



21st Century Schools

Formal Consultation Document 2015

Abertillery Central

The establishment of a 3 to 16 learning environment for Abertillery Central

2nd February to 29th March 2015



OVERVIEW

I am pleased to present this consultation document setting out the second phase of our 3-16 Strategic Policy for Education in Blaenau Gwent.

This consultation on the Abertillery Proposal represents a further development of the council's agreed 3-16 strategic policy for education, to improve standards, pupil wellbeing and aspiration across all schools in Blaenau Gwent.

Abertillery will therefore be the second key area to benefit from this approach after the successful establishment of the Ebbw Fawr Learning Community in 2012.

The Council is committed to developing and establishing innovative approaches to securing better outcomes through increased continuity in pupil learning through seamless phase-to-phase transition and a joined-up strategy to learning, pastoral care and support.

This is therefore your opportunity to secure the second phase of this strategy to ensure the young people of Abertillery are equipped with the skills and qualifications they need to succeed.

To progress this approach, the Council is required to carry out a statutory consultation process for school reorganisation proposals. This formal consultation document provides an opportunity for stakeholders to contribute to a school reorganisation proposal for the Abertillery central area. It is your chance to ask questions and make comments that will be considered when the Education Recovery Board and the Council decides how to proceed.

The Council will be consulting with a range of individuals and groups about the proposal and the list of stakeholders is shown in appendix 1.

There are a number of consultation events as listed in the tables on pages 3 and 4, where the Abertillery Central proposal will be explained. These consultative events are organised so that you can ask questions and make

comments that will be recorded and taken into account in the decision making process. The consultation will start on the 2nd February and conclude on the 29th March 2015.

You may also provide your views by completing the online form <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/19118.asp>; by completing the form at the back of this booklet and returning it to the address below or by:

- writing to Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation and Performance, Education Directorate, Anvil Court, Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB
- emailing 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

I do hope you will take full advantage of both the information contained in this document and the arranged 'drop in' sessions so that you have access to all information and plans, as well as opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion about the proposals set out in this document. I look forward to seeing you at the sessions.

Yours sincerely,



Lynette Jones
Corporate Director of Education
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



Timetable of public consultation events

Date	Venue	Time	Consultees	LA Attendees
09/02/15	Abertillery Comprehensive School	4.30pm - 5.30pm	Staff	Lynette Jones Lynn Phillips Alun Williams (opt) Michelle Jones
09/02/15		5.45pm - 7.15pm	Governors	Support staff Claire Gardner Sharon Northall
10/02/15		10.30am	School Council	Dave Rees Claire Gardner/ Sharon Northall
10/02/15	Abertillery Primary School	3.30pm - 4.30pm	Staff	Lynette Jones Lynn Phillips Alun Williams (opt) Michelle Jones
10/02/15		5.00pm - 6.30pm	Governors	Support staff Claire Gardner Sharon Northall
11/02/15		10.30am	School Council	Dave Rees Claire Gardner/ Sharon Northall
12/02/15	Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	4.30pm - 5.30pm	Staff	Lynette Jones Lynn Phillips Alun Williams (opt) Michelle Jones
12/02/15		5.45pm - 7.15pm	Governors	Support staff Claire Gardner Sharon Northall
13/02/15		10.30am	School Council	Dave Rees Claire Gardner/ Sharon Northall
HALF TERM				

Date	Venue	Time	Consultees	LA Attendees
23/02/15	Queen Street Primary School	4.30pm - 5.30pm	Staff	Lynette Jones Lynn Phillips Alun Williams (opt)
23/02/15		5.45pm - 7.15pm	Governors	Michelle Jones Support staff Claire Gardner Sharon Northall
24/02/15		10.30am	School Council	Dave Rees Claire Gardner/ Sharon Northall
25/02/15	Bryngwyn Primary School	4.30pm - 5.30pm	Staff	Lynette Jones Lynn Phillips Alun Williams (opt)
25/02/15		5.45pm - 7.15pm	Governors	Michelle Jones Support staff Claire Gardner Sharon Northall
26/02/15		10.30am	School Council	Dave Rees Claire Gardner/ Sharon Northall
27/02/15	St Illtyd's Primary School	3.30pm - 4.30pm	Staff	Lynette Jones Lynn Phillips Alun Williams (opt)
27/02/15		5.00pm - 6.30pm	Governors	Michelle Jones Support staff Claire Gardner Sharon Northall
02/03/15		10.30am	School Council	Dave Rees Claire Gardner/ Sharon Northall
24/02/15	Governors Association Meeting			
	Scrutiny			
09/03/15	The Metropole Theatre, Abertillery	9.00am - 7.00pm	Open Day Public Consultation	Education Transformation Team

* Dates subject to change

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1 INTRODUCTION

The 3-16 proposal for the Abertillery central area represents a further development of the Council's agreed 3-16 strategic policy for education, to improve standards, pupil wellbeing and aspirations across all schools in the Blaenau Gwent County Borough. Abertillery therefore will be the second key area to benefit from this approach after the successful establishment of the Ebbw Fawr Learning Community in 2012.

The council is committed to developing and establishing innovative approaches to securing better outcomes to increased continuity in pupil learning through seamless phase-to-phase transition and a joined up strategy to learning, pastoral care and support.

This is therefore your opportunity to secure the second phase of this strategy to ensure the young people of Abertillery are equipped with the skills and qualifications they need to succeed.

The Council is committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education and training tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, extend aspiration, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Progress has been made, however, there is still work to be done to improve outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people. It is, therefore, implicit within the Council's 21st Century School Strategic Outline Programme ("SOP"), that a fundamental review of the school estate be undertaken in order to transform education across the County Borough.

The vision is to improve pupil attainment, achievement and wellbeing through the transformation of schools and learning environments to meet modern 21st Century expectations. Our vision to secure and sustain the delivery of high quality education for all pupils across the age range from 3-16 is underpinned by two objectives:

- to be the best performing Local Authority within the family of Local Authorities (Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Neath Port Talbot) by 2017/2018; and,
- to exceed the Welsh average for all key indicators by 2018.

The regeneration of the area is underpinned by the transformation agenda, which seeks to address the issues of social inclusion, poor health and economic inactivity. Clearly, new approaches are needed to ensure that all pupils are given the best life chances to fulfil their potential.

The Council is committed to:

- securing sustainable high quality education across the 3-16 age range, particularly in Key Stage 4;
- establishing greater consistency, continuity and progression in learning from 3-16; and,
- maximising effort to focus on teaching, learning and the development of leadership by removing duplication where it exists in the current system.

The Council's Education Transformation Strategy seeks to achieve significant improvements in pupil attainment through addressing the following areas:

- raising attainment through improved teaching and learning, including the innovative use of ICT;
- raising attainment, achievement and progress in the skills of Reading, Writing and Maths both separately and in combination, in all Key Stages;
- securing consistency in approach and progression of skills, particularly between Key Stages;
- improving levels of pupil aspiration;
- high quality support for pupils with additional learning needs;
- effective use of performance data; and,
- buildings and school reorganisation through the 21st Century Schools programme.

The transformation of education is to be delivered through the following priority areas:

- 3-16 learning environments with a focus on skills progression and continuity of quality;
- an area/cluster approach to the provision of schools of the right size in the right place;
- a model for post 16 education involving Coleg Gwent as the tertiary provider;
- a sustainable school estate, including life-cycle maintenance costs;
- the co-location of services, where appropriate;
- innovative use of ICT to support the learning agenda; and,
- modernised leadership and governance arrangements to suit local, regional and national needs.

Some of the main challenges currently facing Blaenau Gwent and its education service are illustrated below:

- Education remains in special measures;
- challenging financial settlements for the Council;
- pupil attainment levels remain low; skills remain low;
- pupil wellbeing is disproportionately challenged;
- socio-economic status of Blaenau Gwent;
- some schools still with significant surplus places; and,
- an ageing building stock with significant levels of backlog maintenance and repairs.

In January 2013, the Council's Education Service was subject to an Estyn inspection. The inspectors found that there was still much work to be done and the Council's Education Service remained in special measures.

The inspection report concluded that although the proportion of learners in Blaenau Gwent who are eligible for free school meals is the highest in Wales, even with this deprivation taken into account, performance remains well below average.

Blaenau Gwent experiences high levels of socio-economic disadvantage; however, this is not a reason for the attainment of our children and young people to remain below the Wales average. Indeed, it is arguable that given the socio-economic background of the County Borough, more needs to be done by the Council and its partners to provide an appropriate infrastructure to ensure educational success for our future generations.

Blaenau Gwent Council and its partners are determined to improve educational attainment through achieving the priorities contained in the Single Integrated Plan ("S.I.P") for the academic year 2013/2014.

The current performance as agreed by the Council and the Education Achievement Services ("EAS") are as follows:

- Increased percentage of pupils achieving Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (formerly Key Stage 1 CSI) 83.4%;
- 83.8% of pupils achieving Key Stage 2 CSI;
- 76.4% of pupils achieving Key Stage 3 CSI;
- 72.5% of pupils achieving 5 GCSE's at grade A* - C;
- Improved pupil attendance;
Primary Provisional 94.4%;
Secondary Actual 92.2%;
- Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics
2014 - Actual 41.8%.

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

The Council's commitment to Education can be demonstrated in the following examples, detailing where progress has been made:

- standards are improving across the board, but more work remains to be done to achieve the Council's medium term targets, especially at Key Stage 4;
- school attendance continues to improve in both secondary and primary sectors;
- improving access and school places - ensuring the right schools are in the right place and improving the quality of the building stock;
- initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy - Learning Coach and Youth Worker support within schools, commitment on behalf of

Blaenau Gwent schools, the Education Achievement Service and key partners such as training providers to monitor and allocate adequate support in meeting the needs of children and young people;

- improving use of management information systems to target youth support services - improved communication and information sharing strategies and protocols, to ensure that children and young peoples' needs can be met; and,
- improved partnerships between Council Directorates and external partners in demonstrating a holistic approach to meeting children's needs.

The Council also recognises, however, that there is much more work to be done to further raise educational standards, particularly in nationally recognised qualifications at Key Stage 4 e.g. GCSE's.

In 2012, the Council established the first 3 - 16 maintained school in Wales. This provision has already demonstrated improvements in relation to school standards for secondary age children at Key Stage 4. Consequently, the Council believes that the associated benefits of a 3 -16 provision should now be extended across the County Borough with particular focus in the initial stage on the Abertillery area, where a number of significant challenges exist at both secondary and primary level.

An all through 3 -16 learning environment brings a number of potential benefits, particularly where transition between primary and secondary schools remains a key challenge. It is widely accepted that schools are able to raise attainment by establishing a continuum of education from 3 -16.

Within the context of Blaenau Gwent's challenges, arguably further change is necessary and the "do nothing" approach is simply not an option. Importantly, the Council has demonstrated its willingness to transform education as evidenced by the proposals for the Works site and the establishment of the first 3 -16 maintained school in Wales. This approach, has already contributed to the raising standards agenda. Therefore, the Education Recovery Board and the Council are considering an extension of the approach within elements of the Ebbw Fach valley.

The Council has already undertaken an informal consultation in relation to the creation of a new 360 place school in the Six Bells area. The proposal involves the closure of Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary Schools, and importantly, the Council has received widespread support during the informal consultation process. The new Six Bells School is a key component of the Council's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) and £6m capital funding is secured for this project. The Six Bells informal consultation process has now concluded, and a summary report including responses appears in appendix 2.

2 WHY ARE WE PROPOSING CHANGE?

The 3-16 proposal for Abertillery Central area represents the further development of the councils agreed 3-16 strategic policy for education, to improve standards, pupil wellbeing and aspirations across all schools in the Blaenau Gwent County Borough. Abertillery will therefore be the second key area to benefit from this approach after the successful establishment of the Ebbw Fawr Learning Community in 2012.

The Council is committed to developing and establishing innovative approaches to securing better outcomes through increased continuity in pupil learning through seamless phase-to-phase transition and a joined-up strategy to learning, pastoral care and support.

This is therefore your opportunity to secure the second phase of this strategy to ensure the young people of Abertillery are equipped with the skills and qualifications they need to succeed.

The 3-16 learning provision does not necessarily require primary and secondary school pupils to occupy a single building, or indeed, occupy buildings in close proximity. The potential benefits relate to the creation of a range of options for linking of management and governance arrangements that can be facilitated either through federation or through statutory school reorganisation.

A summary of the benefits of 3-16 arrangements include:

- improved outcomes and pupil wellbeing through greater consistency in the application of high quality teaching and learning strategies across a larger number of pupils;
- greater consistency in the design and delivery of high quality teaching and learning underpinned by high quality and effective leadership and management;
- improved transitional arrangements for all learners, including those pupils presenting with additional learning needs (ALN);
- greater consistency in end of Key Stage teacher assessments leading to more tailored provision;
- ensuring that excellent practice is more widely shared and established as daily practice across a greater number of pupils, and across the full 3-16

age range;

- pupil transition from class to class and through the Key Stages is seamless; pupils' next learning steps are shared more widely leading to improved progression and continuity for individual pupils on their learning journey;
- effective accelerated learning strategies are more widely shared, so that greater progress can be secured by more pupils;
- a broader context for the professional development of school leaders and practitioners across the 3-16 learning environment;
- far greater provision to secure continuity and progression of skills in Reading, Writing and Maths due to improved transition between Key Stages;
- a strong community, citizenship and friendly ethos where older children understand their responsibilities as role models to younger pupils;
- the ability to introduce more specialist teaching into the primary phase, particularly in areas such as languages and science;
- the opportunity for excellence in primary practice to be incorporated higher up the school where appropriate, especially for those children who need additional support;
- strengthening school-to-school working to ensure best innovative practice is shared more widely;
- a strategic approach to the use of budgetary resources, facilities and curriculum delivery in addressing the key objectives, including pupil attainment, attendance, additional learning needs, participation and community engagement; and,
- operational efficiencies and benefits through integration so that more resources are directed to support front line teaching and learning.

The Education Recovery Board and Council have agreed a strategic approach to 3 -16 learning environments across the County Borough. The County Borough wide school re-organisation would be taken forward on a 'case by case' basis and would consider the following criteria:

- Standards and pupil wellbeing.
- Leadership/capacity.
- Building condition.
- Building suitability.
- Surplus places.
- Sustainability / cost effectiveness.
- Socio-economic status.

The 3 -16 learning environment is a key strategic driver for the 21st Century Schools programme and will require a phased implementation over a number of years. There are two main elements of legislation supported by

Regulations and a Code that govern the process for changing the organisational arrangements of schools. These are:

- School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, supported by the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code; and,
- The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 pursuant to the Education Wales Measure 2011.

School Reorganisation - the Council has a proven track record in school reorganisation, which takes into account the quality and standards of education and the need for school places. The Blaenau Gwent process for school reorganisation is usually a three step process involving informal consultation, formal consultation and the publication of Statutory Notices. Due to the need to make rapid progress to enable implementation of the proposals from academic year 2016/2017, the Abertillery Central proposals, in line with statutory requirements, will be a two step process involving the formal consultation process and the publication of Statutory Notices.

Federation - the Council has previously supported one Federation. This was completed under the previous Regulations and was used by the Governing Body as a means of securing the needs of learners in the short term when a school went into Special Measures. The recently published Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 build upon the powers that were initially provided to Governing Bodies and allow Councils to federate up to six schools.





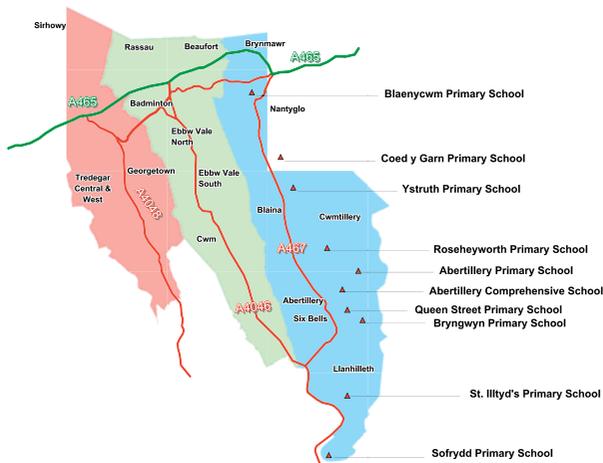
3 WHAT OPTIONS DID WE CONSIDER?

3.1 Abertillery, Blaina, Llanhilleth and Brynmawr Maintained Schools

Abertillery, Blaina and Llanhilleth are located within the Ebbw Fach valley and are presently served by 9 English speaking community maintained primary schools and 1 secondary school, namely:

- Abertillery Primary School.
- Blaen -Y- Cwm Primary.
- Bryngwyn Primary School.
- Coed -Y- Garn Primary School.
- Queen Street Primary School.
- Roseheyworth Millennium School.
- St Illtyd's Primary School.
- Sofrydd Primary School.
- Ystruth Primary School.
- Abertillery Comprehensive School.

The map below illustrates the geographical position of the community maintained schools.



Within the geographical area, there are Community First areas located in the following areas: St Illtyd's, Abertillery, Blaina, Nantyglô, Six Bells and Cwmtillery.

For the purpose of the options appraisal, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg has been excluded due to its status as a Welsh medium community maintained primary school, although it is accepted that future Welsh medium provision at an appropriate time will also need to be considered.

3.2 Options Process

Each option was initially scored as a pass/ fail (i.e. is it physically achievable within the parameters of the relevant legislation?). Officers then scored each option against the following Critical Success Factors ("CSF"):

- to raise standards and achievement;
- to deliver a sustainable and cost effective model; and
- to achieve inclusive settings providing individual learning needs for all pupils in line with the review of additional learning needs.

The CSFs were each weighted High 5, Medium 3, and Low 1. Each option was then scored against the CSF and was scored on the following basis:

- 5** exceeds the criteria;
- 4** meets the criteria;
- 3** neither meets/ does not meet the criteria;
- 2** partially meets the criteria; and,
- 1** does not meet the criteria.

The options for consideration ranged from:

- Doing nothing;
- Federation of schools either by the Council or individual schools; and,
- School reorganisation on an area basis.

This formal consultation document is set in the context of the scale of the challenges facing Blaenau Gwent, and subsequently, a number of radical approaches are considered. Existing attainment and achievement levels remain low; consequently, this document is a key strand of the Council's desire to transform education across the County Borough.

3.3 Strategic Options Analysis

The following options were considered and scored:-

- Option 1** - Do nothing.
- Option 2** - Federate using Local Authority powers.
- Option 3** - Encourage Governing Bodies to federate.
- Option 4** - Statutory school reorganisation.

The results from the options analysis are shown overleaf:

Option	Score
1. Do nothing	17
2. Federate using Local Authority powers	33
3. Encourage Governing Bodies to Federate	22
4. Statutory School Reorganisation	44

3.4 Benefits of the Options Considered

Option 1 - Do Nothing/Maintain the Status Quo

This would mean no changes to the governance and leadership structure to the schools throughout the Abertillery area. The table below illustrates this option based upon a comparative analysis, which outlines the limitations of maintaining the status quo:

STATUS QUO	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>No destabilisation of existing provision.</p> <p>Stability of existing arrangements remains consistent.</p> <p>Clear community stakeholder understanding of the existing service provision.</p>	<p>Standards and viability at Abertillery Comprehensive School remains a key strategic issue for the Council.</p> <p>Governance separation and lack of a coherent approach to school improvement.</p> <p>Pupil numbers at Abertillery Comprehensive School remain low with total school cohort size remaining a significant concern.</p> <p>The capacity for continuing professional development is limited in respect of resourcing constraints. Therefore, impacting upon opportunities for further professional development.</p> <p>A larger school has the ability to maximise economies of scale, thereby directing more funds to support frontline teaching and learning.</p> <p>The quality of the school estate in this area is variable, therefore, impacting upon revenue costs; equality of opportunity in relation to learning and standards.</p> <p>Surplus places remain a concern for some schools within the area.</p>

Option 2 - Federate using Local Authority Powers.

The Council has the power to federate schools using the 'Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014'

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/fundingschools/school-governance/federation-of-maintained-schools/?lang=en>

FEDERATE USING LOCAL AUTHORITY POWERS	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>Creation of one governing body.</p> <p>Consistency of teaching and learning methodology, particularly across the phases.</p> <p>Improved transitional arrangements to improve pupils' performance.</p> <p>Streamlining of policies and structure.</p> <p>Sharing of best practice, preparation materials and resources (both physical and teaching).</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities for pupils activities- widens curriculum choice and options for pupils as schools come together to provide access to each other's course(s) and facilities, leading to improvements in the quality of learning for staff and pupils.</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities for staff professional development.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for middle management development.</p> <p>Potential for recruitment of staff, head teachers and governors particularly if there have been difficulties in recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Opportunities for school leadership beyond a single school.</p> <p>Opportunities for the creation of new roles that can be shared across schools i.e. bursar, ICT technician, drama teacher, peripatetic teacher.</p>	<p>A relatively new approach.</p> <p>The Council can only statutorily federate 6 schools of the same category.</p> <p>Commitment from schools within the area, with an uncertainty of willingness to federate.</p> <p>The admissions process does not facilitate the concept of a 3-16 school, in that there is no guaranteed continuum into secondary phase; therefore, secondary pupil numbers may remain low.</p> <p>Lacks the flexibility of school reorganisation, particularly diverting resources to greatest need.</p>

FEDERATE USING LOCAL AUTHORITY POWERS

BENEFITS

Improved social, sporting and cultural opportunities for pupils.

Opportunities to maximise resources and professional expertise, particularly where there are financial difficulties or low pupil numbers and also achieve financial efficiencies from economies of scale.

Promotes the broader welfare of pupils by offering potential for bringing together pastoral, health, careers, youth and other services to meet pupils needs.

Effective leadership support for schools in need.

Sharing of good practice.

Supports school improvement by enabling schools to draw on the resources of other schools to tackle problems, share expertise, raise expectations and address the needs of particular groups of pupils.

An overall holistic approach aimed to meet the needs of key stakeholders, to ensure effective strategic and operational processes; in turn positively impacting upon delivery and standards/wellbeing.

DISBENEFITS



Option 3 - Encourage Governing Bodies to Federate

ENCOURAGE GOVERNING BODIES TO FEDERATE	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>Securing commitment from schools within the area, when a willingness to federate is in place.</p> <p>Schools actively engage in discussions around partnership working with a view to working more closely through a formal federation.</p> <p>Consistency of teaching and learning practice, especially across phases.</p> <p>Improved transitional arrangements to improve pupils' performance.</p> <p>Streamlining of policies and structure.</p> <p>Sharing of best practice, preparation materials and resources (both physical and teaching).</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities for pupils activities- widens curriculum choice and options for pupils as schools come together to provide access to each other's course(s) and facilities, leading to improvements in the quality of learning for staff and pupils.</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities for staff professional development.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for middle management development.</p> <p>Potential for recruitment of staff, head teachers and governors particularly if there have been difficulties in recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Opportunities for school leadership beyond a single school.</p>	<p>Option can only statutorily federate 6 schools of the same category.</p> <p>Lacks the flexibility of school reorganisation, particularly diverting resources to greatest need.</p> <p>The admissions process does not facilitate the concept of a 3 -16 school, in that there is no guaranteed continuum into secondary phase; therefore secondary pupil numbers may remain low.</p> <p>Powers delegated solely to schools.</p>

ENCOURAGE GOVERNING BODIES TO FEDERATE

BENEFITS

Opportunities for the creation of new roles that can be shared across schools i.e. bursar, ICT technician, drama teacher, peripatetic teacher.

Improved social, sporting and cultural opportunities for pupils.

Opportunities to maximise resources and professional expertise, particularly where there are financial difficulties or low pupil numbers and also achieve financial efficiencies from economies of scale.

Promotes the broader welfare of pupils by offering potential for bringing together pastoral, health, careers, youth and other services to meet pupils all round needs.

Effective leadership support for schools in need.

Supports school improvement by enabling schools to draw on the resources of other schools to tackle problems, share expertise, raise expectations and address the needs of particular groups of pupils; and, better work life balance where the head teacher has a high level of teaching commitment.

An overall holistic approach aimed to meet the needs of all affected stakeholders, ensures effective strategic and operational processes; in turn positively impacting upon delivery and standards/wellbeing.

DISBENEFITS

Option 4 - Statutory School Reorganisation

SCHOOL REORGANISATION	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>Strategic approach can accommodate all schools within scope.</p> <p>Consistency in approach to leadership, management and teaching across the 3 - 16 age range.</p> <p>Consistency in approach to curriculum design, delivery and assessment.</p> <p>A larger cohort of pupils guaranteed a place at secondary phase.</p> <p>The opportunity to provide new school buildings for the Abertillery and Six Bells area remains. High quality teaching and learning practice especially across the phases.</p> <p>Improved transitional arrangements to improve pupils' performance.</p> <p>Consistency in policy development and implementation of policy across the 3 -16 age range.</p> <p>Sharing of best practice, preparation materials and resources.</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities for pupils activities- broader curriculum choice and options for pupils as schools come together to provide access to each other's course(s) and facilities, leading to improvements in the quality of learning for staff and pupils.</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities for staff professional development.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for middle management development.</p>	<p>Significant change in current school arrangements and community understanding of 3-16 school.</p> <p>Potential destabilisation during a period of change.</p> <p>Staff reorganisation.</p> <p>Transition implications for existing school reorganisation proposals.</p>

SCHOOL REORGANISATION

BENEFITS

Potential for recruitment of staff, head teachers and governors particularly if there have been difficulties in recruitment and retention.

Opportunities for school leadership beyond a single school.

Opportunities for the creation of new roles that can be shared across schools i.e. bursar, ICT technician, drama teacher, peripatetic teacher.

Improved social, sporting and cultural opportunities for pupils.

Opportunities to maximise resources and professional expertise, particularly where there are financial difficulties or low pupil numbers.

Creates capacity and supports efficiency by providing economies of scale for undertaking key activities.

Promotes the broader welfare of pupils by offering potential for bringing together pastoral, health, careers, youth and other services to meet their all round needs.

Effective leadership support for schools in need.

Schools with strengths can contribute to the learning of others.

Supports school improvement by enabling schools to draw on the resources of other schools to tackle problems, share expertise, raise expectations and address the needs of particular groups of pupils.

DISBENEFITS

3.5 The Preferred Option

The outcome of the options analysis has resulted in option 4, statutory school reorganisation being chosen as the preferred option. As a result, an assessment of the scope of the schools to be included was carried out. This assessment took into account the following areas:

- Standards;
- Capacity;
- Financial viability; and,
- Anticipated number on roll.

Consequently, the preferred scope for the Abertillery 3 -16 central learning community is detailed below, along with an assessment of the benefits and disbenefits associated with the option.

ABERTILLERY CENTRAL i.e. Closure of Abertillery Comprehensive School, Abertillery Primary School, Roseheyworth Primary School, Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Schools and the establishment of a 3 -16 school for the central area. This proposal will also include the extension of the catchment area to include the northern part of the St Illtyd's catchment area.	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>Consistency in approach to secure high quality leadership, teaching and learning across the 3-16 age range.</p> <p>Significant opportunity for increased pupil numbers in secondary phase.</p> <p>Change manageable with the option to extend approach in the future.</p> <p>School estate will be very good, including 2 new primary phase buildings.</p> <p>Significant transition benefits.</p> <p>Significant opportunities for Continual Professional Development (CPD).</p> <p>Improved financial viability for 3 -16 school.</p> <p>Improved transition and sharing of expertise amongst additional learning needs resource base staff.</p>	<p>Potential destabilisation of schools during the process of change.</p> <p>Implementation of existing school reorganisation proposals.</p>

The other options that were also considered but had less impact on standards, sustainability and quality of provision are shown below:

OPTION A i.e. Closure of Abertillery Comprehensive School, Abertillery Primary School, and Roseheyworth Primary School	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>Consistency in approach to secure high quality leadership, teaching and learning across the age range, but less than the preferred option due to scope.</p> <p>Greater transitional benefits due to scope.</p> <p>Greater opportunities for Continual Professional Development (CPD).</p>	<p>Less impact on standards/revenue/surplus places.</p> <p>Potential destabilisation in the short-term.</p> <p>Financial sustainability partially secured</p> <p>Implementation of existing school reorganisation proposals.</p> <p>Does not generate sufficient critical mass of pupils guaranteed a place at secondary phase – cohort remains small.</p>

OPTION B i.e. Closure of Abertillery Comprehensive School and Abertillery Primary School and the establishment of a new 3 -16 school	
BENEFITS	DISBENEFITS
<p>Consistency in approach to secure high quality leadership, teaching and learning across the age range, but less than the preferred option.</p> <p>Opportunity for stability.</p> <p>Opportunities for transitional benefits remain.</p> <p>Opportunities for Continual Professional Development (CPD).</p>	<p>Less impact on standards/revenue/surplus places.</p> <p>Financial sustainability compromised.</p> <p>Does not generate sufficient critical mass of pupils guaranteed a place at secondary phase – cohort remains small.</p> <p>Implementation of existing school reorganisation proposals.</p>

Consideration has also been given to the geographical closeness of other schools in the area, outside of the scope of this proposal who may wish to consider their inclusion in the establishment of the 3 -16 school and their views are welcomed.



4 THE PROPOSAL

Step 1

To close the following schools on 31 August 2016:

- Abertillery Primary School;
- Bryngwyn Primary School;
- Queen Street Primary School;
- Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School; and,
- Abertillery Comprehensive School.

Step 2

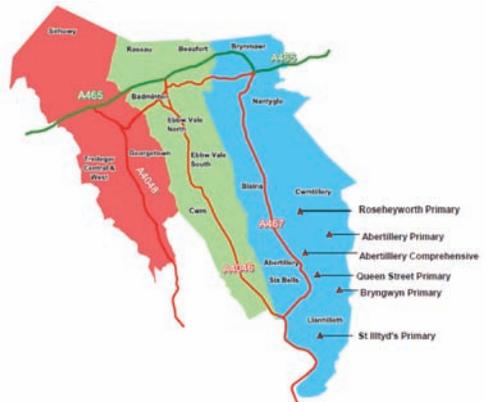
To establish on 1st September 2016, a 3 - 16 learning environment with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision for primary and secondary age pupils with complex needs on the following sites:

- primary phase Abertillery and Roseheyworth sites;
- primary phase initially on Queen Street and Bryngwyn sites; and,
- secondary phase on the Abertillery Comprehensive School site.

Step 3

Transfer of pupils from Queen Street and Bryngwyn sites to the new build in Six Bells on 1st September 2017.

The preferred option for implementation will provide opportunities for a sufficient pupil cohort across all phases and will provide sufficient numbers to provide a viable and sustainable high quality education for children and young people across the Abertillery central area. There will also be enhanced opportunities for the sharing of expertise amongst additional learning needs specialists that will further improve outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs. The new governance and leadership arrangements will be fundamental in delivering the change required to improve standards for children and young people, particularly for secondary aged pupils at Key Stage 4. Additionally, the transfer of the Bryngwyn and Queen Street pupils to a new site on the former Six Bells Colliery will provide significantly improved building conditions in which children and young people will be taught. Moreover, the potential inclusion of the northern part of the St Illtyd's catchment area will contribute to addressing sufficiency and surplus places issues.



The new 3-16 school will provide the following:

NEW SCHOOL	
Admission Number	Nursery: 171 part time places Primary: Reception 140 places Secondary phase: 150 places
Age Range	3 to 16
Capacity	1740 mainstream places from reception to year 11 plus provision for additional learning needs of: 9 places for complex needs provision at primary phase; and 60 places for complex needs at secondary phase
Facilities	A schedule of each sites accommodation is shown in appendix 3
Location	The school will be located on the following sites: Newall Street Abertillery NP13 1EH Bryngwyn Road, Six Bells, Abertillery NP13 2PD** Queen Street, Abertillery, NP13 4BR** Roseheyworth Road, Abertillery, NP13 1SR Alma Street, Abertillery NP13 1YL ** NB As part of the proposal these sites will transfer to the former Six Bells Colliery site on 1 September 2017
Category	Community
Language category	English

1. Please note that this proposal would involve the Council not proceeding to full implementation of the original proposal in respect of Abertillery Primary School (Statutory Notice dated 4 September 2013), insofar as the siting of Abertillery Primary School in a new build on its current site is concerned.
2. The original proposal in respect of Abertillery Primary School (and the closure of Blaentillery Primary School) included Abertillery Primary School moving to a new build school on its existing site by September 2016. This part of the original proposal would not now be proceeded with. The proposal in this consultation would instead involve the closure of Abertillery Primary School on 31 August 2016, and the establishment of a 3-16 school on 1 September 2016, with nursery and primary age pupils of the 3-16 school being accommodated in the new build school on Abertillery Primary School's current site from 1 September 2016.
3. If, following this consultation, the Council decides to publish a statutory notice in respect of this proposal, it is the Council's intention to make an application to the Welsh Minister formally to disapply any obligation to implement the original proposal in full on the grounds that the circumstances have so altered since approval was given to the original proposal that implementation of the remaining part of the proposal would be inappropriate.

5 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 WHAT ARE THE MAIN EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL?

A 3-16 school brings a number of potential benefits where transition between primary and secondary schools remains a key challenge. It is widely accepted that schools are able to raise attainment by establishing a continuum of education from 3-16.

The main educational benefits for 3-16 learning environment is summarised below:

- improved outcomes and pupil wellbeing through greater consistency in the application of high quality teaching and learning strategies;
- greater consistency in the design and delivery of high quality teaching and learning underpinned by high quality and effective leadership and management;
- improved transitional arrangements for all learners, including those pupils presenting with additional learning needs (ALN);
- greater consistency in statutory Key Stage teacher assessments for all pupils;
- ensuring the very best practice is established in all classes and in all year groups across the 3-16 age range;
- improved continuity and progression in learning for all pupils across the 3-16 age range;
- further securing effective accelerated learning strategies and outcomes for all pupils across the 3-16 age range;
- securing a consistency in approach and implementation of high quality and effective leadership and management to ensure accelerated learning and improved outcomes;
- strengthening school-to-school working to ensure best innovative practice is shared and implemented;
- improved opportunities for leadership development across a greater range of career options;
- avoidance of the 'dip' in achievement in year 7 and a greater understanding by both primary and secondary staff as to how pupils learn best;
- far greater provision to secure continuity and progression of skills in Reading, Writing and Maths;
- a strong community, citizenship and friendly ethos where older children understand their responsibilities as role models to younger pupils;
- the ability to introduce more specialist teaching into the primary phase, particularly in areas such as languages and science;

- the opportunity for excellence in primary practice to be incorporated higher up the school where appropriate, especially for those children who need additional support;
- a strategic approach to the use of budgetary resources, facilities and curriculum delivery in addressing the key objectives, including pupil attainment, attendance, additional learning needs, participation and community engagement;
- stronger professional development opportunities for staff;
- operational efficiencies and benefits through integration so that more resources are directed to support front line teaching and learning; and,
- should the school reorganisation option be the preferred way forward, a simpler process for admission to school as primary phase children will have an automatic right of admission into the secondary phase of the new school.

5.2 QUALITY AND STANDARDS

The main reason for the Council to take forward the Abertillery Central proposal is to raise standards for children and young people. There are also other significant benefits of establishing a 3-16 school and these are summarised in the case for change within the document.

The quality and standards of schools in Blaenau Gwent are regulated by Estyn and then monitored by the Council. Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales and is established under the 1992 Education Act.

Since 2012, the Council has commissioned the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support and enable school improvement in Blaenau Gwent schools. The EAS provide school improvement support to the following Councils: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. As part of this proposal, the Council will work in partnership with the EAS to secure an increase in the level of transitional support for the schools specifically named within the Abertillery Central proposal. This will ensure appropriate support is in place during a period of uncertainty and potential change.

Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) is a Welsh Government innovative programme aimed at improving educational outcomes for young people across Wales, delivered in partnership between schools, Regional Consortia, Government, Local Authorities and all those working to raise education standards across the country. Welsh Government is making a significant investment of around £20million to support this school improvement programme which provides opportunities to build sustainable improvement in schools and focus on helping to crack the associated cycle of disadvantage and educational underachievement. Within Blaenau Gwent there are three schools who have

been identified as SCC with one of these being Abertillery Comprehensive School which is at the heart of the proposal.

Individual school performance data is widely available to all schools and governing bodies. Data is also reported in line with the latest data release to various Council Committees and the Education Recovery Board.

The 5.2 Quality and Standards table illustrates Estyn judgements against the key questions. However, the Estyn Inspection Framework changed in 2010. Up until this time the grading structure for inspections was based on the following:

- Grade 1: good with outstanding features.
- Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings.
- Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings.
- Grade 4: some good features, but shortcomings in important areas.
- Grade 5: many important shortcomings.

The inspection framework posed 7 questions covering the areas of standards, the quality of education and training and leadership and management.

The present Estyn Framework has three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

The judgements made by inspectors under the new framework are based on the following:

- Excellent - Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice.
- Good - Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement.
- Adequate strengths outweigh areas for improvement.
- Unsatisfactory - Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths.

The 5.2 Quality and Standards table provides a summary of the performance of the schools included within the scope of the preferred proposal.

The main reason for bringing forward the Abertillery central proposal is to raise standards. Pupils' achievements provide them with a sound educational basis for their life choices. School performance indicators measure how well the school is performing at all key stages from Foundation Phase through to Key Stage 4 and a comparison with Local Authority average and Welsh averages can be made ensuring standards of achievement can be measured.

School	Key Question 1: How good are our outcomes?		Key Question 2: How good is provision				Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management				Recommendations
	Standards	Wellbeing	Learning Experiences	Teaching	Care, Support & Guidance	Learning Environment	Leadership	Improving Quality	Partnership Working	Resource Management	
Abertillery Primary School	GOOD	EXCELLENT	GOOD	GOOD	EXCELLENT	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	EXCELLENT	GOOD	R1 Improve outcomes at end of key stage 2 for more able pupils R2 Improve pupils' oral skills in Welsh R3 Improve further pupils' attendance
Bryngwyn Primary School	GOOD	ADEQUATE	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	R1 Improve the standard of pupils' speaking in Welsh throughout the school R2 Improve levels of attendance R3 Increase the effectiveness of the school council R4 Make arrangements to improve governors' first-hand knowledge of the school's life and work
Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	ADEQUATE	GOOD	ADEQUATE	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	ADEQUATE	GOOD	GOOD	ADEQUATE	R1 Raise standards so that more pupils reach the level expected for their age at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 R2 Raise standards in reading R3 Improve pupils' writing across the curriculum R4 Provide more opportunities for pupils to assess their own work R5 Increase the level of challenge provided by the governing body in relation to the school's performance
St. Iltyd's Primary School	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	In order to improve the school needs to : R1 Improve the performance of more able pupils and raise standards in Welsh; R2 provide suitable opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum; R3 ensure that the new tracking systems are fully embedded; and R4 improve the school development plan by including specific measurable targets that are linked to pupils' standards.
Abertillery Comprehensive School	UNSATISFACTORY	ADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	GOOD	GOOD	ADEQUATE	ADEQUATE	GOOD	UNSATISFACTORY	R1 Raise standards in key stage 4 R2 Raise standards achieved by boys R3 Improve standards of literacy, particularly writing R4 Improve attendance R5 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment R6 Improve self-evaluation and improvement planning by middle leaders R7 Meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship

Inspections carried out prior to 2011:-

School	How well do learners achieve?	2							
	How effective are teaching and learning, training and assessment?	2							
	How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1	1						
	How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?			1					
	How effective are leadership and strategic management?				2				
	How well do learners and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?					2			
	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?						2		
	Recommendations	<p>R1 Raise standards, in key stages 1 and 2, in history and geography, in writing as a key skill and in pupils' bilingual competence, R2 Ensure, through effective monitoring, that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better across the school, R3 Increase the rigour and precision of assessment in the foundation subjects, R4 Ensure target setting for individual pupils and for year groups is sufficiently challenging for all levels of ability. The school has identified these as areas for development in its current school improvement plan.</p>							
		<p>Queen Street Primary School</p>							

Viewing the tables later in this section provides an overview of the following;

- the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI) where expected levels are achieved in Language, Literacy and Communication, Mathematical Development and Personal and Social Development in the Foundation Phase.
- the Core Subjects Indicator CSI represents the percentage of pupils achieving at least level 4 in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.
- attendance data

The aim of the 3-16 proposal is to develop a common approach, with a shared vision and collaborative working arrangements, in aligning strategic and operational delivery towards a whole school approach; as opposed to distinctively separate entities with competing priorities. A 3-16 structure would have a positive impact upon the following areas in relation to quality and standards in education:

- Outcomes including standards and wellbeing would be influenced via the development of more effective transition arrangements; whereby the school is working towards an inclusive transfer process. There will be a consistent approach towards pupil attendance across all school sites, that impacts positively upon the expectations of both parents and pupils. This will be achieved by the sharing of good practice, resources and a more focused approach across the school. In turn the 'whole school' approach to attendance will influence the children and young people's norms and values from the beginning to the end of their school life. Research has shown that consistent approaches to attendance lead to better attainment levels for pupils, along with the development of life skills.
- Continuity of provision will be a key focus of the development. A consistent and continuum of approach will be established with opportunities for pupils and parents being created. Continuity of relationships between children, young people, parents and staff will be maintained. For example, opportunities for pupils with additional learning needs remaining with known staff throughout their statutory education will provide continuity for pupils and staff.
- Effective deployment of staffing and financial resources can improve overall quality standards and improve the learning experience, through the establishment of mutual respect between primary and secondary specialists.
- Specialist provision, staff with enhanced skill sets, along with provision of extra-curricular activity will be distributed equitably across sites creating parity in terms of accessibility and inclusion. For example, opportunities for cross age activities such as a primary practitioner with a specialism such as child care, delivering enriched learning opportunities throughout children and young people's statutory education.
- Leadership and management - opportunities would be created whereby the phasing of education could be structured away from traditional norms within primary and secondary education. For example, the establishment of a three phased approach which could be foundation phase, middle phase for class years 3 to 8 and a later phase for class years 9-11, in preparation for external qualifications. This will be complemented by a unified governance structure with potential opportunities to work in partnership with those schools outside of the proposal.

Within the Abertillery Central area there is a migration of some of the pupil population away from their catchment area. This is not sustainable as this reduces the pupil cohort to a level where the breadth of education is challenged and also results in financial pressures.

School Performance Table

Primary School	Foundation Phase The Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI)								
	2012			2013			2014		
	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average
Abertillery Primary School	80.40%	79.20%	80.50%	86.70%	81.20%	83.00%	84.30%	83.40%	85.20%
Bryngwyn Primary School	79.20%	79.20%	80.50%	93.90%	81.20%	83.00%	82.40%	83.40%	85.20%
Queen Street Primary School	71.40%	79.20%	80.50%	80.00%	81.20%	83.00%	85.70%	83.40%	85.20%
Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	66.70%	79.20%	80.50%	58.30%	81.20%	83.00%	72.70%	83.40%	85.20%
St Illtyd's Primary School	84.20%	79.20%	80.50%	85.20%	81.20%	83.00%	83.30%	83.40%	85.20%

Primary School	Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator (CSI)								
	2012			2013			2014		
	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average
Abertillery Primary School	75.60%	78.30%	82.60%	88.90%	80.10%	84.30%	91.20%	83.80%	86.10%
Bryngwyn Primary School	56.50%	78.30%	82.60%	82.40%	80.10%	84.30%	93.30%	83.80%	86.10%
Queen Street Primary School	70.60%	78.30%	82.60%	68.80%	80.10%	84.30%	66.70%	83.80%	86.10%
Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	66.70%	78.30%	82.60%	72.40%	80.10%	84.30%	85.70%	83.80%	86.10%
St Illtyd's Primary School	71.40%	78.30%	82.60%	85.70%	80.10%	84.30%	84.20%	83.80%	86.10%

Secondary School	Key Stage 3 Core Subject Indicator (CSI)								
	2012			2013			2014		
	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average
Abertillery Secondary School	55.80%	61.50%	72.50%	55.70%	64.50%	77.00%	70.20%	76.40%	81.00%

Secondary School	Key Stage 4 Core Subject Indicator (CSI)								
	2012			2013			2014		
	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average
Abertillery Secondary School	23.10%	33.20%	48.90%	21.90%	36.10%	49.20%	19.90%	38.60%	52.60%

School	Attendance								
	2011			2012			2013		
	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average	School	LA average	All Wales average
Abertillery Primary School	93.50%	92.60%	93.90%	92.90%	93.10%	93.90%	92.40%	93.10%	93.70%
Bryngwyn Primary School	91.43%	92.60%	93.90%	92.99%	93.10%	93.90%	92.50%	93.10%	93.70%
Queen Street Primary School	91.35%	92.60%	93.90%	91.42%	93.10%	93.90%	92.10%	93.10%	93.70%
Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	91.46%	92.60%	93.90%	92.45%	93.10%	93.90%	92.30%	93.10%	93.70%
St Illtyd's Primary School	92.50%	92.60%	93.90%	92.60%	93.10%	93.90%	92.80%	93.10%	93.70%
Abertillery Secondary School	89.00%	90.50%	92.10%	90.30%	91.20%	92.60%	91.40%	92.20%	93.60%

** 2014 Data unavailable

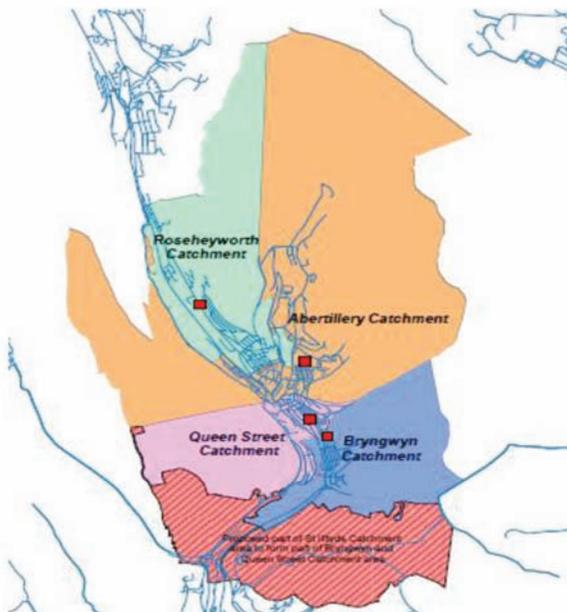
5.3 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS - HOW DO I ACCESS THE PROVISION?

All pupils on roll at the schools named in the proposal as at 31 August 2016 from reception to year 10 will be guaranteed a place at the new school from 1 September 2016. Continuity of Additional Learning Needs provision for pupils educated in the resource base is also guaranteed subject to there being no change to the needs of the individual child, which requires a further assessment of their needs. However, parents of nursery children on roll as at 31 August 2016 will need to apply for a reception place at the new school as part of the application for school places, which will commence during the 2015/16 academic year and further information will be publicised at this time.

Should parents at anytime wish to express a preference to attend an alternative school they can do so by completing an application form, which is available on line at;

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/18095.asp>

The proposed new school's catchment area is shown below along with the sites that will be in use for the delivery of education.



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

Cemetery House Cemetery Road NP13 2AX

Penbre House Cemetery Road NP13 2AX

Trebon Hewlwen Cemetery Road NP13 2AX

Tregarth House Cemetery 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 NP13 2AY

The admission numbers for the new school will be:

- Nursery phase pupils: 171 part-time places.
- Primary phase pupils: 140.
- Secondary phase: 150.

Reception pupils from September 2016 onwards who will be admitted to the 3 -16 school will be guaranteed a place at the secondary phase at the end of their studies in year 6.

The resource base will provide for the needs of learners with moderate/complex additional learning needs. Access to the resource base provision

will be determined by the Council's additional learning needs panel.

For primary aged pupils seeking admission to the school from September 2016, the Council will admit these pupils up to the admission number subject to the admission criteria shown overleaf. The management of the school will determine which site the primary aged pupil will attend. It is anticipated that this will follow the catchment areas of the primary schools up to the physical capacity of the sites as at the date when the schools officially close.

The admissions authority will consider each individual application received by the published closing date. If the number of applications for the new school is greater than the admission number, the allocation of places will be carried out using the following criteria, which are listed in order of priority below:

i) Children in Care

Priority to be given to looked after children/previously looked after children (children under Local Authority care); following consultation on the appropriateness of the named school.

Children in Care means children who are in care of a Local Authority in accordance with Section 22, of the Children Act 1989.

ii) Catchment School

Children who live in the catchment area of the school on or before the published closing date.

iii) Social/Medical

Children who the Authority accepts have an exceptional medical or social need for a place at one specific school. Applications will only be considered under this category if they are supported by a medical consultant's report. The information must specify the medical advantage of the child attending the preferred school. Please note that reports from family doctors are NOT accepted for this purpose.

iv) Brother or Sister

Children who will have a brother or sister at the school to which the parent is applying, after the date of admission, will be given a higher priority than those who do not. Please note however, that having a sibling at the school does not guarantee admission for any other children in the family. Where there is more than one such case, priority will be given to those children closest in age to the sibling already attending the preferred school as of the admission date. Brothers and sisters whether half, full, step or foster will be considered relevant where living in the same household.

v) Distance

Children living closest to the preferred school which will be measured by the shortest recognised permitted walking route between the pupils' front door of the home and school gate using a digital mapping system.

It should be noted that a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs which names a school will be admitted in accordance with Section 343 of the Education Act 1996.

In the event of oversubscription the requirement to prioritise admissions, the determining factors for all criteria are as follows: children living closest to the school measured using a digital mapping system. Places will be allocated on the basis of distance between the shortest recognised permitted walking route between the pupils' front door of the home and the main school gate using a digital mapping system. Children living closest to the school are given the highest priority.

In the case of multiple births relating to a single family, if only one place is available at the school, with the second child who qualifies for a place being a sibling, the school will exceed their published admission number to accommodate both potential pupils.

5.4 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The Council's Home to School Transport policy states that free school transport is provided as follows:

- Statutory primary age pupils under 8 years of age living over 1.5 miles from their nearest catchment school.
- Secondary age pupils living 2 miles from their nearest catchment school.

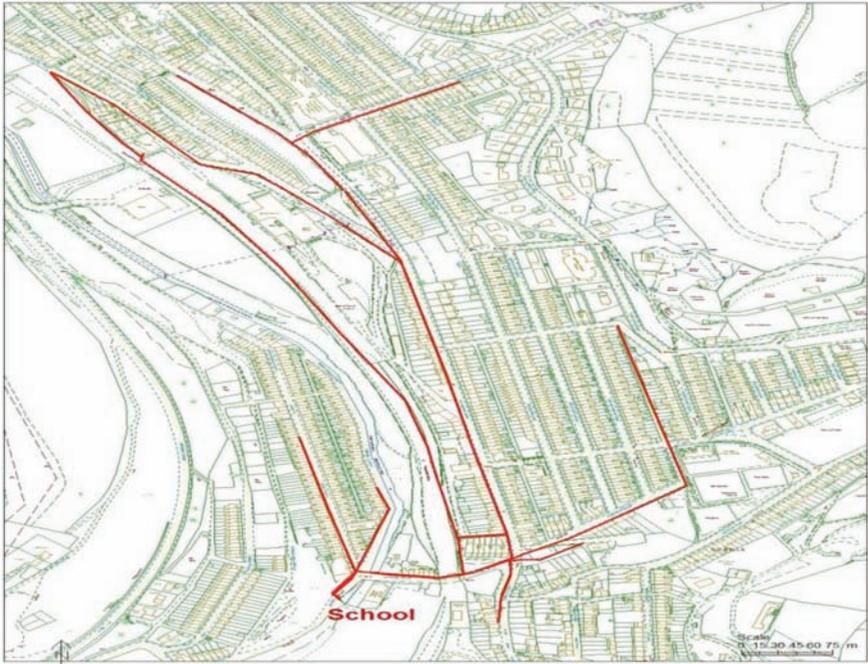
Like many Councils, there are significant financial challenges and a further review of the Home to School Transport policy, is scheduled to take place in 2014/15 with any changes coming into effect in September 2016. This review may see an increase in entitlement moving towards statutory distances, i.e. 2 miles for primary aged pupils and 3 miles for secondary aged pupils, although any change in policy will be subject to separate consultation.

In addition, transport can be provided if the route between home and school has been identified as dangerous to warrant such provision.

Further information is available by contacting the Council's transport team on 01495 355435.

The existing sites are primarily being retained for continued education use, therefore, there will be limited impact upon learner travel arrangements. A travel plan is already being developed in relation to the new build at the Abertillery Primary School site and the only sites in which there will be an impact demonstrated is in respect of Stage 3 of the process when Bryngwyn and Queen Street sites transfer to their new base at the Six Bells Colliery site in September 2017.

Map showing route to the Six Bells site



The table below demonstrates the schools currently serving the area (refer to map on page 9 for school locations):

School Building Condition

Name of School	Type of School	Condition/ Suitability of School Buildings	Capacity (4-11 years) as at Sept 15	Nursery Capacity as at Sept 15
Abertillery Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – C Suitability – B/C New school Grade A – Sept 2016	420	69
Bryngwyn Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – C Suitability – C	194	45
Coed Y Garn Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – A Suitability – A	270	40
Queen Street Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – C Suitability – C	186	26
Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – B Suitability – B	210	41
St Illtyd’s Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – A Suitability – B	210	66
Sofrydd Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – B Suitability – B/C	200	18
Ystruth Primary School	Community English Medium	Condition – B Suitability – B	294	37
Abertillery Comprehensive School	Community English Medium	Condition – C Suitability – B/C	914	N/A
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	Community Welsh Medium	Condition – A Suitability – A	360	41

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 in the table above.

The 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. Further, suitability assessments were based on the following elements:

- Health and Safety.
- Flexibility of space.
- Size /Shape.
- Location / Suitability of facilities / Access.
- Ventilation / solar gain /natural lighting.
- Storage.
- Acoustics.
- ICT.
- Fixtures, fittings and equipment (FFE).

It is proposed that a new school on differing sites will have little or no effect upon the number of schools in the local area and the new school's proposed catchment area is shown on page 37.

School	Will this School be affected by the proposal?	January 2011	January 2012	January 2013	January 2014	2015/16 Projections	2016/17 Projections	2017/18 Projections	2018/19 Projections	2019/20 Projections
Abertillery Primary School	Yes	329	318	316	335	385	382	393	401	406
Bryngwyn Primary School	Yes	213	208	202	210	187	190	181	175	174
Queen Street Primary School	Yes	123	123	123	117	114	114	117	127	132
Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School	Yes	129	128	127	131	156	164	177	175	178
St Illtyd's Primary School	Yes	145	151	166	184	188	197	198	203	198
Abertillery Comprehensive School	Yes	908	813	650	611	521	493	478	504	533

The projected demand for places at entry to reception in 2016/17 amounts to 116 places across the new catchment area for the new school and 118 places at secondary level.

5.5 MY CHILD HAS ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS-HOW WILL MY CHILD BE SUPPORTED WITHIN THE SCHOOL?

Every child has individual needs, all developing and learning at different rates. Some children find learning easy and some find it more difficult and need additional support. 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. Within the Abertillery Central area specialist provision is provided at:

- Abertillery Comprehensive School which has a 60 place Resource Base for secondary age children with Complex needs; and
- Bryngwyn Primary School which has a 9 place Resource Base for primary aged children with Complex needs.

Each Resource Base has a higher adult to pupil ratio than a mainstream class and as such, staff employed to work in this provision have additional expertise, training and experience in meeting complex needs.

The Council intends for the new 3 -16 school to be established with specialist additional learning needs provision at both secondary and primary phases and this will continue to be located in the existing schools sites.

The 3 -16 school will provide further enhancements to the quality of education and support for children with additional learning needs through the following:

- provision of improved learning environment with the potential transfer to the Six Bells Colliery site;
- improved transition arrangements between additional learning needs provision;
- opportunities for continuity of relationships with additional learning needs staff staying with pupils throughout their education; and,
- opportunities to share expertise across phases.

The Education Transformation team work closely with the Education Inclusion team and the existing schools to ensure that adequate provision is replicated and developed further at the proposed new 3-16 learning environment.

5.6 HOW WILL STAFF BE AFFECTED?

The Council acknowledges that there would be a requirement for structural change for example, the creation of shared management posts, such as an Executive Head Teacher with lead professionals to oversee the respective sites. The precise structure for the new school will be determined by the temporary Governing Body, which would be established after the publication of the Statutory Notice and is likely to be prior to the end of the Summer term 2015.

The Council also accepts that contracts of employment for staff employed to work at the 3 -16 school would need to be modified through negotiation by the use of relevant channels to provide greater flexibility for working across school sites within the new school.

The Council will consult with the Trade Unions as part of this consultation exercise.

5.7 WHAT ARE THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS?

Revenue Implications

School budgets are primarily funded by formula funding mechanism which uses as its main driver pupil numbers with any increase (or decrease) in pupil numbers at individual schools is reflected in the revenue budget of the school. The estimated budget for the 3 -16 school will be in the region of £7.611m.

Capital Implications

The Council has already secured capital funding of £9.18m for the replacement Abertillery Primary School and this building is scheduled to open in September 2016. Following the Six Bells consultation exercise undertaken in the Autumn term, the Council has also commenced the process to draw down the match funding element for the Six Bells development which will see an investment of a further £6m into the Abertillery central area with another new school building opening in September 2017. This proposal does not jeopardise Welsh Government's in-principle investment into the school estate.

5.8 WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE LAND AND BUILDINGS OF THOSE SCHOOLS SITES INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSAL?

The new 3 -16 learning environment will be delivered from September 2016, on multiple sites. As stated, the Council has already secured funding for a replacement Abertillery Primary School and this building will open in September 2016. However, should the proposal go ahead, step 3 of the proposal confirms the Council's intention to transfer pupils from the existing

sites of Queen Street and Bryngwyn to a new school building that will be developed on the former Six Bells Colliery site by 1 September 2017. In doing so, the Council has no continued use for the existing sites named above, and will therefore, dispose of these in accordance with the Council's Acquisition and Disposal Strategy.

The primary risks associated with the Six Bells build relate to site anomalies. The area is a former colliery site and existing nature reserve. The Education Transformation team has 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, 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.

A Construction Implementation Group ("CIG") has been established by the Education Directorate in order to manage risks. This CIG consists of a 21st Century Schools Project Manager, representatives from Technical Services, Finance, Planning, Estates and its membership will be reviewed 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 Project Implementation Group 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, 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 Head of Education Transformation and Performance and includes representation from the Education Transformation team, Participation, Finance, the Education Achievement Service ("EAS"), Transport, Service Improvement, Inclusion team, the Headteacher and representatives' of the schools along with other relevant partners, as and when required.

5.9 WHAT ARE THE RISKS IN DELIVERING THIS PROPOSAL?

The risks associated with this work will be managed in accordance with the Council’s agreed risk management process. However, an initial assessment of the main risks is summarised and associated measures to address is shown overleaf:

Risks	Measure to address	Action holder
Potential destabilisation of performing schools whilst going through the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased LA and EAS Officer Support. Prioritised support from LA across a range of services. • Increased monitoring and reporting requirements from EAS to LA for schools in scope • Standing agenda item at the Project Implementation Group • Involvement of schools on project board at Statutory Notice stage 	Head of Education Transformation and Performance with additional EAS support
The need for appropriate and timely specialised legal advice is required for the success of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate risk management • Access to specialist legal advice secured 	Project Manager
The pace of change required by the Council, Education Recovery Board and Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings with identified political leaders to update on project through the provision of highlight reports at appropriate stages 	Corporate Director

5.10 WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL?

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.

The Council has undertaken impact assessments in respect of equalities, Welsh medium and community and these are available on the website <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/19118.asp>

The impact assessments have identified no impact in respect of Welsh language as none of the schools involved are Welsh speaking. However, impact has been identified in respect of equalities and community assessment and these will require careful management should the proposal be implemented. Anyone wishing to obtain further information in respect of the published impact assessments should contact the Council by emailing 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk



6 WHAT IS THE CONSULTATION PROCESS?

There are a number of consultation events listed on pages 3 and 4, where the Abertillery Central proposal will be explained. These consultative events are organised so that you can ask questions and make comments that will be recorded, although consultees should be aware that any comments made in relation to the consultation, will not be counted as objections to the proposal and do not constitute a statutory objection. Objections can only be registered following publication of a statutory notice which will be the next stage of the process, should the proposal go forward (see below). You may also provide your views by completing the online form <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/19118.asp>; by completing the form at the back of this booklet and returning it to the address below or by;

- writing to Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation and Performance, Education Directorate, Anvil Court, Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB
- emailing 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Following the consultation period the Education Recovery Board will receive a further report and will decide whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not proceed with the proposal.

Should the Education Recovery Board decide to proceed with the proposal, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing or by email, and sent to the Council with 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published.

The Education Recovery Board will then consider the outcome of the Statutory Notice at a future meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal.

7 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 seeking stakeholders' views on the preferred option.*

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

A: *It is intended that consultation will end on 22 March 2015 and a report will go to the Blaenau Gwent Education Recovery Board who from the 15 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 amend the proposals based on the views expressed during the consultation, the next stage would be to publish a statutory notice in the Summer term 2015 that will give stakeholders a one month period to object to the proposals.*

Q: How will pupils travel to their new school?

A: *The Council's Home to School Transport policy states that free school transport is provided as follows:*

- *Statutory primary age pupils under 8 years of age living over 1.5 miles from their nearest catchment school; and*
- *Secondary age pupils living 2 miles from their nearest catchment 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.

Like many Councils, there are significant financial challenges and a further review of the Home to School Transport policy, is scheduled to take place in 2014/15 with any changes coming into effect in September 2016. This review may see the increase in entitlement moving towards statutory distances, i.e. 2 miles for primary aged pupils and 3 miles for secondary aged pupils, although any change in policy which will be subject to separate consultation.

As the existing sites are primarily being retained for continued education use, there will be limited impact upon learner travel arrangements. A travel plan is already being developed in relation to the new build at the Abertillery Primary School site and the only sites to which there will be an impact demonstrated is in respect of Stage 3 of the process when Bryngwyn and Queen Street campus sites transfers to their new base at the Six Bells Colliery site in September 2017.

Q: Can I 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 either Abertillery Primary, Bryngwyn Primary, Roseheyworth Primary or Queen Street Primary Schools, 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. Parents of nursery children on roll at the above primary schools as at 31 August 2016 will need to apply for a reception place at the new school as part of the application for school places, which will commence during the 2015/16 academic year and further information will be publicised at this time.

Should parents at anytime wish to express a preference to attend an alternative school they can do so by completing an application form, which is available on line at

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/18095.asp>

Q: My child will be a pupil in August 2016 at one of the following Abertillery Comprehensive, Abertillery Primary, Bryngwyn Primary, Roseheyworth Primary, Queen Street Primary Schools, will they secure a place at the new school?

A: Yes All pupils on roll at the schools named in the proposal as at 31 August 2016 from reception to year 10 will be guaranteed a place at the new school from 1 September 2016. Continuity of Additional Learning Needs provision for pupils educated in the resource base is also guaranteed subject to there being no change to the needs of the individual child, which requires a further assessment of their needs.

Q: If the proposal is implemented what is the likely timeframe for the establishment of a temporary governing body?

A: *Should the Education Recovery Board decide to implement the proposal a Statutory Notice will be published in the Summer term of 2015 which will be subject to a 28 day objection period, after which an objection report will need to be completed with a temporary governing body being established towards the end of the Summer term 2015. Should this occur, a range of stakeholders would be represented on the governing body, including parent, teachers, support staff, local authority representative and community partners.*

Q: If the proposal is implemented what would the uniform be?

A: *A uniform for the new school would be determined by the temporary governing body of the new school.*

Q: How will parent parking be managed at the new Six Bells Campus Site?

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, in relation to the proposed new build on the Six Bells Colliery Site. Extensive works have gone into determining the viability of the site.*

Q: Will the new school build at the Six Bells Colliery Site have sufficient hard and soft recreational spaces and facilities, as the existing schools do not have this?

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

Q: Will the new school build on the Six Bells Colliery Site affect the colliery site in relation to existing leisure facilities?

A: *The Education Transformation team, schools and all intend to engage with community groups, members etc. to ensure that the leisure facilities are preserved and further enhanced.*

Q: How will access to the Six Bells Colliery site be maintained?

A: *The Project Brief requires that access to the site is maintained. 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: What are the plans for Queen Street and Bryngwyn sites, after the new school has opened?

A: *Should the proposal be implemented, Step 3 confirms the Council's intention to transfer pupils from the existing sites of Queen Street and Bryngwyn to a new school building that will be developed on the former Six Bells Colliery site by 1 September 2017. In doing so, the Council has no continued use for the existing sites named above, and will therefore dispose of these in accordance with the Council's Acquisition and Disposal Strategy.*

Q: In respect of Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary sites, is the Vivian site not more suitable for the build?

A: No. *All alternative locations have been examined and the preferred site for this proposal is the Six Bells site.*

Q: The Six Bells 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 very limited sites in the area that are suitable.*

Q: What will the cosmetic impact be for a Six Bells Colliery 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 on the Six Bells Colliery 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 new school building on the Six Bells Colliery site 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 on the Six Bells Colliery site 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 group 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 class sizes of the new school impact upon the quality provision of education for the children?

A: *At primary age there are specific regulations for class sizes and any school whether it is new or established has to comply with these. At secondary age the class sizes are determined by health and safety limitations so the size of a practical class such as art or design technology is usually smaller than that of another class.*

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 number 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 temporary Governing Body with the support of the Local Authority will establish a transition plan to support the process. The project group which oversees the proposal will be extended at Statutory Notice stage to include headteacher representation from the schools that are directly affected.*

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

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



APPENDIX 1 - CONSULTEES

- Children and young people
- Parents / carers of
 - Abertillery Comprehensive School
 - Abertillery Primary School
 - Bryngwyn Primary School
 - Queen Street Primary School
 - Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School
 - St Illtyd's Primary School
- School staff
 - Abertillery Comprehensive School
 - Abertillery Primary School
 - Bryngwyn Primary School
 - Queen Street Primary School
 - Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School
 - St Illtyd's Primary School
- School Governing Bodies
 - Abertillery Comprehensive School
 - Abertillery Primary School
 - Bryngwyn Primary School
 - Queen Street Primary School
 - Roseheyworth Millennium Primary School
 - St Illtyd's Primary School
- Elected members (local councillors, AMs and MPs)
- Abertillery and Llanhilleth Town Councils
- Church in Wales and Catholic Diocesan Authority directors
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Parents of primary schools from which pupils transfer to the secondary school that include:
 - Blaen -Y- Cwm School
 - Coed y Garn Primary School
 - Sofrydd Primary School
 - St Illtyd's Primary School
 - Ystruth Primary School
- Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Brynmawr Foundation School, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Tredegar Comprehensive School
- Estyn
- Welsh Government Ministers

APPENDIX 2 - SIX BELLS CONSULTATION

The Council undertook a consultation during the Summer term 2014, where 3 proposals were put forward for consideration. The Council's preferred option at that time was to close Bryngwyn and Queen Street Primary Schools on 31 August 2017, with all current and future pupils being educated in a new-build 360 place community primary school in the Six Bells area including nursery provision and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) resource base and dedicated community rooms. 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 should future demand exist, including nursery provision and an additional learning needs resource base.

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 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 31 August 2017 with pupils being educated within the remodelled existing buildings from 1 September 2017.
66.7%	Option 3	Closure of both Bryngwyn Primary School and Queen Street Primary School on 31 August 2017 with pupils being educated from 1 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 consultation process has now been undertaken and will further inform this consultation process.

Questions and Answers

The table below captures the main issues that were raised during the consultation and the Council’s response.

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
Proposal and Site Related Questions	
Is the proposal realistic and will it happen?	Yes the proposal is realistic, extensive works have gone into determining the viability of the site and all relevant partners are contributing.
How are site issues being managed in terms of safety and potential for delay?	Following the completion of informal consultation, regular construction meetings are to be held that will address these issues.
Will the new school have sufficient hard and soft recreational spaces and facilities, as the existing schools do not have this?	The building and its space will comply with the relevant building bulletin for new schools.
Will the new school affect the colliery site in relation to existing leisure facilities?	The Education Transformation team will engage with stakeholders to ensure that the leisure facilities are preserved and developed.

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Proposal and Site Related Questions</p>	
<p>How will access to the colliery site be maintained?</p>	<p>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 and these will be consulted upon; whilst also ensuring minimal impact in terms of community access.</p>
<p>Is the top plateau owned by the coal board?</p>	<p>No, it is owned by the Council.</p>
<p>Is building a new school and closing two others really economical?</p>	<p>The suitability and condition surveys show that the existing schools are grade C schools, meaning poor to major deterioration in the building and teaching methods are inhibited as classified by Welsh Government. There are also high levels of surplus places, and low school populations impact upon the curriculum. This along with backlog maintenance costs as stated in the formal consultation document, mean the existing buildings are less economically viable than the development of the new school.</p>
<p>Why are the other schools deemed to be unfit for purpose? Why can't current schools be re-modelled?</p>	<p>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, is significant. Additionally, the buildings and outdoor spaces could not be developed to the standard required for a 21st Century School, due to building and site restrictions.</p>
<p>Would updating the existing schools with modern technology be the most efficient and cost effective option?</p>	<p>As above. No.</p>

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Proposal and Site Related Questions</p> <p>What are the plans for Queen Street and Bryngwyn sites, after the new school has opened?</p> <p>Is the Vivian site not more suitable for the build?</p> <p>Why are the Arrael school and old leisure centre sites not being used?</p> <p>The colliery site is isolated therefore is it the most appropriate site for the school?</p> <p>What are the access plans for the school site?</p> <p>How safe is the site in terms of access for children and do the proposed transport routes increase these risks?</p>	<p>The future of the existing sites will be determined by the Council's Estates Division at a later stage.</p> <p>Alternative locations have been examined and the preferred site for this proposal is the Six Bells site.</p> <p>The Arrael site is not large enough to accommodate the proposal. In drawing up the options prior to informal consultation, the colliery site had more benefits / opportunities than the former leisure centre site.</p> <p>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 for development of a new school.</p> <p>Proposals are currently being drawn up for site access and will be shared at formal consultation stage.</p> <p>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. A travel plan will also be commissioned by professionals to ensure that transportation routes are safe and fit for purpose. An analysis to ensure safe routes to schools will also be carried out as part of the proposal with further details shared at formal consultation stage.</p>

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Proposal and Site Related Questions</p> <p>How will the importance of the existing facilities in and around the site to the community and visitors/ tourists, along with their use be considered in moving forward?</p> <p>Can the three options within the consultation document be clarified?</p>	<p>The plans for the school have been developed with the involvement of partners, including ecologists, architects etc. At formal consultation stage, stakeholders will have every opportunity to be involved in the development and inform the way forward. The proposal supports the regeneration of the area into the future.</p> <p>Option 1: Maintain the status quo and do nothing. However this is not an option due to the level of surplus places and the need to ensure fit for purpose 21st Century learning environments.</p> <p>Option 2: Do minimum. Again this is not an option as the existing schools require too much work and would not accommodate the facilities or space that a new school would in developing standards of learning.</p> <p>Option 3: Close both existing schools and develop a new community school that is able to meet the changing needs of the community and raise standards in terms of the learning environment. This is the preferred option.</p>
<p>Environmental Questions</p> <p>What will the cosmetic impact be for a site of exiting beauty?</p> <p>Will the school detract from the tourism potential of the site?</p>	<p>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 natural environment.</p> <p>No, it will be a community focused school.</p>

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Environmental Questions</p> <p>How will the natural environment and local heritage of the site be preserved?</p> <p>Facility-Related Questions</p> <p>What will be the parking arrangements for community members and visitors, in relation to the site?</p> <p>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.?</p> <p>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 primaries throughout Blaenau Gwent?</p> <p>Will the class sizes of the new school impact upon the quality provision of education for the children?</p>	<p>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 the community focused schools agenda.</p> <p>There will be the opportunity for community members to utilise parking that is available during the day and evening events and have full use of the facility when the school is closed.</p> <p>The existing parking is a temporary arrangement. However, this is recognised and we welcome the involvement of community group 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.</p> <p>Yes, that is the primary purpose of the 21st Century Schools programme and has resulted in the preferred option.</p> <p>There are specific regulations for class sizes for any school whether it is new or established.</p>

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Catchment and Wider Implications</p>	
<p>How will the merger of the two schools be managed?</p>	<p>The proposal is to close two schools and open a new 360 place school. Should the proposal proceed a temporary Governing Body will be established to oversee the process. This will be supported by a Project Implementation Group and will include the Headteacher.</p>
<p>Why is the catchment area so large and how will this impact upon future class size?</p>	<p>The catchment area is not large but reflects the appropriateness of the location of the new school. The admission arrangements will determine the number 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.</p>
<p>How will the children’s transition be supported to ensure minimum impact upon their education?</p>	<p>The Governing Body will establish a transition plan to support the new school. 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 a new school.</p>
<p>How will this development support parents in accessing additional support for their children on a 1:1 basis, when it is already very difficult to secure. Would the increase in terms of numbers of pupils further hinder this?</p>	<p>One of the work streams of the Project Implementation Group will be additional learning needs provision. It is recognised that these pupils needs will need to be considered.</p>
<p>How will / can parents be assured the new school will be the best option for their children?</p>	<p>It remains a parent(s) decision as to where their child should attend school.</p>
<p>Is a huge school the most suitable option for such young children?</p>	<p>The school is not too large. The Education Transformation Strategy sets the appropriate size of a school and a 420 place primary school is an acceptable size.</p>

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Catchment and Wider Implications</p>	
<p>How will distance be accommodated to ensure that it does not impact upon children who live within the wider catchment area?</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Has it been considered how distance could impact upon attendance and lateness of pupils?</p>	<p>The travel plan will support this however, it is a parent(s) responsibility to ensure that their child attends school.</p>
<p>Are there plans in place linked to transport arrangements?</p>	<p>A travel plan is being commissioned and further information will be provided at formal consultation stage.</p>
<p>How will additional learning needs provision be accommodated within the new school?</p>	<p>The Education Transformation team work closely with the additional learning needs/ Inclusion team and will ensure that adequate provision is in place.</p>
<p>What will be the impact for St Illtyd's Primary in relation to the development of the new school?</p>	<p>The school has been oversubscribed at reception in recent years, the redefinition of the catchment area will assist the admission arrangements.</p>
<p>How will the demands of the area in terms of admissions be met?</p>	<p>The Council has a published admission policy which details the oversubscription criteria.</p>
<p>What will the impact be for teaching and other staff such as those in the catering department in terms of jobs?</p>	<p>The Organisational Development (HR) team will work closely with staff to ensure that they are regularly updated and made aware of their employment options.</p>
<p></p>	<p></p>
<p>Community Involvement within the Proposal</p>	
<p>How will the Education Transformation team ensure it works with all relevant parties in moving forward to meet the collective needs of the community?</p>	<p>There will be a structured and planned consultation process, that engages the community in the development of the proposal.</p>

Issues and Concerns	Solutions/Response
<p>Community Involvement within the Proposal</p> <p>How will local community groups and community members views, opinions etc. be accommodated in moving forward? What are the options for their involvement in the process?</p> <p>How will the school work in tandem with existing buildings and facilities, to ensure that usage, room and other bookings, particularly with reference to conference facilities are maintained?</p> <p>When will the school plans be published?</p>	<p>There will be a structured consultation process that engages community members in the planning and development of the school.</p> <p>Community meetings and consultation will be instigated along with the involvement of appropriate parties at different stages which will be essential to the development of the school.</p> <p>Further information will be shared at formal consultation stage. However, the final plans will not be available until a contractor is appointed and this is likely to be in the summer of 2015.</p>





APPENDIX 3 - FACILITIES

SCHEDULE OF EXISTING SITE

School	Nursery	Classrooms / Shared Teaching Area	Staffroom	Library	Headteacher's Office / Offices	Reception	Storage	Multi Purpose use / Hall	Kitchen	Cloakroom
Abertillery Primary	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blaentillery Primary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bryngwyn Primary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Queen Street Primary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Roseheyworth Primary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Abertillery Comprehensive School Facilities

✓	Science Lab
✓	Classrooms / Shared Teaching Area
✓	Staffroom
✓	Library
✓	Headteacher's Office / Offices
✓	Reception
✓	Storage
✓	Multi Purpose use / Hall
✓	Kitchen
✓	Cloakroom
✓	IT Room
✓	Sports Hall
✓	Medical Room
✓	Dining Area
✓	Reprographics Room
✓	Drama and Dance
✓	Music Room
✓	Cookery Room
✓	Fabric and Textiles
✓	Art Room
✓	Metal Work
✓	Design Studio
✓	Wood Work



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 22nd March 2015.

Question 1:

Which community do you live in?

Ebbw Vale Tredegar Brynmawr Nantyglo Abertillery

Other area, please specify:.....

Question 2:

Are you a: pupil parent/carer of a pupil member of staff
governor other (Please tick appropriate box)

If other, please specify:.....

Question 3:

Which of the following schools do your views, comments and/or concerns relate to:

Abertillery Comprehensive Abertillery Primary Bryngwyn Primary
Queen Street Primary Roseheyworth Primary St Illtyd's Primary
Blaen-Y-Cwm Primary Other

If other (please specify).....

Question 4:

The Council proposes to extend the existing 3-16 learning environment in the Ebbw Fawr area into the Abertillery Central area. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes No Unsure

Please outline the reasons and comments in line with your answer above:

.....
.....

Question 5:

The Council aims to extend the 3-16 learning environment currently in the Ebbw Fawr area into the Abertillery Central area, as set out in the consultation document.

The preferred option is set out in the document entitled the Abertillery Central option. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes No

If no do you agree with any of the other options (please refer to page 24-25 of the consultation document)?

Option A: Yes No

Option B: Yes No

Please set out the reasons for your choice and any further comments:

.....
.....
.....

Question 6:

The council has to consider the use of buildings and resources (including financial resources) from an educational perspective, linked to enabling all pupils to improve standards and gain access to modern, fit-for-purpose learning environments and high quality education from 3-16. Do you agree with this statement?

Yes No Unsure

Please provide your views and comments below:

.....
.....

Question 7a:

It is proposed that a new school building to replace the two existing Primary Schools (Bryngwyn Primary and Queen Street Primary), will be built on Six Bells Colliery Site. Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes No Unsure

If no please provide comments below:

.....
.....

It is also proposed that this school building will be part of the 3-16 school reorganisation proposal. Do you agree with this?

Yes No Unsure

If no please provide comments below:

.....
.....

Question 7b:

A new school building for Abertillery Primary school will open in September 2016. It is proposed that this building will be part of the 3-16 proposal. Do you agree with this?

Yes No Unsure

If no please provide comments below:

.....
.....

Question 8:

Please list below your views, comments and concerns, in relation to the perceived impact that the proposal may have upon you and/ or your child/ family?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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



For more information, please visit our webpage
<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/education/19118.asp>
or alternatively email: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

