Ysgol Hen Felin.
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

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

[Proposal to develop a new 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/consultation/develop-a-new-3-to-19-special-school-in-rhondda-cynon-taf)

## 2. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This Consultation Report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018. Its purpose is to inform the stakeholders listed below of the outcome of the consultation held between 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

### 3. Who Have We Consulted With?

A copy of the Consultation Document, which fully outlined and explained our proposal, was sent to the following stakeholders. The Consultation Document was also published on the Council website.

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of:
  - Park Lane Special School.
  - Ysgol Hen Felin.
  - Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.
- Parents/carers, prospective parents/carers (where possible), and staff members of:
  - Park Lane Special School.
  - Ysgol Hen Felin.
  - Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.
- Pupils of:
  - Park Lane Special School.
  - Ysgol Hen Felin.
  - Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.
- Neighbouring local authorities.
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf constituencies
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Childcare providers.
- Mudiad Meithrin.
- Menter Iaith.
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.
- Children and Young People's Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.

## 4. Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified were sent a link to electronic copies of the Consultation Document, and those that requested paper copies received them. The table that follows also outlines the meetings that were convened with the Governing Bodies and Staff Members and School Councils of Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch.

<b>Governing Body and Staff Members and School Council Meetings</b>			
<b>School</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Time / Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Park Lane Special School	Governing Body and Staff Members	20 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 15:30	Virtually via Microsoft Teams
Ysgol Hen Felin		19 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 15:30	
Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel		17 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 15:30	
Park Lane Special School	School Council	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 10:00	Park Lane Special School
Ysgol Hen Felin		19 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 10:00	Ysgol Hen Felin
Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel		17 <sup>th</sup> Ysgol Ty Coch at 13:30	Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel

All governing body and staff meetings outlined in the previous table were held virtually via Microsoft Teams. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 2 (A to C). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

All School Council meetings outlined in the previous table were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people's version of the Consultation Document and the Consultation Response Form was developed using a Picture Education System (PECs). Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 3 (A to C). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

A drop in session was also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. This was held on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023 between 15:00 to 18:30 at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX. Attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.

In addition, the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee also formed part of the consultation process, and considered the proposal at its meeting on the [15th September 2023](#). The response from the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee is contained within the responses detailed in Section Five – Summary of Consultation Responses and the minutes of the meeting are attached at Appendix 4.

## 5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the questions raised at the governing body and staff meetings and School Council meetings are summarised in the notes of the meetings attached at Appendix 2 (A to C) and Appendix 3 (A to C) respectively.

In addition, 46 written responses were received. 26 (56.0%) were in favour of the proposal, 17 (38.0%) were against the proposals and 3 (7.0%) were unsure. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	Percentage
In Favour	26	56.5%
Against	17	37.0%
Unsure	3	6.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The table that follows outlines a breakdown of respondent category for those who were against the proposal:

Breakdown of Respondent Category for those Against the Proposal		
Respondent Category	Number	Percentage
Local Resident	5	29.4%
Parent / Carer of pupils attending primary school within the catchment area	3	17.6%
Parent / Carer of the respective schools	7	41.2%
Staff of the respective schools	1	5.9%
Stakeholder	1	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Of the 58.8% (combined) of respondents categorised as either parent / carer of pupils attending primary school within the catchment area or parent / carer of the respective schools, the following reasons for being against the proposal were received:

Reasons for Being Against the Proposal		
Reasons	Number	Percentage
Likely to have misunderstood the proposal	15	88.3%
No response	2	11.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Those respondents who are likely to have misunderstood the proposal, gave responses that included:

*“RCT is too large an area for one school. three year old children could potentially have to travel long distances to get to school. It will also mean that, as many SEN children travel by mini bus with multiple pick-ups, that children are going to be on the road from very early morning to get to their schools which will have an impact on their wellbeing when they arrive at school. There is an RCT wide shortage of accessible transport and of passenger assistants already. One school will mean more children becoming eligible for school transport which will impact an already overloaded system.”*

*“Too many children in one place and also moved to far away.”*

*“My son currently attends Park Lane Special School. He is in the local area, he lives in Aberaman and goes to school in Trecynon. I would not be happy about his school day being extended to also include an additional hour a day drive minimum. Also, if he is unwell then it means family who can pick him up when I’m working wouldn’t be able to get to him by bus like they can now. Essentially meaning my child would be left until I could get there. As a nurse who also works in theatres at times this doesn’t sit well with me as I’d not pick up messages until hours sometimes after the fact.”*

*“My son attends Park Lane School in Aberdare, and this is the first I’ve heard of this proposal and the meeting which takes place today. I’m extremely unhappy with the proposal and the expectation that my son, with the difficulties he has would be expected to travel in excess of half an hour to get to school every day.”*

*“My granddaughter goes to Park Lane. Clydach Vale is miles away. It would mean an hour travelling to school and an hour back every day. That’s ridiculous for a child with special needs.”*

*“This would mean that children from outside the area, for example Aberdare, would have further to travel.”*

*“I very much oppose to this on the grounds that this will disrupt the education of these children who need routine and stability in their lives. For some of these children, travelling far each day, will be unbearable and a huge hurdle to overcome. Also, by localising a special school to just the Rhondda Valley will limit access for children in the Cynon Valley to provision they desperately need. Some families of these schools do not drive and would therefore struggle to attend the school if there is a need to fetch their child.”*

*“One school will cause too much transport time for pupils across borough.”*

These comments suggest that respondents are concerned that the proposal would potentially result in their child moving school and traveling excessive distances. However, the proposals are based on pupils attending their nearest special school in order to reduce travel times. Furthermore, the proposal enables all pupils to remain in their existing special school placement if they and their families so wish.

In compliance with the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018, a summary of the written responses received during the consultation are detailed in the table that follows along with clarification (where required).

<b>Summary of Written Responses</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
There is a clear lack of provision in the County Borough. Some children are having to travel a long way each day which is hardly ideal for those with extra needs. This must be a significant expense in home to school transport costs.	<p>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.</p> <p>Any revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the school’s delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is develops.</p>
The special schools in the RCT are oversubscribed. A new special school will allow countless opportunities for our children.	Noted.
Will Maesgwyn Special School be included in these changes?	<p>Given the age range of the pupils at the school and the education provided which differs from the other special schools, Maesgwyn Special School is <u>not</u> considered to be affected by these proposals.</p> <p>Maesgwyn Special School is a 11 to 19 school, and these proposals seek to open a new 3 to 19 special school.</p>
The three 3 to 19 special schools in RCT are oversubscribed. The introduction of catchment areas would be welcomed. However, would pupils who are not in their nearest special school stay where they are or move to their catchment school?	Pupils who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than the 2026 academic year) so that pupils attend their local special school.
I currently work in one of the three 3 to 19 special schools in the County Borough. The number of pupils has increased significantly over recent years, resulting in specialist rooms being lost to create additional classrooms. The pupils are missing out.	<p>The new special school will create a highly specialist 21<sup>st</sup> century special school environment which will enable the Council to meet the needs of pupils who require access to highly specialist therapeutic facilities, equipment and resources required to meet all ALN, including complex medical and health needs.</p> <p>We would expect all of our special schools to be adequately serviced with equipment and resources to meet the ALN of all pupils equitably.</p> <p>The expectation is that this proposal will have a positive impact upon the capacity of the existing special schools, so that those specialist areas, now</p>

<b>Summary of Written Responses</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
	being used for teaching, can be reintroduced where at all possible.
Children in special schools need a quiet, safe and familiar place. Building one big special school will create a loud, noisy and crowded environment.	The proposal will involve the creation of an additional 3 to 19 special school in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, increasing the number of 3 to 19 special schools in RCT from three to four. All other special schools will remain open. The size of the proposed school is not excessively large and will provide a calm but stimulating learning environment.
This would mean that children from outside the area, for example Aberdare, would have further to travel.	It is likely the respondent has misunderstood the proposal. The proposal will involve the creation of an additional 3 to 19 special school in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, increasing the number of 3 to 19 special schools in RCT from three to four. All other special schools will remain open.  Pupils who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than the 2026 academic year) so that pupils attend their local special school.
I would like to see more children who currently attend special school be a part of their community.	The new special school will be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area will be designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
I do not support the building of the new 3 to 19 special school on the site proposed. Clydach Vale is crying out for more employment opportunity, the area is losing a large employer shortly and there has been no publicity or campaigning by local politicians to save this factory.  In addition to the employment issue, Cwm Clydach Primary is in bad need of redevelopment and is not fit for purpose for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century. This site could be considered for this purpose. In fact, if a school is going to be located on this site, it would be more beneficial to incorporate the	The private sector contractor involved in the creation of the new special school will be delivering community benefits by means of apprenticeships, training and job opportunities, bringing local jobs for local people and opportunities for the long term unemployed. They will also engage in community volunteering and in kind donations to the benefit of the local community. They will also engage with the school community, giving pupils the opportunity to engage with the contractor in activities.  The identified site is not big enough to house both a special school and a mainstream school. The Council has invested considerably in Cwm Clydach Primary School over the last few years and will continue to invest in the learning environment as part of the Council's Capital Programme in the future.

<b>Summary of Written Responses</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
mainstream school along with the special school.	
I think the location would be perfect, as it would not cause congestion on main routes but is easily accessible and pupils will be able to engage with the local community.	Noted.
I believe that the current special schools in RCT require more funding and major improvements.	<p>The new special school will create a highly specialist 21<sup>st</sup> century special school environment which will enable the Council to meet the needs of pupils who require access to highly specialist therapeutic facilities, equipment and resources required to meet all ALN, including complex medical and health needs.</p> <p>Whilst learning environments differ, we would expect all special schools to be adequately supplied with equipment and resources to meet the ALN of all pupils equitably.</p> <p>Significant investment has already been spent on improvements and upgrades to our special schools over the last few years, including extensions, classroom upgrades, providing canopies, external improvements and the provision of ICT and resources across the estate.</p> <p>This investment is continuing as we are currently providing an additional two-classrooms to Park Lane School along with canopies, external play area upgrades and an office, and designs are underway to provide an extension and upgrades to Maesgwyn.</p> <p>The Council will continue to prioritise investment in our specialist provisions, and we fully expect further projects to improve these important settings to be delivered via the Council's Capital Programme if agreed by the Council's Cabinet Members.</p>

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

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

The table that follows provides a summary of the responses received.

<b>Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015: Summary of Consultation Responses</b>						
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Responses</b>					
Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language?	<b>No</b>		<b>Yes</b>		<b>Not Sure</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
	25	54.4	9	19.6	12	26.0
Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?	<b>No</b>		<b>Yes</b>		<b>Not Sure</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
	27	58.7	6	13.0	13	28.3
How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased.	<b>Positive Effects Increased</b>		<b>Negative Effects Decreased</b>		<b>Not Sure</b>	
	• Should offer Welsh or bilingual special schools.		• Use Welsh language at suitable opportunities.		<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
					27	60.0

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

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

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

All those that responded to this question, apart from one, stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals. The one respondent that stated there would be a negative impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals we think may have misunderstood the proposal and believed that it would severely affect their child and their disabilities as the length of time travel to school would increase. A response to this concern has been clarified in the table above.

## 6. Response from Estyn

In compliance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018 the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix One. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018 and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and have produced a response to the information provided. It is Estyn's opinion that the proposals are likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area.

In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018, the areas of the response from Estyn that require clarification are documented in the table that follows.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
<p>The Council has given a clear rationale for the proposal to build a new 3 to 19 special school, demonstrating increased demand for special school places. The proposal will add a further 180 places to the capacity of the special school sector in the County Borough.</p> <p>The proposal is less clear about what the rationale is for introducing catchment areas for the existing and proposed new special schools. The general reason given is to 'better manage' the allocation of special school placements. However, it is not clear what the problem is with the current arrangement in which the majority of pupils attending special schools go to the school closest to where they live. Also, Maesgwyn Special school is not included on the catchment maps in the proposal. However, if parents of pupils at Maesgwyn who live in the catchment area of another school decide they want their children closer to home, that will impact on pupil numbers in Maesgwyn.</p>	<p><b>Rational for Catchment Changes</b> Placement into special schools is currently agreed by the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panels. Where possible, pupils are placed in the nearest suitable special school to their home. However, to better manage the allocation of special school places, the proposal seeks to define catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools in the County Borough. This will enable more effective forward planning of special school placements.</p> <p>The proposed catchment areas are based on existing secondary school catchment areas (with a few exceptions), as outlined within the Consultation Document. Estyn are correct in that the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panel currently places children to their nearest school, however on occasions there can be challenges to this process. Having defined catchment areas will make this a much clearer and more defined process that will remove any ambiguity.</p>

<b>Response from Estyn</b>	
<b>Estyn Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
<p>It would be helpful if the school were included fully in the proposal.</p>	<p><b>Maesgwyn Special School</b>  Despite data and information from Maesgwyn Special School being included within the Consultation Document for consistency, given the age range of the pupils (11 to 19) and the education provided, which differs from the other special schools across RCT, Maesgwyn Special School is <u>not</u> considered to be affected by the proposals.</p>
<p>RCT appears to have provided a detailed description of the proposal to date. The projected timetable and process for statutory procedures are set out clearly, including how children and young people will be consulted. However, the date for the proposed drop-in session falls within the summer holiday period, and this could stop some staff, parents / carers and learners from contributing.</p> <p>There is no clear timeline given for the subsequent phases of the proposal beyond the aspiration that the new school will be built by no later than the academic year 2026.</p>	<p><b>Drop-In Session</b>  Face to face meetings have been held with the School Councils of Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel, to discuss the proposal. Likewise, virtual meetings have been arranged and held with the governing bodies and staff of Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel, to discuss the proposal. In addition, all parents / carers of pupils attending Maesgwyn Special School, Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel, have been provided with information relating to the proposal.</p> <p>A drop in session was arranged so that members of the public had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team and provide any feedback at the session. This was held on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023 between 15:00 to 18:30 at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX. To confirm, no negative feedback was received regarding the timing of the drop in sessions during the consultation period.</p> <p>If the proposal is to proceed, the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Team will ensure that suitable arrangements are made to seek the views of the stakeholders outlined within the Consultation Document as active participants throughout the implementation process.</p>

<b>Response from Estyn</b>	
<b>Estyn Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
	<p><b>Timeline of Subsequent Phases</b> A provisional project plan for the proposal is currently being developed. This will form part of the business case process in order to secure funding via the Welsh Governments Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and will ensure the successful delivery of the project in accordance with best practice.</p> <p>When appropriate, key dates will be made available to key stakeholders.</p>
<p>The local authority has set out clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo. It is not clear, however, why the proposer considers that there is a risk of increased transport costs from the proposal.</p>	<p><b>Transport Costs</b> The Council is already experiencing an increase in transport costs across the board, and having to renegotiate contracts with transport providers could have a negative impact upon the associated revenue costs.</p> <p>Revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the schools' delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.</p>
<p>The proposer has considered alternatives to the proposal and given reasons as to why they have discounted these. However, while stating that a range of other sites were considered for the new school and that a number of appropriate criteria were used to identify sites near Tonypany as the favoured sites, there is insufficient information about where the other sites are or why they were discounted. This makes it difficult to reach an objective conclusion as to whether the proposed site is the best one.</p>	<p><b>Discounted Sites</b> The proposed site has been selected as the preferred location following a site appraisal process. A number of vacant sites were appraised using the following appraisal criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership.</li> <li>• Have an adequate site area.</li> <li>• Have satisfactory access which is capable of being improved.</li> <li>• Is free from any visual incumbents.</li> <li>• Is a viable development opportunity subject to a detailed feasibility study.</li> </ul> <p>On applying the appraisal criteria listed above, to the identified sites, and following several site visits undertaken by Officers from the Council's Directorate of Corporate Estates and the Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services, all the other sites were discounted, with the Council's Headquarters in Clydach</p>

Response from Estyn																			
Estyn Response	Clarification																		
	Vale, Tonypandy, being identified as the preferred location for the new 3 to 19 special school in RCT.																		
<p>The local authority explains suitably how the proposal supports the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in its Welsh Language Impact Assessment. The proposed new school will be English medium. The proposal explains the benefits of teaching Welsh in state-of-the-art facilities and the opportunities for community use, which might include Welsh language classes. However, the proposal does not make clear what proportion of the 670 pupils currently attending special schools in RCT are Welsh speakers, whether their numbers are increasing or not, and how their language needs are being met.</p>	<p><b>Data</b></p> <p>The proportion of the pupils who attend special schools that are Welsh speakers is not recorded as part of PLASC. The table that follows uses PLASC data for the 2020 to 2022 academic years. It demonstrates the language medium of the previous school attended (if appropriate).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Year</th> <th rowspan="2">Total Pupils</th> <th colspan="2">Language Medium of Previous School Attended</th> </tr> <tr> <th>English</th> <th>Welsh</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td>670</td> <td>654</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>616</td> <td>600</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>574</td> <td>560</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>How Language Needs are Being Met</b></p> <p>Currently Welsh medium pupils with significant ALN who would meet the criteria for a place in a special educational needs learning support class (SEN LSC) within English medium primary and secondary schools are supported by a specialist peripatetic team, the Welsh Complex Needs Team. The Welsh Complex Needs Team, which includes a Welsh medium specialist teacher and two learning support assistants, provide support through an inclusive delivery model whereby pupils are provided with specialist support within their mainstream Welsh medium settings.</p> <p>PLASC data for the 2022 academic year outlines that the Welsh Complex Needs Team supported twelve pupils with an age range of reception to year eleven of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One pupil attended reception to year two.</li> <li>• Four pupils attended years three to six.</li> <li>• Seven pupils attended years seven to eleven.</li> </ul> <p>However, despite positive feedback regarding the provision made by the Welsh Complex Needs Team, primary school aged pupils with</p>	Year	Total Pupils	Language Medium of Previous School Attended		English	Welsh	2023	670	654	16	2022	616	600	16	2021	574	560	14
Year	Total Pupils			Language Medium of Previous School Attended															
		English	Welsh																
2023	670	654	16																
2022	616	600	16																
2021	574	560	14																

<b>Response from Estyn</b>	
<b>Estyn Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
	<p>significant and complex ALN are unable to access full time specialist Welsh medium provision.</p> <p>The Council has one dedicated SEN LSC to support pupils with ALN via the medium of Welsh. Since September 2021, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) (ALNET) Act 2018 has placed a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to work proactively towards establishing a fully bi-lingual ALN system.</p> <p>Therefore, the Council has recently outlined plans to establish two Welsh medium primary school SEN LSC's at the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin for pupils with significant ALN. It is anticipated the proposal will take effect from the academic year 2024. Outcome Six of the Council's WESP focuses on increasing the provision of Welsh medium education for pupils with ALN in accordance with the duties imposed by the ALNET Act 2018. The Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Team has carried out reviews of the sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in education settings to support pupils with ALN.</p> <p>The Council has a dedicated sub-group focussing solely on this WESP outcome. The Head of the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Team leads this sub-group and membership includes internal Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services Access and Inclusion Team, representation from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and representation from Welsh medium primary and secondary schools.</p>
<p>The proposal estimates that the cost of designing and building the new school will be £53.3 million. Up to 75% of the funding for the new school comes from the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, and up to 100% of costs</p>	<p><b>Building Costs</b> Should the proposal go ahead, a significant capital investment would be required. As mentioned, Funding will be secured via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme at an intervention rate of 75.0%. Costs will be</p>

<b>Response from Estyn</b>	
<b>Estyn Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
<p>directly associated with making the school net zero carbon. There is no further mention about how the local authority will fund its share of the building costs or subsequent revenue costs. There are council offices on the proposed site, which are soon to be vacated. It is not clear from the proposal whether the existing buildings will be demolished to allow the new school to be built or whether they will be refashioned and repurposed.</p>	<p>developed alongside the consultation process and in relation to the Council's contribution funding approvals will be sought in line with the Council's internal decision-making procedures.</p> <p><b>Revenue Implications</b> Revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the schools' delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.</p> <p><b>Project Design</b> A number of design options for the new 3 to 19 special school are currently being considered. Demolition of the existing buildings and building a brand new provision is one such option. Decisions will be made collaboratively with key stakeholders and will be led by the potential educational benefits of each design option.</p>
<p>RCT has considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards of education within the new school for each of the five areas of Estyn's common inspection framework. The building of news facilities, especially those taking into account the complex needs of special school pupils, is likely to have a beneficial impact on their learning and wellbeing. The proposal includes a brief summary of the outcomes and recommendations from the last Estyn inspection reports for the existing three special schools. However, it does not include any consideration of how the new school may have a positive impact on the special school sector overall within RCT, for example through the sharing of good practice and professional learning.</p>	<p><b>Positive Impact Overall</b> It is anticipated that the new 3 to 19 special school will have a positive impact on the special school sector overall across the County Borough.</p> <p>The current sharing of good practice and professional learning across the special school sector across the County Borough, and wider, will continue to be an ongoing priority.</p>
<p>The local authority is seeking to ensure that the disruption to learners is</p>	<p><b>Over Subscribed/ Under Utilised</b></p>

<b>Response from Estyn</b>	
<b>Estyn Response</b>	<b>Clarification</b>
<p>minimised. As this is a new school, on a new site, there is no disruption to learning during the design and building phases. When the new school is opened and the proposed catchment areas are in place, there will be no mandatory transfer of pupils from one school to another. Parents of pupils living within the catchment area of the new school will have the option to move their children if they wish. It is envisaged that the new school will 'grow organically' over time. However, no consideration has been given as to what might happen if the school is oversubscribed, or underutilised either immediately or a later point.</p>	<p>On opening, pupils already attending other 3 to 19 special schools that will then reside within the catchment area of the new 3 to 19 special school in RCT, will be given the option to relocate to the new 3 to 19 special school. This will <u>not</u> be mandatory; the decision will be parental/carer choice. However, once the catchment changes come into effect, the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panel will place new pupils into new 3 to 19 special school according to the newly defined catchment boundaries.</p> <p>Given that the expectation is that the school will 'grow organically' there should not be a point at which the school is considered to be under-utilised as we fully expect there to be surplus capacity on opening. The trend data for our special school show a steady increase in pupil numbers and we anticipate that this growth will continue and the pupil numbers at the school will steadily increase.</p> <p>As Estyn will be aware, and in accordance with <a href="#">Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales 2011 (021/2011)</a>, the capacity assessment method applied to all community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and foundation schools in Wales does not apply to nursery, special schools, or pupil referral units. Pupils are placed in special schools based on an assessment of their needs; therefore, special schools can never be classed as 'at capacity.' The Council has a statutory obligation to continually keep the capacity of its schools under review, and this assessment will continue. Should, at any time in the future, the school become oversubscribed, further action to mitigate the impact will be taken.</p>

## **7. Assessment of Consultation**

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation, a further assessment of the proposal, which is included within the Consultation Document, has been undertaken. The proposal has been revisited and the following matters have been reassessed:

- The likely impact of the proposal on the other 3 to 19 special schools in the County Borough.
- The likely impact of the proposal to introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT.

After further consideration, the proposals remain to be the most appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

The recommendation of this report is that a statutory notice be published, as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress this proposal.

## **8. Conclusion**

No information that has been presented during the consultation is deemed to necessitate a change to the Consultation Document, as such the information remains unchanged. Therefore, it is considered that this proposal should be wholly implemented with no amendments.

The recommendation of this report is that a Statutory Notice be published, as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress this proposal.