

d) 6th form and transport

Across the County, there is a large variation in the size of sixth forms, in terms of pupil numbers and range of courses offered. There are learning partnerships in place between the schools, which have resulted in additional choice offered to pupils who are willing to travel, and all schools spoke positively about these arrangements. However, due to the geographically dispersed nature of the County, this is not always a viable or sustainable option for all pupils and it was acknowledged that the travel time for some pupils in certain areas of the County is significant. Whilst all Head Teachers were positive about the family of schools arrangements, they felt that this may inadvertently stifle discussions with neighbouring authorities, which may bring greater benefit to pupils in terms of their choice and travelling distances.

Schools located close to the borders of other counties and England stated that there were other schools, very close, which could offer increased course choice for their pupils, posing a risk of pupil drift, with the funding following the pupil out of Powys. One school in particular, faces significant competition from an English Academy school, which enjoys higher funding per pupil than those schools in Powys. However as transport isn't funded if pupils travel outside of the Council borders, this may restrict pupil's ability to access schools from Powys.

There is a significant variation in 6th form class sizes across the schools. Maes-y-dderwen for example, mentioned that it only has one pupil in two of its 6th form classes, whilst Crickhowell has class sizes of 30. We understand that, to manage the financial pressures, Maes-y-dderwen and Builth Wells are looking to manage costs by teaching years 12 and 13 back to back in some courses.

Home to school transport for all pupils is funded directly by the Council, with schools only funding in-school transport for educational and extra-curricular trips. However, there is an inconsistent cost recovery of school trips amongst the schools. Some schools do not charge pupils, whilst others ask for donations.

e) School conditions and facilities

Under the current financial pressures, maintenance and repair budgets have been scrutinised, and 50% of schools are planning to reduce their budgeted spend over coming years. The actual picture is as follows:

- Maes-y-Dderwn - no change
- Bro-Ddfyi - £10k decrease over the next three years;
- Welshpool - £30k decrease over the next three years;
- Newtown / JB - £15k decrease over the next three years;
- Llanidloes - no change;
- Llanfyllin - £20k decrease in the next three years;
- Llandrindod - £45k decrease in the next three years;
- Gwernyfed - £5k decrease in the next three years;
- Crickhowell - no change;
- Caereinion - no change;
- Builth Wells - £1k increase over the next three years
- Brecon - £10k increase over the next three years

The net change in maintenance and repairs over the next three years is a £104k reduction in budgeted spend across the schools. Despite these plans, schools state that there were improvements which they would like to