

Appendix B – Consultation Report



CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SPECIALIST CENTRE AT CRICKHOWELL CP SCHOOL

CONSULTATION REPORT

1. OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION

Powys County Council consulted on a proposal to close the Specialist Centre at Crickhowell CP School with effect from the 31st March 2016 from the 6th October 2015 to the 17th November 2015.

2. CONSULTATION METHODS

The consultation documentation was available on the Council's website throughout the Consultation Period. Copies were also distributed to stakeholders, as required by the School Organisation Code (2013). A separate version for young people was also available and distributed to pupils, and was also available on the Council's website throughout the Consultation Period.

Consultees were invited to respond to the consultation by either completing a response form and returning it to the School Modernisation Team at County Hall, or by writing to the School Modernisation Team.

A meeting was also held with the School Council of Crickhowell CP School

3. RESPONSES RECEIVED AND ISSUES RAISED

3 written responses were received to the consultation. The issues raised in these responses and the authority's response to them are provided in the table below:

Issue Raised	Local Authority Reponse
From the figures in 2.2 it looks as though the total number of pupils with special learning needs has fallen between 2014 and 2015. Why is this? Have pupils gone elsewhere because they have heard the centre will close or are they no longer classified as having special needs?	The figures in 2.2 show the number of pupils in the school that were accessing the Specialist Centre in each year, not the number of pupils in the school that had additional learning needs. The 'Pupils in Special Classes' information in the consultation document refers to pupils that accessed the centre on an informal basis, making use of a resource that was available

	<p>within the school. However this isn't the purpose of the Centre.</p>
<p>If the number of pupils with special needs has gone down because pupils have heard the centre will close and have gone elsewhere, the numbers are not a true reflection of need in the area.</p>	<p>The consultation document only provides information about the number of pupils accessing the Specialist Centre, not the number of pupils with special needs in the school. The number of pupils placed in the centre by the local authority has remained unsustainably low for many years.</p>
<p>From the figures, it looked as though the number of pupils with special needs was rising in the school prior to 2014 lending support to keeping the centre open.</p>	<p>The consultation document only provides information about the number of pupils accessing the Specialist Centre, not the number of pupils with special needs in the school. The number of pupils placed in the centre by the local authority has remained unsustainably low for many years.</p>
<p>Do pupils with special learning needs who are registered within the mainstream classes still make use of the specialist centre?</p>	<p>In the past, pupils other than those placed in the Centre by the local authority have accessed the Centre on an informal basis. No pupils are currently accessing the Centre in this informal way.</p>
<p>Do pupils from any other schools attend the centre?</p>	<p>Specialist Centres are local authority area resources, and as such would provide to children from other parts of the Crickhowell catchment area. However if the Management Committee admit a child to the Centre, the child would transfer to Crickhowell CP School. Pupils from other schools would not attend the Centre on an informal basis.</p>
<p>Estyn inspection stated that 5 pupils were in the specialist centre, this does not tally with the table in 2.2 which says only 1 was registered at the centre in 2014.</p>	<p>The information provided by Estyn in its Inspection Report referred to pupils accessing the centre on an informal basis, not those admitted to the Centre by the Local Authority through the Management Committee.</p>
<p>In support of mainstreaming pupils with special needs, however only if there is sufficient support / expertise within the school.</p>	<p>The Local Authority notes this comment. The Local Authority is committed to successful inclusion of children with learning difficulties as evidenced by the investment in the learning support advisory teacher service, which began in 2015.</p>
<p>One member of staff with expertise will be made redundant if the centre closes – how will this expertise be replaced?</p>	<p>The close links that existed between the School and the Centre ensure those children now included in the mainstream of the school are successfully supported. Additional support is also now available to</p>

	the school following the introduction of the learning support advisory teacher service.
Report does not fully explain the level of special needs expertise of other staff in the school and whether it is sufficient.	Crickhowell CP School is a very inclusive school with a well-developed learning support team run by the SENCo. The authority is confident that the school has the required level of expertise and access to further support if necessary.
Pupil numbers are very high in some years in the school which could put pressure on teachers – particularly if they have pupils with moderate to severe learning needs to cope with as well as a large class	The authority notes this comment. The authority is committed to supporting teachers to develop their skills in working with a wide range of learners with different needs. Additional support is available to schools where necessary through the advisory teacher service and challenge advisors, as well as internally within the school by the SENCo.
Concern about the impact on children with learning difficulties who will not be able to cope at the school without extra support.	The Code of Practice for SEN provides a graduated response to need through School Action to School Action Plus and in Powys there are support processes to assist schools in delivering effective support.
Concern that pupils that need extra support (e.g. moderately autistic) won't be able to attend the same school as their siblings who already go to the school.	As with all other mainstream schools, children with learning difficulties are supported through the graduated response to need, at School Action, School Action Plus or with a Statement of SEN. Children with special educational needs will be educated in their local mainstream setting, except for the very few where specialist provision is necessary.
What other type of support will be available if the closure goes ahead?	The existing support and available resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the learners in the school.
A shame as there would be no facility to offer to children that may need it so giving less choice to children and their parents.	The authority notes this comment, however the number of pupils that have been admitted to the Centre in recent years has been very low, and therefore the Centre is not an efficient use of resources.
Would like to know exactly where the council would spend the money. How would they prioritise and why?	The local authority has an obligation to use its money in the most efficient way possible in a time of austerity. Savings will be used to support its existing services for children with SEN.

4. CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

A Young People's Version of the Consultation Document was available throughout the Consultation Period.

In addition, officers from the Authority met with the School Council of Crickhowell CP School in order to discuss the proposal.

The notes of this meeting are provided below:

Meeting with School Council of Crickhowell CP School

5th November 2015

Present:

Keith Brelstaff, Senior Manager – ALN and Inclusion, Powys County Council
Sarah Astley, Schools Transformation Team, Powys County Council
Susan Jones SENCo, Crickhowell CP School
8 members of the School Council of Crickhowell CP School from years 3 – 6

KB introduced himself and SA and explained their roles within the Council.

He explained that they were here to talk to the School Council about the classroom in Crickhowell CP School which has provided support to pupils that need extra help (the 'Specialist Centre'). The number of pupils using or needing the centre has gone down significantly in the last few years, partly because the school does such a good job of supporting pupils that need extra support in the mainstream classes.

Because no pupils are currently using the centre, the Council is wondering whether it is still needed in Crickhowell CP School. The Council is keen to know what people think about the possibility that there wouldn't be a Specialist Centre in Crickhowell, and is keen to know what the School Council thinks about this idea. KB explained that a document had been produced to tell people that the Council is thinking about whether the Centre is needed in Crickhowell and the reasons why, and asking for their views. He explained that a young people's version has been produced, which is available at the school.

KB asked the School Council for their views on the idea that there may not be a Specialist Centre in Crickhowell CP School in the future. The following comments were made:

- *What will happen to the room that is currently used to house the Specialist Centre?*

KB explained that it would be up to the school to decide how to use the room should it not be used as a Specialist Centre. The Headteacher / school would discuss with the local authority about how best to utilise it.

A number of suggestions were received from the School Council about how the room could be used:

- The cooker room isn't used much, so perhaps it could be transferred
- Use the room for storing food, milk etc
- Use the room as a music room
- Use the room as a computer room

- *Concern about what would happen to pupils who need extra help*

KB explained that the Council wants to work with the school to make sure that pupils in the school that need extra help can get extra support in the classroom rather than having to go to a special room to get support. He explained that Crickhowell CP School already does this very well, which is one of the reasons why no pupils are currently accessing the Specialist Centre.

- *Concern that there would not be a quiet area available for pupils who need extra help to go where they can concentrate away from a noisy classroom*

KB acknowledged that whilst the Council wants to ensure that pupils that need extra help can get this in mainstream classrooms, it is a good point that sometimes children who need extra help do need somewhere quiet to go where they can concentrate.

- *If you need extra help with your work but you enjoy being with your friends, it's better for you to be in the class with everyone else rather than being in a room by yourself where you might be lonely*

KB acknowledged this point and explained that this is one of the reasons why the Council is keen to ensure that pupils who need extra help can be supported in mainstream classes instead of having to go to a separate classroom. The Council is keen for all children to be together, so that they can interact with each other. Maybe some children would need to go to a different quiet area for short periods of time, but not for the whole time.

- *Would it be possible to get the classroom back to support children that need extra help if it was needed?*

This would be a decision for the school. The Council has Specialist Centres dotted around Powys because there is a real need for them, but in Crickhowell the number of pupils using the centre have gone down. Because of this, the Council doesn't think there is a need to have a whole specialist room set aside, because the Council thinks that any children that need help can get it within the school.

KB thanked the School Council for taking part in the discussion and asked whether they had any other concerns or worries about the idea of there not being a specialist centre in Crickhowell CP School, or whether they wanted to ask any further questions. All members confirmed that they had no other concerns, worries or questions.