



## Gweledigaeth Ysgolion **Powys** Schools Vision

Report on the

# **Powys Schools Conference**

24th October 2019



Yn agored a blaengar - Open and enterprising

# Introduction

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The Powys Schools Conference was held on Thursday 24th October 2019 at the Pavilion in Llandrindod Wells. 66 Headteachers and Governors from across Powys attended. The event was facilitated by officers from Powys County Council's Schools Service and Corporate Transformation Team.

The purpose of the conference was to share information with Headteachers and Governors about the Powys schools infrastructure, and to ask for their thoughts and aspirations to contribute to the development of a new vision for education in Powys.

A mixture of Headteachers and Governors attended the conference, and they represented a range of schools including primary and secondary schools of all sizes, Welsh-medium providers and special schools.



# Format of the day



The conference was opened by Dr Caroline Turner, Chief Executive, Lynette Lovell, Interim Chief Education Officer and Cllr Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Education and Property.

For the remainder of the day, attendees took part in group discussions in order to develop a collective vision for Powys schools using the SPIN model.

## What is the SPIN model?

The model is built around the following 4 questions:

1. What's the current **SITUATION**?
2. What's the **PROBLEM** we want to fix?
3. What's the **IMPLICATION** if we don't do anything?
4. What do we **NEED** to do?

Sessions were held which focussed on each of these questions. The feedback received is summarised on the following pages.



# What is the Situation?

To give an overview of the current situation in Powys, Emma Palmer (Head of Transformation and Communications) presented data relating to the Powys schools infrastructure.

The data is available via the following link:

<https://sway.office.com/8aTHND8fR5JPYfik>



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A summary of the main points is provided below:

## Primary Schools

- 9099 pupils in Powys primary schools
- 80 primary providers
- 110 average pupils per school
- £3.9k average cost per pupil
- 67 permanent headteachers
- 35 schools rated building condition C/D
- 9.7% average percentage of pupils receiving free school meals
- 77 schools not in an Estyn support category

## Secondary Schools

- 7244 pupils in Powys primary schools
- 11 secondary providers
- 659 average pupils per school
- £4.8k average cost per pupil
- 8 permanent headteachers
- 10 schools rated building condition C/D
- 8.0% average percentage of pupils receiving free school meals
- 0.47% predicted reduction in pupils by 2025

## Post-16

- 1012 pupils in Sixth Form
- 11 Sixth Form providers
- 85 average pupils per sixth form
- 21 average subjects provided



The problems noted by attendees have been grouped into themes, and are set out below, in no particular order.

## Communication

- Issues with communication between schools and the local authority and between schools
- 'Us and them' feeling with members and officers
- There has been poor communication in the past and a lack of collaboration
- Change is difficult – some people want things to stay the same
- Need to change mindsets
- Are school contributions listened to and utilised?
- Not selling the opportunities in Powys
- Need to explain to parents the benefits of small schools being amalgamated

## Opportunities outside Powys

- We are losing pupils to neighbouring areas
- The loss of high performing pupils is resulting in a skills gap
- Where schools are located on the border, there is an opportunity for children to go to alternative provision outside Powys. This has an impact on pupil numbers.
- Can't force parents to stay in Wales
- Schools and further education establishments outside Powys subsidise transport
- There are more opportunities over the border

## Buildings

- Poor school estates that are very costly to maintain
- Technology and infrastructure needs review

## Transition

- Transition between primary and secondary is not effective
- Year 6/7 students slip through the net
- Not doing enough to support transition

## Quality of provision

- Quality of education and teaching is variable in each school
- Concern about capacity to embed the new curriculum
- Lack of equity for all children in Powys



## Funding

- Money is so tight
- Budgets
- Financial black holes
- The funding formula is not fair
- The distribution of funding is not right
- The range in per pupil funding across Powys schools is unfair
- Cross border funding variances
- Have to lose staff due to the funding formula
- Financial system doesn't follow the child
- Funding for ALN
- Money to support COLA/LAC arrives too late

## ALN

- Specialist provision needs increasing
- SEN/ALN in Post-16
- SEN particularly behaviour provision at KS1 and KS2
- Support for pupils with complex needs
- Reduction in LIST support
- Managed moves - passes on the problems
- Increase in emotional and behavioural issues

## Declining pupil numbers

- Declining population
- Pupil numbers are continuing to fall
- Spare capacity in schools is increasing
- Children are not going to their closest schools

## Number of schools

- There are too many schools in Powys - primary and secondary
- There are lots of small schools
- The current model and number of schools is not sustainable
- There are too many schools, therefore there are too many surplus spaces
- Schools are not sustainable
- The benefits of scale / range / opportunity due to the number of schools

## Behaviour

- Need more behaviour support across the local authority
- Violent behaviour is impacting on teaching staff and other learners
- Behaviour - undiagnosed pupils

## Staffing / Recruitment

- Recruitment and retention across the authority
- Cannot recruit teachers
- Issues with staff recruitment, retention and sickness
- Reputational issues cause difficulties with attracting staff
- Recruitment of Welsh-medium staff is a challenge
- Difficult to attract quality supply, in Welsh and English
- More static workforce, limits opportunities
- There are less specialist teachers
- Recruitment / retention of educational psychologists
- Concerns about staff health and wellbeing
- Low morale of school staff

## Criticism of Powys County Council

- The politicians haven't made the difficult decisions needed
- Decisions have been made based on misleading information
- The Council's approach to schools organisation in the past hasn't helped (e.g. be sensitive, show benefits)
- Not selling the benefits of change
- Not approaching schools in an area as a collective (joint discussion/decision)
- Poor change management (need to change hearts and minds)
- Poor leadership within the authority
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of Vision
- Vision doesn't turn into reality
- Lack of joined up thinking across services

## Welsh-medium

- Welsh medium education is a postcode lottery
- Lack of Welsh-medium provision
- No lifelong pathway through the medium of Welsh
- Lack of understanding of what a Welsh-medium school / Welsh-medium education is and the benefits of being bilingual
- Dual stream provision is expensive - in some cases, language streams are provided for small number of pupils
- In some dual stream schools, subjects are taught in both languages together, which reduces teaching time
- Providing 2 language streams limits the ability to offer full provision in either language
- The Council's transport policy enables people to avoid Welsh-medium education
- There are less children in Welsh-medium education in Powys than the proportion of the population that speak Welsh in Powys
- Welsh-medium pupils are lost when transferring from primary to secondary
- Welsh language resources are an issue



## Rurality / Transport

- Concern about increase in transport costs if provision is centralised
- Transport system and costs
- Powys' rurality

## Post-16

- Declining number of post-16 learners
- Concern about retention rates at Post 16
- Lack of college style provision in Powys
- Don't have the right post-16 offer in Powys
- Lack of knowledge about other pathways e.g. apprenticeships, need to think outside re: the offer
- Lack of vocational provision
- Post-16 is a drain on lower down in secondary schools
- Parental concerns about quality of teaching in 6th forms

## Early Years

- Children don't start education until they are 5 which has an impact on schools
- The change in the age of admission means that pupils start learning later
- Impact of change in early years funding

## Leadership

- Lack of support for headteachers
- Leadership is not sustainable (full time teaching heads)
- More static workforce, limits development opportunities
- The quality of governing bodies varies across the county
- More static workforce, limits development opportunities



# What are the Implications if we don't do anything?

In the next session, attendees discussed the implications for education in Powys if nothing is done.

Below is a word cloud illustrating the main themes which were expressed by attendees:



Overall, there was agreement among the groups that not addressing the problems identified would have significant implications, and would ultimately result in failure of the Powys education system, and further deterioration in the provision offered to Powys learners.

# What do we Need to do?

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In the final session, attendees were asked to consider what should be done to address the challenges identified in the earlier sessions.

A wide range of suggestions were made. These have been split into the following categories:

- 1) General suggestions to improve the education provision in Powys in the shorter term**
- 2) More radical suggestions which would alter the schools infrastructure in the longer-term**
- 3) Factors which need to be taken into consideration when making changes to the schools infrastructure**
- 4) Other comments**

The issues raised in each of these categories are outlined on the following pages.



# 1) General suggestions to improve education provision in Powys

## Provide better opportunities for pupils

- We need to aspire for the best for our pupils
- Quality teaching and learning in all schools to allow learners to reach their full potential and to prepare for lifelong learning
- All learners need to have same opportunities regardless of background
- Appropriate number of teachers in school, workable class sizes
- Schools built around the four core purposes
- Curriculum must be meaningful
- Need an attractive offer – need to focus on improving the offer
- Need equity for all pupils in Powys – well supported transition Yr 6, 7, 8 focus
- Improve KS3 provision and transition
- Improve secondary school provision so that pupils leave Powys for post 16
- Post 14 – need breadth of choice, vocational and academic
- Need a broad balanced offer of vocational and academic for all learners
- Have to have a rich offer at KS4. If the offer isn't right at that level, pupils won't come back for post 16
- Need to provide the same opportunities as those available in other areas (London, Cardiff etc)
- Skills appropriate to learner/sector area
- The 14-16/19 offer varies – want a rich curriculum to offer for all learners

## Improved Communication

- Need to engage with stakeholders, parents
- Hold catchment brainstorming sessions
- Need to be transparent – data (plain facts) needs to be in the public domain
- Need to communicate with the community. They are part of the process, need to bring them with us
- Need wider community understanding of the risk of doing nothing
- Need to use the right language to communicate change
- Share positive final outcomes from Gwernyfed / Ystrad
- Tell the story of the journey: Primary – High School – Post 16
- Need optimism, need to be solutions focused
- More sharing of good practice across the LA
- Challenge for all by all – schools / stakeholders to challenge the LA
- We are Waitrose but not selling ourselves as Waitrose
- Provide feedback to attendees about today
- Hold a follow up event in 8 weeks

## Digital

- Digital solutions for learners to be taught online (e.g. Open University)
- Effective use of digital learning
- Digital skills – remote learning
- Digital opportunities in the sixth form – E-sgol
- Need to embed and further develop
- E-sgol for minority subjects
- Online provision possible for 6th form to supplement provision – have to teach learners and teachers how to use it

## Early Years provision

- Reverse the change in the age of admission to primary schools
- Include nursery children back into primary schools
- Widen the early years offer
- Nursery provision for all to ensure readiness for school

## Funding

- Budget Formula
- Money – availability of
- Need more resources
- Need to reallocate resources – need to make the best use of what's available
- Need to fund to enable schools to balance budgets and meet the needs of pupils
- Funding has to follow the child
- Need to consider income generation
- Need to think of schools as businesses, wages vs income
- Need the financial capacity to back change

## Welsh-medium

- Need to ensure that every child has the option of bilingual provision across the authority
- Tutorials for improving and learning welsh language skills
- Equity in Welsh language provision
- Need to encourage people who want to learn welsh
- Need to improve latecomers provision – pupils should have the right to be able to access Welsh-medium provision at any age
- Welsh training for teachers to develop their skills

## Buildings

- Need to improve buildings so that they are suitable for the new curriculum
- Need a fit for purpose environment

## Staffing

- Ensure that Powys is a place where teachers want to come and work.
- Invest in teachers and leaders at all levels to meet all needs
- Need to upskill staff
- Upskilling staff – need to consider what works elsewhere.
- Self-sufficiency and succession, planning/train our own
- Upskill everybody
- Teachers working cross phase – links to HE

## Leadership

- Support school staff to move into SMT/HT – support to enable DHT's to become effective HT
- Development of leadership and management – criteria for effective HT/SMT
- Primary schools need non-teaching heads
- Parents want a head teacher at their child's school 5 days a week – not 2 days at one school and 3 days at another
- Need to ensure that governors and headteachers time is used efficiently
- Support with recruitment of governors when needed
- Ask pupils to be involved with letter to businesses to recruit governors
- Governing bodies that are accountable and fully informed so are able to make effective decisions

## Links with business

- Link with business groups so that skill sets can be developed
- Bring industry into school
- Give all schools the option of work experience on a weekly basis
- Sponsorship of schools by local businesses if allowed

## More community focus

- Need more community focus – enterprise projects to use buildings outside of school hours
- Open to adult education to re-train through collaboration with other providers
- Hub of the community – evening lessons and enrichment activities
- Community focus that must feed into a bigger plan
- Schools to be seen as a community asset
- Community spaces – multi-agency – collaboration
- Support for communities that may lose a school
- Community hub

## SEN / ALN provision

- Re-build support for schools to effectively provide for SEN/ALN pupils
- Need to improve Welsh-medium SEN provision – need appropriate WM provision, equality of opportunity
- Potential to locate a unit within a Welsh-medium provision. Need more specialist provision through the medium of Welsh e.g. Educational Psychologists
- Need a Seren type provision for vulnerable learners

## Behaviour support

- Need high quality behaviour support – clear systems/signposting/success criteria – need to create a flow chart/graduated response
- Pupil focus – need to work with PRU instead of paper process
- Need early intervention to support behaviour, not just at crisis point.
- No permanent exclusions
- Need appropriate behaviour provision

## More cluster working

- Cluster approaches to finance, governance, curriculum
- Shared resources e.g. business manager
- Reference to business manager in the Llandrindod cluster – when funding ran out it couldn't continue
- Cluster management model, but has to be dependent on the size of the cluster
- Improved cluster working – could create a bigger offer
- More cluster working – sharing resources across schools – SENCO/ALNCO/Business Managers

## More collaboration

- Need to discourage competition, encourage collaboration
- Collaboration between schools and governing bodies
- Multi-disciplinary approach – joining up budgets
- Learning hubs for teachers and governors across larger clusters (beyond own school)
- More connected – more cluster/support/ leadership

## Travel

- Need to understand transport costs
- No bussing of children between schools for a lesson
- Pupils would prefer to travel once and be on one site all day for all lessons
- Reduce out of catchment travel – need to ensure that the local school offers the best provision

## 2) More radical suggestions which would change the Powys schools infrastructure in the longer term

Whilst the majority of feedback focussed on more general, shorter term solutions to improve the education provision in Powys, the feedback received also included some more radical suggestions to change the schools infrastructure in the longer term.

These following ideas were suggested:

- **Reduction in the number of primary schools**
- **Reduction in the number of secondary schools**
- **Establish more all-through schools**
- **Cluster/catchment based models**
- **Establishment of designated Welsh-medium secondary provision**
- **Rationalisation of Sixth Form provision**
- **Establishment of 14-19 Centres / 4-14 schools**





### **3) Factors to be taken into consideration when making changes to the schools infrastructure**

Some of the feedback received suggested factors which would need to be taken into consideration when making significant changes to the schools infrastructure.

These are outlined below:

- Where there are surplus places, need to consider how far children would need to travel
- Need to consider the rural nature of Powys - city solutions won't work
- Need to consider the impact on each school/cluster
- Need to consider financial impact of changes / restructures
- Need to be aware of the Powys geography
- Need provision where the people are
- Need to look at sustainability – cluster, locality, funding, based on need
- Need to consider local situation - different models will suit different areas
- Need to be locality by locality
- One size will not fit all across Powys - need to go and gather local intelligence before decisions are made

## 4) Other comments

In addition to the feedback outlined above, some other general comments were received. These are listed below:

### Need a Vision

- We need to think differently
- We need an agreed and transparent vision
- Need a vision that celebrates the best of Powys
- Vision must be developed and shared with all stakeholders
- Need a long term plan – need to get things right not quick fixes

### Political

- Political decisions need to be made
- Cabinet need to do something radical or there is a risk that Estyn will be in
- Need to take politics out of education
- Need to ensure that politicians share the same vision
- All councillors need to take responsibility
- Need decisions and leadership from the Council
- Decisions need to be made on small primary schools
- Need to make the correct decisions on provision and get agreement

### Other

- Education is deemed good in primary schools (according to Estyn), so do we need to change them?
- Need to move away from where you walk to your school in your local village.
- Smaller schools are not viable - not good for pupils or staff
- Need action quickly, otherwise the rest of Wales will move further ahead and Powys' reputation will suffer
- Want quick progress on this
- Need a clear timescale

# Next Steps

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The feedback received during the Schools Conference, along with feedback received from other key stakeholders, including county councillors, staff from the Council's Schools Service, school staff, governors, learners and town and community councils, will contribute to the development of a Case for Change report. This report will set out the main challenges facing the Council's education provision, and will consider some high level options for the schools infrastructure going forward.

The Case for Change report is due to be considered by the Council's Cabinet in January 2020. Should the report be approved, further engagement with a range of stakeholders is expected to take place in the Spring Term on a new vision for education in Powys.

A 10 Year Implementation Plan will then be prepared, which will include further consideration of the feedback received through engagement. It is expected that this Implementation Plan will outline the steps to be taken and indicative timescales, will be considered by the Cabinet in April 2020.

Information about the work will be shared on the Council's website:  
<http://www.powys.gov.uk/transformingeducation>



[www.powys.gov.uk](http://www.powys.gov.uk)