

Abersychan Brynteg Nursery and Victoria Primary Schools

Questions and Answers/Comments and Responses

QUESTION/COMMENT	ANSWER/RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What criteria are used to judge “not fit for purpose” in respect of buildings and grounds? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Government commissioned an independent assessment of all schools across Wales before the 21st Century Schools programme proposals were submitted in 2011. The surveys looked at building condition, suitability and sustainability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the maintenance backlog for Victoria? Why has it built up? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The maintenance backlog for Victoria is £265,530. Prior to the 21st Century Schools programme funding for capital investments in Wales was insufficient to manage the decline, and took the form of an annual bidding process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is Victoria running “economically”? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school outturned with a surplus of £67,676 at the end of 2014-15 financial year which is 8.65% of total funding. Governors approved a surplus of £24k for the end of the 2015-16 financial year, which is 3.3% of total funding. We are currently working with the school to produce their medium term financial forecasts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any surplus places in Victoria school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no surplus places in Victoria School at present, but surplus places are projected in north Torfaen as a whole due to changes in population.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is Victoria school located in an area where demand for school places is concentrated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria school is one of a number of schools in the area and the council needs to ensure it can meet that demand across those schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is a 420 place primary school the optimum size? What evidence supports this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estyn’s report “School size and educational effectiveness” (December 2013) reported that large primary schools, defined as those having more than 300 pupils, were found to perform

	better.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there to support the assertion that the field/adjacent area is too small to site a new school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Bulletin (BB) 99 and 103 recommend that the gross site area for a 210 place primary school should be between 2.4 and 2.7 acres. The existing site is made of up 3 separate parcels of land, and a lane runs between these plots which is not owned by the Authority, and provides access to private residential properties. The playing field is approximately 2 acres, while the canteen/demountable classroom site is 0.9 acres. With the main school building covering 1 acre and the public access across the overall site, none of the areas are suitable to develop a new school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have any options for an upgrade of the existing school been considered? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, this option was considered in 2010/2011 but was discounted because it does not address the fundamental issue the council has with provision in the north of the county borough, which is the number of small schools and the declining population.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there an intention to commission an independent survey of the fabric of the existing Victoria School building? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, a further survey would not highlight anything that we are not already aware of.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When will a full analysis of the performance of schools affected be carried out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information contained in the consultation document indicates that it should be possible to at least maintain, if not better outcomes for learners as a result of the proposals. This issue is something that Estyn in particular will comment on when it replies to the proposals as part of the current consultation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When will the implications for outcomes be analysed and published? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council believes outcomes will not be adversely affected. At the end of the consultation period, we expect to have Estyn's view on this issue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the transitional arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition will be supported by a working group consisting of the head teachers, governing body representatives, school/staff representatives and council

	<p>officers. The purpose of this group will be to identify all of the issues that it will be important to address as part of the change. It is an approach that has worked well with similar proposals in the past.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the proposals proceed what advice does Torfaen have for parents whose children will be leaving Brynteg in 2016? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of school is a matter of parental preference provided there are spaces available in the identified school. The council's "Parents/Carers Information Booklet" provides details of all schools in the county borough, and the Admissions Team can answer questions parents might have not covered by that booklet.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps will be taken to ensure flexibility with enabling friendship groups that have developed at Victoria to be kept together? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first step to take if it is decided to close Victoria and Brynteg schools will be to establish which primary school parents of children at the school would like to transfer to for September 2017. Once that has been established the transition process will enable staff in the schools involved to look at learners and their friendship groups when planning for the changes ahead.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will transport be provided? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport will continue to be provided in accordance with current policy and prescribed mileage criteria (1 ½ miles from the school before September 2015 and 2 miles after). Where there are no safe walking routes and the home address is under the prescribed mileage, transport will be provided as is the case now.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no safe walking routes? What about the risks to pedestrians with the extra traffic and congestion in the area? Will there be extra parking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is anticipated that the proposals will not impact significantly on pupils' journeys to school. Garnteg Primary School the proposed catchment area school, is located approximately 1 mile from Victoria Primary School. <p>Traffic and parking congestion outside schools at the start and end of the day are acknowledged by the Council. As part of the planning process a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) has been carried out to identify traffic and pedestrian movements.</p>

	<p>Additional parking is proposed within the site (Garnteg) as a consequence of the establishment of a larger school.</p> <p>£250,000 of investment in Safe routes in the community is being delivered in Abersychan which will address some of the issues in the locality.</p> <p>The council will also work with the school on its Travel Plan and try to minimise use of vehicles in support of Welsh Government's policy direction.</p> <p>Where there is no safe route the council's transport policy allows for free transport to those affected.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the effect of this proposal on Torfaen's carbon footprint? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biggest determinant (almost half) of emissions in schools arises from procurement, but the approach used in Torfaen is unlikely to result in any significant difference between schools. The second largest determinant (just under a third) relates to buildings and it is anticipated there will be some gains resulting from the relative efficiency of current and proposed accommodation. Emissions resulting from travel and transport is typically the third notable contributor (just under a fifth) but could only be determined once it is known who will be travelling where and how they will journey (foot, car, school transport etc), which will be affected in part by parental choice in terms of school and mode of travel. It would also be necessary to know the current choices being made in terms of mode of travel. Emissions from waste are negligible and unlikely to be significantly different (pro rata) between schools. End use of the two sites proposed for closure would also have to be factored into the assessment but that will not be known until a decision has been made on whether the schools should close or not.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be done to fully consider the impact of the proposals to ensure delivery of the full curriculum at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no anticipated barriers to delivery of the curriculum arising from the proposals. Estyn is a statutory consultee

<p>Foundation Phase and other Key Stages?</p>	<p>for the proposals and will need to be satisfied that what is being proposed is at least as good as current provision.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the closure that is now being proposed, what will be done to consider the relative performance of the affected schools, and the impact on displaced pupils? Will Torfaen be commissioning an independent assessment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of education and diversity of education of the schools is detailed in the consultation document (pages 21-33). Estyn is a statutory consultee for the proposals and will need to be satisfied that what is being proposed is at least as good as current provision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What will be the impact on Welsh language? Can it be confirmed that there will be no expected increase in applications to Ysgol Bryn Onnen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposals are not expected to have a significant impact on the demand for Welsh Medium education. Nonetheless, the authority has a statutory duty to provide Welsh Medium education where it is requested. Applications to Ysgol Bryn Onnen will be a matter of parental preference, which will determine demand for places. Parents/carers seeking a Welsh Medium primary school setting will be provided for at that setting or one of the others settings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does Torfaen propose to do during the consultation to further consider, the needs of pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)? Once considered, will the proposed actions be published? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in these schools will have their individual needs met within a mainstream setting. Schools will be constantly assessing and reviewing the progress of pupils who they have identified as having additional educational needs. If any additional support is required they will seek the support of their ALN Link Officer or other members of the ALN team at Torfaen CBC as outlined in the ALN policy and handbook. Brynteg and Victoria schools do not have Special Need Resource Bases attached to them in addition to mainstream provision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the Equality Impact Assessment be made readily available to parents? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, included in the consultation document.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can a reduction in surplus places be achieved in ways other than closing a school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools amalgamations and removal of redundant buildings/demountable classrooms are other ways to reduce surplus places. Neither is considered an appropriate alternative in this instance where we have already three small schools.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can it be explained how an increase in surplus places in the short term, and continued surplus places fit into a policy of reducing surplus places? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's 21st Century Schools Programme is a strategic approach to managing the challenges of surplus places and the need for investment in the school estate. These proposals contribute to the overall delivery of that approach, and will ensure amongst other things that we are meeting Welsh Government's target for surplus places, which is to have no more than 10%.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can it be confirmed that the needs of working parents/carers will be considered in the issue of surplus places? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not possible to answer this question without knowing what needs are being referred to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reduction of surplus places inevitably leaves the Authority with less flexibility to accommodate special circumstances in its admission policy. What is the target for surplus places, the current level in the area and what is the target? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government target is for no more than 10%. It is accepted that reducing the number of schools ultimately reduces parental preference in where they send their children. Whilst guarantees can never be given (particularly given infant class size legislation), it is anticipated however that sufficient places will be provided for the expected in-catchment demand. The published admission criteria gives a higher priority for certain groups of children, those living in catchment and those with siblings already attending school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the authority recognise the tension between the need to cut surplus places and the desire amongst parents for flexibility? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. It is a tension replicated across Wales as more and more surplus places are removed by councils, but removal of surplus places is a key priority nationally and locally.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the council publish every consultation response as an appendix to the consultation report, rather than a summary, to make sure that the council is seen as being open and transparent? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code requires the Authority to publish a consultation report within 13 weeks of the end of this period allowed for responses (and in any event prior to publication of proposals) which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Summarises each of the issues raised by consultees ii) Responds to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal(s) or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons;

	<p>and</p> <p>iii) Sets out Estyn's view (as provided in its consultation response) of the overall merits of the proposal(s).</p> <p>In addition to the above the council will, in this instance and given current resources, make available an electronic copy of the responses received (personal information having been removed) after the consultation has closed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to Cwmffrwdoer Primary school, who carried out the topographical study and when will it be published? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study was carried out by Parsons Brinckerhoff and published in October 2015.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an independent Drainage engineer been commissioned to assess the level of risk at Cwmffrwdoer with regard to future potential flooding, and is Torfaen in a position to deal with the consequences of a further flooding incident? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is not in a flood zone. A drainage survey has been carried out and no significant issues have been identified.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You talk about the condition of the buildings at Victoria Village School and Brynteg Nursery. What about the condition at Garnteg and Cwmffrwdoer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Garnteg Primary</u> was built in 1995 and occupies a site of 6.63 acres. <p>The school is a modern single storey premises built on two levels over a sloping site. It is a brick and block construction (cement rendered and painted externally) under a pitched composite slate roof. The school is set on a large landscaped site, with grassed sports pitches, tarmacadam yard areas and a feature pond. The School also has a specialist climbing wall.</p> <p>Although single storey it is on two levels with a stair-lift to allow DDA access.</p> <p>Welsh Government appointed surveyors categorised the school buildings/site as a Category B school (Satisfactory) in 2010.</p> <p>Condition and suitability is fairly good as it is only 20 years old, but will require work over the next few years. For Garnteg, the maintenance backlog is estimated at</p>

	<p>£121,000 and backlog issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) Routine and planned maintenanceii) Pre paint repairs and external redecoration <p><u>Cwmffrwdoer Primary</u> was built in 1983 and occupies a site of 3.12 acres.</p> <p>The school is a modern single storey building, constructed of brick and block elevations under a pitched bitumen slate roof. It has powder coated aluminium window panels. It is set on a landscaped site on the edge of the development boundary. It has a tarmacadam surfaced yard.</p> <p>Welsh Government appointed surveyors categorised the school buildings/site as Category C (Poor) in 2010.</p> <p>Although DDA access into the site is poor, access into and around school is reasonable. The buildings are generally considered to be suitable but could be improved.</p> <p>Some ground stabilisation works were undertaken circa 2003 on the site due to old mine workings, and this is considered suitable for this development.</p> <p>The backlog maintenance requirements for Cwmffrwdoer are estimated at £290,000.</p> <p>Maintenance backlog issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) Replacement of roof(heavily vandalised over the last few years)ii) Mechanical and Electrical Services Infrastructure (the infrastructure is now 30 years old).iii) Windows & Doors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposals to extend and refurbish these schools was the subject of consultation which began in June 2015. That work is dependent upon decisions to be made about the proposed closure of Victoria
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	and Abersychan Brynteg schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the Early Years provision of additional nursery places as proposed for Cwmffrwdroer undermine registered private/voluntary early years settings in the area? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal if agreed would see a 26 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) nursery for 4 year olds and “rising 3’s” established at Cwmffrwdroer. It is the view of the council that it would not significantly undermine any such existing provision in the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the proposal proceed, will there be an opportunity for Cwmffrwdroer Under 5’s to move back into the refurbished and extended Cwmffrwdroer Primary School and offer childcare? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be a decision for the school and its governing body as was the case when the Cwmffrwdroer Under 5’s previously occupied accommodation in the school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there any consideration given to other providers when the age range increase for Cwmffrwdroer was considered? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. The council maintains a mix of private, voluntary, independent and council run providers and takes into consideration data from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which indicated that the net impact of the proposals for Cwmffrwdroer and Garnteg would be relatively neutral.