



Gweledigaeth Ysgolion
Powys
Schools Vision

Transforming Education in Powys

Engagement Report
January 2020



Introduction and Background

In September 2019, Estyn published a report outlining the findings of its inspection of Powys Education Services. The report outlined significant concerns regarding the Councils progress on school reorganisation and included a recommendation to "ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16, welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys".

Since then, the Council has been engaging with a range of key stakeholders in order to shape a vision for education in Powys for the future.

A Schools Conference was held on the 24th October, which Headteachers and Governors were invited to attend. Feedback from this session is contained within the Schools Conference Report.

In addition to this, engagement sessions were held with a range of stakeholders during the autumn term 2019. These included the following:

- Governors, via governor briefing sessions in North, Mid and South Powys between the 11th and 18th November 2019
- School Staff, via catchment engagement sessions held at high schools between the 19th November and 10th December 2019
- Schools Service Staff on the 3rd December 2019
- Powys County Council Councillors, via a members seminar on the 21st October 2019
- Town and Community Councils on the 13th December 2019

All of the above sessions used the same format:

- A data presentation, giving an overview of the current Powys schools infrastructure. The data presented is available online at <https://sway.office.com/8aTHND8fR5JPYfik>
- Group discussions to complete a SPIN exercise in order to identify the problems facing the Powys schools infrastructure and what we need to do to address this.

The feedback received at all of these events is summarised in this report. The issues raised are listed in no particular order.

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?

What is the Problem?

Powys County Councillors

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by County Councillors at the Members Seminar held on 21st October 2019.

Funding

- Inadequate finance for the current model of schools
- £3000 difference per pupil in across Powys schools
- Money per pupil not equitable
- Welsh Government can't justify giving extra money when they see the data - too many small and rural schools
- Need to change the funding formula - costs 10% of education budget to transport pupils to school

Declining pupil numbers

- Declining population
- Pupil numbers are continuing to fall
- Sparsely populated county
- Not enough pupils in some schools to form sports teams and other opportunities

Number of schools

- Too many schools for the population of Powys

Powys County Council

- Bias - members feel that if a school closes in their ward it is a reflection on them
- Lack of vision

Welsh-medium

- Need to redefine bilingual education and achieve it
- No or limited growth in Welsh-medium
- Need to increase the number of Welsh speakers by 2050

Opportunities for pupils

- Limited progression opportunities for all students
- Inequality of provision
- Quality in the whole system is not there
- Subject choices at Post-16 vary too much across the county
- Key Stage 4 option choices are being squeezed
- Pupils should be the number one priority

What is the Problem?

School Governors

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by School Governors at the governor briefing sessions held in Welshpool on the 11th November 2019, Llandrindod Wells on the 13th November 2019 and Brecon on the 18th November 2019.

Buildings

- Huge backlog in maintenance of school infrastructure - a need for new buildings
- Failing buildings, not fit for purpose

Funding

- Unfairness in terms of how budgets are formulated for individual schools
- Inequality in per pupil funding
- General lack of money

Opportunities outside of Powys

- Movement out of cluster, including out of country/at post 11 as well as post 16

Criticism of Powys County Council

- Long term planning needed
- Feel unsupported in our day to day running of the school. Non-educational issues take priority over learning, affecting outcomes for all
- Problem with the Council's historic approach
- Lack of decision making

Leadership

- Quality of leadership/ HT's
- Lack of specialist teaching advice

Declining pupil numbers

- Reduction in pupil numbers - need to promote Powys as a place to raise your children
- Powys has an ageing population - young people leave and don't come back
- Too much and growing spare capacity in schools
- Lack of equity of in choice of subject at GCSE and A-Level

Other

- Many standards are set and based on the expectations of urban areas, we are a rural county.
- Too many schools

What is the Problem?

Schools Service Staff

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by Schools Service Staff at a staff meeting held on the 3rd December 2019.

Funding

- Inequality in funding across schools and between small and large schools
- Too many schools - enough money but spread too thinly

Declining pupil numbers

- Leakage to other local authorities
- Declining pupil numbers

Number of schools

- Too many small schools
- Small schools are draining resources

Leadership

- Lack of accountability
- Need more committed governors
- Difficult to attract headteachers to Powys
- Need to improve middle leadership

Post-16

- Not enough choice for learners
- Lack of collaboration between schools and FE
- Post-16 provision is too small
- Sixth Formers leaving Powys to go elsewhere

Welsh-medium

- Lack of Welsh-medium provision
- Dual stream schools do not work
- Concern about lack of Welsh-medium in special schools
- No Welsh speaking Speech and Language specialist

Opportunities for Learners

- Availability of subjects for pupils
- Need to ensure equity for all pupils

Buildings

- School buildings are in poor condition
- State of buildings are not appropriate for the new curriculum

What is the Problem?

School Staff

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by School Staff at the 10 engagement sessions held at Powys high schools between the 19th November and the 10th December 2019. Although there were differences in the issues raised at each session, this is an overview of the main issues raised across all sessions.

Buildings

- Buildings in poor condition
- Lack of maintenance
- Ageing buildings
- Property Plus runs out of money
- Energy costs

Opportunities outside of Powys

- We're near the border, we see schools across the border that are getting much more funding.
- Too many children moving out of catchments

Welsh-medium

- Welsh medium education not available to pupils in all parts of Powys
- Lack of Welsh immersion provision
- Location of Welsh medium provision

Declining pupil numbers

- Too many surplus places
- Pupils do not attend their nearest school

Early Years

- New intake are not school ready due to changes in admission age

Funding

- Lack of funding – the current distribution penalises large schools, favours small schools
- Inequality in per pupil funding
- Additional costs to rural primary schools e.g. transport for trips/swimming
- Lack of ability to plan strategically due to lack of secure budgets
- Cost of funding small schools
- Large senior leadership teams absorb too much money
- Long term issue of poor financial management and lack of challenge around this
- High transport costs

Number of schools

- Too many small schools

ICT

- Lack of ICT support from Powys
- ICT is out of date
- Connectivity is an issue

Opportunities for Pupils

- High schools not offering an appropriate range of subjects
- Pupils having to travel from school to school

What is the Problem?

School Staff (Continued)

Criticism of PCC

- PCC not effective at supporting schools
- Lack of support for schools with shared heads
- Other re-organisations of secondary schools have led to outcomes being worse for pupils
- Lack of vision
- Constant turnover of staff in the Schools Service

Staffing/Recruitment

- Impact on staff well-being as a result of lack of funding, resources, poor condition of buildings – has a knock on effect on retention of staff and standards
- TLR and leadership workload ratios staff to TLR holder
- Posts are less attractive where staff have to travel across sites
- Staff working outside of their specialism impacts on standards
- Greater demands on teachers and staff in small schools same amount of responsibilities but less staff to share it.
- No movement within Powys for jobs
- Lack of classroom support due to funding issues
- Decline in permanent leadership

Post-16

- Sixth Form provision is a concern - reduced funding leads to a reduced curriculum. This leads to fewer students and funding.
- 6th Forms in Powys are unsustainable
- Post 16 students have very limited choices
- Sixth Formers are leaving Powys
- All schools want a sixth form but it is not working
- Inequality of subject offer between schools
- Not enough vocational choice
- Need a wider range of opportunities including vocational, work experience, apprenticeships - closer relationships with industry
- Welsh Baccalaureate is a blocker

ALN & Behaviour

- Lack of support from County on ALN
- Lack of behaviour support
- Difficulties in securing ALN support for pupils
- Removal of LIST team is a bad decision
- Are the right pupils in special schools?
- Lack of Educational Psychologists
- Specialist support (CAHMS, nurture support & early years intervention)

Other

- Dual-sited arrangement isn't effective
- Too many layers of administration - why do we need ERW and PCC
- Inability to deliver the new curriculum

What is the Problem?

Town and Community Councils

The following is a summary of the problems facing education in Powys as identified by representatives of Town and Community Councils at a session held on the 13th December 2019.

Small schools

- Small schools are unsustainable and do not offer social benefits

Rurality/Transport

- Carbon footprint of transport is high
- Rurality a problem - old buildings etc

Quality of provision

- Quality of education in a rurality dispersed environment

Post-16

- Sixth Forms are small and unviable

What do we Need to do?

Powys County Councillors

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by Powys County Councillors at the Members Seminar held on 21st October 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested and are outlined on Page 15.

Provide better opportunities for pupils

- Need to cater better for learners who would prefer a vocational pathway rather than academic
- Need to look at what professions we need in Powys. Placement and subject choice should then support this
- Need to work with training providers to come into Powys and enable students to access these courses
- Need to embrace apprenticeships and work based learning and work with our partners such as NPTC

Improved Communication

- Positive communication required to enable members and parents to see the benefits of changes

Digital

- Move to a more digital environment
- Embrace technology within our schools

Welsh-medium

- Need to embrace Welsh-medium education and the Welsh Language to ensure we can increase and promote opportunities to use it within our schools

Funding

- Need more resources
- Need to reallocate resources – need to make the best use of what's available
- Need to fund approximately to enable schools to balance budgets and meet the needs of pupils

Travel

- Need to understand transport costs
- Transport isn't an issue if we want to access high quality education

More cluster working & collaboration

- Cluster approaches to finance, governance, curriculum
- Shared resources e.g. business manager
- A joint headteacher to work over 2 or 3 schools
- Need to work together

What do we Need to do?

School Governors

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by School Governors at the governor briefing sessions held in Welshpool on the 11th November 2019, Llandrindod Wells on the 13th November 2019 and Brecon on the 18th November 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested and these are outlined on Page 15.

Early Years

- Bring back nursery provision into primary schools

Improved Communication

- Better sharing of experiences and celebrating success
- Improve relationships between the LA, schools, parents and pupils
- Keep sharing information with all stakeholders
- Strengthen the role of governors in cluster meetings

Staffing

- Support teachers

Buildings

- Use capital funding to improve buildings

Funding

- Review the funding formula

More cluster working & collaboration

- Provide more resources for cluster working
- Improve communication throughout the cluster
- More collaboration between schools
- Share good practice

Other

- Look at examples of good practice in other European countries

What do we Need to do?

Schools Service Staff

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by Schools Service Staff at their staff meeting held on the 3rd December 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested. These are outlined on Page 15.

ALN

- In county ALN/Behavioural residential provision required

Improved Communication

- Ensure politicians are aware of the implications of not doing anything
- Listen to communities, staff and pupils
- Communicate with communities to get them onboard
- Effective stakeholder engagement
- Improved communication with other service areas
- Ensure that schools communicate effectively with their own communities
- Improve links with other local authorities in England and Wales

Leadership

- Face the reality and maintain stable leadership at all levels
- Improve leadership skills for middle and senior leaders

Learners

- Offer a viable curriculum to give choices to learners at GCSE and Post-16
- Ensure opportunities linked to the new curriculum
- More Able and Talented programme across all schools at all levels
- Ensure equality of education from 3+ to Post-16 across Powys

Early Years

- Remove 3+ funding from small settings of less than 8 children

Buildings

- Improve building condition
- Fit for purpose buildings with high quality digital learning environments

Funding

- Review and adapt the funding formula

Staffing

- Upskill staff
- Better career progression for Powys staff

Post-16

- Higher Education links to support sixth form education
- Vocational opportunities for learners
- Do we need Welsh Bacc at Post-16?
- Collaborate with FE providers

Welsh-medium

- Increase Welsh-medium provision and quality
- Commit to one language - no dual stream settings
- Work closely with other Welsh language organisations
- Dedicated resource to deliver the WESP

What do we Need to do?

School Staff

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by School Staff at the 10 engagement sessions held at high schools between the 19th November and 10th December 2019. Although there were differences at each session, this is an overview of all main issues raised across all sessions. Alongside these some structural changes were suggested. These are outlined on Page 15.

Early Years

- Bring back nursery provision into primary schools as removing this has led to a decline in standards
- Welsh immersion in the nursery sector

Buildings

- Improve quality of school buildings
- Use capital funding to improve buildings
- More energy efficient buildings

ALN & Behaviour

- Improve support from outside agencies e.g. Ed Psych, Social Services, Speech & Language
- More ALN/behaviour support to keep pupils in catchment
- Stronger ALN panel to say no to unsuitable learners
- Reinstate ALN support services e.g. LIST team
- Behaviour specialists required for high schools

ICT

- New computers for the 21st Century
- Improve technology
- Ensure appropriate support for ICT
- More investment in digital infrastructure
- Virtual classrooms

Improved Communication

- Educate parents about what is going on and how they can help
- Need to sow the seed about the alternative being better
- Need to inform politicians about why change is needed
- Focus on the need to improve for learners
- Include more teachers in future engagement exercises
- More communication to reduce insecurity and promote positive relationship

More cluster working & collaboration

- Provide more resources for cluster working
- Improve communication throughout the cluster
- More collaboration between schools
- Share good practice
- Links with local businesses & industry

Learners

- Maintain standards & wellbeing and ensure the child is at the centre of all thinking
- More attractive ways to retain pupils in Powys
- Ensure learners have a fantastic, world-class education in Powys

What do we Need to do?

School Staff (Continued)

Decision making

- More transparency with decisions affecting staff, children and families

Staffing

- Support teachers
- Avoid teacher burnout
- Have a national/regional supply agency
- Overstaff to manage stress of change
- Retain good quality staff who want to stay
- Improved leadership development
- Non-teaching headteachers in all schools
- Complete audit of all teachers to gain knowledge of skills and subjects
- Stronger performance management

Enhance the role of the school

- Encourage wrap around facilities
- Provide breakfast clubs/after school clubs

Funding

- Review the funding formula
- Make funding fair
- Fairer investment
- Equal distribution of funding
- Projections for funding needed over longer time frame
- Funding should follow pupils
- Savings from school reorganisation need to stay within education

Other

- Be bold!
- Focus on health and well-being

What do we Need to do?

Town and Community Councils

The following is a summary of general suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to improve education in Powys made by representatives of Town and Community Councils at a session held on 13th December 2019. Alongside these, some structural changes were suggested. These are outlined on Page 15.

Improved Communication

- Better engagement with heads

Provide better opportunities for pupils

- Improved career advice on offer for pupils
- More sporting opportunities

Need a vision

- Schools to provide much more than just education
- Create a community education county with links to lifelong learning

What do we Need to do?

In addition to the general suggestions made about what we need to do in order to address the problems identified, suggestions were made at all engagement sessions regarding structural changes which could happen to change the Powys schools infrastructure in the longer term.

The following is a summary of the types of suggestions made across all engagement events:

Reduction in the number of primary schools

- Close small schools so under capacity (not a popular opinion, but needed)
- Need to move away from idea of every village having a school

Reduction in the number of secondary schools

- Have to close some small secondary schools - no way to make a big difference unless we are prepared to do this
- Fewer secondary schools

Rationalisation of Sixth Form provision

- Sixth Form Colleges - 1 in the North, 1 in the Mid and 1 in the South
- Sixth Form Hubs
- Some Sixth Forms may need to close but not necessarily whole secondaries

Establishment of 14-19 Centres/4-14 Schools

- Look at alternative models such as 4-14 and 14-19 schools
- Explore links for a 14-19 or 6th Form Academy

Cluster/catchment based models

- Federations and amalgamations where required
- Need to create different models for different areas – all-through schools, but there is also a hub model with schools feeding into it
- Specialist teachers travelling around the cluster
- Sharing resources at cluster level e.g. finance

Designated Welsh-medium provision

- Close dual stream schools and establish dedicated Welsh medium education
- Commit to one language - no dual stream settings and schools
- Review how we categorise Welsh medium education in Powys