



Gweledigaeth Ysgolion
Powys
Schools Vision

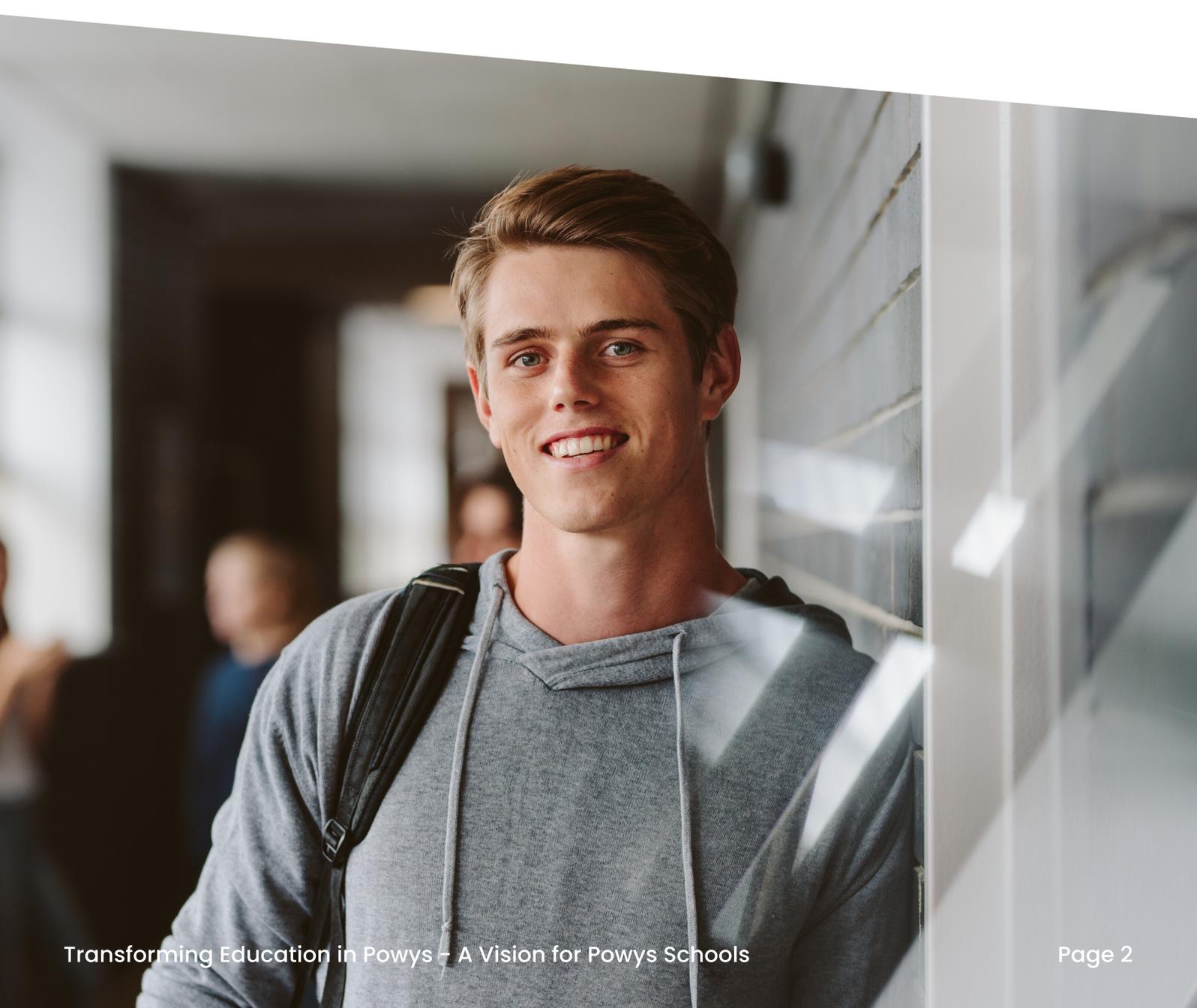
Transforming Education in Powys

A Vision for Powys Schools



Contents

Foreword by Councillor Phyl Davies	3
Education in Powys – the opportunity for change	5
What are we proposing?	8
Guiding principles for the future	9
Teachers and other adults in our schools	11
What could the structure of education be by 2025?	12
After engagement, what next?	14
Appendix 1 – Personas	15–25



Foreword

Whilst most learners in Powys have been well served by their schools, we recognise that many challenges now need to be addressed. We need to ensure that in future, all our learners are educated in a way that will ensure they will be able to adapt and respond to the significant changes in society, economy, environment and technology.

The council wishes to set out on a programme of reform that can deliver a high performing education system for all learners in Powys – across the range of domains that are important – academic, cultural and sporting. In short, we need to strengthen our provision across the authority and plan an education service that can be a matter of pride to all who live in Powys.

Recent engagements with our key partners in schools across Powys suggest that we have much to do, and that we should be bold in our ambitions. Helpfully, our need to make changes comes at the same time as Wales as a whole is on the cusp of some of the most exciting developments in education for many generations. We must ensure that every school in Powys is geared to play its full part in that national education reform.

Powys is the largest county in terms of land mass but with a small and declining young population, we need to provide clever solutions to the challenges we are going to face.

Cllr Phyl Davies

Portfolio Holder for
Education & Property



We must have high ambitions for the future of our schools, agree on a shared vision and make firm commitments to action. As a backdrop to our thinking, we have the Welsh National Mission to realise a transformational new curriculum, for which we need to develop:

- a high-quality education profession
- inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
- strong and inclusive leaders committed to excellence, equity and well-being
- robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.

The new Curriculum for Wales, which by 2022 will be live in all our schools, defines four key purposes for education. Every school will work to ensure that all young people become:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

To achieve this, learning will be developed through a transformed curriculum, ensuring that all learners show progress in Expressive Arts, Health and Well-being, Humanities, Languages, Literacy and Communication, Mathematics and Numeracy and Science and Technology.

To face this change, we must work together and will need to take shared responsibility over an extended period. We need to ensure that our schools are fit for purpose and that headteachers and their staff are resourced and supported appropriately for the new world of education. As a council, we must ensure that all our plans focus on improving the learner experience, recognizing the well-being of our children and young people today and into the future. To do this, we want to engage partners in building a county-wide commitment to achieving the excellence in education and learning that Powys requires.

I urge you to read the document and provide responses that can help shape plans that we will then bring forward to develop our schools' community to serve our learners well into the 21st century.

Cllr Phyl Davies
Portfolio Holder for Education and Property

"Welsh medium education is a postcode lottery"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with headteachers



Education in Powys – the opportunity for change

Rurality brings its blessings and challenges for education. The beauty of our landscape and the warmth of community life are challenged by our ability to deliver the wide range of services in a way that can meet the needs of all our citizens.

We have now reached a point where we need to consider very seriously how we should shape our education system so that it can provide lifelong learning opportunities for all our young people and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their potential. In their inspection of the authority's education services in the summer of 2019, Estyn (the Welsh education inspectorate) expressed concern about the organisation of provision across Powys, and have challenged the authority to "ensure that the organisation of provision for non-maintained, post-16; Welsh-medium education and secondary education meets the needs of the children and young people of Powys."

There is no doubt that our schools are currently working hard to provide for their pupils. However, our building stock is ageing, our investment is spread across a very large number of schools, teachers often work in small groups to provide for their learners and we are finding it difficult at times to attract outstanding leaders for some of our schools.

Funding per pupil varies enormously. The lowest funded mainstream pupil in the county receiving only £3,127 whilst some mainstream schools receive £7,877 per pupil.

"Schools are not offering an appropriate range of subjects"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with schools

Between 2014 and 2019, Powys' population fell by around 0.71%, or 949 people*. This decline is set to continue for the foreseeable future. This population decline will not be evenly distributed across all age groups and it is expected that the number of young people in the county will reduce by 14% over the next 20 years+. This will create additional pressures on an already stretched education system.

As is the case nationally, there is a significant gap in educational outcomes between pupils from low-income families and those from more affluent backgrounds in Powys. In 2018/19, 11.7% of school pupils aged 5-15 were eligible for free school meals. With a focus being placed on tackling inequality across Wales, concentrated effort is required to close the attainment gap between those eligible for free school meals and those who are not.

Taking Stock

Now is a good time to take stock to ensure that we can face the challenges head-on and make sure that we develop a vision and a plan to inform how our schools should be re-configured for the future. It is time for us to set out to ensure that:

- Schools are organised in a way that ensures a breadth of choice for all learners, with a special focus on the choices available to learners post-14 and effective continuity into post-16 education and training.

* Population projection 2014 to 2019, all ages - Powys Wellbeing Bank

+ Population projection for 2039, ages 0-15 - Powys Wellbeing Bank

- Schools are supported to be more collaborative to ensure that they collectively develop the curriculum to provide all pupils with the opportunities to acquire the necessary experiences, knowledge and skills in order to succeed
- Schools will be excellent, vibrant and sustainable places well into the future, able to embrace change and utilise a wide range of technologies to inspire learners.
- School buildings are inspiring learning environments that will encourage every pupil to achieve their potential across all areas of learning
- Standards are good or better in every school, with specialist teachers delivering to our learners.
- Leadership and management will be good or better in every school
- Every child can be assured a good school within reasonable travelling distance to home, including provision through the medium of Welsh,
- Every school can make efficient use of resources, providing for less variation in the costs of educating each pupil across schools.
- The buildings maintenance backlog can be resolved, and that every school can be safe, warm, weather-tight, environmentally sustainable and educationally suitable well into the future.
- The shape of our schools' system reflects our changing demographics and prepares appropriately for the future demand for places in each part of Powys.
- Our schools are suitably designed so that they can act as hubs for wider community activity across Powys

With Welsh Government providing significant investment opportunities to support the building of new schools and transformational refurbishments of others, we need to consider how we can best use this funding to deliver equity for all of our learners, wide curricular and other opportunities, technological excellence and much else.

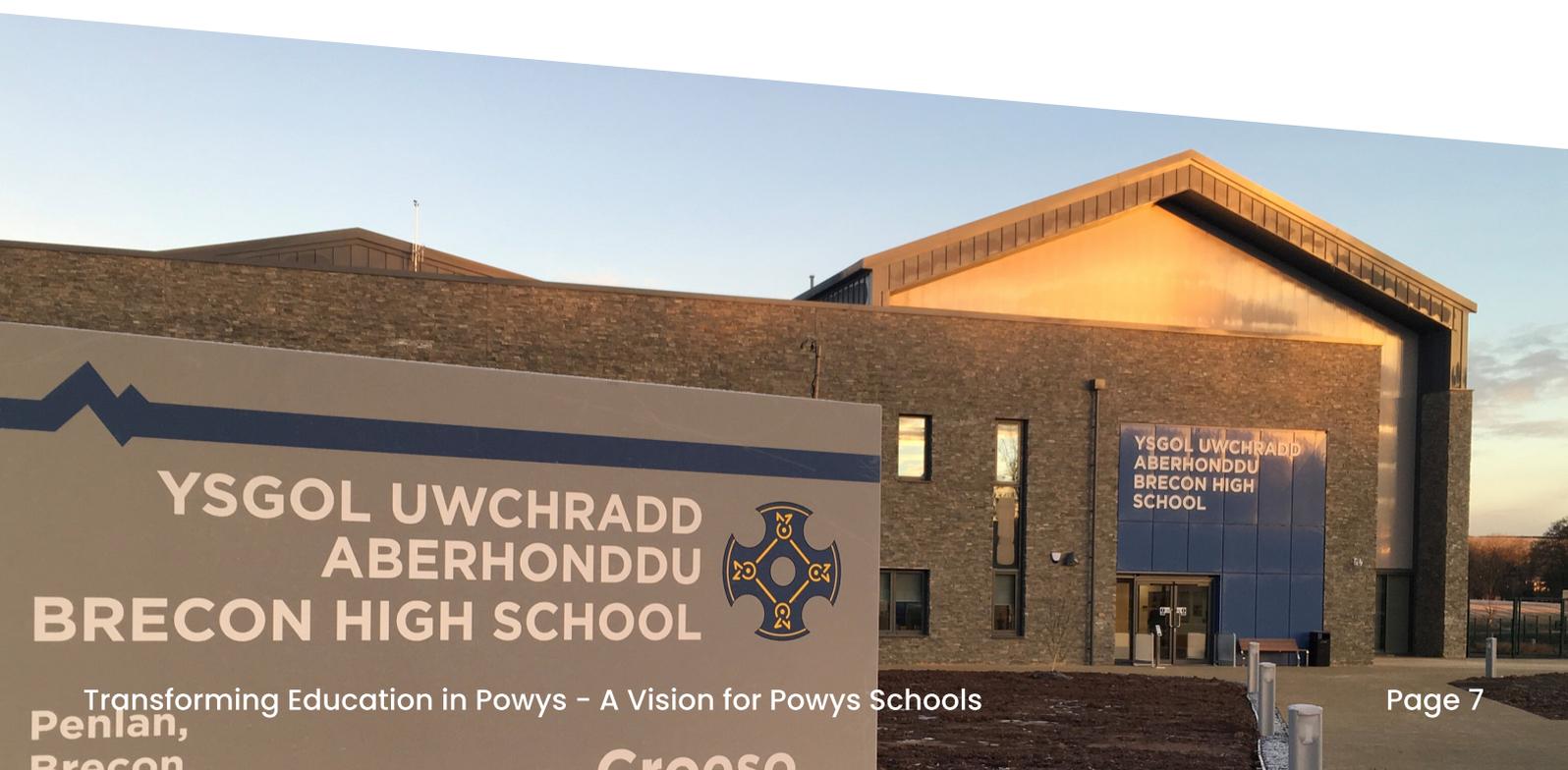
Powys should now set its course to become a flagship rural authority, where families can enjoy the benefits of living in cohesive communities in an attractive landscape, supported by outstanding schools. Powys should seek to affirm schools where excellence is expected, well-being is prioritised, diversity is recognised and valued, and where the Welsh language is nurtured and developed.

Currently there is much work going on in Wales where groups seek to “re-imagine” what the education system might look like in 2030. Our current patterns in Powys are largely based on mid-19th century models, when there was a larger rural population and workforce, and a far poorer transport infrastructure.

The new Curriculum for Wales is clear that the ‘re-imagining’ will call for much greater levels of innovation over the next ten years as we raise ambition and re-focus efforts upon providing all children and young people with access to the experiences, knowledge and skills that they need to succeed, whatever their individual ambitions may be.

"We need more joined up, long term thinking to plan across provision"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with schools



**YSGOL UWCHRADD
ABERHONDDU
BRECON HIGH SCHOOL**



What are we proposing?

We propose that the council engages with parents, school leaders, governors, wider educators and partners, together with many children and young people, between January and February 2020. We will seek to gather their views on how we plan our education, to the mid-part of this century, using the questions in this engagement document. Those views will help Powys set out a vision and guiding principles for our future education system.

The Cabinet will then ask our council officers to identify, with clarity, what needs to be done to ensure that we can deliver long-term, sustainable plans to implement the vision, guided by the principles that will be agreed.

Proposing a clear vision:

“All children and young people in Powys experience high quality education and develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally-engaged citizens.”

Questions for engagement

QX) Would you agree with this as a high-level vision for education in Powys?
Please offer any improvements

Guiding principles for the future

As we consider improvements to our system, we should have guiding principles that should underpin our thinking. For those guiding principles, we propose that every child is educated in a Powys system characterized by:

- Excellent and inclusive schools that are encouraged to work together to develop high-quality teaching, learning and leadership
- A curriculum that is responsive to the need of learners, the community and the economy, and meets statutory requirements
- Welsh medium provision across all key phases of education, where growing numbers of learners can be confident that they will have access to provision in Welsh
- Schools that are financially stable and sustainable, where their leaders can concentrate on pupil and staff learning and well-being
- Curriculum choice from the age of 14 that offers a breadth and balance of specialist academic, vocational and work-based learning to meet the needs of all learners
- Appropriate provision for pupils with additional learning needs, as near to home as is practically possible, in a way that best combines the specialisms and facilities needed to provide effective support.
- A safe, digitally rich, learning environment that is fit for purpose
- School environments that provide attractive spaces for community activities, including sport, active citizenship and culture
- A local authority where staff in our schools are valued and are encouraged to work collaboratively with partners to develop the new curriculum
- An open and transparent process for change

Questions for engagement

QX) Are these appropriate guiding principles for the local authority to adopt to underpin its thinking around the future of schooling?

QX) Should any of these principles be removed or adapted? In what way?

QX) Is there anything that you would wish to add or remove?

Once we have established guiding principles, we should look at how the outcome of future plans might look for learners at different points in their school careers. In order to do this, we will portray some of the key features which we believe could become entitlements for learners at different ages, with different needs, and ask you to add your views to these features.

"Recruitment and retention of staff is an issue"

A quote from our recent engagement sessions with schools





Staff in our schools

The abilities, knowledge, passion, commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and teaching assistants is crucial in determining the success of learners, along with the capacity of school leaders. Therefore, with an eye to the future we are aware that the local authority needs to develop strategies to attract and retain the most capable professionals. We also need to develop leadership pathways, in partnership with others, that can encourage our professionals to grow within our local authority.

Your responses to the following questions would help us identify what needs to be done to develop our systems in Powys, to better serve our learners and our professionals.

Questions for engagement

QX) How should we face the challenges of ensuring that the curriculum in Powys offers all learners rigorous, inspiring, relevant, contextualised opportunities to become ambitious and capable learners, ethical informed citizens, enterprising and creative contributors and healthy and confident individuals? What could it mean for the configuration of schools and the inter-relationships between groups of teachers?

QX) How could we better support the opportunities for adults who wish to enter the education workforce – either as support staff, or who wish to train to be teachers?

QX) How could we build stronger partnerships with our universities to encourage accessible lifelong learning for our professionals? How can we build career progression for our teachers and support staff within Powys?

QX) Is the current configuration of schools the most effective means for ensuring that all of our teachers can have career-long development, dynamic working environments and access to transformational technology? What could be done to improve things?

QX) How could career-long leadership development be best facilitated across Powys?

QX) How could we make it more attractive for individuals to want to become school leaders or headteachers in Powys?

What could education in Powys look like in the future?

If we can agree the guiding principles and a vision for our learners and teachers, we should be well on the way to delivering transformation by 2025. Schools need significant investment, including in ICT infrastructure to transform learning.

By 2025 we could have a variety of settings;

- a network of schools with high-quality facilities that will provide education across all phases of education, including
 - wrap-around provision including pre-school and after-school support;
 - high quality sports facilities which would be accessible to the local community;
 - wide-ranging community facilities and multi-agency services which would be available beyond the school day, including provision for adult learning;
 - specialist facilities for learners with additional learning needs
- For learners with Special Educational Needs, Powys should provide a range of provision, including mainstream classes (with support where required), specialist classes, satellites of special schools in our mainstream schools, special schools and a pupil referral unit. These should be supplemented by outreach support from special schools, specialist centres/satellites/PRU and advice and guidance from a small team of highly qualified central staff
- The provision of education for 14 -16 and 16 – 19 year olds which enables all learners to have the choice of a broad range of subjects, integrating vocational and academic learning, delivered in partnership with a range of providers. This provision could be delivered in schools or centres with specialist teachers and facilities.
- The provision of a full continuum of education through the medium of Welsh across all phases of education, with Welsh-medium provision for early years and primary pupils available in every catchment within the county and more accessible Welsh medium secondary provision that offers a wide range of subject choices.

- Clusters of primary and secondary schools working closely together to deliver the reformed curriculum for Wales or a smaller number of larger primary schools serving greater numbers of learners.
- Other configurations that might be helpfully suggested during engagement.

In partnership with Welsh Government, there are opportunities to invest heavily in our schools' estate. Now is the time to build a vision for the future and to move ahead with its implementation. It is nothing less than the young people of Powys deserve. We should build such a vision with all of our learners in mind – of all abilities and at all stages in their education – and across both language provisions.

The changes that we need to put in place across Powys must also provide a transformed working experience for staff in our schools. Modern buildings will help transform learning, but we need to be ambitious beyond buildings. Making the best of the opportunities presented by the new Curriculum for Wales requires that we create a system where Powys teachers can more easily work together across schools to help generate inspiring teaching and learning opportunities for all our pupils, whilst also helping to manage professional workloads. Collaborative schools can also help us generate a community of future leaders for Powys schools who can be nurtured through a range of programmes, led by our most inspiring teachers and headteachers. We also need our teachers and school leaders to be ably supported by effective learning support staff and business support staff – who also deserve and need development programmes across our schools. As things stand, much of our county's education funding is tied up in maintaining a large and ageing building stock, when it could be used instead on staffing and pupil learning resources. We need to re-imagine what is possible, at the same time as Wales as a whole is doing the same.

Developing a vision that has the learner at its heart, and one that can inspire and support our staff to deliver outstanding learning for our future pupils requires us to plan carefully, and we intend to start that planning by generating an agreed vision.

Questions for engagement

QX) Are there any models that you would like the local authority to consider as it seeks to invest in the transformation of the schools' system in Powys?

After engagement, what next?

The Cabinet will ask officers to prepare an Education Transformation Implementation Plan. We will specifically ask for a plan that can:

- Deliver a coherent vision that will emerge from this engagement activity.
- Bring forward plans that remain faithful to the guiding principles that will be agreed by Cabinet

Please find the time to examine the matters raised in this engagement process. We hope that the proposed vision and guiding principles can be improved through your engagement. We also hope that you might be able to suggest models for delivery – or comment on the ones outlined briefly above.

Now is the time to set out a greater ambition for future learning in Powys. We are not currently in the right place to support all of our learners and meet all of their needs. Working together, we can put things right.

Please give your candid views and we will seek to bring forward a coherent vision and practical proposals that can set out how the local authority can set its course for the coming years, mindful that decisions taken today will shape the lives of people in Powys well into the mid part of this century and beyond.

Thank you for your engagement.

How to respond

Details on how to respond will be outlined here.

Alys is aged 4 and is just about to start school in a future Powys, in 2025.

Alys will attend a well-led school that will fully meet the needs of each one of its different learners. Her parents will be given a choice of a Welsh medium/bilingual education or an English medium education for Alys, and in her case they will have decided that they want her to become bilingual at the earliest age possible.

At the school they will have facilities that are fit for purpose and you would expect them to be proud that they serve the children of the local community well. The sports facilities are very visible and are used by parents and the wider community in the evenings and at weekends, and the school hall is already familiar to Alys, because the local holiday club meets in the hall.

Alys and her parents will have a very helpful session about starting school and there will be active links with the nursery that she will have attended – including shared new curriculum training between the school and the staff of the nursery. Her reception class teacher will be a vibrant part of the wider local authority schools' family, working with teachers from other schools to develop resources to use with their learners. At the same time as Alys starts in school, she will be part of a group of over 20 new pupils of the same age, who the staff can develop as a group of learners – each with their unique ways.

Alys' parents will be pleased with the learning experiences that Alys will have at school and they should also be delighted with the variety of learning environments that the school has shown them. There will be a significant investment in the IT available for teachers and learners, and the school have also developed water play and a creative arts area as well as a very attractive outdoor learning zone that will be their Forest School. The school will have developed effective online links with parents so that they will be able to engage easily in the learning that goes on. Breakfast Club will form part of the wider offer, which will also include an after-school club facility, in partnership with the local nursery.



Alys is aged 4 and is just about to start school in a future Powys, in 2025.



Miss Jones, the headteacher will only teach occasionally (which she will do mainly to release her staff to visit other schools to learn from and work with other professionals). Much of her time will be spent actively engaging with parents, including helping identify who from the local community will be able to support the school as they try to embed the new curriculum to be as localized as possible for the children.

The staff (teachers and support staff) based in the early years setting /reception class will all be well trained in the skills needed for developing high quality adult/child interactions and will look forward to building strong relationships with the new cohort, with Alys' social and emotional well-being a high priority. Whilst they will be working on building a positive sense of self, Alys will be encouraged to develop her social skills through a range of stimulating activities.

The curriculum, based on the six areas of learning, will be taught through active experiential learning in a language-rich environment. Alys will have access to outdoor learning opportunities and will engage in learning activities that will be well-planned, and well-resourced and organised to make links between the six Areas of Learning and Experience. A key part of her early experiences in school will be the development of her curiosity and independence to set her up for a successful career in school, and beyond.

Questions for engagement

QX) Does the above present an attractive vision for Alys' education in Powys?

QX) Is there anything in Alys' anticipated experience that isn't currently available in all schools?

QX) What else do you think Alys should be entitled to from her education, that isn't mentioned above?

Alun is 9 years old, attending a primary school in Powys, 2025

Alun is aged 9 and is attending a strong and inclusive school in his local area. He enjoys going to school, and his attendance this year has been 100% and he is making excellent progress. He is in a mixed class of learners, but they are all of a similar age to Alun – either his age, or at most a year older.

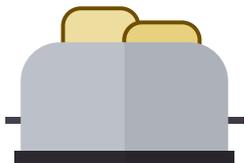
He is accessing the new curriculum for Wales 2022 and has progressed along a continuum of learning from age 3 for each of the areas of learning and experience. Alun's carers can see that the school's vision is clearly built on the Four Purposes, with the learner at the centre of everything the school does.

The school has a helpful digital platform which allows for confidential contact when needed between home and the school. During the regular parents' engagement opportunities, they have seen that the school plans progression in a flexible manner through the six areas of learning with the full range of literacy, numeracy and digital skills being used in order to meet the needs of individual learners. Alun is provided with many learning opportunities to develop, extend and apply a range skills across the curriculum, with learning taking place both within and outside the class. His classroom is well equipped, and his independent learning has been well developed.

Alun knows what it means to be a good learner and he confidently reflects those learned skills when he is working on his own and when working collaboratively.

Pupil Voice is well developed in his school and Alun has opportunities to debate issues and influence decision making. The pupils recently chose to refurbish a room that pupils can go to when feeling particularly anxious, instead of spending the money on a new sound system for the school hall. The school staff keep careful contact with his carers, who have noticed that his confidence is developing and that the school promotes his health and wellbeing at every opportunity. His carers are proud of his improving Welsh (including winning a Welsh learners' competition at the Urdd Eisteddfod). They hadn't expected Alun to enjoy Welsh, but he is wondering if he could join an immersion class so that when he will be eleven, he could access his secondary education in Welsh. That option wasn't open to his older siblings, but Alun is thinking about it.

Alun is 9 years old, attending a primary school in Powys, 2025



Alun attends both the Breakfast Club and After School Club. It is at After School Club that he attends sports training sessions, choir and chess. During this year he has developed his resilience and empathy, and this has been most evident through team sports when he utilises the excellent sporting facilities of his new community school.

Alun's natural curiosity about science and technology has led to him ask questions in school about the world around him. His teacher has worked out opportunities to network with other teachers and pupils in other schools through the new IT learning platform in order to share good practice and provide learners like Alun with a variety of science experiences. His teacher is now actively engaged in current research through an online national teachers' network through which they share effective practice in teaching to maximize impact on learners. Despite the school being in a very rural setting, Alun's headteacher ensures that all teachers and teaching assistants in the school have regular professional development and active interaction with staff from other schools.



Questions for engagement

QX) Does the above present an attractive vision for education in Powys?

QX) Is there anything in Alun's 2025 experience that you believe isn't currently available in all schools?

QX) Should Alun be entitled to anything else from his education that isn't mentioned above?

Lynfa is 7 years old in a future Powys and will need additional support from her school

Lynfa is a very cheerful pupil, who has many friends, and has Cerebral Palsy. Her mobility is limited, so she uses a wheelchair.

She also has speech and language difficulties, although her overall ability is in line with that of her peers.

Lynfa attends a mainstream primary school and she is likely to require access to adult support, though she has rapidly learned to say when she does not want to be supported.

The school (with the local authority) has made sure that she is able to take part in all aspects of school life, including concerts, shows and trips. The building is designed to be easy to access for pupils (or staff) with mobility challenges. Her teachers have been trained to provide whole-class physical education activities that Lynfa is able to access and enjoy. She is always encouraged to be as independent as possible and specialist equipment has been provided to enable her to access the curriculum, including communication aids. All relevant staff have been trained to support her to use these aids. Over recent years, there has been a lot of shared working across schools to ensure that staff are confident in using the specialist teaching aids that are available, and on a Friday a colleague from one of the special schools is available to support teachers with adapting the curriculum or with using the equipment so that pupils like Lynfa are well supported in their local schools.

The schools and local authority work closely to ensure well-co-ordinated support from a range of professionals, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists as well as specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Specialist programmes are provided for school staff to carry out on a daily basis.

Lynfa has medical needs which require a health care plan, in addition to an individual education plan. All planning is person-centred, taking into account her views, which are quite often very clearly expressed!



Lynfa

In a few years, Lynfa will move on to secondary school and that transition will be carefully planned in good time, to ensure that any necessary adaptations are made to the secondary school site and to ensure that the teachers will know what to expect when Lynfa joins them. She isn't worried about moving on to the secondary school, because they host the pupils from many of the primary schools who require a lot of additional support (like Lynfa) and their friends on a termly basis, when they do "Super Days", to explore the learning technologies available and have a chance to work with the high school's Year 8 pupils.

Griff is 15 years old and needs a significant amount of additional support



Griff is 15 years old and has Downs Syndrome and is able to communicate his needs and answer simple questions. He attends a local authority mainstream school that hosts what is often known as a 'satellite' of a nearby special school. This ensures that he receives the specialist provision that he needs whilst also being able to attend the same school as his siblings, and other children from the same community, rather than travelling long distances to one of the special schools.

Griff follows a curriculum that has been developed to meet his individual needs. This has a focus on basic literacy, numeracy and self-help skills. The school and his parent agree that it is crucial that he should be taught the skills he needs for future life, so that he can become a happy, confident and, where possible, independent young adult.

Griff needs to be taught to apply the literacy and numeracy skills he learns to real life situations, for example identifying signs and symbols, telling the time and using money. Although he will require adult support, he is always encouraged to be independent. He is taught self-help skills, such as getting dressed, going to the toilet and keeping himself clean. Griff especially loves school on Tuesday and Friday when he is taught to prepare basic meals. The secondary school has a specially designated area for those activities called "The Independent Living Quarters – Dysgu Byw". It looks like a family home, and has a kitchen, an iron, a programmable digi TV and a lot else.

Griff is 15 years old and needs a significant amount of additional support

The school is particularly good at providing their pupils with meaningful work experience, and for this, Griff will be supported by Mike, an enthusiastic support worker in school. Mike works with pupils in mainstream and special schools, and is great at engaging local businesses to support young people with disabilities. They have set up a regular day for Griff in a local café, after he'd previously had an extended experience in the local garden centre. Griff is taught important work skills, such as dressing appropriately, arriving at work on time and being polite to customers. Wherever he goes, customers love interacting with Griff.

To help him to move into adult life, Griff will have a clear transition plan which will identify his likely destination. He has been given realistic advice by a careers' advisor, taking on board as far as possible his hopes and aspirations. Griff's parent is pleased that he is fully involved in decisions about his future and Mike will keep working with Griff for a few years after he leaves school.

If Griff chooses to go on to college, it is essential that his transition is planned carefully. The school and local authority will help Griff and his family to identify an appropriate course that will meet his needs and ability and enable him to make progress.

Questions for engagement

QX) The local authority is keen to enact the national reforms to provide better and more joined up support through to education and health services for learners with Additional Learning Needs. If you currently have a child who needs greater support with their education, are you content with the support that they have received from the local authority and its providers?

QX) What do you think that Powys should do to improve provision for learners with additional needs over the coming years?

QX) Would you agree that an investment programme for Powys schools should include investment in supporting pupils with ALN to be better supported as close to home as possible?

Alberto is 14 in Powys in 2025

Alberto is embarking, for the first time, on a curriculum where he has been able to make some important choices.

He has been given a choice of 6 subjects in each of his 3 option columns. In each of those columns he was able to choose from a range of GCSEs or a vocationally relevant subject. Alberto being a practical learner, has agreed with the school that some time in work-based learning would be most appropriate for him whilst he pursues other subjects in school.

He is pleased that the choices he has just made will help give him a continuum of education in Powys that can serve him well through to the age of 18, within a reasonable distance to home. Whatever route he chooses to take, he can be confident that he is on a well-supported progression. Because he has chosen some vocational options, he will have some involvement with the local college – because they have specialist equipment and staff who can support the school.

By the time Alberto reaches Year 10, he will be part of regional sports leagues for schools, and they also compete on a national basis against schools from the north and the south. His twin, Anna is not particularly interested in sports, but is glad that there are youth theatre and well-organised Urdd activities that draw out her creative talents.

When he feels the need, a full-time counsellor is based in the school who can advise on effective strategies for Alberto to help him through the most stressful times. Year 9 had been quite challenging for Alberto, and the student counsellor provided an important part of the support that he needed.

His teachers are subject specialists who all work as part of larger teams, including strong networking with other schools, and his classrooms are modern, with excellent technology to support his learning – both in school and at home. Alberto decided to pursue his subjects in Welsh, and that is now possible for him, unlike his older sister who was unable to follow most of her subjects in Welsh, only a few years earlier.



Alberto is 14 in Powys in 2025

Alberto's teachers are part of wider learning networks, including a vibrant college which supports parts of his curriculum. He is busy because of his schoolwork, and because of other enrichment activities that he selects from the schools' and county offers.

Questions for engagement

QX) Do you agree that the local authority should ensure that wide subject choice from 14 onwards should be an entitlement for all our learners?

QX) How could we develop wider range of 14 – 19 learning pathways?

QX) Should the local authority and schools set out to develop more high-quality vocational options for learners from the age of 14?

QX) Given the centrality of artistic and sporting activities to pupil wellbeing, how could we be better at providing those activities for our young people, at an age when many switch off from such activity?

QX) How can we best serve our most able learners across Powys?

QX) Choices at 14 and again at 16 are often limited in Powys schools – depending on the sizes of schools. It has been suggested that we could develop a small number of centres that focus heavily on the learning of pupils from the age of 14, providing wider options, academic and vocational study, hi-tech modern environments, specialist teaching and a defined clear progression through to university, lifelong learning or the world of work. Do you think that we should seek the support to invest in such facilities? If so, why, or if not, why not?

It is 2025 and Gwenno is 17 and has just finished her year 12 in one of our secondary schools.

Gwenno was given a choice of 18 A level subjects along with a choice of 3 vocational areas in school and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Additionally, the local college was able to offer courses, but these were not taken up by Gwenno. In each of her A level subject classes, she has over a dozen other learners, and they have developed a very open culture of competitive collaboration, which she enjoys greatly. For her History class, they have a fortnightly symposium, where the 2 classes in her year group come together for a 'university-type' seminar. She certainly does feel that she is being pushed in each of her classes, and enjoys the challenge.

She is part of a sixth form of over 240 learners, and they also play an active part in their local community, through enterprise activities, creative arts projects and sports coaching for younger pupils at school. The sixth form has worked closely with the Urdd to establish coaching networks so that sixth formers can work with younger people through community theatre and sports. These are being accredited through a range of programmes that are overseen by the learning coach who works to the head of sixth form.

Over 20 learners in Gwenno's various A level classes are part of the SEREN Network for the most able learners in Wales, and the school regularly engages with colleagues from universities, who regularly video conference university lectures into the sixth form e-centre. The e-platform underpins much of Gwenno's learning – at school and at home, and she interacts with other able learners across Wales through a range of specialist learning networks. Her teachers also benefit from being part of Wales-wide and global teacher networks through the new platforms that have been put into their schools.

The development of specialist post-16 teaching is taken very seriously across the authority, and in partnership with college staff and sixth forms in other authorities, there is regular, planned professional learning for all staff.



George is Gwenno's 17-year-old twin, and he has just finished his year 12 studies.



Things didn't work out well for George after his GCSEs and he feels that year 12 was largely a wasted year. However, through close collaboration between the school and the local college, he has secured a place to begin a new course of study but will also maintain his link with the school to complete the one A level that was going well for him. In fact, a growing number of learners in the school are utilising a range of courses in partnership with the college, and the reverse is also true.

Through the agreement between the local schools and the college, George will also be able to take advantage of the partnership with the rugby academy, funded by the regional franchise of the Welsh Rugby Union. He plays regularly for his county team, which has motivated him greatly to pursue a higher education course in PE and Sport Science. He has been given the opportunity to mix his school A level with a college course and playing rugby. It is now up to him to get the grades to move on to university to take things further.

Questions for engagement

QX) The offer available for post-16 learners varies across the authority. Should there be a standard entitlement for our post-16 learners that guarantees them a minimum choice of academic and vocational subjects?

QX) Other than subject choice, what do you believe should be part of the learner entitlement for all our post-16 learners in schools?

QX) Would you agree that the authority should develop a wider diversity of provision, in both English and Welsh, by promoting more effective partnership working?

QX) At present, approximately 450 of our 16-19 year old learners travel daily beyond our boundaries for their sixth form education. Do you have any information that would help us understand why this is happening? What do we need to do to ensure that the young people of Powys can pursue their education (with confidence) through to the age of 18 or 19 within the authority?

