

Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Review

Consultation Document

Proposal to close Lewis Girls school and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam

To change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025
3rd June 2024 – 15th July 2024



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

This document is available in Welsh and English. Information can also be made available in other formats, languages and in hard copy on request. Please contact us on 01443 864817 / 21stCenturySchools@caerphilly.gov.uk to arrange this.



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INTRODUCTION

What is this booklet about?

This booklet is for anyone who has an interest in education in Caerphilly and may be of particular interest to parents/guardians of children attending or expecting to attend Lewis Girls School or Lewis School Pengam.

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

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

What are we proposing to do?

We are proposing to:

- Close Lewis Girls school and make a regulated alteration to Lewis Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.

The Lewis Girls School site would be retained as a provision to Lewis School Pengam to manage the transition over a number of years. (minimising impact on exam pupils and enabling staff and pupils to be integrated over an appropriate timeframe).

The proposed pupil transition will be phased as follows:

September 2025 pupils would attend settings as follows

Year 7 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis Girls School site
Year 8 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis Girls School site
Year 9 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis School Pengam site
Year 10 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis School Pengam site
Year 11 - retain single sex, pupils to remain either at Lewis Girls School or Lewis School Pengam
Year 12 - As now, pupils to attend Upper Rhymney Valley consortia lessons where they are offered
Year 13 - As now, pupils to attend Upper Rhymney Valley consortia lessons where they are offered

September 2026 pupils would attend settings as follows

Year 7 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis Girls School site
Year 8 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis Girls School site
Year 9 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis School Pengam site
Year 10 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis School Pengam site
Year 11 - all pupils (Girls and Boys) Lewis School Pengam site
Year 12 - As now, pupils to attend Upper Rhymney Valley consortia lessons where they are offered
Year 13 - As now, pupils to attend Upper Rhymney Valley consortia lessons where they are offered

September 2027 pupils would attend settings as follows

All pupils (Girls and Boys) 7-13 Lewis School Pengam site

This phased approach is intended to minimise disruption and any potentially negative impact on exam pupils, whilst enabling staff and pupils to be prepared for integration over an appropriate timeframe.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Who are we consulting with?

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

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

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

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

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

Please note:

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

How can you find out more?

The planning and development of effective school organisation proposals is crucial to the Welsh Government's goal of transforming education in Wales and providing better educational outcomes with a commitment to increase school effectiveness, and narrow inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals.

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

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

- A Consultation Document outlining the proposal (available in a number of formats)
- An Integrated Impact Assessment

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

Views of children on the proposal

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

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

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

When bringing forward any proposal, suitable arrangements are made to consult and involve pupils throughout the process and post occupancy. A child friendly version of the Consultation Document has been produced and any feedback from pupils and School Council's for those schools directly affected by the proposals will be included in the documentation forwarded to Cabinet for consideration once the consultation period has ended.



WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THESE CHANGES?

Background Information

Caerphilly's Cabinet established a Board in 2019 to develop recommendations for change in relation to Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places across Caerphilly.

The Board consisted of a wide range of stakeholders including Head Teachers, College Representatives, Scrutiny Members, Governor Representatives, TU Representatives, EAS representatives and Local Education Authority Officers.

Through previous discussions in 2021, the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board had reached an informal consensus that co-education would be the way forward in the Upper Rhymney Valley (URV).

Having gained Board consensus at that time, Local Education Authority (LEA) officers engaged directly with the four URV Secondary Head Teachers as educational experts to consider this position further.

The URV Head Teachers agreed the following wording to reflect their position on Single Sex provision as well as the potential benefit of moving toward co-education across the Lewis Schools:

"We explore ways in which families can be brought together and re-united and avoid the division that some experience when, due to the current arrangement of schools, children from the same family are split apart at age 11".

The Board acknowledged that Lewis School Pengam and Lewis Girls School are the last remaining local authority maintained single sex schools in Wales. Moving away from single sex toward co-education has been under consideration by the Local Authority and the Schools over many years.

Board Members also received information in relation to the levels of surplus places at the Lewis Schools with Lewis Girls School at circa 38% and Lewis School Pengam at circa 42%, as at January 2024. At its last LEA Inspection in 2012 Estyn concluded that the authority had not made enough progress in respect of the removal of surplus capacity from its secondary schools.

The Board, at its meeting of February 6th 2024, resolved unanimously to support the proposal to formally consult stakeholders with a view to:

- (1) moving from Single Sex provision to co-education in the Upper Rhymney Valley
- (2) locating Lewis catchment pupils at the Lewis School Pengam site, while retaining the Lewis Girls School site to manage the transition over a number of years (minimising impact on exam pupils and enabling staff and pupils to be integrated over an appropriate timeframe).

The Council's Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee then met to consider the report and the proposals on the 20th March 2024. The Committee noted the unanimous support from

the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board and then commented and scrutinised proposals ahead of their onward consideration at Cabinet.

Cabinet, at its meeting on the 3rd April, then agreed the recommendation to move to consultation.

Planning of school places

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

Information accurate as of January 2024

➤ Lewis Girls School

- The site currently has a capacity for 1103 pupils
- The published admission number is 180
- There are currently 38.35% surplus places
- 83.86% of current pupils on roll are from within catchment.

➤ Lewis School Pengam

- The site currently has a capacity for 1140 pupils, however, through reconfiguration of the usage of rooms, would have capacity to accommodate pupils from both schools
- The current published admission number is 191
- There are currently 42.63% surplus places
- 84.22% of current pupils on roll are from within catchment.

Both schools share a catchment area and have the same feeder schools at primary level, these being Coedybrain Primary, Derwendeg Primary, Glyngaer Primary, Greenhill Primary, Hengoed Primary, Llancaeath Junior Junior School, Llanfabon Infant School, Maesycwmmer Primary, Tiryberth Primary, Ystrad Mynach Primary

Table 2: Actual and Projected Numbers in attendance				
	Lewis Girls School		Lewis School Pengam	
Academic Year	Number on Roll	Excluding Post 16	Number on Roll	Excluding Post 16
Current	680	611	654	599
2024	706	629	664	606
2025	702	631	658	596
2026	694	619	653	591
2027	690	610	639	573
2028	703	631	634	567
2029	685	614	609	546
2030	674	597	591	529
2031	653	581	570	511

Figures take into account projected pupils from any new building developments identified within the catchment area.

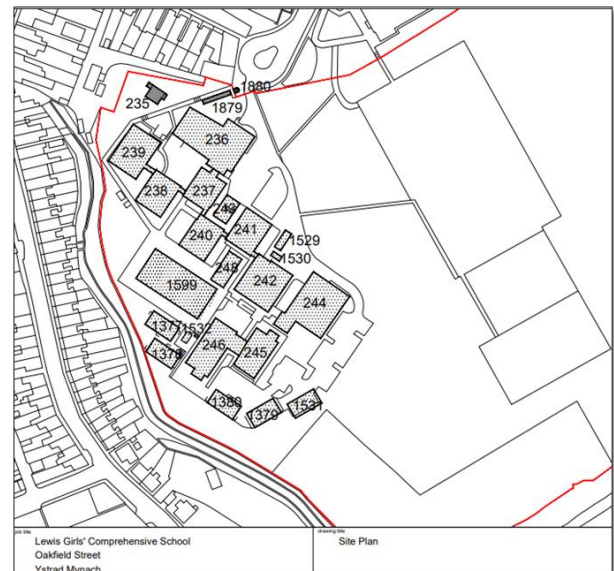
Condition and Suitability of school buildings

Lewis Girls School:

Lewis Girls School is currently an English Medium Secondary School. The building was originally constructed in 1959, however Lewis Girls Comprehensive School was formed in 1973 after the amalgamation with Lewis Girls' Grammar School.

Situated in Ystrad Mynach, the school is surrounded by a mixture of residential properties and businesses including supermarkets, a Veterinary practice, Doctors surgery etc. There is a CCBC owned car park next to the school along with bus and train transport links nearby.

The school occupies a total site area of circa 7.7 Hectares (approx.) which accommodates 24 buildings of which 7 are demountable (including 1 mobile building) and outdoor areas. The Sue Noakes Leisure Centre located next to the school is utilised only by the school during school hours and then open to the public outside of school hours.

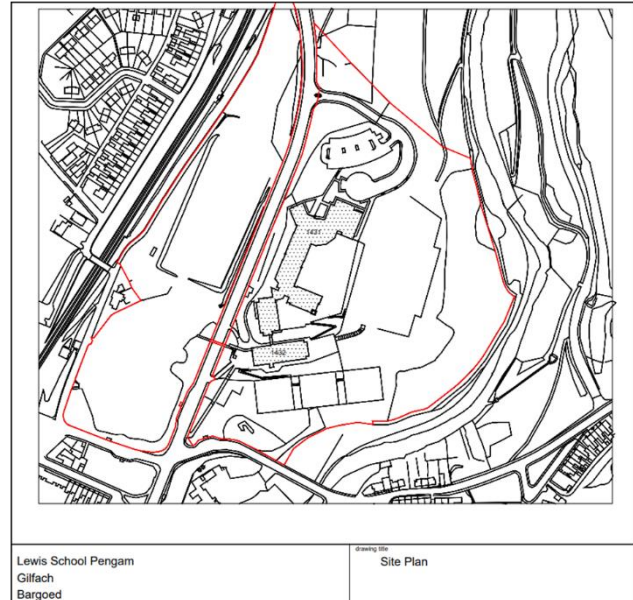


Lewis School Pengam

Lewis School Pengam is currently an English Medium Secondary School. Originally constructed and opened in 2002, the school was funded through the Welsh Government's Private Funded Initiative (PFI) programme .

Situated in Pengam, the school is surrounded by woodland with both bus and train transport links nearby. There are residential properties in the nearby vicinity along with several local amenity shops and businesses.

The school occupies a total site area of circa 7.8 Hectares (approx.) which accommodates 2 buildings and outdoor areas.



Decarbonisation Strategy

On the 4th of June 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency a Notice of Motion, with full support from all political parties. As a result, Caerphilly County Borough Council has committed to being net carbon neutral by 2030.

In line with the latest investment objectives and Welsh Government targets, it remains our commitment that any school reorganisation proposals take into consideration the impact on achieving Net Zero Carbon and as part of the formation of this recommendation, consideration has been given to the impact on operational carbon as well as sustainable build and transport principles.

Illustrative Master Plan

'A Foundation for Success' provides a framework for the future regeneration of the County Borough up to 2023. The document sets out strategic priorities for regeneration under four key themes:

- Supporting People (reducing inequality, building capacity and resilience to create healthier, prosperous, cohesive communities)
- Supporting Business (creating employment opportunities, increasing entrepreneurial activities, encouraging innovation and improving access to employment)
- Supporting Quality of Life (providing the right physical environment for our communities that encourages them to prosper)
- Connecting People and Places (improving connectivity locally, regionally and globally)

This proposal supports the Council's collaborative approach to maximising the full potential of all Council assets. Subject to approval to progress, the Council has an agreed Asset Disposal Workflow which enables a consistent and stringent approach to be taken when land and / or buildings become surplus to operational requirements.

In the first instance, the service that occupies the land and/or building in question would move to declare it surplus, which would be the case for the Lewis Girls School site in this instance. From this point, the Council's Property Services Team would then engage with services internally against set criteria to see if other service areas would wish to take up ownership or occupation of the land or building. Thereafter, should no such interest be forthcoming Property Services would explore opportunities for the site to be marketed externally with specific consideration included for Welsh, Health or Community provision.

HOW WOULD OTHER SCHOOLS BE AFFECTED?

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

Early Years Provision and Projected Demand

The Mid Valleys West area data in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-2027 is the area most relevant to this consultation proposal. The numbers of 0-3 year olds has decreased since the last Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2017. The CSA identified 24 childcare providers of which 6 were registered childminders and 18 were full day care providers. Since the collection of the data there have been changes in the area for childcare provision to meet demands of the expansion of Flying Start and Childcare Offer funded placements. This proposal is unlikely to impact the development of childcare provision locally.

Catchment Area Arrangements

The proposal seeks to close Lewis Girls school and make a regulated alteration to Lewis Pengam to change to from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025. The Lewis Girls School site would be retained as a provision to Lewis School Pengam to manage the transition over a number of years.

There are no proposed changes to the existing catchment arrangements as both schools currently share the same catchment.

Impact on other schools (Feeder Schools)

The Council is mindful to ensure that any school proposals have minimal impact on neighbouring schools. This proposal would have a positive impact on the feeder schools as they would have one point for contact for transition of their pupils.

There are no proposals to change the existing feeder school arrangements.

Disruption to pupils

Our guiding principles during this process are outlined below.

- ✓ A need to explore ways in which families can be brought together and re-united
- ✓ Minimising disruption to learners undertaking examinations
- ✓ Maximising the opportunity for additional resource as the Lewis Girls School site remains open for some time
- ✓ Maximising the opportunities for the effective transition of pupils moving from year 6 to 7 to better support pupil wellbeing

The proposal seeks to employ the following approaches to mitigate disruption to pupils in order to support a smooth transition:

- A transition plan will be created that outlines how specialist facilities and resources from both schools will be integrated and optimised to meet the needs of the combined pupil population. This plan will consider factors such as geographical location, accessibility, and capacity and will ensure that children with additional learning needs (ALN) continue to have their needs met in line with the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act and that there is appropriate additional learning provision (ALP) in place.
- Pupils will be kept informed about the process, including why it's happening, what changes to expect, and how it will benefit them in the long run.
- A transition program will be implemented to familiarise pupils with the new school environment, routines, and expectations. This could include orientation days, guided tours, and buddy systems pairing incoming pupils with existing ones.
- Pupils will be involved in decision-making processes where appropriate, to help them feel ownership and pride in their new school community.
- Staff members will be equipped to support pupils emotionally and academically during the transition through the provision of guidance from the LA on how to address concerns, provide reassurance, and facilitate adjustment.
- The use of consistent policies and procedures, such as rules for behavior, uniform codes, and disciplinary measures across the amalgamated schools will help to minimise confusion and maintain stability for pupils.
- Support services, such as mentoring and school-based counselling can be made available to pupils who may need extra assistance coping with the transition.
- We will seek to reserve important relationships between pupils and staff members by retaining key personnel from both schools whenever possible. Familiar faces can provide continuity and comfort during a period of change.
- We will keep a close eye on pupils' well-being and academic progress following the amalgamation by monitoring indicators such as attendance, behavior, and achievement levels to identify any emerging issues that need to be addressed.
- We will establish channels for pupils to voice their concerns, suggestions, and feedback about the process and will actively listen to their input and incorporate it into decision-making when appropriate and feasible to do so.

Secondary Provision

Information from inspection reports indicate that the quality of education in the Upper Rhymney Valley is good.

Lewis School Pengam was removed from Estyn Review in November 2019 and outcomes for pupils have continued to improve since then. In 2022-23 attendance was 88.7%.

Lewis Girls school had a successful inspection in October 2022 and was invited to present case studies on the “Impact of professional learning on teaching and learning, curriculum development and leadership” and another on “Broadening pupils’ horizons and developing a culture of belonging”. In 2022-23 attendance was 88.4%.

Both schools have sound improvement plans that are resourced well.

The strengths in the two schools complement each other and there is effective collaboration in regard to post 16 provision and the sharing of professional learning.

As part of this proposal, staff will have greater opportunity to extend their own professional learning and to share their expertise in a wider context. Both senior leadership teams are committed to maximising best practice and talent.

Transition experiences within the cluster will inevitably be streamlined and enhanced. This will impact positively on all involved, with schools and families having single points of contact.

Within the proposal all pupils will be ultimately educated on one site which is in an excellent condition. The other significant part of this proposal is to support a new secondary school in Bargoed. This would mean that all pupils in the Upper Rhymney Valley would access provision within schools that are in excellent condition and have a range of facilities.

Overall, this proposal will enhance transition experiences, maximise resources and further develop expertise which will empower all involved to build upon the quality of current provision, creating a high quality co-educational experience for every secondary aged pupil in the Upper Rhymney Valley.



WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL?

Education Standards, Quality and Leadership

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

Copies of the full reports for each individual school are available from the [Estyn website](#)

The inspection reports identify that both schools have a range of strengths which will support the potential merger. Ongoing engagement with the Local Authority and school improvement service has identified how each school has built on existing strengths and continue to address relevant recommendations.

The intention is that the merging of schools will bring a range of educational benefits to all learners, regardless of pupils' individual starting points in year seven. This will positively impact on the progress of learners, provision and, as a result, improvements in standards across all year groups.

Examples of how this will be achieved includes:

- Greater opportunities for collaboration within and across subject departments, sharing expertise, providing support for inexperienced teachers etc.
- Increased opportunities to widen the curriculum offer to all learners. This could include increasing the volume of vocational subjects, or providing more specialist subjects such as computer science qualifications.
- Improved ability to provide quality teaching in subjects where recruitment can be a challenge; e.g. Welsh, physics
- Fewer non-specialists teaching non-core subjects.
- Shared development of 'Curriculum for Wales' building on collaborative work across the cluster.
- Improved assessment arrangements through a consistent approach to feedback and tracking of progress of learners.
- Greater opportunities for professional learning within school. This would include opportunities to mentor or learn alongside peers, engage in practice-based research relevant to the local setting, and undertake whole school INSET training to address school priorities
- Shared approaches to self-evaluation and strategic planning, sharing best practice across departments. This would increase the capacity of senior and middle leaders to effectively manage and support teams.
- Improved equity in the quality of resources across curriculum departments. This would also include a more effective sustainability plan for digital resources.

Governance Arrangements

The Local Authority will work alongside the Governing Body of the school to ensure that all statutory and legal requirements are met. The Governing Body will be proactive in minimising any potential disruption, will represent the whole community, and work towards the benefit of all learners.

Staff Matters

School staff play an important role in ensuring pupils are learning in a safe and supportive learning environment. They can foster positive, trusting relationships with pupils and improve the school climate by encouraging parent and family involvement in education.

By forging strong relationships, staff can affect virtually every aspect of their pupils' lives, teaching them the important life lessons that will help them succeed beyond just academia.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation and Cabinet approval to progress, Lewis Girls School will close and Lewis School Pengam will accommodate all pupils, subject to parental preference.

The staffing structure at Lewis School Pengam will change and it is anticipated that the staff at Lewis Girls School will be accommodated at Lewis School Pengam where possible and we will also support staff to be employed at other schools where there are vacancies. The Council fully understand that there will be a lot of anxiety but want to give assurance that all staff will be supported through the process.

Financial Matters

Subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise and formal approval to proceed given, our Education Finance Team would then work closely with both schools in relation to this matter to further understand the implications.

Impact on Welsh Language Provision

The First Minister's programme for Government 2016-2021 Taking Wales Forward, is working towards one million people speaking the Welsh language by 2050.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Legislation (Wales) Act 2019, provides a series of standards and places a statutory duty on the Council to assess the demand for Welsh medium education in the area. One of the key standards is a requirement to develop a 5-year Welsh language strategy, with the aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers and which will enable us to facilitate the use of the Welsh Language within the county borough.

As set out in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan where Caerphilly County Borough Council's commitment to the promotion of Welsh language and the provision of quality, attractive educational facilities is evident. The Council is committed to developing opportunities for provision to be delivered in the medium of Welsh where possible. There are various actions in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 that would be relevant to the proposal and the development in the Secondary provision including increasing the number of pupils continuing to develop their Welsh language skills and studying qualifications in Welsh, which will also need to develop the confidence and skills in our teaching workforce to deliver Welsh language lessons and qualifications.

The Welsh Language Profile analysis of the census data was completed by Menter Iaith and is published on the Caerphilly CBC website supporting the Welsh Language Strategy. In the catchment areas for the schools, there are 6 community areas that have a higher percentage of Welsh speakers than the average for Caerphilly borough. The average percentage of Welsh speakers in Caerphilly borough in 2011 was 11.2%. Ystrad Mynach, Pengam, Nelson, St Cattwg, Llanbradach and Maesycwmmmer all have percentages above this. Maesycwmmmer, Nelson, Pengam, and Gelligaer have all had an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers between the 2001 and 2011 census data.

Learner Travel Arrangements

The table below details the nearest available alternatives, based on distances from the Lewis School Pengam site.

Table 3: Geographically Nearest Alternative Secondary schools			
School Name, Postcode	Medium	Condition	Distance / Travel
YG Cwm Rhymini	Welsh	A	1.5
Blackwood Comprehensive	English	C	1.7
Heolddu Comprehensive	English	C	1.8
Islwyn High School	English	A	3.2
Newbridge School	English	C	4.9
Idris Davies 3-18	English	B	6.3
Bedwas High School	English	C	7.1
St Cenydd Comprehensive	English	C	7.6
St Martins Comprehensive	English	C	8.2
Risca Community School	English	C	10.6

It is always the intention of the Council to provide a system of transport that seeks to ensure pupils can safely and comfortably access their education.

A number of 'Safe Travel' routes, as far as reasonably practicable, are already established such as lighting and designated footpaths.

Equalities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Specialist Facilities / Additional Learning Needs

A key responsibility of the Council is to ensure that there are sufficient pupil places in the most appropriate locations and maintain an awareness of demographic changes (i.e. increases and decreases in the pupil population) as well as identifying an authority-wide strategy for community provision in schools.

The Council has a robust strategy for learners with additional learning needs centered around a person-centered approach ensuring that all learners access education that meets their needs. The Local Authority also has a duty to keep provision under review, which includes provision for additional learning needs in mainstream schools as well as specialist provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) or disabilities.

The Local Authority is committed to developing inclusive education opportunities and provision in Caerphilly aims to create conditions that support learners to stay in mainstream education through a variety of strategies. These include ensuring all learners have access to high quality education, investing in professional learning to ensure the workforce can support diverse needs, promoting early intervention and working in collaboration with schools to ensure a cohesive approach.

The proposals contribute to the review and improvement of provision and will support the effective allocation of resources, the coordinated provision of training and professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge in supporting students with additional learning needs thus ensuring that specialist facilities and support services are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities or additional learning needs.

Community Impact and Community Benefit

Existing Community Groups at Lewis Girls School will be encouraged to relocate to Lewis School Pengam or will be supported in finding alternative provision within the localised area, for example Ystrad Mynach Library. A data gathering exercise will be undertaken and any groups identified will be engaged with as part of this proposal.

This proposal relates to the school provision only and no impact on the adjacent leisure facilities is anticipated.

Digital Inclusion

Caerphilly Council has clear aspirations for all schools to become community learning centres as part of their Hwb Programme. All schools within the borough are required to meet the Education Digital Standard and Lewis School Pengam currently complies with this standard.

Sport and Outdoor Play Facilities

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

All educational facilities provide external recreational and educational facilities which in the case of Lewis School Pengam includes a 3G pitch.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL?

Benefits

The principal benefits of the scheme are as follows:

- ✓ Moving away from single sex toward co-education bringing Caerphilly in line with the rest of Wales
- ✓ Families can be brought together and re-united and avoid the division that some experience when, due to the current arrangement of schools, children from the same family are split apart at age 11
- ✓ Greater consistency in what we provide to young people
- ✓ Minimising impact on exam pupils and enabling staff and pupils to be integrated over an appropriate timeframe
- ✓ Reducing surplus places at Lewis School Pengam
- ✓ Better value for money and a more sustainable model of delivery
- ✓ Reducing the number of maintained buildings, with associated backlog maintenance

Disbenefits

The principal disbenefits of the scheme are as follows:

- Travel times may change for a minority of pupils dependent on their proximity to Lewis School Pengam, but this can also be conversely applicable for those who find themselves closer who were previously attending Lewis Girls School
- Community usage and accessibility of alternative provision for groups using the existing Lewis Girls School site needs to be supported and encouraged to transition to the Lewis School Pengam site or other suitable alternatives
- There will be a period of transition for the pupils and appropriate support for 'Settling in' will require consideration
- The current Lewis Girls School site will need to be decommissioned and disposed of in line with appropriate guidelines once the phased transition period is complete
- It is anticipated there will be minimal impact on other schools through a managed and phased capacity increase

Risks

The proposal seeks to close Lewis Girls school and make a regulated alteration to Lewis Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.

Risks will be managed pro-actively in accordance with our risk management procedures along with the suggested mitigating actions:

Table 4: Risks and Mitigations			
Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Parents choose for their children to attend alternative schools which results in a reduction in pupil numbers at these schools	Low	Low	Engagement with parents to take place throughout the process.
Period of uncertainty for the affected schools whilst the statutory process is being carried out and implemented may have a negative impact on standards at the two schools.	Medium	Medium	The Council to provide advice and support to the schools and governing bodies to ensure that standards and performance continue to improve during the transition period.
Uncertainty for staff during the transition period, may result in some staff leaving	Low	Low	Engagement with staff to take place throughout the process and staff to be kept informed of developments.

NEXT STEPS

Consultation Period and key dates

The formal consultation process begins on Monday 3rd June 2024

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

If you would like this information in any other format, for example large print, or help with interpretation in a different language, please contact us on 01443 864817 / 21stCenturySchools@caerphilly.gov.uk so that the necessary arrangements can be made to provide this service.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is midnight on 15th July 2024

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

Statutory Notices, Reporting and Decision Making

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

Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing and sent to the Council within the 28-day period.

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

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

Should Cabinet approve the proposal, implementation of the move to coeducation will commence.

Have your say

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

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

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

Your views matter

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

Consultation Response 'Lewis CoEd'

c/o Sustainable Communities for Learning Team
Directorate of Education and Corporate Services
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Penallta House
Tredomen Park
Ystrad Mynach
CF82 7PG



21stCenturySchools@caerphilly.gov.uk

Please note that we are only able to receive comments in writing, either via the online form, pro forma or via email. You must include your full name and postal address as part of the information provided.