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## **SECTION 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 26) requires each local education authority to prepare a school organisation plan for its area. The Plan for the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf will inform the LEA and others about the need to add or remove school places within the County Borough.

The Education (School Organisation Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2003 require the publication of a new draft plan by 31 December 2003, followed by a further draft plan on or before 31 December 2006, and on or before 31 December in every third year thereafter. Following publication, and consultation on the draft plan, this document is now the new adopted plan for this Council, covering the period January 2004 to August 2009.

The School Organisation Plan will not replace the requirement to publish statutory proposals for changes to schools. Such changes would be the subject of separate National Assembly regulations and guidance in accordance with the provisions of sections 28 to 35 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It should be noted, however, that some of the conclusions reached in this and subsequent School Organisation Plans might require relatively minor changes to schools which would not result in the publication of statutory notices.

There is no compulsion on LEA's or school governors to make proposals to meet needs identified in the Plan. Where there is an identified shortfall of places, the LEA will consider making statutory proposals to meet its duty to secure sufficient places in its area.

The LEA will be able, if it so desires, to publish proposals which do not contribute directly to meeting the objectives set out in the School Organisation Plan. If the LEA sees opportunities for change other than those in the Plan, perhaps to take advantage of an unexpected development, it will still be able to propose prescribed alterations.

## **1.1 Purpose of the School Organisation Plan (SOP)**

The SOP is a contextual document. The Plan will draw conclusions about the need to add or remove school places within the County Borough. The Plan will help the LEA, schools, parents and local communities to understand the need for changes in the provision of school places, in response to future demands. It will provide a basis upon which the LEA and the Welsh Assembly Government will consider subsequent proposals for reorganising the supply of school places.

The Plan contains information on:

- the context of Rhondda Cynon Taf LEA;
- the current provision of places from nursery to post 16, including projected pupil numbers for the five year period of the Plan;
- provision for pupils with special educational needs (including provision proposed to be used outside the County Borough);
- a statement of policies and principles relating to the provision of school places (specifically to secure improved standards of achievement by pupils);
- provision for pupils out of school (e.g. because of illness, injury, pupils in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), pupils looked after by local authorities, pupils educated at home by parents etc.);

The Plan should include sufficient information to allow the community at large, schools and their governing bodies to see how its conclusions have been reached, and is therefore structured in three parts: -

- a statement of policies and principles relevant to the provision of school places, specifically related to securing improved standards and achievements by pupils;
- demographic information relevant to the supply of school places; and
- conclusions drawn from the above about the need to add or remove school places in particular areas of the LEA.

As it is a duty of the LEA to secure sufficient and suitable school places in its area, the LEA now produces this updated School Organisation Plan. Schools, local communities and neighbouring authorities, amongst others have had an opportunity to comment on the draft prior to its formal adoption by the County Borough Council. It is hoped that the consultation process has secured a broad understanding of the relevant issues and the proposals that will eventually follow.

## **1.2 Consultation Process**

The LEA has undertaken a period of consultation, with education partners, in accordance with the Education (School Organisation Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2003.

These partners included:

- the governing body of each school maintained by the Authority;
- the Diocesan Director of Education of every diocese of the Church in Wales, whose responsibilities include any area of the authority;
- the Diocesan Director of Education of every diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, whose responsibilities include any area of the authority;
- the Board of Mission of the Church in Wales;
- Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales);
- the Welsh Joint Education Committee;
- the Welsh Language Board;
- ELWa;
- the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; and
- the Welsh Assembly Government

In addition to the prescribed consultees listed above, the LEA also consulted:

- neighbouring Local Education Authorities (Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Powys and Neath Port Talbot);

- the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership;
- the Admissions Forum for the area;
- the relevant SEN regional Group;
- Coleg Morgannwg;
- Mid Glamorgan Careers;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Governor's Association;
- the Parent Teacher Association of Wales;
- the Wales' Primary Schools Association;
- the Wales' Secondary Schools Association;
- other departments of the County Borough Council;
- Education Business Partnership;
- the management panel of the Pupil Referral Unit;
- the management panel of the Ty Gwyn/Talbot Green SEN Centre;
- the professional associations, teaching and other staff unions; and
- any other organisations with an interest in the provision and delivery of education in the area, for example, pre-school playgroup associations.

Copies of the Plan are available at Ty Trevithick, all public libraries, schools and on the Internet. It will be available in both English and Welsh.

A notice for the public, that the new SOP has been adopted and is available, will be published in the local press at the appropriate time. The notice will summarise the Plan's conclusions and identify the areas where there is a need to add or remove places. A full copy of the Plan is available from the Education and Children's Services Group, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash, CF45 4UQ, telephone 01443 744227 and on the Internet, at [www.rctednet.net/sop](http://www.rctednet.net/sop).

### **1.3 Relationship with other plans**

Rhondda Cynon Taf LEA's School Organisation Plan (SOP) forms part of the Education & Children's Services Group strategic planning framework. It relates to a number of the Group's existing strategic plans, namely:

- the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2002 – 2005,
- Service Unit Business Plans,
- the Early Years Development Plan;
- the Behaviour Support Plan;
- the Special Educational Needs Action Plan;
- the Welsh Education Scheme;
- Fair Funding: Scheme of Financing Schools;
- Infant Class Size Reduction Plan;
- Literacy and Numeracy Strategies;
- Lifelong Learning Strategic Plan, 2003 - 2006;
- 'Children First' - Management Action Plan;
- the Children's Services Plan for Children in Need.

References to the plans listed above are made throughout this document.

The Plan also reflects the Councils corporate priorities of economic renewal and prosperity and social development, as highlighted in the Community Plan "A Better Life – A Programme of Change for the Future".

The vision and mission of the Education & Children's Services Group, as related in the Education Strategic Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf is:

"A Rhondda Cynon Taf where children, young people and adults are supported, throughout their development, to become full and active citizens and where learning, in all settings, is fostered and encouraged.

The primary focus of all our services is the needs of individual people, whether as learners or as people in need of help and support. Whilst our service clearly has the individual, whether a learner or a person in need, as our

primary focus, we also acknowledge the obligation individuals have to one another and the fact that prosperous communities are dependent on mutual help and support.

For pupils in schools, we intend to create the best possible circumstances to secure effective learning – where the student develops the skills and qualities necessary to become an independent, lifelong learner. This will require high quality teaching in appropriate surroundings. Teachers will need sufficient resources and time to plan and prepare for their pupils' learning, or as facilitators of independent learning.

Many of our young people, too often due to circumstances beyond their control, will also require help and support to safely progress through difficult episodes in their life. Our systems for protecting children from abuse need to be highly effective and our resources focused, in particular, on children and families suffering deprivation.

Schools are a key element in sustaining and developing local communities. The community dimension of schooling will become increasingly important as we recognise the social aspect of learning and the mutually beneficial relationship between a school and its local community: a relationship which will increase the school's capacity for improvement. Effective learners will need to develop the capacity for resourcefulness, resilience and reflection; qualities which will flourish in contexts which also exhibit these same qualities.

We also acknowledge the importance of producing self confident, healthy and rounded individuals, ready to play a full part in society. Such individuals will be sensitive to the needs of others and respectful of different groups in our communities.

We believe that a strong education and children's service is a pre-requisite for economically and socially healthy communities. This requirement will grow in significance as the pace of change quickens, due to the global effects of social, economic, and technological developments. As our society advances

and becomes more complex so our response to needs will become more sophisticated and will often require a partnership approach to the delivery of services.”

## **SECTION 2 POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES**

### **2.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - The Community Plan**

The County Borough Council has a Community Plan covering the period 2004 - 2014 entitled "A Better Life – A Programme of Change to Create a New Future". It sets out the Council's vision, and long term goals. The Community Plan provides a framework for a range of corporate strategies, which reflect the main aims of the Council and underpin policies and priorities for long term development. The Community Plan will ensure that all services work together to ensure that limited resources are focused on the issues which matter most in improving the quality of life for all local people.

The Community Plan covers the whole County and its purpose is to :

- set out the aspirations, needs and priorities that local people and organisations identify for the county.
- co-ordinate and support the actions of public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally.
- focus and shape existing and future activity of those organisations so they effectively meet community needs and aspirations.
- help achieve sustainable development both locally and more widely with local goals and priorities relating, where appropriate, to regional, national and even global aims.

The Community Plan will be used as a practical tool to encourage all organisations to work together and with residents to tackle problems and improve the well-being of the County Borough. This will be done through :

- setting out the outcomes to be achieved and agreeing an action plan.
- setting out the responsibilities and roles of each organisation involved, alongside proposals for how the action plans will be implemented.

- ensuring all organisations have a shared commitment to achieving the outcomes.
- agreeing the best use of resources to meet the objectives.
- monitoring the implementation of the action plan, reporting progress to local communities and developing further action plans.
- helping promote more local area and community action planning, which sets out the priorities for each part of the county. As more and more local community action plans are developed, they will in turn influence the future direction of the overall Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Plan.

The community strategy is based on five long term goals: -

**Boosting our Local Economy:**

- More 'quality' jobs and increased employment opportunities in a strong, prosperous, self-reliant local economy.
- Towns, villages, streets and homes that have been improved and revitalised, through new development which is sympathetic to our environment
- Vibrant communities with a viable long term future.

**Learning for Growth:**

- To enable everyone to fulfil their personal potential, from their earliest days to their retirement years
- High standards of education for all learners, with levels of attainment above the average for Wales and England
- A local workforce equipped with all the skills they need to take advantage of new employment opportunities, new ways of working, and changing technologies in the workplace.

### **Our Health and Well Being:**

- Local people whose health and access to high quality health services is equal to the best in Britain
- Local communities where we have revived our tradition of taking action to protect and care for those who are vulnerable
- To have services in the health, social care and voluntary sectors that support individual needs for independence and personal choice.

### **Safer Communities:**

- To further reduce the level and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
- To make Rhondda Cynon Taf an even safer and more pleasant place to live, work and visit.

### **Our Living Space:**

- To protect and improve our local environment, which we value because of the growing quality of its bio-diversity, natural beauty, heritage, parks and open spaces, streetscape, and architecture
- To make Rhondda Cynon Taf a place where people want to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, because of the high quality of life it offers.

What do we need to do first?

Our action points: -

- Provide access for every child to good quality “early years” education, and ensure that those families in need get extra support and help, so that their children are ready to benefit from starting school.
- Identify new ways to improve the quality of teaching in schools, and to use European funds and other grants to improve school buildings and facilities.
- Set clear improvement targets for all schools, which reflect the future needs of local employers, as part of our wider School Improvement Programme.
- Extend our programme of creating “Community Schools”, which offer local opportunities for learners of all ages to improve their skills, in partnership with our local colleges and the University.

- Extend our “World of Work” pilot programme with local companies so that every young person leaving school is equipped with the skills and experience necessary to ensure their success in the workplace.
- Put in place a Lifelong Learning strategy to improve the skills of the unemployed and those who work in smaller firms and have little access to training opportunities, as well as to increase the number of young people who stay in education or training after the age of 16.

## **2.2 The Education and Childrens’ Services Group**

The Education & Children’s Services Group in Rhondda Cynon Taf is committed to the promotion and development of high standards within a learning community. The major focus of the Education Strategic Plan is raising levels of achievement in all sectors of the service. The priorities of the LEA are set out in six priorities within the Education Strategic Plan:

“The Plan’s key priorities arise from an analysis of the County Borough’s context and our performance over the duration of the current ESP. The key priorities listed also take into account the Council’s Community Plan and other related plans. The key priorities of the ESP focus on:-

- skills (communication, numeracy and ICT)
- learning and teaching,
- the community dimension of schools,
- inclusive education,
- leadership and management,
- ethos.”

## **SECTION 3 THE DATA**

### **3.1 Background**

The County Borough Council of Rhondda Cynon Taf was formed in 1996 from three districts of the previous Mid Glamorgan County Council. It serves an area of 44,000 hectares, with a population of some 231,952 (5.3 per hectare). The overall percentage decrease in population, highlighted in the 2001 Census data, shows a decline in population of 0.3% over the data for 1991.

However, an increase has occurred in the southern part of the County Borough, near the 'M4 corridor', as a result of extensive new housing development, resulting in an ageing and decreasing population in the northern areas.

A breakdown of the population by age and gender is shown below in figure 1.

**Figure 1** **Rhondda Cynon Taf  
Population on Census Day, 29 April 2001**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>ALL AGES</b>	<b>231,952</b>	<b>112,454</b>	<b>119,498</b>
0 - 4	13,887	7,136	6,751
5 - 9	14,980	7,671	7,309
10 - 14	16,421	8,510	7,911
15 - 19	15,061	7,512	7,549
20 - 24	14,370	7,231	7,139
25 - 29	14,243	6,957	7,286
30 - 34	16,515	7,954	8,561
35 - 39	17,157	8,482	8,675
40 - 44	15,355	7,512	7,843
45 - 49	14,397	7,021	7,376
50 - 54	16,401	8,245	8,156
55 - 59	13,748	6,851	6,897
60 - 64	11,685	5,837	5,848
65 - 69	10,603	5,022	5,581
70 - 74	9,414	4,266	5,148
75 - 79	8,429	3,443	4,986
80 - 84	5,364	1,829	3,535
89 - 90	2,707	730	1,977
90+	1,215	245	970

Source – Office of National Statistics. Crown Copyright.

Whilst statistics show that the southern area of the County Borough is the most economically and socially healthy, pockets of deprivation still exist in the southern part of the County.

The settlement structure of the County Borough is partly urban and partly rural, consisting of strings of villages along valley floors, the legacy of a mining industry which provided the main source of employment. With all but one of the mines closed it is unsurprising that unemployment is concentrated in specific areas. These same valley areas also exhibit high indices of social and economic deprivation.

The ethnic minority community accounts for 1.1% of the population of Rhondda Cynon Taf. A higher proportion of ethnic minorities exists in the ward of Treforest (7.3% of the population) due largely to the student population attending the University of Glamorgan.

The 1991 Census recorded that 91.1% of the population of Rhondda Cynon Taf were born in Wales, of which 9% were Welsh speaking, compared to an all Wales average of 17.9%. 2001 data shows that 89.9 % of the population of the County Borough are now recorded as being born in Wales, with 9.79% being Welsh speaking, compared to an all Wales figure which has fallen slightly, to 16.3%.

### **Live Births by Area and Year 1990 - 2009**

The live birth rate is 10.7 per 1,000 residents (source: Population Estimates Unit, ONS). Figure 2 and figure 3 provide actual live birth figures for the period 1990-2001 and estimated live births for 2002-2009. The actual live birth rates in recent years have shown an average decline.

Figure 2

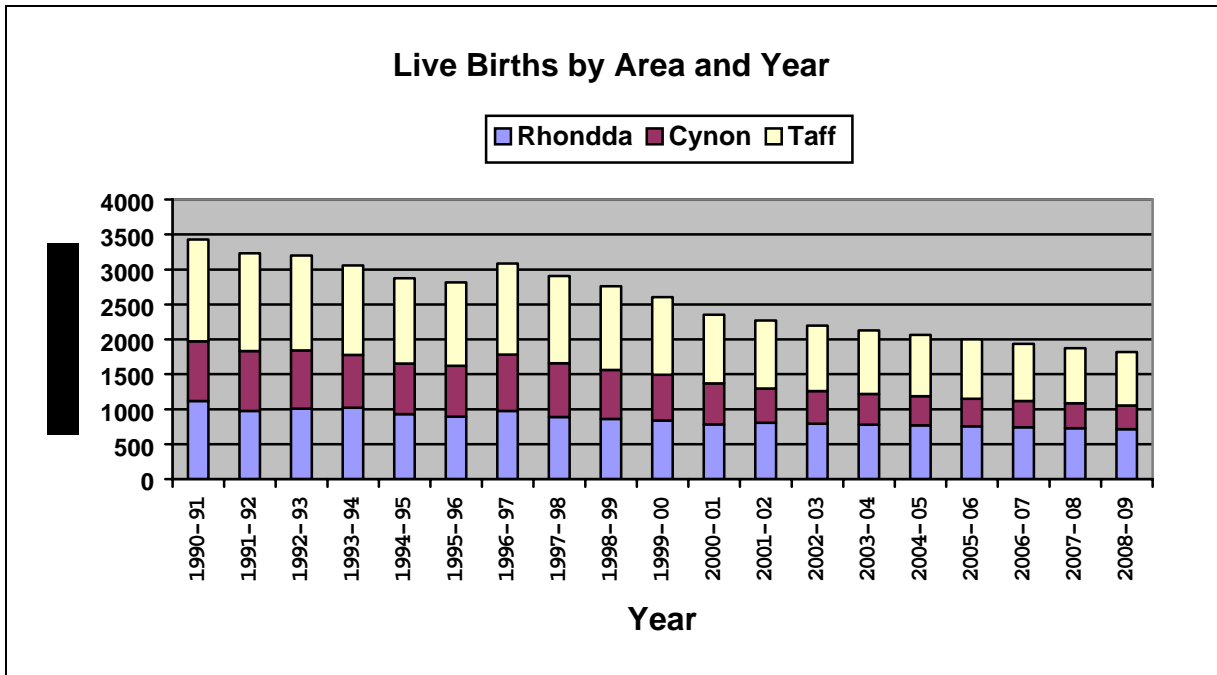
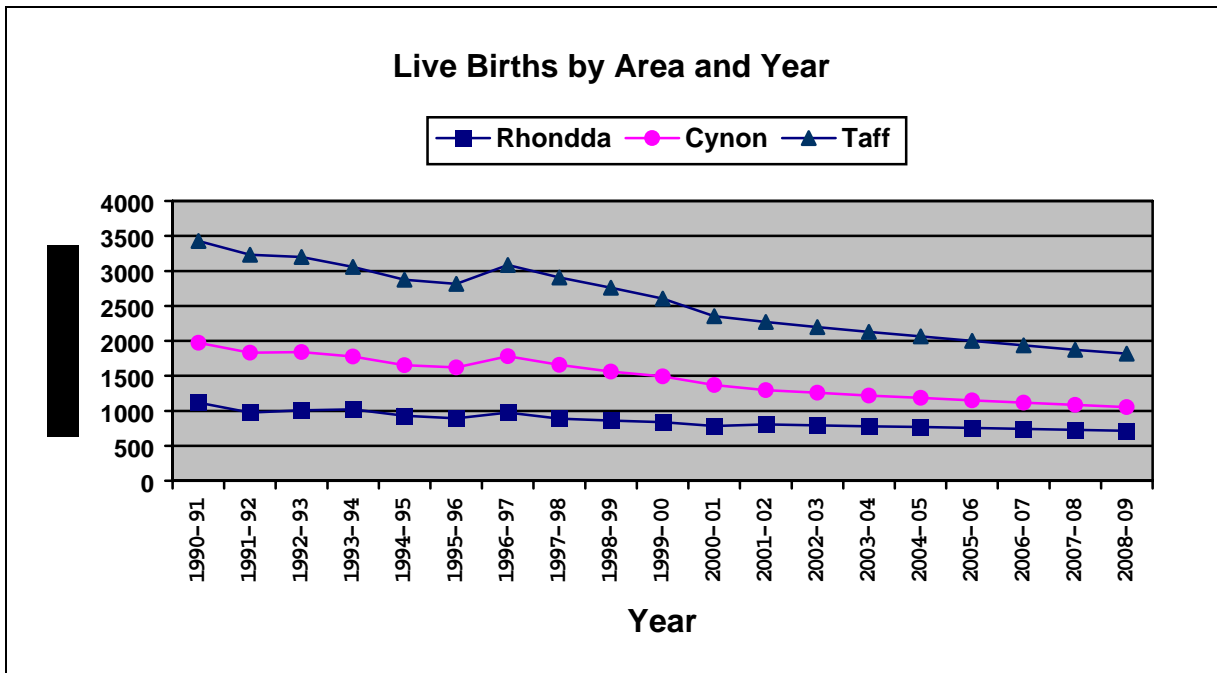


Figure 3



## 3.2 The Structure of Education Provision

### Outline

Our local education service is the second largest in Wales by population but, being a diverse area, both demographically and geographically, it possesses the largest number of schools of all Welsh LEA's. As a consequence of the variety of the area, school size is equally variable with infant, junior and primary schools ranging from 29 to 421 pupils and secondary schools from 748 to 1,495 pupils. See Appendices 1 and 2 for school sizes.

There is a range of provision including 13 Welsh Medium and 3 Bilingual Primaries, and 4 Welsh Medium Secondary Schools. Of the English Medium Schools, 6 of the Primary Schools and 2 of the Secondary Schools are Voluntary Aided, organised and run by either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Authority in partnership with the LEA. There are no Voluntary Controlled Schools in this County Borough. Two of our secondary schools are single-sex schools (Aberdare Girls and Aberdare Boys Comprehensives).

### Education Premises

In January 1999 there was a total of 172 schools in the County Borough. This figure reduced to 169 in the summer of 1999 as a consequence of certain rationalisations, and, with four further primary amalgamations in January 2003, three more in September 2003, together with the closure of one nursery school, the total as at September 2003 now stands at 160. The types of schools are as follows: -

	<b>January 1999</b>	<b>September 2003</b>
Nursery	8	6
Infant	35	27
Junior	19	12
Primary	85	90
Secondary (Mixed)	17	17
Secondary (Single Sex)	2	2
Special	4	4
EBD/Pupil Referral Unit	2	2

The Council undertook formal consultation regarding the closure and amalgamation of four Infant and four Junior Schools (Penyreglyn, Penrhys, Penywaun and Gwaunmeisgyn) to form Primary Schools in January 2003. Tir Gwaidd Nursery School also closed at this time, and became part of the new Penrhys Primary. A new school building was also provided to facilitate the Penyreglyn merger.

### **The Best Value Review of Primary Education Provision.**

The Council commenced a wide-ranging Review of Primary Education Provision in December, 2001, using the Government's 'Best Value' framework. The scope of the review looked in particular at the possibility of merging 'pairs' of schools, which met agreed criteria, to create our preferred model of 'all-through' Primary Schools. Following periods of statutory consultation, approval was given to the three merger proposals already detailed above (Penrhys, Penywaun and Gwaunmeisgyn), effective from 1 January 2003, with the following further proposals taking effect from 1 September 2003:-

Gwauncelyn Infants and Juniors

Hendreforgan Infants and Juniors

Penrhiwceibr Infants and Juniors

Cwmaman Infants and Glynhafod Nursery

As a consequence of all the aforementioned merger proposals, the total number of schools in the County Borough has reduced to 160. Some of the proposals also involved the rationalisation of buildings and premises, and consequently removed almost 600 surplus Primary school places.

Another area considered as part of the Best Value Review was the possibility of making more efficient use of school buildings, as community assets. As a consequence, the Council rationalised provision at Craig yr Hesg Primary School, which involved transferring all pupils to one block of the school. The redundant block was converted for use as a replacement for the Ty Gwyn SEN Centre, which was previously housed in sub-standard accommodation on a split site. Conversion of a redundant, dilapidated classroom block at Maerdy Junior School has also been completed, to provide office accommodation for our 'Catering Direct' service. The outcome of these two proposals removed a further 390 surplus places from the system.

The Review programme continued in the autumn term 2003, with further statutory consultation undertaken on the proposed merger of Dinas Junior and Craig yr Eos Infants Schools. This proposal has since been agreed, and the two schools in question will merge, to form a new Community Primary School, in September 2004. This process will continue in the future, as and when individual schools meet the criteria for review as outlined in our Best Value Review Report.

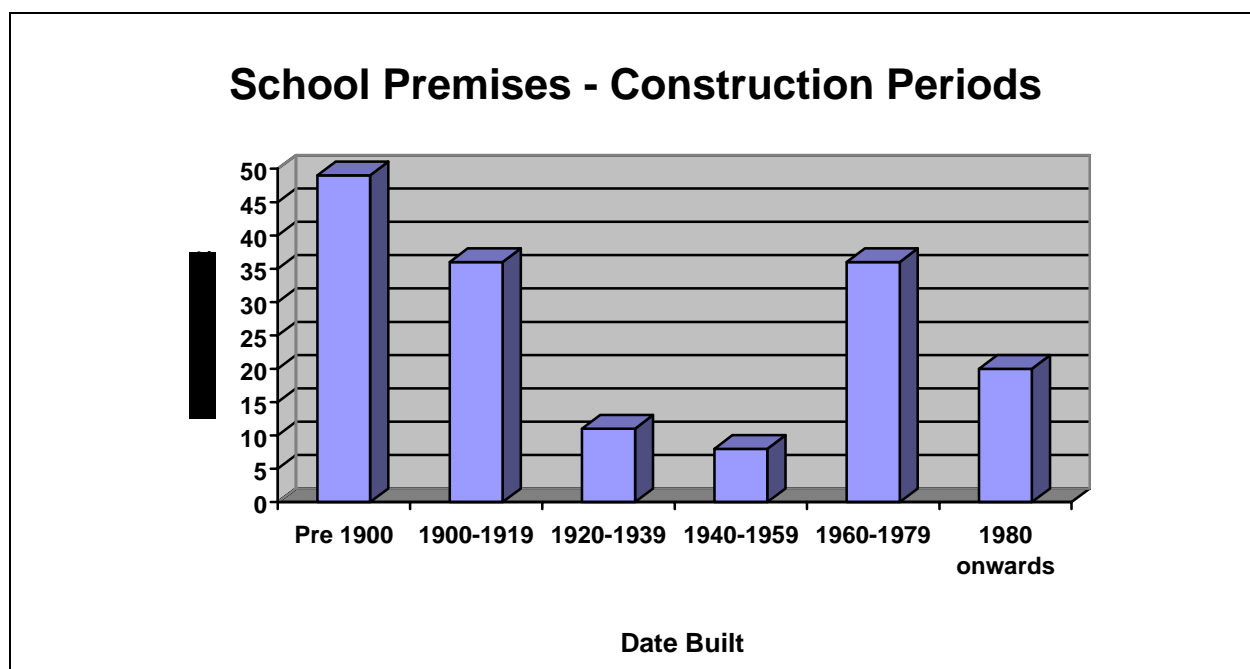
### **Construction Of School Buildings**

The dates of construction of school buildings are as follows:  
(see also Figure 4)

pre 1900	49	equating to 30.6% of buildings
1900-1919	36	equating to 22.5% of buildings
1920-1939	11	equating to 6.9% of buildings

1940-1959	8	equating to 5% of buildings
1960-1979	36	equating to 22.5% of buildings
1980 onwards	20	equating to 12.5% of buildings

**Graph indicating school premises by age of construction**  
**Figure 4**



The above graph illustrates the construction rates of school buildings over 20 year periods (except for those built pre-1900). It is interesting to note that during 1980-2000 the number of schools built was just over half the number built in the previous 20 year period, largely due to a lack of capital investment. It should also be noted that the majority of new schools built in the 1990's have been reconstructed following major arson attacks, therefore the number built in this period is disproportionately high in terms of 'normal' patterns of capital investment.

District Audit (in its report to the LEA on Planning of School Places, November 1997) indicated that the education service has a high level of temporary accommodation. The LEA has a large number of demountable buildings which are significantly older than their date for obsolescence. It has been agreed that, wherever possible, traditional construction methods will be used for future classroom accommodation, especially where the requirement is known to be of a permanent nature. Information on the number and location of demountable classrooms,

throughout the County Borough, is provided in Appendix 7. The LEA has already begun removing mobile classrooms from sites where they are no longer required. Examples in recent years include the removal of such classrooms at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari, Hawthorn Primary and Cwmdar Primary. This programme is continuing, with permanent build extensions already constructed in certain schools that had a high percentage of demountable accommodation, namely Comin Infants, Tonypandy Comprehensive, and YGG Ynyswen. The Council is currently considering a programme of construction of extensions in a further eight primary schools deemed to have an unacceptably high level of demountable accommodation.

### **Planning of School Places**

The manner in which the LEA plans the provision and supply of school places and manages the admission of its pupils, is critical in ensuring that limited financial resources are spent to best effect. An effective educational infrastructure will become increasingly important as LEAs seek higher standards in schools. Section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 states:

1. *A local education authority shall make arrangements for enabling the parent of a child in the area of the authority-*
  - (a) *to express a preference as to the school at which he wishes education to be provided for his child in the exercise of the authority's functions; and*
  - (b) *to give reasons for his preference.*
2. *Subject to subsections (3) and (6) and Section 87 (children excluded from two or more schools), a local education authority and the governing body of a maintained school shall comply with any preference expressed in accordance with arrangements made under subsection (1).*
3. *The duty imposed by subsection (2) does not apply-*
  - (a) *if compliance with the preference would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources.*

The LEA in meeting its responsibilities in respect of parental preference also pays due regard to the Codes of Practice on Admissions and Admission Appeals issued by the Welsh Office and the National Assembly for Wales in April and September 1999 respectively.

The key strategic function of planning, by the LEA, is to ensure that there are sufficient places available in accordance with parental preference, except where this would prejudice effective education and the efficient use of resources. In doing this, the LEA needs to take account of overall changes in demographic trends, local variations as a result of new housing developments or housing estates in decline, and changing levels of demand for particular schools. This planning function will assume greater importance with the establishment of a formal Admissions Forum, and the need to demonstrate value for money/cost effectiveness in the efficient delivery of the service, in accordance with the principles of Best Value.

### **Admissions to Schools**

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf each school has an area it traditionally serves, known as its 'catchment area'. Most parents send their children to the 'local' school, but some parents exercise their right to state a preference for a different school. In almost all cases these preferences are able to be met, which is reflected by the fact that we have had no formal appeals made against any decision to refuse admission to any of our schools. Parents are able to choose either an English or Welsh Medium School or Voluntary Aided Schools organised and run by either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Authority in partnership with the LEA. The LEA does not have any Voluntary Controlled Schools. The service has produced over-subscription criteria for use in circumstances where the number of applications for admission at a particular school exceeds the standard number. Full details of the LEA's Admission Policies are contained in the annual publication "*A Guide to Policy on Admission Arrangements 2003/2004*". The service recognises the need for a diversity of provision, by gender or by religious or denominational conviction (having regard to the duties placed on LEAs and governing bodies by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976) and this is reflected in the structure of education provision, as detailed in section 3.2 of the document.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council recognises the right of parents to state a preference for the school of their choice, which is confirmed in our 'Starting School' booklet. We further recognise the importance of diversity in enabling parents to make appropriate choices. Consequently, the LEA has a range of provision which caters for diversity in respect of language and faith. Within early years provision, there is the opportunity to take up places in the maintained, private and voluntary sectors. Overall, the LEA provision is able to meet the current demand for diversity.

### **Nursery and Infant/Junior/Primary School Structure**

As at September 2003, Rhondda Cynon Taf had 6 free-standing Nursery Schools. Of the 129 Infant, Junior and Primary schools, 4 are Roman Catholic (Voluntary Aided), 2 are Church in Wales (Voluntary Aided) and 13 are Welsh Medium. In addition, 3 schools have Welsh Units. These numbers will change as further rationalisation proposals are implemented in the future.

The level of early years provision in the LEA is high, with all four year olds and 95.9% of three year olds provided with at least a part time place in a maintained school. Further development of quality provision for young children in the non-maintained sector is supported by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

The pupil teacher ratio (including headteachers) in our Nursery Schools is 12.33:1 and 22.09:1 in our Primary Schools. The average class size, taught by one teacher, is 17.38 pupils per class in Nursery Schools and 26.18 pupils per class in Primary Schools.

Since September 1998, a major factor influencing class sizes has been the government's pledge to ensure that all infant pupils were taught in classes of 30 and below by the year 2001 (The School Standards and Framework Act 1998). The LEA made a successful bid to the Welsh Office for additional funding for the academic year 1998-1999 which enabled class sizes to be reduced in 10 of the LEAs schools, and released 634 pupils from being taught in infant classes of over 30. The LEA

maintained this development in 1999/2000 with another grant awarded by the National Assembly for Wales, which enabled class sizes to be reduced in a further 12 of the LEAs schools, and released 1,175 pupils from being taught in infant classes of over 30.

Funding continued in 2000/2001 to the end of the academic year, with grant approval to the end of August 2001, which reduced class sizes in a further thirteen schools, releasing a total of 1,134 pupils from Infant classes of over 30. The total number of schools which benefited from this grant is thirty five. Twenty nine of the thirty five employed teachers, and a further six were provided with additional accommodation and resources.

Funding for this scheme, from September 2001, continues via the local government revenue settlement, with schools receiving allocations of finance, via their formula budgets.

There are no statutory limits on class sizes in Key Stage 2. However, announcements by the National Assembly indicate that it intends also to reduce the size of junior classes to the same level as infant classes in the future. Additional revenue funding has already been received, and distributed to schools, to commence this exercise, and we are advised that more funding will be forthcoming.

In order to minimise any short term negative effects on KS2 pupils, the LEA proposes a range of measures including:

- the full use of additional funds (if granted) to support planned developments;
- effective co-operation and dialogue with schools and governing bodies on the need to ensure equable and appropriate organisational structures;
- monitoring by the LEA, through its officers and advisory service, of school organisation and its effect on quality and standards;
- reporting regularly to schools and the LEA on the outcomes of the monitoring process.

Decisions about the appropriate size of teaching groups/classes are matters for individual governing bodies (infant class size legislation apart) and relate to the internal management of the school. Teaching group sizes vary depending upon a number of factors, including number of pupils on roll, finances and available accommodation.

In July 1999 the capacity of our schools was updated following the previous exercise carried out by Mid Glamorgan LEA in 1991, followed by further annual updates each year thereafter, undertaken during the autumn term. School capacity is calculated according to guidance contained in Welsh Office/Assembly Circulars and the DfEE's more open enrolment formula (MOE). A total of 25,941 pupil places have been identified.

A detailed analysis of pupils on roll and the capacity of primary schools is shown in Appendix 1.

In addition to the above, new developments in the curriculum, such as the National Grid for Learning Initiative, has meant that schools with surplus capacity have endeavoured to convert classroom space into specialist I.T. resource areas.

The amalgamation of Blaencwm, Blaenrhondda and Dunraven Primary Schools into Penpych Community Primary School, together with the closure of Hendrefadog Infants School, in the Summer Term 1999, resulted in the removal of 239 surplus places. The amalgamation of Penyreglyn Junior and Infants, with the transfer to a new building in January 2003, removed an additional 150 surplus places. The merger of Penrhys Junior and Infants, together with Tir Gwaidd Nursery, resulted in the closure of the Nursery school building, and the alternative community usage of the Infant building, which, in total, removed a further 230 places. Other amalgamations and removal of surplus places, arising out of the Best Value Review, are detailed earlier in this chapter.

The LEA concluded formal consultation, and published statutory notices, on the construction of a new replacement school for YGG Aberdar, with additional capacity of 80 places, and an extension to Cwmdar Primary, to provide additional

capacity of 60 places. Both projects were deemed necessary to meet recognised growth in demand for school places in the Aberdare area, caused mainly by housing developments. The Cwmdar extension opened in April, 2002, and the new YGG Aberdar opened in January, 2003.

There will be a continuing need to review existing catchment areas due to a fall in pupil population caused by lower birth rates and the operation of parental choice. Where necessary, appropriate adjustments will need to be undertaken. Careful monitoring of the potential effect of new housing developments, especially in the southern area of the county, will continue.

The LEA will ensure that pupil number projections are continually monitored in order to constantly review school capacity figures.

### School Population Characteristics for Primary Schools

Whilst undertaking the detailed review of primary school provision, a separate exercise was undertaken to reflect the difference in school population of English and Welsh Medium Primary Schools over the next five year period. See figure 5 and 6 for an overall picture and Appendix 5 for School projections.

Figure 5

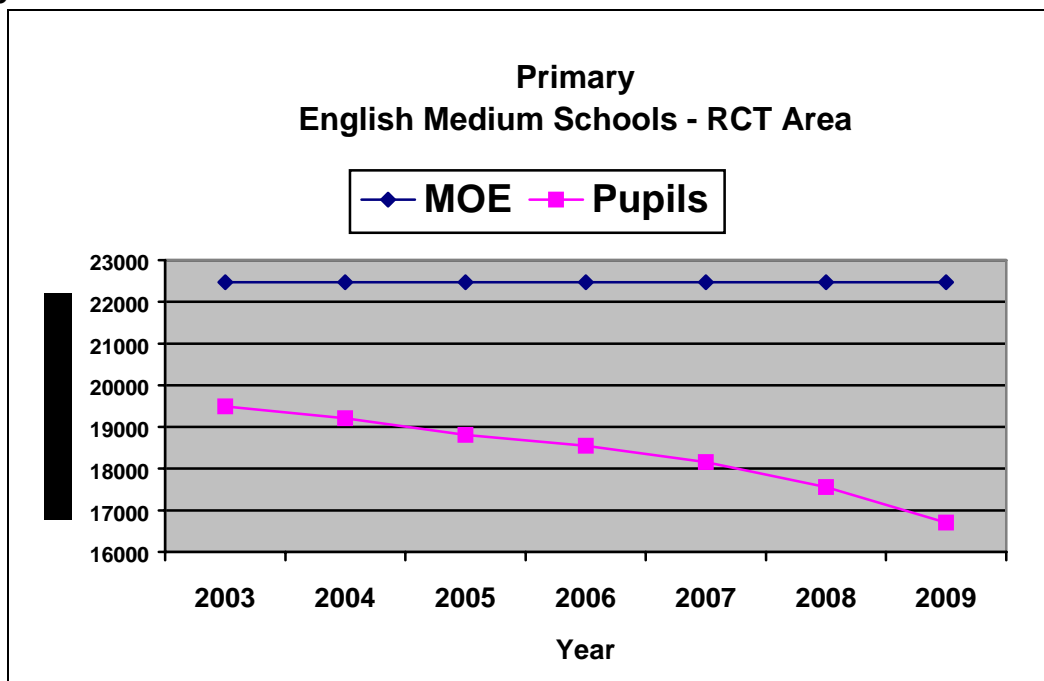
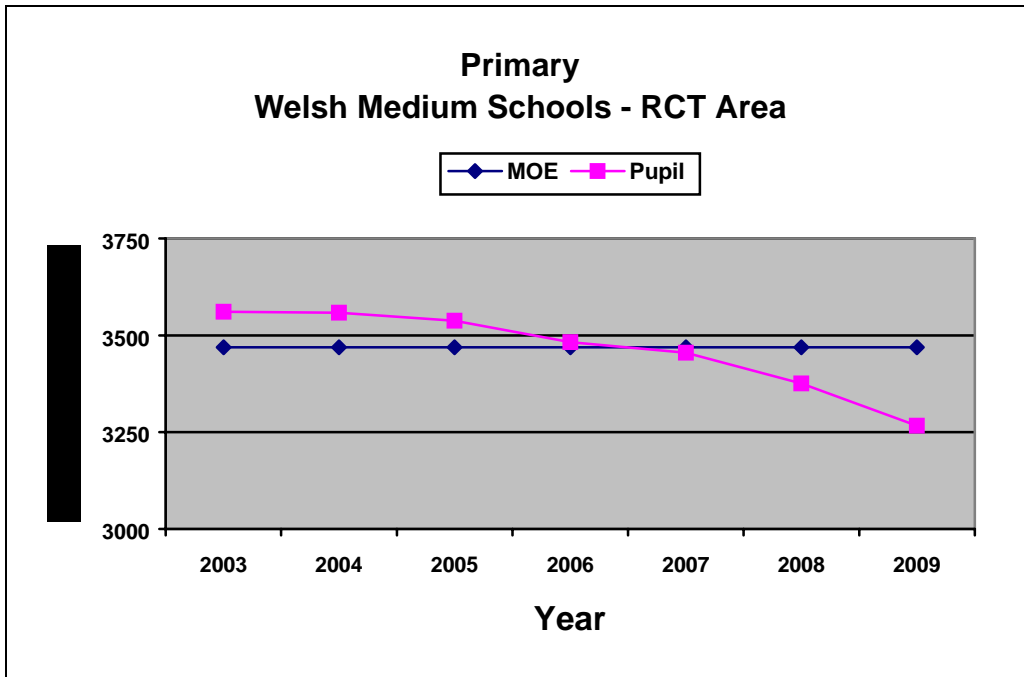


Figure 6



In general the school numbers are not affected by any seasonal workforce or the proximity of any defence establishments but certain volatility in pupil numbers is on the increase in areas of new housing development, for example, Cefn-yr-Hendy in the Pontyclun area and Llantwit Fardre on the outskirts of Pontypridd.

The impact on the demand for primary school places across the County Borough arising from housing developments, is subject to continual monitoring in conjunction with the Planning Department. The process may reveal the need for additional accommodation with obvious resource implications.

The expected trend in net total surplus capacity in the primary sector is summarised below:

2002/2003 (January 2003)

English Medium	2,980	Surplus	= 13.3% of capacity
Welsh Medium	92	Deficit	= 2.7% of capacity

2005/2006 (January 2006)

English Medium	3,920	Surplus	= 17.4% of capacity
Welsh Medium	13	Deficit	= 0.4% of capacity

2008/2009 (January 2009)

English Medium	5,766	Surplus	= 25.7% of capacity
Welsh Medium	202	Surplus	= 5.8% of capacity

The Council intends to reduce the level of surplus places in the primary sector by between 2 and 3% each year reflecting the trend indicated above. It should be noted, that the proposals implemented following the aforementioned Best Value Review, resulted in a significant reduction of 1060 surplus places (plus 35 Nursery) in one year, in respect of those proposals that were agreed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Measures to meet demand for places in the Welsh Medium Sector are outlined in our Welsh Education Scheme, a copy of which is available from Ty Trevithick (Section 7.2).

Current demand for Welsh Medium provision is variable, with some schools experiencing negative projections whilst others project continued growth. In the overall context of falling pupil numbers in the County Borough as a whole, the proportion of pupils requiring Welsh Medium will decline less sharply, with overall numbers remaining fairly constant. There is also the issue of 'latent' demand which informs the planning process, despite the lack of firm evidence.

Where demand has created pressures on admissions, the Council has:

- provided additional accommodation
- replaced existing schools with new schools of increased capacity, e.g YGG Aberdar
- provided increased and/or improved specialist accommodation
- commenced a large scale PFI project for a new secondary, primary and lifelong learning centre

- increased nursery provision, including the establishment of a Welsh Medium Early Years Centre (Y Gorlan) on the site of YGG Abercynon.

## **Secondary School Structure**

Rhondda Cynon Taf has 19 secondary schools, all have provision for 11-19 year olds. Two of the schools provide single sex schooling for girls and boys, four are Welsh Medium, one Roman Catholic (Voluntary Aided) and one Church in Wales (Voluntary Aided) School.

The pupil teacher ratio (including headteachers) in our secondary schools is 16.71:1 and the average class size taught by one teacher is 20.32 pupils per class.

The capacity of the secondary schools was calculated in August 2002, indicating a total of 23,799 places available. The pupil number on roll in January 2003 was 19,473, highlighting a surplus capacity of 4,326 which equates to 18.2% of the overall accommodation available.

The LEA has recently undertaken projects to provide extensions to the buildings at two schools that have experienced severe accommodation pressures, namely Y Pant Comprehensive and Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer. The extensions have added 200 places to each of the schools. A similar extension has also been completed at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive, another school which is experiencing increasing demand for places, mainly due to new housing developments in its catchment area.

Whilst the Council has not reached a view as to what it considers to be 'small' or 'large' schools in the secondary sector there are, at present, no secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf which can be defined as small schools. The District Audit and Estyn definition of a small secondary school is 600 pupils (or less) for schools without a sixth form and 700 for those with a sixth form. Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun now has its full complement of pupils since receiving its first Year 13 intake in September 2001.

The Council constantly monitors the provision of places and applies the following criteria;

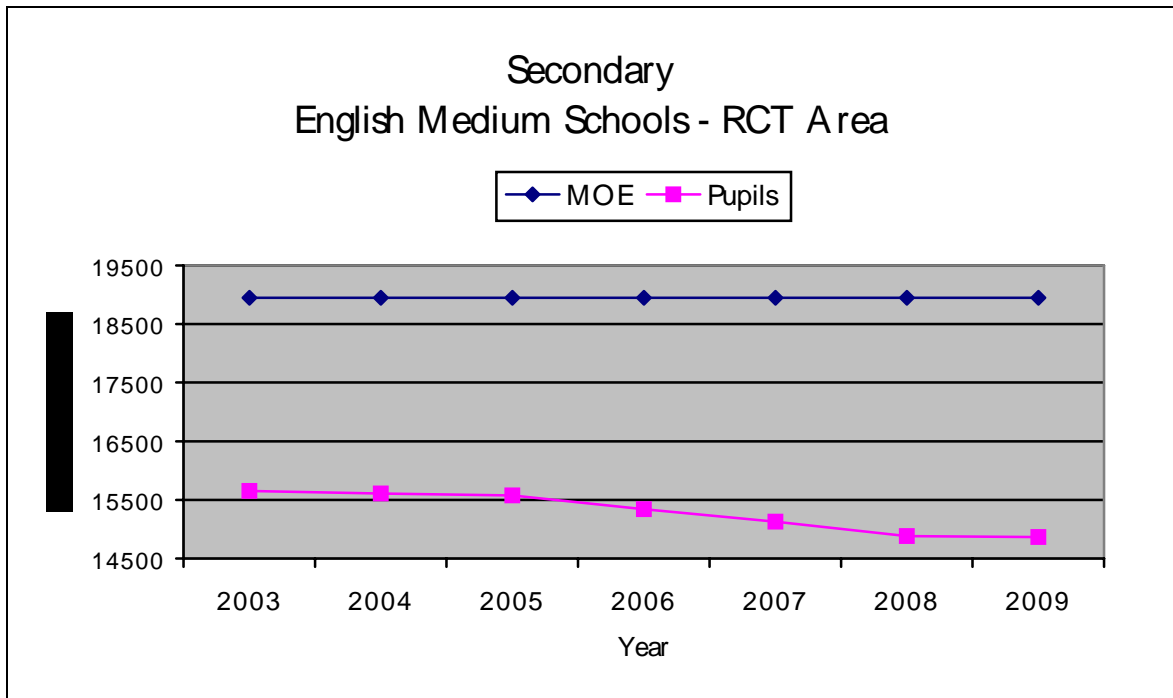
- pupil number projections;
- sixth form projections;
- demographic change;
- parental preference.

In addition, the development of provision at 16+, under the auspices of ELWa will, hopefully, ensure more effective provision for education and training for post 16 students.

See Appendix 2, for the number of pupils on roll and capacities of schools in the secondary sector.

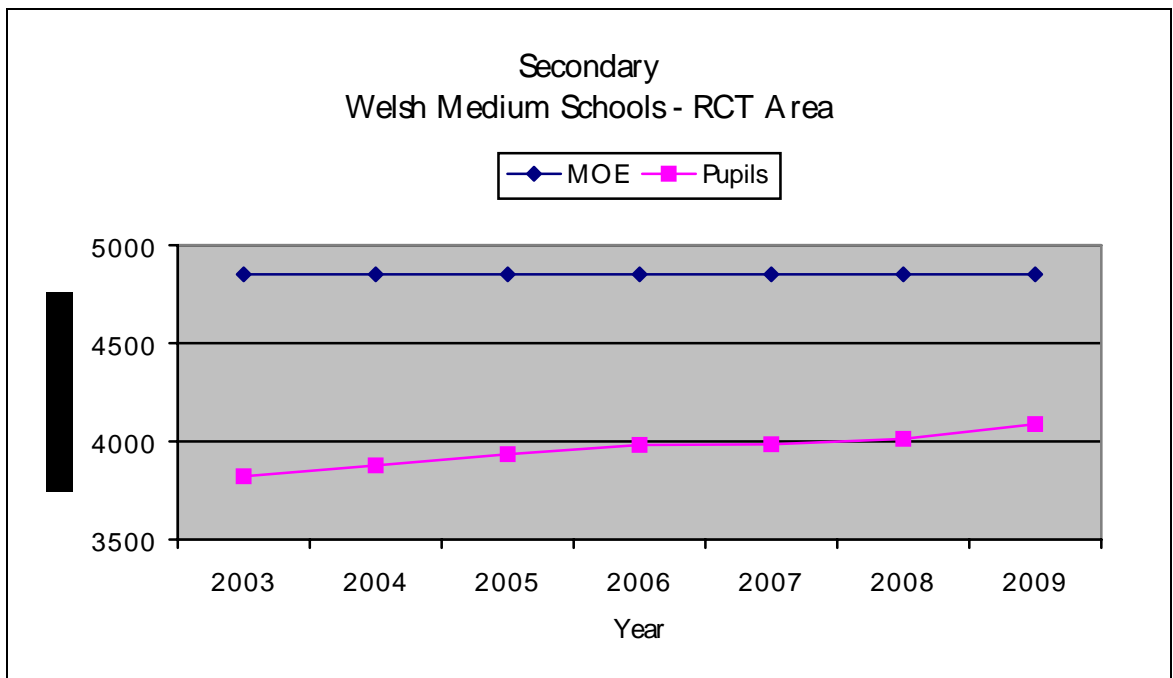
In addition to the above, several of our Welsh Medium Secondary Schools cater for pupils from neighbouring authorities, as there are, currently, no Welsh Medium Secondary Schools within Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil County Boroughs. However, Bridgend LEA has informed the Council that it plans to open a Welsh Medium Secondary School in the next few years. This development could remove up to 800 pupils who would normally have attended a Welsh Medium School within this LEA. This situation is currently being reviewed and discussions are on going with the School Governing Body and Bridgend LEA, to ensure that the potential impact is managed as smoothly and as sensitively as possible.

**Figure 7**



In reviewing secondary school data it has been possible to plot the difference in school population of English and Welsh Medium Secondary Schools over the next five year period. See figures 7 above, and 8 overleaf, for an overall picture and Appendix 6 for School projections.

**Figure 8**



The projections suggest that following a steady increase in English Medium pupil numbers a decline is to be expected after January 2003. This is not reflected in the Welsh Medium projections where pupil numbers will continue to rise. However, if Bridgend does open a Welsh Medium School in the near future then pupil numbers in one part of the County Borough could be expected to fall. The worst scenario, for this specific case, indicates a fall in pupil numbers before a gradual recovery, following an increase in Welsh Medium primary provision within the relevant catchment area.