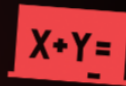




Closure of Irfon Valley C.P. School Consultation Report



Consultation on the closure of Irfon Valley C.P. School

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Consultation on the closure of Irfon Valley C.P. School

1. OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION

Powys County Council consulted on a proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School. The proposal is as follows:

- To close Irfon Valley C.P. School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools

The consultation took place from the 26th of October 2023 to the 7th of December 2023.

i) Consultation methods

The consultation documentation was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period, and was distributed to stakeholders, as required by the School Organisation Code (2018). A separate version for pupils was also available on the Council's website throughout the consultation period.

Consultees were invited to respond to the consultation by either completing an online consultation form, filling in a paper copy of the form and returning it to the Transforming Education Team at County Hall, or by e-mailing / writing to the Transforming Education Team.

Meetings were held with the following:

- Staff of Irfon Valley C.P. School – 23rd November 2023
- Governors of Irfon Valley C.P. School – 23rd November 2023

In addition, the school's Headteacher spoke with pupils about the proposal.

ii) Responses received

A total of 46 respondents completed the consultation response form which was included in the consultation document. This included paper copies as well as responses submitted using the online response form.

In addition, two written responses were received, which included a response from Estyn. The response received from Estyn is provided on page 17, in-line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.

iii) Summary of issues raised

The issues raised in the consultation responses are listed in detail in section 6, on page 18 onwards. This includes the Council's response to each issue. The following is a summary of the issues raised:

1. Comments about Irfon Valley C.P. School
 - 1.1 General positive comments about the school
 - 1.2 Comments about quality of provision at Irfon Valley C.P. School
 - 1.3 Comments about extra-curricular activities available at the school
 - 1.4 Comments about the staff at Irfon Valley C.P. School
 - 1.5 Comments about the school's role in the community
 - 1.6 Comments about the school's small size
 - 1.7 Other comments
2. Comments about the impact on pupils
3. Comments about the impact on pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups
4. Impact on staff
5. Impact on the community
6. Impact on families
7. Impact on early years provision
8. Comments about housing developments in the local area
9. Comments about travel/transport arrangements
 - 9.1 Concern about additional travel
 - 9.2 Comments about the Council's Transport Policy
10. Comments about other schools
11. Comments about small/rural schools
 - 11.1 Positive comments about small / rural schools
 - 11.2 Concerns about larger schools
12. Criticism of the council
13. Comments about the process
 - 13.1 Comments about the timing
 - 13.2 Comments about consultation meetings
 - 13.3 Comments about consultation with pupils
 - 13.4 Other comments
14. Comments about the documentation
15. Alternative options
 - 15.1 Keep the school open
 - 15.2 Develop the provision at the school
 - 15.3 Federation
 - 15.4 Merge with another school

- 15.5 Establish a Welsh-medium school
- 15.6 Close a different school
- 15.7 Other suggestions

16. Comments in support of the proposal

2. CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

43 respondents completed the English language consultation response form, which was available online. 3 respondents sent the consultation response form by email in English. No responses were received in Welsh.

The quantitative findings of the questionnaire are summarised below. Written comments were also provided in the consultation response forms. The issues raised in these comments are included in Section 6 of this report.

Part 1 – About you

1. Please indicate how you are associated with the schools affected by this consultation:

Response	No.	%
Parent, carer or guardian	18	39.13%
Prospective parent, carer, or guardian	1	2.17%
Governor	2	4.34%
Member of staff	7	15.22%
Member of the community	18	39.13%
Organisation	4	8.69%
Pupil	0	0.00%
No association	2	4.34%
Other	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%
Total responses	52	100%

2. Please specify which school you are associated with:

Response	No.	%
Irfon Valley C.P. School	36	78.26%
Another school	3	6.52%
No association with any school	7	15.22%
Not Answered	0	0.0%
Total responses	46	100%

3. Please provide your postcode:

Response	No.	%
Llandrindod Wells	2	4.34%
Builth Wells	7	15.22%
Beulah	1	2.17%
Llanafan-Fawr	1	2.17%
Sennybridge	1	2.17%
Garth	26	56.53%

Llanwrtyd Wells	4	8.69%
Abergavenny	1	2.17%
Newtown	1	2.17%
Not supplied	2	4.34%
Total responses	46	100%

Part 3 – About you

12. How old are you?

Response	No.	%
Under 16	0	0.00%
16-23	0	0.00%
25-34	6	13.04%
35-44	14	30.43%
45-54	6	13.04%
55-64	6	13.04%
65-74	1	2.17%
75-84	0	0.00%
85+	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	4	8.69%
Not answered	9	19.56%
Total responses	46	100%

13. What is your gender?

Response	No.	%
Male	6	13.04%
Female	29	63.04%
Gender Fluid	0	0.00%
Non-Binary	0	0.00%
Gender neutral	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	2	4.34%
Not answered	9	19.56%
Total responses	46	100%

14. Can you understand, speak, or write Welsh?

Response	No.	%
Yes	11	23.91%
No	18	39.14%
Prefer not to say	8	17.39%
Not answered	9	19.56%
Total responses	46	100%

15. If you have school-aged children, are they entitled to receive free school meals?

Response	No.	%
Yes	11	23.91%
No	12	26.09%
Prefer not to say	10	21.74%
Not answered	13	28.26%
Total responses	46	100%

16. If you have school-aged children, do they have any additional learning needs?

Response	No.	%
Yes	5	10.87%
No	18	39.13%
Prefer not to say	9	19.56%
Not answered	14	30.43%
Total responses	46	100%

17. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Response	No.	%
Yes	3	6.52%
No	31	67.39%
Prefer not to say	3	6.52%
Not answered	9	19.56%
Total responses	46	100%

18. What is your ethnic group?

Response	No.	%
White	34	73.91%
Asian	0	0.00%
Black, African or Caribbean	0	0.00%
Mixed	0	0.00%
Gypsy/Traveller	0	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	2	4.35%
Not Answered	10	21.74%
Total	46	100%

3. CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

The Headteacher of Irfon Valley CP School held a discussion with pupils at the school on the 30th of November 2023. The following is a summary of the discussion:

What do you like about Irfon Valley School?

- Playing on the computer and with all the toys in pre-school.
- Like how the teachers help me with my work and everyone is kind to me and kind to others in this school.
- Maths, computers, get to play in pre-school area.
- Teachers are all kind and lovely.
- Big play area, lots of space.
- Obstacle course, lots of equipment and variety of things you can do.
- Pond area.
- Play space for little ones.
- Like the learning & lessons, especially cooking. Fun lessons, even Maths.
- Cooking & crafts.
- Art lessons – sketching, painting.
- Football & basketball.
- Really like being in plays.
- Good playground games in Class 1 yard e.g. hopscotch.

Is there anything you don't like about Irfon Valley School, or that could be better?

- Don't like how sometimes people are bossy to me such as when tidying up.
- Sometimes get a little bit tired.
- Sometimes feel there's some favouritism from some staff towards some pupils.
- It's a little school (but I like that).
- Don't like being indoors for PE lessons – prefer to be outside like we used to.
- Don't like that there are no playground markings on Class 2 yard e.g. no hopscotch.
- Maths & English.
- Gravel on Class 2 yard.

If the school closed, you would need to move to different schools. What do you think about this?

- If I go to a big school, loads of people are going to be there that I don't know.
- Sometimes my ears hurt if it is too noisy with lots of people, so I'd need to wear my ear defenders all the time.
- If I wasn't in Y6, I'd be quite nervous about moving to a new school. If I only had one more year, I'd prefer to stay here as I've been here so long (since I started).
- Other schools are much bigger in size – nerve-wracking.
- Terrible. Where would we go?

Is there anything you think would be bad about this?

- I'd miss my teachers and miss the school.
- I'd just miss school because I like being with my friends.
- I don't want to move to a different school because I like how teachers help me with my learning.
- I'd miss my friends if they all went to different school. Other schools might have about 100 pupils in so it would be very different.
- It would be bad because of all the people there and I wouldn't see my friends as much because they might have to go to a different school.

Is there anything you think would be good about this?

- I'd get to see some of friends again who have already left the school and who I really miss.
- Meeting new friends.
- More kids to interact with.
- Seeing new teachers.
- More kids to do sport with.

If the school closed, you would probably need to go to a bigger school. Is there anything you think would be better about being in a bigger school?

- Nothing.
- Building might be bigger so I might need to go to top floor and could get nose bleeds as I go upstairs.
- More people to play sports with.
- Bigger football matches and basketball games. More people to make friends with.

Is there anything you think would be worse about going to a bigger school?

- Not knowing which room I'd have to go in.
- When fire alarm goes off, not knowing which way to go or how to find a teacher.

- No cloakroom.
- Lots more people so they might hurt me.
- Probably half the kids I wouldn't get to know and there might be some mean kids, but not scared about this.
- Maybe more homework.
- Won't get as much chance to do things (Christmas play) as there would be so many others there. Also, might not get to even touch the ball in games of football as so many other players.

What do you think the impact would be on the community if Irfon Valley School closed?

- People wouldn't be able to come and meet all their lovely friends/teachers or see everything that's lovely about the school.
- They won't hear the lovely sound of people playing outside at playtimes.
- It's the only proper community thing in the village, except for the village hall. If school closes, there would be nothing here but houses.
- Everybody is going to be sad, especially the old man who lives across the road who I wave to at the end of each day. I would miss the bus drivers.

Do you have any other questions or comments on the plans?

- If I went to a big school, all the coats might be thrown on top of each other, and I wouldn't be able to find mine.
- Where would we put our wellies?
- I just love this school so much; I just don't want to leave it.
- I love everyone here.
- I want to stay in Irfon Valley.
- I'd be sad and miss all my friends here.
- Teachers will be sad without us.
- They shouldn't close down the school.
- If they do close the school, nobody will like Powys (the Council). I feel like making a YouTube video about it to tell people we need to keep the school open.

4. CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH STAFF AND GOVERNORS

Consultation meetings were held with the staff and governors of the school.

The issues raised at these meetings are summarised below:

i) Consultation meeting with Staff of Irfon Valley C.P. School

- Concern about the process for conducting the consultation with pupils
- Concern about the impact of the process on staff
- Fielding questions from parents and trying to explain what is happening to younger pupils has been difficult for staff
- It might be easier for school staff to conduct the consultation with pupils, rather than council employees
- Parents are unhappy with the idea of pupils being consulted with
- Will there be a meeting with parents?
- Given the “nearest school” wording, will parents have a choice about where their children will move to?
- Queries about admissions and transport policies
- Concern about parents being panicked at suggestions of closure, and that this is what led to shrinking numbers of pupils at the school
- How many responses have been received as part of the consultation?
- Why did the proposal to close Irfon Valley come around so suddenly?
- Why was nothing was done to prevent school numbers from dropping
- What will happen to the setting at Irfon Valley?
- Are there long-term plans for a larger primary in the area
- Parents may apply to Welsh units as free transport would be available
- Staff are very concerned about how unsettling everything is for the pupils
- Some pupils are likely to struggle with transition, especially ALN and EAL pupils
- The process is likely to be difficult for EAL families
- Would the closure date change if pupil numbers were to change between now and then?
- Some parents would like to keep their children at the school, but “book a place” with a new school for when the time for Irfon Valley to close comes
- Some families may decide to move away from the area
- What would happen to the school’s resources should the school close?

ii) Consultation meeting with Governors of Irfon Valley C.P. School

- A request for confirmation of the timelines for the consultation period and report

- Why are no public meetings scheduled? Is this in line with statutory expectations?
- A request for clarification around the way in which pupils contribute to the consultation process
- Governors emphasise that they wish to support the staff and minimise any negative impact of the process upon pupils
- What processes are in place to support school staff? A request for clear timescales for the support which is on offer to be provided is made
- The school is nurturing, and achieving excellent standards
- Governors are saddened by the shrinking numbers of pupils at the school
- The loss of the school will be significant to the community, including future generations
- Governors express thanks for the work of school staff, both teaching and non-teaching
- A request for more honesty in communication from the council is made. Whilst it is understood that schools with small numbers are unsustainable, there is a feeling that the impact of changing schools on Irfon Valley's pupils has been under-emphasised by the council
- Council press releases have had a negative impact on individuals involved with the school, especially in suggesting that greater opportunities are available at larger schools
- Governors mention the school's positive Estyn report, and emphasise that staff knowing individual pupils is a particular strength of Irfon Valley
- Anecdotally, some parents who have left the school feel that Irfon Valley offered a better standard of education than their new school
- Governors feel that suggesting that larger schools may offer a better standard of education than smaller schools on the back of the school's positive Estyn report was difficult to hear for parents/staff/governors
- Research proves that small schools are better than larger schools, and that this isn't being addressed by the council
- An acknowledgement that shrinking school numbers has led to a greater workload for school staff
- It would be helpful to receive more information from the council about nearest schools, and where pupils are likely to move to
- Governors ask for clarification about transport policies and nearest schools
- The difficulties of application processes and appeals should be looked into by the council, and that extra support and exemptions should be offered to parents of children at schools which are closing
- Face-to-face meetings with parents should be offered by the council to support with admissions processes

- Governors ask about implications of closure to the school budget, and how the situation should be navigated in conjunction with the council

5. ESTYN

Estyn's response to the consultation is provided below:

Estyn's response to the proposal to close Irfon Valley Community Primary School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to their nearest available schools.

Introduction

This report has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/Conclusion

Powys local authority is consulting on their proposal to close Irfon Valley Community Primary School from the 31st August 2024, with pupils to transfer to their nearest available schools.

It is Estyn's view that this proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.

Description and benefits

The local authority has presented a clear rationale outlining the reasons for the proposal. The school's governing body has raised concerns with the local authority regarding declining pupil numbers at the school. The governing body report that this has put significant pressure on the school's finances, and they have shared concerns about the school's ability to continue to provide an appropriate standard of education with only a small number of pupils. In response to this, the local authority has carried out an options appraisal exercise which concludes that their preferred proposal is to close the school.

The local authority has provided a suitably detailed description of the proposal along with an estimated timetable for statutory procedures. The local authority states that as there are alternative schools in the area with sufficient surplus places, there would be no requirement for any interim arrangements. This appears to be reasonable.

The local authority has included a useful video on its website that provides a clear overview of the proposal. The local authority has also included accessible consultation documents for children and young people. Both appear to be clear and useful documents.

The main consultation compares the proposal against the current arrangements in appropriate detail, outlining several advantages for pupils. These include access to wider opportunities in a larger primary provision along with greater opportunities to learn in classes with children of a similar age. In addition, the consultation outlines how the proposal aligns with the local authority's own strategy for transforming education in the county.

The local authority has identified risks to the quality of education standards due to what would be perceived as a period of uncertainty for pupils and for staff. The consultation document proposes suitable mitigation against these potential risks.

The local authority has considered a range of alternative options to closure. These include a possible federation or merger with another local school on one or both existing school sites. The local authority appears to have carried out a thorough analysis of each option and has provided what seems to be a reasonable justification for favouring school closure. However, the local authority's assessment against critical factors (appendix c), does not appear to consider all of the options.

The proposal has identified that there will be a requirement for additional transport should closure go ahead. The local authority has provided a calculation outlining the difference in average journey time for all pupils concerned. The proposal states that free home to school transport will be available in accordance with the local authority's home to school transport policy. However, there could be an impact on pupils' ability to access after-school activities. The consultation does not provide an indication about how the local authority will seek to address this issue.

The local authority seems to have demonstrated effectively the impact of the proposal on surplus places. There are currently 19 pupils attending Irfon Valley Community Primary School and 47 surplus places across neighbouring schools. Should the closure go ahead, it is reasonable for the local authority to suggest that surplus places will be reduced.

The local authority has taken account of the impact of the proposal on Welsh medium provision within the local authority. The proposal concludes simply that as Irfon Valley Community Primary School is an English medium provision, closure would neither expand or reduce the availability of Welsh language provision in the area. The local authority states that the proposal is not linked to the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

The local authority has considered the financial costs of the proposal appropriately. As neighbouring schools have existing capacity to accommodate all pupils from Irfon Valley Community Primary School, buildings will not require additional capital investment. The consultation document provides an estimation of the cost for any necessary additional transport. The proposal states that this cost would be met through savings from the school's delegated budget. In addition, sale of the school building and school site would provide an opportunity to raise additional capital.

The local authority has provided a Welsh Language Impact Assessment as part of this proposal.

The local authority has provided a Community Impact Assessment as part of this proposal.

NB. Estyn provides their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals and does not evaluate the Welsh Language Impact Assessment or the Community Impact Assessment.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The local authority appears to have considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards of education carefully. The consultation includes the outcomes from the most recent Estyn inspection report for Irfon Valley Community Primary School and for each neighbouring school. The proposal seems to outline the anticipated impact on wellbeing and attitudes to learning appropriately, balancing the short-term implications of a change of school against longer term benefits such as a wider range of social and educational opportunities.

The local authority states that it has no concerns with the quality of teaching or provision for skills development in each of the neighbouring schools. The proposal outlines a range of perceived benefits to learning in a larger school. These include access to a broader curriculum along with increased opportunities to learn alongside peers of a similar age and ability. However, the local authority also acknowledges that some of the neighbouring schools also meet the Welsh Government definition of a small school.

The proposal states that as pupils would transfer to neighbouring schools that do not cause concern, there would be no perceived impact on the quality of care, support and guidance offered to pupils and their families. The same is stated for the quality of leadership and management. The local authority notes that under the current arrangements, Irfon Valley Community Primary School shares a headteacher with a neighbouring school. Pupils who choose to attend that school would benefit from some consistency. The local authority asserts that the quality of leadership would be at least as good in neighbouring schools, but doesn't include the supporting evidence in this proposal.

The proposal has suitably considered the impact of the closure on the delivery of the curriculum. In the local authority's opinion, the curriculum will benefit from wider staff expertise and resources. The local authority also anticipates that a larger school can provide improved provision for pupils to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

The local authority's view is that neighbouring schools would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality to that provided at Irfon Valley Community Primary School. Considering the outcome of the inspection reports and any additional monitoring carried out by Estyn, the local authority's appraisal of the impact this proposal will have on the quality of education appears to be fair and reasonable.

The local authority outlines a desire to provide ongoing support to all affected schools in ensuring that transition arrangements are effective. The consultation document includes a detailed impact equality assessment which reports that this proposal will affect all pupils, not just those with protected characteristics. However, the consultation document specifies that increased travel requirements for school events could have a greater impact on learners affected by socio-economic disadvantage. Whilst the proposal states there would be ongoing support for pupils with additional learning needs, the support to be provided for learners affected by socio-economic disadvantage is not clear.

Irfon Valley Community Primary School is a rural school and therefore the proposer is required to make additional considerations in line with the School Organisation code. The local authority appears to have carefully considered and outlined the reasons as to why the proposal to seek closure is viable. The proposal has explored a range of alternative options including partnerships with other neighbouring schools well. The local authority's decision to proceed with a proposal to close the school seems to be reasonable.

The local authority has suitably considered the impact of this closure on the local community. The proposal concludes that the limited demand for use of the school building could be accommodated in the local village hall. This appears to be a reasonable suggestion. The local authority notes that there is currently a funded early years provision operating from the school and should the proposal go ahead, the local authority anticipates that this provision will no longer be viable. The proposal provides a list of alternative funded early years providers. However, the proposal does not make clear whether all providers are able to provide the Childcare Offer for Wales.

6. ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD

The following tables list the issues raised during the consultation period and provide the local authority's response to these issues.

1. COMMENTS ABOUT IRFON VALLEY C.P. SCHOOL

1.1 General positive comments about the school

Ref	Comment	Council Response
1.1.1	Irfon Valley has always been a very open and welcoming school to all.	The council notes these positive comments about Irfon Valley C.P. School.
1.1.2	Parents have said that they have chosen for their children to attend Irfon Valley School because of its nurturing nature, and the closer attention to the education their children will receive.	As above.
1.1.3	The children are happy and confident learners. If you were to visit the school, this would be evident from the moment you step through the door.	As above.
1.1.4	Irfon Valley C.P. school is a little gem of a school with a very inclusive and nurturing environment and excellent teaching in a lovely rural setting.	As above.
1.1.5	The children are able to express themselves and have a lot of involvement in the day to day running of the school.	As above.
1.1.6	Irfon Valley C.P. School is a fantastic, rural school which caters for all pupils' needs.	As above.
1.1.7	The pupils are all happy and have first class teaching.	As above.

1.2 Comments about quality of provision at Irfon Valley C.P. School

1.2.1	The education provided is of excellent quality, as evidenced in the recent Estyn inspection.	<p>The Council notes these comments about the quality of provision at Irfon Valley C.P. School. Information about Irfon Valley C.P. School's latest Estyn inspection was included in the Consultation Document published in respect of this proposal, as well as the outcome of the most recent inspections of the alternative schools in the area.</p> <p>Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 14 of this report. Estyn's view is that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.</p>
1.2.2	The Estyn inspection that the school had in the summer term 2022 was excellent – surely the high end education and support these children are receiving at Irfon Valley rises above just being a number in a bigger school.	As above.
1.2.3	Irfon Valley is a school with an exceptionally high standard of teaching following its last Estyn inspection in June 2022 where it received a glowing report and was quoted 'This is a caring and nurturing small school that knows its pupils well'. Words well fitted to Irfon Valley CP School.	As above.
1.2.4	The following comments have been taken from our ESTYN inspection in June 2022. I am sure you will agree the comments speak for themselves: 'This is a caring and nurturing small school that knows its pupils well. Pupils feel safe and happy at the school'; 'Staff care for each pupil as an individual and support them all to make progress and achieve. Teachers provide engaging activities for their pupils that interest them, including a wealth of trips and visitors in school'; 'The few staff	As above.

	work very well together to create the inclusive ethos that pervades all aspects of school life'; 'Over their time at Irfon Valley Primary School, most pupils make strong progress from their starting points. They leave the school with standards at least in line with, and often above, those expected for their age'; 'Across the school, strong teaching is underpinned by warm, respectful professional relationships between adults and pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and provide appropriate support and challenge where it is needed'; 'The school is an inclusive, nurturing community that provides for each pupil as an individual. The very small class and cohort sizes mean that adults know the pupils very well and tailor the provision to meet their needs.'	
1.2.5	The education in Irfon Valley is fantastic and had a great Estyn report last year. Especially when compared to other local schools.	As above.
1.2.6	The Council's Vision Statement states that "all children and young people in Powys will experience a high-quality, inspiring education" – they already experience this in Irfon Valley C.P. School.	As above.
1.2.7	Staff at the school work extremely hard to provide a rich curriculum full of meaningful activities and real-life problem-solving skills, which is at the heart of the new curriculum for Wales.	As above.
1.2.8	The school works extremely hard to meet the needs of our pupils, providing a rich curriculum full of meaningful activities and real-life problem-solving tasks. We are more than equipped to deliver the new curriculum, having attended the same courses as other schools in the area. We have excellent resources and wonderful grounds that allow the children to play, develop their imagination and learn. Because we teach the same children for	As above.

	several years, we are already skilled in thinking of new ideas so that teaching remains fresh, and the children are engaged.	
1.2.9	The school has been praised over the years for its academic and caring attitude to all learners including and especially ALN learners from varying backgrounds and its overall nurturing ethos to all its pupils.	As above.
1.2.10	Anecdotally, some parents whose children have left the school feel that Irfon Valley offered a better standard of education than their new school.	As above.

1.3 Comments about extra-curricular activities available at the school

1.3.1	The school participates in a number of extra-curricular activities including the local Eisteddfod in Llanwrtyd Wells, swimming galas, football/hockey/rugby competitions and cross country.	<p>The Council notes these comments about the extra-curricular activities available at Irfon Valley C.P. School.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, pupils would transfer to larger schools, which would also offer a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils, so these types of opportunities would continue to be available to pupils, although the actual activities offered may be different.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that pupils would live further away from the alternative schools, which may impact on their ability to access activities that take place after school. However, all of the alternative schools serve rural communities, so are experienced in meeting the needs of pupils who travel to school.</p>
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1.3.2	The children have lots of opportunities and always take part in school tournaments for sports as well as stuff for the Urdd and local eisteddfods.	As above.
1.3.3	The school provides the same opportunities during school time as larger schools however more children can participate. For example, whereas in a larger school auditions may take place for a choir, or the very best sports-players may be picked for a football competition, in Irfon Valley C.P. School, the children are all able to get involved due to the smaller numbers.	It is acknowledged that there may be more opportunity for pupils in a smaller school to participate in all activities that take place, due to the fact that there are fewer pupils at the school to take part in such activities. However, all schools, regardless of size, have a range of activities, and are expected to ensure that pupils can participate fully in these.
1.3.4	In the school's annual Christmas concert, all children have the opportunity to have a speaking part, with all children in Class Two taking bigger parts. This wouldn't happen in a larger school.	As above.
1.3.5	They are given more opportunities to be part of school groups such as School Council and Criw Cymraeg.	As above.
1.3.6	My children have had experiences at Irfon Valley School that children in larger schools would not have, from gardening to helping serve refreshments at the Macmillan coffee morning.	As above.
1.3.7	Whilst we might not have the staff to provide extra-curricular opportunities after school many of our children attend clubs locally which provide them with opportunities outside of school such as judo, football, rugby, hockey, piano and horse riding.	Comment noted. Pupils would continue to be able to access these activities should the proposal be implemented.

1.4 Comments about the staff at Irfon Valley C.P. School

1.4.1	The school staff are a very close-knit group, who work tirelessly and endlessly to ensure each child is taught and cared for with the upmost support.	The council notes these positive comments about the school staff at Irfon Valley C.P. School.
1.4.2	The staff in the school are welcoming and friendly, they are always willing to help out with both each other and the pupils.	As above.

1.4.3	Staff at the school know each and every individual child/children and their families, which has always helped make the transitioning process so much easier, and comfortable for everyone.	As above.
1.4.4	The school has experienced staff including HLTA's who are confident in delivering the curriculum and supporting the children's learning needs.	As above.
1.4.5	The Teaching staff and non-teaching staff at the school today are exceptional and are a credit to the school.	As above.
1.4.6	The Head, teaching staff and non-teaching staff are exceptional in their professions.	As above.
1.4.7	The staff know each and every child as an individual. They know their families and backgrounds, their interests, which is so important in understanding the child as a whole. They know when something isn't quite right them and this allows them to offer the support they need.	As above.

1.5 Comments about the school's role in the community

1.5.1	Even with low numbers of pupils, Irfon Valley CP School has been at the heart of this community for many years.	The Council fully acknowledges the school's role within the local community. A Community Impact Assessment has been prepared which considers the proposal's impact on the community, this will be updated to reflect information received during the consultation and will be considered by Cabinet when deciding whether or not to proceed.
1.5.2	Several schools were previously closed (Llanafan Fawr, Beulah, Llangammarch Wells) to join together to form Irfon Valley and it has very much felt like the hub of the community ever since. We have had generations of families attend this school - which goes to show how much the school is thought of in people's hearts.	As above.

1.5.3	The school plays an important role in the community – the Christmas Concert is held in the village hall and the elderly are invited to attend; the school holds MacMillan Coffee Mornings and invites the locals; the school has participated in events with Beulah Music Festival and supported local charities, and has even performed a play in front of the then Prince Charles at the request of the Village Hall Committee.	As above.
1.5.4	The school is at the heart of the Garth community, and the school regularly invites the local community into school for charity events, which include a diverse range of people.	As above.
1.5.5	The school provides a place of belonging, it is a place that is familiar to our children (and many for the children’s parents who also attended the school). It is a place that offers historical, cultural and social relevance and shapes and continues to shape our community.	As above.

1.6 Comments about the school’s small size

1.6.1	Children have moved to the school from larger schools where they found it difficult to cope with the large numbers and the size of the building, but who are now thriving in this smaller, nurturing school.	<p>The Council notes these comments about the benefits of small and rural schools.</p> <p>However, as stated in the Council’s Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Irfon Valley C.P. School currently has only 18 pupils, which means that it is increasingly difficult for the school to deliver education. The teacher-pupil ratio at the school is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council’s funding formula, the school’s funding per pupil is higher than the</p>
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		<p>Council's average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil.</p> <p>As pupil numbers at Irfon Valley C.P. School have decreased, it has been increasingly difficult for the school to provide education within the funding allocated to it by the funding formula.</p> <p>All schools, regardless of size, are required to meet the needs of all children and to support and challenge them to fulfil their potential. Smaller schools and smaller class sizes do not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education, as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class. This adds a challenge for teachers in small schools: they need to plan, implement and assess for the needs of up to four year groups within one class, and within each of those year groups plan, implement and assess for up to several ability groups, some with complex needs, thereby ensuring that the planning is differentiated for each child's needs. Larger schools usually have a greater level of staffing and single year group classes or a mixed year class of no more than 2 years.</p>
1.6.2	Because the school is small, staff know the pupils very well and the fact that they are in small mixed-aged classes means they have more adult attention. Staff are able to easily identify those who need additional challenge and those who need additional	As above.

	support. The fact that they are in mixed aged classes means that they can work at their ability level whether that is within their year group or with children in the year above if they are considered MAT or the year below if they require additional support.	
1.6.3	The staff are able to support pupils better due to smaller class sizes as they know the pupils' academic skills and capabilities extremely well. Each lesson, staff know exactly what each pupil has achieved and have provided feedback to each child, which is often difficult to achieve in a larger school.	As above.
1.6.4	Staff at Irfon Valley C.P. School know the children's abilities inside out due to teaching them for up to four years. In a larger school where a teacher has a completely new class each year, it takes several weeks to discover what the pupils already know and what they can do.	As above.
1.6.5	As it is a small school staff all provide a variety of roles i.e some TAs are also Mid-day supervisors, admin is also breakfast club leader etc. All staff are with the same children throughout the day and are also able to speak to each other about any concerns that are seen throughout the day.	As above.
1.6.6	As it is a small school, staff have been able to identify and help children with any behavioural or additional learning needs they may have from a younger age than is mostly recognised in a bigger school, and with the referrals now taking at least 18months, this is crucial.	As above.

1.7 Other comments

1.7.1	The older children in school are very caring of our younger learners. We do a range of activities in school where the older children work and support the younger children such as 'buddy',	The Council notes these comments about the support provided to younger children at Irfon Valley C.P. School by the older pupils.
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	cooking and leading well-being activities. The children really feel like they are part of one big family.	
1.7.2	The happiness on each child's face when they leave school is plain for everyone to see when they leave school.	Comment noted.
1.7.3	It is a great asset to Irfon Valley School that meals are still cooked on site by an invaluable staff member who ensures children do not leave school hungry. This is not the case at many other local schools.	The Council notes these comments about the provision of school meals at Irfon Valley C.P. School. It is correct that school meals are cooked on site at Irfon Valley. This is not currently the case at Builth Wells C.P. School or Llanelwedd C. in W. School, however both Ysgol Dolafon and Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School have their own cooking kitchens.
1.7.4	If local children HAD to go their nearest primary school, then the school would have sufficient numbers to be viable.	Parents are entitled to apply for a place for their children at any school they choose. All applications are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Admissions arrangements. If parents apply for a place at a school which isn't their closest school and there are places available, then the place would be allocated to the pupil.

2. COMMENTS ABOUT THE IMPACT ON PUPILS

2.1	The impact of school closure has the potential to create considerable anxiety, distress and disruption for the pupils affected.	The Council recognises that any school reorganisation process creates a period of uncertainty for all involved, including children. The Council is committed to supporting schools and learners, including through periods of change. An experienced member of staff from the Council is supporting school leaders effectively to help them manage possible changes for their learners.
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		<p>It is also expected that school governors, staff, and parents support the children to ensure that there isn't a detrimental impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Schools receiving pupils as a result of a school closure are expected to work with the closing school, the pupils, and their families to provide full support to pupils to ensure a smooth transition.</p>
2.2	The children in Garth school are from the local mainly agricultural community - it will be great shame for them to be transferred to the local town where it's a completely different environment for them to learn in. I'm confident they won't thrive in this vastly different environment.	As above.
2.3	Pupils have developed great friendship groups in the nurturing environment of Irfon Valley these groups will be broken up whilst they are relocated to the alternative schools. Causing further distress and unnecessary anxiety to each pupil.	As above.
2.4	With mental health issues becoming more of an issue in children as well as for adults I feel this is not going to be helpful for future generations.	As above.
2.5	Pupils have already suffered enough through the pandemic.	As above.
2.6	Bigger schools and longer bus journeys are not better for young children.	As above. It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposal could result in additional travel for some pupils, however the additional distance / journey time to the alternative schools is not considered to be excessive.
2.7	Some of the school's pupils already spend a considerable time travelling to school by bus in the morning due to the bus route and remoteness of where they live. It is a concern that they will have to spend longer on the bus getting to school	As above.

2.8	There will be anxiety caused to pupils who will be forced to now take school transport who previously have walked / or had parental transport.	As above.
2.9	I worry that children who need extra support will be completely lost in a larger school where there are many more children. How are staff in a larger school going to give the same care and attention that we do in a smaller school? I have concerns that children will not be encouraged to reach their full potential.	All schools, regardless of size, are required to meet the needs of all children and to support and challenge them to fulfil their potential. Smaller schools and smaller class sizes do not necessarily mean that pupils receive a more individual education, as there are a number of year groups and a wider age range of pupils in the class. This adds a challenge for teachers in small schools: they need to plan, implement and assess for the needs of up to four year groups within one class, and within each of those year groups plan, implement and assess for up to several ability groups, some with complex needs, thereby ensuring that the planning is differentiated for each child's needs. Larger schools usually have a greater level of staffing and single year group classes or a mixed year class of no more than usually 2 years.

3. COMMENTS ABOUT THE IMPACT ON PUPILS BELONGING TO PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC GROUPS

3.1	Some children with particular ALN will find it difficult to cope in larger schools particularly with the greater number of people, increased noise levels, the size of the building etc. Some children will feel overwhelmed by this.	<p>The Council notes these concerns about the potential impact of the proposal on pupils with ALN that currently attend Irfon Valley C.P. School.</p> <p>The Council recognises that any school reorganisation process creates a period of uncertainty for all involved, including any pupils with ALN. The Council is committed to supporting schools and learners, including through periods of</p>
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		<p>change. An experienced member of staff from the Council is supporting school leaders effectively to help them manage possible changes for their learners, including any learners with ALN.</p> <p>It is also expected that school governors, staff, and parents support the children to ensure that there isn't a detrimental impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Schools receiving pupils as a result of a school closure are expected to work with the closing school, the pupils, and their families to provide full support to pupils to ensure a smooth transition. This would particularly be the case for any schools receiving pupils with ALN.</p>
3.2	Concern that it will be more difficult for pupils with additional needs to make new friends and to adapt to changes.	As above.
3.3	Concern about the impact on pupils with autism and ALN pupils of transitioning to a larger / noisier school/	As above.
3.4	Concern about the impact on the families of pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups, who will have to deal with the upheaval in moving their child, possibly creating an issue with behaviour and their mental well-being. This is something that is meant to be high on the priorities but seems to have been pushed aside at the current time.	As above.
3.5	Children with ASD diagnosis find it incredibly difficult to come to terms with change. Moving to a bigger school will have a negative effect on them.	As above.
3.6	The proposal will greatly impact people with protected characteristics	<p>As above.</p> <p>An equality impact assessment has been carried out which considers the impact of the proposal on</p>

		pupils belonging to protected characteristic groups. This will be updated to reflect comments received as part of the consultation, and an updated version will be considered by Cabinet when deciding whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.
3.7	Concern about the impact on EAL pupils and their families.	As above.
3.8	Transgender pupils have been welcomed into the school and felt safe.	Comment noted.

4. IMPACT ON STAFF

4.1	I'm sure this whole situation has had a major impact on the staff. Please support them as much as you can going forward to find new jobs if the school is to close.	The Council recognises that any school reorganisation proposal creates a period of uncertainty for staff. A consultation meeting was held with staff as part of the consultation, and the HR team is providing to support to staff throughout the process.
4.2	The potential closure of the school means that all staff employed at the school face the prospect of future job losses whilst continuing to maintain the excellent standards of education and support for pupils at the school. Every effort should be made by PCC to offer support to school staff through this difficult period.	As above.
4.3	The members of staff who work tirelessly to ensure the children get the same opportunities as they do in other schools will miss attending Irfon Valley massively	As above.
4.4	No one has considered how many of the staff will lose their jobs and the impact it will have on them.	As above.
4.5	It's been difficult for staff as they have been fielding questions from both parents and pupils.	As above.

5. IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

5.1	Closure of Irfon Valley School will have a detrimental effect on the whole community.	The Council recognises that closure of any school has an impact on the local community. A draft Community Impact Assessment has been prepared with input from the school, which considers the impact of the proposal on the community. This will be updated to reflect feedback received during the consultation period, and will be considered by Cabinet when deciding whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.
5.2	A village school is at the heart of the community, closing the school would have a detrimental effect on the community.	As above.
5.3	It would be a shame to lose such a valuable asset to the community.	As above.
5.4	Closing the school will have a huge impact on the village, it's only the school that keeps it alive.	As above.
5.5	There is no other amenity in the village, so removing the school would be incredibly detrimental to the immediate and wider community.	As above.
5.6	The closure of Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School has shown the devastation that closing a thriving school has on pupils, parents, staff and community.	As above.
5.7	Concern about the impact on other resources in the area, such as shops close by.	As above.
5.8	What is the Council intending to do with the school site/building? This isn't outlined fully in the consultation document – more details should have been provided on this. Is the intention to sell the site and building for development? Who is going to buy the building if it is sold? It's not in a town where it could be used for other community purposes.	Irfon Valley C.P. School building is owned by Powys County Council. If it is decided to close the school, the Council's Corporate Asset Policy would be followed in respect of disposal of the site / building. This would include opportunities for other Council services to express interest in the site, consideration of a community asset transfer or sale on the open market via different methods.

5.9	It would be a shame to see the school building to be left empty (like other empty school buildings in Powys) or to be bulldozed to make space for houses, which won't attract families as there isn't a school to attract them to the area, and then become an eye sore.	As above.
5.10	Garth already has a successful Village Hall so there would be no need to use the building as a community facility.	The Council notes that Garth has a successful Village Hall. The proposal to close the school would not impact on the Village Hall.
5.11	There is a Hall in Garth, however this is not used for events similar to those held at the school, so closure of the school would mean a great loss for the local ageing community.	As above.
5.12	Closure of the school could put people off buying houses in the village and locally especially those with young families.	The Council notes this concern that pupils would not want to live in the area should there be no school in Garth. However, pupil numbers at Irfon Valley C.P. School have decreased significantly in recent years, as families currently living in the area have chosen for their children to attend other schools in the area instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School.
5.13	Not having a local school close by could put off people moving to the area and this would have a huge effect on the community.	As above.
5.14	Without the school less people will want to live near Garth.	As above.
5.15	Houses are being built in the area, but having no school in the local area limits the chances of these houses being sold to families, who would perhaps prefer to live closer to schools and towns.	As above.

6. IMPACT ON FAMILIES

6.1	Parents are worried about where their children will end up if the school closes – Irfon Valley is their first choice, but they would be unable to choose this school, and many other schools are full	The Council recognises that any school reorganisation process creates a period of
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	to capacity in some year groups, which makes it more difficult for parents to make a decision.	<p>uncertainty for all involved, including the families of pupils affected by any proposals.</p> <p>Whilst Irfon Valley C.P. School may be the first choice for some parents in the area, in particular those whose pupils continue to attend the school, many parents in the area are already choosing for their children to attend alternative schools.</p> <p>Parents are entitled to apply for a place for their children at any school they choose. All applications are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Admissions arrangements. Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School, parents would still be able to apply for a place at any alternative school they choose, so they would have a choice in terms of which school their child attends.</p>
6.2	The idea of shutting the school removes parental choice with the education of their children. The parents will be forced to move their child to a school they simply are not happy with them to attend.	As above.
6.3	Parents / families who want their children to be able to attend this school are facing having to make several life choices so that their children can attend a school of their choice.	As above.
6.4	The Council is forcing children to schools the parents have previously considered and discounted for individual reasons as not good enough for their children. Parents are now being forced to send their children to schools which are not as good as Irfon Valley. Where is parental choice when you are forced to send your child to a school you categorically don't want them to attend?	As above.

6.5	Proposal is for pupils to transfer to the 'nearest alternative school'. This is at odds with the broader commitment to provide Parents with choice over the school that their children attend. Commitment should be to work with parents to find a suitable alternative school for children to attend in the event that the IV School closes.	Whilst the wording in the proposal is for pupils 'to transfer to their nearest alternative school', in practice parents would be able to apply for a place at any alternative school they choose.
6.6	There will be extra cost implications on parents if the school closes, such as school uniform, bags, P.E. Kit. Are Powys able to provide financial support to pupils currently in the school to purchase the items needed to move to another school?	If the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School is agreed, it is recognised that there would be an additional cost to parents for school uniforms etc. Funding is currently available to support low income families with support for uniform costs. In addition, many schools offer the opportunity for parents / families to purchase second hand uniforms.

7. IMPACT ON EARLY YEARS PROVISION

7.1	There would be an impact on the provision at Rainbow Tots, which has been a great resource used in recent years.	It is acknowledged that should the Council proceed with the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School, it is likely that there would be an impact on Rainbow Tots. As stated in the Consultation Document in respect of this proposal: <i>'Should the Council proceed with the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School, it is unlikely that the provision at Rainbow Tots would continue to be viable.'</i>
7.2	Closure of the school would also mean closure of the very well-run pre-school. This would most definitely be a huge loss to the area.	As above.
7.3	The early years provision offered in alternative schools would increase the travel time for nursery age children, meaning parents would not have reasonable access to the 3 year old funding.	As stated in the Consultation Document, should the Council proceed with the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School, <i>'access to alternative funded early years provision would be available at other providers in the area.'</i>

7.4	At Irfon Valley we pride ourselves for having an excellent transition from the pre-school into the school, are they going to be able to get this same transition when transitioning with many other children?	The alternative providers of early years provision, which are listed in the Consultation Document (Dolafon Ducklings, Cylch yn yr Ysgol, Llanelwedd Little Learners, Newbridge-on-Wye 3 Year Old Setting), are all located on school sites, so there is no reason to believe that transition arrangements for pupils from pre-school into school would not continue to be effective should pupils attend alternative provision.
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8. COMMENTS ABOUT HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LOCAL AREA

8.1	New houses are being built in Beulah and Llangammarch Wells, however new families moving there would not have the option to attend their village school if we were to close.	Comment noted. However, families living in the area are currently choosing for their children to attend alternative provision instead of attending Irfon Valley C.P. School. Should there be no school in Garth, parents would be able to apply for a place for their children at any other school in the area.
8.2	The proposal is short sighted in view of extensive building in the area and likelihood of young families moving into the area.	As above.
8.3	Once the houses in Beulah and Llangammarch Wells are completed they will not be able to send any children who live there to a nurturing small rural school to help develop their confidence but rather to travel further on a unsupervised bus to a bigger school in a town.	As above.
8.4	There are houses being built in Beulah, Llangammarch and Llanwrtyd, this could affect the number of children coming to the school.	As above.
8.5	There are several local housing developments in the surrounding area such as Llangammarch Wells, Cilmery, Beulah. These houses have not yet been sold and if young families with children of school age move into the area it would	As above.

	add to the pressure to the local schools and exceed the capacity in schools such as Builth and Ysgol Dolafon. Where are you expecting these children to be educated locally?	
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9. COMMENTS ABOUT TRAVEL/TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

9.1 Concern about additional travel

9.1.1	Additional travel would be needed to alternative schools, and surely this would be an additional cost to the county.	<p>It is correct that additional transport would need to be provided to enable pupils for whom Irfon Valley C.P. School is currently their closest school to access alternative provision. This has been reflected in the Consultation Document which states:</p> <p><i>'It is estimated there would be additional transport costs of £46k per annum, based on pupils' current location and assuming that pupils will transfer to the next nearest school.'</i></p>
9.1.2	There would an increase in travel costs.	As above.
9.1.3	There would be a massive environmental impact due to additional travel.	<p>It is acknowledged that that the additional travel required would have an environmental impact. As stated in the impact assessment document which was published as part of the Consultation Documentation:</p> <p><i>'Implementation of the proposal would require additional travel for pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School for whom this is their closest school. This would have a negative environmental impact as more home to school transport would</i></p>

		<p><i>need to be provided to transport pupils to their nearest alternative school.</i></p> <p><i>Implementation of the proposal would mean that the Council would no longer need to run the Irfon Valley school site. This would result in a reduction in the use of heating and electricity amongst other factors.'</i></p>
9.1.4	Concern about the impact on parents being able to attend school events if they have to travel further – this would limit parents ability to attend events at school.	<p>The impact on parents being able to attend school events is acknowledged in the impact assessment document which was published as part of the consultation documentation, which states:</p> <p><i>'Whilst free transport would be provided to eligible pupils, it is acknowledged that there could be an impact on some pupils' ability to access after school activities, and could impact on the ability of parents to take part in school events, meetings etc.'</i></p>
9.1.5	Concern about the impact of additional travel on parents, grandparents and others in the wider support network.	As above.

9.2 Comments about the Council's Transport Policy

9.2.1	There is no indication of any flexibility in the established PCC school transport policy. The parents of children at Irfon Valley School have remained supportive and committed to the school despite reducing pupil numbers that clearly place the school's viability at risk. Parents' commitment and support for IV School should be recognised and endeavours made to assist with	These concerns are noted. Should the Council proceed with the proposal in respect of Irfon Valley C.P. School, transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.
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	transport provision even where the choice of school is not the 'nearest alternative school'.	
9.2.2	I do not believe it is appropriate to have school transport where primary and secondary school pupils travel together, conversations which 16 year olds have during these bus journeys are certainly not to be overheard by Key Stage one pupils. What provision is being put in place to provide transport separately for primary & secondary school pupils?	The concerns about primary and secondary aged pupils travelling on the same transport are noted. However, the Council has no intention to introduce any alternative arrangements which would mean that separate transport would be provided for primary and secondary pupils. This would have significant financial implications and is therefore unaffordable at this time.
9.2.3	The council has attracted children away by providing free school transport to Builth to the detriment of Irfon valley school.	All local authorities are expected to promote access to Welsh-medium education. This is in-line with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure.
9.2.4	The Welsh unit in Builth Wells CP School has had an effect on pupil numbers at Irfon Valley School. Local families are sending their children there now and previously, passing by Irfon Valley CP School as free transport is provided to the Welsh unit in Builth Wells.	As above.

10. COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER SCHOOLS

10.1	Pupils will not necessarily have any choice of which school they go to. There is currently no space in Newbridge and Llanelwedd, with limited spaces in Builth as that includes space in the Welsh stream too.	Information about the capacity and pupil numbers at Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School and Llanelwedd C. in W. School was provided in the consultation document, as well as Builth Wells C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is pressure on places at Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School and Llanelwedd C. in W. School in particular, there are sufficient places at Builth Wells C. in W. School and
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		Ysgol Dolafon to accommodate all pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School.
10.2	Most of the other schools are full so the school has to stay open for the children to still have an education.	As above.
10.3	What happens when these schools get full? Where do the pupils go then?	As above. The Council is already planning to review primary provision in the area as part of the plans for Ysgol Calon Cymru. This review will need to ensure sufficient places are required to accommodate current and future pupil numbers in the area.
10.4	A major concern that has been mentioned to myself is the lack of places in other local school as well as transport to the schools, the nearest school to some pupils are full which may mean that they may have to go to another school and then lose out on free school transport through no fault of their own.	As above. Should a pupil be refused a place at their nearest alternative school as part of the Admissions process, transport would be provided to the next nearest school.
10.5	Builth primary is going to be overpopulated and some children will be forgotten.	Information about the capacity and current pupil numbers at Builth Wells C.P. School is provided in the Consultation Document published as part of this proposal. This shows that there are currently 44 available places, which is more than sufficient to accommodate all pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School.
10.6	Some of the alternative schools haven't had such a glowing Estyn Inspection as Irfon Valley.	Information about the latest Estyn inspections of Irfon Valley C.P. School and the alternative schools pupils may choose to transfer to was provided in the Consultation Document. Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 14 of this report. Estyn's view is that the

		proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.
10.7	You state that pupils would have a better education in bigger schools in the area which is completely not true. In one of the local schools that you recommend, one of their recommendations from their recent Estyn inspection is to "ensure that teachers provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities", which implies that not all teachers are currently doing so. However, you state that bigger schools are more equipped at meeting the needs of all pupils!	As above.
10.8	Llanelwedd have 4 recommendations in their report including "Ensure that teachers provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities " which I believe is something that we do really well at in Irfon Valley.	As above.
10.9	Irfon valley provides excellent school meals cooked on site (which appears to be unusual for Powys CC Schools) which is an invaluable asset to the school. At other schools, meals are transported and held at temperature for a long time. This is not something I want my grandchild to eat, and I am sure they will choose not to eat it either as it's so unpleasant.	<p>It is correct that school meals are cooked on site at Irfon Valley C.P. School. This is not currently the case at Builth Wells C.P. School or Llanelwedd C. in W. School, however both Ysgol Dolafon and Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School have their own cooking kitchens.</p> <p>There are many examples across Powys where meals are transported from one school to another. Whilst acknowledging that this is not the preferred way of providing access to school meals, and that this method does pose some challenges, all meals served meet the required guidelines.</p>
	The Consultation Document states that Builth Wells School has building suitability of A/B. I cannot fathom how the building is suitable when it does not have adequate cooking facilities to provide fresh hot meals to its pupils. The meals are transported	It is correct that Builth Wells C.P. School does not have a cooking kitchen. Meals are supplied to Builth Wells C.P. School from the Builth Wells site of Ysgol Calon Cymru.

	<p>and kept warm for a prolonged period of time before the pupils are offered them. With the increased uptake of free school meals and likelihood of this offer being extended to older years, I would like Powys to outline if it has any plans to return adequate cooking facilities to the local schools listed below which do not have them. It's a fundamental requirement outlined by the Welsh Government that no child should ever be at school hungry, surely the common practice within Powys of cooking and transporting meals, results in sub-standard food offered to the children most in need which in turn they refuse to eat and therefore leave school hungry. Talking to parents of school children in Builth Wells Primary this is a common occurrence, what measures are being put in place by Powys to counteract this? They are not being offered freshly cooked meals.</p>	<p>There are many examples across Powys where meals are transported from one school to another. Whilst acknowledging that this is not the preferred way of providing access to school meals, and that this method does pose some challenges, all meals served meet the required guidelines.</p> <p>The catering department is currently looking to reinstate a cooking kitchen at Builth Wells C.P. School, by expanding the kitchen and locating a kitchen pod attached to the existing kitchen, which would ensure that in the future, meals would be prepared on site at Builth Wells C.P. School.</p>
10.11	<p>Hopeful that the proposal would result in an increase in pupil numbers at Ysgol Dolafon, however a request for assurance that Ysgol Dolafon will be safe from the same fate – concern that there is a long term plan to close all local schools and expand Builth.</p>	<p>The Council is unable to provide any assurance regarding the future of Ysgol Dolafon – pupil numbers at all schools are regularly reviewed, and sometimes there is a requirement to review provision at a school. However, should a review of Ysgol Dolafon be carried out, there would be a need to consider the impact on pupils, including any pupils who had transferred to the school from Irfon Valley C.P. School, should the Council proceed with the current proposal.</p>

11. COMMENTS ABOUT SMALL/ RURAL SCHOOLS

11.1 Positive comments about small / rural schools

11.1.1	<p>We think the children will be better study in a small school where they are can get more attention and be more happy.</p>	<p>The Council notes these comments about the benefits of small and rural schools. However, as</p>
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		<p>stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Irfon Valley C.P. School has seen a significant decrease in pupil numbers over recent years and currently has just 18 pupils, which is causing challenges.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. This includes Ysgol Dolafon, which is also a small school with around 50 pupils. Pupils wishing to continue to attend a smaller school could choose to transfer here.</p> <p>The Council's view is that the alternative schools in the area which pupils may choose to transfer to would enable pupils to access education which is of at least equivalent quality to the education they currently receive.</p>
11.1.2	It has been proven that lower numbers in a classroom can stem better results.	As above.
11.1.3	In smaller local schools the number of children per teacher is reduced. This means the child gets more opportunity to express themselves and receive a far more tailored learning environment.	As above.
11.1.4	Village schools are very important for quieter children.	As above.
11.1.5	In smaller schools staff are more able to cater to differing learning abilities, and to pick up on whether a child is feeling down or unwell or if something is bothering them, and because	As above.

	of this things are picked up on quicker and can be dealt with quicker.	
11.1.6	In small schools, staff have an in-depth knowledge of every child. Knowing the child means that teaching can be pitched to ensure all children feel supported but also challenged. Parental contact is nurtured, with a collaborative approach between school, teacher and parent. Having reliable access to in-depth knowledge about your child's individual progress becomes incredibly reassuring for parents.	As above.
11.1.7	There are clear benefits to smaller schools, not only for academic progress, but also for pastoral care and a child's development. Their social, emotional, and medical needs are known by all staff, and their individual characteristics are encouraged and thrive, rather than having to fit a mould to survive.	As above.
11.1.8	Significant Research tells us that belonging to a close-knit community is vitally important in developing a child's resilience. It is also a protective factor for mental health and bullying issues. Small schools are leading the way in tailored and flexible learning programs. In my experience they offer an environment that fosters empathy and positive wellbeing in a way that a large school never could. Small schools are more conducive to individual care, whilst still achieving excellent academic outcomes	As above.
11.1.9	It is disappointing to see that small schools are not valued in small communities. Local schools offer a convenient hub in the community for more than just educational purposes and everything should be done to protect these assets.	The Council fully acknowledges the role and value of small schools in rural communities. However, as stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools.

		A draft Community Impact Assessment has been prepared with input from the school, which considers the impact of the proposal on the community. This will be updated to reflect feedback received during the consultation period, and will be considered by Cabinet when deciding whether or not to proceed with implementation of the proposal.
11.1.10	There is significant and extensive research from the US which supports the case for smaller schools. Has this research been read and considered in the decision-making process?	Research from the US has not been considered in the decision-making process. The process is being carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code, and all documentation has been prepared in accordance with the Code's requirements.
11.1.11	In 1999, after inspecting every primary school in England, Ofsted reported on the comparative performance of small schools, which it defined as those with fewer than 100 pupils. It found that small primary schools achieved markedly better test results. However, there was much else that was positive for small schools. Ofsted argued "the quality of teaching in small schools is generally better than in larger schools". Inspectors concluded that their "positive ethos" and "important place in the community" meant there was "a good case" for small schools. In short, they tick all the Every Child Matters boxes. Has this been considered as part of the consultation? You are forcing the pupils to move to larger schools where they will not thrive in the manner each pupil does in Irfon Valley.	Ofsted's report has not been considered as part of the consultation. Schools in Wales are inspected by Estyn, not Ofsted. Estyn's response to the consultation is provided on page 14 of this report. Estyn's view is that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.

11.2 Concerns about larger schools

11.2.1	Concern that pupils will become 'just a number' in larger schools.	The Council notes these concerns about pupils attending larger schools. However, as stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in
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		<p>Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Irfon Valley C.P. School has seen a significant decrease in pupil numbers over recent years and currently has just 18 pupils, which is causing challenges for the school.</p> <p>Should the Council proceed with implementation of the proposal, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. This includes Ysgol Dolafon, which is also a small school with around 50 pupils. Pupils wishing to continue to attend a smaller school could choose to transfer here.</p> <p>The Council's view is that the alternative schools in the area which pupils may choose to transfer to would enable pupils to access education which is of at least equivalent quality to the education they currently receive, regardless of their size, and that pupils would continue to receive the care and attention they need to enable them to meet their full potential.</p>
11.2.2	When in a larger school, pupils are 'just a number' and don't get the individual care they do in a smaller school like Irfon Valley.	As above.
11.2.3	I worry that in a larger school some children may fly under the radar and may not have certain issues picked up on.	As above.
11.2.4	Sending children from small local schools to larger hub schools can be daunting, less empowering and cause children at a vital age for progressing to go into their shell, hindering their progress and damaging their opportunity to learn in a more open environment.	As above.

11.2.5	My biggest concern of moving my child to another larger school is that their individual characteristics will be diminished as part of a larger class.	As above.
11.2.6	There are lots of bad things in a bigger school such as bullying and attention deficit to children. The teacher can't get attention for all pupils who study in the class where 30 or more children.	As above. Issues such as bullying can occur in all schools, regardless of its size.

12. CRITICISM OF THE COUNCIL

12.1	The Authority should have engaged more with the school and Governors on all options on the table. Perhaps the Authority should have stepped in sooner with support when the pupil numbers began to fall.	The process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code, and support has been provided to the school in line with the support provided to all schools. It is not the Council's responsibility to step in to support schools in increase numbers when pupil numbers begin to fall.
12.2	It is clear from the evidence given that Irfon Valley school governors contacted Powys County Council a few months ago for help in regards to the small amount of pupils, I am not sure the beginning of the process to close the school would be considered the help the governing body was after. It is appalling that Powys have moved so fast in wishing to close the school.	Comment noted. After the governing body contacted the Council regarding the decrease in pupil numbers at the school, the Council carried out an options appraisal exercise in respect of the school. This is the Council's usual process when reviewing schools. The preferred option identified by this options appraisal was to close the school.
12.3	I am mortified that the council want to close this lovely local school, whilst the force the agenda that larger schools are better. This is simply not the case and this is proof that the council do not value all the work the staff, pupils and parents put in to make the school such a success.	The Council is not forcing the agenda that larger schools are better. However, it is a fact that the cost per pupil at Irfon Valley C.P. School is significantly higher than the Powys average, and this tends to the be the case for all small schools. As stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge

		due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools.
12.4	I do strongly believe that the way the council have approached this idea of closure, has scared several members of the community already with them being told the decision has already been made.	No decision has been made. The Council's Cabinet will consider this Consultation Report and will decide whether or not to continue with the process.
12.5	It seems to me that the decision has already been made and we're just riding the storm and ticking boxes before it can be done officially.	As above.
12.6	It is of great sadness that the school system to Powys Council is purely a numbers game where the balance sheet becomes of greater importance than a child's education, mental wellbeing, happiness and all the other aspects that a small local school supports.	It is not 'purely a numbers game', however it is a fact that the cost per pupil at Irfon Valley C.P. School is significantly higher than the Powys average. The Council has a duty to ensure the best possible provision for all pupils across Powys. There is currently a lack of equity amongst schools.
12.7	The closure of Irfon Valley school is purely financial and does not take into consideration the plentiful other reasons a small community based school is beneficial to all.	The proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School is not 'purely financial'.
12.8	The other local schools are already either full or nearly full, and with houses being built in the local area this seems like an ill thought out money saving exercise	Information about the capacity and pupil numbers at Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School and Llanelwedd C. in W. School was provided in the consultation document, as well as Builth Wells C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is pressure on places at Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School and Llanelwedd C. in W. School in particular, there are sufficient places at Builth Wells C. in W. School and Ysgol Dolafon to accommodate all pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School.
12.9	Powys are purely looking to line their own pockets, as closing a school brings great financial gain to PCC. The site can be sold which is the initial short term capital outlined in the consultation	Whilst it is possible that the Council could realise a capital receipt from sale of the site should Irfon

	document as a advantage to closing the school. Once a developer purchases the site, Powys CC then receive further money through the costs associated with planning permissions and once completed the ongoing income received from Council Tax etc. This further compounds the fact that Powys are only looking to close the school for financial reasons and have not fully considered any other options.	Valley C.P. School close, no decisions about the site's possible future use have not yet been made.
12.10	As a county decisions are being made that are against the general consensus – local people want a local school that has local values	The proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School is being taken forward due to the significant decrease in pupil numbers at the school recently. This decrease is because families currently living in the area have chosen for their children to attend other schools in the area instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School. This does not support the statement that 'local people want a local school that has local values'.
12.11	Powys CC and the Transforming Education Team are pushing the narrative that larger schools are better, what factual research is this based on? There is clear research, academic articles etc that states that small schools are better than large schools where has this research been considered. There is no evidence this has been considered although Powys should be aware of the research otherwise how can they make an informed proposal if it is not based on evidence based research? I would suggest therefore that Powys are not making decisions on evidence and facts which is greatly concerning.	It is not correct that the Council is pushing a narrative that 'larger schools are better'. The Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2022-32, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Irfon Valley C.P. School has seen a significant decrease in pupil numbers over recent years and currently has just 18 pupils, which is causing challenges for the school. The cost per pupil at Irfon Valley C.P. School is significantly higher than the Powys average, and this tends to be the case for all small schools, meaning that there is currently a lack of equity amongst schools. The Council has a duty to ensure the best possible provision for all pupils across Powys.

12.12	<p>The need to consider closure is a fiscal matter. Communications around the proposed closure have suggested that closure could result in at least or better standards of education provision for the children impacted. Without doubt, smaller schools face administration and compliance related challenges. However, these have all been maintained well at IV School, alongside the continued high levels of education. The requirement for IV School pupils to attend a different school will be disruptive in itself and will involve most pupils facing longer journey times and reduced ability to partake in activities outside of school hours. Parents and other stakeholders understand that where a School has experienced significant reductions in pupil numbers, such as those experienced by IV School. And where school funding allocations are largely based on pupil numbers, the longer-term viability of a school is likely to be placed in jeopardy. Instead of “dressing up:” the proposals in terms of education provision, a more honest and transparent approach to future communications is requested. Can future communications explain the position as it is, and be frank and honest about the limited viability of a School with such small pupil numbers within the current policy and funding regime.</p>	This comment is noted.
12.13	<p>Press releases issued by the Council have had a negative impact on individuals involved with the school, as they have suggested that greater opportunities are available at larger schools.</p>	Comment noted.

13. COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROCESS

13.1 Comments about the timing

13.1.1	The process appears to have come about very quickly and has not given the school, community, governors, parents and pupils time to develop a plan to keep the school open.	The process is being taken forward in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code. This has included a 6 week consultation period which has given all stakeholders the opportunity to let the Council know their views on the proposal.
13.1.2	I believe that the proposal to close Irfon Valley CP School in such a short space of time has not given parents, staff or other members of the community time to process what a loss the school closing will have on the community.	As above.
13.1.3	I believe the council should consider giving more time for this decision to be made.	As above.
13.1.4	The consultation period does not co-incide with the school application closing dates. Who is to say we won't have a pick up on children wanting to begin their educational journey at Irfon Valley which given a few years may bounce back!!!	It is acknowledged that school reorganisation processes and admissions arrangements could be better aligned. However, even if there were a number of applications for places in Reception at the school from September 2024, this would take many years to impact on overall pupil numbers at the school, and the school would remain a very small school, at least in the short term. There are currently no applications to join the school's 'Reception' year group in September 2024.
13.1.5	PCC School Application Policy requires Parents to apply to preferred choice of school by January (two terms in advance) ahead of the next School year commencing. There is a risk that pupils of IV School are placed at the back of the list when choosing an alternative suitable school for their children due to the timing of any announcements on the future of IV School. Given the small numbers of children impacted by the proposals (13 in total) commitments should be given by PCC to work with all local schools identified to earmark places for children at preferred schools to minimise the impact of changing school and	This concern is noted. It is acknowledged that school reorganisation processes and admissions arrangements could be better aligned.

	the associated disruption. Moreover, the current approach encourages parents to move children to their preferred school during the year, itself a more disruptive approach for the pupils, in order to “jump the queue”.	
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13.2 Comments about consultation meetings

13.2.1	I'm very disappointed that there has not been any attempt by the Council to hold any open/public meetings where parents, staff, community members could all come together to be spoken too and informed about the situation.	<p>Consultation meetings were held with staff and governors, which include community representatives. The School Organisation Code does not require public meetings to be held as part of school reorganisation processes.</p> <p>The Council has not held public meetings as part of school reorganisation proposals for a number of years.</p>
13.2.2	I am also baffled as to why the authority didn't engage in person with the local community. Can you explain why you failed to do this and solely relied on online forms for members of the community to complete? Not everyone is online. How can everyone have their views noted and opportunity to voice their concerns?	As above.

13.3 Comments about consultation with pupils

13.3.1	Whilst it is acknowledged that the statutory process makes provision for consultation with children on proposals, this is not always appropriate. The language of the children and young persons consultation documents were not age appropriate for younger pupils. It is accepted that in this instance, for IV School, arrangements were made to allow Parents to opt their children	Comment noted. Whilst it is important that pupil voice is heard as part of any school reorganisation proposal, concerns were raised during the consultation meetings with staff and governors at Irfon Valley about pupils meeting with Council
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	out of the consultation process, and for teachers instead of PCC Officers to undertake the consultation with pupils that took place. This flexibility should be a standard part of a flexible approach applied to other schools facing potential closure, especially for younger children. In some instances, asking children about “potential” school closure can be counter-productive, particularly where the position such as that faced by IV School is so stark in terms of the financial impact of such considerable loss of pupil numbers (given the funding formula is based predominantly on pupil numbers). Where the decision remains to proceed with closure, it suggests to children that their voices do not matter.	officers as part of the proposal, so alternative arrangements were made.
13.3.2	Concern about the process for carrying out consultation with pupils.	As above.

13.4 Other comments

13.4.1	I feel this is a 'done deal' and that no matter what other options are available there is no way it will be considered or listened to.	It is not a 'done deal'. The process is being carried out in accordance with the School Organisation Code. Cabinet will consider this Consultation Report, and will decide whether or not to proceed with the process.
13.4.2	As the potential school closure date approaches, it is inevitable that the school may face additional challenges, as for instance, staff find new / alternative employment. This is likely to have an impact on the school's budget which would not have otherwise arisen had a review of the future of the school not been taken. PCC are requested to consider the need for additional financial support for the school should that be required through the period of disruption.	Should the Council proceed with the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. Schol, we would work with the school throughout the period leading up to its closure to support with any issues which may arise.
13.4.3	Would the closure date change if pupil numbers were to drop again between now and the final decision?	No, the closure date would remain as per the proposal.

13.4.4	What would happen to the school's resources should the school close?	Resources would be distributed to other schools and the community where possible.
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14. COMMENTS ABOUT THE DOCUMENTATION

14.1	The numbers quoted in the consultation document do not include the number of pupils likely to start Reception in September as the window of applying for reception places is open for the duration of the consultation process. It also does not consider the pupils who are not yet in Rainbow tots which would like to use Garth school from September 2025.	The consultation document includes the actual pupil numbers that were attending the school in September 2023, as well as the latest projected numbers available.
14.2	It's disappointing that the local housing developments being built in the area have not been acknowledged in the Consultation Document. With 25 properties being currently built in Llangammarch Wells and a further 20+ in Beulah, this could possibly bring more children into the school.	As above.
14.3	The document itself was littered with basic errors. We are entrusting Powys County Council to make a major decision with an impact that will ripple throughout the community, and they are not able to get basic facts correct in a consultation document.	The Council does not agree that 'the document was littered with basic errors'.
14.4	The video presented on the Powys website did not show Irfon Valley C.P School. It is of great disappointment, that the Transforming Education Team cannot identify the school itself, and to get such a basic detail incorrect is an insult.	It is acknowledged that initially a document was published which included an incorrect photograph. The Council apologises for this. This was corrected immediately once the Council became aware of this error.
14.5	Before you leave the first page of the Consultation Document the beginning of the factual inaccuracies begins, a phone number which no longer works. Secondly the distance from Irfon Valley is inaccurate.	The phone number included in the consultation document is correct. The distances from Irfon Valley C.P. School to alternative schools which are provided on pages 22-23 of the Consultation Document are also correct.

14.6	Why is the building condition stated as poor and satisfactory? The school was built in 1980, yes is 43 years old but its not old as other school buildings around.	The assessments of Irfon Valley C.P. School's building condition and suitability are based on the latest assessments of the school building which have been carried out.
14.7	In the disadvantages compiled in the consultation document there has not been consideration of the pupils moving to larger class sizes and the disadvantages this brings. Of which there is multiple reasons. These have not been considered let alone explored.	Comment noted. The advantages and disadvantages listed in the document are based on the Council's view of the proposal, and reflect the views of a cross section of professionals from across the Council, e.g. School Improvement, Finance, Transforming Education.
14.8	The reasons in the consultation document are particularly poor and unconsidered.	The reasons for the proposal reflect the views of a cross section of professionals from across the Council, e.g. School Improvement, Finance, Transforming Education.
14.9	You state that "because pupil numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged." I wholeheartedly disagree with this. Due to our small class sizes, we get to know each and every pupil extremely well and can cater to their needs, ensuring they are suitably challenged at their own level. This is an enormous benefit to small schools, and larger schools simply cannot know their pupils as well.	Comment noted.
14.10	The devastation caused by closing Irfon Valley school has not been outlined in enough detail within the consultation document. It does not consider the social, emotional, and general well being of the pupils who would be forced to transfer to a larger school and the impact it has on their daily lives.	The Consultation Document has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation Code.
14.11	There is an overall disingenuous theme to the consultation document and associated communications.	As above.
14.12	In section 17 the capacity for Builth CP is stated as being 249, which with 7 year groups would give an admissions number of 35.57 rounded down to 35, but in Appendix A the admission	The comments about the relationship between the admission number and the capacity are noted. The information provided is as per the sources which

	number is given as 40, which would mean the school has a total capacity of between 280 and 286.	are identified in the consultation document, however the figure of 249 which is provided should be 246, according to the Council's capacity information submitted to Welsh Government in 2022.
14.13	In the finance section of Appendix A, Builth CP is stated to have an annual budget of £280,000 with a per pupil funding figure of £4,470 per pupil, so if the per pupil figure is correct then the annual budget is above £900,000.	The figure provided for Builth Wells C.P. School is an error – the figure of £280,000 is the figure for Ysgol Dolafon in the row below. The correct figure for Builth Wells C.P. School is £914,153.
14.14	In Appendix A the pupil numbers for January 23 are shown as both 34 and 30 and I know the one is actual and the other is a previous year estimate, this then goes on to give different sets of projected pupil numbers for future years, one from the same source as above and the other from finance.	The data shown in Appendix A includes the actual pupil numbers at the school in January 2023 which were 34, as well as projected pupil numbers based on January 2022 information – this is because updated projections based on January 2023 PLASC were not yet available when the document was published. This is why there are two pupil number figures for January 2023 – one is actual pupil numbers, the other is a projection. A footnote is included in the document to explain that the figures are based on PLASC 2022 as PLASC 2023 information was not available.
14.15	In the section on equalities the percentages given against each group in relation to Ysgol Dolafon only adds up to 93.1% and not 100%. I assume that if you look at the following table the missing 6.9% relates to the same 6.9% as shown in the second table.	Information about the remaining 6.9% was not provided, and should have been shown as such in the table.
14.16	However, the local authority's assessment against critical factors (Appendix C), does not appear to consider all of the options.	Options 6 and 7 were omitted from the critical success factors table, however they were included in the SWOT assessments carried out which were included in the papers considered by Cabinet in October 2023.

	There could be an impact on pupils' ability to access after-school activities. The consultation does not provide an indication about how the local authority will seek to address this issue.	It is acknowledged that pupils would live further away from the alternative schools, which may impact on their ability to access activities that take place after school. However, all of the alternative schools serve rural communities, so are experienced in meeting the needs of pupils who travel to school.
14.17	The local authority asserts that the quality of leadership would be at least as good in neighbouring schools, but doesn't include the supporting evidence in this proposal.	The Council holds termly meetings with schools to monitor progress in learning, provision and leadership. The information in the Consultation Document is based on the findings of these meetings.
14.18	The consultation document specifies that increased travel requirements for school events could have a greater impact on learners affected by socio-economic disadvantage. Whilst the proposal states there would be ongoing support for pupils with additional learning needs, the support to be provided for learners affected by socio-economic disadvantage is not clear.	<p>The Council recognises that any school reorganisation process creates a period of uncertainty for all involved, including any pupils with ALN, or pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage. The Council is committed to supporting schools and all learners, including through periods of change. An experienced member of staff from the Council is supporting school leaders effectively to help them manage possible changes for their learners, including any learners affected by socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>It is also expected that school governors, staff, and parents support the children to ensure that there isn't a detrimental impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Schools receiving pupils as a result of a school closure are expected to work with the closing school, the pupils, and their families to provide full support to pupils to ensure a smooth transition. This</p>

		would particularly be the case for any schools receiving pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage.
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15. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

15.1 Keep the school open

15.1.1	Don't close it	Status quo is one of the options considered in the options appraisal carried out in respect of Lrfon Valley C.P. School, however this option would not address the challenges identified. As explained in the Consultation Document, pupil numbers at Lrfon Valley C.P. School have decreased significantly over recent years to 18 pupils, 5 of whom are in Year 6. This is because parents have chosen for their children to attend alternative schools in the area.
15.1.2	Keep the school open	As above.
15.1.3	Because of all the new builds in the area you should keep the school open another year or so, the houses are family homes and lots of children would need a school that's close by, I'm sure the school will fill up quickly.	As above.

15.2 Develop the provision at the school

15.2.1	Provide after school provision	It is not the authority's role to provide after school provision at the school.
15.2.2	Most of the drop in pupil numbers could be fixed by the provision of an after school club or organised clubs after school by contacting local sports clubs to run coaching sessions.	As above.

15.2.3	Ask the local community to help in running lunch time or after school support alongside parents and teachers	It is not the authority's role to take forward these activities.
15.2.4	Run a nursery from the Lrfon valley site alongside the school to offer care from babies to Year 6.	There is already access to pre-school provision on the school site.
15.2.5	Fund additional hours for the pre-school, 7.5 hours a week is not enough, children are entitled to more funding than that.	As stated in the Consultation Document, ' <i>Rainbow Tots isn't currently funded for the full 10 hours a week. Due to low numbers at Rainbow Tots and Dolafon Ducklings, both settings offer 7.5 hours a week.</i> '
15.2.6	Increase fund raising to close the financial deficit	Funding is provided to the school in accordance with the funding formula, in the same way that it is provided to all other schools. It is not the Council's responsibility to arrange for increased fund raising to support the school.
15.2.7	The council should support the school and local community to raise the extra funds to make the financial aspect of the school viable. I am not aware the school has been given the chance to raise any more funds or explore the financial options to keep the school open.	Funding is provided to the school in accordance with the funding formula, in the same way that it is provided to all other schools. The Council is not in a position to 'support the school and local community to raise extra funds' to support the school.
15.2.8	They should be looking at doing more fundraising to get the community more involved or linking the school to others to help with funds and advertising the school for more children to attend there. Doing open days for the area so people can see what the school is about.	The Council is not responsible for fundraising, promoting the school or arranging open days.
15.2.9	The school should be looking at the reasons why numbers at the school are low and encouraging/making the school an attractive option for education as well as extra curricular activities in the community.	Numbers at the school are low because parents in the area are choosing for their children to attend alternative provision elsewhere.
15.2.10	The Council should provide support for the school and suggest ways in which the school numbers can be increased.	Support is provided to the school in-line with the support which is provided to all other schools. It is not the Council's responsibility to 'suggest ways in which the school numbers can be increased'.

15.2.11	The council could consider promoting the school and its benefits of being a smaller rural school rather than proposing its closure would potentially make parents understand that their child is lucky to have such an education and its not all about saving money.	It is not the Council's responsibility to promote the school.
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15.3 Federate Irfon Valley and Ysgol Dolafon

15.3.1	Federating Irfon Valley C.P. School with Dolafon would make complete sense, especially as there is a shared headteacher across the two schools which is working well.	Federating Irfon Valley C.P. School with Ysgol Dolafon is one of the options considered in the options appraisal carried out in respect of Irfon Valley C.P. School, however this option would not address the challenges identified. As explained in the Consultation Document, pupil numbers at Irfon Valley C.P. School have decreased significantly over recent years to 18 pupils, 5 of whom are in Year 6. This is because parents have chosen for their children to attend alternative schools in the area.
15.3.2	Federate with Ysgol Dolafon.	As above.
15.3.3	Why did the council not federate Ysgol Dolafon and Irfon Valley as proposed several years ago? Joining the Governing bodies etc to make it one school on two sites, where was the support from the LA to do this?	As above.

15.4 Merge with another school

15.4.1	Why hasn't a merger been put in place with another school, i.e. Llanwrtyd?	Options involving merging Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon were considered in the options appraisal exercise carried out, and are outlined in the Consultation Document. The reasons why each
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		of these options were discounted are outlined in Appendix D of the Consultation Document.
15.4.2	I would like to see a provisional plan put in place to see whether the merging of Irfon Valley would benefit us and the children in a better way than closing us down, and the children all being separated and sent in different directions to different.	As above.
15.4.3	Options of merging with another local school could be an option to be considered, rather than 'getting rid' of Irfon Valley altogether.	As above.
15.4.4	What are the reasonings behind not looking further into merging to keep more continuity for the children in our school?	As above.

15.5 Establish a Welsh-medium school

15.5.1	Has consideration been given to it being a Welsh-medium school? The majority of pupils have been lost to Builth Welsh Stream, the Welsh unit in Llanwrtyd was too far out for a lot of people yet Garth is more central.	The Council has not considered establishing a Welsh-medium school here. Welsh-medium provision is currently available in the area at Builth Wells C.P. School, however the Council is currently working on future plans for Ysgol Calon Cymru which aims to establish a Welsh-medium all-age school in Builth Wells, which would provide enhanced access to Welsh-medium provision in the area.
15.5.2	Consider making the school a Welsh-medium school	As above.
15.5.3	Have Garth as a Welsh primary school for those who currently travel further and past Garth to go to a Welsh primary school use the facilities in Garth instead	As above.
15.5.4	Make it a Welsh medium primary school or give it a Welsh medium department as that is where a lot of local parents seem have decided to send their children, meaning Irfon Valley CP School's numbers are currently low.	As above.

15.6 Close Ysgol Dolafon instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School

15.6.1	Close the Llanwrtyd school which is on the extreme boundary of Powys and maintain Irfon Valley which is more central and could have a larger catchment area.	There are currently 52 pupils attending Ysgol Dolafon, which is nearly 3 times as many as the number of pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School, so it would be very difficult to justify closing Ysgol Dolafon and retaining Irfon Valley C.P. School. In addition, there would be significant additional transport costs, as the Council would need to provide transport to enable pupils currently attending Ysgol Dolafon to attend Irfon Valley C.P. School.
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15.7 Other suggestions

15.7.1	Provisions should be put in place for the whole school or at the very minimum year groups to move to the same school. They should all be allocated spaces in the school and transport provision should be provided irrelevant of where the child lives. There should be no barriers put in place to this. Parents should not have to fight / use exception rules or appeal for this.	Comment noted. Should the Council proceed with the proposal to close Irfon Valley C.P. School, officers will endeavour to work with parents to understand their preferences.
15.7.2	Perhaps closer working with Ysgol Dolafon should have happened a long time ago with 'shared' activities and events along with more shared working which would have seen the 2 schools worked collaboratively and perhaps that route could have been followed to save Irfon valley now.	Comment noted.
15.7.3	Amend policies to ensure children are taught within their local community and not schooled in out of catchment schools.	Parents are entitled to apply for a place for their children at any school they choose. All applications are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Admissions arrangements. If parents apply for a place at a school which isn't their closest school and there are places available, then the place

		would be allocated to the pupil. However, they would not be entitled to transport – this is only to their nearest suitable school.
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16. COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSAL

16.1	It will be extremely sad however I do believe that closure is the best way forward for the children. They will have more opportunities, friendships and a better level of teaching at alternative schools.	Comment noted.
16.2	I don't want the school to close, but I understand that financially the school budget ultimately won't allow the school to go on as it is due to the low pupil numbers.	Comment noted.
16.3	I believe the school needs to close. The standard of teaching and level of child protection knowledge is low.	Comment noted.
16.4	I appreciate that this is down to money at the end of the day and that is why it feels like a futile box ticking exercise for myself and others to have to give their time and energy to this consultation. No amount of heartfelt opinion is going to balance the books, pay for new roofing tiles or replace the flat roof which are no longer fit for purpose.	Comment noted.
16.5	This is a common sense proposal.	Comment noted.
16.6	It is not sustainable to maintain a school for so few pupils. Staffing and maintenance costs for such few students is a drain of limited and previous resources.	Comment noted.
16.7	Classes taught across more than 2 years fail to provide a fair curriculum to students, and are unable to provide them with the highest level of education needed for each stage of their development.	Comment noted.

7. FURTHER ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

The School Organisation Code includes some additional steps to be undertaken in respect of the consultation report for proposals relating to the closure of rural schools. This section addresses these requirements.

7.1 Further assessment of the proposal and alternatives

Following consultation, the Council has carried out a further assessment of the proposal and the alternatives identified in the proposal paper on the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements.

The revised assessments, which take account of further information that has come forward through the consultation or otherwise, are provided in the table below:

Option	Likely impact on quality and standards	Likely impact on the community	Likely impact of different travelling arrangements
Option 1: Status quo – continue as a standalone school	There would be no impact on quality and standards – pupils would continue to access the current provision at Irfon Valley.	There would be no impact on the community – provision would continue to be available in Garth.	There would be no impact on travel arrangements – pupils would continue to attend Irfon Valley C.P. School.
Option 2: Federate Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon	There would be very little impact on quality and standards – pupils would continue to access the current provision at Irfon Valley. Pupil numbers at Irfon Valley would continue to be low, however, more opportunities may be	The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Garth.	Pupils would continue to attend school in the same location, thus there would be no additional transport costs. Some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.

	provided for collaboration between the schools.		
Option 3: Merge Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon to establish a new school on two sites	<p>This option would retain provision in Garth, as both sites would be retained as part of the merger.</p> <p>There would be enhanced opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff, however, ensuring equal opportunities to all pupils in mixed age range classes would continue to be difficult.</p> <p>Merging the two schools to establish a new school is likely to result in a school where the quality and standards are at least as good as the current provision.</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Garth. However, one new governing body would be responsible for both sites, therefore there may be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the make-up of the new governing body.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Irfon Valley C.P. School.</p> <p>Some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>
Option 4: Merge Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon to establish a new school on the Irfon Valley site	<p>This option would retain provision in Garth, as both sites would be retained as part of the merger.</p> <p>There would be enhanced opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff, however, ensuring equal opportunities to all pupils in mixed</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Garth. However, one new governing body would be responsible for both sites, therefore there may be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Ysgol Dolafon, particularly those for whom Dolafon is currently the closest school.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with</p>

	<p>age range classes would continue to be difficult.</p> <p>Merging the two schools to establish a new school is likely to result in a school where the quality and standards are at least as good as the current provision.</p>	<p>school, depending on the make-up of the new governing body.</p>	<p>the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities/events.</p>
<p>Option 5: Merge Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon to establish a new school on the Dolafon site</p>	<p>This option would remove provision from Garth, with pupils to attend school on the Dolafon site.</p> <p>There would be enhanced opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff, however, ensuring equal opportunities to all pupils in mixed age range classes would continue to be difficult.</p> <p>Merging the two schools to establish a new school is likely to result in a school where the quality and standards are at least as good as the current provision.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Garth as there would no longer be provision in Garth.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities/events.</p>
<p>Option 6: Close Irfon Valley C.P. School, but retain</p>	<p>This option would retain provision in Garth, building upon the</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal. Provision would continue to be available in Garth.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Irfon Valley C.P. School.</p>

<p>the site as part of Ysgol Dolafon</p>	<p>relationship that is already in existence with Ysgol Dolafon.</p> <p>There would be enhanced opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff, however, ensuring equal opportunities to all pupils in mixed age range age classes would continue to be difficult.</p> <p>It is anticipated that implementation of this option would mean that pupils attend provision where the quality and standards are at least as good as the current provision.</p>	<p>However, the site would be managed by Ysgol Dolafon, so there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in the management of the school.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the larger Ysgol Dolafon site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Irfon Valley site.</p>	<p>Some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>
<p>Option 7: Close Irfon Valley C.P. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools</p>	<p>The nearest schools to Irfon Valley are Ysgol Dolafon and Builth Wells C.P. School. Some pupils would also live closer to Newbridge-on-Wye C. in W. School. Should pupils transfer to any of these schools, it would mean that pupils would be attending provision where the quality and standards are at least as good as the current provision at Irfon Valley.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Garth, as provision would no longer be run within the village.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Irfon Valley C.P. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities/events.</p>

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7.2 Further reasonable alternatives

The other alternatives which were suggested in the consultation responses received are outlined in section 15 of the 'issues raised in the consultation period' section of this report, including the Council's response to these alternatives. These are as follows:

- i) Keep the school open
- ii) Develop the provision at the school
- iii) Federate Irfon Valley and Ysgol Dolafon
- iv) Merge with another school
- v) Establish a Welsh-medium school
- vi) Close Ysgol Dolafon instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School

i) and ii) are included within Option 1 – Status Quo in the above table, and are therefore not subject to a separate assessment.

iii) Federate Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon is included as option 2 in the table above, and is therefore not subject to a separate assessment.

iv) Merging Irfon Valley C.P. School and Ysgol Dolafon are considered in options 3, 4 and 5 in the table above, and is therefore not subject to a separate assessment.

v) Establish a Welsh-medium school – this will be subject to a further assessment.

vi) Close Ysgol Dolafon instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School – this will be subject to a further assessment

The reasonable alternatives that will be subject to further consideration against the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code for rural schools are:

v) Establish a Welsh-medium school

vi) Close Ysgol Dolafon instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School

These reasonable alternatives are considered in the following table:

Option	Likely impact on quality and standards	Likely impact on the community	Likely impact of different travelling arrangements
<p>v) Establish a Welsh-medium school</p>	<p>Irfon Valley C.P. School is currently an English-medium school with no experience of providing Welsh-medium education, so it is likely that there would be a negative impact on quality and standards of education.</p> <p>It is unclear whether staff at the school have the appropriate language skills to deliver the curriculum through the medium of Welsh. If they don't have the necessary skills and experience, this could have a negative impact on quality and standards of education.</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Garth.</p>	<p>Pupils living in the area currently served by Irfon Valley C.P. School would continue to attend school on the current site, where they would access Welsh-medium education. There would be no impact on travel arrangements for these pupils.</p> <p>Some pupils may choose to access English-medium provision at an alternative location, so additional travel would be required for these pupils.</p> <p>In the longer term, it is possible that there would be a reduction in travel, should pupils in the area currently served by Irfon Valley C.P. School access Welsh-medium provision here instead of Builth Wells C.P. School's Welsh-medium stream.</p>
<p>vi)</p>	<p>Pupils attending Ysgol Dolafon would transfer to alternative</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the Llanwrtyd Wells</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently</p>

<p>Close Ysgol Dolafon instead of Irfon Valley C.P. School</p>	<p>schools, which would provide an opportunity to increase pupil numbers at Irfon Valley C.P. Schools. However, it is possible that some pupils would choose to attend other schools.</p> <p>Implementation of this option would mean that pupils could continue to be able to access education which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Ysgol Dolafon.</p>	<p>community as there would be no provision in Llanwrtyd Wells. There is also a library co-located with the school in Llanwrtyd Wells. Depending on the future use of the school building, it is possible that there could be an impact on the library.</p>	<p>attending Ysgol Dolafon. Ysgol Dolafon currently has significantly more pupils than Irfon Valley C.P. School, so this option would have a significant impact on travel for the majority of pupils. This would impact on their ability to access any after-school activities, and would also have an impact on parents in terms of their ability to access to school activities.</p> <p>There would also be a significant additional cost to the Council in order to transport pupils from Llanwrtyd Wells to Garth.</p>
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7.3 Conclusion

The Council has considered the issues raised in the consultation exercise and has also carried out a further assessment of the proposal, the original options and alternative options identified during the consultation with consideration of the likely impact on quality and standards in education, the likely impact on the community and the likely effect of different travelling arrangements. The Council's view is that none of the other original options or the alternative options address the challenges facing Irfon Valley C.P. School, which are:

- Low pupil numbers
- Budget difficulties
- High budget per pupil
- Combined age classes

As outlined in the Consultation Document, the reasons for the proposal are as follows:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Irfon Valley
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Pupils would be taught in classes with peers of similar ages
- Minimal impact on other schools compared with other options
- Opportunity for the Council to realise a capital receipt from sale of the school site

The reasoning for this conclusion is that implementation of the proposal will ensure improved management of the Powys schools estate, ensuring that the best possible educational opportunities can be provided to pupils living in the area currently served by Irfon Valley C.P. School and across Powys in the future.

As stated in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-30, the Council faces a challenge due to the high proportion of small schools in the county and the lack of equity amongst schools. Irfon Valley C.P. School has seen a significant decrease in pupil numbers in recent years, and currently has only 18 pupils. With such low pupil numbers the teacher-pupil ratio is notably different to many other schools in the area, and due to the Council's funding formula, the school's funding per pupil is significantly higher than the Council's average. This does not provide equity across the education system – teachers in larger schools are required to provide the same education as smaller schools for less funding per pupil.

The Council's Strategy is intended to improve equity across the education system and to ensure an improvement for every pupil's learning entitlement and experience.