

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
10th October 2019**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Learning at the time of the appeal hearing referred to in the question

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor James Gibson-Watt

The Portfolio Holder has recently dismissed appeals by parents from the Brecon High School catchment area applying for school transport for their children to Ysgol Calon Cymru Builth Wells campus to study through the medium of Welsh, on the grounds that the Welsh medium provision at Brecon High School is comparable to the provision at Ysgol Calon Cymru, despite the fact that Welsh medium provision at Brecon High School is demonstrably not as extensive as at Ysgol Calon Cymru, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Given the above how does the Portfolio Holder justify her decision to dismiss the appeals in circumstances in which Powys County Council is still providing school transport to some learners from the Brecon High School catchment area to Welsh medium provision at Ysgol Calon Cymru Builth Wells campus; and can she confirm that her decision to dismiss these appeals is compliant with current Equalities legislation and the provisions in Powys County Council's Welsh Education Strategic Plan?

Response

You will be aware that the Authority's Home-to-School Transport Policy states clearly that free transport is provided for eligible pupils to their nearest suitable or catchment school that provides education through the medium of English or Welsh. In the case of learners from the Brecon area, Brecon High School is the nearest provider of Welsh-medium secondary education.

A few years ago, a number of parents from the Brecon area were refused transport to Builth Wells High School for Welsh-medium provision due to Brecon High School being their closest provider. The parents took this decision to a transport appeal and were granted free transport on the basis that the provision at Builth Wells High School was deemed, by the Portfolio Holder for Education at the time, to be more suitable than the provision at Brecon High School.

Upon hearing parental appeals this year, I was provided with information which shows that the difference in terms of number of subjects available in Welsh at Ysgol Calon Cymru and Brecon High School is now of a similar level. There are a similar number of Welsh medium subjects being provided at both school in years 7-9, although there is a greater difference in years 10 and 11.

It was my decision, therefore, not to grant free transport as the provision is comparable in both schools and therefore does not contradict equalities legislation or the aspirations of the authority's WESP.