

Consultation Document

Proposal to close Cwm Glas Infant School

28th September 2023 – 9th November 2023



This document is available electronically at
<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-learning>

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Head Teacher

Cwm Glas Infant School,

Llanbradach

Letter issued 30th June 2023

FOREWORD

Letter from Cwm Glas Infant School

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness I write to you today to share some news which I know will undoubtedly cause upset and distress to our whole community.

Over a number of years, we have seen fewer and fewer children attending Cwm Glas Infants. Many parents have noted this and sadly, the number of children forecast to attend in the future is very low. Coupled with low birth rate and increased costs, we find ourselves in a very difficult situation when meeting the costs of running the school.

Governors met again recently to look at projected pupil numbers and budget forecasts for the next three years. The financial outlook causes great concern as Governors are not able to agree a balanced budget. Therefore, Governors invited Officers from the Local Authority (including the Chief Education Officer) to a meeting to advise them that Governors feel that the school is no longer viable. As such, Governors have asked the Local Authority to proceed with a full consultation as prescribed by the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code to close Cwm Glas Infants at the end of the next academic year (July 2024). The consultation will take place during the Autumn Term.

I, along with Governors will be available to discuss any issues or concerns you may have from 2pm in the main Hall later today (Friday 30th June). I appreciate this is very short notice, so as well as this opportunity today, I will make myself available throughout next week.

As you can imagine, staff are devastated. Cwm Glas Infants has provided excellent education and care for over a thousand children since opening its doors in 1977. Some staff and many parents have links with the school having attended themselves and the potential closure will be a great loss to our community in Llanbradach. However, as parents/carers are aware, the school shares its catchment area with Coedybrain Primary School and subject to parental preference, children transition there at Key Stage 2. Therefore, if the closure does proceed it is proposed that the pupils will be accommodated at Coedybrain Primary School from Foundation Phase. There are adequate places to accommodate current and future pupils within Coedybrain Primary School.

It is crucial that you as parents feel reassured there will be no impact on the quality of education and care we provide in the coming year. Staff and Governors are committed to continuing to give our children the best possible start to their education journey. Governors have agreed that staffing levels will remain unchanged from September 2023 to July 2024 and as there will be fewer children in the school next year than this year, there is a greater potential to support working in smaller groups and 1 to 1 support. We are committed to packing the year with amazing experiences including specialists in creative arts and lots of trips to excite and inspire our children.

Throughout the consultation process, I want to reassure you that the schools high standards will remain consistent, and we will keep you informed every step of this process. We only hope that you will continue to support our school over the coming year and allow your child to benefit from the excellent teaching and care the staff provide.



INTRODUCTION

What is this booklet about?

This booklet is for anyone who has an interest in education in Caerphilly and may be of particular interest to parents/guardians of children attending or expecting to attend Cwm Glas Infant School and Coed y Brain Primary School.

This booklet sets out the changes we are suggesting to these educational facilities in the Borough and the reasons for these proposed changes.

The consultation process represents an opportunity for people to learn about the proposal, ask questions and make comments that will be recorded and summarised in a consultation report. This report will be published on the Council's website and will be considered when Cabinet decides on the way forward.

What are we proposing to do?

The Council wishes to make a 'regulated alteration' to a maintained school in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code 2018.

Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school. The conclusion of the meeting, agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made by the Head Teacher and Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.

We are proposing:

- **Closure of Cwm Glas Infant School**

Currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. The proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver an inclusive all-through primary school provision from September 2024.

This will result in the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Who are we consulting with?

Through [TeamCaerphilly - Better Together](#), the Council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focused services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement which is central to our decision making - [Read more about our approach to Consultation and Engagement here](#)

For this proposal, our consultation process must follow the Welsh Government Statutory guidance as set out in the School Organisation Code 2018.

We are obligated to advise the following of our proposals by letter or email:

Table 1: Consultee List	
Pupils and Pupil Councils*	Welsh Ministers
Parents, prospective parents, guardians and carers*	Assembly Members and Members of Parliament representing the area served *
Headteacher, Staff and Governing bodies*	Local CCBC Members
Directors of Education for Neighbouring Authorities	Local Town and Community Councils
Teaching and Support Staff Associations	Estyn
Parent Network	Welsh Education Forum
Diocesan Directors / Boards of Education	South East Wales Consortium (EAS)
Gwent and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners	South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership	Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith and voluntary nursery providers

**of schools directly or likely to be affected by the proposal only*

Please note:

- All responses received during the consultation period will be recorded and summarised in a Consultation Report.
- The Consultation Report will be presented for initial review and endorsement at Education Scrutiny Committee, with final approval to proceed to the next stage sitting with Cabinet.
- Cabinet members will be provided with copies of all the responses received within the consultation period and in their original format as part of the decision making process.
- Any negative responses made during the consultation period will not be counted as objections to the proposal but as adverse comments.
- Objections to a proposal can only be registered after the publication of a statutory notice which is the second stage in the proposal, subject to approval by Cabinet.

How can you find out more?

The School Organisation Code 2018 states that when undertaking a consultation process in connection with a school proposal, the Council must publish information to enable transparent, balanced and open decision making.

As part of this proposal, the following documentation has been produced:

- A Consultation Document outlining the proposal (this document)
- A Children and Young People's Summary
- An Integrated Impact Assessment

Information is made available on the Council's website and all documentation is published in Welsh and English and available in other languages or formats on request.

Further details in relation to the processes and timelines can be found later in this document in the ['Next Steps'](#) Section.

Views of children on the proposal

The Council has acknowledged that the voice of young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management and improvement of their educational and student experience and needs to be at the heart of planning, provision and evaluation.

Young people have a right to act to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The Council recognises the potential of young people to enrich the decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and facilitators of change.

This is also been reflected by the Estyn report 'Pupil Participation: a best practice guide', which highlights how effective participation benefits pupils and helps schools to improve.

The Sustainable Communities for Learning Team in Caerphilly will ensure that when bringing forward any proposal, suitable arrangements are made to consult and involve pupils throughout the process and post occupancy. A child friendly version of the Consultation Document will be produced and any feedback from pupils and School Council's will be included in the documentation forwarded to Cabinet for consideration once the consultation period has ended.

WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THESE CHANGES?

Background Information

Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school.

The conclusion of the meeting agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.

Local authorities must ensure that there are sufficient schools providing primary and secondary education for their area. Schools are regarded as sufficient if they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education.

The Council recognises that the prime purpose of any school is the provision of education and any case for closure should be robust and in the best interests of educational provision in the area. Reasonable alternatives to closure, such as collaboration, federation and making fuller use of the existing school building as a community resource have been considered but deemed not viable or sustainable options.

Currently Cwm Glas Infant School shares a catchment area with Coed Y Brain Primary School where pupils transition at Key Stage 2 subject to parental preference. Both schools provide education through the medium of English, are located in Llanbradach.

This proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase, to deliver an inclusive all-through primary school provision. Subject to Cabinet approval, this will result in the proposed closure of Cwm Glas Infants School with effect from July 2024.

Planning of school places

All Councils in Wales must make sure they provide enough school spaces for pupils of all ages in order to provide the best quality of education and ensure the funding provided by the Welsh government is used effectively. All Councils in Wales must also provide places that meet the needs of the pupils in Welsh, English or Faith medium and must be suitable for any additional learning needs.

Information accurate as of September 2023

➤ **Cwm Glas Infant School**

- The site currently has a capacity for 55 pupils + 10 nursery
- The published admission number is 19
- The current pupil roll is 34 pupils (31 Full Time Equivalent)
- There are currently 50.88% surplus places
- Cwm Glas Infant School is a feeder for Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2 level

➤ **Coed Y Brain Primary School**

- The site currently has a capacity for 242 pupils + 28 nursery
- The published admission number at Infant level is 28 and at Junior level is 39
- The current pupil roll is 174 pupils (169 Full Time Equivalent)
- There are currently 32.23% surplus places
- Coed Y Brain Primary School is a feeder for Lewis Girls School and Lewis School Pengam at secondary level

Table 2: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance				
	Cwm Glas Infant School		Coed Y Brain Primary School	
Year	Number on Roll	Excluding Nursery	Number on Roll	Excluding Nursery
Current	34	28	174	164
2024	35	24	168	155
2025	42	30	161	149
2026	37	29	159	148
2027	40	31	132	121
2028	39	29	132	121
2029	36	27	132	121
2030	37	28	127	116

*Figures take into account projected pupils from new building developments identified within the catchment area and Coed Y Brain Primary School figures include the anticipated pupils coming through from Cwm Glas Infant School at Year 3.

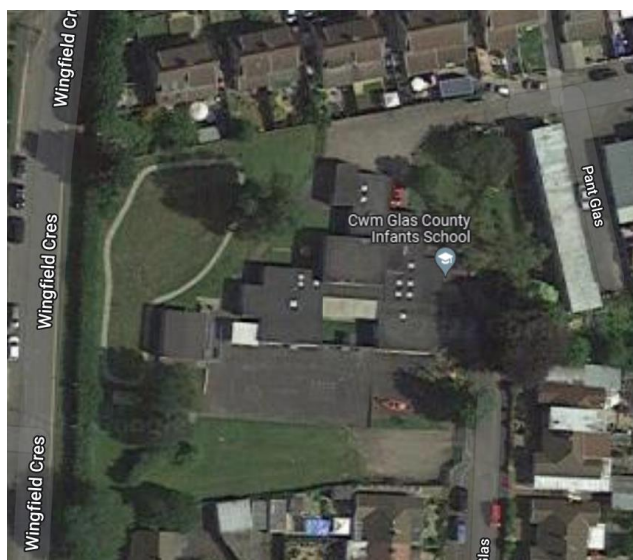
Condition and Suitability of school buildings

Cwm Glas Infant School:

Situated in Llanbradach, with a site boundary encompassed by residential properties on all sides. The school occupies a total area of approximately 0.5 Hectares, and accommodates 2 main structures and outside space utilised for curriculum activities.

The school has a condition rating of C+, a Suitability grading of B and a Display Energy Certificate category of D.

Current Site



Site plan



Table 3: Cwm Glas Infant School Information	
CAD Plan Designation	Facilities Provided
Main Building 28	4 classrooms 1 Assembly Hall, Library, Staff Room, Quiet Area, Kitchen, WC's and stores
Out Building 29	Single Demountable – 1 classroom, WC, Store

Cwm Glas Infant School is a natural feeder into Coed Y Brain Primary School. When considering the condition and suitability, both schools are equally matched, with Coed Y Brain Primary having a higher (more efficient) energy rating as a category C site. Coed Y Brain Primary School, also located in Llanbradach, is a larger site, with additional buildings in situ, covering 0.8 Hectares, with woodland situated along the Eastern curtilage of the school.

Based on projected demand, the current configuration of Coed Y Brain Primary School would be able to fully accommodate the existing and future pupil cohort from Cwm Glas Infant School in its entirety with minimal investment.

Decarbonisation Strategy

Coed Y Brain Primary School has a higher DEC rating of 'C' (A is the most efficient) when compared with Cwm Glas Infant which is currently at D.

Subject to the proposal gaining approval and the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School, the existing school building and site would then be classified as surplus to educational requirement and become an unallocated Corporate Asset. Future use of the building and site would then be subject to a stringent series of tests to ensure Welsh Language and Local Community Use are prioritised. Any current community groups would be encouraged to relocate. An initial data collection exercise has been undertaken, and both schools have limited existing community use, however any community groups that have been identified will be engaged with as part of the consultation process.

The Coed Y Brain Primary school site is 1.1 mile from the current Cwm Glas Infant site, which may result in additional travel for pupils dependent on their home address. However both schools are situated within the village of Llanbradach, share the same catchment area and safe/active travel routes are already established in the area. Pupils at Cwm Glas Infant would already naturally progress into Coed-Y-Brain Primary at Key Stage 2 level so any anticipated Carbon impact linked to travel as part of this proposal will be minimal.



HOW WOULD OTHER SCHOOLS BE AFFECTED?

Changes in one part of the Education sector in the County has a wider 'ripple' effect on other schools and their pupils. When considering any proposals, the sustainability and enhancement of the education network and wider area is considered. Due regard will be given to the impact of this proposal and consultation will be undertaken with any affected schools.

Early Years Provision and Projected Demand

Caerphilly County Borough Council recognises the value and importance of childcare as a vital element of the anti-poverty agenda as well as providing an enriched, safe and nurturing environment in which the children and young people of the county borough can flourish and have fun. As such the Council has an Early Years' Service area that is dedicated to managing all aspects of the childcare market in a coordinated manner.

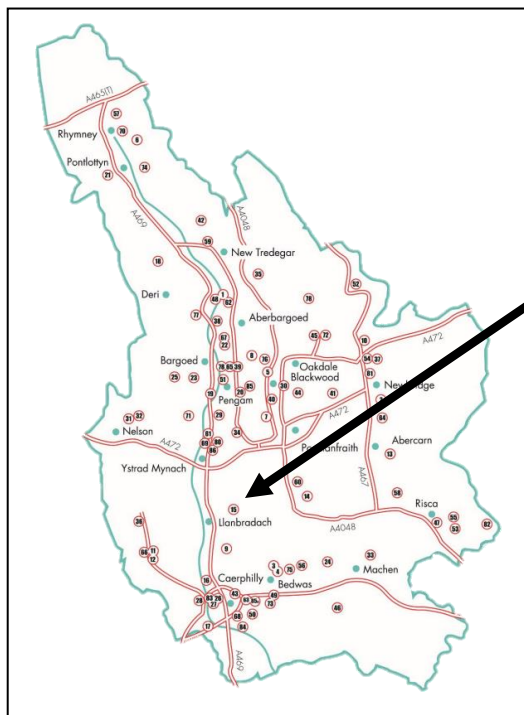
Every 5 years the Welsh Government requires every local authority across Wales to undertake a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, that brings together a range of different data and information to develop a picture of the current childcare market and to identify whether there are any gaps in supply.

The report notes that in the Llanbradach area of the Caerphilly Basin there are a number of different types of childcare provision including a Day Nursery, childminders and playgroup wrap around. However, we are aware that since the report was written a wrap around and after school club attached to the Cwm Glas Infant school has closed due to low numbers requiring this service. Because of its location, families of Llanbradach are also able to easily access childcare located in both Caerphilly Town and Ystrad Mynach. In addition there is the development of a new Cylch Meithrin in the centre of the village supporting families who wish to access Welsh medium playgroup provision. Parts of Llanbradach have recently been included in the expansion of the Welsh Government's Flying Start Programme and the local day nursery and childminder have recently been approved to deliver these places.

Going forward, our focus for the next 5 years will be monitoring the demand for additional Flying Start childcare places as the programme continues to grow and understand the new levels of demand for wrap around / after school club places childcare. We will continue to grow the sector in areas of identified need in particular in relation to the Childcare Offer both in Term Time and during School Holidays, and to ensure we have sufficient places to deliver Flying Start places, Flying Start expansion, and Early Years Education, while giving parents choice.

In light of this we will be working closely with our colleagues in the childcare umbrella organisations and with the schools, to ensure we accurately understand demand and that quality childcare providers are able to openly and transparently apply to support the delivery of any identified childcare provision required.

Catchment Area Arrangements



The Authority believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity to further safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future

The existing Cwm Glas Infant School and Coed Y Brain Primary School are both located within Llanbradach in the Caerphilly Basin area.

The ward profile based on the 2011 census information indicates that

- 6.3% of the ward population age is between 0 – 4 years
- 5.6% of the ward population age is between 5 – 9 years

Cwm Glas Infant School is a feeder school for Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2.

Both schools currently share the same catchment area. It is proposed that the catchment area would remain unchanged as part of this proposal.

Impact on other schools

The Council is mindful to ensure that any school proposals have minimal impact on neighbouring schools.

There are 3 Community Primary Schools within a 2.6 mile radius from Cwm Glas Infant School, excluding Coed Y Brain Primary school, these are Ystrad Mynach Primary School (English Medium), Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta (Welsh Medium) and Maesycwmmmer Primary School (English Medium).

Table 4: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance (Neighbouring Schools)			
	Ystrad Mynach Primary	YG Bro Allta	Maesycwmmmer Primary
Capacity	420	308	158
Admissions	60	44	22
Year	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)	No. on Roll (excluding Nursery)
2023	405	260	143
2024	396	258	132
2025	389	258	131
2026	381	269	123
2027	376	266	120
2028	365	261	113
2029	357	255	108
2030	346	263	108

Currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. The proposal seeks to transition the pupils at Foundation Phase subject to parental preference, to deliver an inclusive all-through primary school provision from September 2024. It is envisaged that the impact of the proposal will therefore have minimal impact on the neighbouring school which fall outside of this existing arrangement.

Disruption to pupils

The proposal seeks to transition the current pupils from Cwm Glas Infant School into Coed Y Brain Primary School and transition any foundation phase pupils at the outset from September 2024, subject to parental preference. The existing Cwm Glas Infant School will close, resulting in the delivery of a single, inclusive all-through primary school provision for the Llanbradach catchment area. Through utilisation of the existing Coed Y Brain Primary School site and the proposal to make the relevant changes to coincide with the start of the academic year, there will be minimal disruption to the daily operations of the existing school cohorts, and pupils and families will be supported through the transplantation process.

Secondary Provision

Pupils from Cwm Glas Infant School currently transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. Coed Y Brain Primary School is a feeder for Lewis School Pengam and Lewis Girls School. As such, this proposal will have no perceived impact on the current arrangement at Secondary level.



WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL?

Education Standards, Quality and Leadership

Quality and standards in schools in Caerphilly are monitored by Estyn and the Local Authority (LA). Estyn is the office of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is a Crown body, established under the Education Act 1992. Estyn is independent of the National Assembly for Wales but receives its funding from the Welsh Government under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. Estyn inspects quality and standards in education and training providers in Wales. Copies of the full reports for each individual school are available from the [Estyn website](#)

Every school must provide a curriculum which is broad and balanced in content and relevant to all learners’ needs. The child’s learning journey should be seamless throughout their time in school, building on experiences, skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress.

Developing a single all-through primary school provision for the Llanbradach catchment area through transitioning pupils directly into Coed Y Brain Primary School, will ensure that experiences are further enhanced, enabling even higher standards of education to be provided. It will enable a whole school view of and consistent approach to learning and teaching, curriculum delivery and achievement, through a single vision with consistent ethos to benefit pupils, staff and parents/carers.

Within a primary school, all children - younger and older - have opportunities to share the outcomes of their learning and develop an enhanced understanding of the range of personal achievement across the key stages.

A primary school provides an environment where children can work and play together over a longer period of time developing a greater understanding and appreciation of one another’s diverse strengths, skills and personalities. This has been shown to have a positive impact on social skills, problem solving and relationship development between all members of the community.

Table 5: Benefits of Primary School Provision	
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single vision and consistent ethos to benefit pupils, staff and parents/carers • Continuity and progression of learning • Continuity of experience and provision • One staff and management team giving unified leadership and management of curriculum, teaching and learning and social development and guided by a single School Improvement Plan • Access to a greater range of staff talent and expertise with a larger staff, wider enrichment opportunities are inherent across the wider curriculum • Efficient use of resources, both human and educational
Pedagogical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A suitable organisation (with single sets of learning and teaching policies and procedures) for delivering the national curriculum

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for increased educational contact with younger and older children and the chance to share the outcomes of learning across the key stages • Opportunities for increased social development, for example, with older pupils having some appropriate pastoral responsibility for younger children • A greater knowledge of staff, organisation and curriculum
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of site maintenance • Greater possibilities for the effective, efficient and flexible use of accommodation and more efficient site maintenance
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More capacity to support the extended school agenda and the development of “dawn to dusk schools with breakfast childcare and after school clubs” in a more cohesive manner for parents/carers • A focal point for the community
Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to gain broader professional experience from working with a wider range of ages • The opportunity for staff to build partnerships with pupils, parents & families over a longer period of time • More effective and efficient deployment of resources which would not be possible in smaller establishments and a better alignment of resources to local priorities • A streamlined and stronger administrative infrastructure, avoiding duplication of resources • The capacity to meet the personalised learning agenda at the heart of the Primary Strategy and Workforce Reform

Governance Arrangements

The proposed changes would be planned carefully to minimise any negative impact. The Governing Body of Cwm Glas Infants School will be dissolved at the time of closure.

Staff Matters

Further discussions with both schools will be made as the proposal progresses and the Council’s Human Resources Team will work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that processes are adhered to and support is provided as required.

Financial Matters

The projected pupil numbers and resultant financial outlook for the school provides a significant challenge to the ability of the Head and School Governors to agree a balanced budget to maintain the school and an appropriate staffing level which has led to a request to the local authority to consider closing the school from July 2024.

Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led. Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget. However, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward.

Reasonable alternatives to closure, such as reduction in the number of classes, collaboration, federation and colocation were considered by the Head Teacher and Governing Body in partnership with the Local Authority, but deemed not viable or sustainable.

Impact on Welsh Language Provision

The Council is committed to developing opportunities for provision to be delivered through the medium of Welsh where possible, however, the proposal seeks to make changes associated with an English Medium School and it is envisaged that this will have minimal impact on the current Welsh Medium offer available across the Borough.

Learner Travel Arrangements

The proposal seeks to transition the pupils from Cwm Glas Infant School into Coed Y Brain Primary School, subject to parental preference, at Foundation Phase.

The distance between both schools situated within Llanbradach and which share the same catchment area is 1.1 miles. In addition, currently the pupils at Cwm Glas Infant School transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2. Therefore, the likely effect of different travelling arrangements as a result of the proposal is negligible.

The table below details the nearest available alternatives:

Table 6: Geographically Nearest Alternative schools			
School Name, Postcode	Medium	Condition	Distance / Travel
Ystrad Mynach Primary School	English	C+	2.2 miles
Bro Allta Primary School	Welsh	C+	2.2 miles
Maesycwmmmer Primary School	English	C+	2.6 miles
Plasyfelin Primary School	English	C+	2.9 miles
Hendre Infants School	English	C+	2.9 miles
Hendre Junior School	English	B	3.0 miles

It is always the intention of the Council to provide a system of transport that seeks to ensure pupils can safely and comfortably access their education. A number of 'Safe Travel' routes, as far as reasonably practicable, are already established such as lighting and designated footpaths.

There is a Statutory duty placed upon the Authority to provide pupils with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond 'walking distance' to that school. All pupils are assessed in accordance with the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. However, the Authority does offer a more generous policy than what is statutorily required by the Measure. It is anticipated that a status quo will be maintained as Coed-Y-Brain primary school is only 1.1 mile away from the current school site and pupils would have naturally progressed into this school at junior KS2.

Equalities

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities.

Impact assessments help us to show that the council has due regard in the exercise of its equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. They are a tool we use to ensure the policies, practices, projects and activities which shape our work are ensuring equal access to all our services.

Impact assessments look at whether changes to how we do things (like working practices or ways we deliver services) are likely to have a positive or negative impact on the people we serve and on those who deliver our services. They help us to plan to reduce or remove negative impact – for example by making reasonable changes to how a group receives a service (perhaps providing information in a different format or providing ramped access into a building etc.).

A new socio-economic duty set out in section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force on 31st March 2021. The Caerphilly Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) template will be utilised to undertake an initial Equality Impact and Welsh Language Impact Assessment which will be further reviewed in the light of any additional elements highlighted through the statutory consultation processes as the proposal progresses.

The utilisation of the new IIA design will shape the Council's work in ensuring equal access to all services and further help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Statutory Consultation v Doctrine of Legitimate Expectation and Gunning Principles

A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This document is available to view a part of the consultation pack on the website.

Specialist Facilities / Additional Learning Needs

A key responsibility of the Council is to ensure that there are sufficient pupil places in the most appropriate locations and maintain an awareness of demographic changes (i.e. increases and decreases in the pupil population). The Council is also required to identify an authority-wide strategy for community provision in schools, as well as specialist provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disabilities.

The Authority recognises the impact of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the need to future proof provision. Consideration of the correct types, quantity and quality of provision to meet the future needs of the population has been considered. Coed Y Brain Primary School has an established Special Recourse Base operating from site.

Community Impact and Community Benefit

Community Provision and Community Use

The proposal will build upon the Council's commitment to sustainability and Carbon reduction, encompassing the built environment and utilising our existing school assets in the Llanbradach

area in a way that enriches pupils' daily life and supporting wider community cohesion, keeping pupils within their existing catchment area.

Subject to the proposal gaining approval and the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School, the existing school building and site would then be classified as surplus to educational requirement and become an unallocated Corporate Asset. Future use of the building and site would then be subject to a stringent series of tests to ensure Welsh Language and Local Community Use are prioritised.

An initial data collection exercise has been undertaken, and both schools have limited existing community use, however any community groups that have been identified will be engaged with as part of the consultation process.

Digital Inclusion

Caerphilly Council has clear aspirations for all schools to become community learning centres as part of their Hwb Programme. All schools within the borough are required to meet the Education Digital Standard which includes community Wi-Fi.

In addition to providing the physical infrastructure, the Adult Education team within the Council has developed robust operational plans to deliver the Digital 2030 Strategic Framework and widen access to learning activities at a time and place flexible to the needs of the community, implemented in accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five principles of working. Wider access to learning and participation in learning activities for communities is already in place, so that learners are not restricted by their physical location and have greater flexibility to learn in a time, place and language that suits their preferences and availability around home and work commitments. This would continue to be supported at Coed Y Brain Primary School.

Sport and Outdoor Play Facilities

The Council recognises that children's physical development, enthusiasm and energy for movement should continually be promoted through helping them to use their bodies effectively, by encouraging spatial awareness, balance, control and coordination, and developing motor and manipulative skills across all Areas of Learning, indoors and outdoors.

Coed Y Brain Primary School currently has established outdoor learning and play provision which can accommodate the additional projected numbers resulting from this proposal.

Community Benefit

Our aspiration is to commit to making assets available to support educational need, community use, promote community resilience and contribute to meeting several Local Authority Strategies.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL?

Benefits

The principal benefits of the scheme are as follows:

- Continuity of Education within a Primary School Provision
- Less disruption to families as their children will be attending 1 school site e.g. siblings across both sites currently have separate inset days, sport days, parent evenings etc.
- Familiarity of Teaching Staff from Foundation Phase to the end of Key Stage 2
- Reduction in backlog maintenance

- Significant reduction in Surplus Places at both schools
- General financial savings associated with school operations

Disbenefits

The principal disbenefits of the scheme are as follows:

- Travel times may change for a minority of pupils dependent on their proximity to the new school location
- There will be a period of transition for the pupils and appropriate support for ‘Settling in’ will require consideration
- The current school site will need to be decommissioned and disposed of in line with appropriate guidelines

Risks

Risks will be managed pro-actively in accordance with our risk management procedures, although as pupils currently transition from Cwm Glas Infants School to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2 and the proposal seeks to transition at Foundation Phase, processes are already well established.

Options framework

An Options Framework approach has been followed to identify the widest possible number of feasible options, focusing on the following key dimensions: scope, service solution, service delivery, implementation and funding.

The following options were considered and scored: -

Table 7: Options Appraisal	
Option	Longlist Options: Description
Option 1	Do Nothing : No change to existing school arrangements
Option 2	Do Minimum: Reduce staffing levels at Cwm Glas Infant School through reduction to 1 class
Option 3	Do Intermediate Co-location of services at Cwm Glas Infant School to offset costs to maintain the school
Option 4	Do Major: Collaboration/ Federation of Cwm Glas Infant School with another school in the area
Option 5	Do Maximum Transition Cwm Glas Infant School pupils to Coed Y Brain at Foundation Level and close Cwm Glas Infant School

Preferred Option and Alternative options that have been discounted

As identified in the Options Appraisal above, a list of the reasonable alternatives to closure have been identified; and an assessment of their likely impact on Quality and Standards in Education,

on the community and on travelling arrangements in addition to delivering a balanced budget for the school has been undertaken.

- Option 1 is not a viable option and is therefore discounted. Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led. Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget. However, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward. As such, the school is no longer sustainable.
- Option 2 is not a viable option and is therefore discounted. Under the Schools Admissions (Infant Class Size) (Wales) Regulations 2013, a statutory class size limit of a maximum of 30 pupils to one qualified teacher has been applied to all infant classes in Wales since September 2001. Whilst pupil numbers are predicted to decrease when compared to the current provision, this would still exceed 30 pupils and therefore the option to reduce the staffing level and class size cannot be accommodated.
- Option 3 is a viable option, however has been discounted. Colocation has already been attempted to support the school through the addition of a childcare provision, however the provider has given notice that they will be withdrawing from the school. In addition, consideration of the school functioning as a wider 'community hub' to accommodate community services has been explored, however, Llanbradach has an active Community Centre, Library and Medical Centre, therefore no suitable alternative service provision has been identified in the vicinity of the school that has not already been accommodated elsewhere.
- Option 4 is a viable option, however has been discounted. Collaboration/Federation, does in theory enable the school to be retained from an educational perspective, however, savings are only be made against a single Head Teacher Salary. Whilst no predetermination has been made in consideration of this option as to which Head at which school (Cwm Glas Infants or Federating School) would be lost, an average saving has been utilised for costing purposes and would not make any significant impact on the financial situation, the school therefore remaining as no longer sustainable.
- **Option 5 is the preferred option and forms the basis for this proposal.** Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further and the future financial viability of the school, in addition to the existing arrangements whereby Cwm Glas Infant School pupils already transition to Coed Y Brain Primary School at Key Stage 2, Coed Y Brain Primary School has been identified a suitable alternative school-based provision with sufficient capacity and equivalent quality accommodation to meet existing and projected demand for pupils in the same language category and with minimal impact on travel. Whilst this proposal would result in the closure of the Cwm Glas Infant School site, pupils, parents and the local community will be offered support for the transition should this option be approved by Cabinet.

NEXT STEPS

Consultation Period and key dates

The formal consultation process begins on Thursday 28th September 2023

This consultation document and response form are available electronically on the Council website. Further information is available on the [Sustainable Communities for Learning webpage](#)

A Children and Young People's Everyday Summary Version of this consultation has also been produced. Both this and the full version are available via the Caerphilly County Borough Council website and printed copies are also available on request.

If you would like this information in any other format, for example large print, or help with interpretation in a different language, please contact us on 01443 864817 so that the necessary arrangements can be made to provide this service.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is midnight on Thursday 9th November 2023

Unfortunately, we will not be able to consider any responses received after this date.

Statutory Notices, Reporting and Decision Making

Following consultation, Caerphilly's Cabinet will receive a Consultation Report which will outline the proposal and all the comments received from the public during the consultation period. At this stage, the members can decide whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not to proceed with the proposal.

Should Cabinet 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 and sent to the Council within the 28-day period.

Cabinet will then consider the outcome of the Statutory Notice at a future meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal having given due consideration to all the information provided.

In the event of objections, the Council will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and Cabinet's response to those objections. This report will be available for all persons to view on the Council website and paper copies will be available on request.

Have your say

Your views matter and we want you to tell us what you think about the changes we have proposed in this document. We would like you to consider the information contained within the document and to hear your views as to whether or not you support the proposal. All views are welcomed in support of or opposed to the proposal. This is your chance to ask questions and make comments that will be considered when the Council decides how to proceed.

If you would like to comment on the proposal, you can do this by:

- Completing the online response form on the Council's website
- Complete a printed response form and return via post
- Email your comments to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Team at Caerphilly

Your views matter

Please complete the questionnaire and return via post or email to:

Consultation Response 'Cwm Glas'

c/o Sustainable Communities for Learning Team
Directorate of Education and Corporate Services
Caerphilly County Borough Council
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Tredomen Park
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Please note that we are only able to receive comments in writing, either via the online form, pro forma or via email. You must include your full name and postal address as part of the information provided.