

Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School - Diocese Response to Options Appraisal – December 2020

After reviewing the documentation sent to the diocese, please find the initial response.

Concerns over Timing of the Proposal

The timing of the consultation over the Christmas period and in the midst of a global pandemic has been challenging. Upon reflection, the pre-consultation documentation could have been distributed at a more appropriate time.

Concerns of how Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School fit into Powys Strategy.

The Powys Strategy for Transforming Education clearly indicates ambitious new plans for schools in Powys, that will provide high quality teaching and learning environments and the commitment to deliver an improved learner offer for the children and young people in Powys, which the diocese fully supports. The emphasis for the diocese is to provide the best possible opportunities to Powys learners now and in the future and we believe that Llanbedr Church in Wales School is delivering this. Considerable progress has been made since the last Estyn and Section 50 Inspection, with the strategic leadership of the Headteacher providing firm direction for the current and future high standards within the school. This is reflected in visits from the Challenge Advisor and the Diocesan Director of Education.

Reflecting upon one of the strategic objectives to develop a network of all-age schools based around the current secondary locations, it is difficult to see how this objective relates to Llanbedr Church in Wales School. After reviewing the five reports already published on proposals in other areas, in line with the Powys Strategy, there are currently no plans proposed for the Crickhowell area. Are the children who attend Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School therefore, not part of this objective? One proposal could be the building of an all-age Church in Wales School in Crickhowell, as discussion are taking place between the diocese and Crickhowell High School to become a Church in Wales School.

Christian Ethos

Llanbedr Church in Wales School is a VA, voluntary aided, school, with a very distinctive and strong Christian ethos running throughout the heart at what it does, providing the best possible opportunities for all the pupils, staff, and local community. Emphasis is placed upon enhancing and growing the existing links with the church and local community by the schools, with a high regard for wellbeing. This is in the line with the diocese education vision on wellbeing, using the Biblical quote of John 10:10, “I came so that everyone would have life, and have it fully”. This is being achieved at Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School, with regular monitoring visits from the Diocesan Director of Education, who works in partnership with the school. Church Schools are at the heart of the Church in Wales’s mission, who faithfully serve children and parents of all faiths and of none, providing a high-quality education of the whole child and enriching their communities. This is being achieved at Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School.

With this overarching focus, the school is distinctly different from community schools in the area, and upon reading the documentation, the Christian ethos and rural school community links have not been fully considered and do not feature in the preferred option given.

Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School is distinctive from other schools in the cluster:

- The Christian ethos runs through the heart of the school and is the main reason many families join the school from other areas especially where families live in remote/rural areas;
- A number of pupils have been admitted into the Christian ethos of the school after having previous difficulties in other schools, one following discussions with ALN officers. The preferred option means that if the school were to close before 2024/25 these pupils would return to the schools where they were experiencing difficulties;
- Llanbedr Church in Wales School plays a vital role in the promotion of community cohesion both within the school and in working with the parishes to reach out to the wider community that it serves.

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- Llanbedr Church in Wales School has a strong commitment to the development of the spiritual dimension both in the formal and the hidden curriculum. A Sunday School was started at the school in 2018 and last year Messy Church and an after-school club, which organises community events for children and their families.
- Church events involving the school are well attended by the local community and the three parishes. The Christmas Services, Harvest Festivals, Easter Services, Lent lunches, and Remembrance Services are popular events with high attendance. The last event at the Church the school had brought all the chairs from the school and there were still many that had to stand. For community members who live in remote areas these Christian events led by the school are their community links.
- Rev. Chris Bowler was due to start confirmation classes with the pupils, but in the present climate this did not begin, although families are still interested. This is the next stage in the pupils' religious and spiritual journey.
- There is a strong Welsh dimension in the school and the school also holds an annual Eisteddfod which receives over one hundred entrants from the community for the different categories, linking to the traditions of Welsh Christianity.

The preferred emerging option as set out in the Options Appraisal would result in only 2 pupils attending a Church in Wales School. Nearly all pupils will lose the strong Christian school ethos along with the sense of rural community cohesion that this school brings.

Number on roll

Within the documentation provided the number on roll from Powys calculations differ from what Llanbedr Church in Wales School actually have on roll at the present time. Currently, Llanbedr Church in Wales Primary School has on roll: Nursery: 5; and Reception to Year 6: 44.

Housing Development in the school's catchment area

Upon reviewing the current and proposed housing stock in the catchment area, there is an opportunity for the school to grow:

- There is already planning in place and passed for over 130 houses. A large number of these dwellings will be affordable housing which will more than likely add to the number of children requiring school places.
- The first development of 70 houses is due to start building at any time and it is more than likely that this site will be added to with more housing in phase 2. This housing is in the Vale of Grwyney Community Council area which covers Llanbedr School. In fact, Llanbedr School is the only primary school in the Vale of Grwyney.
- With other development of 60 houses in Crickhowell and a large development going through planning in Llangattock, this will again increase the need for school places in the Crickhowell area.