



Crickhowell Area Review

Engagement Report

November 2022

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1. Summary of the Engagement

1.1 The engagement period

The Council has been reviewing the Crickhowell catchment to identify a preferred way forward for the delivery of education in the catchment in the future. As part of this, an engagement exercise was carried out between the 13th October 2022 and the 10th November 2022, to give the opportunity for stakeholders within the catchment to contribute to this work.

As part of the engagement exercise, an online questionnaire was issued, which was available on the Council's engagement website throughout the engagement period.

Alongside the questionnaire, in-person sessions were held for staff and governors within the cluster. A total of 37 staff attended the session for staff, and 21 governors attended the session for governors.

1.2 Responses received

A total of 233 responses were received. 228 of these were responses to the questionnaire. 5 additional written responses were received.

2. Responses to the Questionnaire

The following section summarises the feedback received in the response forms which were completed.

Part 1 – About you

1. Please indicate how you are responding to this questionnaire:

Response	No.	% of responses to this question	% of total responses to questionnaire
Parent, carer or guardian	142	53.8%	62.3%
Prospective parent, carer or guardian	12	4.5%	5.3%
Pupil	3	1.1%	1.3%
Governor	19	7.2%	8.3%
Member of staff	30	11.4%	13.2%
Member of the community	50	18.9%	21.9%
Other	8	3.0%	3.5%
Total responses	264	100.0%	

2. Please indicate which school(s) you are associated with:

Response	No.	% of responses to this question	% of total responses to questionnaire
Crickhowell C.P. School	55	18.3%	24.1%
Llangynidr C.P. School	40	13.3%	17.5%
Llangattock C. in W. School	33	11.0%	14.5%
Llanbedr C. in W. School	39	13.0%	17.1%
Crickhowell High School	110	36.7%	48.2%
No association	11	3.7%	4.8%
Other	12	4.0%	5.3%
Total responses	300	100.0%	

3. Please provide your postcode:

Response	No.	%
Crickhowell	155	68.0%
Brecon	37	16.2%
Vale of Grwynwy/Abergavenny	24	10.5%
Abertillery	4	1.8%
Ebbw Vale	3	1.3%
Cardiff West	1	0.4%
Merthyr Tydfil	1	0.4%
Blackwood	1	0.4%

Hay on Wye	1	0.4%
Ponypool	1	0.4%
Total responses	228	100.0%

3. How old are you?

Response	No.	%
Under 16	1	0.4%
16-24	6	2.6%
25-34	13	5.7%
35-44	81	35.5%
45-54	70	30.7%
55-64	23	10.1%
65-74	13	5.7%
75-84	3	1.3%
85+	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	14	6.1%
Not answered	4	1.8%
Total responses	228	100.0%

4. What is your gender?

Response	No.	%
Male	49	21.5%
Female	158	69.3%
Transgender	0	0.0%
Non-binary	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	14	6.1%
Not answered	7	3.1%
Total responses	228	100.0%

5. Can you understand, speak or write Welsh?

Response	No.	%
Yes	62	27.2%
No	119	52.2%
Prefer not to say	43	18.9%
Not answered	4	1.8%
Total responses	228	100.0%

6. If you have school-aged children, are they entitled to free school meals?

Response	No.	%
Yes	8	3.5%
No	149	65.4%
Not applicable	47	20.6%

Prefer not to say	16	7.0%
Not answered	8	3.5%
Total responses	228	100.0%

7. If you have school-aged children, do they have additional learning needs?

Response	No.	%
Yes	22	9.6%
No	130	57.0%
Not applicable	45	19.7%
Prefer not to say	21	9.2%
Not answered	10	4.4%
Total responses	228	100.0%

8. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Response	No.	%
Yes	11	4.8%
No	187	82.0%
Prefer not to say	21	9.2%
Not answered	9	3.9%
Total responses	228	100.0%

9. What is your ethnic group?

Response	No.	%
White	193	84.6%
Asian	1	0.4%
Black, African or Caribbean	0	0.0%
Gypsy/Traveller	1	0.4%
Mixed	1	0.4%
Other	2	0.9%
Prefer not to say	25	11.0%
Not answered	5	2.2%
Total responses	228	100.0%

Part 2 - Area review of education in the Crickhowell catchment

Your view on the current provision

- 4. Based on the data provided and your own local knowledge of the Crickhowell catchment, please outline up to 5 strengths with the current educational provision in the Crickhowell catchment area.**

199 respondents provided a response. The responses received are summarised below:

i) Comments about the current provision

- All schools provide a good all-round standard of education, are supported by their communities, and provide access to their facilities to the community.
- The schools in the Crickhowell catchment provide a good education to the children in the communities in which they are based.
- Estyn rates each of the schools as being at least good. This demonstrates that the schools provide a very good standard of education which is more than can be said for neighbouring clusters both within Powys and across the borders.
- Schools in the catchment have been pioneer schools for the new curriculum and are ahead of expectations for implementation.
- Progressive and forward thinking regarding the national curriculum
- The High School is very strong academically at GCSE and A Level when compared to other schools in Wales and the UK and does well on added value measures.
- Crickhowell High School offer above and beyond education which is excellent.
- Crickhowell High School has a good reputation for providing an excellent education
- Standards of education is very good in Crickhowell High School - best in the county.
- The secondary school performs very well which is a credit to Crickhowell
- Well-being at our local school, Llanbedr CIW is extremely high. The children are like a large family, and the staff genuinely know each individual, therefore offering an extremely effective support network.
- The smaller primaries are noted for their excellence in terms of pupil wellbeing especially with the after effects of the Covid pandemic. A lot of pupils join the smaller primaries from the larger ones for this very reason.

ii) Comments about religious educational provision

- There is a choice of religious and non-religious provision in the catchment
- The cluster includes faith schools and encourages all religions and cultural awareness, especially in Llanbedr School with its unrivalled strong community and church links.
- The school provide parents with a good balance of parental choice i.e. CiW/non-CiW

- Llanbedr & Llangattock Schools benefit from being part of the Church family, rooted in village / rural Communities.

iii) Comments about the location of the schools near to pupils' homes

- Schools delivering education locally, meaning less travelling time, opportunity to walk to school, less traffic and smaller carbon footprint
- Short journeys to school with many children able to walk or cycle
- The school locations are accessible to all and serve different parts of a close-knit community.
- Provides for the local communities of Powys including Bwlch.
- Most pupils can walk to school with some having only a short bus ride to school which is obviously environmentally much better for our communities and is well managed. This makes the school day length reasonable with no pupils having to travel long journeys before or after school leaving more time at home with their families and for their leisure activities.

iv) Comments about Post-16 education at Crickhowell High School

- Crickhowell High has a large sixth form, which allows offering of a vary of different subjects
- The size of the High School means it provides a viable sixth form, a strong sport and extracurricular offering all offered at the lowest funding per student in Powys.
- Larger range of A-levels [on offer] compared to Gwernyfed High and Brecon High
- Crickhowell High School supports strong and effective 6th form which keeps young people in the community.
- CHS seems to perform well in Maths at AS and A Level and with Further Maths and seems to have good teaching in French.
- Crickhowell High School has the largest Sixth Form in Powys and compared to other counties too – this is very positive.

v) Comments about the size of the schools

- The primary school sizes are just right. Many parents do not want their children attending a super school.
- Smaller pupil numbers mean there can be greater focus on children's needs
- Small schools allow and encourage children to take part in sporting activities
- The size of school means that children are all known as individuals- no one slips through the gap.

- A distinct advantage to the children is the class sizes. Smaller class sizes encourage closer working relationships between staff and pupils. This creates the ability to balance the learning between those who need additional help to those who find school less of a struggle.
- Most of the children and parents in Crickhowell primary know one another so there is a very safe feeling.
- In Llanbedr the whole of KS2 take part in cluster and Urdd events.

vi) Comments about the school buildings / outdoor spaces

- The buildings, although poor are serviceable and could easily be expanded or improved (although would cost a lot of money).
- They each have wonderful grounds, very important for outdoor learning and enrichment.
- It's irrelevant that the secondary school building is in a poor condition when the provision is superb.
- Good building condition of Llangattock and Llangynidr schools

vii) Comments about cluster working

- All the schools share close ties through educational, social and cultural activities
- The catchment is starting to work together on many support activities, Professional Development of staff, access to the High schools sport facilities and the Public Library.
- Wellbeing and inclusion for all pupils is shared across the catchment.
- There is a sharing of specialisms and skills within the strong teaching of the cluster staff, especially at Llanbedr with its early implementation of the new curriculum.
- Teachers can work within a supportive "cluster" model of mutual support and resource sharing
- All schools work very closely together with excellent relationships and transition.
- Well established good cluster working/partnership/transition
- The cluster already works collaboratively on a number of projects and is developing how to better share resources and expertise within the structure. If anything, the cluster should be hailed as an example of good practice.
- The cluster are geographically quite close together, which allows great opportunities for collaboration.

viii) Comments about links between the schools and the community

- Small schools are able to work with the local business community in an innovative way
- The schools are embedded in the community

- The schools keep the community thriving with a small shop, social events at pubs and village halls.
- Central to community, part of the community with excellent community links.
- Each school well serves its local community, establishing links within it and growing those links as individual schools with a cluster based approach, provide an environmentally stable approach
- Opportunity for children to play an active part in their own community, with schools providing strong links to residents, environment, church and concerns. This relationship is mutually beneficial to the children and the people that live in the surrounding area.
- Local schools keeping local communities alive and enabling pupils to be educated within their own community
- The schools enjoy close links with their local Communities
- Children are able to attend a school near to their home which helps to grow the smaller communities
- Crickhowell Primary School serves the community and enables families to live in town.
- Llanbedr often do litter picks, community harvest festivals, fetes, coffee mornings, village scarecrow competitions, entries for classes at the Royal Welsh etc
- The High School gives depth and richness to Crickhowell as a broader community - cultural life, volunteering, supporting local retail.

ix) Comments about the rural nature of the schools / the rural area

- Rural setting means easy access to building environmental knowledge first hand.
- Smaller schools have excellent provision for rural families.
- Being a small school allows for the differentiation between town and rural farming schools
- Small schools are vital in rural communities and allow children to flourish.
- Our rural schools support rural life and communities. In a rural county, the school is the hub and lifeblood of many villages and towns.
- Smaller schools outside of the towns cater to the needs of the many rural villages that make up this catchment and provide a place of support and cohesion to Powys residents that live in more isolated areas.
- The schools meets the needs of the more rural communities in the Vale of Grwyney and Llangynidr as well as the more urban setting in and around Crickhowell.

x) Comments about transition to secondary school

- There is a feeling of progression through primary school with an exciting element regarding the move to High school - I think it is good for them to move to a different building and experience something new, it allows them some additional independence.
- Excellent transition to secondary education means that pupils feels supported as their education moves on to the next level with the caring support of teachers that work closely together.

5. Based on the data provided and your own local knowledge of the Crickhowell catchment, please outline up to 5 weaknesses with the current educational provision in the Crickhowell catchment area:

128 respondents provided a response. The responses received are summarised below:

i) Comments about funding

- Not enough funding per pupil which means a poorer quality of education.
- Low levels of funding leading to overworked teachers
- Schools have almost no budget for extra things for the school or children and have to do their own fundraising
- We need more funding in order to provide better facilities
- Funding per pupil is low, as the area is considered well off, though many parents with lesser means find ways to get their children into these schools
- Budget share per pupil has always been unfair in the catchment as the calculation benefits city not country schools.
- Distinct lack of funding based on perceived belief that area is affluent and pupils need less funding, giving less educational opportunities to students compared to other areas in Powys
- Not enough funding given to the schools by county. Report shows this. How can some be below the average?
- Unfair budget share per pupil. No equality of education for pupils in Powys.
- Lack of funding for example parents having to pay for swimming classes.
- Premises costs have been allowed to spiral out of control
- CHS gets a very low budget share and may be partially responsible for why CHS is not performing as well as it should given the catchment it has.
- Crickhowell High School suffer from the significant variation in funding described in the transformation document. Our students are disadvantaged because of this variation as compared to other students educated in the county.
- Crickhowell High School is hugely underfunded and not supported by Powys CC in the same way that other secondary schools are across Powys

- There should be fewer primary schools so as to increase funding provision for Crickhowell High School
- There are too many primary schools in the area, this is proving to be costly

ii) Comments about surplus / oversubscribed places / pan-Powys catchment area

- The High School is over subscribed.
- High School has taken too many pupils out of catchment area. The school was only built for 600 children.
- High needs to stop accepting out of county pupils and concentrate on its own.
- Given that 33% of pupils from Crickhowell High School reside out of Powys I find this unacceptable. My view is that as Powys residents they should have priority access to a Powys High School over pupils from neighbouring local authorities.
- Crickhowell High has always taken a large number of students that are not Powys residents
- People not in catchment area and "buying" seats on the school buses are making the traffic in the villages very busy.

iii) Comments about school buildings

- Poor quality buildings
- Council have not maintained the fabric of the buildings or infrastructure in an organised or timely fashion. Repairs have been delayed and postponed causing more decay and decline in condition.
- The state of the buildings is woefully inadequate, especially Crickhowell High School. After attending a recent open evening, I was shocked to see the bad state of repair of the fabric of the building.
- CHS infrastructure is poor, no library, study areas, sixth form centre, ability to eat in a canteen.
- The high school is oversubscribed meaning that buildings become overused, deteriorate quicker and become unsuitable.
- Building work for Crickhowell high school has been delayed in the past meaning a lack of space for the pupils.
- Crickhowell High School is massively overcrowded, and the building is in dire need of repair & expansion.
- Kids can't get lunch as huge queues.
- Infrastructure for the High School and Crickhowell Primary below par, and buildings need renewal.
- Crickhowell CP School building needs updating and modernising

iv) Comments about class sizes

- Class sizes are very big.
- Class sizes too big and not enough support to enhance learning of pupils with ALN or the more able and talented.
- Large class sizes in the high school – more staff and resources are required.

v) Comments about lack of Welsh provision / support

- There is no Welsh medium Provision in the catchment. Families moving their children out of the area will have a detrimental effect to the whole town and community.
- There is a lack of Welsh medium provision - only one of the schools has a robust programme within its current curriculum.
- Lack of Welsh medium provision or at least an English medium school with a strong emphasis on Welsh language and culture.
- Welsh needs to be embedded in the system better. Having moved to Powys from another local education authority, it feels to be hugely behind in efforts to improve learning, use and access to Welsh.
- Welsh language is not supported enough - though it should be understood that a lot of parents are not in favour of Welsh
- There is a Welsh Medium primary school in Abergavenny and many of these students come to Crickhowell for secondary provision. There is very limited secondary Welsh Provision in the area.
- The lack of Welsh Language Secondary provision in the area is appalling - I had to send my son 15 miles across a mountain and 2 county boundaries to get secondary Welsh Language provision in a school in special measures.

vi) Comments about early years provision

- Inflexible early years (3+ provision) should be reviewed. Poor hours offered, meaning reduced uptake into school linked nursery settings at a key point when parents deciding where to send children to school. It would probably improve numbers at local schools if nursery provision was easier for parents to use / access and provided longer hours. They provide a brilliant feeder 'class' into primary school.
- Hard to get grants for the nursery as not flying start area

vii) Comments about reorganisation proposals in the area

- Ongoing threat of school closure provides an uncertain background to young children's learning and development.
- Rumours of changes disrupt the generally positive attitude of the schools.
- We are being constantly threatened by poorly thought out, financially driven plans, that don't consider wider impacts.

- There is a reluctance for other schools in the cluster to support each other and look out for each other as they are all feeling under threat of closure
- Concern about several consultations running side by side.
- The parents, staff and children at Llanbedr are under the constant stress of their school closing due to Powys policy.
- There has been much uncertainty over the fate of Llanbedr which is not fair for pupils, staff and the local area
- Concern about allowing the smallest school to stay open despite the cost
- The recent consultation regarding all through schools has not helped the stability of the cluster and the cluster do not agree that it is a viable model for Crickhowell.

viii) Other comments

- Schools are treated as if they are mid Wales, but we are right on the boundary to the valley's regions - we are not recognised as being different, yet similar to both
- Council appears to have a severe dislike and are far less supportive to Crickhowell Catchment compared to other areas.
- Concerns regarding potential plans to adjust the catchment area map to not include Bwlch area.
- Economic weakness. The county cannot sustain such a financial loss. Close Llanbedr and annual review other primary sites.

6. Please provide any other comments you have about the current provision in the Crickhowell catchment

128 respondents provided a response. The responses received are summarised below:

i) Positive comments about provision in the catchment

- All schools within the current cluster provides a good, solid education to local children and, more importantly, provides parental choice as to the style of education their child(ren) receive. This is in stark contrast to many other parts of the County and across border. It is not a great look for PCC to be considering closing very good primary schools. The finger should be pointed at many different parts of Powys and this cluster should be held up as an example of good practice.
- A superb provision, a fantastic ethos and working relationship between schools that play such an active role in the community, long may it continue.
- A cluster where there is effective collaboration across the whole cluster where standards are high.

- I think the current provision is excellent - research has shown that smaller schools are safer and result in higher academic achievement and better teaching conditions.
- Crickhowell High School is oversubscribed because it is amazing as it is. It is highly appreciated and sought after by many. The quality and standard of education at the school is like nowhere else in the area.

ii) Support for retaining the status quo

- The area benefits from having schools in every village. It helps to keep villages alive and they are central to the community.
- The existing provision suits the nature of the wider community.
- It's vital to maintain secondary in the heart of Crickhowell for local students.
- Notwithstanding financial pressures, I believe any significant change to current arrangements could inflict hidden damage on the wider community and, most importantly, the children themselves.
- It would be a real shame to change the current situation- there haven't been great results from 'through' schools

iii) Comments about admissions / transport consultation

- Bwlch village has always been within Crickhowell High School catchment and is closer to Crickhowell High School than any other school. Keeping Bwlch within the catchment is fair, especially as people have moved to Bwlch with the understanding Bwlch is in the Crickhowell high school catchment.
- Bwlch provides numbers to Llangynidr to maintain them and keep what is a clear selling point and community hub for the village.
- Bwlch is a ten min drive to Crickhowell high School and there is a natural transition between primary and secondary education, promoting friendships and community networking for outside of school activities that starts at primary level.
- I wish Bwlch to remain either as a dual catchment (due to some children attending Llangynidr) but if that is not possible Bwlch shouldn't be considered as a catchment school for an already over-subscribed comprehensive in Crickhowell

iv) Other comments

- The primary provision is far too generous in the catchment. I would make one all singing and dancing primary hub facility, with opportunity for good transference process. As technology develops the need for so many sites will become a thorny question for the authority. The primary school ratings by Estyn are good but building facilities are poor except for Llangattock so consolidate.

- Breakfast clubs and after school clubs are vital for working parents. If schools don't have both clubs available they might lose out on future pupils, especially from families moving from bigger cities outside the county, eg Bristol or Cardiff, who will opt to move near a school that does have them. It would be great for Powys education authority to support after school clubs.

Your view on the future provision

- 7. The Council needs to review its school infrastructure to ensure that it provides value for money and will provide the best possible opportunities for Powys learners.**

Please outline your ideas and suggestions about the way forward for the Crickhowell catchment area, which will lead to improving the educational provision in the area in the future:

176 respondents provided a response. The responses received are summarised below:

i) Support for retaining the status quo

- All schools staying open, continuing to serve the local communities.
- Don't mess with what's not broken.
- Education provision is already good, why change it?
- Educational provision within the catchment area is already good and parental choice is good allowing parents to determine where the best provision for their child is. Reducing choice and closing schools will be a detrimental step.
- It doesn't need to be altered; it is working well as it is
- Keep all of our schools open, well maintained and invest in our children and their future by improving what we have not by destroying it.
- Keep the schools separate.

ii) Options relating to federation

- A federation supporting the rural nature of our community and strengthening the education of all the schools in the catchment.
- Llangattock and Crickhowell primaries could successfully be federated, but to include Llanbedr and Llangynidr would not be feasible or beneficial.

iii) Comments about the number of primaries in the catchment

- Primary schools to be looked at – to see if all are needed
- Close inefficient schools. Keep secondary provision as is.

- Close one of the smaller primary schools makes sense to address the capacity issue, maintaining schools in their community is important rather than collapsing all schools into a super school in Crickhowell.
- Close small primary schools to allow funding to increase in larger schools.
- Close small schools and redirect and invest the money in the catchment, not on other areas of the council or other school catchments.
- Closing down small, undersubscribed schools to save money
- Close expensive, inefficient, small primary schools to help fund a new high school.
- Close Llanbedr school
- No one wants to consider the closure of their own local school, but I think decision makers have made the wrong decision by giving a stay of closure at Llanbedr.
- For efficiency, maybe look to merge 4 primaries in to 3 or look at more shared resources
- Combine Crickhowell and Llangattock primary schools since they are in close proximity
- Amalgamate all the primaries into one big new build school.

iv) Suggestions relating to an all-age model

- Create a school which covers all ages.
- Provide one through school while continuing provision in outlying areas.
- The opportunity to work more closely (and regularly) with primary colleagues should there be a through school in Crickhowell would potentially improve provision in the longer time.
- The all through school model for the Crickhowell catchment should be based on a community hub comprising of the existing primary schools feeding into the High School with a business / value based approach with leaner and community outcomes being central to the decision. The cost effective sharing of facilities, expertise, staff and resources is going to be key in ensuring The Crickhowell catchment area not only survives but thrives.
- I can see the value of a multi-site-cluster school, with a collective budget/management, but only if all years are represented in the local community.
- Keeping all the schools open and working as one school is the best option and a lot cheaper than building a completely new school.
- I would strongly consider transforming the HS into a CiW HS. This would enable the council to federate Llanbedr, Llangattock and Crickhowell HS. A similar model has been introduced in the St

David's (Pembrokeshire) cluster where an all-through CiW school has been created on three sites.

- Build a educational campus at Cwrt-y- Gollen for the whole age range.

v) Suggestions relating to enhanced cluster working / sharing resources

- Allow schools to work together closely
- A scheme to join the primaries in a network to enable better sharing of resources and skills, potentially sharing key management roles.
- Continue with using the whole cluster as a hub, sharing staff, resources, reduce costs from County maintenance by using local community professionals.
- There could be further savings by cross-site collaboration – admin support, site management
- Closer working and management ties within the catchment area will allow the unique identities of the school environments to be retained while being cost effective in terms of sharing of facilities, expertise, staff and resources.
- Because Crickhowell catchment especially for primary schools doesn't cover a too big area maybe sharing one headmaster/mistress?

vi) Comments relating to admissions arrangements

- Take less children from outside catchment
- Prioritise pupils from Powys more than pupils outside of Powys
- Local children should have priority at CHS, children outside county should attend their local school
- Decrease the intake of pupils from outside the county for the high school, as the high school wasn't built for that amount, this would support the infrastructure of the roads around this area due to less buses travelling from out of county.
- Children living within Crickhowell should have priority but after That whether they live in the county shouldn't be relevant. School choice should be what is the best fit for the pupil
- Bwlch to part of the catchment for Crickhowell High – to have a dual catchment, to be in the catchment of Gwernyed High too.
- Leave Bwlch in the catchment area for Llangynidr primary

vii) Comments relating to the funding provided to schools

- Better funding for the High School – more experienced teachers demand higher salaries, we should be able to pay for experience.
- Fair funding for every school. Should be the same per pupil for every school.
- Improve the funding allocation.

- Invest in CHS through increased budget share and maintenance, strengthening the sixth form.

viii) Comments relating to buildings / facilities

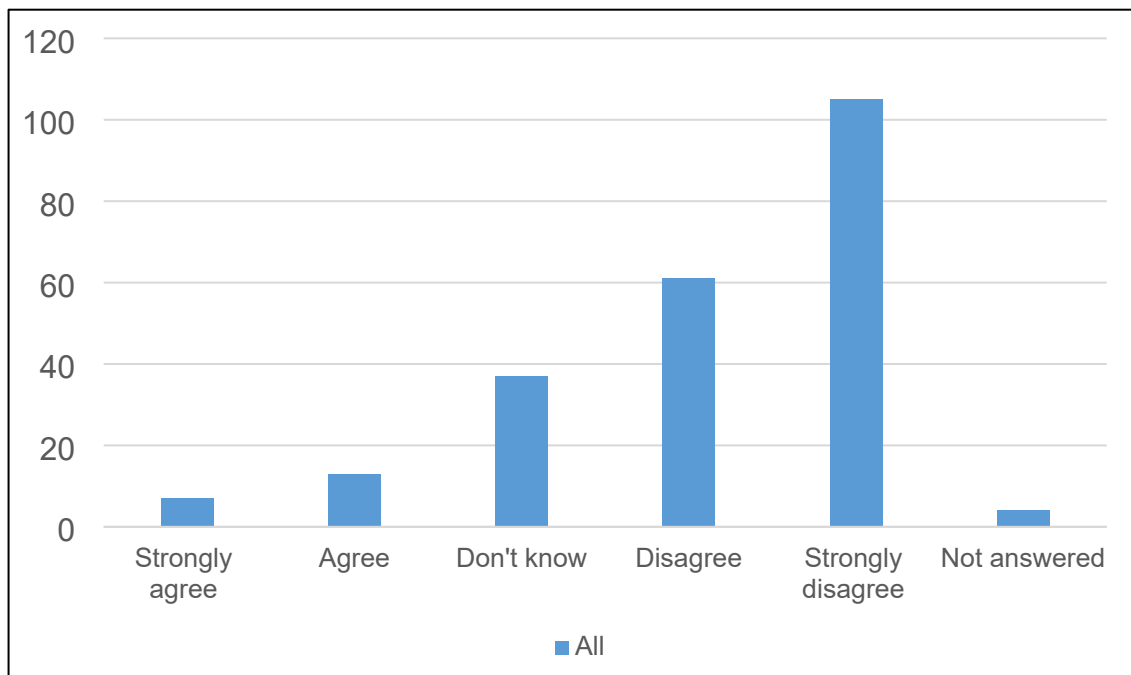
- Improve building infrastructure.
- Provide additional funding to maintain the current buildings
- Improve the build of the high school
- Invest to improve current school buildings rather than spending money on new buildings
- If there is funding, Crickhowell Primary school rebuild is well overdue. This depends on an available site. New provision for the High School sixth form would free space for the rest of the pupils, rather than expense of complete new build.

ix) Other comments / suggestions

- I would not wish to have my children attend a religious school or a school part-funded by a religious group and would strongly oppose any plans to seek funding from such groups.
- If the "cluster" was recognised as a budgetary unit, then synergy savings could be developed

8. The Council's Strategy for Transforming Education sets out an aspiration to establish all-age schools in the 13 current high school catchment areas in Powys.

To what extent do you agree that establishing an all-age school would be an appropriate way forward in the Crickhowell catchment?



Response	No	%
Strongly agree	7	3.1%
Agree	13	5.7%
Don't know	37	16.3%
Disagree	61	26.9%
Strongly disagree	105	46.3%
Not answered	4	1.8%
Total	227	100.0%

9. Please provide any further comments about the idea of establishing an all-age school in the Crickhowell catchment:

168 respondents provided a response. The responses received are summarised below:

i) Comments in support of an all-age school

- After visiting Pembrokeshire and seeing all-age schools in action we can use this as model for the Crickhowell Cluster
- Fully support this idea - with the right leadership and vision in place it is a fantastic opportunity.
- I acknowledge the financial argument for creating centralised all-age schools
- A multi-site school could work, with different sites sharing resources across the progression steps.
- Combining Crickhowell Primary and Secondary schools could mean a new building which would resolve the issue of the state of both current school buildings.

ii) Comments not in support of an all-age school

• Comments relating to a single site all-age school

- Agree on closer working between primary and secondary schools, but single site would disadvantage other schools in cluster and favour Crickhowell CP
- An all-age school would mean that my children would have to be driven to school, using more cars, more expense to families.
- Concern that this would lead to traffic jams in the area.
- I feel that a single-site, all-age school wouldn't work in the Crickhowell catchment due to the local area & environment that we're in.
- Concern that this would lead to the closure of schools in other villages in the area.

• Comments relating to impact on pupils

- All age school loses the closeness of a family feeling at a smaller primary school. My children know all the pupils in the school, this is impossible in an all-age school.
- An overall Executive Head will not have the necessary experience to manage all ages and could well end up being a Business Manager appointment.
- It would ruin the 'innocence' of the children and take away from the small rural community
- Children need to learn as they grow. They need to become confident in every stage of development. The idea that this can happen in an all-age school is nonsense.
- Children feel safe and inclusive in smaller setting with their own age groups. This would be lost.
- Children need a nurturing environment and not be a number and not heard which is the most important factor of success for children in the future for both wellbeing, education and development
- Children needs to stay children for as long as possible. There is a strong push to grow up too early. Mixing primary and secondary kids wouldn't help.
- Children should be educated within their communities, particularly at primary age. All age schools would appear to disadvantage primary pupils, in particular in a large school with older children
- All age schools are not a good model for successful education for all learners. Teachers and leadership teams with a more in depth and skill based knowledge of the learning needs of the children in their specialised age range (primary and secondary) is of far more benefit.
- Better to keep school ages separate, better for children/educational outcomes.
- They're doing this with King Henry in Abergavenny which is why we are avoiding that school as our secondary choice and are crossing border to Powys. They're very much 'one size fits all' schools.
- Super schools are great for children that fit in the box, but a lot don't!
- I believe super schools are just way too big. What about the students who are quieter, shy, anxious, ALN, etc who just can't cope with a large school environment?
- An all-age school would need to be able to offer a sense of well-being, nurturing and security for the primary school children, perhaps in a separate building to the high school, but with use of all facilities.

- **Concerns about impact on the community / families**

- Concern about the impact on the fabric of villages and local communities, and the greater transport time and cost

required to get children to a school (which would be further away for many). Smaller, local schools are part of what make the wider Crickhowell area so special.

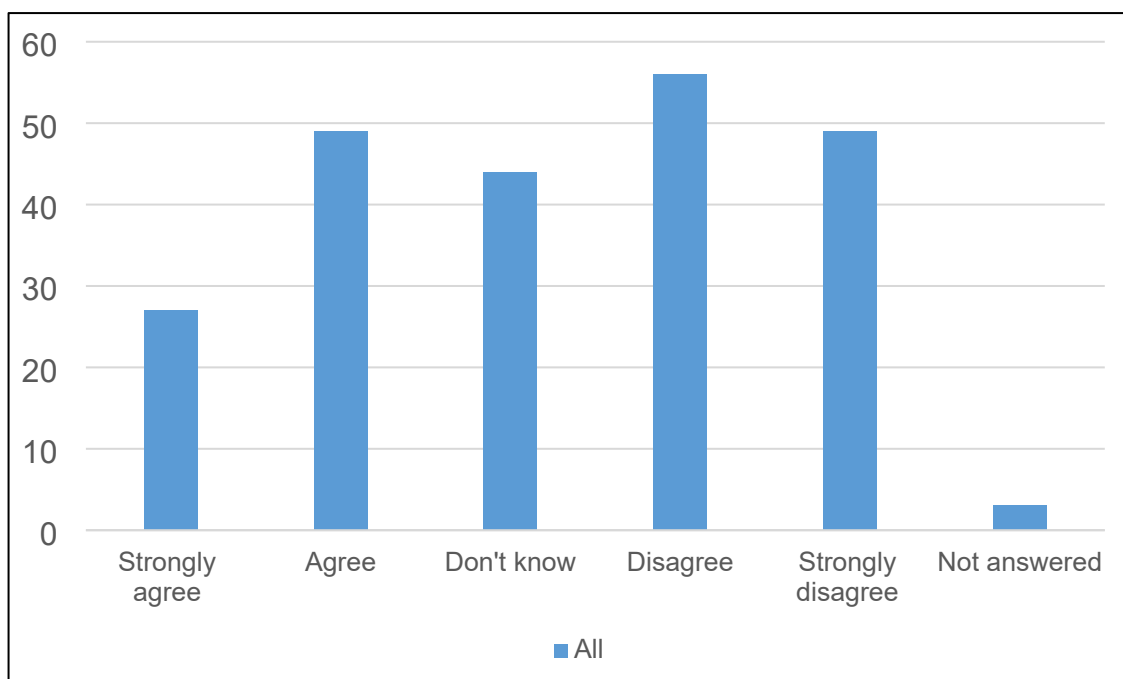
- If you give away the individual communities by doing this, it will never return.
- Concern that this would mean moving the high school to an out-of-town site. This would be a disaster for the businesses on the High Street, for traffic caused by people needing to drive out of Crickhowell, and for the parents who chose to live in Crickhowell due to the presence of a strong, local school.

iii) Other comments

- A combined school at junior level would make more sense
- A federation of schools would enable each school to have its own identity yet integrate the education provision from age 5 to 18
- A federation would work well encompassing the faith schools and schools of no faith.
- Cost savings can be made in other ways
- I don't think its addresses the issues in Crickhowell unless at least one primary school is closed. Destabilizing the standards and provision in the secondary sector in Crickhowell to solve a surplus place primary problem seems fundamentally wrong.
- Not enough information is provided.
- This does not make provision for Church of Wales.

10. The Council has made a commitment to develop Welsh-medium provision across Powys and to introduce Welsh-medium primary education in areas where there is currently no provision, such as the Crickhowell catchment.

To what extent do you agree that there is a need to introduce Welsh-medium primary provision in the Crickhowell catchment?



Response	No	%
Strongly agree	27	11.9%
Agree	49	21.6%
Don't know	44	19.4%
Disagree	56	24.7%
Strongly disagree	49	21.6%
Not answered	3	1.3%
Total	227	100.0%

11. If the Council was to establish Welsh-medium primary provision in the Crickhowell catchment, where do you think would be the most appropriate location for this provision?

148 respondents provided a response.

The following locations were suggested:

- Add it onto Crickhowell High School
- A stream in Crickhowell Primary School.
- Llanbedr CiW given that they already have a qualified member of staff to assist with delivery.
- Llanbedr is currently the only school offering Welsh medium teaching, which it does well.
- Llangattock or Llangynidr
- Llangynidr would be happy to include a Welsh stream in the school, if more space was made available to accommodate it.
- Knowing that children often travel further to go to a Welsh medium school would not be a problem as Llangynidr already has many

school buses from the outlying villages, so transporting many of the children would not be an issue as they could go on the buses already running from those areas to the school.

- As a stream in an all through school.
- A Welsh stream in every school
- Any of the more rural sites. Crickhowell can't cope with anymore school time traffic
- Crickhowell catchment is a relatively limited geographical area in terms of the location of the main residential areas so could be in any/close to the current primary schools and would be accessible (in terms of acceptable travel times and distances) for the majority of eligible pupils

In addition, the following comments were received:

i) Comments about assessing demand

- Careful consideration as to the need and demand for Welsh medium provision in this area should be paramount – concern that limited money and resources would be spent on providing something that is not good value for money and only benefits a very small minority of children.
- A questionnaire would need to be given out to parents to see if this would be an option for their children and then see if this would be financially viable

ii) Promote access to Welsh-medium provision that already exists in the surrounding area

- Work with Monmouthshire County Council to make Abergavenny Welsh medium school a choice for Crickhowell kids. Make it more accessible with a bus available etc and provide investment in it to make it a choice for Crickhowell families wishing to send their children to a Welsh medium school. That is all that is needed. They already have the staff available to teach through a Welsh medium which are hard to come by! We don't need our own Welsh Medium school just for Crickhowell. Abergavenny is close enough!
- If students want to go to a Welsh medium school there is one in Abergavenny which meets the demand.
- Welsh provision is strong in Brecon and Abergavenny. For those requiring this, school transport is available.

iii) There is no need for Welsh-medium provision in Crickhowell

- With the overwhelming majority of the population being English speaking (many having moved from England too), a Welsh-medium school is not a priority
- This area is not a strong Welsh speaking part of Powys. The Welsh language is an important part of our cultural and historical

significance and it is already taught in High School with its use increasing with Welsh based learning and extra-curricular language use in the primary cluster. There are already Welsh-medium schools within an easy commute of Crickhowell, therefore it is unnecessary to have a new Welsh school in Crickhowell.

- Don't agree, although it is a priority for the Welsh Government it should come second to providing a good English education first.
- I disagree that there is a real need for this development. There is out of catchment provision within a stones throw, this screams of hitting local and National government targets rather than actually understanding the demographics of the area.
- Developments of this nature come with huge financial costs. Utilise any funds to correctly address the outstanding maintenance issues at the successful educational sites we have in the catchment in the first instance before looking to expand provision of Welsh medium education.
- I do not think the provision is needed outside of Welsh speaking communities. Resources might be better spent strengthening school budgets to deal with current socioeconomic pressures. However, offering this provision within schools to enhance educational needs should be considered if it can be proven warranted.

12. Please provide any further comments you have about the way forward for education in the Crickhowell catchment:

104 respondents provided a response. The responses received are summarised below:

i) Comments about keeping the status quo

- I think provision should stay as it is as it is performing well.
- Leave our schools as they are. Maintain the buildings and support the staff so that they remain doing their best and providing good and consistent learning opportunities for all the children.
- All the current schools (bar Llanbedr which I understand is to close) to remain at their locations with their own heads and governing bodies.
- Ensure you protect a fantastic High School and group of primary schools.
- Shutting any small school in this area would be hugely irresponsible and impactful for our community and children.
- Don't decimate well functioning schools

ii) Comments about the impact on the community

- Consider the communities and the impact on the closure of rural schools on the people attached to those schools. Villages and rural communities often use the schools as a focus for socialising and entertainment.

- Schools should be protected as they supply such a positive effect on the communities they find themselves in, they attract younger families to areas where otherwise elderly age groups would dominate. They help create a great balance in rural areas and to upset this balance would be extremely naive and destructive.
- Embrace the communities. Build communities not just houses.
- Our local schools – proudly and happily existing within their communities – are priceless.
- If villages lose their schools they risk losing one of the key factors that keep them growing and thriving. Villages that used to have schools and lost them (eg Cwmdru) risk an expansion of holiday homes/second homes as people with families will be more likely to move closer to schools. Therefore the closure or weakening of village schools can kill the heart of a village at a time when having vibrant, local communities is more important than ever.

iii) Comments about an all-age school

- An all-age school is not the way forward. People move into this catchment area specifically because CHS gets such good results and its catchment feeder primaries are so good. Take that away and watch the value of your house plummet.
- It isn't progression to make a huge super school, it is regression - children's wellbeing should come before grand master plans. I feel that the fact that this is being considered will be detrimental in so many ways to the children and the community.
- Keep the separated primary and secondary school provisions. As a parent all-age schools really scare me!
- Strongly feel an all-age school in Crickhowell would raise safeguarding concerns and lower the quality of education delivered but more importantly would negatively impact the welfare of younger children.
- All-age school setups in counties close by are and have been chronically mis-managed, leading to lower levels of pupil attainment and in many instances been hugely detrimental to pupil wellbeing.

iv) Comments about admissions

- Bwlch to continue to be able to access Crickhowell High School.
- Please keep Bwlch in the catchment area.
- Proposed boundary changes (in the Bwlch area) for the Crickhowell catchment appear to be unjustified given the large proportion of out-of-county pupils attending high school. There is sufficient capacity for local children to attend their closest secondary school.
- Each of the schools within the catchment has sustainable numbers and a weakness in the catchment could occur if student numbers for admissions were reduced or Bwlch catchment boundaries changed.

v) Other comments

- If Llanbedr is no longer viable, you need to make a decision to close it.
- I'm not sure there are enough pupil numbers to justify a Welsh medium primary school in Crickhowell area without jeopardising numbers at English medium schools. But a dual stream bilingual primary school would be an excellent idea.
- Important to retain Church in Wales provision in the catchment
- One faith school of any kind will not be welcomed by some.
- Central, properly funded central/ dedicated sixth form for south Powys which would then provide additional space/ facilities for 11-16 students. An increasing number of students are leaving school sixth forms in south Powys.
- Work with neighbouring LEAs to find solutions. People live/work/school across boundaries so delivery of education services should reflect that.
- You should ask the children and give them a voice – what do they want?

3. Other written responses

In addition to the online questionnaire and engagement sessions for staff and governors, a number of written responses were received. 5 written responses were received in English.

4 of these were a letter from Crickhowell C.P. School, Crickhowell High School, Llanbedr C. in W. School and Llangynidr C.P. School.

A summary of the comments received are as follows:

i) Positive comments about the provision in the cluster

- All schools in the catchment work well as a community team
- School leaders are committed to working positively together, supported by strong governing bodies
- There is a willingness to embrace collaboration in the cluster, as well as a commitment to work across the cluster and break down any boundaries.
- Transition is very positive.
- The local communities value the availability of schools of a religious character.

ii) Comments about the geographical area

- All schools in the catchment take students from Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent, as well as Powys. Gilwern is considered part of the catchment and is closer to Crickhowell than Abergavenny.
- Its geographical position means that the Crickhowell catchment can draw in pupils, parents and staff from a wider area, enriching and strengthening the high standards within the schools. This is a strength which must be preserved going forward.
- The catchment's geographical position means it can attract and retain specialist staff and maintain buoyant numbers of students going forward.
- The catchment is unique within Powys due to its cross-border position in the south of Powys and the fact that it comprises of only four Powys primary schools, supporting transition to one of the larger secondary schools in Powys.

iii) Comments about the high school

- Crickhowell High School is one of the largest secondary schools in Powys but Wales-wide, a secondary school of just under 1000 would be considered average size or less. The school provides very good standards from a very low funding base as well ensuring specialist teaching in all areas and the largest sixth form in the county.

- Academic results at GCSE and A level mean that the school is in the top five per cent of UK schools with a breadth of curriculum which is extensive and crucially facilitating vocational and academic pathways learners at all levels with great success.
- The school has a large sixth form which means that a wide range of subjects can be offered and specialist staff can be attracted to the school. The school teaches over 30% of Powys Sixth Form students.
- Wellbeing and Inclusion are known as sector leading despite Covid and post Covid challenges and there have been no permanent exclusions since 2005.
- Attendance and behaviour are rated as excellent and the school has been a pioneer school for New Curriculum and Professional Learning with significant innovative work ongoing with Welsh Government and the LA.

iv) Suggested future options

- The schools maintaining their individuality, but working much more collaboratively to provide all-through schooling for students from 3 to 19
- More sharing of resources e.g. ICT resources, site management, business manager, shared admin and photocopying contracts, inclusion facilities
- Greater emphasis on a community focussed schools model and developing greater access for the wider community outside school hours
- Possibility that a Welsh language stream could be introduced
- Crickhowell High School remains committed to becoming a school of religious character through the establishment of a pluralistic school which welcomes families of all faiths and no faiths

v) Other comments

- Concern that amending the current catchment as is being considered in relation to Bwlch would be out of step with nearest school protocols and would have an unwarranted impact on the catchment

4. Engagement with staff and governors

As part of the engagement exercise, in-person engagement sessions were held for governors and staff in the cluster. A total of 37 staff attended the session for staff, and 21 governors attended the session for governors.

In the sessions, attendees were asked to complete a SWOT analysis for the educational provision within the cluster. A summarised SWOT has been produced based on the responses received.

Staff

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close community ties and engagement - Good quality education recognised by Estyn - Deep understanding and knowledge of families - Collaboration between schools - Strong transition arrangements - Schools at the heart of villages - Sharing of specialist staff - Strong and effective leadership - Community focussed - Stable pupil numbers - Pull in pupils from other local authorities - Sixth Form is strong - Cost effective provision - Parental choice of school – CiW/CP - Maintaining high standards of well-being - Forest schools, outdoor pursuits - Holiday / summer clubs - Funding from community groups - Sports Centre, Gym and Library ran through the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welsh provision and expertise in the area - Lack of communication and transparency in the consultation / area review - Affluent parents mean lower PDG spend but parents do not cover the shortfall - Transport costs for trips - Lack of dedicated nurture base for ALN - Physical buildings make realisation of Curriculum for Wales difficult - Building conditions are poor - Lack of funding compared to rest of Powys - Rural area impacts opportunities - Private nurseries lead to impact on skills for Foundation Phase pupils - Lack of funding for Post-16 collaborative students - Concerns within the community about transformation
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Closer links with neighbouring schools - Sharing resources and expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cutting cross-border provision - Changing catchment areas

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative projects - Shared responsibilities within the new Curriculum for Wales - Sharing of facilities - School of religious character - Community hub model across the cluster - Ability to create a centre of excellence for ALN or Welsh provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing the size of the secondary school - Uncertainty of catchment review and transformation makes people nervous – has impact on pupil numbers - Effects on staff of review - Rumours begin to circulate - Reduction of pupil numbers will lead to reduction in funding - Loss of potential Welsh speakers to other local authorities - Break up of communities - Loss of the Sixth Form - Job losses in teaching and non-teaching staff - Loss of community funding and facilities - Loss of CiW provision - Environmental damages due to increased transport
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Governors

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership in schools is excellent - Standards of education are good and recognised by Estyn - Inclusion and well-being is good - The cross boundary provides more funding into the cluster - Community focussed schools providing services for the community e.g. Leisure, Library - Value for money - Strong sense of family - Pupils are diverse - Range of opportunities available at Post-14 and Post-16 - Implementation of the National Mission and Curriculum for Wales - Good cluster working between schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standards are benchmarked at Powys level, as opposed to nationally or UK wide - CIW primary schools have no feeder CIW secondary - Poor facilities / buildings - Low level of investment in buildings - Not fully recognising opportunities of cross-border - Change fatigue for staff - Lack of Welsh 1st language provision -

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viable and growing sixth form – largest in Powys, top 3% UK wide in A Level results - Unique learning environments at the heart of communities - Recent and historical achievements in wide areas - Welsh 2nd language provision - Pupils can walk to school on all current sites 	
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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to benchmark at UK level - Collaboration between the cluster - Developing modern facilities - Delivering economies of scale through sharing of resources - Enhancing community focussed schools - Multi-agency involvement and space - Specialist facilities for ALN and behaviour across the cluster - Specialist cluster leads for languages, digital, literacy, numeracy etc - Enhance after school provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inability to recognise natural community - Reducing the school size - Transformation strategy may not fit this catchment well - Economically unviable schools if less pupils - Loss of strong community support - Loss of engaged parents - Breakup of communities - Impact on travel arrangements and environment

In addition to a SWOT analysis for the cluster, attendees also put forward their suggested ideas for the future of the cluster. A summarised list has been produced on the responses received.

Staff

- Stay we are but tighten up the positive things that have been identified
- We have no objections to change if change is for the better
- Maintain high standards of education within the cluster
- Protect the quality of options for education
- 3-19 provision
- Strengthen ALN links between schools
- Distribute funding more evenly across the local authority
- Close old unsustainable buildings
- Allow Crickhowell High School to become a CiW school
- Invest in existing buildings

- Bring back nursery in schools
- Keep Post-16 education
- Create a community focussed schools for centres of excellence
- Create a CiW VA all-age school which is pluralistic, inclusive, all religions & no religions
- Combine all-age school with loose federations of all schools in catchment
- Retain the current sites
- Explore a Welsh-medium stream for primary and secondary
- Specialist centres for behaviour and ALN serving whole cluster
- Keep Llangynidr as it is
- Do not change the catchment admission areas
- Sharing of key roles – business manager, caretaker, key holder, ALN, ICT

Governors

- Develop cross catchment collaboration
- Expansion of catchment to include Powys, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent
- Data should reflect natural community
- Look at a cluster financial agreement / budget
- Sharing of resources such as business manager, supply staff, caretaker, ALN, ICT
- Multi-sited primary schools under one governance model
- Start a Welsh-medium stream in one primary school to start provision
- Super school would be detrimental to status/standing of primary schools
- Improve energy efficiency
- School of religious character
- Strong 6th form provision
- Better collaboration with local businesses
- New curriculum development can take place and share all sites e.g. science on one site, sports on another, languages, culture
- Out of school hour provision for all other site

5. Conclusion

The responses to the engagement exercise suggest that in general, those that contributed do not think that any significant changes are needed to the schools infrastructure in the Crickhowell catchment. Respondents to the engagement exercise were asked to list the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision in the catchment. In general, the feedback received suggests that there are no major issues to be addressed in respect of education provision in the catchment.

As part of the engagement exercise, respondents were asked to what extent they agree that establishing an all-age school would be an appropriate way forward in the Crickhowell catchment. 20 respondents (8.8%) indicated that they agree or strongly agree that this would be an appropriate way forward, whilst 166 respondents (73.2%) indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree that this would be an appropriate way forward. This suggest that the majority of stakeholders do not agree that there is a need to establish an all-age school in Crickhowell, although this was a possible way forward that was suggested by some stakeholders as part of the engagement exercise.

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agree that there is a need to introduce Welsh-medium provision in the Crickhowell catchment. 76 respondents (33.5%) indicated that they agree or strongly agree that there is a need, whilst 105 respondents (46.3%) indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree that there is need. This suggests that some stakeholders in the area are of the view that there is a need to develop Welsh-medium provision in the area. This was also reflected elsewhere in the engagement exercise, as the lack of Welsh-medium provision in the catchment was identified as a weakness. However, it is also clear that there are many stakeholders in the area who do not think there is a need to develop Welsh-medium provision in the Crickhowell catchment.