

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposal : To construct a new school building for Hirwaun Primary School and change the language medium of Penderyn Community Primary School from 1st September 2021.

1. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the consultation held during the period 1st October 2018 and 31st December 2018 between all stakeholders and interested parties listed below.

2. Who did we consult with?

A copy of a consultation document which fully outlined and explained our proposal was sent to the following stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council website at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

- The governing bodies of Hirwaun Primary School, Penderyn Community Primary School and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar
- Pupils of Hirwaun Primary School, Penderyn Community Primary School and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar
- Parents, carers and staff members of Hirwaun Primary School, Penderyn Community Primary School and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar
- Other governing bodies of neighbouring schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- Welsh Minister for Education & Skills
- Assembly Members for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda Cynon Taf constituencies
- Estyn
- Teaching and staff trade unions
- Central South Consortium – Joint Education Service
- South East Wales Transport Association
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- Communities for Work Plus Employment Support Programme
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council
- The Welsh Language Commissioner
- Menter Iaith
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Neighbouring local authorities

and regional Assembly Members for
the area

Copies were also sent to all local authorities that share a boundary with Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3. The Proposal

The proposal is to replace the current Hirwaun Primary School buildings with a newly constructed 21st Century Schools standard building, on the existing site of the current school with a capacity of 390 pupils (plus nursery) all of which will be English medium; and to amend the language category of Penderyn Community Primary School from its current dual language status to a 3-11 Welsh medium community primary school with a capacity of 231 pupils (plus nursery) all of which will be Welsh medium.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the consultation document that was circulated to all the stakeholders listed overleaf which is attached as Appendix 1; this also includes the Community Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and the Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

4. The Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified in Section 2 overleaf were sent paper or electronic copies of our consultation documentation. The following meetings were also convened:

School Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
Penderyn Community Primary School	Governing Body and Staff Meeting	Thursday 11 th October 2018 / 4pm	Penderyn Community Primary School
Hirwaun Primary School	Governing Body and Staff Meeting	Thursday 11 th October 2018 / 4pm	Hirwaun Primary School
Penderyn Community Primary School	School Council	Thursday 11 th October 2018 / 2:30pm	Penderyn Community Primary School
Hirwaun Primary School	School Council	Thursday 11 th October 2018 / 2:30pm	Hirwaun Primary School
Both Schools and members of the local community	Parents and public drop in session and exhibition	Tuesday 27 th November 2018 / 3pm-6pm	Hirwaun Primary School

Notes of all of the above meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 2. These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made, with responses provided where appropriate.

An open evening/exhibition was held at Hirwaun Primary School on 27th November 2018, the purpose of which was to provide further information on the proposal, answer any questions, and give parents in particular the opportunity to ask questions. Officers from the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate, Corporate Estates, and Highways Directorate were in attendance. This event was attended by approximately 60 people, which included school governors, pupils, parents and local residents.

A meeting with the Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee was held on 19th December 2018, where the consultation proposals were presented and comments and questions on the proposals received and where appropriate were answered by the Officers in attendance. Notes of this meeting were recorded and are included at Appendix 3.

5. Summary of Responses to Consultation

Responses to the matters raised at the meetings outlined above are, as indicated, summarised in the notes of the meetings attached as Appendix 2 and 3. Also enclosed at Appendix 4 are summaries of the questionnaires and written responses received plus comments posted on a 'Have your say' board provided for this purpose at the open evening.

There were 58 written responses received during the consultation period and the number of those which are in favour of the proposals and those which are not are; 15 in favour, 22 against, and 21 unsure or their preference not specified.

Comments submitted during the consultation period, as well as feedback provided verbally at the public drop-in session, are recorded below. Where a number of letters received were duplicated, or a common theme raised by numerous respondents during the consultation process, we have captured this in a singular comment in this part of the report. Where required and/or appropriate our responses are included:

- **The consultation report does not quantify the number of children being taught through the medium of Welsh that live outside the Penderyn catchment area.**

The number of pupils that are educated through the medium of Welsh at Penderyn Community School that are within the Welsh medium catchment area is 89%, therefore 11% are out of catchment.

The language split of pupils that attend Penderyn Community Primary who reside in the Penderyn 'English' School catchment are 22 English and 17 Welsh.

- **Penderyn is a community school and all children should be able to attend.**

If these proposals are to go ahead then Penderyn will remain open as a community school, this will not change. The proposal is to remove the English language stream from the school not close it. The School Admissions Code will be implemented which

ensures that all pupils who wish to attend Penderyn Community School, that live in catchment, will be able to do so.

- **Concerns were raised over Hirwaun Primary School's poor Estyn Report**

Since receiving their inspection report in February 2018, Hirwaun Primary School, Central South Consortium and the Local Education Authority, have been working closely to significantly improve upon the findings of the Estyn Report. A Post Inspection Action Plan has been written which focuses on those areas in need of improvement and provides targets to ensure that progress is made against each of the recommendations in the Estyn inspection report.

Progress continues to be closely monitored by the Director of Education and Challenge Advisors. The half term review suggests that progress is being made on the targets outlined in the PIAP. Ongoing support and monitoring will be provided to ensure that the school continues on its school improvement journey.

- **Concerns were raised that pupils will be unsettled if they move to a new school mid way through the primary phase**

Meaningful and successful transition is an integral part of ensuring that pupils settle into their new school environments with little disruption. Advice and support will be provided by the local authority to both Hirwaun Primary School and Penderyn Community Primary School to ensure that the transition process is as smooth and worry free as possible for the pupils.

- **Hirwaun needs a new school building**

- **Children are being discriminated against as they cannot be taught English in their local school**

School Organisation and School Admissions are administered through Statutory Codes and are requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. We ensure that all of our procedures are in line with this code which ensures we undertake due diligence so that no pupil is unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against. This consultation has been carried out in accordance with this code.

- **It is likely to result in job losses for the English medium staff currently employed at Penderyn. This is not acceptable.**

The impact upon staff is still unknown at this early stage in the consultation process. However RCT's Human Resources Department have confirmed that they will discuss any concerns with staff members on an individual basis.

- **Having children attend two different schools from September 2019 is not practical**

Having considered this and all comments that have been submitted during this consultation period, the recommendation is that this element of the consultation proposal is amended so that new English medium admissions **will** be accepted after September 2019. The recommendation will be to change the category of Penderyn Community Primary School from a dual language school to a Welsh medium school from September 2021, which will align with the proposed opening of the new Hirwaun Primary School.

- **The Penderyn catchment area was reduced so why not extend it again**

It can be confirmed that the former Mid Glamorgan Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council have not changed any catchments to Penderyn.

- **Penderyn School is subject to a restrictive covenant that is specific around the education of children through English and Welsh languages. Please could you confirm if there are covenants in place for Penderyn School**
The Conveyances for Penderyn Community Primary School have been checked and there are no covenants or restrictions on the title relating to the education of children through English and Welsh languages.

- **Making Penderyn Community Primary School will help to achieve the Welsh Government's target of creating 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.**

- **Free transport is not a suitable option for such young children.**

Rhondda Cynon Taf is experienced in providing safe transport for pupils upwards from the age of 3, and this service is provided in line with the School Transport Policy. The Council currently transports 2,292 primary age pupils to school, of which 252 are in their first year of school (aged 3-4). All primary school contracts are operated by drivers and passenger assistants that have been cleared by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The safety and well-being of our pupils is paramount to us at all times.

- **Object to the idea of all pupils accessing the school site via Glanant Street and Longfield Court throughout the construction of the new school**

This consultation process is in respect of proposals to provide Hirwaun with a new larger primary school and amend the language category of Penderyn Community Primary School and follows statutory guidance contained within the School Organisation Code. If the proposal progresses and a planning application for a new school is submitted in the future, then further consultation will be undertaken in the community under the relevant legislation (the Town and Country Planning Act). This is entirely separate from the current consultation process.

These objections are however noted for the purpose of this report.

The View of Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales) of the Overall Merits of the Proposal.

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act 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 has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

Summary/ Conclusion

The proposer is Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, and the proposal relates to the construction of a new school building for Hirwaun Primary School (Hirwaun PS) and a change of language medium status - to Welsh medium only - at Penderyn Community Primary School (Penderyn CPS) from September 2021.

Overall, the proposal is likely to have a beneficial impact on the standard of education provision in the area.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a clear description of the proposal and arrangements for responding to the consultation.

The proposer has made suitable reference to: the schools' performance data and trends; information about the condition of the estate; current and projected pupil numbers and attendance; recent Estyn reports. Both of the schools affected by the proposal have been inspected within the past year, and the proposal acknowledges the judgements of Adequate and needs improvement, and Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement that were

awarded at Hirwaun PS. It notes the relatively poor condition of the school buildings at Hirwaun PS.

The proposer has set out its rationale for changing Penderyn CPS to a Welsh medium-only school, both in terms of a trend of increasing numbers of pupils attending its Welsh medium stream, and in respect of the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). In relation to the change of catchment, the proposal sets out the priorities for allocating pupils a place according to the authority's school admissions policy. Pupils studying in the English medium stream at Penderyn CPS would transfer automatically to provision at Hirwaun PS without any additional application process.

The proposal addresses transport for pupils within the proposed changed school catchments appropriately. Pupils living in Trenant and Penywaun (within the expanded catchment area for Penderyn CPS) who wish to receive Welsh medium education would be eligible for free transport to school at Penderyn CPS. Pupils living in Penderyn (within the expanded catchment area for Hirwaun PS) who wish to receive English medium education would receive free transport to Hirwaun PS.

The proposal addresses potential staff changes as a consequence of closing the English medium stream at Penderyn CPS. Staff below SLT level would have the opportunity to apply for new posts at Hirwaun PS before they are externally advertised, and these posts would initially be 'ring fenced' to former Penderyn CPS teachers.

The proposer identifies a few disadvantages to the proposed changes. These include the perceptions by parents that a smaller school may be more appropriate to their child's needs and increased travelling distance for some pupils in some communities. The proposer has mitigated the increased travel for these pupils by providing free transport for those pupils affected. The proposal includes consideration of demographic changes in the area in the near future, including housing developments and future development at the site of the former Tower Colliery at Hirwaun. These are likely to lead to an increase in demand in both English- and Welsh-medium provision.

The proposer has considered alternative options, including maintaining the current language status of the two schools, and replacing the old buildings at Hirwaun PS 'like for like'. However, it has concluded that these would not address the increasing demand for Welsh medium provision, the local demographic changes or the potential benefits to quality that having larger single-language provision at the two schools could bring. The proposal includes consideration of the risk of disruption to pupils at Hirwaun PS during building works. The proposer notes that these risks will 'be mitigated by the detailed and thorough project management arrangements that will be put in place', although does not give any detail of these arrangements.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposal sets out the perceived benefits. They include, for the construction of an English-medium school at Hirwaun: an extended, enhanced environment in a modern, purpose built

school, all pupils being taught in same-age-group classes, improvements brought about by increases in scale to pupils' and teachers' opportunities. For Penderyn CPS, the benefits identified include: total immersion in the Welsh language for all pupils at the school, the creation of a 'critical mass' of Welsh medium learners, more opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities through the medium of Welsh and improved recruitment and retention of staff.

The potential benefits identified by the proposer appear to be a reasonable assessment of the consequences of the proposed changes.

6. Assessment of Consultation

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation period, a further assessment of the proposals, which are included within the consultation document, has been undertaken. The proposals have been revisited and the impact of the proposals on the quality and standards of education, the community, and transport arrangements, have been reassessed.

Following this reassessment the proposals are not wholly considered to be the most suitable and as such it is considered appropriate that an amendment to the proposals be tendered. The recommendation is that an element of the consultation proposal is amended so that new English medium admissions **will** be accepted to Penderyn Community Primary School after September 2019.

The recommendation of this report is to construct a new school building for Hirwaun Primary School, change the category of Penderyn Community Primary School from a dual language school to a Welsh medium school from September 2021, and continue to allow new English medium admissions to Penderyn Community Primary School until such time that the change in category of Penderyn Community Primary School, from a dual language school to a Welsh medium school, comes into effect.

7. Conclusion

The recommendation is that this report is published, and at the appropriate time a statutory notice be published with the recommended modification as stated above, in order to progress this proposal.