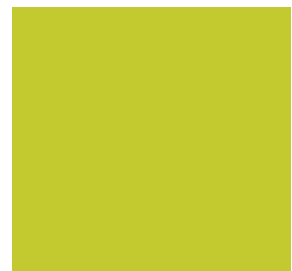
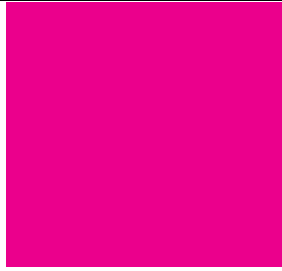


21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO FEDERATE OUR LADY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH ST MARGARET'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Consultation Report and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.

APRIL 2024

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1. THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The Governing Bodies from Our Lady's Catholic Primary School and St Margaret's Catholic Primary School, in partnership with the Archdiocese and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, wish to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to federate Our Lady's Catholic Primary School and St Margaret's Catholic Primary School.
- 1.2 The proposal is made in accordance with Welsh Government's (WGs) Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014. However, prior to the implementation of federation, it is incumbent on the Council to consult on the proposal.
- 1.3 The term 'federation' describes a formal and legal agreement by which the schools involved work together in formal partnership under a single governing body. The existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body that will make decisions in the best interests of the schools, staff and pupils in the federation.
- 1.4 Meetings of the governing bodies of Our Lady's and St Margaret's Catholic Primary Schools were held on September 18th [respectively], to discuss the opportunity of federation and gain an understanding of the process to ensure the schools accept and will fully support the arrangement. Both governing bodies expressed support for the principle of federation and for the consultation process.
- 1.5 A governor working group representing both schools has been established. The name of the proposed federation will be The Federation of Mary Immaculate
- 1.6 If the proposal is accepted, the federation will be established on **1st September 2025**.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Our Lady's Catholic Primary and St. Margaret's Catholic Primary Schools are English medium, 3-11, mixed, voluntary aided (Church) schools with capacity for 119 pupils and 141 pupils, respectively. Both schools have been working successfully as a soft collaboration for over 2 years and both governing bodies would like to formalise these arrangements.
- 2.2 Our Lady's Primary School is located in Mountain Ash in the Cynon Valley area of RCT. The number of statutory-aged pupils on roll is 102 (**PLASC 2024**).

- 2.3 St. Margaret's Primary School is located in Aberdare in the Cynon Valley area of RCT. The number of statutory-aged pupils on roll is 90 (**PLASC 2024**).
- 2.4 As part of its statutory responsibility for the planning of school provision, RCTCBC is including the option of federation within its strategic planning for effective and efficient education provision across the County Borough.
- 2.5 Education budgets within the Local Authority (LA) are extremely tight, with the expectation that the financial situation will not improve in the foreseeable future. The governing bodies, diocese and Local Authority are looking to make best use of resources through the federation, which will provide a foundation for long term sustainable development and improvement.

3. WHAT IS FEDERATION AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 3.1 The Welsh Government's policy objective is to promote collaboration between all parts of the education system to raise standards and improve outcomes. School federation is a more formal way of extending collaboration and promoting closer working relationships.
- 3.2 The term federation describes a formal and legal agreement by which schools share governance arrangements and have a single governing body. It is the principal initiative for achieving formal partnership working among schools to improve outcomes and ensure good attainment for all learners. Working together to share good practice, expertise and resources has been beneficial for both schools in their overall aim of raising standards.
- 3.3 The most important reason for considering a federation must be for the benefit of all learners. Through federating, schools share resources enhancing education provision, ultimately leading to an improvement in pupil attainment.
- 3.4 One of the advantages of federation is that schools which federate remain in their communities and keep their individual identity. However, the existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new single governing body which will have oversight and responsibility for the schools in the federation. Federated schools will still maintain their own name, delegated budgets, culture, school ethos and uniform but will have the advantage of sharing resources such as staff, facilities, ICT etc.
- 3.5 Federation is not an amalgamation, a takeover or a route to closure. Rather, it is a partnership, in this case, of two faith schools sharing a joint vision which would serve the interests of pupils, staff and both school communities. The schools would remain as separate establishments; they would be funded and inspected separately, be responsible for their own delegated budgets and report their own assessment results. The governing body of the federation has the option of allocating a portion of each school budget, to enhance joint working or shared staffing should the opportunity arise.

- 3.6 The Federation of Mary Immaculate believes that entering into a federation will allow further development of a cohesive staffing structure, consolidating improvements in leadership, and continue to improve teaching and learning in both schools. The day to day operation of the federation will depend entirely on the circumstances of the individual schools, there is no blueprint as such. The focus for the two schools will be to work together under a shared leadership, sharing best practice, identifying areas for improvement and capitalising on their strengths to raise outcomes.
- 3.7 The responsibility for the staffing structure of the federated schools lies with the governing body of the federation, however, LA School Improvement officers will be on hand to advise and to ensure the structure will be sustainable and will continue to strengthen leadership.
- 3.8 Each school will continue to be funded separately based on pupil numbers, and in accordance with the LAs funding formula.

4. THE FEDERATION PROCESS

- 4.1 The LA has statutory responsibility for the effective planning of school provision across the communities in the County Borough. The Education (Wales) Measure 2011 gave Governing Bodies and LAs the power to make proposals for federation. The Council will provide advice and support to governing bodies considering the option to federate, including identifying a LA officer to assist throughout the federation process.
- 4.2 A prescribed process set out under the Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 must be followed. It is a statutory requirement of a federation consultation to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal of federation, namely: parents/carers, staff, learners, LA, all school staff unions, all foundation governors, diocesan authorities and any other appropriate religious body and anyone else in the school communities.
- 4.3 Schools with a faith and/or a trust, such as voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools, can only federate with schools of the same category or with schools that have a similar charitable trust status and/or religious ethos. Faith schools can only federate with other faith schools.
- 4.4 Governing bodies should seek help from the LA on the process for the publication of proposals including seeking the views of stakeholders which must be at least 6 weeks. Although not explicit in regulations, it is good practice to exclude holidays from this period.
- 4.5 An extraordinary meeting for both governing bodies was arranged on the 18th September 2024. Each governing body:

- Carefully considered the benefits and risks of establishing a federation in relation to the impact on children and young people’s achievements, and the quality of education across the schools;
- Carefully considered the information about the schools involved, particularly in relation to school performance, funding, facilities and buildings so that decisions are based on sound evidence;
- Agreed to ensure that staff, parents/carers and learners are kept informed and involved in developments during the federation process.

4.6 The decision agreed at both meetings was to proceed with the statutory process to formally consult and seek the views of relevant stakeholders on the proposal to federate Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School and St Margaret’s Catholic Primary School.

4.7 Since the meetings a governor working group representing both schools has been established. The proposed name of the federation is The Federation of Mary Immaculate.

5. SEEKING THE VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 The LA is formally required to consult on the proposals with the following stakeholders of each school:

- Parents/carers
- Staff
- Learners (via the School Councils)
- Any relevant Local Authority
- All school staff unions
- Foundation governors
- Diocesan authorities
- Any other appropriate religious bodies
- Anyone else in the school communities

5.2 This consultation document will be available for inspection in hard copy at both schools and published electronically within both schools and the Council website.

5.3 There will be an opportunity for pupils of both schools, through their relevant School Councils, to participate in the consultation process. The information provided will be presented in an age-appropriate format. The information collated from consultation with pupils will form part of the Consultation Report.

- 5.4 A 'Questions & Answers' information leaflet covering any concerns parents and staff may have, is attached as Annex A.
- 5.5 At least six weeks must be allowed to seek the views of stakeholders.
- 5.6 The consultation period for this proposal will be from 10th March 2025 to 18th April 2025. During this time, you can have your say by writing to the RCT Governor Support Service via email schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk or School Planning, Valleys Innovation Centre, Abercynon, CF45 4SN

Response Form See Annex B of this document

Both schools will also provide a drop box.

- 5.7 At the end of the consultation period, feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised in a report which will be presented to a meeting of both governing bodies where a decision should jointly be reached on whether they wish to proceed or not, and whether there are modifications to the proposal.

6. COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNING BODY

- 6.1 Where a decision has been made to federate the schools, governors should liaise with the LA and the diocese over the new Instrument of Government, and to proceed with the election and appointment of the new governing body. A copy of the new instrument of government must be sent to the Welsh Ministers.
- 6.2 In line with the 2014 Federation Regulations, the minimum number of governors on a governing body is 15, the maximum number is 27. The regulations set out the various categories permitted to join a federated governing body; the following table demonstrates the options for this proposal.

Category of Governor	Number in line with regulations	Notes	LA recommendation	
			Our Lady's	St Margaret's
a.) Parent	At least 1	At least one parent governor elected or appointed to represent the interests of all parents of registered	1	1

		pupils at all the schools in the federation		
b.) Teacher	1-2	At least 1, but no more than 2 teacher governors	1	1
c.) Staff	1-2	At least 1, but no more than 2 staff governors	1	1
d.) Local Authority	1-2	At least 1, but no more than 2 LA governors	1	
e.) Community	1	1 additional community governor where the federation includes a primary school or schools situated within a community council area	1	1
f.) Headteacher (or acting Headteacher)	The headteacher, or acting headteacher of the federation if one is appointed, or the headteacher or acting headteacher of each school in the federation, unless those persons resign as a governor		1	
g.) Foundation	The persons who are entitled to appoint foundation governors may appoint such numbers of foundation governors as outnumber all the other governors listed in (a) to (f) by one provided the maximum of 27 governors is not exceeded		11	

6.3 This complies with the statutory requirements for Voluntary Aided governing bodies.

7. CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL FEDERATION

- 7.1 The building of trust between LAs, governing body and school communities is fundamental. The schools in this proposal will be fully supported to continue to engage through their commitment to time and resources to successfully establish the federation.
- 7.2 A shared identity lends itself to achieving a successful working partnership, in this proposal the schools are faith schools.
- 7.3 The schools will have a common purpose where they will share the same ethos and employ the same vision to raise standards and improve pupil attainment, outlining what needs to be done and how it will be achieved.

- 7.4 Clear leadership and management structures will help to support cohesive leadership and strong management.
- 7.5 It is essential that good communication continues with parents/carers and all members of staff and stakeholders over the changes that will be brought about by federating the schools.

8. BENEFITS OF FEDERATION

- 8.1 Embedding the concept of federation and engaging staff at all levels is critical to the success of the federation. The role of the senior staff in the federating schools will be to explain the possible benefits to other staff members, which could include the opportunity to enhance their professional learning and development, and to improve their subject expertise to broaden and enrich curriculum provision for all learners.
- 8.2 The federation will create increased opportunities for middle management development.
- 8.3 Opportunities for extending the curriculum and extra-curricular activities can be created, through the sharing of skills and expertise, allowing pupils to access areas of learning they otherwise may not have.
- 8.4 Creating a federation will allow for distributed leadership, continuing to empower individuals to take ownership of leadership responsibilities and share decision-making. Members of staff will continue to work collaboratively and inclusively to strengthen the federation and ensure its success.
- 8.5 For the day to day running of the schools, a federation will allow for the streamlining of policies and structures.

9. LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

- 9.1 Human Resources staff will provide advice and support on any proposed changes to the individual structures and staff organisation in the federation.
- 9.2 As voluntary aided Faith schools, the current employer of teaching and non-teaching staff is the governing body of each of the schools. Under the proposal, the new federated governing body will become the employer and staff will accordingly transfer to its employment. All terms and conditions of employment will transfer from the current employer to the new employer, in other words the new federated governing body will take over existing staff contracts.

9.3 The following table show the current staffing arrangements at each school:

Our Lady's		St Margaret's
Full Time Equivalent		Full Time Equivalent
0.5	Acting Executive Headteacher	0.5
1.0 50% teaching	Acting Head of school	1.0 50% teaching
3.6	Teachers	2.8

9.4 The table that follows shows the proposed staffing arrangements following the implementation of the federation:

Our Lady's		St Margaret's
Full Time Equivalent		Full Time Equivalent
0.5	Executive Headteacher	0.5
1 50% Teaching	Head of School	1 50% Teaching
3.5	Teachers	2.5

9.5 Future members of staff may have the opportunity to be appointed to work in both schools which could be of benefit due to the sharing of expertise through collaborative working and increasing professional learning opportunities. An enriched pool of resources could be created which will allow staff to be employed more flexibly across the federation.

10. ADMISSIONS

10.1 The admission arrangements for each school will remain unchanged. As voluntary aided Faith schools, the relevant governing body has responsibility for admissions in each school. Parents

should apply for a place for their child at the school of their choice, not at the federation, as each school in the federation is a separate school.

- 10.2 If the child is not given a place in the school they choose, they must make a separate application to attend a different school. This is the case even if the second school applied for is the other school in the federation. Application forms are available from each school office.

Annex A - Frequently Asked Questions

Extracted from Welsh Government Guidance – circular 011/2014

Q1. What is a federation?

A federation is a legal governance structure where between two and six schools share a single governing body. The schools will retain their individuality, their own name, ethos, budget and school uniform but could share resources, facilities and good practice.

Q2. Why should schools federate?

Working together through a single governing body structure enables schools to raise standards and maintain local education provision by sharing resources, staff, expertise, and facilities and sharing best practice. A single governing body also provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources, including staff and budgets, release capacity in the senior management team and gain economies of scale and efficiencies.

Q3. What are the benefits of federation?

Federation will allow schools to more easily:

- extend the breadth and quality of provision
- respond to pupils' wider needs
- facilitate the release of our strongest school leaders teachers and governors to assist poorer performing schools
- widen opportunities for staff professional development
- deliver greater value for money.

Q4. Why might small schools benefit from federation?

Federation can help small primary schools to remain sustainable within their communities. The shared governing body provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources and staff, gain economies of scale and efficiencies that enable them to remain viable. Smaller schools in more rural and isolated areas could also gain as federation could open up opportunities to share management, governing body responsibility and curriculum expertise. For small primaries it would allow them to deliver an enriched primary education by, for example, sharing a specialist language teacher or drama teacher.

Q5. What are the benefits and risks of Federation?

There are a number of benefits for schools from being within a federation including broader learning and social experiences for children leading to improvement in pupil performance. Schools will be able to share resources, best practice, facilities and expertise. There can be further emphasis on strategic leadership and management structures, and staff will have new opportunities to work together and reduce isolation. Duplication of effort can be avoided and there is an opportunity to promote better economies of scale.

Some of the risks include the potential organisational difficulties in providing a curriculum across a number of schools. Communication with parents and staff at different schools may present a challenge. Travel costs may be higher if staff and pupils move between schools to meet curriculum needs. There may also be relationship and trust issues for governors, headteachers and staff working across schools. The federated governing body should be aware of the potential risks and have strategies and actions to mitigate them.

Q6. Will my school lose its identity within a federation?

Schools within a federation will not lose their individual identity though they will share a single governing body. The schools retain their separate legal status and have their own budget allocations and will be subject to their own Estyn Inspection. The schools will also remain in their community and retain their own character, name, ethos and school uniform. Whilst each school receives and must account for its own separate budget, there is scope, through the single governing body, to use pooled budgets across the schools in the federation. Federation works on the basis that all schools have their own particular strengths and advantages, whether it is facilities, staff or resources.

Q.7 What are the Inspection arrangements for federated schools?

Estyn's document 'When will the next school inspection take place?' sets out guidance on inspecting federated schools. The Education (School Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006 require Estyn to inspect maintained schools every six years and produce an individual report for each school. This would also apply to schools in the federation. Estyn cannot move a school inspection to later than six years but may carry out inspections in a way that the schools in a federation are inspected in the same term, especially where the schools have the same headteacher. Estyn would also consider requests from a governing body or LA to inspect schools in the same term. Estyn would also try to ensure that the inspection teams for the schools in a federation have overlapping membership.

In addition, Church schools are required to have a Section 50 Inspection arranged by the Diocesan authority. In the case of a federation the Diocese would also consider a request from the governing body to inspect schools in the same Term.

Q8. What happens to staff within a federation? Will their conditions of service change?

In a federation, all staff would be employed on the same conditions of service as now and by the same employer. Whoever is the employer of staff will continue to be the employer under the contract of employment. For community, voluntary controlled, community special schools and maintained nursery schools, the LA is the employer under the contract of employment although the governing body of the federation retains responsibility for certain staffing functions i.e. staff grievance, capability, redundancy, staff disciplinary and dismissal matters and appointments. The governing body is the employer under the contract of employment for staff in voluntary aided and foundation schools.

Combined strategic and financial planning should mean that jobs can be better protected in any combined period of contraction and that specialist staff can be used to best effect, recognising that all support and teaching staff have specialist skills and knowledge. Staff

would be able to learn from each other within a coherent approach to deliver professional learning communities that use data and the National Model to focus on school improvements that link to national priorities and their school development plans.

The governing body of a federation would also be able to appoint new staff to work within all schools in the federation. This could include the appointment of a single headteacher with responsibility for all the schools in the federation, or the appointment of a Bursar or person with financial management skills and/or business management skills to oversee the non-teaching aspects of the federation business.

Q9. Can a federation have a single headteacher with responsibility for all the schools in that federation?

Yes, if that is what the schools wish to have and this might be a viable option in a federation of small rural primary schools. Where this option is chosen for a larger federation of up to six schools, i.e. a secondary school and its feeder primary schools where each of those schools has a large number of pupils, governing bodies and local authorities should consider how this arrangement could be managed and any support structure a single headteacher might require. For example, consideration could be given to implementing a management structure that addresses the individual needs of each of the schools whilst also supporting curriculum continuity across the federation. This could mean having staff in each school whose purpose is to focus on teaching and learning supplemented by a structure of posts that work across the federation, all of which would be managed by a single headteacher.

Another option governing bodies and local authorities may consider is for the federating schools to retain headteachers in each of the schools instead of appointing a single headteacher.

From a day-to-day operational perspective schools may wish to adopt a third option which would be to appoint a head of the federation and retain a headteacher in each of the schools. If this arrangement was agreed, from a governance perspective only, the overarching headteacher in charge of the federation, if such an appointment is made, would be a member of the governing body. If no such appointment is made the headteachers of all the schools may be governors.

Q10. Would the 'headteacher' with overall responsibility for the federation be responsible for managing headteachers of each school in the federation if that is the agreed structure?

The governing body may choose to appoint a single head of the federation with full responsibility for all of the schools in the federation and have only a senior teacher or deputy headteacher in charge of each school. If the teacher in charge is not a qualified headteacher carrying out the full range of statutory duties of a headteacher, then the head of the federation would be responsible for the performance management of those staff. The governing body would be responsible for the performance management of the head of the federation.

Q11. Are parent governors elected by the parents from their school only or from parents across all schools in the federation?

The proposal for federation should state the number of parent governors from each school which in law is that every school must have at least one parent governor elected by the parents (or appointed by the governing body if no parent stands for election), at that school but no more than two parent governors per school. It is reasonable therefore that once a decision has been made as to how many parent governors each school would have, the parents of only that school should vote in the parent governor elections. If the decision is that a school should have two parent governors each, and no parents in a particular school stand for election or only one parent stands for election, the federated governing body may appoint parent governors in accordance with Schedule 2 of the 2014 Federation Regulations.

This means that the governing body could appoint a parent of a registered pupil at the school; or the parent of a registered pupil from another school in the federation; or the parent of a child of compulsory school age (or under compulsory school age for a nursery school).

Q12. Can a federation be time-limited?

A federation should be seen as a long-term commitment and not as a quick fix. The LA or respective governing bodies will have considered in depth the benefits and risks of establishing a federation in relation to the impact on children and young people's achievements. A federation would put in place strategic and operational plans to ensure the sustainability and development of the schools. That will require medium to long term planning. Nonetheless, the 2014 Federation Regulations do allow individual schools to leave a federation and for a federation to be dissolved.

Q13. What are the differences between school federation and school mergers?

If two schools merge, they may remain open in their community but they become one multiple site school with a single name, governing body, headteacher, ethos, budget, character and school uniform. In a merger there would only be one headteacher and it is possible there would be redundancies or staff would have to re-apply for posts in the new single school. In a multi-site schools the LA could also close one of the school sites and transfer the pupils to the other sites without the need to go through statutory proposals.

In a federation, the schools remain open in their communities but they also retain their own individuality, name, ethos, character budget and school uniform. Staff would also keep their jobs and may have wider opportunities for further professional development by working across the schools in the federation. Headteachers may also remain in post although some federations may only have a single headteacher. Schools in a federation can be closed as part of school organisation proposals but the LA would have to apply the statutory proposals process to do this.

Q14. What may influence schools in deciding whether to merge and become a single school or federate?

The LA may have long term plans for school organisation within their area and schools

would need to consider these and discuss with their LA, which option is more beneficial for them and fits in with the LA's overall plans.

Q15. Should we be working collaboratively as a first step with schools we may be thinking of federating with?

If you work collaboratively with other schools, it may help you to create trust between the schools and will enable you to foster a good working relationship which will make it easier for the schools to take the next step and federate. Federation will be successful where the staff and governors are committed to working together for the benefit of the school communities.

Q16. Can schools establish a joint governing body before formally federating?

No – the governing body of the federated schools comes into being on the date the federation comes into force which must be at least 125 days from the date the federation proposals are published (or 100 days if small schools are being federated). This means that the governing bodies of the schools that are federating will have to have held elections for the core governors i.e. parents, teacher and staff and the LA and Diocese will have to appointed the LA and Foundation governors. The schools may however set up a joint working group or committee of governors to oversee the federation process if they wish.

Q17. What happens if a pupil is excluded from one school in a federation? Could they be placed in another school in the same federation?

Yes – although schools are federated and share a governing body the schools remain as separate entities so a pupil could not be turned away by one school because he/she had been excluded from another school in the same federation.

If the pupil is subsequently permanently excluded from the second school within the federation it is recommended that the pupil discipline committee that meets to consider the exclusion consists of members of the governing body un-associated with the consideration of the first exclusion.

This recommendation is in order to avoid possible bias that could be considered with relation to the first exclusion. Whilst it may not always be possible to provide a complete discipline committee of new governing body members any such circumstances should be discussed with the LA in the first instance.

Q18. Can we change the name of the school and/or give all the schools in the federation the same name?

One of the key drivers and benefits for federation is that schools do not lose their individuality, name and identity and remain as separate establishments. The names of all the schools in the federation will appear on the new instrument of government as well as the name of the federation. The process for revising the instrument of government and changing details such as the names of the schools is set out in the Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005. The LA and the governing body should reach an agreement on the proposed changes. If they cannot the final decision rests with the LA who will want to ensure that any changes are not misleading.

All schools in a federation must retain their individual reference number and budget and it could become quite complex and confusing if all the schools decided to change their name and adopt a single name when they have to account for separate budgets.

Annex B - Response Form



Proposal to federate Our Lady's Catholic Primary School and St Margaret's Catholic Primary School

Please note that any comments you make, will be made publicly available as part of the subsequent report. You are not asked to provide your personal details. All the information you provide will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

Question 1

Please provide your comments on the proposal to federate Our Lady's Catholic Primary School and St Margaret's Catholic Primary School.

We particularly invite comments on:

- **the proposed name of the federation;**
- **the proposed composition of the governing body;**
- **the recommendation that there should be only one Executive Headteacher for the two schools.**

Question 2

Please indicate which of the following statements best reflects your views on the proposal.

	Please tick
I do not feel strongly one way or the other	
I support the proposal to federate	
I do not support the proposal to federate	

About you

Question 3

Please indicate your interest in this consultation (*please tick all that apply*)

Our Lady's RC Primary School		St Margaret's RC Primary School	
	√		√
Pupil		Pupil	
Parent/Carer		Parent/Carer	
Staff		Staff	
Governor		Governor	

Other	
	√
Elected Member	
Local resident	
Representative of a local community organisation or group	

Once complete, please return to:

School Planning, RCTCBC, Valleys Innovation Centre, Navigation Park, Abercynon, CF45 4SN

The closing date for responses is Friday 18th April 2025

