

Transforming Education in Powys

Options Appraisal

Castle Caereinion Church in Wales School

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys sets out a number of aims and objectives to transform the Powys education system over the next few years, in order to provide the best possible opportunities to Powys learners now and in the future. One of the objectives included in the strategy is to 'Reconfigure and rationalise primary provision'.

The purpose of this paper is to identify a preferred option for the future of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

Current pupil numbers¹ at the school are as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	4	3	5	4	4	3	0	23

¹ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

PART A – THE CASE FOR CHANGE

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 POLICY CONTEXT

Following the inspection of Powys Education Services carried out by Estyn in the summer of 2019, the Council carried out a strategic review of schools during 2019-20, which led to the development of a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys. The strategy, which was developed following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, was approved in April 2020.

The strategy sets out a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles which will underpin the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years. The Vision Statement is as follows:

All children and young people in Powys will experience a high-quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.

In addition, the strategy outlines a number of aims and objectives, which include an objective to 'Reconfigure and rationalise primary provision' in order to improve overall learner entitlement and experience in Powys.

To take forward this objective, the Council is reviewing the smallest schools in Powys, with the aim of identifying solutions for these schools which will meet the objective to 'Reconfigure and rationalise primary provision', in order to ensure that education in Powys is delivered through an affordable, resilient infrastructure which provides the best possible opportunities to learners, now and in the future.

2.2 WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN POWYS

Powys is a large, rural authority. Covering a quarter of the landmass of Wales, it contains only 4.2% of the population, making it the most sparsely populated county in Wales. Delivering services across such a large, sparsely populated area is challenging and expensive.

Whilst there has been some reorganisation activity in Powys over recent years, the county's schools' infrastructure largely remains similar to that which was in place 20 years ago.

The Council's new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys outlines a number of challenges facing education in Powys, which were identified following engagement with key stakeholders during the autumn term 2019 and spring term 2020.

The following is a summary of the main challenges facing the Council:

i) High proportion of small schools

Based on PLASC 2019 figures, there were 33 small primary schools in Powys – this is approximately 40% of the primary provision in the county. 21 schools had fewer than 50 pupils, and for those schools the budget share per pupil is generally higher than the Powys average for primary schools.

ii) Decreasing pupil numbers

Pupil numbers have decreased over the past decade, and are expected to decrease further over the next five years. Pupil numbers in the primary sector in Powys are expected to decrease by approximately 4% by 2025.

iii) High number of surplus places

Based on PLASC 2019 figures, there was 18% surplus capacity in Powys primary schools. With pupil numbers across Powys projected to decrease overall over the coming years, the proportion of surplus places across the county will continue to increase.

iv) Building condition

Whilst the Council has invested in its school's estate through the 21st Century Schools Programme and the Asset Management Plan, building condition remains an issue across Powys, with associated maintenance costs.

v) Financial pressures

The Council is currently facing significant financial pressures in general. This is affecting all service areas, including the schools' sector. There are significant variations in the budget share per pupil across Powys schools, ranging from £3,276 to £11,912 in the primary sector.

vi) Inequality in access to Welsh-medium education

In contrast to other areas of Wales, there has been no growth in Welsh-medium pupil numbers in Powys over recent years. Significant changes are needed to the Welsh-medium offer in Powys to reverse the trend of the

last few years and ensure that all Powys learners can access comprehensive Welsh-medium provision throughout their educational careers.

vii) Limited post-14 and post-16 offer

In September 2019, the Council's Cabinet considered a report on post-16 provision, which outlined a number of challenges facing the sector, including decreasing learner numbers, financial challenges and sustainability of the curriculum offer, including Welsh-medium provision.

viii) Inequality in access to SEN provision

Within Powys, pupils with special education needs (SEN) attend a range of settings, including special schools, specialist centres, the pupil referral unit (PRU) as well as mainstream schools.

Currently, not all pupils are educated in the setting that meets their needs best, and depending on where pupils live, they have access to a different quality and type of provision.

ix) Historical lack of political decision making

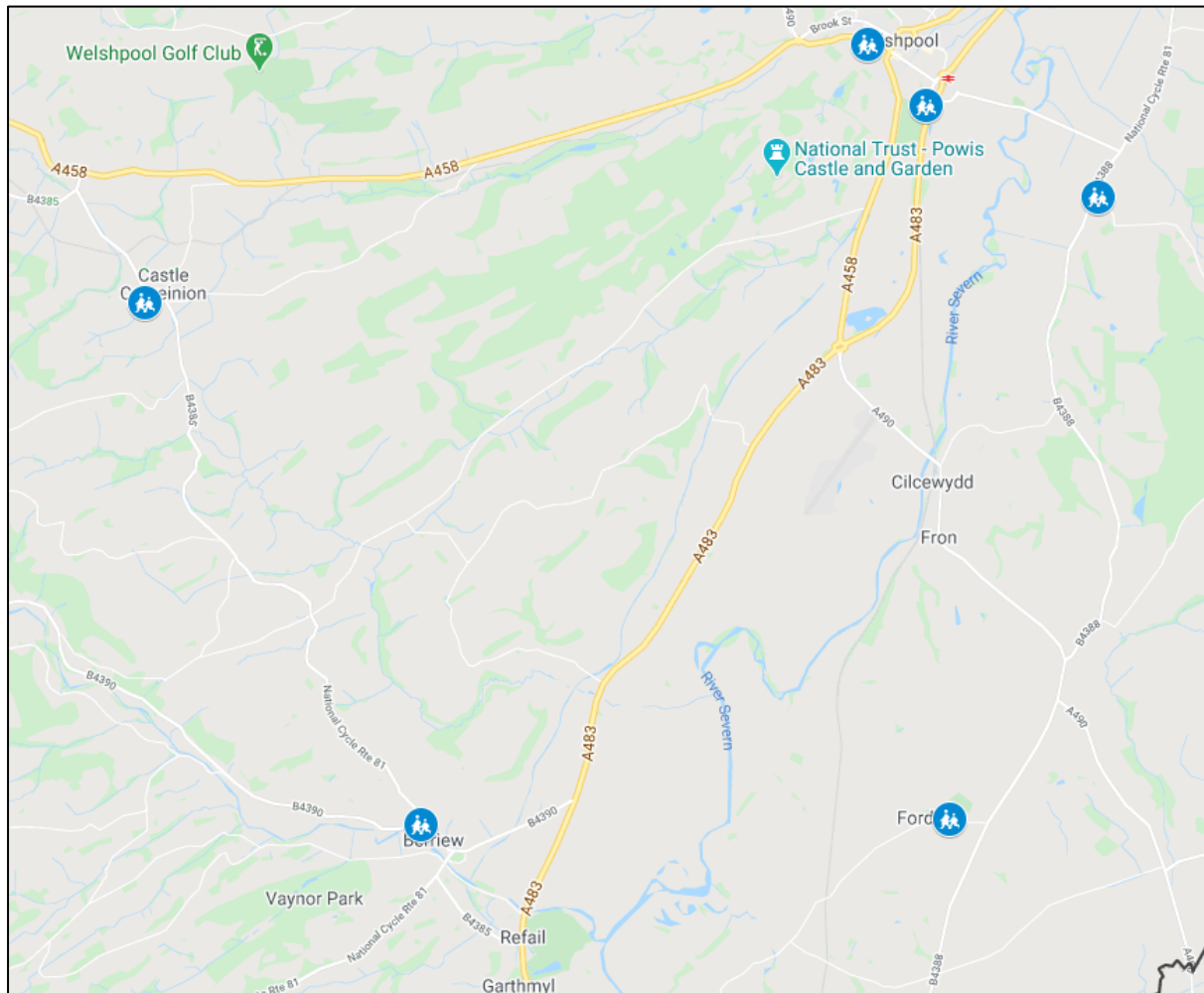
Although there have been some developments in terms of the schools' infrastructure over recent years, the Council's failure to implement a number of high-profile proposals in the last few years has left a legacy in Powys, and there has been a reluctance to embark on large scale reorganisation of education provision since then.

3. WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN CASTLE CAEREINION

3.1 THE CURRENT SITUATION

Castle Caereinion is a Church in Wales primary school located in the village of Castle Caereinion in North Powys.

The following map shows the location of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and nearby schools:



Blue – Powys Schools

The following primary schools are located within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School²:

School	Distance from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School by road (miles)
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² School Distances by Road - Council's Business Intelligence Team

Berriew C.P. School	3.614 miles
Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School	4.507 miles
Welshpool Church in Wales	4.562 miles
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng	4.759 miles
Leighton C.P. School	6.115 miles
Guilsfield C.P. School	6.428 miles
Ysgol Pontrobert	7.024 miles
Ysgol Meifod	7.121 miles
Ysgol Rhiw Bechan	7.766 miles

The following is a summary of key data relating to Castle Caereinion C. in W. School:

	School Type	Language Category	Admission Number	Rural School?³
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	Voluntary Controlled Primary Church in Wales School building owned by the Diocese of St Asaph	English-medium	8	Yes

Pupil Numbers

i) Current pupil numbers⁴

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	4	3	5	4	4	3	0	23

ii) Historical pupil numbers⁵

³ Annex F of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018) (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>) includes a list of 'rural schools', to which the 'Presumption against the closure of rural schools' applies.

⁴ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

⁵ PLASC

	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2017	Jan. 2018	Jan. 2019	Jan. 2020
Castle Caereion C. in W. School	42	47	44	40	31	30	24

iii) Projected pupil numbers (Birth rate)⁶

	Jan. 2021 ⁷	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
Castle Caereion C. in W. School	20	21	19	19	19

iv) Projected pupil numbers (Finance projections)⁸

	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2023	Jan. 2024	Jan. 2025
Castle Caereion C. in W. School	23	24	22	N/A	N/A

Building Capacity and Condition

i) Capacity

The following table provides information about the current capacities of school and the capacity:

	Current Capacity⁹	Currently Filled	Surplus Capacity
Castle Caereion C. in W. School	74	23 (31.1%)	51 (68.9%)

ii) Building condition¹⁰

In 2009, Welsh Government carried out condition and suitability assessments of the school.

⁶ Powys Schools Service Projections based on PLASC & Birth Rates

⁷ These are the projected figures based on PLASC 2020 information, therefore include a projection for January 2021. PLASC 2021 information and projected pupil numbers based on PLASC 2021 are not yet available.

⁸ Powys Finance Projections based on data provided by the school – November 2020

⁹ Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

¹⁰ Premises Data Return to Welsh Government – 2020

	Condition	Suitability	Access to hall on site
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	B Good	B Good	Yes – Community Centre

Further to this, the Council recently commissioned an updated condition survey of the school building. This was carried out in the autumn term 2020. The survey assessed the condition of all three blocks at the school as condition C.

Standards of Education

i) Estyn

	Castle Caereinion C. in W. School
Date of Inspection	November 2016
Standards	Adequate, needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate, needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate, needs improvement
Follow up activity	School to draw up action plan, Estyn to review progress. The school was removed from Estyn monitoring in June 2018.

ii) School Categorisation¹¹

¹¹ 2019. Categorisations were not carried out in 2020 due to Covid-19.

	Standards Group	Improvement Capacity	Support Capacity
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	N/A	C	Amber

Financial information

i) Cost per pupil¹² (Section 52 Budget Statement, 2020/2021)

	Budget share per school	Budget share per pupil	Notional SEN budget	Non ISB funds devolved to the school
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	£173,000	£6,919	£9,000	£0
Powys average (Primary)	N/A	£4,264	N/A	N/A

Home to school travel

i) Closest school

An analysis of pupil travel patterns has been carried out, based on the 24 pupils that were attending Castle Caereinion in January 2020. The closest provider for all of these pupils is as follows:

	Pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School
Castle Caereinion C. in W. Primary School	75%
Guilsfield C.P. School	8.3%
Welshpool C. in W. School	8.3%
Berriew C.P. School	4.2%
Llanidloes C.P. School	4.2%

¹² Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

Based on this information, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is the closest school for 18 (75%) of pupils attending in January 2020.

If there was no school in Castle Caereinion, the closest school for all of the pupils attending in January 2020 would be as follows:

	Pupils' closest school should there be no school in Castle Caereinion
Berriew C.P. School	70.8%
Welshpool C. in W. School	12.5%
Guilsfield C.P. School	8.3%
Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School	4.2%
Llanidloes C.P. School	4.2%

ii) Average travel distance

The current average travel distance for all pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School in January 2020 is 0.5 miles.

If there was no school in Castle Caereinion, the average travel distance for all pupils attending the school in January 2020 to attend alternative provision would be 2.8 miles.

iii) Furthest travel distance

Of the pupils that attended Castle Caereinion C. in W. School in January 2020, the furthest travel distance to the school for those pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is the closest provider is 2.5 miles.

If there was no school in Castle Caereinion, the furthest distance to the nearest alternative provision would be 3.8 miles.

Equalities Information

i) Free School Meals¹³

¹³ PLASC 2020

	Number of pupils who had a free school meal on Census day
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	0.0%

ii) Pupils in care¹⁴

	Number of pupils in care
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	0.0%

iii) SEN/ALN¹⁵

	School Action	School Action Plus	Statement
Castle Caereinion C. in W. School	16.7%	12.5%	0.0%

Early Years

No early years / pre-school provision on the school site.

3.2 WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED IN CASTLE CAEREINION

The following is a summary of the main challenges facing Castle Caereinion C. in W. School:

i) Low pupil numbers

Current pupil numbers¹⁶ at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are as follows:

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Caereinion C. in W. School	4	3	5	4	4	3	0	23

The Welsh Government defines a 'small school' as a school with less than 91 pupils. Pupil numbers are significantly lower than this, and are projected to remain below 30 for the foreseeable future.

¹⁴ PLASC 2020

¹⁵ PLASC 2020

¹⁶ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

The school's low pupil numbers have also resulted in a high number of surplus places at the school. Based on current pupil numbers, there is currently 68.9% surplus capacity at the school.

ii) High budget per pupil

Based on the Council's Section 52 Budget Statement for 2020-21, the school's budget share per pupil during 2020-21 was £6,919. This is significantly higher than the Powys average of £4,264. Castle Caereinion is ranked the 5th highest school in Powys by budget share per pupil.¹⁷

iii) Issues with the building

Whilst the school building was assessed to be in good condition by the Welsh Government's condition survey carried out in 2009, it is an old fashioned building, and there are concerns regarding its suitability to deliver education which meets the requirements of the new curriculum, and which meets the Council's vision statement, as outlined in the Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys.

The Council recently commissioned an updated condition survey of the school building. This was carried out in the autumn term 2020. The survey assessed the condition of all three blocks at the school as condition C.

iv) Combined age classes

The small pupil numbers at the school mean that pupils are taught in whole key stage classes, with Key Stage 2 in one class and Foundation Phase in another class. Because pupil numbers in each year group are small, it is more difficult to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged.

v) Leadership

Following a long period of instability during which leadership arrangements for the school were by other schools in the local area, the school now has its own standalone headteacher. However, the headteacher has a significant teaching commitment, which limits the time available to focus on leadership of the school.

¹⁷ Section 52 Budget Statement 2020/2021

PART B – OPTIONS FOR CASTLE CAEREINION C. IN W. SCHOOL

4. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

The following options have been identified which could potentially provide a solution.

Option	Description
1	Status quo – continue as a standalone school
2	Federation with Welshpool Church in Wales School
3	Merge with Welshpool Church in Wales School to establish a new school on two sites
4	Close Castle Caereinion, but retain the site as part of Welshpool C. in W. School
5	Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on two sites
6	Close Castle Caereinion, but retain the site as part of Berriew C.P. School
7	Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on the Berriew site.
8	Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on the Castle site.
9	Close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools

5. SWOT ANALYSIS OF EACH OPTION

SWOT analyses for each of the four options are provided below.

Option 1: Status quo – continue as a standalone school

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would retain provision in Castle Caereinion - There would be no additional transport costs - Would continue to provide access to Church in Wales provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion would continue to be low - Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision - Would still need to maintain the Castle Caereinion building

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No requirement for a reorganisation process - No change for staff - No impact on pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would not reduce surplus places - Would not lead to a financial saving - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion school building - Would not address the high budget per pupil
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for further collaboration with other neighbouring schools to provide increased opportunities for pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the new curriculum – would be difficult to provide educational opportunities which meet the requirements of the new curriculum

Option 2: Federation with Welshpool Church in Wales School

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would retain provision in Castle Caereinion - Would continue to provide access to Church in Wales provision - There would be no additional transport costs - More opportunities could be provided to pupils and staff - Castle Caereinion pupils would continue to attend school in the same location - Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion would continue to be low - Castle Caereinion pupils would still be taught separately - Would not lead to a rationalisation of primary provision - Would still be required to maintain the Castle Caereinion building - Would not reduce surplus places - Would not lead to a financial saving - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion school building - Would not address the high budget per pupil - Significant difference in the size of the two schools
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity for further collaboration across the sites - More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the new curriculum – would be difficult to provide educational opportunities which meet the requirements of the new curriculum on the Castle Caereinion site - Threat to Welshpool C. in W. School, who have been operating over 3 sites over several years pending the move to their new building

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Option 3: Merge with Welshpool Church in Wales School to establish a new school on two sites

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would retain provision in Castle Caereinion - Would continue to provide access to Church in Wales provision - There would be no additional home to school transport costs - More opportunities could be provided to pupils and staff - Could provide a financial saving to the Council - Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small numbers would remain at Castle Caereinion - Castle Caereinion pupils would still be taught separately - Would still need to maintain the Castle Caereinion building - Would not reduce surplus places - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion school building - Both schools would lose their identity - Would impact on staff at Welshpool C. in W. School, who have already been through a reorganisation process in the last few years. - Significant difference in the size of the two schools – would have a disproportionate impact on Welshpool C. in W. School
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for further collaboration across the sites - More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the new curriculum – would be difficult to provide educational opportunities which meet the requirements of the new curriculum on the Castle Caereinion site - Threat to Welshpool C. in W. School, who have been operating over 3 sites over several years pending the move to their new building

Option 4: Close Castle Caereinion, but retain the site as part of Welshpool C. in W. School

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would retain provision in Castle Caereinion - Would continue to provide access to Church in Wales provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small numbers would remain at Castle Caereinion - Castle Caereinion pupils would still be taught separately

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There would be no additional home to school transport costs - Could provide a financial saving to the Council - Minimal impact on staff at Welshpool C. in W. School - Welshpool C. in W. School would retain its identity - Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would still need to maintain the Castle Caereinion building - Would not reduce surplus places - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion school building - Castle Caereinion school would lose its identity
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for further collaboration across the sites - More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the new curriculum – would be difficult to provide educational opportunities which meet the requirements of the new curriculum - Threat to Welshpool C. in W. School, who have been operating over 3 sites over several years pending the move to their new building

Option 5: Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on two sites

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would retain provision in Castle Caereinion - More opportunities could be provided to pupils - There would be no additional home to school transport costs - Could provide a financial saving to the Council - Opportunity for all staff to secure positions in the new school - Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small numbers would remain at the Castle Caereinion site - Castle Caereinion pupils would still be taught separately - Would not reduce surplus places - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion school building - Would also impact on the staff of Berriew C.P. School - Both schools would lose their current identities
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for further collaboration across the sites - More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the new curriculum – would be difficult to provide educational opportunities which meet the requirements of the new

	<p>curriculum on the Castle Caereinion site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible tension between Church in Wales provision and C.P. status - May not be acceptable to the Berriew community due to previous shared headteacher arrangements.
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Option 6: Close Castle Caereinion, but retain the site as part of Berriew C.P. School

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would retain provision in Castle Caereinion - More opportunities could be provided to the pupils - There would be no additional home to school transport costs - Could provide a financial saving to the Council - Berriew C.P. School would retain its identity - Potentially would not impact on staff at Berriew C.P. School - Pupils would continue to attend school at the same location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small numbers would remain at the Castle Caereinion site - Castle Caereinion pupils would still be taught separately - Would not reduce surplus places - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion school building - Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would lose its identity - Would be no access to C. in W. School provision locally
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for further collaboration across the sites - More opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the new curriculum – would be difficult to provide educational opportunities which meet the requirements of the new curriculum - May not be acceptable to the Berriew community due to previous shared headteacher arrangements.

Option 7: Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on the Berriew site

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More opportunities could be provided to the pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional travel for those pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently the closest school

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could provide a financial saving to the Council - Would reduce surplus places - All staff would have the opportunity to apply for positions at the new school - Improved opportunities for staff from working in a larger school - Pupils would all be taught in one location - Would address the issues with the Castle Caereinion school building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional transport costs - Pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion School would have to transfer to a new location - Loss of provision from Castle Caereinion - Impact on the Castle Caereinion community - Would impact on Berriew staff as well as Castle Caereinion staff - Potential reduction in staffing requirements - Current capacity of Berriew school may not be able to accommodate all pupils - Both schools would lose their identities - There would be no access to C. in W. School provision locally should the new school be a C.P. School
Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would need to review the capacity of the current Berriew C.P. School – additional capacity may be required - Possible tension between C.P. and C. in W. provision

Option 8: Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on the Castle Caereinion site

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More opportunities could be provided to the pupils - Could provide a financial saving to the Council - Would reduce surplus places - All staff would have the opportunity to apply for positions at the new school - Improved opportunities for staff from working in a larger school - Pupils would all be taught in one location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional travel for those pupils for whom Berriew C.P. School is currently the closest school - Additional transport costs - Pupils currently attending Berriew School would have to transfer to a new location - Less convenient location for the majority of pupils - Current Berriew pupils may live closer to other schools - Loss of provision from Berriew - Impact on the Berriew community

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would not address issues with the Castle Caereinion building - Would impact on Berriew staff as well as Castle Caereinion staff - Potential reduction in staffing requirements - Both schools would lose their identities - Castle Caereinion School is too small to accommodate the merged school - Significant investment would be needed in the Castle Caereinion site to accommodate Berriew pupils.
Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant investment would be needed in Castle Caereinion to accommodate Berriew pupils - Unlikely that the Castle Caereinion site would be large enough to accommodate a school of the size required – a new site may be required - Possible tension between C.P. and C. in W. provision

Option 9: Close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion - Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools - Revenue saving to the Council - Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum - Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities - Pupils would attend schools with more suitable accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional travel for those pupils for whom Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is currently the closest school - Pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion School would have to transfer to alternative provision - Loss of provision from Castle Caereinion - Impact on the current staff of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School - Impact on the Castle Caereinion community - Reduction in C. in W. provision

Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Likely to be the least popular option locally - Possibility of referral of the decision to WG by the Diocese

6. IMPACT OF EACH OPTION

The likely impact of each option on quality and standards, the community and travelling arrangements is considered below:

Option	Likely impact on quality and standards	Likely impact on the community	Likely impact of different travelling arrangements
Option 1: Status Quo – continue as a standalone school	There would be no impact on quality and standards – pupils would continue to attend the current provision at Castle Caereinion.	There would be no impact on the community – provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion.	There would be no impact on travel arrangements – pupils would continue to attend Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.
Option 2: Federation with Welshpool C. in W. School	<p>The impact on quality and standards would be minimal. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would continue to operate as a stand alone school, however the school would be federated with Welshpool C. in W. school, meaning that one joint governing body would be responsible for both schools. There would also be the potential for shared leadership across the two schools.</p> <p>Establishment of the federation could lead to opportunities to share staff / resources across the federation, which would have a</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion.</p> <p>However, one joint governing body would be responsible for both schools, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the make up of the federated governing body.</p>	There would be no impact on travel arrangements – pupils would continue to attend Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

	positive impact on quality and standards.		
Option 3: Merge with Welshpool C. in W. School to establish a new school on two sites	<p>Welshpool C. in W. School was established in 2017 following the amalgamation of 4 nursery and infant schools in Welshpool. The school is currently operating across three sites, pending a move to a new building in 2021.</p> <p>Merging Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and Welshpool C. in W School would mean that Welshpool C. in W School would need to undergo a further management of change process, having already undergone numerous changes over the last few years. The Council's view is that this would threaten the quality of provision at Welshpool C. in W. School.</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion.</p> <p>However, one new governing body would be responsible for both sites, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the make up of the new governing body.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Welshpool site as the much larger site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Castle Caereinion site.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>
Option 4: Close Castle Caereinion, but retain the site as part of Welshpool C. in W. School	<p>Welshpool C. in W. School was established in 2017 following the amalgamation of 4 nursery and infant schools in Welshpool. The school is currently operating across three sites, pending a move to a new building in 2021.</p>	<p>Provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion. However, the site would be managed by the current governing body of Welshpool C. in W. School, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>

	<p>Retaining the Castle Caereinion site as part of Welshpool C. in W. School would lead to further change for the Welshpool C. in W. School community, which has already undergone numerous changes over the last few years. The Council's view is that this would threaten the quality of provision at Welshpool C. in W. School.</p>	<p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Welshpool site as the much larger site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Castle Caereinion site.</p>	
<p>Option 5: Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on two sites</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this option would have a positive impact on quality and standards through the establishment of one larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff.</p> <p>Whilst pupils would continue to attend separate sites, therefore would not benefit from all being taught together, this option would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and resources to be shared across both sites. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and Berriew C.P. School are both in the amber support category based on the 2019 categorisations, therefore it is not anticipated that the impact</p>	<p>The impact on the community would be minimal – provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion.</p> <p>However, one new governing body would be responsible for both sites, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school, depending on the make up of the federated governing body.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Berriew site as the larger site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Castle Caereinion site.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>

	on quality and standards would be negative.		
Option 6: Close Castle Caereinion, but retain the site as part of Berriew C.P. School	<p>Implementation of this option would result in closure of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, however provision would continue on the current site. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and Berriew C.P. School are both in the amber support category based on the 2019 categorisations, therefore it is not anticipated that the impact on quality and standards would be negative.</p> <p>The school would be a larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff, which could have a positive impact on the opportunities available for pupils and staff.</p> <p>Whilst pupils would continue to attend separate sites, therefore would not benefit from all being taught together, this option would provide additional opportunities for staff expertise and resources to be shared across both sites.</p>	<p>Provision would continue to be available in Castle Caereinion. However, the site would be managed by the current governing body of Berriew C.P. School, therefore there could be a perceived reduction in community involvement in management of the school.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that joint school activities would take place on the Berriew site as the larger site, which could lead to a reduction in activity on the Castle Caereinion site.</p>	<p>Pupils would continue to attend school on the current site of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>However, some additional travel may be required between schools in order to access activities and events.</p>

<p>Option 7: Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on the Berriew site</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this option would have a positive impact on quality and standards through the establishment of one larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff.</p> <p>All pupils would attend one site, which would provide further benefits to pupils from being part of larger cohorts of pupils, and improved opportunities to share staff expertise.</p> <p>Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and Berriew C.P. School are both in the amber support category based on the 2019 categorisations, therefore it is not anticipated that the impact on quality and standards would be negative.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion as there would be no provision in Castle Caereinion.</p> <p>However, merging with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school would provide opportunities for the Castle Caereinion community to be involved in the process of establishing the new school, would aid community involvement in the new school.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>
<p>Option 8: Merge with Berriew C.P. School to establish a new school on the Castle Caereinion site</p>	<p>In general, it is anticipated that this option would have a positive impact on quality and standards through the establishment of one larger school, with a larger number of pupils and a larger team of staff. All pupils would attend one site, which would provide further benefits to pupils from being part of larger cohorts of pupils, and</p>	<p>There would be a positive impact on the Castle Caereinion community as this option would retain provision in Castle Caereinion and would lead to an increase in pupil numbers, safeguarding provision in the village for the future.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Berriew C.P. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement</p>

	<p>improved opportunities to share staff expertise.</p> <p>However, it is unlikely that the Castle Caereinion site would be able to accommodate all pupils, therefore there would be a negative impact on the quality of provision should all pupils be taught in the current Castle Caereinion building.</p>	<p>However, there would be a negative impact on the Berriew community as there would no longer be provision in Berriew. Whilst merging the two schools to establish a new school would provide opportunities for the Berriew community to be involved in the process of establishing the new school to aid community involvement in the new school, however as Berriew is the larger village with a larger school, it is likely that the Berriew community would consider this option to be disproportionate.</p>	<p>for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>
<p>Option 9: Close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools</p>	<p>Implementation of this option would mean that pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would transfer to their nearest alternative schools. For the majority of pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, the closest alternative schools would be Berriew C.P. School. The nearest alternative Church in Wales provision would be Welshpool C. in W. School. Some pupils may also choose to attend Llanfair Caereinion C.P.</p>	<p>There would be a significant impact on the community of Castle Caereinion as there would be no provision in Castle Caereinion.</p> <p>As a Church in Wales School, The Castle Caereinion School building is owned by the Diocese, therefore the Diocese would need to determine the building's future use, and therefore whether or not facilities would remain in Castle Caereinion.</p>	<p>Additional travel would be required for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.</p> <p>Whilst free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, there would also be an additional travel requirement for parents in order to access school activities / events.</p>

	<p>School or Guilsfield C.P. School as other nearby schools.</p> <p>The Council's view is that all of these schools would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall. The overall aim of the proposal is to improve learning opportunities for pupils. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, Berriew C.P. School and Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School were categorised as Amber in the latest school categorisations carried out in 2019, whilst Welshpool C. in W. School was categorised as Yellow. Guilsfield C.P. School was classified as a Green school.</p>		
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7. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The options have also been assessed against the following Critical Success Factors:

Critical Success Factor	Description
1 – Strategic fit and business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The option must align with the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030, to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the challenges facing education in Powys, as outlined in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030 Align with the Vision and Guiding Principles outlined in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030 Align with the Strategic Aims and Objectives outlined in the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030 The option must optimise the benefits of the Council's Transforming Education Programme
2 – Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The option must optimise the resources available for the delivery of learning The option must provide value for money in the delivery of learning
3 – Potential achievability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The option must be achievable within current legislation The option must be operationally achievable The option must be physically achievable
4 – Potential affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the option is affordable within the Council's forecasted revenue The extent to which the option is affordable within the forecasted capital funding available to the Council

Each option has been assessed against the Critical Success Factors based on the following criteria:

✓ – Meets ? – Could meet x – Does not meet

The assessment for each option is as follows:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6	Option 7	Option 8	Option 9
1 – Strategic fit and business needs	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓
2 – Value for money	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓
3 – Potential achievability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	x	✓
4 – Potential affordability	x	x	x	x	x	x	?	x	✓
Total ✓	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	4
Total x	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	2	0
Outcome	Discount	Discount	Discount	Discount	Discount	Discount	Possible option	Discount	Preferred option

8. EMERGING PREFERRED OPTION

Based on the work carried out, the emerging preferred option for Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is:

Option 9: Close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools

The reasons for this are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Pupils would attend schools with more suitable accommodation
- Meets all of the Critical Success Factors

Further consideration of the emerging preferred option will now be carried out, to include consideration of the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code.

PART C – FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF PREFERRED OPTION

The Welsh Government's School Organisation Code outlines factors to be considered when developing school organisation proposals. Consideration is given below to the impact of the preferred option, closure of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, with pupils to attend their nearest alternative schools, on the factors outlined in the Code.

9. QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION

9.1 Likely impact on standards and progress overall, of specific groups and in skills

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school would be Berriew C.P. School. However it is possible that pupils would choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School, as other nearby schools.

The Council's view is that all of these schools would provide education for pupils which is of at least equivalent quality as that provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on standards and progress overall. Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, Berriew C.P. School and Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School were categorised as Amber in the latest school categorisations carried out in 2019, whilst Welshpool C. in W. School was categorised as Yellow. Guilsfield C.P. School was classified as a Green school.

This would also apply in respect of pupils belonging to specific groups, such as pupils eligible for Free School Meals, pupils for whom English is an Additional Language, Looked after Children and pupils with Additional Learning Needs. Based on PLASC 2020 information, there are no pupils eligible for Free School Meals, Looked after Children or pupils for whom English is an Additional Language at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. There are a number of pupils with Additional Learning Needs, however the number of pupils belonging to this group is small. It is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on the standards and progress of these pupils.

This is also the case in respect of the impact on the skills of all pupils, including literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils would transfer to larger schools, which would provide improved opportunities to share staff expertise and

resources, and which have an improved ability to monitor pupil progress in these aspects.

9.2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

In the short term, it is possible that there would be an impact on pupils' wellbeing, as they would need to transfer from Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to alternative schools. It is possible that pupils could choose to transfer to different schools, which could have a further impact on their wellbeing. However, the receiving school(s) would provide full support to the pupils during the transition period, to minimise any negative impact on them.

For some pupils, implementation of the preferred option could result in additional travel, which could have an impact on pupil well-being. However, alternative primary provision would be available at a number of other schools located within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. It is not considered that the additional travel time required to alternative provision would be excessive.

In the longer term, the intention is that implementation of the preferred option would have a positive impact on pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning as they would transfer to larger schools with larger cohorts of pupils, providing improved social and extra-curricular opportunities.

9.3 Teaching and learning experiences

9.3.1 Quality of teaching

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school would be Berriew C.P. School. However it is possible that pupils would choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School, as other nearby schools.

It is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on the quality of teaching experienced by pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

9.3.2 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school would be Berriew C.P. School. However it is possible that pupils would

choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School, as other nearby schools.

The Council's view is that all of these schools would provide a curriculum which is at least equivalent to that currently provided at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. It is likely that pupils would transfer to larger schools, therefore the expectation would be that there would be an improvement in the breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum provided to pupils, and that the alternative schools would be better placed to develop provision which meets the requirements of the new curriculum.

Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is a Church in Wales school, which impacts on some aspects of the curriculum. Alternative Church in Wales provision is available at Welshpool C. in W. School, ensuring that denominational provision would continue to be available to those pupils who wished to access it.

9.3.3 The provision of skills

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school would be Berriew C.P. School. However it is possible that pupils would choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School, as other nearby schools.

The Council has no concerns about the provision of skills at these schools, therefore it is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on the provision of skills for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

9.4 Care, support and guidance

9.4.1 Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support, personal development and safeguarding

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. For the majority of pupils, the closest alternative school would be Berriew C.P. School. However it is possible that pupils would choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School, as other nearby schools.

It is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would have a negative impact on tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support,

personal development and safeguarding for pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. In respect of Berriew C. P. School, whilst an issue in respect of car parking arrangements at the school was identified previously, this has been addressed. In respect of Welshpool C. in W. School, the school moved into a new building in January 2021. Safeguarding is a key consideration when designing new schools, therefore the expectation is that the safeguarding arrangements here would be improved compared with the current arrangements at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

9.5 Leadership and Management

9.5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers, self evaluation processes and improvement planning

Should the Council proceed with implementation of the preferred option, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close, and pupils would transfer to alternative schools. However it is possible that pupils would choose to attend Welshpool C. in W. School as the nearest Church in Wales school, or Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School or Guilsfield C.P. School, as other nearby schools.

Permanent leadership arrangements are in place at Berriew C.P. School, Welshpool C. in W. School and Guilsfield C.P. School, therefore the Council's view is that leadership and management at the alternative schools would be at least as good as the current arrangements at Castle Caereinion, whilst there are currently temporary leadership arrangements in place at Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School.

The alternative schools which pupils may transfer to are all larger than Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, therefore the headteachers of these schools would have more time available to focus on leadership and management.

9.5.2 Professional learning

It is not anticipated that implementation of the preferred option would impact on professional learning opportunities. Staff currently employed at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would be subject to a management of change process.

9.5.3 Use of Resources

Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is projecting to be in a surplus budget position over the coming years. Whilst there are no concerns about the use of resources within the school, there are concerns about use of resources overall within the Powys schools infrastructure. As indicated on page 5 above, one of the main challenges facing the Powys schools infrastructure is the high proportion of small schools in the county. Castle Caereinion C. in W. school is

among the smallest schools in the county, and the budget share per pupil at the school is higher than the Powys average for primary schools.

Closure of the school would reduce the number of schools in Powys, and would enable the Council to use its resources more effectively for the benefit of all Powys learners.

Should the emerging preferred option be implemented pupils would transfer to larger schools, ensuring more effective use of the Council's resources.

In addition, larger schools often have more resources available in terms of number of staff and educational resources, therefore pupils would benefit from the opportunity to access these resources.

9.6 Impact on vulnerable groups, including children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Implementation of the preferred option would result in the closure of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. It is acknowledged that there would be an impact on any pupils belonging to vulnerable groups currently attending the school, including any pupils with SEN, and that in the short term, these pupils would need to transfer to alternative schools.

Based on January 2020 PLASC information, 5 pupils at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School were on School Action, and 3 pupils were on School Action Plus. There were no statemented pupils.

Whilst the preferred option would impact on these pupils, as they would be required to move to alternative schools, there is no reason to believe that the schools to which they might transfer would not be able to meet their needs.

Should the option be implemented, the Council would work with Castle Caereinion C. in W. School and the receiving schools to ensure an effective transition for any vulnerable children, including children with SEN, and their families.

9.7 Ability of the school/schools which are the subject of the proposals to deliver the full curriculum at the foundation phase and each key stage of education, including the quality of curriculum delivery and the extent to which the structure or size of the school is impacting on this

Should the emerging preferred option be implemented, Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would close and pupils would transfer to alternative schools, therefore Castle Caereinion C. in W. School would no longer need to deliver the curriculum to any key stages.

Should Castle Caereinion school close, pupils would transfer to alternative schools. This would lead to an increase in pupil numbers at the schools to which the pupils wish to transfer. However current pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion school are small, and therefore the number of pupils likely to transfer to each year group is low, therefore the impact on alternative schools is not likely to have a significant impact on their ability to deliver the full curriculum at the foundation phase and in each key stage of education.

In some schools, it is possible that an increase in pupil numbers would improve their ability to deliver the curriculum, however depending on the class structure and current breakdown of pupils, it's likely that some schools would need to make adjustments to their class structure in the short term to accommodate any additional pupils.

10 NEED FOR PLACES AND IMPACT ON ACCESSIBILITY OF SCHOOLS

10.1 Will the alternative provision have sufficient capacity and provide accommodation of at least equivalent quality for existing and projected pupil numbers?

The following table shows the number of spaces available and the building condition of schools providing English-medium education located within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School:

School	Capacity ¹⁸	Current pupil numbers ¹⁹	Available spaces	Available capacity	Building Condition	Building Suitability
Berriew C.P. School	106	85	21	19.8%	B	B
Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School	195	161	34	17.4%	B/C	B
Welshpool C. in W. School	360 ²⁰	254	106	29.4%	A	A
Leighton C.P. School	91	71	20	22.0%	B/C	B
Guilsfield C.P. School	157	137	20	12.7%	B	B

¹⁸ Welsh Government School Places Return – August 2020

¹⁹ Finance NOR – 2020 Pupil Count Day (6th November 2020)

²⁰ This capacity and condition refers to the new Salop Road site of Welshpool C. in W. School

Ysgol Meifod	77	81	-4	-5.2%	B	C
Ysgol Rhiw Bechan	146	135	11	7.5%	B	A

This suggests that there are sufficient places available within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to accommodate all current and projected pupils at the school.

The condition of the nearest school, Berriew C.P. School is equivalent to the condition of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. In addition, Welshpool C. in W. School has recently moved to a brand new building, which provides access to a condition A building.

10.2 Is the alternative provision sufficient to meet existing and projected demand for schools of the same language category and (if relevant) designated religious character?

As indicated in the table in section 11.1 above, there is sufficient English-medium capacity within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to accommodate the school's current and projected pupil numbers.

Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is a Church in Wales school. As indicated in the table in section 11.1 above, there are places available at Welshpool C. in W. School, would enable pupils to access a school of the same religious character, should they wish to continue to attend a Church in Wales school.

10.3 What will be the nature of journeys to alternative provision and resulting journey times for pupils including SEN pupils?

As indicated in the table in section 11.1 above, there are alternative primary places available at other schools within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. Should Castle Caereinion C. in W. School close, it is not considered that the length and nature of journeys for pupils to alternative provision would be excessive. This includes journeys for SEN pupils. One-way journeys to alternative provision would not be in excess of 45 minutes.

11 RESOURCING OF EDUCATION AND OTHER FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 What effect will the proposals have on surplus places in the area?

Implementation of the preferred option would lead to an overall reduction in surplus places in the area.

11.2 Do the proposals form part of the local authority's 21st Century Schools Investment Programme and contribute to the delivery of sustainable schools for the 21st Century and to the better strategic management of the school estate?

The review of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School does not form part of the local authority's 21st Century Schools Investment Programme.

However, the Council's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys identifies a number of issues relating to the overall Powys schools' estate, including a high proportion of small schools, a high number of surplus places and issues with building condition. The Strategy includes a strategic objective to 'Reconfigure and rationalise primary provision', which aims to address these issues, to ensure better strategic management of the Powys school estate. The review of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is being carried out in order to meet this objective.

11.3 What are the recurrent costs of proposals over a period of at least 3 years and is the necessary recurrent funding available?

The recurrent costs of this proposal would be the increased transport costs which are currently estimated to be an additional £32,300 per annum as detailed in 11.4. This has been included in the delegated revenue costing and is funded through savings in other areas of the formula in relation to this proposal.

11.4 Will additional transport costs be incurred as a result of the proposal?

It is estimated there would be additional transport costs of £32,300 per annum, this is based on pupil's current location and assuming the pupils would go to the next nearest school.

11.5 What are the capital costs of the proposal and is the necessary capital funding is available?

It is not anticipated that capital funding would be required in order to implement the emerging preferred option. As indicated in the table in section 10.1 above, there are sufficient places at schools located within 10 miles of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School to accommodate all current and projected pupils.

11.6 What is the scale of any projected net savings (taking into account school revenue, transport and capital costs)

It is estimated that this would result in annual revenue savings to the Council of around £58,100. This overall figure comprises a potential saving on Schools' delegated funding of over £90,400 offset by estimated additional transport costs of £32,300

11.7 Without the proposals, would the schools affected face budget deficits?

Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is not currently forecasting a deficit budget.

11.8 Will any savings in recurrent costs be retained in the local authority's local schools budget?

Any savings would be reinvested in the Council's corporate budget and any reinvestment in the schools' system would be agreed as part of the annual budget planning cycle.

11.9 Will the proceeds of sales (capital receipts) of redundant sites be made available to meet the costs of the proposal or contribute to the costs of future proposals which will promote effective management of school places?

Castle Caereinion C. in W. School is not owned by the Council, therefore the Council would not receive any capital receipts following any sale of the site.

12 OTHER GENERAL FACTORS

12.1 What impact will the proposals have on educational attainment among children from economically deprived backgrounds?

Implementation of the preferred option would impact on any pupils from economically deprived backgrounds currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. All pupils currently attending the school, including any from economically deprived backgrounds, would need to transfer to alternative schools. Free home to school transport would be provided to eligible pupils in accordance with Council's home to school transport policy, however it is acknowledged that there would be an impact on families due to the requirement to travel to school events, which could have a greater impact on children from economically deprived backgrounds.

Based on PLASC figures from January 2020, no pupils attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School were eligible for FSM, therefore it is likely that the proportion of children from economically deprived backgrounds is minimal.

12.2 Any equality issues, including those identified through equality impact assessments

Initial consideration of equalities information recorded through PLASC suggests that there are no significant equality issues in respect of pupils currently attending Castle Caereinion C. in W. School. Should the Council proceed with the statutory process in respect of the preferred option, equality

impact assessments will be carried out and regularly reviewed throughout the process to ensure that any issues are identified and fully considered.

12.3 Whether the school / schools involved are subject to any trust or charitable interests which might be affected by the proposals, for example in relation to the use or disposal of land.

The school is not subject to any trust of charitable interests which might be affected by the proposals.

13. SPECIFIC FACTORS IN THE CONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

13.1 Whether the establishment of multi-site schools might be considered as a means of retaining buildings, or the reasons for not pursuing this option

A range of options have been considered in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, these are outlined in section 4 of this document, as well as an assessment of each option which includes a summary of the weaknesses / threats associated with each.

Pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are very low, and are not projected to increase above 30 over the coming years. Establishing a multi-site school would not address this issue.

13.2 Whether alternatives to closure, such as clustering, collaboration or federation with other schools, might be considered or the reasons for not pursuing these as an alternative

Federation of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School with Welshpool C. in W. School is one of the options considered in section 4 of this document. As assessment of this option has been carried out, which includes a summary of the weaknesses / threats associated with this option.

Pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion C. in W. School are very low, and are not projected to increase above 30 over the coming years. Becoming part of a federation with another school would not address this issue.

13.3 Whether the possibility of making fuller use of the existing buildings as a community or educational resource could be explored

The Council's view is that making more use of the existing building as a community or educational resource would not address the issues identified in respect of Castle Caereinion C. in W. School.

Pupil numbers at the school are low, and are not projected to increase significantly over the coming years.

13.4 The overall effect of closure on the local community (including the loss of school based facilities which are used by the local community)

Implementation of the preferred option would mean that there would no longer be provision in Castle Caereinion. It is acknowledged that this would have a negative impact on the Castle Caereinion community, including the loss of primary provision from the village of Castle Caereinion, and a possible loss of any community facilities associated with the school from the village.

Should the Council proceed with the statutory process in respect of the preferred option, a community impact assessment would be carried out, which would include input from the affected schools to identify the potential impact on the community. This would be updated throughout the process to reflect any feedback received, and would be considered by the Council's Cabinet as part of the decision making process.

13.5 How parents' and pupils' engagement with the alternative school and any facilities it may offer could be supported

Should the Council proceed with the statutory process and eventually implementation of the preferred option, support would be provided to pupils and their parents as part of the transition process, to ensure full engagement with their new schools. The nature of this support would depend on the needs of the parents / pupils, however this could include provision for effective transition to the receiving school by new headteacher and class teachers.

14. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the options appraisal carried out and further consideration of the preferred option against the factors outlined in the School Organisation Code, the preferred option is as follows:

Option 9: Close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, pupils to attend nearest alternative schools

The reasons for this are:

- Would address the issue of low pupil numbers at Castle Caereinion
- Would reduce the Council's overall surplus capacity in primary schools
- Revenue saving to the Council
- Pupils would attend larger schools, which would be better equipped to meet the requirements of the new curriculum

- Pupils would attend larger schools, which could provide a wider range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities
- Pupils would attend schools with more suitable accommodation
- Meets all of the Critical Success Factors

It is recommended that a paper is considered by the Council's Cabinet, requesting approval to commence consultation on a proposal to close Castle Caereinion C. in W. School, with pupils to transfer to their nearest alternative schools.