

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

21st Century Schools Programme

**Six Bells, Ebbw Fach Valley
School Organisation Proposal**

Formal Consultation Document



2nd February 2015 – 5th April 2015

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1. Foreword

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, after much discussion and informal consultation, is now in a position to proceed to the next stage in the consultation process and present formal proposals in respect of the transformation and re-configuration of the primary education provision in the Six Bells area.

The publication of this formal consultation booklet is an opportunity for you to participate in the development and implementation of the 21st Century Schools Programme, and therefore, we welcome your views as part of this formal consultation process.

These views and comments can be sent to:

Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation and Performance. c/o Education Transformation Team, Anvil Court, Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB or by emailing

21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

The closing date for receiving comments is 5th April 2015. Alternatively, you may want to express your views at the public consultation events, details of which can be found on [page 55](#).



2. Executive Summary

In January 2013, Estyn, the regulators who are responsible for inspecting the quality and standards of education and training providers in Wales, recognised Access and School Places as an adequate feature, but also identified that further work is required to raise standards and reduce surplus places particularly in the primary sector. It is, therefore, necessary that further school reorganisation is undertaken throughout the Blaenau Gwent's school estate, which is an essential component in transforming education across the County Borough.

An informal consultation process was carried out between

23rd June 2014 and 22nd September 2014, to discuss a number of proposals to reorganise primary school provision within the Six Bells community of Abertillery, which is situated within the Ebbw Fach valley. These proposals formed part of a programme of school reorganisation in line with the 21st Century Schools initiative, which is partially funded by the Welsh Government. The informal consultation included a number of options, as well as the Council's preferred option for the Six Bells community of Abertillery and the reasons for the preferred option status.

The Informal consultation was the first stage in the consultation process and after much discussion and careful consideration; the Council are now in a position to present its formal proposals. This document marks the beginning of the formal consultation process to discuss proposals to reorganise primary school provision within the Six Bells community of Abertillery.

The formal consultation process will begin on 2nd February 2015 and conclude on 5th April 2015.

The Council's formal consultation process will meet the duties of the Equality Act 2010, whereby an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken by the Council.

The purpose of the formal process is to enable the Council to obtain the views and comments of all interested parties, and therefore, enable those parties to contribute to the decision making process.

This formal consultation document reinforces the Council's preferred option on school reorganisation within the Six Bells

community of Abertillery.

There are several ways to make your views known:

1. By writing to: Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation and Performance, c/o Education Transformation Team, Anvil Court, Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB.
2. By emailing: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
3. By attending public consultation events, details of which can be found on page 55.

Please let us know your observations for them to be considered. The last day for receiving comments is 5th April 2015.

3. Vision statement and key educational and organisational principles

a) Vision statement

Blaenau Gwent is continually changing. The last twenty years has seen the area presented with a range of social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities as it has moved from its heavy industrial past, into the 21st Century.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's mission statement is:

*a better place to live and work
lle gwell i fyw a gweithio*

The Education Transformation Strategy's overarching long-term vision for Blaenau Gwent in relation to 21st Century Schools is;

'All Blaenau Gwent schools should have quality facilities which will improve curriculum opportunities for young people and contribute to better standards for all learners.'

The provision of high quality education and training is critical to improving children and young people's life chances. The Council has a responsibility to offer children and young people the right skills and prepare them physically, mentally and socially for work and later life. There is a duty on the Council, headteachers, governing bodies and further education institutions to co-operate, so that learners are given the best educational opportunities throughout the duration of their learning life.

Delivering the vision will require a willingness to embrace new approaches to service delivery and place the needs of learners and communities before that of individual organisations and institutions.

b) Key educational and organisational principles

- ***Outcomes not Institutions***

The interests of children, young people and adult learners should have priority over the interests of individual institutions. The needs of learners are of paramount importance.

- ***Entitlement***

Children and young people have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which meets a wide range of needs and aspirations.

- ***Collaboration***

The Council and schools needs to work with partners in developing and delivering the vision to improve standards.

- ***Efficiency and Effectiveness***

A Blaenau Gwent school estate is created that is both effective and efficient.

- ***Fit for purpose***

The quality of school buildings and facilities must demonstrate the value of education, motivate and raise the aspirations of children and young people and support

the delivery of high quality teaching and learning.

- **Community Engagement**

The views of all people are sought and valued.

These key principles underpin the implementation of Welsh Government strategies including: -

- The Learning Country: Vision into Action (2006) (Further details can be found via the internet by accessing: www.wales.gov.uk);
- Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales (2008)(Further details can be found via the internet by accessing: www.wales.gov.uk);
- School Size and Educational Effectiveness (December 2013)(Further details can be found via the internet by accessing : www.estyn.gov.uk);
- ICT Strategy (2009)(Further details can be found via the internet by accessing: www.wales.gov.uk);
- 21st Century Schools Programme (2012)(Further details can be found via the internet by accessing: www.21stcenturyschools.org);
- Estyn – How do surplus places affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils? (May 2012) (Further details can be found via the internet by accessing: www.estyn.gov.uk); and
- The Welsh Government Minister’s directives to reduce surplus places to less than 15% by 2015.

4. Introduction

(a) Background

The Council and its partners are determined to improve educational attainment through achieving the aspirational priorities contained in the Single Integrated Plan (S.I.P) for the academic year 2013/2014, the targets as agreed by the Council and the Education Achievement Services (EAS) are:

- Increased percentage of pupils achieving Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (formerly Key Stage 1 CSI) to 81%; (Actual 83.4%)
- 81% of pupils achieving Key Stage 2 CSI; (Actual 83.8%)
- 67% of pupils achieving Key Stage 3 CSI; (Actual 76.4%)
- 68% of pupils achieving 5 GCSE's at grade A* - C; (Provisional 72.5%)
- Improved pupil attendance
 - Primary 93.5% (Provisional 94.4%)
 - Secondary 91.6% (Actual 92.2%)
- Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics
 - 2014 – 45% (Provisional 41.7%)

(Further details of the Single Integrated Plan can be found via the internet by accessing: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education)

Progress has been made over recent years to transform education in Blaenau Gwent. For example, the Council has made good progress in the areas of:

- improving access and school places;
- raising standards in key indicators, including Key Stage 4;

- initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy;
- improving use of management information systems to target youth support services;
- an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) review at primary level has been completed;
- links between partners, such as regeneration to raise skills.

The Council also recognises, however, that there is much more work to be done to further raise educational attainment levels.

In January 2013, Estyn who are responsible for inspecting quality and standards of education and training in Wales, undertook an inspection of the services for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent. The inspection identified significant shortcomings in both the outcomes children and young people achieve and the services provided. Estyn considers the Council's education services to be unsatisfactory because children and young people do not make good progress and standards are below what is expected.

The Council accepts Estyn's judgements and has acknowledged the urgency of addressing the seven key recommendations made. In response to the judgements a post inspection action plan has been developed which relates to four high level outcomes:-

- all 3-16 year olds achieve high standards;
- leadership is effective at all levels so that learners achieve their potential;

- services are transformed to raise the performance of the Council, schools and learners; and,
- children and young people are safe.

The Post Inspection Action Plan (P.I.A.P) is monitored regularly by a P.I.A.P Implementation Board to ensure progress and improvements are secured.

Furthermore, the issue of excess surplus places needs to be addressed to ensure the effective use of facilities and resources. Welsh Government and Estyn have provided evidence that where schools have a higher level of school places than is necessary, resources are being deployed inefficiently and a reduction in surplus places will direct more funding to support frontline teaching and learning. The current position on surplus places is improving across the County Borough and is shown below for both the Primary and Secondary sectors;

Blaenau Gwent's position in comparison to all Wales data:-	As at January 2013:-	As at January 2014:-
Primary	22nd out of the 22 local authorities	21st out of the 22 local authorities
Secondary	14th out of 22 local authorities	12th out of 22 local authorities
Overall Primary & Secondary combined	combined 20th out 22 local authorities	combined 19th out 22 local authorities

The transformation of the school estate in Blaenau Gwent will be delivered through the following priority areas:

- an area/cluster approach to the provision of schools of the right size in the right place, where appropriate;
- a sustainable school estate, including life-cycle maintenance costs;
- the co-location of services, where appropriate;
- innovative use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to support the learning agenda; and,
- modernised leadership and governance arrangements to suit local needs.

b) Site Suitability and Key Areas of Consideration for the Formal Consultation

***Jim to add site-related information**

- learners needs are paramount and attainment levels need to improve;
- the document focuses on the primary sector within the Six Bells area;
- in the primary sector, there is a need to ensure that schools have appropriate modern facilities to deliver the Foundation Phase of education, which includes the opportunity to learn and develop through outdoor activities;
- some Blaenau Gwent primary schools have more than 25% surplus places and a relatively low pupil population, which is also an issue in Six Bells;
- a more effective and efficient use of revenue and capital resources;

- some Blaenau Gwent schools have significant limitations in terms of access for people with disabilities;
- technology influences all of our lives, therefore, we need to promote the innovative use of ICT to improve learning; and,
- recognition that the Blaenau Gwent school estate should be of a consistently high quality and offer a full range of facilities to support teaching and learning and raise aspirations.

The key issues identified have formed the basis for an analysis of the schools involved in this proposal. The analysis discussed the schools' relative strengths and weaknesses. A detailed description of the status quo is shown on pages 25 - 47 of this document along with the potential benefits of change.

The Council undertook an informal consultation during the summer term 2014, where 3 proposals were put forward for consideration. The Council's preferred option was to close Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary School on 31st August 2017, with all current and future pupils being educated in a new build 360 place community primary school including nursery provision and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) resource base and dedicated community rooms in the Six Bells area. The new build will include a community use area, which can be adapted to facilitate teaching and learning, enabling the provision to become a 420 place community primary school including nursery provision and an ALN resource base should future demand exist.

Furthermore, as part of the proposal a catchment review would be undertaken in order to reallocate any addresses that are currently situated at the northern end of St Illtyd's

catchment area and are within closer proximity to the proposed new Six Bells School.

The informal consultation exercise included questionnaires, which were available online, at open days and were also included in all the consultation packs that were distributed.

The responses from stakeholders were as follows:

78.6% of respondents agreed with the proposal to review catchment areas as detailed within the informal consultation exercise.

The responses from stakeholders on the 3 options that were proposed are detailed below:

8.8%	Option 1	Maintain Status Quo
12.3%	Option 2	Do minimum – closure of both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School on 31st August 2017 with pupils being educated within the remodelled existing buildings from 1st September 2017.
66.7%	Option 3	Closure of both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School on 31st August 2017 with pupils being educated from 1st September 2017 in a new build Community Primary School.
3.5%		No opinion

6.8%

Disagree with all proposals

A review of the responses from the informal consultation process has now been undertaken and has informed the decision to proceed to a formal consultation stage on the preferred option to develop a new 360 place school.

The formal consultation will provide assurances to stakeholders on the process of closing schools/opening a new school and will also deal with the suitability of the proposed site. All views provided at Formal Consultation stage are welcomed and will further inform the design brief for the proposed new school, should a decision be made to proceed to the next stage of the process. Responses to the formal consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal but rather as a discussion points which will be used to inform the next stage of the process. As detailed below objections can only be registered following publication of a statutory notice.

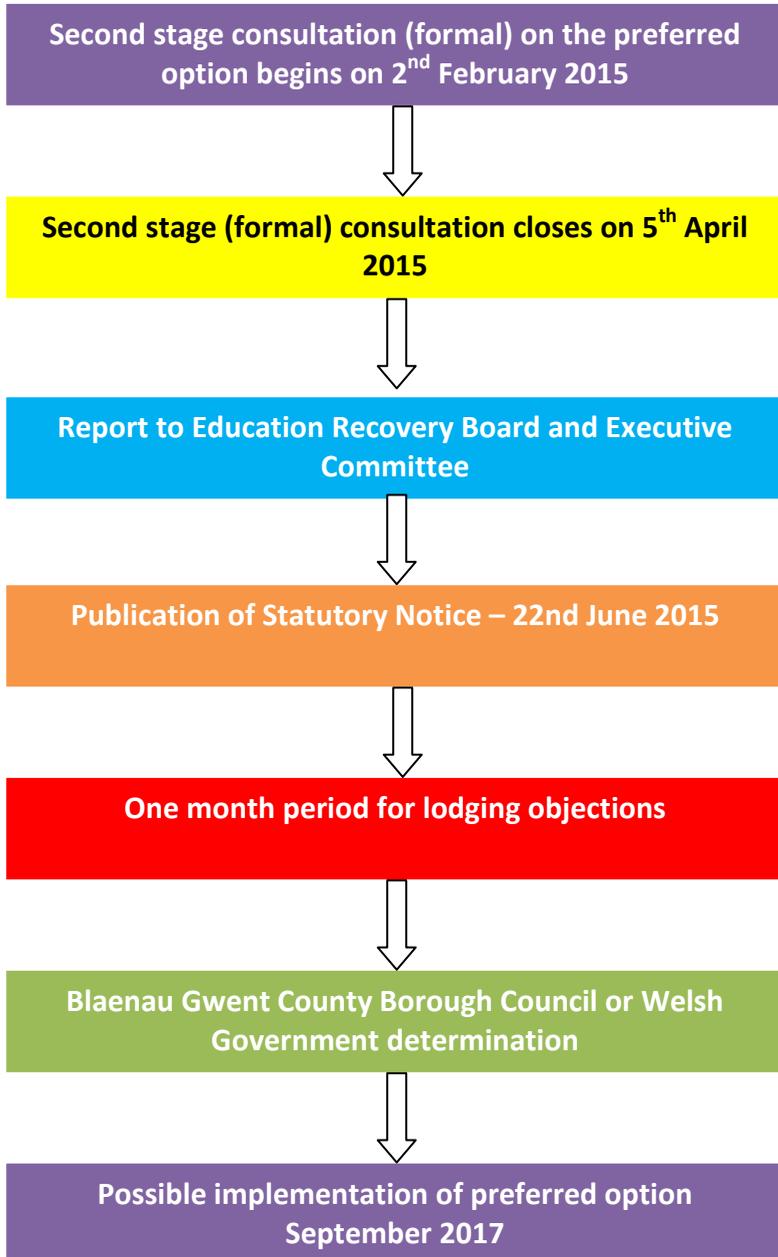
c) The Next Stage in the Formal Consultation Process

Following the completion of the formal consultation process, the Council/Education Recovery Board will consider all views expressed and decide whether to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice, which would give all interested parties a one month period to comment on, or object to the proposal.

In the event of receiving formal objections to the proposal set out in the statutory notice, the proposal would be referred to the Welsh Government for determination by

Government Ministers. The ultimate decision on the proposals may not therefore rest with the Council/Education Recovery Board.

How long will this take?



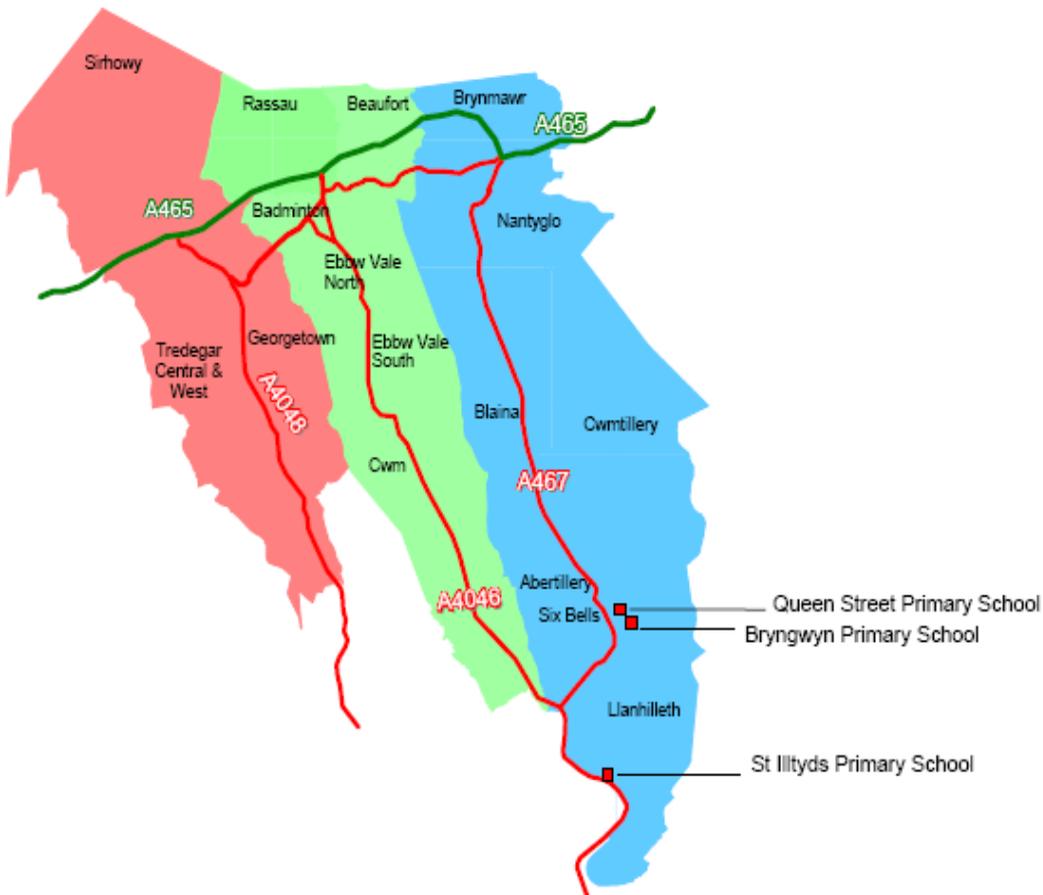
**SIX BELLS COMMUNITY OF THE
EBBW FACH VALLEY -
SCHOOL ORGANISATION
PROPOSAL**



Primary school provision throughout Abertillery and Llanhilleth

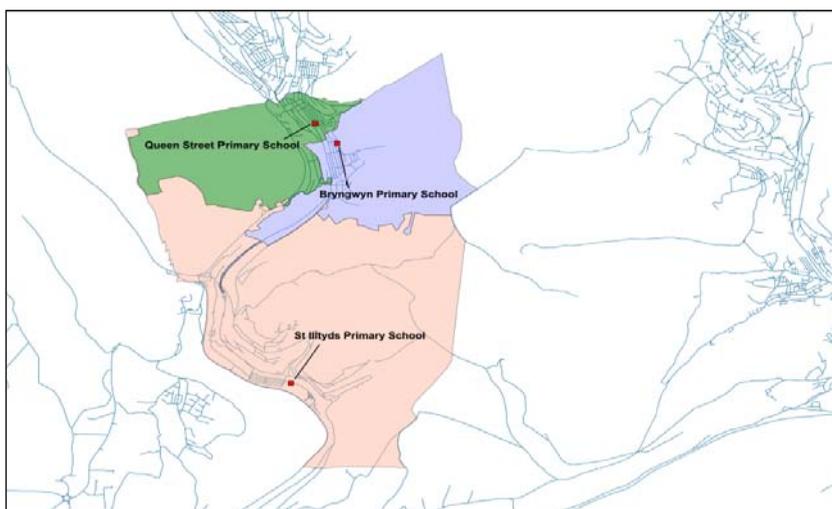
1) Background

The Council undertook an informal consultation during the summer term 2014, in relation to the proposed closure of Queen Street Primary School and Bryngwyn Primary School on 31st August 2017.



The Council has decided to proceed to formal consultation on the closure of Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School on 31st August 2017, with all current and future pupils being educated in a new build 360 place community primary school including nursery provision and ALN resource base and dedicated community rooms on the Six bells Colliery Site in the Six Bells area. The new build will include a community use area which can be adapted to facilitate teaching and learning; enabling the provision to become a 420 place community primary school including nursery provision and an ALN resource base should future pupil demand dictate the need.

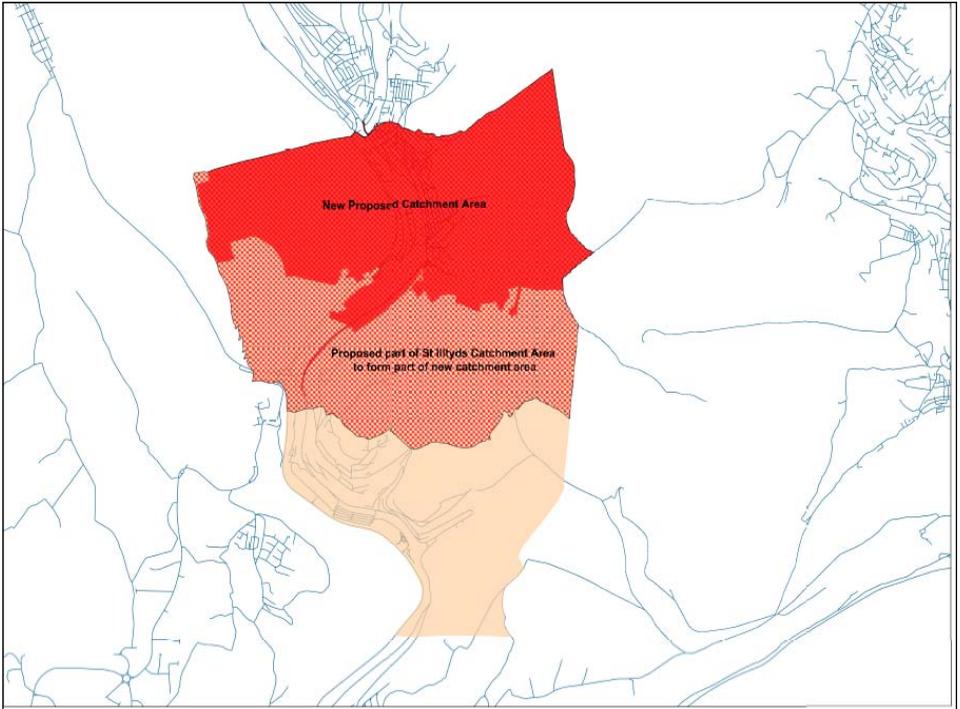
As part of this proposal, a catchment review will be undertaken in order to reallocate any addresses that are currently situated at the northern end of St Illtyd's catchment area and are within closer proximity to the proposed new Six Bells School.



The above map illustrates the current Queen Street, Bryngwyn and St Illtyd's Primary catchment areas

The proposed addresses that would be included within the new Six Bells catchment area that presently form part of St Illtyd's catchment area are:-

2 - 98 Aberbeeg Road NP13 2EQ
The Bungalow Aberbeeg Road NP13 2EG
1 -28 Cwrt Bracty NP13 2AH
1 – 2 Brondeg Lane NP13 2ET
Brondeg Bungalows Brondeg Lane NP13 2ET
Brondeg Cottages Brondeg Lane NP13 2ES
Cemetry House Cemetry Road NP13 2AX
Penbre House Cemetry Road NP13 2AX
Trebon Hewlwen Cemetry Road NP13 2AX
Tregarth House Cemetry Road NP13 2AX
2 – 4 Church Road Aberbeeg NP13 2AA
The Croft Church Road Aberbeeg NP13 2AA
1 – 119 Woodland Terrace Aberbeeg NP13 2EN
Ty Gorsaf Woodland Terrace NP13 2EW
1 – 22 Railway Terrace Aberbeeg NP13 2AD
Arrael Griffin House Railway Terrace NP13 2AD
3 – 8 Brewery Terrace Llanhilleth NP13 2EL
Manchester House, The Square Llanhilleth NP13 2AB
1 – 10 The Square Llanhilleth NP13 2AB
Argoed Cottages Llanhilleth NP13 2BA
Argoed Farm Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Carpenters Arms Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Castle Cottage Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Church Farm House Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Crud Yr Awel Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Emerald Cottage Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Hafodarthan Farm Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
St Illtyds Cottage Llanhilleth NP13 2AY
Abercommon Farm House Mount Pleasant Brynithel NP132AY



The above map illustrates the former Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary catchment areas merged and the northern end of St Illtyds to show the proposed new catchment area for the new build Six Bells Primary School

The following information detailed in pages 25-49, provides a description of the status quo and sets out both its strengths and weaknesses. This section highlights the reasons why the change is considered necessary and why maintaining the status quo is not considered a viable option; by presenting factual evidence in relation to the reasoning behind this school reorganisation proposal.

2) Primary School provision involved in the proposal – The status Quo

In order to provide a full picture for consideration, in addition to the schools involved in this proposal, the following details of all surrounding schools have been included in this section:-

School	Capacity	Current and past Pupil numbers on roll (exc. nursery and SEN)				Condition grading
		2011	2012	2013	2014	
Abertillery English medium community Primary School	420 & 60 nursery	317	313	332	388	A (new school 2016)
Bryngwyn English medium community Primary School	194 & 26 nursery	209	201	191	189	C
Queen Street English medium community Primary School	186 & 26 nursery	124	127	123	108	C
Roseheyworth Millenium English medium community Primary School	210 & 52 nursery	126	131	134	149	B
Sofrydd English medium community Primary School	200 & 26 nursery	116	110	129	136	B
St Illtyds English medium community Primary School	210 & 52 nursery	147	164	188	184	A

Projected pupil figures:-

School	Capacity	Projected figures			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Abertillery Primary School	420	386	376	383	388
Bryngwyn Primary School	194	184	189	184	181
Queen Street Primary	186	117	110	110	109
Roseheyworth Millenium Primary	210	151	162	172	173
Sofrydd Primary	200	148	151	162	170
St Illtyds Primary	210	206	206	204	219

Projected surplus places:-

School	Capacity	Projected surplus places			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Abertillery Primary School	420	8%	10%	9%	8%
Bryngwyn Primary School	194	5%	3%	5%	7%
Queen Street Primary	186	37%	41%	41%	41%
Roseheyworth Millenium Primary	210	28%	23%	18%	18%
Sofrydd Primary	200	26%	25%	19%	15%
St Illtyds Primary	210	2%	2%	3%	-4%

It is anticipated that the proposed establishment of the new Six Bells, English Medium , Community Primary School will have little or no effect on the number of pupils on roll at the surrounding schools in this area as the new school size is designed to accommodate the projected demand for pupil places required at Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary School. However it is the intention of the proposal to reconfigure St.Illtyds Primary School catchment area as part

of this proposal in order to alleviate any future over-subscription requests based on the existing catchment area.

Further detailed information on the schools involved in the proposal:-

Bryngwyn Primary School

Bryngwyn Primary School is a community school offering an English medium education for boys and girls aged 3 to 11 years and is situated on the southern end of the Abertillery area. The school also offers support for pupils with additional learning needs in a Resource Base that provides education for up to 9 primary pupils (age 5-11) with complex learning difficulties. The school serves the community of Six Bells and has access to offsite local Council playing fields. The school is popular with in catchment pupils and out of catchment pupils and most recent information shows that 66% of the school's pupils live within neighbouring catchment areas.



Bryngwyn Primary School

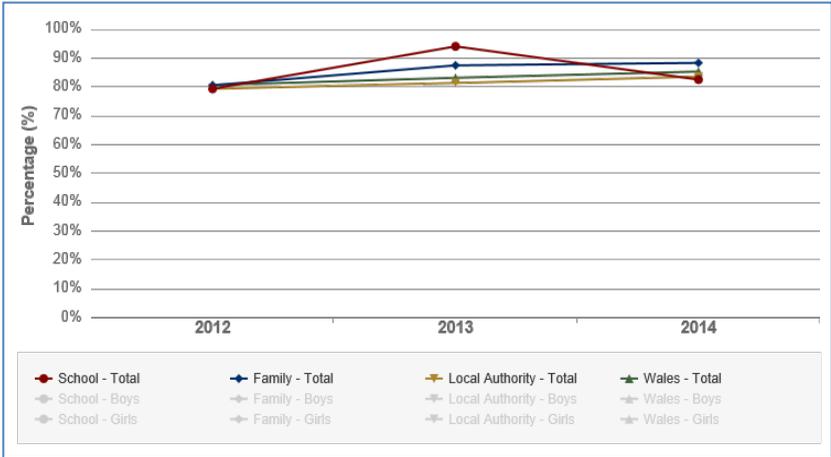
National Curriculum Assessment comparisons

The Foundation Phase assessment was introduced in the 2011-12 academic year. Pupils achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) when they achieve the expected level (Outcome level 5 or above) in Language Literacy and Communication in English/Welsh, Mathematical Development and Personal and Social Development.

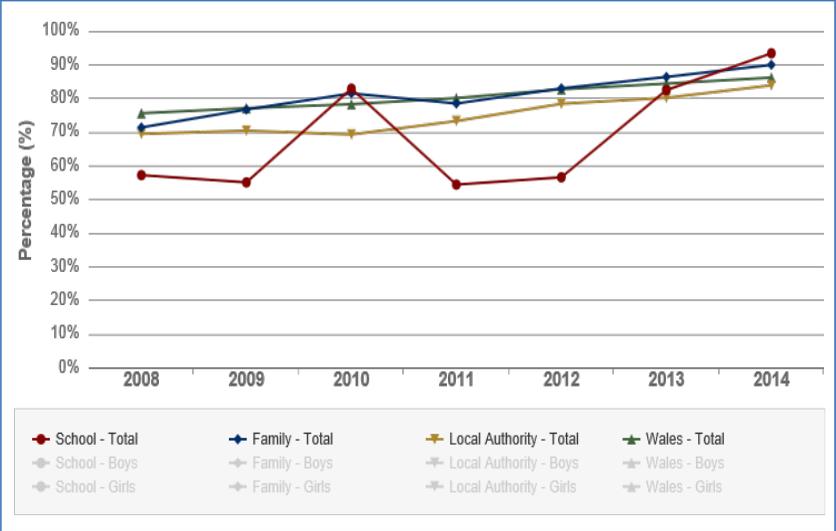
Key Stage 2 – Pupils achieve the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) when they achieve the expected level (level 4 and above) in English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science.

Bryngwyn Primary School

Bryngwyn Primary’s performance in the FPI in 2012 was slightly below the Welsh and Family of Schools average and in line with that of the local Council. In 2013, performance improved, and was above that of the Council, Family of Schools and Wales averages. However, in 2014 performance was below the Welsh, Family of Schools and local Council averages.



Bryngwyn Primary’s performance in the CSI has been inconsistent between 2008 -2014 and for 4 out of the 7 years has been below that of the local Council, Wales and Family of Schools averages and for 5 out of 7 years lower than that of Wales and Family of Schools averages. However, in 2014 performance has improved and was above that of the local Council, Wales and Family of Schools averages



Further school data can be found via the internet by accessing: <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>

Queen Street Primary School

Queen Street Primary School is a community school offering an English medium education for boys and girls aged 3 to 11 years and is situated at the southern end of the Abertillery area. The school serves the community of Six Bells and has access to local offsite Council playing fields. The school is popular with in catchment pupils and out of catchment pupils and most recent information shows that 50% of the school's pupils live within neighbouring catchment areas.



From September 2013, Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary Schools have been managed by a shared Headteacher with both schools being governed by separate governing bodies.

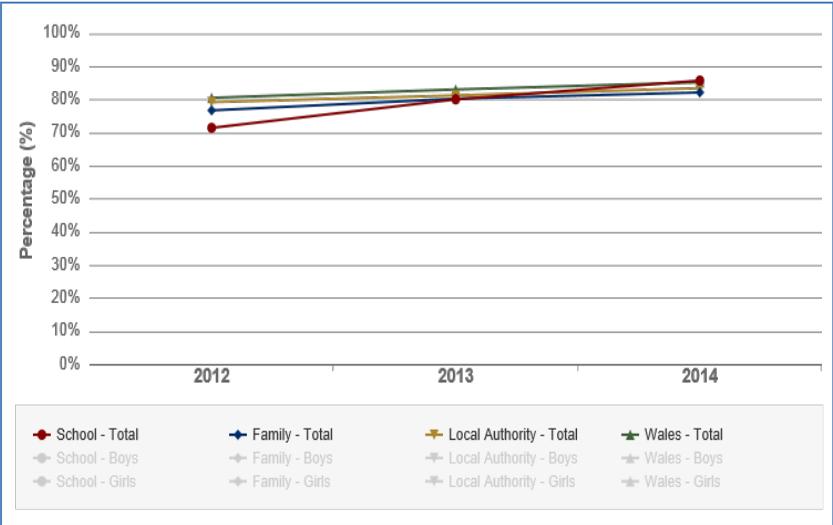
National Curriculum Assessment with comparisons

The Foundation Phase assessment was introduced in the 2011-12 academic year. Pupils achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) when they achieve the expected level (Outcome level 5 or above) in Language Literacy and Communication in English/Welsh, Mathematical Development and Personal and Social Development.

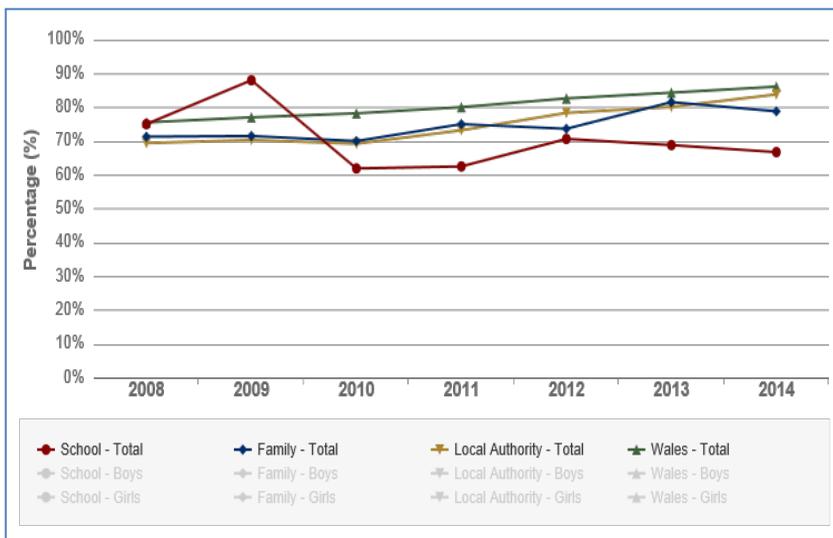
Key Stage 2 – Pupils achieve the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) when they achieve the expected level (level 4 and above) in English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science.

Queen Street Primary School

Queen Street Primary’s performance in the FPI in 2012 and 2013 was below that of the Council, Family of Schools and Wales averages. In 2014, performance improved and was above the that of the Council, Family of Schools and Wales average.



Queen Street Primary’s performance in the CSI has been inconsistent between 2008 -2014 but has remained below that of the Council, Wales and Family of Schools averages for the past 5 years.



Further school data can be found via the internet by accessing: <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>

St Illtyd's Primary School

St Illtyds Primary School is a community school offering an English medium education for boys and girls aged 3 to 11 years and is situated on the furthest southern end of the Abertillery area. The school serves the communities of Llanhilleth and Brynithel and has access to offsite local Council playing fields. This school is popular with in catchment pupils and the most recent information shows that 95% of the school's pupils live within the catchment area.



St. Illtyds Primary School

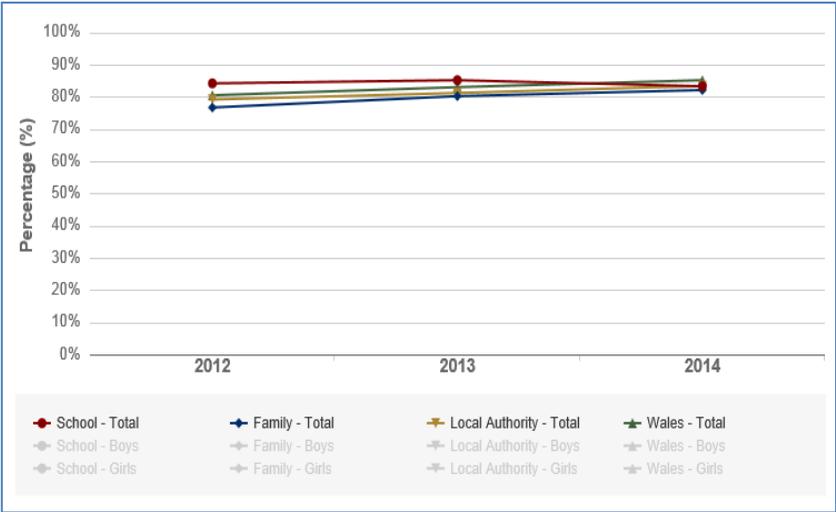
National Curriculum Assessment with comparisons

The Foundation Phase assessment was introduced in the 2011-12 academic year. Pupils achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) when they achieve the expected level (Outcome level 5 or above) in Language Literacy and Communication in English/Welsh, Mathematical Development and Personal and Social Development.

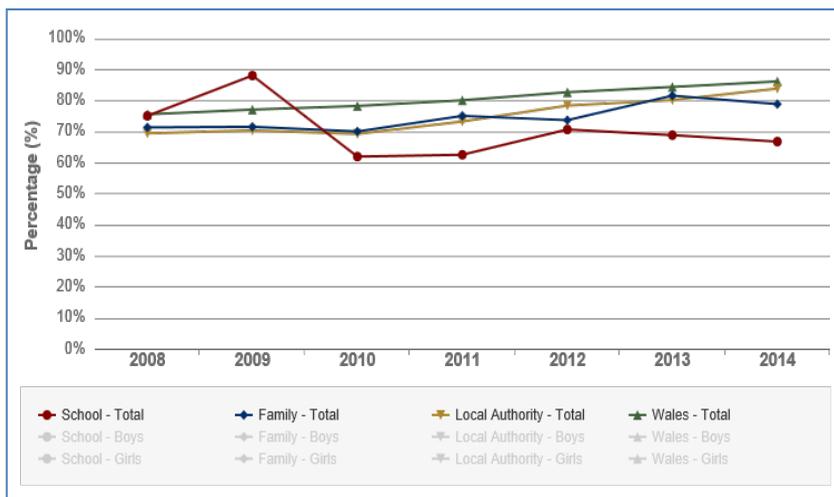
Key Stage 2 – Pupils achieve the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) when they achieve the expected level (level 4 and above) in English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science.

St Illtyd’s Primary School

St Illtyd’s Primary’s performance in the FPI in 2012 and 2013 was above that of the Council, Family of Schools and Wales averages. In 2014, performance reduced slightly and was below that of the local Council and Wales average.



St Illtyd's Primary's performance in the CSI has been inconsistent between 2008 -2014. Performance for 5 out of the 7 years has been above that of the local Council and Family of Schools averages, albeit lower than the Wales average with performance for 2 out of the 7 years being above that of local Council, Family of Schools and Wales averages.



Further school data can be found via the internet by accessing: <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>

School premises

It is recognised that the Blaenau Gwent school estate should be of a consistently high standard and offer a full range of facilities to support teaching and learning and raise aspirations.

There is a need to ensure that schools have appropriate modern facilities to deliver the Foundation Phase of education, which includes appropriate sites to allow the opportunity to learn and develop through outdoor activities. There is a need to ensure that there are no limitations in terms of access for people with disabilities and schools are of the right size and in the right place.

In 2010, an assessment of all school buildings was carried out as part of the Council's School Asset Management Plan (SAMP), with condition assessments being updated via a desktop survey by the Council's Technical Services Division in 2013. The results for all schools which have been identified in this proposal are detailed below:

	Suitability	Condition	Backlog Maintenance Costs as at February 2014
<i>Bryngwyn Primary</i>	C	C	£572,217
<i>Queen Street Primary</i>	C	C	£426,262
<i>St Illtyd's Primary</i>	B	A	No current costs

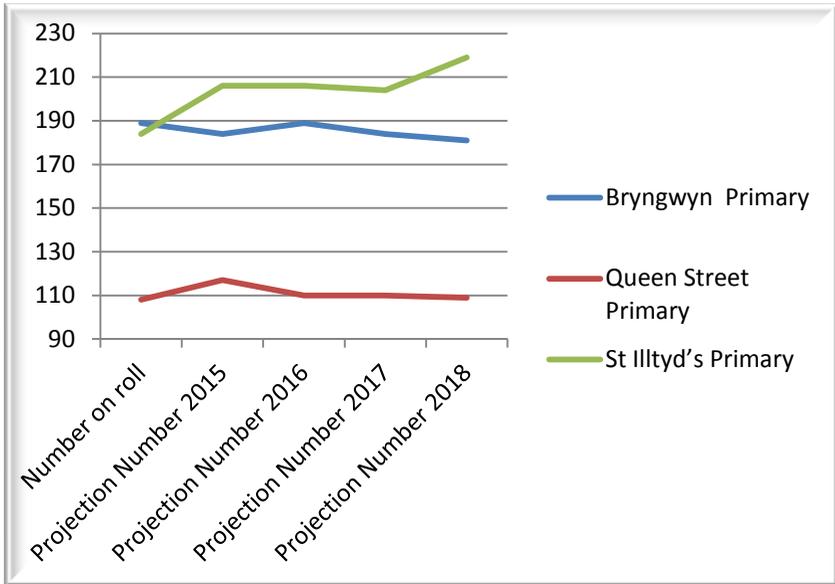
**Key: Suitability: A=Suitable levels for Teaching, Learning and Well Being in Schools,
B=Reasonable - but behaviour / morale and management adversely affected
C=Teaching methods inhibited
D=Severe situation and/or unable to teach the curriculum.**
**Condition: A=No deterioration
B=Satisfactory-minor deterioration
C=Poor-Major deterioration
D=Life expired**

The above suitability ratings are based on an assessment of school buildings carried out by independent consultants on behalf Welsh Government and have no reflection on the standards of teaching and learning provided at the specific schools.

Suitability assessments were based on the following suitability elements:-

- Health and Safety
- Flexibility of space
- Size /Shape
- Location / Suiting of facilities / Access
- Ventilation / solar gain / natural & art. Lighting
- Storage
- Acoustics
- ICT
- FF&E

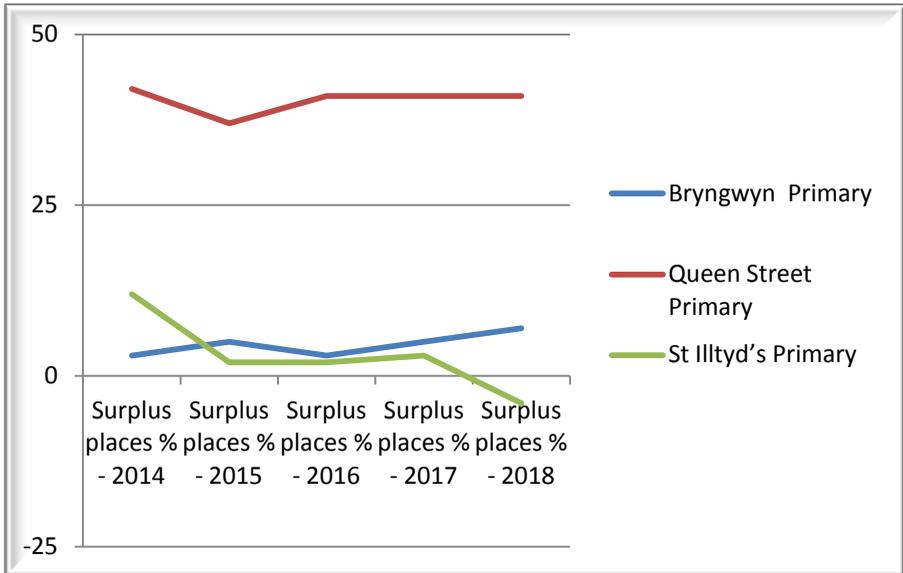
Current and projected pupil numbers



	Capacity of school	Number on roll Sept 2014	Projection Number 2015	Projection Number 2016	Projection Number 2017	Projection Number 2018
Bryngwyn Primary	194	189	184	189	184	181
Queen Street Primary	186	108	117	110	110	109
St Illtyd's Primary	210	184	206	206	204	219

Please note: The above figures have been calculated using 2014 capacity figure and a five year trend projection, excluding nursery and SEN.

Current and projected surplus capacity



	Surplus places % - 2014	Surplus places % - 2015	Surplus places % - 2016	Surplus places % - 2017	Surplus places % - 2018
Bryngwyn Primary	3	5	3	5	7
Queen Street Primary	42	37	41	41	41
St Illtyd's Primary	12	2	2	3	-4

Please note: The above figures have been calculated using 2014 capacity figure and a five year trend projection, excluding nursery and SEN.

Financial viability – Most recent published data on school budgets

Bryngwyn Primary School	
Out-turn Statement 2013/2014	
Funding	£
Funding	946,683
Balance Brought Forward 2012/2013 (Surplus/Deficit)	-30,767
Total	905,916
Employees	£
Teachers	457,945
Supply	5,120
Support Staff	276,903
Premises Staff	24,099
Midday Supervisors	12,354
Total	£776,421
Other Employee Costs	£
Adult Meals	0
Travel/Expenses	715
Employee Advertising	0
School Funded Training	2,950
Total	£3,665
Energy	£
Gas	5,991
Electricity	4,306
Other Fuels	0
Total	£10,297
Capitation	£
Capitation	23,788
Exam Fees	0
Total	£23,788
Premises	£
Rates and Rent	7,772
Building Maintenance	8,024
Building Cleaning	9,125
Grounds Maintenance	856
Water	1,521
Miscellaneous	3,101
Refuse Collection	1,743
Total	£32,143
Communications	£
Postage	52
Telephones	2,414
Total	£2,466
Transport	£
Vehicle Maintenance/Insurance	4
Vehicle Hire	1,660
Work Experience	0
Total	£1,664
Central Services/SLA's	£
Building Insurance SLA	5,988
Building Maintenance SLA	6,286
Catering	32,391
Courier Service	325
Education Management Support	6,146
Governor Support	2,014
Health & Safety	795
HR	3,752
Legal Services	313
Music Support (peripatetic)	5,352
Music Support SLA	0
School Finance (Payroll, Creditors, Audit)	3,060
School Marketing	94
Schools ICT	5,056
Sickness Insurance Scheme	13,633
SpLD	0
Total	£85,205
Total Expenditure	£
Total	£935,649
Income	£
Telephones	0
Lettings	0
Photocopying	0
Sales	0
Donations	2,185
Miscellaneous	4,402
WAG Grants	0
Interest	0
Sickness Compensation	6,738
Maternity Compensation	22,363
Total	35,689
Total Income	
Total	£35,689
Net Expenditure	£
Total	£899,960
Outturn	£
Surplus/Deficit	£5,956

Queen Street Primary School	
Out-turn Statement 2013/2014	
Funding	£
Funding	702,471
Balance Brought Forward 2012/2013 (Surplus/Deficit)	98,383
Total	£800,854
Employees	£
Teachers	336,198
Supply	10,226
Support Staff	183,427
Premises Staff	23,405
Midday Supervisors	6,341
Total	£559,592
Other Employee Costs	£
Adult Meals	0
Travel/Expenses	238
Employee Advertising	0
School Funded Training	740
Total	£978
Energy	£
Gas	7,686
Electricity	4,410
Other Fuels	0
Total	£12,096
Capitation	£
Capitation	29,437
Exam Fees	0
Total	£29,437
Premises	£
Rates and Rent	8,004
Building Maintenance	28,320
Building Cleaning	8,890
Grounds Maintenance	0
Water	2,219
Miscellaneous	32
Refuse Collection	1,523
Total	£48,988
Communications	£
Postage	128
Telephones	3,102
Total	3,230
Transport	£
Vehicle Maintenance/Insurance	0
Vehicle Hire	0
Work Experience	0
Total	0
Central Services/SLA's	£
Building Insurance SLA	3,884
Building Maintenance SLA	4,988
Catering	42,338
Courier Service	325
Education Management Support	3987
Governor Support	2014
Health & Safety	595
HR	2,434
Legal Services	203
Music Support (peripatetic)	3,875
Music Support SLA	0
School Finance (Payroll, Creditors, Audit)	1,855
School Marketing	94
Schools ICT	3,379
Sickness Insurance Scheme	8,009
SpLD	0
Total	£77,979
Total Expenditure	£
Total	£732,299
Income	£
Telephones	0
Lettings	0
Photocopying	0
Sales	0
Donations	0
Miscellaneous	3,687
WAG Grants	0
Interest	490
Sickness Compensation	0
Maternity Compensation	6,709
Total	£10,886
Total Income	£
Total	£10,886
Net Expenditure	£
Total	£721,414
Outturn	£
Surplus/Deficit	£79,440

St Illtyds Primary School	
Out-turn Statement 2013/2014	
Funding	£
Funding	1,007,853
Balance Brought Forward 2012/2013 (Surplus/Deficit)	17,045
Total	£1,024,898
Employees	£
Teachers	432,240
Supply	44,139
Support Staff	237,909
Premises Staff	23,245
Midday Supervisors	12,853
Total	£750,386
Other Employee Costs	£
Adult Meals	0
Travel/Expenses	0
Employee Advertising	0
School Funded Training	1,190
Total	£1,190
Energy	£
Gas	9,933
Electricity	11,298
Other Fuels	0
Total	£21,231
Capitation	£
Capitation	17,041
Exam Fees	0
Total	£17,041
Premises	£
Rates and Rent	24,305
Building Maintenance	7,190
Building Cleaning	35,541
Grounds Maintenance	1,400
Water	4,196
Miscellaneous	2,164
Refuse Collection	2,579
Total	£77,375
Communications	£
Postage	67
Telephones	933
Total	£1,000
Transport	£
Vehicle Maintenance/Insurance	0
Vehicle Hire	3,633
Work Experience	0
Total	£3,633
Central Services/SLA's	£
Building Insurance SLA	5,155
Building Maintenance SLA	7,910
Catering	32,335
Courier Service	325
Education Management Support	5,290
Governor Support	2,014
Health & Safety	695
HR	3,230
Legal Services	270
Music Support (peripatetic)	4,552
Music Support SLA	0
School Finance (Payroll, Creditors, Audit)	2,268
School Marketing	94
Schools ICT	4,324
Sickness Insurance Scheme	11,304
SpLD	0
Total	£79,766
Total Expenditure	£
Total	£951,622
Income	£
Telephones	0
Lettings	0
Photocopying	0
Sales	0
Donations	0
Miscellaneous	1,530
WAG Grants	0
Interest	90
Sickness Compensation	15,974
Maternity Compensation	0
Total	£17,594
Total Income	£17,594
Net Expenditure	£
Total	£934,028
Outturn	£
Surplus/Deficit	£90,870

School Inspection Reviews

The schools involved in this proposal are inspected as part of a national programme of school inspections which is carried out within a six year cycle in order to give parents information about the performance of their child's school. The purpose of these inspections is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils.

- **Bryngwyn Primary School**

In June 2014, Estyn's overall judgement in relation to Bryngwyn Primary's performance was that the school's current performance is good and the school's prospects for improvement are good. This judgement summarised the school as having many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement.

- **Queen Street Primary School**

In November 2009, Estyn's overall judgement in relation to Queen Street Primary's performance was that the school's current performance is good with no important shortcomings. It was stated that pupils progress well because of the school's high quality teaching provision and supportive, inclusive ethos.

- **St Illtyds Primary School**

In March 2012, Estyn's overall judgement in relation to St. Illtyd's Primary performance was that the school's current performance is good and the school's prospects for

improvement are good. This judgement summarised the school as having many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement.

Community Impact

A Community Impact Assessment is a structured way for the Council to fully understand the implications of key decisions and to take into consideration the impact of those decisions for the community. Details of all facilities and services that are provided by each of the schools mentioned in this document can be found in the Community Impact Assessment detailed on pages 50 - 55 of this booklet.



3) Status Quo strengths and weaknesses

School premises

Both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School premises were identified in the Council's School Asset Management Plan, which is a document that highlights Asset Management issues within schools (table found on page 34) as having poor/major deterioration within the buildings which inhibits teaching methods. Both schools are traditional Victorian buildings with limited outdoor space and external play areas with neither school having green spaces on site. Overall both schools lack many of the internal and external facilities which would be expected in a modern school in order to ensure efficient delivery of the curriculum and the wellbeing of pupils and staff.

St Illtyd's Primary School was categorised in the Council's School Asset Management Plan (table found on [page 34](#)) as having no deterioration with reasonable suitability levels for teaching, learning and well-being but behaviour/morale and management can be adversely affected in the view of Welsh Government.

The above suitability ratings are based on an assessment of school buildings carried out by independent consultants on behalf of Welsh Government and have no reflection on the standards of teaching and learning provided at the specific schools.

Suitability assessments were based on the following suitability elements:-

- Health and Safety

- Flexibility of space
- Size /Shape
- Location / Suiting of facilities / Access
- Ventilation / solar gain / natural & art. Lighting
- Storage
- Acoustics
- ICT
- FF&E

Surplus places

As of September 2014, Bryngwyn Primary School has 189 mainstream pupils on roll, with the capacity to accommodate 194 pupils, excluding nursery and SEN. Current and projected pupil figures are slightly below the capacity of the school but are above the Education Transformation Strategy's minimum limit of 90 pupils. The five year trend projection in pupil numbers (as detailed in the table found on page 36), does illustrate a slight decline by 2018. The projections leave Bryngwyn Primary with a surplus capacity over the period ranging from 2% at its lowest to 7% at its highest which is within an acceptable range.

Queen Street Primary School has 108 mainstream pupils on roll, with the capacity to accommodate 186 pupils, excluding nursery and SEN. Current and projected pupil figures are below the capacity of the school but are above the Education Transformation Strategy's minimum limit of 90 pupils. The five year trend projection in pupil numbers (as detailed in the table found on page 36), does illustrate a slight variation year on year. The projections leave Queen Street Primary with a surplus capacity over the period ranging from 37% at its lowest to 42% at its highest, which is over and above the

Education Transformation Strategy’s maximum 25% surplus places limit.

St Illtyd’s Primary School has 184 mainstream pupils on roll, with the capacity to accommodate 210 pupils, excluding nursery and SEN. Current and projected pupil figures are marginally below the capacity of the school and are above the Education Transformation Strategy’s minimum limit of 90 pupils. The five year trend projection in pupil numbers (as detailed in the table found on [page 36](#)), does illustrate an increase by 2018. The projections leave St Illtyd’s Primary with a surplus capacity over the period ranging from 0% at its lowest to 12% at its highest which is within an acceptable range up until 2017, albeit oversubscribed by 4% in 2018. This oversubscription issue is also reflected in the recent admissions round with an increasing number of pupils being refused admission at reception.

The tables below demonstrate the projected surplus places situation based on maintaining the status quo and also based on the implementation of the proposed way forward:-

Projected surplus places position based on existing combined Six Bells schools:-

Total Capacity	Projected pupils and surplus places as at 2017	Projected pupils 2018
590	498 pupils	509
	92 surplus pupil places	81 surplus pupil places

Projected surplus places position based on combined Six Bells schools should the proposal be taken forward:-

Total Capacity	Projected pupils and surplus places as at 2017	Projected pupils 2018
570	498 pupils	509
	72 surplus pupil places	61 surplus pupil places

It is recognised that the continued provision of excessive pupil places that are surplus and can be removed represents poor value for money; a resource which could otherwise be used to raise educational standards. The most recent informed analysis by Welsh Government shows that the annual average cost of a primary surplus place equates to £260. Based on this information the tables above highlight that should the preferred option be taken forward there would be a reduction of 20 surplus places within this school community which represents £4,200 per annum being reallocated into pupils education.

Should the ‘Six Bells’ proposal be implemented the issue of Queen street Primary School maintaining more than 25% surplus places will be addressed along with assisting the oversubscription issues we are facing at St. Illtyd’s Primary.

Financial and curriculum viability

Consideration needs to be given to whether schools with a relatively low pupil population, combined with a high level of surplus places, currently maximise opportunities for pupils, families and communities. A school with a relatively low pupil population such as Queen Street Primary may have limited opportunities to deliver the curriculum and address pupils' needs. Whereas, a larger school is able to maximise curriculum opportunities for pupils as there are enough resources to specialise in certain aspects of the curriculum and meet the broad range of needs (including personal development needs) of pupils and families.

Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses in relation to the status Quo:-

STRENGTHS:-	WEAKNESSES:-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 3 schools involved in the proposal are maintaining a surplus budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two schools involved in the proposal condition rating of C with poor major deterioration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 3 schools involved in the proposal received an inspection rating of good in their latest inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of external space, hard/soft play areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two schools with high backlog maintenance costs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One school with over 25% surplus places

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One school receiving more pupil admission applications than places are available
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor value for money in the continued provision of excessive pupil places in one school
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One school with relatively low population does not maximise opportunities for pupils
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two schools with disabled access issues

In summary, the status quo does not provide us with the option to maximise school and educational standards. Maintaining the status quo will not ensure parity throughout the school estate; has resourcing implications in that the two schools will be treated as separate; finally, is currently and will continue to have a negative impact from both a financial and delivery perspective. In terms of the preferred option, overall the likely impact of the proposals on the quality and standards in education are that it will enable us to deliver a full curriculum at Foundation Phase and each key stage of education.

4) The preferred option, strengths and weaknesses

Financial Expenditure

The purpose of this section is to set out the indicative financial implications of the preferred option.

The financial position facing the Council will create a number of challenges; The Council, however, has a proven track record of allocating both revenue and capital resources to prioritised projects and this has manifested itself in significant progress in renewing many primary school buildings, which has also resulted in the Local Authority tackling the issue of surplus places in some key areas across the Council.

Education is a key priority for the Council and consequently the capital programme has been aligned to match the Band A period and will cover the financial years of 2014 to 2018.

The Council has provided indicative capital costs of £6m to open a new 360 place primary school plus community and ALN provision. The capital requirements for this preferred option include:-

- the development of a new build 360 place community English Medium 3-11 primary school including nursery provision and ALN resource base and dedicated community rooms in the Six Bells area:
- the closure of Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary Schools.

In order to set the financial savings into context the above preferred option will realise savings on school site re-sale (Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary)

- Bryngwyn Primary School £112,000
- Queen Street Primary School £73,000

The above figures are based on the assumption that the sites are cleared of any building and that residential planning consent would be forthcoming. Reflected within the above figures are abnormal development costs of developing the sites, this is only an estimate. The figures therefore may change when the costs are known, once a site investigation has been undertaken.

Savings in relation to Backlog Maintenance costs (from Bryngwyn and Queen Street) of £571,171.00

This proposed school reorganisation seeks to establish a robust, efficient and effective primary school estate within the Six Bells cluster area and it seeks to facilitate the removal of surplus places as indicated on [page 46](#) and poor building stock as shown on [page ?](#) .

It is envisaged that the building of the new 360 place English Medium community primary school would commence between mid-end of year 2015, concluding in September 2017 with the school opening and operational in September 2017.



Quality and Standards in Education

The proposal would mean that pupils would be educated in high quality modern buildings which would be able to support the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum including the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Phase. The proposed establishment of the new build school, fit for the 21st Century would offer an exciting and attractive career proposition, and is therefore expected that the new school would attract high quality leadership, management and teaching. It is not anticipated that there would be any impact on the quality and standards of education and delivery of the Foundation phase at the other community primary schools within the area.

The expected benefits of the proposal and disadvantages when compared to the status quo:-

Disadvantages:-	Benefits:-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The changes to the function of the current buildings and any new build can cause some disruption, although experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum as the transition process is managed and the children’s education will not suffer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a larger primary school would maximise curriculum opportunities for pupils and ensure there are enough staff to specialise in certain aspects of the curriculum and meet the broad range of needs (including personal development needs) of all pupils and families; • greater continuity in delivery of education and the provision of a range of connected services to children, young people , adults and families; • the utilisation of staff expertise, facilities and resources more effectively; • world-class facilities which can be associated with raising the aspirations of pupils, students and the community; • modern teaching and learning facilities; • curriculum can be more

	<p>effectively delivered, resulting in maximum curriculum opportunities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• able to deliver full curriculum at Foundation Phase and each key stage of education;• reduction in surplus places;• reduction in poor building stock;• Increase in Grade A educational accommodation;• Reduction of backlog maintenance costs of £571,171.00;• A community of schools with adequate pupil places, which are within an acceptable range of no more than 10% surplus and no oversubscription;• new building will encourage new approaches to learning; and,• 21st Century Schools funding could be generated to support the proposal.
--	--

Supporting Information to inform formal discussions in relation to taking forward the preferred option.

Transitional arrangements

It is important to ensure a smooth transition occurs from the current arrangements to the proposed situation. To achieve smooth transition arrangements children will be involved in the design process for the new build and will be provided with the opportunity to monitor the progression of the construction of the new school prior to their start date of September 2017. The implementation process for the preferred option will be overseen by a 21st Century Schools project implementation group which will include the headteacher representative of the schools affected.

Add in Site plan

Add inAccess plans for the school site?

Admission arrangements / Transport

There are no plans to change the Council's policy on the admission of children to schools as a result of this proposal.

Should the Council decide to implement the proposal, all pupils attending reception to year 6 at Bryngwyn Primary and Queen Street Primary as at September 2017 will automatically be guaranteed a place at the new Six Bells Primary School. The new school will have an admission number for reception to year 6 of 51 pupils / year group and a nursery admission number of ??? (this is dependant on the design size of the Nursery classroom).

The Council's oversubscription criteria is as follows and is applied where applications exceed the number of places available to determine which applicants may be offered places:

- a) Priority to be given to looked after children (children under Local Council care);
- b) Children who live in the catchment area of the school;
- c) Priority to be given to children seeking admission on medical grounds, supported by a medical officer;
- d) Children who have older siblings at the school at the date of admission, will be admitted in preference to those who do not;
- e) Where there is more than one case as in (d) priority to be assessed on the basis of those children closest in age to the elder siblings already at the school at the date of admission; and
- f) After taking account of categories (a-e), priority will be based on closeness to the school, measured by nearest available walking route from the child's home.

Presently, transport guidance states that free school transport is provided only to pupils under 8 years of age living over one and half miles and pupils aged 8 to 16 living over two miles from the nearest catchment area school. However, there will be no entitlement to free school transport if a pupil chooses to attend an alternative school, when there is another school nearer to the pupil's home which the pupil is able to attend.

The Council is considering changes to the transport policy in 2016/2017 and this may change as a result of the ongoing

review. Free transport is not provided for extra curricular activities as this responsibility lies with parents. However, free transport can be provided on danger grounds where the Council is satisfied that the route between home and school is sufficiently dangerous to warrant such provision, even though the distance is under that quoted under statutory limits. The Council will have regard for the degree of danger involved including where escorting parents themselves are at risk from the particular traffic situation. **The Council has reviewed the area and has concluded that**

INSERT SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL MAPS

?????Consequently, the Council has confirmed that all routes to school are less than 1.5 miles, and therefore, no home to school transport will be provided on the grounds of distance or safety?????

DETAIL ANY REQUIREMENTS FOR HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT BASED ON DISTANCE OR SAFETY GROUNDS

UNTIL SPECIFIC SITE PLANS, ACCESS ROUTES ETC ARE CONFIRMED THIS DETAIL CANNOT BE OBTAINED

Further details on the above can be obtained during the consultation events or by contacting the Council's school transport team on 01495 355435 or by email 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Staffing considerations

Subject to the outcome of Formal Consultation on the proposals, it will be necessary to review the staffing arrangements of the schools involved. It is appreciated that

any process of changes to school organisation can give staff cause for concern, although every reasonable effort will be made to protect the interests of staff, in consultation with school governing bodies. If taken forward, the preferred option will be discussed with individuals, groups and their trade unions, who may be affected and employee support arrangements would be provided. It is appreciated that this is a particularly delicate area and will be handled sensitively and directly with the schools involved.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Every child has individual needs, all developing and learning at different rates. Some children find learning easy and some find it hard. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice for Wales offers clear guidance and practical advice to schools and Local Authorities regarding identifying, assessing and making provision for children's special educational needs. It recommends a graduated approach to the way support is organised. This means that step by step more help and expertise can be provided if needed.

The Council expects that the majority of pupils will have any identified needs met in their local school and in a mainstream environment. A very small minority of pupils may have additional needs over and above that which a mainstream school is able to provide for. These pupils may be appropriately placed in a Special Needs Resource Base attached to a mainstream school. Bryngwyn Primary School has such a Special Needs Resource Base.

The Special Needs Resource Base provision at Bryngwyn Primary School has a capacity of nine pupils and has a higher adult to pupil ratio than a mainstream class. Teachers and

support staff have additional expertise, training and experience in meeting complex needs.

The Education Transformation Team work closely with the SEN Team and the existing schools and as such will ensure that adequate provision is replicated and developed further at the proposed new school provision.

Future of school sites

The Council has an Acquisition and Disposal Strategy. The Education Directorate confirmed that if the proposal goes ahead, there will be no continued use of Bryngwyn and Queen Street site and the Council will dispose of the site in line with the Council's Acquisition and Disposal Strategy. The site will be made safe during the period between the closure of the school and disposal of the site.

Community Impact Assessment

Community Impact Assessments are a structured way for the Council to fully understand the implications of key decisions and whether they are detrimental or discriminatory to certain groups or sections of the community. The assessments help the Council consider the impact of decisions from a community perspective. The Community Impact Assessment process will ensure that the decision making process is robust and impacts on all communities within Blaenau Gwent ensuring that they are fully considered in Council business. By carrying out impact assessments, the Council is working to promote equality for all our service users, employees and the wider community that we serve.

- a. **How many pupils in total will be affected by this proposal?**

Bryngwyn Primary	209
Queen Street Primary	118
St Illtyd's Primary	203
Total	530

Based upon the number on roll figure for September 2014 (including nursery)

- b. **How many pupils from outside the catchment attend the above schools?**

Bryngwyn Primary	152
Queen Street Primary	62
St Illtyd's Primary	11
Total	225

- c. **What facilities and services are provided by each of the schools?**

Bryngwyn Primary :-

Activities before/after the school day	Activities that support the community within the school day	Community activities which are run on the weekends or during school holidays
Breakfast Club	Read Write Inc Family Learning	—
Chess Club	—	—
Healthy Eating Club	—	—
Fitness Club	—	—
Eco Club	—	—
Tag Rugby	—	—

Football (boys)	—	—
Football (girls)	—	—
Choir	—	—
Science Club	—	—
I.C.T Club	—	—
Recorder Club	—	—
Foundation Phase Spy Watch Club	—	—
Art Club	—	—
Netball	—	—

Queen Street Primary :-

Activities before/after the school day	Activities that support the community within the school day	Community activities which are run on the weekends or during school holidays
Breakfast Club	Various activities that support the community	—
Drama Club	Come into the school to work with the children	—
Art Club	Police	—
Netball Club	Fire Department	—
Games	Various churches	—
Eco Club	Community First (Six Bells)	—
	Family Learning	—

St Illtyd's Primary :-

Activities before/after the school day	Activities that support the community within the school day	Community activities which are run on the weekends or during school holidays
--	---	--

Breakfast Club	–	Community First hold a summer Club
After School Club	–	–
Chess Club	–	–
Art Club	–	–
Football Club	–	–
Rugby Club	–	–
Netball Club	–	–

d. What limitations are there within each of the schools?

Both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School premises were identified in the Council’s School Asset Management Plan, which is a document that identifies asset management issues within schools as having poor/major deterioration within the buildings which inhibits teaching methods. Both schools are traditional Victorian buildings and lack many of the facilities which would be expected in a modern school, neither school has green spaces on site and also have limited hard external play areas.

St Illtyd’s Primary School was identified in the Council’s School Asset Management Plan as having reasonable levels for teaching, learning and wellbeing but behaviour/morale and management is adversely affected, however, there is no deterioration within the building.

e. Facilities which could be provided within the new Six Bells primary school in the future, which are currently available at other new build schools within

Blaenau Gwent include:

- flexible ICT provision;
- learning resource media centre;
- green resources;
- suitable ALN provision;
- Improved community use;
- Foundation Phase – direct access to outdoor learning environments;
- conference facilities; and,
- access to outdoor space.

The creation of a modern community focussed school will enhance the quality of the learning environment and will have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes.

The brief for the new school build is under development and includes the above cited examples of provision that would be available at the new Six Bells Primary School.

f. Can other facilities available in the immediate local or wider community be enhanced as part of the schools' reconfiguration?

School re-organisation has to be holistic and consider the broader education, community regeneration strategies and the need to provide joined-up services to communities. The Education Transformation team regularly meets with colleagues from Estates to ensure that any opportunities for further involvement with the community through the development of a new community focused school is met, where possible.

g. How will the Council ensure good parental and pupil engagement during transitional arrangements particularly for less advantaged pupils?

The Council recognises the importance of an effective and smooth transition process for ALN learners. The process will be monitored and arrangements will be reviewed and findings will be feedback to Governing Bodies via updates. Parents/carers and pupils will be provided with relevant information to support their understanding of the transfer process and the most appropriate support required for their children during the period of transition. The schools will work together with other agencies, in identifying families who may need additional support, at the point of, and after their child's transfer. Parental and community engagement is a key priority and examples of work to be taken forward include:

- coffee mornings for parents to welcome them into the life of the school;
- gradual introduction of events to support parents, help assist their children's learning;
- Language and Play Literacy; Numeracy support;
- engagement in Parent/Teacher Associations;
- engagement of community leaders from the wider catchment areas;
- initiatives to encourage improved levels of attendance; and,
- enhanced tracking for those pupils new to the school.

This list is not exhaustive and will differ from school to school.

Risks of the preferred option and how they will be managed

The primary risks associated with the project in question currently, are associated with site anomalies. The area is a former colliery site and existing nature reserve. We have been working with partners including Technical Services to identify the initial programme of works required to identify the extent of the site anomalies; along with the potential impact they may have in terms of design, cost, consultation and project development.

The Construction Implementation Group (as outlined below) have been utilising the Technical Services resources in commissioning and implementing the following investigations and works: a culvert survey, ground investigation, flood consequences assessment and interim ecological survey. Additionally to this, the design team have been looking at standardised design option/example for the school that can be implemented to mitigate potential issues and meet the requirements of the site.

In order to manage risks a Construction Implementation Group (CIG) has been established which is overseen within the Education Directorate. This CIG consists of a 21st Century Schools Project Manager, representatives from Technical Services, Finance, Planning, Estates and will review its membership on a regular basis in line with project need. As part of the routine business process of this group, quarterly risk reviews will be held at all CIG meetings. The group meets on a monthly basis and plans to address key initial works, risks, staff and other requirements, along with planning in accordance with the project timeline for delivery.

Potential project risks are also cascaded via the Project Implementation Group (PIG), who advise in relation to the final determination of risk management, plans and approach to stage by stage project development. The group is chaired by the Assistant Director, Head of Education Transformation and Performance; and includes representation from the Education Transformation Team; Participation; Finance; the Education Achievement Service (EAS); Transport; Service Improvement; Special Educational Need Team (SEN); the Headteacher and representatives' of the schools along with other relevant partners as and when required.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY



a) Key aims

Blaenau Gwent has an opportunity to further re-shape the way lifelong learning is delivered and by working together can create a school estate which meets community needs. The key aims being:

- i. to promote lifelong learning by providing access to high-quality education for the whole community;
- ii. to ensure that the resources are used to best effect;
- iii. to ensure that all pupils make good progress to achieve the very best that they can;
- iv. to modernise teaching and learning environments to meet 21st Century standards; and,
- v. to improve educational standards of pupils throughout the County Borough.

b) Details of proposal

The formal consultation booklet details the Council's preferred proposal on the future development of education provision in the Six Bells area of Abertillery and Llanhilleth.

The Council wants to be clear that that no decisions have been made at this stage and your views are welcomed. Any views put forward will be considered as part of the Council's decision making process.

The proposal being consulted upon during this formal consultation period is detailed in the following table:-

Aspect of Education	Current Preference
Primary education within the Six Bells community of Abertillery situated within the Ebbw Fach valley	Closure of both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School on 31 August 2017, with pupils being educated from 1 September in a new build 360 place English Medium community primary school which would include nursery provision, an ALN Resource Base and specialised community provision located on the Six Bells Colliery site. The dedicated community area included in the new build could be adapted to facilitate teaching and learning; enabling the provision to become a 420 place community primary school including nursery provision and an ALN resource base should future pupil demand dictate the need to increase the footprint of the school. Within this proposal, part of St Illtyd's catchment would transfer to the new school.

c) Reasons for current preferred proposal

- the potential to improve educational attainment levels;
- the opportunity to reorganise the primary sector, to meet the demands of a 21st Century education;
- to ensure that schools have appropriate modern facilities to deliver the Foundation Phase of education and ALN provision, which includes the opportunity to learn and develop through activities outdoors;
- reduce surplus capacity as directed by the Welsh Government;
- the provision of high quality education and training;
- a school estate is created that is both effective and efficient;
- a more effective and efficient use of revenue and capital resources;
- the ability to promote the innovative use of ICT to improve learning; and,
- to ensure that we are working to Blaenau Gwent's long term aim of creating a school estate which is of a consistently high quality and which can offer a full range of facilities to support teaching and learning and raise aspirations.

d) Your opportunity to participate

In addition to your general views and comments on the content of the formal consultation document and on the preferred option for development, we would like your responses to the following questions:

- **Do you agree with the current proposal as stated above?**
- **Would you modify or add to it in any way? If yes, please provide further details.**

After reading this document you may well have questions you would like to pose. Please come along and raise them at the consultation events which will be held as detailed in the timetable on [page ??](#) . Alternatively, you may contact the Education Transformation team on telephone number: 01495 355294 or at the email address given below.

Your views and comments in writing would be particularly welcome. Please send them to: Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation and Performance, c/o Education Transformation Team, Anvil Court, Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB, or by emailing 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.

The closing date for receiving comments is 5th April 2015.

All views expressed will be given full consideration before a decision is made on whether to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice, which would give all interested parties a one month period to comment on, or object to the proposal.

APPENDIX 1

List of Consultees

- Pupils via school councils
- Grand school council
- Parents/Carers/Guardians of pupils
- Governors – Individual Governing Bodies
- Staff of schools
- Governors Association
- Youth Forum
- Trade Unions
- Blaenau Gwent Education Recovery Board
- Shadow Executive Member

Information will be made available to and comments sought:

- Members of the Council
- Diocesan Education Authorities
- Abertillery and Llanhilleth Town Council
- Neighbouring Local Education Authorities
- Education Achievement Service
- Transport Consortium
- Ebbw Fach Community Firs cluster, Children and Young People and Young People's Partnership Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Voluntary Organisations
- Health Authority
- Greater Gwent Music, Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired Services
- Welsh Government
- Assembly Members (AMs) representing the area

- *Members of parliament (MPs) representing the area*
- *Estyn*
- *Police and Crime Commissioner*

Information contained within this booklet will be available on the Council's website:

www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk, under 21st Century Schools.

And for reading at: Council Libraries.

You may also request a booklet by calling 01495 355294 or by emailing us at 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.

APPENDIX 2

FORMAL CONSULTATION - 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

Timetable of public consultation events (These dates are currently provisional and are subject to change)

Date	Time	Consultees	Venue
Ebbw Fach Valley			
TBC	TBC	Staff of Bryngwyn Primary School	Bryngwyn Primary School
TBC	TBC	Governing Body of Bryngwyn Primary School	Bryngwyn Primary School
TBC	TBC	School Council of Bryngwyn Primary School	Bryngwyn Primary School
TBC	TBC	Staff of Queen Street Primary School	Queen Street Primary School
TBC	TBC	Governing Body of Queen Street Primary School	Queen Street Primary School
TBC	TBC	School Council of Queen Street Primary School	Queen Street Primary School
TBC	TBC	School Council of St Illtyd's Primary School	St Illtyds Primary School
TBC	TBC	Staff of St Illtyd's Primary School	St Illtyds Primary School
TBC	TBC	Governing Body of St Illtyd's Primary School	St Illtyds Primary School
TBC	TBC	Open day	Ty Ebbw Fach
TBC	TBC	Open day	The Metropole

Frequently asked questions

Q: Why has the decision been taken to close my child's school?

A: No decision has been taken the Council is exploring options.

Details and the reasoning behind the proposal can be found within the booklet.

Q: When will we know what is going to happen?

A: *It is intended that the formal consultation will end on 5th April 2015 and a report will go to the Blaenau Gwent Education Recovery Board who from the 15th January 2014 assumed responsibility for all of the education functions within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The Education Recovery Board will consider all views expressed prior to making a decision on whether to bring forward specific proposals. Should a decision be made by the Blaenau Gwent Education Recovery Board to proceed further with the proposal, or amended proposals based on the views expressed during the formal consultation, the next stage would be to publish a statutory notice which will give stakeholders a one month period to object to the proposals*

Q: How will pupils travel to their new school?

A: *Current transport guidance states that free school transport is provided only to pupils under 8 years of age living over one and half miles, and pupils aged 8 to 16 living over two miles from the nearest catchment area school.*

In addition, free transport can be provided on danger grounds where the Council is satisfied that the route between home and school is sufficiently dangerous to warrant such provision, even though the distance is under that quoted under statutory limits. The Council will have regard for the

degree of danger involved including whether escorting parents themselves are at risk from the particular traffic situation. Further details on the above can be obtained during the consultation events or by contacting the Council's school transport team.

Q: Can we still choose which school I would prefer my child to go to if their school is closed?

A: Yes. Parents can express a preference for their child(ren) to attend any school or make a request to the admission authority to transfer their child (ren) during the academic year.

Q: My child attends Nursery at Bryngwyn or Queen Street, will they automatically secure a Reception place at the new school?

A: No. Attending a nursery class does not give your child priority for a place in the Reception year group at any primary school, a separate application is required. Copies of the application form will be available from Blaenau Gwent schools. Alternatively, application forms can be found online at www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Q: My child will be in reception to year 3 in September 2014 at Bryngwyn or Queen Street, will they secure a place at the new school?

A: Yes. Pupils who are in years 4,5 and 6 on 1st September 2014 will be of Secondary age at the time the proposal is implemented.

Q: How will parent parking be managed?

A: A travel plan will be developed as part of the proposed school re-organisation, which will involve consultation with Highways colleagues and the school community.

Q: Is the proposal realistic and will it happen?

A: Yes the proposal is realistic, extensive works have gone into determining the viability of the site and all relevant partners are onboard.

Q: How are site issues being managed in terms of safety and potential for delay?

A: Following the completion of informal consultation regular construction meetings are being held that will address these issues.

Q: Will the new school have sufficient hard and soft recreational spaces and facilities, as the existing schools do not have this?

A: The building and its space will comply with the relevant building bulletin.

Q: Will the new school affect the colliery site in relation to existing leisure facilities?

A: The Education Transformation Team, schools and all will intend to engage with community groups, members etc. to ensure that the leisure facilities are preserved and developed.

Q: How will access to the colliery site be maintained?

A: The Project Brief requires that access to the site is maintained and will be detailed further at formal consultation stage. We are working with Technical Services to ensure that access proposals are developed to be consulted upon; whilst also ensuring minimal impact in terms of community access.

Q: Is building a new school and closing two others really economical?

A: The suitability and condition surveys show that the schools are grade c schools, meaning poor to major deterioration in the building and teaching methods are inhibited. They are also high levels of surplus places, and low school populations impact upon the levels of curriculum activity. This along with backlog maintenance costs as stated in the formal consultation document, mean these are less economically viable than the development of the new school.

Q: Why are the other schools deemed to be unfit for purpose? Why can't current schools be re-modelled?

A: Extensive investigations and surveys have been carried out to determine the viability of developing the existing schools and the cost; which have revealed that the cost of works to the existing schools, in order to ensure they are up to standard far outweighs the costs of a new build. In addition to this the buildings and outdoor spaces could not be developed to the standard required for a 21st Century School, due to building and site restrictions within them.

Q: Would updating the existing schools with modern technology be the most efficient and cost effective option?

A: As above. No, as the existing schools would need a lot of additional building works and do not have the scope in terms of facilities that a new school would.

Q: What are the plans for Queen Street and Bryngwyn sites, after the new school has opened?

A: The future of the existing sites will be determined at a later date.

Q: Is the Vivian site not more suitable for the build?

A: All alternative locations have been examined and the preferred site for this proposal is the Six Bells site.

Q: The colliery site is isolated therefore is it the most appropriate site for the school?

A: Extensive investigations have deemed the site to be suitable; we are working with Technical services to ensure that safety is a key feature in terms of the plans in moving forward. There are not many sites in the area that are suitable.

Q: What will the cosmetic impact be for a site of exiting beauty?

A: There will be a full ecology survey and site investigations to ensure minimum impact on the environment. This will also determine additional features that can improve and add to the cosmetic outlook.

Q: What will be the parking arrangements for community members and visitors, in relation to the site?

A: There will be the opportunity for community members to utilise parking that is available in excess during the day and evening events; and have full use of the facility when the school is closed.

Q: Will the school detract from the tourism potential of the site? How will the natural environment and local heritage of the site be preserved?

A: No, it will add to it and this is part of the process. There will be a full ecology survey and site investigations to ensure minimum impact on the

environment. This will also determine additional features that can improve and add to the environment. One of the aims of providing a 21st century school building is to incorporate community focused schools.

Q: The existing parking facilities have been a vital facet for community members, facilities and groups. The parking has also been a significant resource in supporting disabled access and tourism, how will this be managed in ensuring minimum disruption to services, groups etc.?

A: The existing parking is a temporary arrangement. However, this is recognised and we welcome the involvement of community groups in members in the planning and development of the school. Parking (as above) will be available and disabled parking is a key feature in terms of developing the site access.

Q: Will the new build provide parity with regards to facilities and resources, for primary age children in relation to the standards that are visible within other primary's throughout Blaenau Gwent?

A: Yes, that is the ultimate purpose of the 21st Century Schools Programme and has resulted in the preferred option.

Q: Will the class sizes of the new school impact upon the quality provision of education for the children?

A: There are specific regulations for class sizes and any school whether it is new or established has to comply with these.

Q: Why is the catchment area so large and how will this impact upon future class size?

A: The catchment area is not large but reflects the appropriateness of the location of the new school. The admission arrangements will determine the no of pupils admitted to the school. The Governing Body determine

the class sizes via Welsh Government policy and therefore will not exceed maximum numbers, whilst also ensuring appropriate teacher, pupil ratio.

Q: How will the children's transition be supported to ensure minimum impact upon their education?

A: The Governing Body will establish a transition plan to support all structures. Parents will have the opportunity to be involved in the development of provision. Teaching staff ratios and requirements are also a key feature of the proposal and development of the school.

Q: How will distance be accommodated to ensure that it does not impact upon children who live within the wider catchment area?

A: The Council presently has a more generous home to school travel policy than the statutory provision. However, a travel plan will be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

Q: What will be the impact for St Illtyd's Primary in relation to the development of the new school?

A: The school has been oversubscribed in recent years, the redefining of the catchment area will assist the admission arrangements.

**21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME
BW FACH VALLEY
SCHOOL ORGANISATION PROPOSAL**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council would appreciate your response to the proposal.

Please let us have your views and observations by completing and returning this questionnaire to the Education Transformation Team, Anvil Court, Abertillery, NP13 1DB, by the 5th April 2015.

Question 1

Which community do you live in?

Ebbw Vale Tredegar Brynmawr Nantyglo Abertillery

Other area ,please indicate:

Question 2

Are you a:

Pupil a parent/carer of a pupil member of Staff governor

Other interested party, please specify

Question 3

At which of the following primary schools:

Bryngwyn Primary Queen Street Primary St.Illtyds Primary

Another primary school, please specify:

Question 4

The Council has to review school catchment areas to ensure they serve the local community, do you agree with the proposed catchment area detailed on **page 36** of the formal consultation booklet?

Yes

No

If no, please outline your reasons below:

Question 5

The Council has to make better use of resources so all pupils gain access to modern, fit-for-purpose learning environments. Do you agree with this?

Yes

No

If no, please outline your reasons below:

Question 6

Do you agree with the proposal to Close both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School on 31st August 2017 with pupils being educated from 1st September 2017 in a new build Community Primary School

Yes

No

Comments below :

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, your views are very important to us and we will consider carefully all the comments you have made.

