



Integrated Children's Services

SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2009-2014

*'Putting children first.....
helping schools improve'*

Gosod

*plant yn Gyntaf..... yn helpu i
wella ysgolion*

CONTENTS

	Page No(s)
1.0 FOREWORD	3
2.0 INTRODUCTION	4-5
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council – Vision	4
The Children’s and Young People’s Plan	4
21 st Century Schools	4
Supporting information in the School Organisation Plan	5
3.0 EDUCATION SERVICE IN CONTEXT	6-8
Profile of the County Borough	6
Education Establishments.....	6
What have we already achieved?	7
4.0 PLANNING PRINCIPLES	9-14
Overarching Purpose.....	9
Planning school places	9
Initiating Change.....	10
Standards	11
Additional Learning Needs.....	11
Nursery and Primary School Provision.....	12
Secondary School Provision	13
5.0 METHODOLOGY	15-19
Admission to schools	16
Diversity of Provision	16
Additional Learning Needs.....	16
Additional Learning Needs and Welsh Medium Education	18
Statistics relating to Pupils with Additional Learning Needs	18
Community Schools.....	18
Asset Management Plan.....	19
Welsh Education Scheme	19
6.0 CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS	20-25
Options for dealing with surplus places.....	20
Early Years and Foundation Phase.....	20
Primary	20
Secondary	21
Additional Learning Needs.....	22
The Way Forward	22
Proposals	22
APPENDICES	25
Appendix 1: MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS	25

1.0 FOREWORD

- 1.1 In Merthyr Tydfil, our vision for education is shaped by national policies and by the local strategic priorities identified by the County Borough Council and in the Community Strategy. The education service, which is part of the Integrated Children's Service, aspires to excellence in all that it does, reflecting the local ambition for Merthyr Tydfil to become "a sustainable, confident County Borough which recognises and promotes equality of opportunity and where people want to achieve in all aspects of their life, through work, leisure and learning." (County Borough Council vision statement).
- 1.2 Achieving our vision requires us to focus effectively on children and young people as a core customer group. This School Organisation Plan should be viewed as a key aspect of the Authority's Children and Young People's Plan. The Authority is determined to fulfil its duty effectively in the planning of school places to give "added value" to the whole process of delivering quality education and will continue to strive to establish an improved education infrastructure, with the right number of schools of the right size in the most appropriate locations. The Authority is clear about its wish to provide educational leadership through a particular focus on school improvement and by continuing to forge strong partnerships with schools and other organisations that have an important contribution to make to "education for life". The Authority will continue to strike an appropriate balance between challenge and support, placing an emphasis on the celebration of success rather than focusing on failure.

Signature

Portfolio Councillor for ICS/Lead Member for Children and Young People

Signature

Portfolio Councillor for ICS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Vision

- 2.1 By 2010 Merthyr Tydfil will be a safe, healthy and exciting place to live. Our ambition is to become a sustainable, confident County Borough that recognises and promotes equality and where people want to achieve in all aspects of their life, through work, leisure and learning.

The Children and Young People's Plan

- 2.2 The Children and Young People's Plan is the overarching plan for children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and so directly links with the Authority's vision and related strategies and policies.

- 2.3 The aim of the Children and Young People's Plan is that every child and young person will:

- have a flying start in life;
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and
- not be disadvantaged by poverty.

- 2.4 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is working collaboratively with over 60 partner organisations to implement the Plan focusing on achieving a number of strategic priorities for change relevant to children and young people of all ages are to improve:

- attainment, qualifications and life skills;
- the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents;
- emotional and mental health of children and young people;
- safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people;
- health and well being of all children and young people, particularly the sexual health of young people;
- children and young people's enjoyment, learning and social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play and recreational activity;
- children's, young people's and their parents' influence over the services they receive and over services which are designed for them;
- homeless young people's access to housing and support; and
- the life chances of children and young people through alleviating the impact of poverty and disadvantage

21st Century Schools

- 2.5 Jane Hutt, AM, the then Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, launched the Welsh Assembly Government's 21st Century Schools programme in July 2009 with details of a major funding package of £165m in capital investment for schools and colleges in Wales. This is in addition to the £170 million investment that has already been announced by the Welsh Assembly Government over the last year.

- 2.6 This additional funding will enable the delivery of a total capital investment programme in education that exceeds £530 million and is a key part of the Assembly Government's One Wales commitment to deliver schools fit for purpose for the 21st century. This very significant

investment will provide local authorities with the means to build new schools, improve school facilities and develop purpose built Special Education Needs centres. Jane Hutt said:

“The £165 million in capital investment will have a huge impact on our schools and FEIs, ensuring that our young people will be learning in educational facilities that are modern and fit for purpose in the 21st Century. This specifically targeted capital investment will allow local authorities and colleges to progress with their reorganisation programmes, creating learning institutions that inspire while helping fulfill one of our key One Wales objectives.”

- 2.7 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has already registered its interest in this programme with the Welsh Assembly Government and plans strategically to improve the quality of all its educational establishments through the School Organisation Plan, the Education Asset Management Plan, and the Education Capital Programme.

Supporting information in the School Organisation Plan

- 2.8 The School Organisation Plan will support the above and provides information on:

- forecasts of pupil numbers;
- managing the supply of school places;
- managing demand through admissions and appeals procedures; and
- current strategic thinking about school places in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

3.0 EDUCATION SERVICE IN CONTEXT

Profile of the County Borough

- 3.1 The County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil is the smallest of the unitary authorities in Wales and is home to approximately 56,000 (2001 census). Merthyr Tydfil has 18,500 children and young people under age of 25. The proportion of children and young people is similar to the Welsh average, but the total population is declining. The National Statistics 2006 mid-year estimates show Merthyr to be the only local authority in Wales with a declining population, with the biggest decline since the 2001 Census. This is the result of a falling birth-rate and outward migration, while the population of Wales is increasing. Live births have fallen from 761 in 1995 to 595 in 2002, but are now increasing. The population of primary school children will continue to fall until 2012; the 14 -19 population peaks in 2008 and will decline until 2017.
- 3.2 Considerable efforts are currently being made to tackle the serious problems experienced in Merthyr Tydfil as one of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. These efforts revolve around a number of partnerships involving the County Borough Council working with bodies such as the Welsh Assembly Government, Heads of the Valley Board, Merthyr Tydfil College, University of Glamorgan, and a range of other organisations. Progress is being made but there is still a range of issues to be addressed and resolved.

Education Establishments

- 3.3 In September 2009 there were thirty six educational establishments in the Local Authority, three nursery schools, twenty five infant, junior and primary schools (two on two sites), four secondary schools (one located on two sites) one special school, two pupil referral units, and an Integrated Children's Centre. The dates the school buildings were constructed are as follows:-

pre 1900	2	5.5%
1900 – 1949	6	16.6%
1950 – 1959	1	2.7%
1960 – 1969	10	27.7%
1970 – 1979	8	22.2%
1980 – 1989	2	5.5%
1990 – 1999	3	8.3%
2000 – 2009	4	11.1%

- 3.4 The Authority has an aspirational capital building programme and plans, with continued external funding support from the Welsh Assembly Government, to make all schools fit for teaching and learning in the 21st Century by 2016. Since 1996 the Authority has built five new educational establishments and refurbished two further schools. The latest school to open is a £6.2m Welsh-medium primary school, Ysgol Santes Tudful, and the Authority will complete another two new primary schools by April 2010.
- 3.5 By September 2010 the Authority will have replaced 17% of its educational buildings with brand new innovatively designed buildings. These new buildings are having a positive impact upon pupil attainment and doing much to enable the aims of the Children and Young People's Plan.

3.6 The current educational buildings and the year built are as follows:

SCHOOL	YEAR BUILT
NURSERY	
Gurnos Nursery School	1977
Trefechan Nursery School	1973
Treharris Nursery School	1887
PRIMARY	
Abercanaid Community School	2002
Bedlinog Community Primary School	Remodelled 1999
Brecon Road Infants School	1902
Caedraw Primary School	1962
Cyfarthfa Junior School	1970
Dowlais Primary School	1969 (Junior) 1974 (Infant)
Edwardsville Primary School	1974
Gellifaelog Primary School	1996
Goetre Junior School	1960
Goetre Infants School	1960
Gwaunfarren Primary School	1970
Heolgerrig Community School	1906 (new school opening Spring 2010)
Mount Pleasant Primary School	1912 (to close August 2010)
Pantysgallog Primary School	1994
St Aloysius RC Primary School	1968
St Illtyd's RC Primary School	1972
St Mary's RC Primary School	1963
Trelewis Primary School	1984
Troedyrhiw Primary School	1914, 1905 and remodelled 1971
Twynrodyn Community School	2004
Ynysowen Community Primary School	1968 (new school under construction)
Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen	1958 & 1959
Ysgol y Graig Primary	1932
Ysgol Rhyd-y-Grug	1905
Ysgol Santes Tudful	2009
SECONDARY	
Afon Taf High School	1967
Bishop Hedley RC High School	1967
Cyfarthfa High (Upper) School	1981 (Extended 2001)
Cyfarthfa High (Lower) School	1825
Pen-y-Dre High School	1972
SPECIAL	
Greenfield Special School	1968
Pupil Referral Unit	1986
Options Programme	1968
Integrated Children's Centre	2005

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY ACHIEVED?

3.7 Effective planning of school places has ensured that Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has:

- robust strategies for managing surplus places; since 2003 the Authority has reduced the capacity of its schools by 13.2% (the removal of over 1,331 surplus places);
- no school significantly overfull; the Authority has worked with schools to manage accommodation needs and reduce the number of over capacity schools;

- regular reviews of trends across the Authority informing school re-organisation proposals when appropriate;
- developed community focused schools including the provision of community facilities in all new schools; and
- supported schools in maintaining class sizes at the statutory level.

Since Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council became a Local Authority in April 1996, the changes to school places have included:-

NURSERY/FOUNDATION PHASE

- the provision of nursery education at St Aloysius, St Illtyd's and St Mary's R C primary schools;
- increase in nursery provision at Treharris Nursery School, Trelewis Primary School and Ysgol Rhyd y Grug;
- rebuilding of Treharris Nursery School following a major fire in March 2002;
- the development of Foundation Phase facilities in ten schools; and
- the closure of Ynysowen Nursery School to become part of Ynysowen Community Primary School.

PRIMARY

- provision and completion of extensions at Caedraw Primary School, Pantysgallog Primary School, Trelewis Primary School, Ysgol Rhyd y Grug, Ysgol Santes Tudful
- the amalgamation of Gellideg Infant and Gellideg Junior Schools and formation of a new primary school Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen (January 2002);
- the closure of Pentrebach Infants School in August 2002;
- the completed construction of a new and enlarged Abercanaid Community School (September 2002);
- the amalgamation of Twynyrodyn Infants and Twynyrodyn Junior schools to form the new Twynyrodyn Community School from September 2003 and the transfer to the new school in January 2004;
- the amalgamation of Edwardsville Infants School and Edwardsville Junior School to form a new primary school with effect from January 2005;
- the closure of Bedlinog Infants, Bedlinog Junior and Graig Bedlinog Infants schools and the opening of Bedlinog Primary School (in a remodelled Junior School, 2000);
- the construction of the new Gellifaelog Primary School (1996);
- the amalgamation of Troedyrhiw Junior and Troedyrhiw Infant schools to form a new primary school with effect from September 2006;
- the amalgamation of Dowlais Infant and Gwernllwyn Junior schools to form a new primary school with effect from September 2009; and
- the opening of the new Ysgol Santes Tudful, Welsh-medium Primary, February 2009.

SECONDARY

- new extension at Cyfarthfa High School and new sports hall;
- the closure of Vaynor and Penderyn High School with effect from September 2005; and
- new sports barn at Bishop Hedley High School.

OTHER

- The opening of an Integrated Children's Centre (2005)

In total statutory proposals affecting 25 schools have been published, of which all were successful.

4.0 PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Overarching Purpose

- 4.1 In planning the provision and supply of school places in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council the Authority will seek to ensure an:
- effective educational infrastructure in order that educational standards will continue to rise;
 - efficient provision and supply of school places and management of pupil admissions in order that financial resources are spent to best effect.

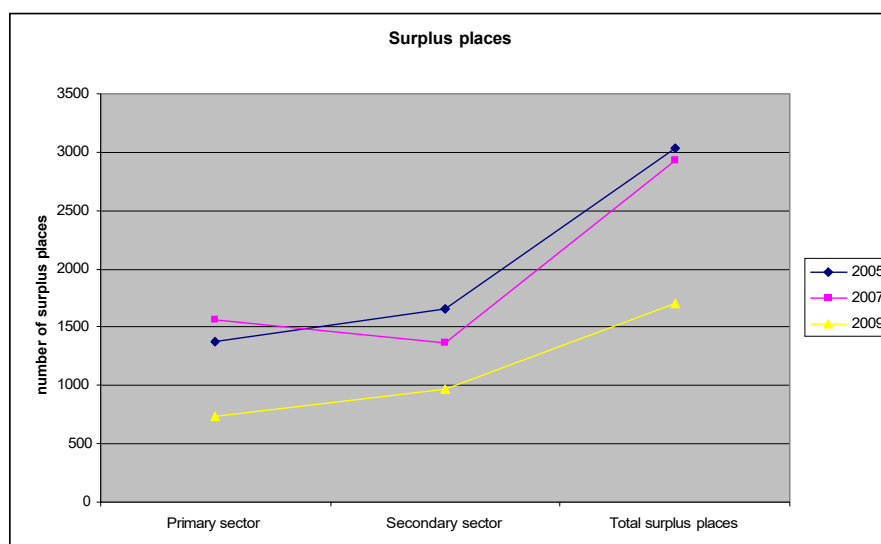
Planning school places

- 4.2 The way the Authority plans its provision and supply of school places and manages the admission of its pupils is crucial in ensuring that limited financial resources are spent to best effect. Action is required to rationalise the provision of school places, largely because of significant falling pupil rolls, movement in population, parental preferences and changes in the pattern of demand. Maintaining a higher than necessary level of school places ties up resources that could be better used to improve the quality of education.
- 4.3 The Authority makes pupil number forecasts in order to assess the likely demand for school places. These projections are based upon a number of factors:
- birth statistics provided by the local health authority;
 - information provided by schools;
 - number of pupils on roll and ages;
 - size and age composition of classes;
 - parental preferences and cross county movement of pupils;
 - transfer of pupils between primary and secondary schools and also between years 11 and 12 within secondary schools;
 - location of private nurseries and playgroups;
 - information provided by other Council departments e.g. Planning; and
 - information on Welsh medium education provided by the headteachers of the two Welsh medium primary schools.

Forecasts are currently available up until 2014 for primary schools and 2021 for secondary schools.

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the Authority continues to prioritise the reduction of surplus places due to falling pupil rolls, movement in population, parental preferences and changes in the pattern of demand. Maintaining a higher than necessary level of school places ties up resources that could be better used to improve the quality of education. The Audit Commission defines schools with 25% or more surplus accommodation as having “significant” over capacity. The Audit Commission suggests that local authorities should aim for individual school occupancy rates within the range of 85% - 105%.

- 4.4 The Authority has responded to the continuing fall in pupil numbers by reducing the number of surplus places in schools. Since 2003 the Authority has removed 1,331 surplus places from schools. This has been achieved through a planned programme of school closures and amalgamations, through replacement new build matched to identified need in all sectors and by working with schools and their communities to make best use of existing surplus capacity, for example for community focused learning.



Reduction in the number of surplus places across primary and secondary schools

- 4.5 Strategic planning by the Authority ensures that there are sufficient places in accordance with parental preference, except where this would prejudice effective education and the efficient use of resources. In conducting its duty to plan, the Authority takes account of overall changes in demographic trends, local variations as a result of new housing developments or estates in decline and changing levels of popularity for particular schools.
- 4.6 The Authority is committed to the inclusion of children with additional educational needs, where possible, in mainstream schools, unless there is a good, child centered reason why the child should be placed in a special school.
- 4.7 The main legislation and guidance regarding school organisation is:
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998: Organisation of School Places
 - Education (School Organisation Proposals) (Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended)
 - Change of Category of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2001 (as amended)
 - Education (Maintained Special Schools) (Wales) Regulations 1999
 - The National Assembly for Wales Circular 9/99
 - The National Assembly for Wales Circular 23/02 *School Organisation Proposals*
 - School Organisation Proposals by the National Assembly for Wales Regulations 2004
 - The National Assembly for Wales Circular 09/2006 *Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales*
 - Welsh Assembly Government Circular 021/2009 *School organisation proposals*.

Initiating Change

- 4.8 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council keeps school provision arrangements, pupil projection data, admission applications and the quality of teaching and learning in schools under constant review.
- 4.9 A variety of factors may lead the authority to make proposals for changes in school provision.

These include:

- school improvement opportunities;
- significant surplus places;
- curriculum changes which impact upon the accommodation requirements such as Foundation Phase, and the 14-19 Transforming Agenda.

These factors may arise individually or in combination.

- 4.10 School organisation proposals will be designed to ensure that the interests of existing pupils are protected and advanced. Although this may cause short term difficulties and/or disruption the Authority is not afraid of making difficult decisions necessary to the long term interests of Merthyr Tydfil pupils.
- 4.11 Prior to initiating any review or changes the Integrated Children's Services department will make such soundings and investigations as considered necessary to inform their report.
- 4.12 The report will then be considered by Councillors who will either approve, or reject the recommendation to formally consult on the draft school organisation proposal.
- 4.13 The consultation document will be published and will contain:
- a clear statement outlining the reason for change;
 - one or more specific proposed changes; and
 - reasoning as to why the proposed change(s) represent the most appropriate way to address the stated reasons for change.

The general aim will be that consultations are focused, precise and conducted to a managed timescale of no more than necessary length. The purpose of this is to avoid long periods of uncertainty and confusion.

- 4.14 If appropriate, statutory notices and other processes outlined in the Education Acts will be adhered to. If necessary the proposal will be referred to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills for determination.

Standards

- 4.15 Where a proposal includes any consideration of individual school quality or viability, particular factors will be of relevance. These may include:
- recent findings by HMI Estyn on the quality of the school;
 - popularity of the school with local residents and wider user groups;
 - prospects for the school remaining or becoming viable in terms of admissions; and
 - an indication that the school has a good understanding of the challenges it faces.

Additional Learning Needs

- 4.16 In planning provision for children with additional learning needs the Authority will:
- ensure that suitable provision is available for all children and young people with additional learning needs aged 2-25 years and for younger children where this is necessary;
 - make such provision available in mainstream schools and Greenfield Special School whenever possible; and
 - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has a successful team that works solely on placing pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream settings. Overtime the Authority aims to increase the proportion and number of children who can be offered effective and appropriate education in mainstream settings, principally by broadening the skills and special arrangements that can be made within the mainstream sector.

Nursery and Primary School Provision

4.17 As at September 2009, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has three nurseries, two infant, two junior and twenty-one primary schools.

Of the primary schools, two are Welsh medium. In key stage 1 (pupils aged 5-7 years) the medium of instruction in these schools is wholly or mainly Welsh. In key stage 2 (pupils aged 7-11 years), pupils are taught Welsh and English. There are also three voluntary aided schools, financed largely by the Authority, but which are organised and run by the Roman Catholic Education Authority in partnership with the Authority.

4.18 The Welsh Assembly Government has placed a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure class sizes in the primary sector do not exceed 30 pupils (except under certain exceptions). Whilst decisions about the appropriate size of teaching groups are matters for individual governing bodies (primary class size legislation apart) and relate to:-

- the key stage;
- overall size of the school;
- whether it is a mixed or single age class;
- the management / organisational structures in place in the school;
- the views of staff, governors and parents/carers; and
- finance available.

The Authority works closely with schools to support their efforts in maintaining class sizes at appropriate levels and in determining accommodation needs. The capacity of a school is calculated using the *Measuring the capacity of schools in Wales Guidance Information* issued by the Welsh Assembly Government.

4.19 **The number of pupils on roll and capacity of primary schools at January 2009:**

School	Age Range	NOR Jan 09	MCSW Capacity	Surplus capacity	Over capacity	Surplus %	Over subscribed %
				12	0	8.00	0.00
				17	0	14.17	0.00
				17	0	13.93	0.00
				2	0	1.17	0.00
				0	8	0.00	4.82
				45	0	21.43	0.00
				45	0	12.13	0.00
				18	0	8.91	0.00
				44	0	24.86	0.00
				9	0	4.79	0.00
				26	0	9.85	0.00
				39	0	20.10	0.00
				59	0	66.29	0.00
				30	0	12.66	0.00
				13	0	8.28	0.00
				0	1	0.00	0.71
				20	0	10.64	0.00
				28	0	13.33	0.00
				38	0	15.02	0.00
				31	0	11.48	0.00
				96	0	30.77	0.00
				34	0	28.10	0.00
				27	0	17.20	0.00
				50	0	12.82	0.00
				48	0	25.26	0.00
		4,311	5,050	748	9		

4.20 Whenever the Authority reviews primary school places it takes into account:

- The size of the school. Schools below a particular size will have greater difficulty in delivering the national curriculum and in ensuring that staff develop specialised curriculum knowledge. Primary schools of between 60-90 pupils could be expected to experience such difficulties.
- The ethos of the school. Primary schools of between 300-500 pupils may need to make special arrangements to ensure that the schools continue to exude a caring ethos where pupils are generally known by name to all or most teachers.
- The continuum of curriculum experience. Primary schools with “all through” teaching for ages 3-11 years are able to facilitate greater co-ordination between the Foundation Phase and Key Stages 1 and 2 and offer more staff development opportunities. As a result the Authority has tried to amalgamate nursery, infant and junior schools whenever appropriate.
- The number of surplus places. The Authority critically reviews cases where schools have significant surplus places (more than 25%).

Secondary School Provision

4.21 There are four secondary schools all of which have provision for 11 to 18 year olds. One of the schools is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided school. All schools have post 16 provision catering for 614 pupils in January 2009. A range of AS and A level courses are available as well as the Welsh BaccaLaureate and NVQ courses.

There is no Welsh medium secondary school within the Authority. All pupils seeking an education via the medium of Welsh mainly attend Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, Cynon Valley in Rhondda Cynon Taff. In January 2009 404 pupils who reside in Merthyr Tydfil attended school at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun.

4.22 The number of pupils on roll and capacity of secondary schools at January 2009:

School Name	Age Range	NOR at January 2009	MCSW Capacity	Surplus Capacity	Surplus %
Afon Taf High	11 - 18+	1,098	1,458	360	24.69
Bishop Hedley R.C. High	11 - 18+	657	971	314	32.34
Cyfarthfa High	11 - 18+	1449	1,465	16	1.09
Pen- y- dre High	11 - 18+	882	1,159	277	23.90
		4,086	5,053	967	19.14

4.23 In January 2009 the number of pupils in the secondary schools ranged from 657 to 1,449, with all schools having surplus places. Overall surplus accommodation accounts for approximately 19.14% of total accommodation available with three schools showing significant unfilled places.

Possible options for dealing with surplus places in secondary schools are being considered. The options are not firm models or proposals but, rather, help exemplify possible issues for attention in planning for change. Given the evolving nature of proposals for post-16 education and training in Merthyr Tydfil, it is necessary at this stage to consider the issues in relation to both 11-18 schools and, subject to any change of age range, 11-16 schools. Only when the future of post-16 education in Merthyr Tydfil has been resolved will it be possible to move to firm proposals for any secondary school reorganisation. The nature of the proposals and their potential for improving the overall quality of educational provision across the 11-16 age range as well as post-16 is dependent on the availability of sufficient capital to deliver the desired changes.

- 4.24 In reviewing secondary school provision, greatest attention will need to focus on the post 16 curriculum. Students should enjoy a range and quality of post 16 educational provision which:
- gives equality of access to both breadth and depth of study through a learning entitlement to a variety of courses which can be taken in different combinations;
 - leads to a wide and appropriate range of opportunity post 18, either in higher or further education, or the world of work;
 - provides continuity in the experience of learning;
 - is conducive to learning in a structured and supportive educational community;
 - is responsive to the needs of, and supported by, the local community;
 - draws upon a high level of teacher expertise;
 - has access to a good range and quality of material resources;
 - provides effectively for those parents who wish their children to be educated in a denominational setting;
 - is efficient and sustainable over the longer term; and
 - results in a high degree of examination success as well as securing students' personal and social development.

5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Planning of school places is based upon probabilities not certainties and while projections may be derived from sound calculations they come without guarantees. Nonetheless, the Authority's calculations are robust and are often the best in Wales for accuracy (*ADEW Benchmarking data*) and provide a sound basis for pupil projection data.
- 5.2 In recent years the demographic changes in Merthyr Tydfil have affected the pupil numbers at schools and during the period January 1996 to January 2009 there has been a net loss of 18.94% of pupils across all sectors (a loss of 2,221 pupils).
- 5.3 For many years the primary sector has seen a continual fall in pupil numbers and whilst there is evidence that the number of pupils in primary schools is starting stabilising, the earlier fall in numbers is now affecting secondary schools and will continue to do so for most of the next decade. In the period January 2009 – January 2014 the number of secondary schools pupils is expected to drop by 533.
- 5.4 This fall in pupil population is expected to continue in the immediate future. Details of anticipated numbers are given below.

Primary Schools	Actual NOR at Jan 2009	Forecast NOR at Jan 2010	Forecast NOR at Jan 2011	Forecast NOR at Jan 2012	Forecast NOR at Jan 2013	Forecast NOR at Jan 2014
Abercanaid Community School	138	150	178	195	202	202
Bedlinog Primary School	103	95	101	106	115	112
Brecon Road Infants School	105	112	101	100	99	101
Caedraw Primary School (w/o SEN unit)	169	175	166	176	175	171
Cyfarthfa Junior School	174	161	159	149	141	144
Dowlais Primary School wef Sept 2009	165	166	169	172	175	172
Edwardsville Primary School	326	336	330	340	356	362
Gellifaelog Primary School	184	188	175	175	178	183
Goetre Infants School	133	160	178	191	194	189
Goetre Junior School	179	180	168	164	187	207
Gwaunfarren Primary School	238	239	240	227	235	229
Heolgerrig Community School	155	162	167	169	175	195
Mount Pleasant Primary School	30	28	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Pantysgallog Primary School	207	194	206	203	199	200
St Aloysius R.C. Primary School	144	147	152	153	162	166
St Illtyd's R.C. Primary School	142	141	139	139	150	143
St Mary's R.C. Primary School	168	166	166	169	165	166
Trelewis Primary School	182	192	191	188	188	194
Troedyrhiw Primary	215	215	216	217	221	215
Twynnyroddyn Community School	239	234	232	231	241	237
Ynysowen Community Primary School	216	200	226	217	213	218
Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen	87	100	103	105	109	117
Ysgol Rhyd y Grug	130	126	123	129	135	149
Ysgol Santes Tudful	340	350	358	365	379	397
Ysgol y Graig Primary	142	145	152	156	161	172
Total	4,474	4,362	4,396	4,436	4,555	4,641

Secondary School	Actual NOR at Jan 2009	Forecast NOR at Jan 2010	Forecast NOR at Jan 2011	Forecast NOR at Jan 2012	Forecast NOR at Jan 2013	Forecast NOR at Jan 2014
Afon Taf High	1,098	1080	1,029	988	940	898
Bishop Hedley R.C. High	657	650	641	624	604	591
Cyfarthfa High	1,449	1406	1,378	1,373	1,357	1,324
Pen- y- Dre High	882	833	781	762	727	710
Total	4,086	3,969	3,829	3,747	3,628	3,523

Admission to Schools

- 5.5 Every school has an area it traditionally serves known as a catchment area. Most parents/carers send their children to the 'local' school, but some parents exercise their right to state a preference for a different school. Due to the number of pupils on roll in our schools in almost all cases these preferences are able to be met. Indeed there has been no appeal against an admission refusal to attend a maintained school since the early 1990's.

Full details of the Authority's admission policy and procedures are contained in its annual publication "A Guide to Policy and Admission Arrangements". The Authority's policy and practice in dealing with the admission process complies with Welsh Assembly Guidance "School Admissions Code, Circular 002/2009 – July 2009".

Diversity of Provision

- 5.6 Within the County Borough there is there is a mixed 'economy' of provision for 3 year olds both in terms and types of providers – local authority maintained nursery schools and nursery classes, playgroups and private nurseries, and also in the extent of provision whether it is full or part time.

There is presently no demand within the Authority for separate gender schools or for Church in Wales primary or secondary schools. Provision for Roman Catholic education exists in the form of three primary schools (each with nursery classes and one secondary school. With regard to Welsh medium education, children are able to attend one of five Clychoedd Meithrin run by Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and there are two primary schools (each with nursery classes). Welsh medium pupils generally continue their education at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun within Rhondda Cynon Taff Authority.

Additional Learning Needs

- 5.7 Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is an important part of the education service. It is estimated that 20% of pupils in England and Wales will have additional learning needs at some time during their school career. Some of these needs may respond quickly to appropriate provision; others may be long lasting and require special provision throughout the educational careers of the children/young people concerned. Approximately 2% of children may require a statement of special educational needs.
- 5.8 The Authority recognises its duty to identify a child who may have an additional learning need if s/he:
- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; and/or
 - has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of the educational facilities generally provided for children of his/her age in schools within the area of the Authority.
- 5.9 The Authority enables pupils with additional learning needs to be educated in local schools where possible and desirable, provided this takes into account parental/carers views, and is compatible with:

- his/her receiving the special educational provision which his/her learning difficulty calls for;
- the provision of efficient education for the children with whom s/he will be educated; and
- the efficient use of resources.

The Authority works closely through the Additional Learning Needs Team, the Health Authority and Property Services Division to ensure that wherever possible school buildings are adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils.

5.10 For all pupils with additional learning needs a variety of options for provision are considered and the vast majority will have their needs met within a mainstream class in their school. The facilities available for those pupils who require additional support to meet their needs include:

- observation classes in infant/primary schools for pupils aged 3-7 years with a range of developmental delays and requiring ongoing assessment;
- special classes in junior/primary schools for pupils aged 7-11 years with a range of learning difficulties;
- unit for pupils aged 3-11 years with speech and language difficulties based in a mainstream school;
- unit for pupils aged 3-11 years with physical/motor impairment, complex difficulties based in a mainstream school;
- unit for pupils aged 3-11 years with hearing impairment/communication difficulties based in a mainstream school;
- unit for secondary aged pupils with hearing impairment, speech and language difficulties and for ambulant pupils with physical/motor impairment based in a mainstream school;
- additional learning needs department in each secondary school to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties;
- The Authority has one special school (Greenfield Special School) which caters for up to 147 children with moderate and severe learning difficulties; behavioural difficulties; profound and multiple learning difficulties; and difficulties related to autism;
- Pupil Referral Unit caters for approximately 16 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The main aim of the Unit is to reintegrate children to mainstream schooling. Each child is on roll in a mainstream secondary school;
- Options Programme for years 10 and 11 pupils showing signs of disaffection or difficult behaviour;
- out of county borough placements for a small number of pupils who require specialist provision that cannot be adequately met from the services available within the Authority; and
- provision for gifted and talented pupils is available in all our schools. Most pupils who are particularly gifted or talented will make good progress with simple enhancements to their timetables and programmes of study. Advice to parents/cares and teachers of able pupils is available through the Educational and Child Psychology Service.

Additional Learning Needs and Welsh Medium Education

- 5.11 The Authority has regard for the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales and seeks to meet the additional learning needs of all of its pupils, including those pupils who are bilingual and/or studying in the medium of Welsh.
- 5.12 Where a pupil has significant learning difficulties, requiring placement in a special school, the Authority undertakes an assessment under the 1996 Education Act to determine the pupil's level of need. Where communication is a major part of the pupil's learning difficulties, alternative communication systems are recommended e.g. signing, Makaton, and these would be made available in Welsh and English. All pupils in the special school follow the national curriculum throughout and would therefore receive Welsh language teaching.
- 5.13 Where a pupil has significant behaviour difficulties, requiring placement in the Pupil Referral Unit, the pupil would attend on a part time basis only, thus ensuring his or her continued teaching through the Welsh medium in his/her mainstream school.
- 5.14 Where a pupil is excluded from school and requires home tuition, or where home tuition is provided on medical grounds, the materials for teaching a child at home are provided through the school which the child has attended. If the child has attended a Welsh medium school, therefore, he/she would have access to the same materials as he/she had in school. A number of home tutors are able to teach through the medium of Welsh.
- 5.15 Welsh medium schools have a favourable weighting for language support, a resource made available to identified individuals. The Authority also funds dyslexia support from a neighbouring authority to support Merthyr Tydfil pupils already at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun.

Statistics Relating to Pupils with Additional Learning Needs

5.16 Special classes in schools (January 2009)

School	No of special classes	Description	Number of pupils in special class
Abercanaid Community Primary	1	Observation	9
Caedraw Primary	2	Physical disability/complex difficulties	16
Edwardsville Primary	1	Moderate learning difficulties	15
Goetre Infant	2	Observation	16
Goetre Junior	3	Moderate to severe learning difficulties	34
Gwernllwyn Junior [Primary]	1	Moderate learning difficulties	12
Twynrodyn Community	1	Moderate learning difficulties	12
Ynysowen Community Primary	3	Moderate learning difficulties Communication hearing impaired Speech and Language	20
Ysgol y Graig Primary	1	Moderate learning difficulties	14
Afon Taf High School	1	Hearing Unit	12

Community Schools

- 5.17 The Authority regards its schools as community assets and recognises that they can play a major role in developing and supporting communities and addressing issues related to social inclusion. The Community Focused Schools team works closely with schools and has developed additional accommodation for community provision at two primary schools as well as assisting all schools in enabling greater community involvement.
- 5.18 All new school builds include community facilities and the Authority works closely with schools with surplus capacity to enable refurbishment of facilities specifically for community use, whenever possible. The Authority currently has 29% of schools with dedicated facilities for the community.

Asset Management Plan

- 5.19 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is committed to being a learning, improving and innovative Council and continued improvement of school buildings and new school development is an important component of this strategy. The Authority's Asset Management Plan outlines the priorities for the next five years. Research into new primary school buildings has shown that they have a positive impact upon pupil attainment, improving it beyond the national average.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council aspires to making all schools fit for teaching and learning and works closely with schools, governing bodies, and other educational experts to ensure that curriculum development and opportunities can be enhanced by the building and environment.

The Asset Management Plan 2004-2009 achieved:

- the development of three new primary schools: Ysgol Santes Tudful; Heolgerrig Community; and Ynysowen Community Primary;
- extensions to Caedraw Primary, Gwernllwyn Junior, Cyfarthfa Junior, Brecon Road Infant, Gwaunfarren Primary and refurbishment of Ysgol Coed y Dderwen;
- a rolling programme of toilet refurbishments which has seen over 48 toilet blocks completed during this 5 year period;
- new sporting facilities and enhancements to existing facilities at secondary schools and Greenfield Special School as well as playground enhancements to primary schools;
- refurbishment of classrooms and laboratories in secondary schools;
- roof and window replacements in all schools (a rolling programme of work to keep schools up to standard); and
- security and fire safety improvements.

The Education Asset Management Plan 2009-2014 outlines the priorities for school building improvement for the next five years.

Welsh Education Scheme

- 5.20 The Authority has completed its Welsh Education Scheme 2009-2014 in accordance with Section 5 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and will be consulting on the document during the Autumn Term 2009. The main aims of the Scheme are to ensure that:-

- there is suitable provision for all children whose parents wish to receive their education through the medium of Welsh;
- all children who attend Welsh medium schools can speak, read and write fluently and confidently in both Welsh and English by the end of key stage two;
- Welsh as a second language is taught in all English medium schools in accordance with the National Curriculum requirements for each school phase;
- we work in partnership with our schools in both primary and secondary sectors to raise standards;

- all pupils, through the Curriculum Cymreig, are given opportunities in their study to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the culture, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales; and
- the continuity and progression in the learning and teaching of Welsh from one key stage to another.

A copy of the draft Welsh Education Scheme is available from the Integrated Children's Services department and on the website at www.merthyr.gov.uk.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

6.1 This section examines the key areas for action over the next five academic years and sets out broad proposals. A recurring theme is the need to concentrate resources (funding, expertise, support) on equality of opportunity, the removal of surplus places from both the primary and secondary phases of education and improve the schools and building stock and their facilities. The primary sector has experienced significant falling rolls for some years and this is now affecting secondary education. A high priority of the Authority must be to remove surplus accommodation where it is envisaged that it will no longer be required. Forward planning is a key feature in managing the education building stock especially with regard to pupil number forecasts and their accuracy.

Options for dealing with surplus places

- 6.2 Options for dealing with surplus places include proposals for school closures, amalgamations and new or upgraded school buildings matched appropriately in size to the anticipated pupil population. Other possible options include:
- increasing the use of surplus places for community or youth facilities;
 - redesignating catchment areas, which can be controversial and, given the policy of parental choice, is not binding;
 - amending the capacity of the school downward because of school site issues, for example split site accommodation can reduce the capacity by up to 10% of the physical capacity of the school. Where appropriate this has already been applied within the revised capacity calculations, with the approval of the Welsh Assembly Government; and
 - removing certain classrooms from school use. This is only used for health and safety reasons.

Early Years and Foundation Phase

6.3 There is universal provision for all 'rising five' year olds (reception aged children) in the Authority. With regard to three to four year olds (nursery aged pupils) it is estimated that in excess of 96% receive education at an Authority maintained school, although some attend on a part-time basis only. This meets the Welsh Assembly Government's requirement that every child be statutorily entitled to receive three terms of nursery education prior to the start of compulsory education (i.e. the start of the term following a child's fifth birthday).

Primary

- 6.4 The Authority has had much success in reducing the number of surplus places in the primary sector and working with schools and governing bodies will maintain this drive over the next five year period.
- 6.5 The latest school organisation project (Spring – Summer 2009) approved is the amalgamation of Dowlais Infant School and Gwernllwyn Junior School and this took effect from 1st

September, 2009. During the Autumn-Spring Term 2009-2010 the Authority will consult on the amalgamation of Goetre Junior and Infant schools.

- 6.6 Subject to the availability of the necessary funds, the Integrated Children's Services is requested to maintain the drive on school reorganisation, aimed at reducing surplus places, improving the overall quality of school buildings and enhancing the quality of educational provision.

Secondary

- 6.7 Although there is currently just over 19% surplus accommodation across the secondary sector (i.e. 967 places) the projected fall in pupil numbers will see the total figure for the secondary sector at over 25% surplus places by 2020. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider the need for further secondary school reorganisation to reduce surplus places.
- 6.8 Any proposals for secondary school reorganisation in Merthyr Tydfil are linked inextricably to proposals to reorganise post-16 provision. In particular, should the 'character'/age range of the secondary schools change as a consequence of losing their sixth forms, this would have the effect of increasing the number of surplus places in the schools (by over 500). The impact of this would be to require a different set of solutions for secondary reorganisation than would otherwise be the case. For example, the need for school closure or amalgamation may be heightened whilst the need for new build may be reduced as a consequence of more space becoming available in each school to accommodate increased numbers of 11 to 16-year-olds following any amalgamations or closures. In general, in order to plan effectively for any proposed reorganisation of our secondary schools, it is necessary to await the outcomes of present discussions and possible consultation and proposals about the future of post-16 education and training in Merthyr Tydfil.
- 6.9 Notwithstanding the challenges associated with progressing secondary school reorganisation presently, it is imperative to recognise the need for change and to commence planning for those aspects of provision that, subject to the availability of adequate financial resources and the outcomes of consultation, can be managed in the short to medium term as part of a staggered approach to organising school places.
- 6.10 Various options for dealing with surplus places in secondary schools are being considered. The options are not firm models or proposals, but rather help exemplify possible issues for attention in planning for change. Given the evolving nature of proposals for post-16 education and training in Merthyr Tydfil, it is necessary at this stage to consider the issues in relation to both 11-18 schools and, subject to any change of age range, 11-16 schools. Only when the future of post-16 education in Merthyr Tydfil has been resolved will it be possible to move to firm proposals for secondary school reorganisation. The nature of the proposals and their potential for improving the overall quality of educational provision across the 11-16 age range as well as post-16 is heavily dependent on the availability of sufficient capital to deliver the desired changes.
- 6.11 Subject to the availability of the necessary funds, the Integrated Children's Services will maintain the drive on school reorganisation, aimed at reducing surplus places, improving the overall quality of school buildings and enhancing the quality of educational provision.

Additional Learning Needs

- 6.12 The Authority is continually reviewing its provision for pupils with additional learning needs to ensure that it adds value. The role and remit of the special school, special classes in mainstream schools and all specialist services are constantly evolving and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of pupils continues to be evaluated. Alongside these developments runs the programme of professional development for special educational needs staff thereby enabling schools to meet special educational needs from within their own resources.
- 6.13 The role of the special school is crucial in promoting wider opportunities for inclusion in partnership with mainstream schools and *Unlocking the potential of Greenfield Special School* is part of this strategy.
- 6.14 Every effort will be made to ensure that the additional learning needs of pupils in Merthyr Tydfil are met in a consistent and coherent way offering a continuum of provision to meet a continuum of need.
- 6.15 Promote inclusion through a variety of initiatives involving both special and mainstream schools. During 2009-2010 this will involve an appraisal of the PRU and Options facilities with a view to improving accommodation, educational opportunities and links with schools.

The Way Forward

- 6.16 The Authority's statutory responsibility for the planning and provision of school places is a particularly complex one and any proposed change to existing provision is likely to be emotive. However, rationalisation of school provision on a strategically planned basis would:-
- ensure that schools retained are strengthened both in educational and financial terms;
 - yield financial savings on a significant scale which could be ploughed back into the schools' sector;
 - remove surplus places from the system; and
 - strengthen the educational system.

Proposals

- 6.17 A summary of the local authority's proposals are given overleaf.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Sector	Key Issue	Proposals	Target
All sectors	Surplus places	To reduce surplus places by working with schools and a programme of review and rationalisation of school places	Primary reduce surplus places by 10% (75 places) by 2011. Secondary reduce surplus places by 5% (49 places) by 2012 and a further 500 places between 2012 and 2015
All sectors	Expansion of Community Focused Schools	To work with schools, governing bodies and Community Focused Schools Team to promote greater use of school buildings by the community	Open new community facilities at Twynyrodyn Community School (2010). Provide new community facilities at Heolgerrig Community (2009) and Ynysowen Community Primary (2010)
All sectors	Accessibility	To work with schools, Additional Learning Needs Team, Health Authority, Property Services and parents to ensure schools are accessible to meet the needs of individual pupils with mobility problems	100% pupils with additional physical needs are able to attend the school of their preference
All sectors	School Building Improvement Programme	To progress priorities of Education Asset Management Plan to ensure all schools suitable for teaching and learning in the 21 st Century	All schools fit for purpose by end of 2015
All sectors	Welsh medium education	To progress priorities of Welsh Education Scheme	2009 - 2014
All sectors	Surplus temporary accommodation	To remove terrapin classes no longer used by schools	By 2014
Early Years/ Foundation Phase	To ensure accommodation needs of Foundation Phase are provided in all maintained schools.	To work with schools and the Early Years' Team to target capital funding appropriately.	2009 – 2014
Early Years/ Foundation Phase	To enable Flying Start and other pre school groups to have access to school accommodation whenever possible	To work with schools and the Children and Young People's Partnership to determine where capacity is available and where appropriate bring forward proposals accordingly	2009-2014
Primary	Amalgamation of Gwernllwyn Junior and Dowlais Infant Schools	Implementation of approved school organisation project	With effect from 1 st September, 2009

Primary	Amalgamation of Goetre Junior and Infant Schools	Consultation on proposal to amalgamate Goetre Junior and Infant schools and if considered appropriate bring forward proposals	Spring Term 2010
Primary	Closure of Mount Pleasant Primary School and amalgamation with Ynysowen Community Primary School	Implementation of approved school organisation project. Work with school to enable transfer to new school site for 2010-11 academic year	By 31 st August 2010

Sector	Key Issue	Proposals	Target
Secondary	Review of secondary education provision	To continue the review of secondary education as approved by Council June 2009	Complete the review by Summer 2010
	Split site secondary school	Take forward options to locate Cyfarthfa High School (Lower site) on Upper School site. Phased arrangements to commence Autumn 2010	Single school site by 2014
	Provision of Welsh medium secondary education	Maintain co-operative arrangements with Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council regarding the provision of Welsh medium secondary education for Merthyr Tydfil pupils	2009 – ongoing.
Pupils aged 14-19	Transforming Agenda	Continue to progress arrangements in line with priorities of ANDP	2009-2014
Post 16 Provision	Merthyr Learning Quarter (MLQ)	To work with Programme Board to progress MLQ	2009-ongoing
Special Education	Inclusion	To promote inclusion throughout a variety of initiatives involving both special and mainstream schools	2009-ongoing
General	Pupil number forecasting methodology	To critically examine the methodology in forecasting pupil numbers and undertake an evaluation of past estimates	Summer 2009
	Asset Management Plan 2009-2014	To ensure the improvements identified in the Asset Management Plan are financed and implemented in accordance with the identified timescales	2009 - ongoing
	Capital Building Programme 2009-2010	To ensure that the capital building programme is financed and implemented in accordance with the identified timescales	2009 - ongoing

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

