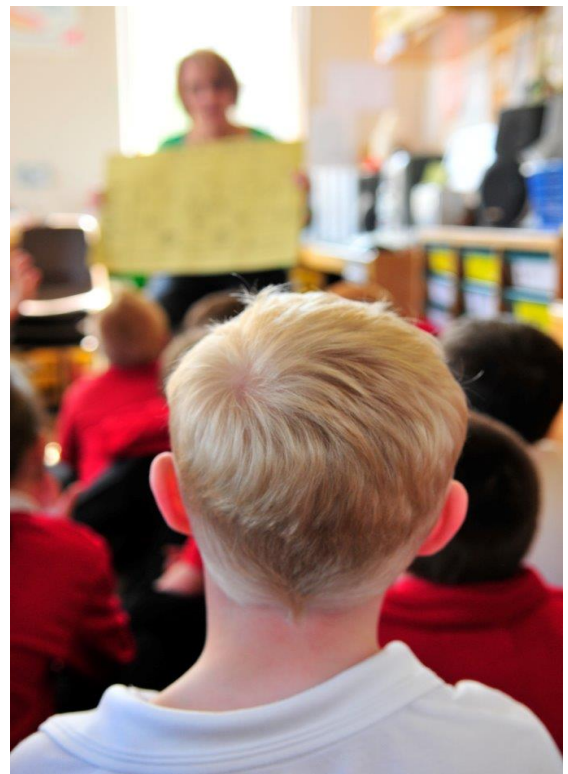




Schools Organisation Policy

Planning Education Provision



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Contact Details

- **Schools Transformation Team, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5LG**
- **Telephone number: 01597 826155**
- **Email: Schools.Modernisation@powys.gov.uk**

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DEFINITION

This Policy applies to all schools maintained by Powys County Council, and is effective from December 31st 2015. It replaces all previous policies for the reorganisation of schools held by the Authority, and will be applied to any plans to review or reorganise schools that are commenced from this date onwards. For the avoidance of doubt, the following reviews which have already started will be completed in accordance with the School Transformation Policy 2014:

- Secondary School Reviews – Llandrindod High School, Builth Wells High School, Gwernyfed High School and Brecon High School;
- Primary School Reviews – primary schools in the Llandrindod and Builth Wells catchment areas; and
- Welshpool Town Primary Education Review.

1. THE VISION FOR SCHOOLS IN POWYS

Powys County Council is committed to ensuring that all children and young people have an equal opportunity to receive the best possible education. The Council aspires to have an educational infrastructure that:

- Provides all learners with opportunities to achieve high standards of achievement and attainment;
- Provides for first class teaching and learning provision reflecting national, regional and local priorities;
- Has high quality resilient leadership and management;
- Provides robust linguistic continuity and progression;
- Improves cost-effectiveness and efficiency;
- Has the right number of schools in the right place for the current and future pupil population of Powys;
- Has school buildings and blocks that are assessed as condition A or B;
- Minimises dependency on temporary accommodation; and
- Reduces overall surplus places in schools.

The Council has a duty to ensure that school buildings, teaching resources and pupils' learning experiences are shaped to develop competencies which allow children and young people to engage confidently with the challenges of their future lives. The challenge faced by the Council is to ensure that schools provide an appropriate, fit-for-purpose learning environment that will facilitate the delivery of a curriculum, as defined in "Successful Futures"¹ to ensure children and young people develop as;

- ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives;

¹ Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Requirements in Wales. Professor Ian Donaldson February 2015

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

1.1 Aspiration for size of schools in Powys

The aspiration for primary education in Powys is to have schools with single year group classes, and schools that have headteachers with no classroom responsibilities. For secondary phase provision, the Council aspires to have schools with at least 600 pupils in Years 7 to 11. This would allow average year group sizes of a minimum of 120 children.

The Authority's optimum model for post-16 education is for centres to be able to provide 25 subjects, with a minimum class size of 12 or above. This will enable the Authority and schools to meet the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 whilst minimising the need for inter-school travel.

However, it must be recognised that in some situations, geographic or linguistic issues make the aspirational targets for size of schools difficult to achieve, and consideration will be given to the specific circumstances of each school under consideration.

In order to establish an infrastructure of schools that meet the Council's aspirations for education, the Council will need to consider new models of delivering educational provision in the county. In a rural county as diverse as Powys there is no one size fits all approach to school organisation. Consideration will be given to the specific circumstances of each school/s and community.

1.2 Continued Improvement of Educational Standards

Powys County Council, in partnership with Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot (ERW) implements the National Model for School Improvement to raise standards in its schools. The Council is working effectively in partnership with schools and other partners to ensure that school and pupil performance is improving. There is a need to ensure that schools are organised in such a way that will ensure that they can continue to improve in the future, to ensure that all pupils can achieve the best possible standards.

1.3 Ensuring more effective and resilient leadership

Ensuring effective, distributed and resilient leadership in our schools is a key driver in terms of reviewing the way education is provided in Powys. There are significant difficulties in recruiting headteachers in both the primary and secondary sector. A significant number of headteachers in primary schools in Powys continue to have class responsibility for over 50% of their time, which limits the time they have to carry out a leadership function.

The Council's aspiration is for all primary schools to be led by headteachers who do not have any class responsibilities, to enable them to focus on effective leadership of the school and on school improvement.

1.4 Delivering education within a challenging budgetary situation with changing demographics

In May 2012, Estyn published a report entitled 'How do surplus places affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils?'², which concluded that 'where there is a higher than necessary level of school places, resources are being deployed inefficiently that could be better used to improve the quality of education for all learners.'

The Council monitors school population projections on an annual basis and recognises that school population trends fluctuate dependent on a variety of school and external factors

In order to ensure that the resources available to provide education in Powys are used in the most efficient way, the Council will continue to work towards reducing the percentage of surplus places in Powys schools. The Council must seek to reduce its fixed property costs if it is to release resources to improve standards.

It must be acknowledged that in a rural county such as Powys, travel costs will be an important consideration when considering how to address large numbers of surplus places in schools.

1.5 Robust continuity and progression in Welsh-medium education in all key phases

The Welsh Government's vision, as stated in its **Welsh-medium Education Strategy** (2010)³ is "to have an education and training system that responds in a planned way to the growing demand for Welsh-medium education, reaches out to and reflects our diverse communities and enables an increase in the number of people of all ages and backgrounds who are fluent in Welsh and able to use the language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace."

In its **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan**⁴ for 2014-17, the Council sets out its aim to ensure robust linguistic progression through the medium of Welsh. In order to achieve this, the Council will need to establish additional and extend current Welsh-medium provision in the county. However, the Council is fully aware that there is a resource implication to fulfilling this aspiration and this will be taken into account. In some cases, it may be necessary to close

² 'How do Surplus Places affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils?' May 2012 Estyn

³ www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/welshmededstrat/

⁴ <http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/schools-students/apply-for-a-school-place/use-of-the-welsh-language-in-powys-schools/>

Welsh-medium schools and streams in order to ensure more appropriate provision for learners.

1.6 The 21st Century Schools Programme

Powys County Council aspires to provide learning environments that meet the standards of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme.

The 21st Century Schools Programme is a major, long-term and strategic capital investment programme, which aims to create educational communities in Wales that are fit for the 21st century. The programme aims to deliver:

- Learning environments in Wales that will enable the successful implementation of strategies for improvement and better educational outcomes;
- Greater economy and efficiency for learning environments through better use of resources; and
- A sustainable education system in Wales that meets national building standards and reduces the recurrent costs and carbon footprint of education buildings.

The majority of Powys schools are of ageing stock, with a combination of old Victorian buildings, early and mid-20th Century buildings. The Welsh Government commissioned consultants E.C Harries in 2008/9 to carry out surveys on all Powys schools as part of their 21st Century Schools Programme. The majority of schools were graded on their condition, their suitability and their sustainability. In terms of building condition, schools were graded from A-D, and the grades are defined as follows:

Grade	Description
Grade A	Good. Performing as intended and operating efficiently
Grade B	Satisfactory. Performing as intended but exhibiting minor deterioration
Grade C	Poor. Exhibiting major defects and / or not operating as intended
Grade D	Bad. Life expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure

Future investment in school buildings in Powys will be aligned with the aspirations of the 21st Century Schools Programme, as follows:

- Buildings and grounds that are welcoming to the parents, staff and the community, whilst providing the appropriate security for the safeguarding of learners;
- Good organisation of learning spaces that are easily accessible;
- Internal spaces that are well-proportioned, fit for purpose and meet the needs of the curriculum and staff;
- Flexible design to allow for future growth or changes of use;
- Good environmental conditions throughout, including optimum levels of natural light and ventilation;

- Well-designed external spaces;
- A sustainable approach to design, construction and environmental servicing;
- Good use of the site, balancing the needs of the local community.

1.7 Integrated service provision and commissioning

Increased service integration and multi-agency working is one way of delivering services more effectively, and is particularly important in order to provide support for children and their families. Integrating service provision will enable the removal of barriers which could prevent them from reaching their full potential.

2. CURRENT PROVISION IN POWYS

Early Years provision is delivered at school based provision or by third party providers.

Primary School provision in Powys is delivered through a mixture of traditional primary schools, infant, junior, 'all through school', and federated schools.

Secondary School provision is delivered through a mixture of secondary schools and an 'all through school'. In some cases, provision is delivered from schools that are on dual-sites.

Specialist provision in Powys provides for pupils with multiple, profound and complex needs.

Welsh-medium provision is provided through a combination of Welsh-medium schools and dual stream schools in the primary sector, and through dual stream schools in the secondary sector.

Denominational provision is provided at voluntary controlled or voluntary aided Church-in-Wales or Roman Catholic schools.

3. SCHOOL REVIEW PROCESS

The School Review Process will ensure that the Council can take a proactive approach to planning and managing school places within a changing demographic context. This will ensure that the Council continues to avoid a 'one size fits all' approach, and can take careful account of local circumstances and context.

All reviews will be undertaken in accordance with

- Section 38 and 39 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013;
- The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014;
- Any other related policy and legislation, where appropriate.

The **School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013**, which came into force on the 4th March 2013, requires that the Welsh Ministers issue a School Organisation Code (the "Code"). The Code outlines the legislative process that local authorities are required to follow when preparing, publishing, approving or determining school organisation proposals.

The **Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014** which came into force on 22 May 2014 gives effect to local authorities' powers to federate schools. Schools already have powers to federate by choice under provisions introduced in 2010. These powers have now been consolidated into the 2014 Regulations. Statutory guidance containing information and practical advice to governing bodies and local authorities on the federation process has been issued to support the regulations.

3.1 Format of Reviews

The Schools Service Senior Management Team, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Schools, will decide which schools are to be reviewed, as outlined in Stage 1 below.

School reviews may take a variety of forms:

- i. Reviews of single schools;
- ii. Reviews of a group/s of schools;
- iii. Reviews of a catchment area/combined catchment areas;
- iv. County-wide reviews;
- v. Thematic reviews – these may include, but not be limited to, the following: Welsh-medium provision; sixth form provision; special education provision;
- vi. In some cases, it may be necessary to carry out reviews of educational provision on a cross-border basis in partnership with other Welsh Authorities;

In order to ensure that there is sufficient denominational places available to meet the needs of pupils, faith provision will be reviewed in accordance with the School Review Process in partnership with the relevant diocesan authority.

Stage 1: Review

All reviews will consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:

- Quality and standards in education;
- Need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools;
- Resourcing of education and other financial implications; and
- Other general factors.

In the case of 3.1 (i) ii) and iii) above, reviews will include discussion with governors, local members and headteachers of all schools under review, and also with diocesan directors, in the case of faith provision. Discussion may also take place with the headteachers, governors and local members of affected schools i.e. schools that may be affected by the review of another school, as identified by the Schools Service Senior Management Team and the Portfolio Holder for Education.

In the case of 3.1(iv) v) vi) (strategic, thematic or cross-border) reviews, the Schools Service Senior Management Team, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education, will decide on the most appropriate means of engagement with key stakeholders, including, but not limited to, governors, headteachers, local members and diocesan authorities.

On completion of a review, officers will then develop draft recommendations. These will be shared with the appropriate stakeholders who will have the opportunity to provide written comments within 14 days of receipt of the draft recommendations.

Stage 2: Recommendations and Consultation

Cabinet will receive and consider a report with **draft recommendations, together with any comments received from stakeholders**, along with a draft impact assessment.

If the draft recommendations are supported, in principle, by Cabinet then the following will take place:

- If the draft recommendations relate to an 'element of school reorganisation that requires the publication of proposals' or is 'a regulated alteration', as defined within the Code, then statutory procedures will be followed in accordance with the Welsh Government's **School Organisation Code**, including consultation; or

- If the draft recommendation is to proceed with establishing a **federation** of schools, then the statutory procedures set out in **The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations (2014)** will be followed, including consultation.

Stage 3: Decision-making following consultation

Following consultation, a Consultation Report will be prepared. Cabinet of the Council will then consider the Consultation Report, along with a final impact assessment.

- a. If the proposals are related to an **'element of school reorganisation that requires the publication of proposals' or is 'a regulated alteration'**, as defined within the Code, Cabinet will be responsible for deciding whether to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice.

If Cabinet decides to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice, then this will be published in accordance with the School Organisation Code. Anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so in writing within 28 days of the date on which the statutory notice was published.

Following the completion of the statutory notice period, an Objection Report will be drafted and published in accordance with the School Organisation Code, which will include a summary of the objections received and the Authority's response to those objections. This will be considered by Cabinet, which must decide to approve, reject or approve the proposals with modifications allowed by the Code; or

- b. In some cases, proposals require approval by the Welsh Ministers. The Welsh Ministers may decide to approve, reject or approve the proposals with modifications allowed by the Code; or
- c. If Cabinet supports a proposal to establish a **federation of schools**, then the process to establish a federation will be followed in accordance with the Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014.