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Impact Assessment

Cradoc Community Primary School

Number: Cradoc-001

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Publicly Available – prepared pursuant to consultation launched by Powys County Council, in reference to the closure Cradoc Community Primary School.

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Notice to recipient.

This document represents work undertaken by those affected by the proposed changes to Cradoc Community Primary School.

The evidence contained within this document has been collected from a questionnaire that has been made available online by the 'Cradoc Community Primary School Working Group'. As a group, we felt that there were additional questions that needed asking which were not directly included in the Powys consultation process. We have advertised this through our local campaign, through social media, and word of mouth to encourage people to complete the feedback form designed herein.

Additional references are listed.

Central to the evidence collected is the depth and breadth of the research carried out in the affected community.

Notes in blue are un-edited feedback direct from the community members



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Change history

This document uses change bars in the page margin to indicate the areas where technical changes have been made since the last version. Minor editing, formatting and the rearrangement of content that has no technical impact is not indicated by change bars.

Version	Date	Author	Comment
0.3	1 st March 2021	Andy Carr	Framework Drafted
0,5	4 th April 2021	Cradoc Community Feedback	Initial Data Analysis
1.0	10 th May 2021	Working Group Input	Questionnaire Close & Data update Addition of Case Study & Statement

Executive Summary

Research carried out by the Cradoc Working Group demonstrates that the planned changes are highly likely to have a detrimental effect on both the children's education, and the surrounding rural community. The proposed closure is likely to cause irreversible damages. The overwhelming response by the community is that the planned merger will erode the fabric and nature of rural Cradoc. There is a strongly held feeling that the impact assessment made by PCC, cannot give due justice to Cradoc Community Primary School clustered together with Mount Street Infants and Mount Street Junior School. The impact of the closure of two urban schools and one rural school cannot be considered under the same Impact Assessment. There are massive implications that the closure of Cradoc Community Primary School would have on the pupils and the communities it serves. Cradoc Community Primary School plays a vital role within the rural community.

96.6% of the families surveyed, were against the planned merger of the three schools' management teams, without a clear and detailed plan, that had been shared and consulted on.

In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code and Rural Action plan, PCC have failed to explore every possible option and suggestion before a decision is made. The Cradoc Community Primary School Working Group would like you to consider this document as a set of suggestions, and alternative proposals that can be built on by your team. Essentially, assisting PCC to ensure it complies with the presumption against closure of Cradoc Community Primary School.

This report will demonstrate that the proposed plans are poorly considered, badly thought through and lack credibility to form the basis for due diligence on which council leaders can use to make accurate decisions. The report pulls on local community input, Welsh Government Guidelines and shows the Council that it is failing to consider the changing nature of society.

The PCC business plan talks about the requirement to attract funding from the 21st Century Schools & Education funding program. This program focuses on the sustainability of the schools in education, environmental and total cost of ownership. The business plan shared with the Powys County Councillors fails to address any of the factors that demonstrate the proposal is in fact sustainable. For this reason alone, we would urge your councillors to reject the plans in their current form.

The report also provides a vision for the council members to consider as an alternative to the current plans. This vision would focus on the positive role that Powys Country Council could take in protecting and investing in the long-term future of education within the rural settings.

The information, facts, figures and statistics provided by Powys County Council have been conflated in a number of places.

1 Preface

1.1 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide research and facts to support and challenge aspects of the proposed closure of Cradoc Primary School. The report is intended to open the eyes of those making the decisions, and to empower them to take better, more productive steps towards the education of the children in Cradoc, and the effect it will have on the surrounding rural community.

To be honest the Community Impact Assessment that has been carried out by Powys County Council is woefully inadequate in its detail of impacts and merely glosses over any negative impact for the communities that will be affected by the closures.

1.2 Audience

This document is written for three audiences:

- Powys County Councillors and their respective parties and support networks.
- Members of the Public interested in the facts surrounding the planned closure of Cradoc Community Primary School.
- Employees of Powys County Council, who are party to the process taking place.

1.3 Assumptions, dependencies, and constraints

This report assumes nothing, in that all the evidence, comments and research have been conducted with an open mind, so that the narrative provided by PCC can be further enhanced with facts, and critical thinking to achieve a different result than the one planned.

1.4 References

This report uses cited references from current research as a matter of principle, primarily because many of the figures and statements in the PCC report are not backed up with any hard facts or research. This allows the reader the opportunity to look beyond the limited information provided by PCC to observe best practice and the views from the rest of the UK.

Table 1 lists documents and other reference sources containing information that may be essential to understanding topics in this document.

Table 1 References

No.	Publisher	Date	Title
	Welsh Gov	2018	Rural education action plan
	OECD	2014	Improving Schools in Wales
	UK GOV	2019	Education childcare - August_2019

No.	Publisher	Date	Title
1	Welsh Gov	2018	School Organisation Code 2 nd Edition
2	OECD	2009	PISA 2009 Results
3	OECD	2012	PISA 2012 Results
4	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	2020	Poverty in Wales
5	Public Policy for Wales	2014	Rural Poverty in Wales
6	Powys County Council	2021	Proposals affecting Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School Consultation Document
7	Powys County Council	2020	Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys
8	Powys County Council new home commitment		https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/8477/Work-starts-on-Brecon-Housing-Project
9	21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme	2020	https://gov.wales/21st-century-schools-programme

1.5 Terminology

Table 2 provides a short glossary of any terms crucial to the understanding of this document, and lists the acronyms and abbreviations used in the document.

Table 2 Terminology

Term	Definition
PCC	Powys County Council

2 School Catchment & History

Cradoc school was formed as part of the legal changes enacted on 7th September 1967.

Notice is hereby given in accordance of the provision of Section 13 (3) of the Education Act, 1944 as amended by Section 16 of the Education (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1953 and the County Council of Breconshire, being the Local Education Authority, propose to Cease to maintain the existing Battle County Primary School, the Merthyr Cynog County Primary School and the Upper Chapel County Primary School, and to establish a new County Primary School for about 75 pupils aged 5 to 11 years at Cradoc, in the rural district of Brecknock. The school will be available for the following District:

- Merthyr Cynog,
- Llanfihangel Nant bran
- Trallong
- Aberyscir
- Penpont
- Llanspyddid
- Fennifach
- Battle
- St. John the Evangelist in the Municipal Borough of Brecon
- Llandefaelog Fach
- Garthbrengy
- Llandew
- Llanfihangel Fechan

2.1 PCC Catchment

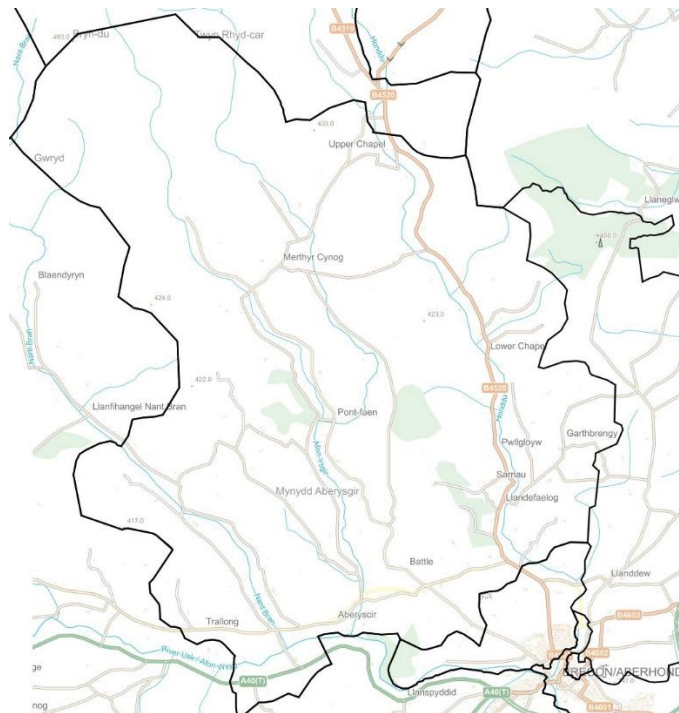
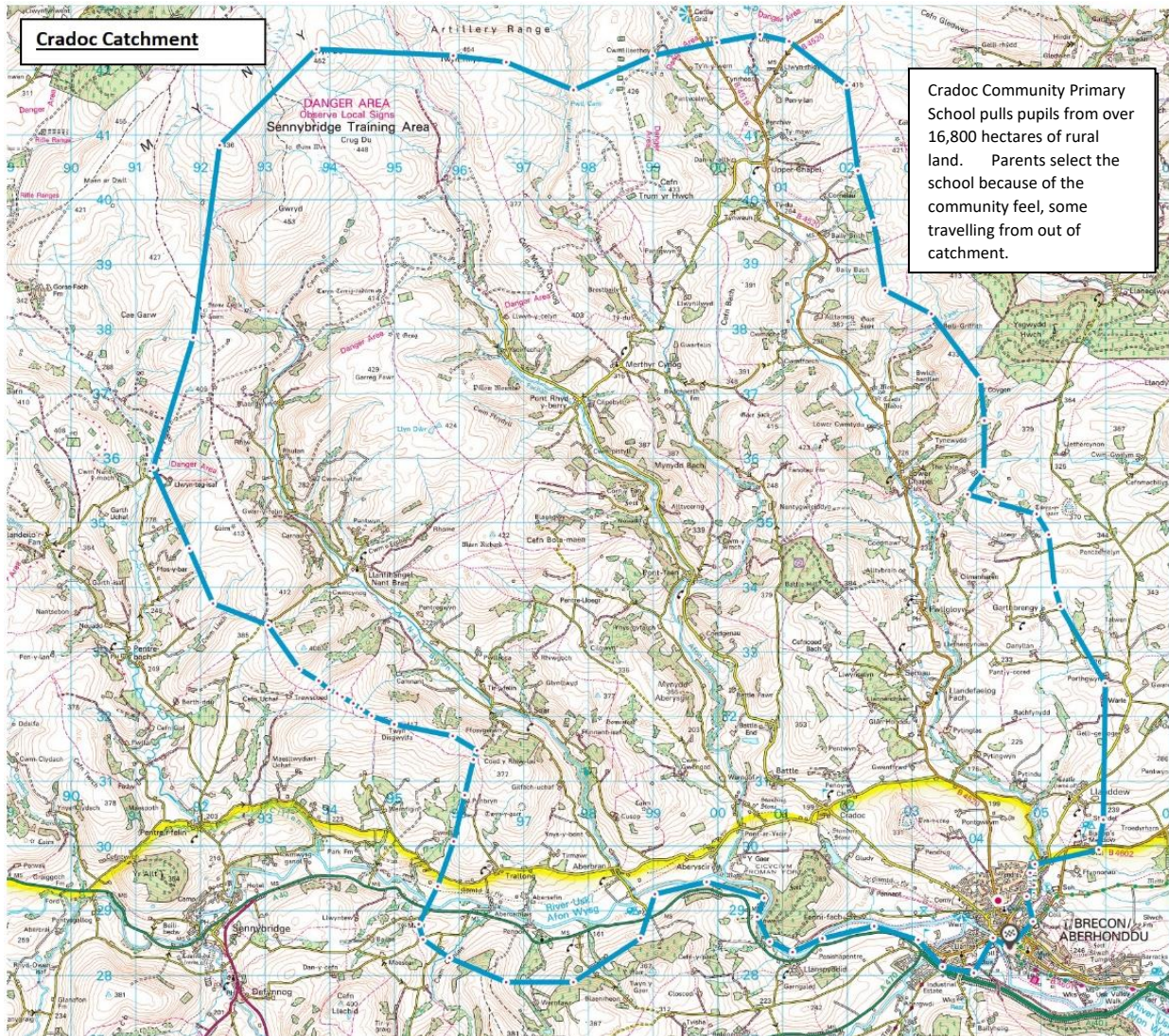


Figure 1: PCC Catchment area

PCC judge the school catchment as approximately 12600 hectares.

2.2 Actual Catchment

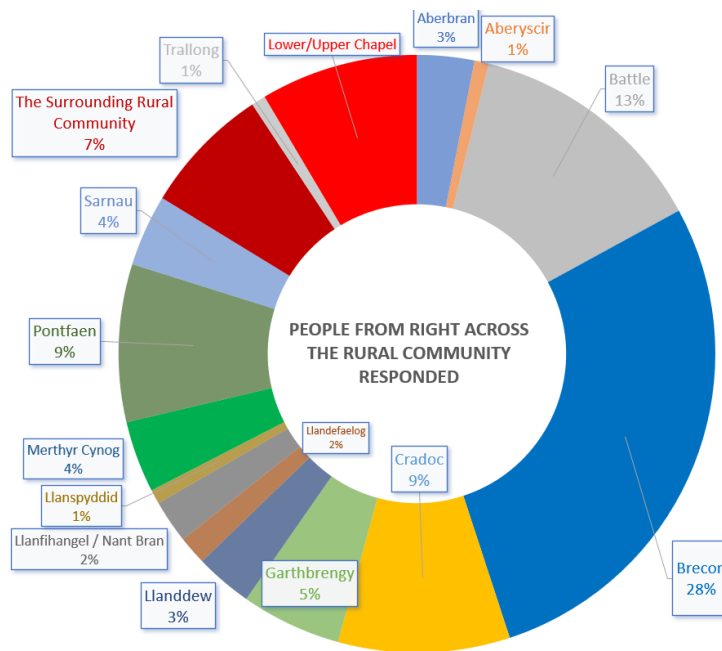


Research has shown that the actual catchment area is closer to 16,800 hectares of rural mid Wales with parents choosing to select the school for its rural community values and setting.

3 Impact Assessment Data

An important goal for the Cradoc Working Group, was to establish a wide range of diverse and inclusive views from across the community. The data shows the breadth of communities that responded to our questionnaire. The Cradoc Working Group, looked to its community to understand the feeling about the proposals made by PCC. The working group received 131 responses from across the community.

Figure 2: The depth and breadth of rural of families wanting to save and rebuilt Cradoc Primary School



3.1 What year were you involved with the school?

We wanted to understand how many or our respondents were current, and how many had previously been at the school.

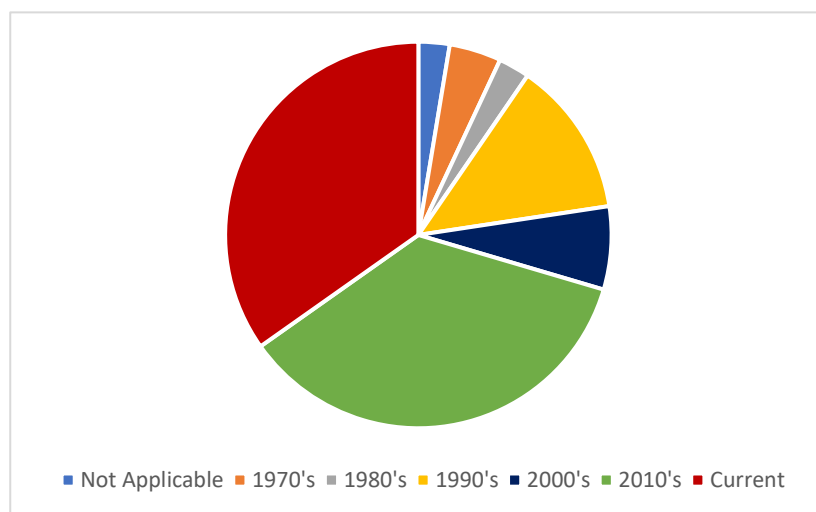
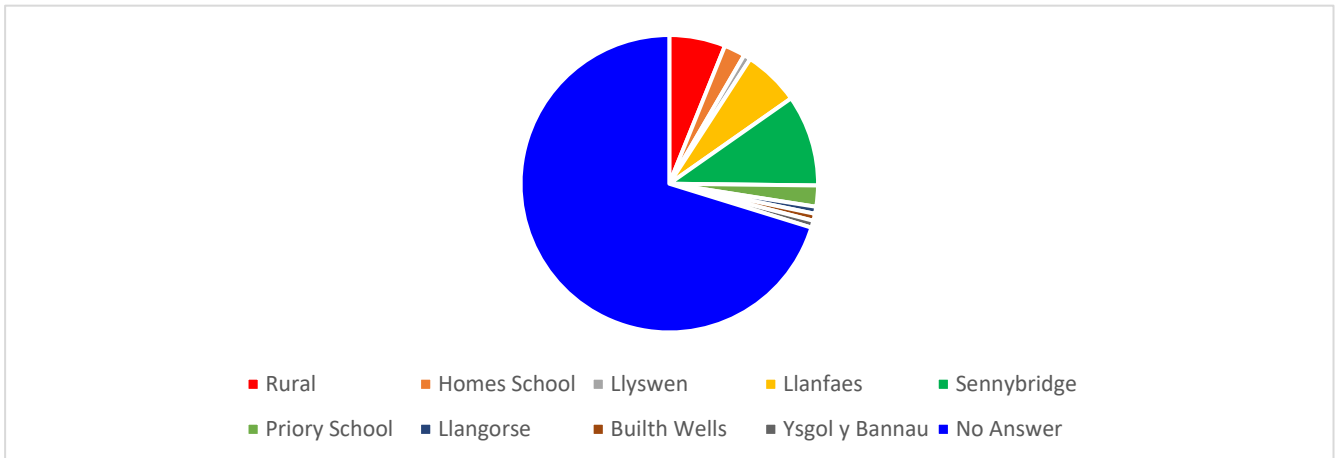


Figure 3: Chart of respondents last connection with the school

3.2 If Cradoc closes, which school would you send your child to?



3.3 Cross Community Interest

One fact that sets Cradoc apart from both Mount Street Infants and Junior School, is the rural nature of its pupils. Some children travel a great distance to reach Cradoc, and some parents in Brecon chose to send their children to a school in a rural setting. Our research took responses from right across the Cradoc catchment area. We asked respondents to explain their connection to Cradoc Community Primary School.

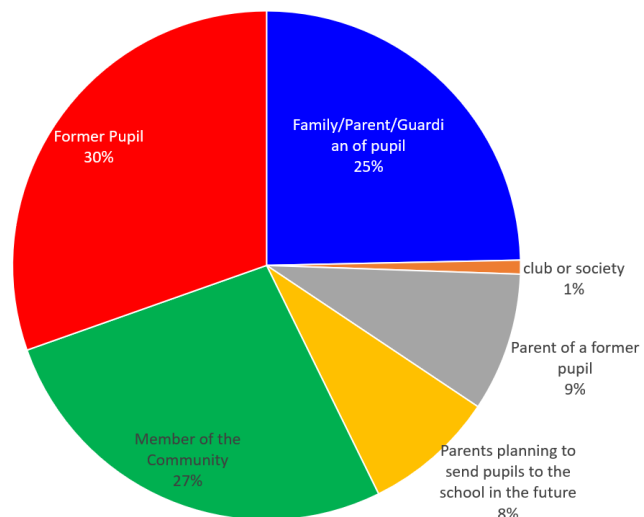


Figure 4: How the families of those responding are connected to the school

3.4 Phased Approach

The Cradoc Community Primary School Working group has made a significant effort to engage with its rural community about the planned merger. Nearly every family raised concerns about the proposed approach to merge the schools into one, before funding had been secured.

In our survey, we asked: “Do you think it's reasonable to merge the management of the schools before the council has secured its funding and developed its detailed plans and costings?”

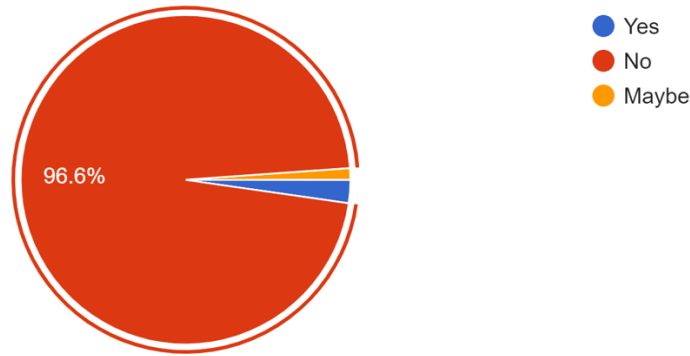


Figure 5: 96.6% of families against merging the schools without funding.

The result of merging the schools and failing to achieve funding for the project would likely be detrimental to all the children involved. The government’s own due diligence process would likely fail this aspect of the plans set out by PCC.

3.5 Saving and Rebuilding Cradoc Community Primary School

Families were asked if they would support a plan to keep Cradoc Community Primary School open and rebuild a new school on the same site.

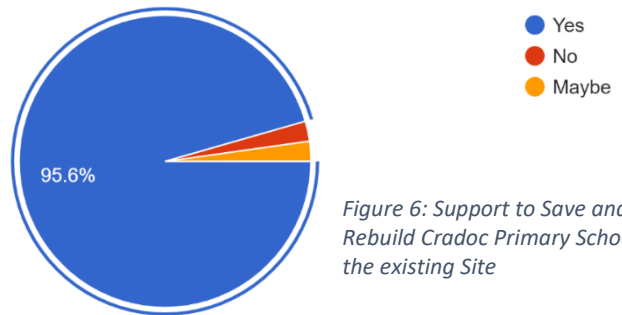


Figure 6: Support to Save and Rebuild Cradoc Primary School on the existing Site

PCC have rejected this route in favour of closing Cradoc, and the Mount Street Schools in favour of a new School. Given the

overwhelming support for the site at Cradoc to be redeveloped, our community would like to see accurate costs and estimates for the existing Cradoc site to be redeveloped.

3.6 Quality of Education

Many reports demonstrate that rural community education yields higher academic standards and better life skills than urban schools. PCC makes the assertion that the only route to better schooling standards is by creating new larger schools.

Our research asked former pupils of Cradoc Primary School what they felt about the quality of education they received.

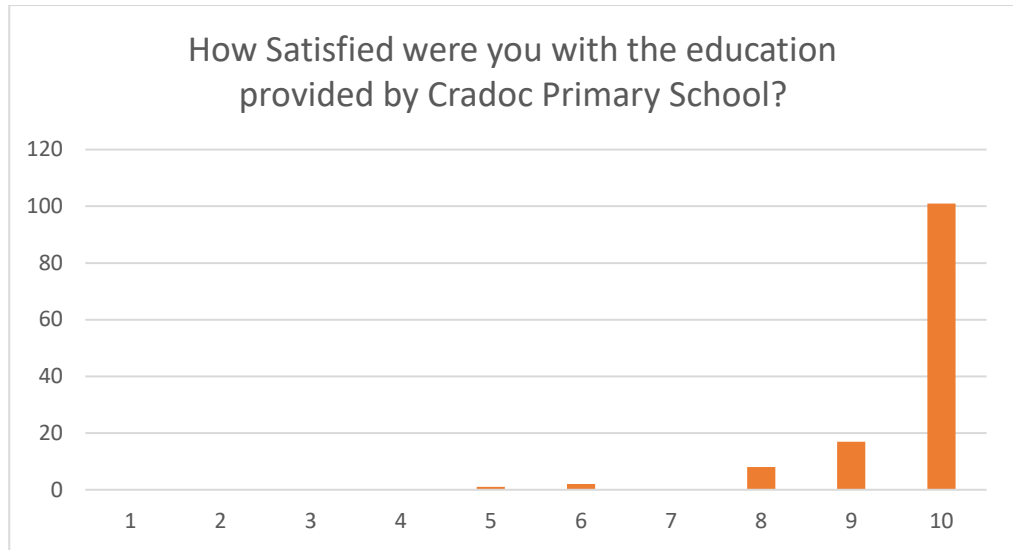


Figure 7: How satisfied are you by the education Cradoc provided 10 = very good 1 = very bad

98% of former pupils and parents were more than 80% satisfied with the education received.

See Appendix A for supporting evidence about Rural Academic Achievements

3.7 Loss of Friendship Groups

School friendship groups are the fabric of the school community. In Cradoc they extend the local fabric to that of a rural community. The plans from PCC have made little effort to consider the short to mid-term effects that their plans will have on the very children they believe the new school will assist.

Our research looked to ask our community what effect the school move might have on friendship groups?

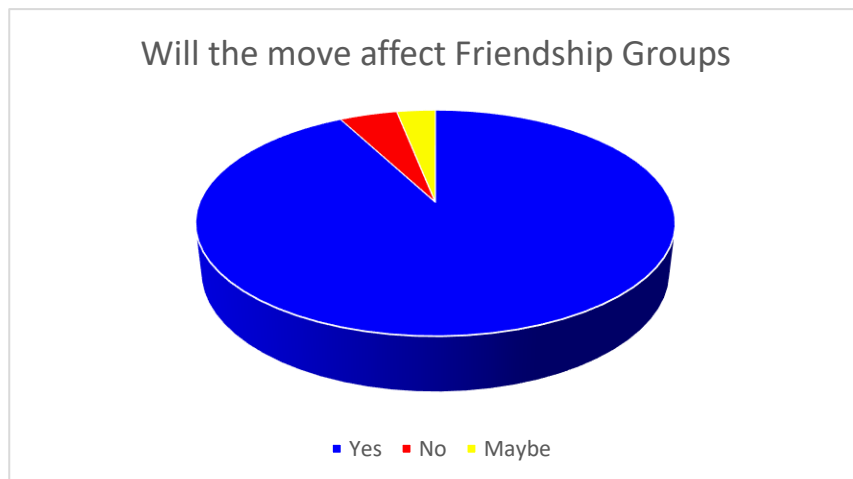


Figure 8: Any plans to move the school will need to consider Friendship Groups and the impact on mental health.

Having local community schools is vital for the rural residents. Not only does it form a massive part of this areas heritage but it creates new connections, communities, friendships. Things a urban school just can not provide. The school IS its own community, linking farms, hamlets, villages and friends together. With out it you isolate people, you destroy connections. You destroy local history. Leave community schools ALONE. BUILD ON and STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS. Don't destroy them.

In a rural community your friends and neighbours are typically closer than family, and they are the people you turn to when you have challenges. If the schools merge the families believe, a substantial number of these friendship groups will be lost, as rural children form new bonds with children from the town. The empathy that the town's children will have for the challenges of rural life will be different.

3.8 Community Engagement

Cradoc Community Primary School has many uses. There are several purposes that the school serves to the community at large. Cradoc Community Primary School is used as a central hub for many of the surrounding areas. The school sits at the heart of the community.

Rural communities rely on the school for breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs, specifically these provisions working through the summer when the Farming community is at its busiest. Given the school is the centre of so much activity, its removal will have a devastating effect on the community in Cradoc and many of the surrounding areas.

Cradoc is used for a broad range of non school activities

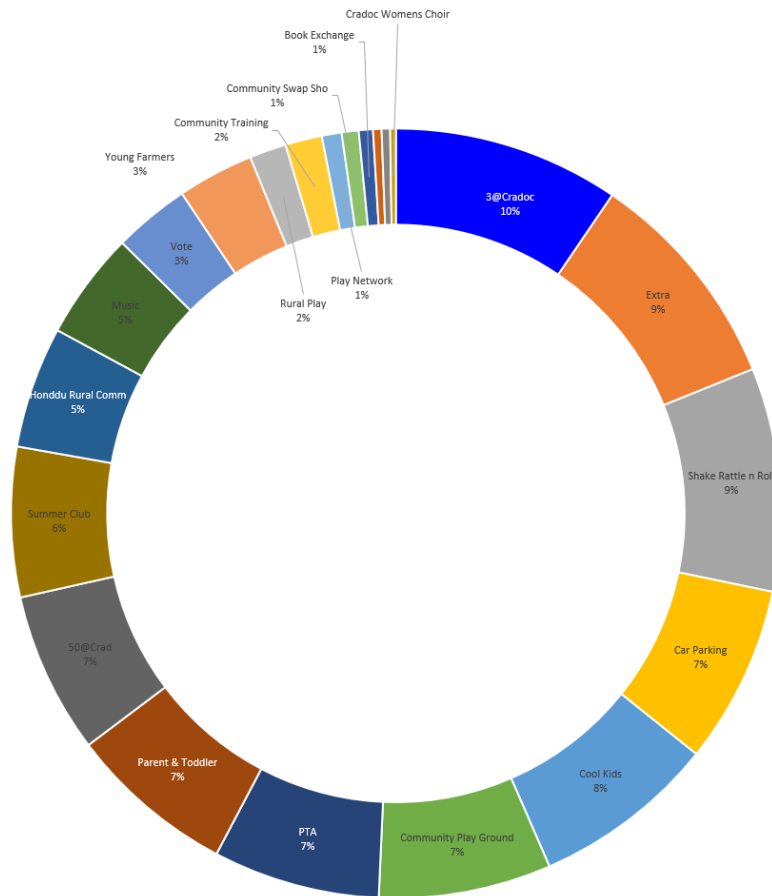


Figure 9: Community Engagement at Cradoc Primary School

3.9 Travel Impact

Our survey found that 28% of respondents were reliant on school transport.

Moving a school of 124 children and staff into Brecon is going to increase the journey time, traffic and CO2 emissions. Additional mini-buses, or larger buses on the roads in our rural community would cause considerable congestion in the community, even if such larger buses were able to reach all of the areas from which children would require collection.

Cradoc Community Primary School Working group will work to provide data on the environmental impact of the proposal.

If the proposal were to go ahead and Cradoc Community Primary School close, this would have on-going financial implications in the way of school transport costs. Based on the children presently at school, 38.9% of children are currently eligible for free school transport. If the proposal were to go ahead, and the new school at Penlan was named as the “named receiving school”, 73.6% of the children would be eligible for free school transport. Of those, 10.5% would become eligible for transport to Sennybridge, being their nearest suitable maintained school should they choose to transfer.

The proposal would result in children having longer journeys to school. The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 requires that primary children should not have journeys to school exceeding 45 minutes each way. Some of the children that attend Cradoc in the last couple of years have had journeys exceeding 40 minutes each way. If the school were closed, this time would be exceeded.

3.10 Travel Route

The route that vehicles will take to the new school is also important. Because of the roads in Brecon, nearly all the families surveyed would need to drive past the cathedral, at the busiest point of the day, increasing traffic jams and the strain on the traffic lights on the Struet. Over 70% of the families responding to the questionnaire suggested this route would be used. Only 28% of people in the community would use a school bus (we have not explored why this was so low).

Closure of the school will increase congestion from an increase in traffic into Brecon during ‘rush hour’. Increased traffic brings with it an increased risk to pedestrians walking to schools at the same time.

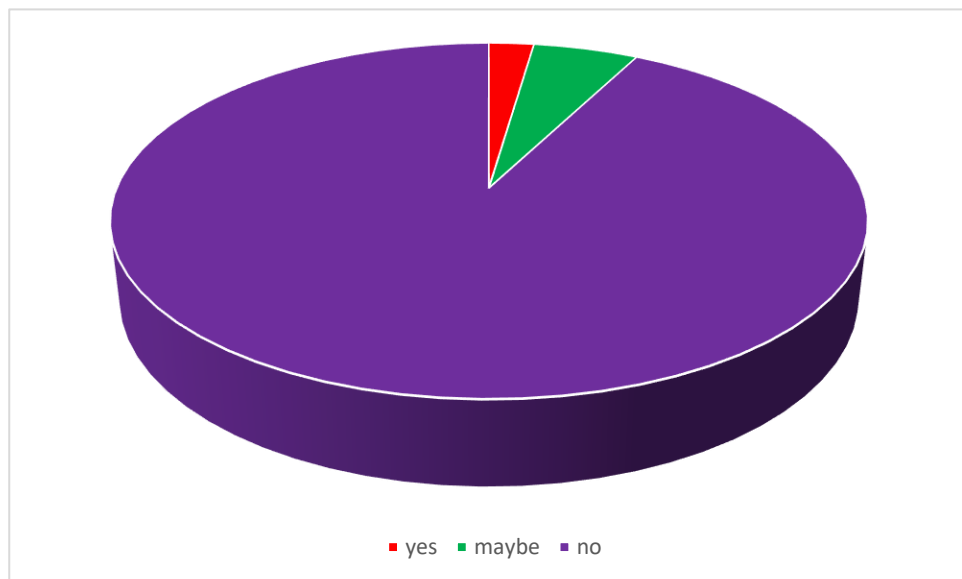
- We are already aware of considerable congestion around Llanfaes Bridge from about 8.20am most days.
- The alternative route to Brecon would be via Priory Hill, but this too has difficulties as the parking on the one side of the road means there is effectively a single filter there.
- Even now, many parents already use the Llanddew lane to reach Brecon High School during peak times. This is a single-track lane, with very few passing places and a very narrow bridge. Additional traffic along this road would be particularly dangerous.
- Any increase in traffic on these sites would further exacerbate what is already a problem. The increase in cars would of course be in addition to the increase in the number of school buses/mini-buses having to travel these same roads at a similar time.
- The roads around Cradoc are narrow, with Cradoc Road being single lane in places. As there is no public transport to Cradoc, if the school were closed and the site sold for housing development, there would be a further increase in residential traffic in the village itself, causing even further congestion.

The closure of this school will be a tragedy for the whole very wide community!! Friendships lost, community spirit lost! Local fundraising activities will no longer have use of the school! The young farmers club could be lost! Yes Cradoc children do need a new school but they want it in their community! The impact of traffic into Brecon is horrendous now how will this be dealt with, with the increased amount of transport entering and leaving Brecon if there was a new school. What about the loss of jobs!! And will the new school be built to accommodate the growing number of families living in Brecon? If one child went there are siblings guaranteed a place!?! If not how do these families manage drop offs and pickups etc if children attend different schools! Some local Schools already not able to cater for every year groups due to an increase of families moving to the area. I went to Cradoc, and all three of my children went to Cradoc and i would like to see any future grand children going to a Cradoc too. Powys CC are ruining this community it's devastating!!

3.11 Selling the land for housing development?

The site itself is idyllic. When we asked local community members to consider if they would want to see the site re-used for housing development, 98% of the responses suggested they did not want to see a housing development on the site.

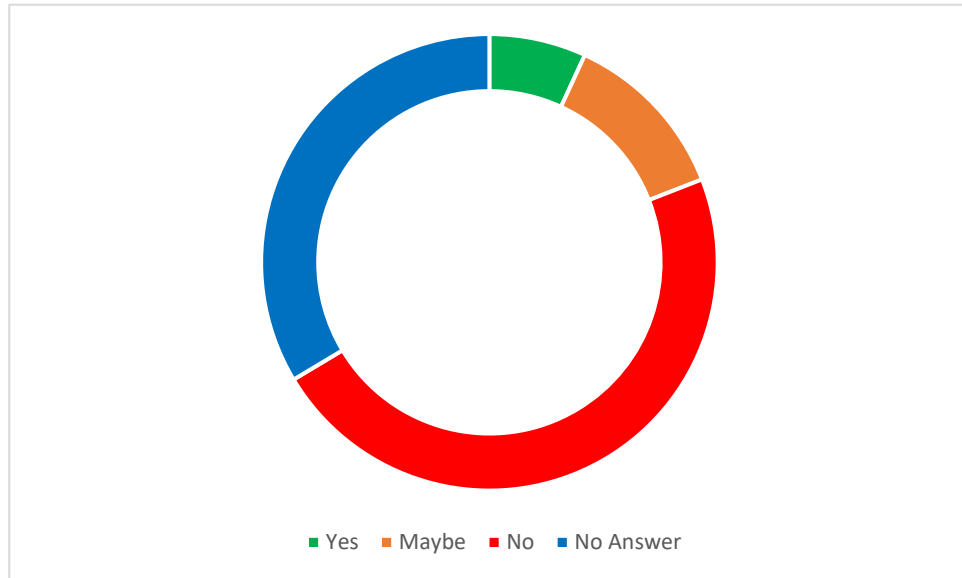
Our survey found little support for the school's site to be re-used for a housing development.



Selling the land for property development rather defeats the object of closing the school, as the village would end up with more families and no local school.

3.12**Has hearing about the planned closure of Cradoc affected your decision to send your child to Cradoc School?**

Our survey wanted to understand the impact that the PCC Plans had already had on parents and the choices they make about sending their child to Cradoc School.



The data showed that 1 in 5 parents have changed their views because of the planned closure.

4 Rejecting the Proposal Structure

There is an overwhelming feeling that the combined Impact Assessment on the proposed closure of three Brecon Schools (Mount Street Infants, Mount Street Juniors and Cradoc Community Primary School) is insufficient. An Impact Assessment on the closure of two urban schools, combined with one rural school fails to recognise the unique differences between rural and urban schools and neglects to consider their individual roles within their particular communities.

The plan presented by PCC, make some sweeping assumptions about the changes to personnel and management structure of the schools in phase one, without having credible funding in place to follow through with phase two. This would fail the most basic commercial due diligence tests.

The business plan talks about the requirement to attract funding from the 21st Century Schools & Education funding program. This program focuses on the sustainability of the schools, in education, environmental and total cost of ownership. The business plan shared with the Powys County Councillors fails to address any of the factors that demonstrate the proposal is in fact sustainable. For this reason alone, we would urge councillors to reject the plans in their current form.

The plans provided by PCC, do not consider the school transition arrangement with any clarity. This has provided a great deal of uncertainty.

A well-established, popular, successful, happy rural school in the heart of a lovely community. Cradoc school should be rebuilt in Cradoc, moving the school will be detrimental to the local community, school bus travelling times would be greatly extended for young children to go to another school.

I have lost my confidence in Powys County Council.

I have written letters to all the relevant council members in regard to my views that Cradoc School should not be closed and should be rebuilt. I did not receive one response.

Cradoc School buildings were never fit for purpose - a failure of provision on the part of the education authority - but the education provided was excellent.

Closure of the school will change the entire character of the village and will be a very sad day.

5 Alternate Vision

Cradoc Working Group, the teachers, governors and wider community would like to see detailed plans and costs for a new school at Cradoc on the existing site, the school would be net zero, and designed to promote and re-enforce community engagement. The school could be perfect for 21st Century Funding. The vision for a new school is to rebuild Cradoc Community Primary School on the same site, maintaining the foundations of community and belonging that exists today.

The vision would be that new buildings on the current site would ensure that the children from our rural location have “inspiring, environmentally sustainable buildings that can provide opportunities for wider community activity” (Transformation document).

Ensuring that any new build has a self-contained unit that can be used by the community in the evenings and weekends would improve that. Including facilities for multi-agency working and community support (eg meeting room, therapy rooms, etc) would further improve the community focus, reduce the need for travel into Brecon or beyond and reduce rural isolation. Cradoc Community Primary School already provides community involvement and engagement, but inclusion of such facilities would enable it to become more of the “community hub” envisaged by Welsh Government in their Rural Education Action plan, “offering not just education but a much wider array of community activities; the hubs will reflect the needs of the local area, particularly in rural communities”.

Combining resources and sharing buildings with the community in this way would create efficiencies and sustain services, which would support the Powys Wellbeing Assessment community delivery project which is working to address the loss of services locally and encourage resilience. This would also support the School Organisation Code recommendation that alternatives to closure could include building effective links with local community regeneration strategies. Development of a Community Hub at Cradoc would support such community regeneration.

5.1 Reuse of Existing Site

Reuse of the existing site needs more thought. The site could be configured in a number of different ways to:-

- Deliver the new school
- Fund some of the cost
- Enhance the community
- Champion Rural Education

5.2 Continuity School Operation

Cradoc is lucky in that its site is substantial, and this space would allow for a significant development on site, while the existing school can continue to operate. It would be more than possible to phase the work in two phases to build a new school, while the existing build continues to be utilised.

There would be minimal disruption to the children's education and school experience while contractors build the new school buildings and community centre.

The old school building could be removed as the last phase of work restoring some of the outdoor space.

5.3 New Cradoc Community Primary School Objectives

- A high-quality design that inspires users to learn and is rooted in the rural community.
- A sustainable net-zero approach to design, construction, environmental servicing, and travel to school
- Good use of the site, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, and enhancing the school's presence in the community.
- Buildings and grounds that are welcoming, safe and secure, and inviting to the community while protective of the children, continued use of the community play grounds and forest school areas.
- Good organisation of spaces in plan and section, easily legible and fully accessible, extendable for community use.
- Internal spaces that are well proportioned, fit for purpose and meet the needs of the curriculum.
- Flexible design to support transformation, allowing for short-term changes of layout and use, and for long-term expansion or contraction.
- Good environmental conditions throughout, including optimum levels of natural light and ventilation.
- Well-designed external spaces offering a variety of different settings for leisure, learning and sport.
- A simple palette of attractive local materials, detailed carefully to be durable and easily maintained, and to age gracefully.

It would be beneficial for the community if the new buildings on the Cradoc site had a hall, meeting room and kitchen and multi-agency rooms with a separate alarm system. Those involved in local WI, YFC, Yoga classes and for one off event such as Baptism teas, Funeral wakes, family parties, Eisteddfodau, prize giving's etc, have all expressed interests in using Cradoc Community Primary School on a regular basis for a range of community events. All of these would of course provide a valuable on-going income for the school whilst supporting increased community cohesion and regeneration.

5.4 Cradoc Working Group

The Cradoc working group are keen to engage PCC in a new positive plan to rebuild on the existing school site. To achieve this we propose to work together to follow clear processes to achieve a well-designed school. A clear vision for how education will be delivered in the future in the school.

I feel the closure of a local school without following a proper consultation phase is quite frankly appalling. I strongly feel that going through this process in a time of Covid restrictions is not acceptable, yes Covid cant stop the world from moving forward but at least wait for a time where the community can get together and talk through the issues. Community schools are hugely important in giving children a great childhood, just like I had when I had attended Cradoc. My daughter goes to school at Cradoc, and I strongly believe Cradoc needs to be invested in, rebuild and re-structured. The welsh government should not be ripping out the beating heart of a community, that is what this feels like. The government should be investing in the smaller farming communities where educating the future generations in a calm, relaxed and community focused environment is so great for these children.

6 Information for Decision makers to consider.

In the proposed business plan the Cradoc Working Group felt that many of the facts as well as the presentation of the facts were less than substantive. This erodes the foundations and veracity of those plans.

Cradoc Working Group would like to call on the councillors to reject the business plan, until such time that PCC can produce accurate plans developed to substantiate the costs and savings, that meets the necessary due diligence expected by the government.

6.1 School Capacity

The projected school capacities seem incorrect, given that the local council has aggressive targets to build new houses, with several projects under way. It seems that any growth in the local population has been missed from the considerations within the business plan projections.

School	Capacity	2021 Act	2022	2023	2024	Maintenance Backlog
Cradoc	161	115	117	121	125	£628K
Mount Street Jnr	172	172	167	163	149	£1.036M
Mount street Inf	129	121	108	111	112	£712K
Sennybridge	102	133	133	135	133	£1.023M
Pupil Referral Unit						£681K

I am very concerned because if Cradoc school is closed, my choice in primary schools will be very limited. Llanfaes is full, and I would have to choose between a church school which I do not want for my child or this new massive school which I don't want either. The schools available right now are a good choice for parents, and Cradoc school should stay where it is to serve the local community.

New homes within the catchment zones of the new and old schools will see a minimum of 250 homes added during the next four years. Statistics show that these homes shall be affordable and most likely to be bought by younger people with families or aspirations to start families. A minimum of 250 homes would likely see an increase in the school population, for both primary and high school places.

250 new homes target in Brecon for 2025, where are the children to be educated

The current plan for a new school in Phase Two, projects that the three schools will be accommodated by a new school with a capacity of 360 pupils, potentially completed by 2024. The projection for school places in 2024 is 386, without including the pupil referral unit or the growth in Brecon families resulting from the new build projects.

Too few school places for the current plans

Missing from the plans are 70+ places for children in the 3+ setting

Another important fact is the track record for school places within PCC. Brecon High School is currently under its official capacity, however, operationally the school is unable to take many more students due to constraints and poor design.

Given the UK commitment to net zero, only one of the current school buildings are suitable for conversion and upgrade namely Mount Street Juniors. The 21st Century funding scheme, names these as essential requirements.

No BREEAM Assessment carried out as part of the business plan

The other properties need to be rebuilt. The council should have performed a total cost of ownership assessment for each site in their current form, it should have projected the increase in fuel bills costs, as part of that assessment. This plus the backlog of maintenance should have been considered.

Given the proposal response and suggestions contained within this document are constrained to look at the proposed merger of the three schools.

The business plan fails to take account of the sustainability criteria for:-

- Management
- Health & Well-Being
- Energy
- Transport
- Water
- Materials
- Waste
- Land Use / Ecology
- Pollution
- Innovation

Where these items are considered, they fail to be considered in the context of the BREEAM objectives, which are largely aligned for the vision that the Cradoc Working Group have set out in the Vision Section of this document.

6.2 Parental Choice

All PCC plans neglect to consider the expectations of the local community about their ability to choose the location and type of school to which they send their children. Currently, parents have a choice of where to send their children to school. For parents who live in and around the Brecon area, they have the opportunity to choose a school that is urban, or a school that is rural.

For many parents, the choice of primary school is one of such significance and importance as it reflects the values and emulates the type of education setting most appropriate for their children.

The school closing and merging would be awful. We chose Cradoc as we want our child to be part of a smaller community school, where there is less pressure on the children. At Cradoc they get to be kids in the right way, without the amount of pressure that other schools put on pupils over figures and traffic light scoring systems. Yes, it needs a new building but don't take Cradoc school away as a choice for parents and children.

We recently moved to the area as we were attracted to Cradoc school for our children to attend a rural school with an excellent reputation. I am concerned other families will not move to the area or even move away should the school be closed. I do not want to live in a rural area and send my children to a school in the town.

One style of education does not fit all. Some children thrive in larger schools, some children thrive in small rural schools. By closing Cradoc, the chance to choose a rural school would become almost impossible.

The benefits of rural schools are highlighted in School Organisation Code 2nd Edition.

If Cradoc closed, families would be forced into an urban school. This would have long lasting implications for future generations of so many children who are to be denied the opportunity to thrive in their own community.

The proposed plans remove choice for parents.

"Although we no longer live in Brecon I feel that it will be a great loss to the community if the school was to close. We are a military family and move houses every 2 to 3 years. In our short time living in Brecon we were welcomed and instantly felt part of the community. I feel this was mainly to do with the size of the school. My child was very happy at Cradoc and moved seamlessly from 3@Cradoc to the main school with all of his friends. He still talks very fondly of his time at Cradoc and if we had not been moved by the military we would still happily be part of this community."

6.3 Community Fund Raising for Playground

Cradoc successfully won grants in 2018, for a rural play pod. Central to achieving the grant application was our ability to demonstrate that Cradoc had, and would continue to have a high level of commitment to, and proven involvement with, the local community. Only three of such pods were awarded in Powys.

The pods provide children with an opportunity to experience loose parts play out of school hours, thus supporting Powys County Council's Play Sufficiency Assessment and by providing a free, unsupervised play area for the community. This is actively used by the local community.

This initiative was also made possible via training from the Brecknock Play Network for all school support staff and some teachers, ensuring that the facility is regularly restocked with suitable low-cost resources.

By their very nature, these resources are provided by the local community and businesses, thus further enhancing our rural community cohesion.

Communal green space areas are for use by the children during the day and, outside of school hours, providing a quiet place for the community to sit and enjoy the calming nature of the school grounds, participate in mindfulness activities, and improve their mental health.

The rural location of our community is such that there are no safe play facilities for local children within the community other than the school, which are used regularly by families all year round for children from birth to 15,

School Sport Activities

Currently, we cannot run clubs due to covid-19. However, clubs are a regular part of the school provision and in the previous couple of years or so, clubs have varied term on term to provide a wide range of experiences. Clubs have included, but not limited to :-

Club	Run by	Frequency
Football	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Cricket	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Rugby	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Tennis	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Netball	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Athletics	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Maths Club	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Watch (nature) Club	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
ECO Club	Community volunteer/parent and staff	weekly
Sewing Club	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Gardening Club	Community volunteer/parent	weekly
Cinema Club	Community volunteer & Governor	weekly
Homework Club	Staff	weekly
Choir	Community volunteer/parents, Governors and Staff	weekly
Orchestra	Community volunteer/parents, Governors and Staff	weekly
Lego Club	Staff	weekly

Some clubs are run in term time only, but the facilities are made available in and out of term time.

6.4 Hosting Events

Cradoc Community Primary School provides the venue to host other schools locally and further afield for sporting events, competitions, quizzes etc. The frequency and numbers attending vary, depending on the event, for example Cwis Dim Clem where only a team of 6 attended from North Powys, to Brecon Primary Inter-School's Cross Country competitions with over 290 runners and their families. Cradoc is an ideal location for this kind of event, providing a very rural environment which really is cross "country".

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act includes a goal to develop “A more equal Wales” with a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances). Pupils will be less likely to access out of school clubs and activities. The new National Framework states that “A school’s curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes”. Reducing the ability of such a high percentage of children from accessing school clubs and activities, would prevent them accessing all of the experiences provided and could be deemed to be inequitable. This would be particularly problematic for dis-advantaged pupils as there is no public transport available to them, other than school transport.

6.5 The Value of Rural Schools

Closing a rural school then building and replacing it with an urban school comes at a cost to the children’s well-being. Within the last two years, the ERW consortium (of which Powys is part) commissioned a report, which was undertaken by ERW staff and the Education Development Trust. The study focussed on comparisons between children attending rural schools (such as Cradoc) and urban schools (eg those in Brecon). Some of the key findings concluded that:

- Students from rural schools have a greater sense of belonging and wellbeing than those in urban schools
- Students in rural schools enjoy learning more than children in urban settings.
- Students had a higher sense of physical and emotional safety in rural schools compared to urban.
- Students in rural schools participated in more extra-curricular activities.

The study concluded that there are many advantages to small rural schools.

The findings in this study are reflected in the Cradoc “Health and Attainment of Pupils in a Primary Education Network (Happen) Survey undertaken in Autumn 2020, which show that 96% of Cradoc children are happy with their area compared to 88% across Wales, and 96% feel very safe playing in the local area compared with 67% nationally. The findings of the study would therefore highlight that children’s physical and emotional health, along with their extra-curricular engagement, and sense of belonging would be reduced if Cradoc Community Primary School were closed.

The One Powys Local Action Group of the Powys County Council Leader Project has stated aims which include “Improving safety in communities”, providing “Equality of opportunities” and developing “More inclusive and cohesive communities”. Closure or removal of the school from the Cradoc site would be completely contrary to these stated aims.

Cannot see the benefit of the merger for the pupils of Cradoc school. Evidence shows that small is better.

6.6 Why Rural Schools Matter

The community that Cradoc Community Primary School serves matters. Our children, their families and the wider community deserve the security that a school in Cradoc with the associated community and multi-agency facilities brings.

The Welsh Government Rural Education Action Plan in 2019 clearly states that “As a government, we believe in the principle that places matter and we are ambitious in delivering better jobs closer to home, within prosperous, healthier and secure communities.”

By closing Cradoc Community Primary School, it removes the element that brings young families into the rural communities. The internationally recognised Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) clearly states that “Providing access to quality education in rural areas is crucial to meet the needs of rural youth and also to attract young families to settle in these regions.”

The Welsh Government School Organisation Code contains a presumption against closure of rural schools and Cradoc is deemed a rural school under the definition. The Code acknowledges that schools may be the main focal point for community activity, and that closure of such a school could have implications beyond the issue of the provision of education. It further acknowledges that this may be a particular feature in rural areas if school buildings are used as a place to provide services to the local community.

Services within the Yscir Ward that Cradoc serves are limited, with the school forming the heart of that community and providing facilities to that community. Closure of the school would reduce these facilities and adversely impact on community cohesion. Regeneration as a community hub, with new community and school buildings on the Cradoc site on the other hand would enhance and improve life for all of the community, including the disadvantaged.

The Powys School Transformation Document specifically states that “The best interests of learners are at the forefront of all proposals and decision-making”. Whilst acknowledging the benefits a new building and digital resources at Penlan will provide and the costs savings that can be made, we believe that if the school were kept open and new buildings were provided on the Cradoc site the benefits can be delivered equally well, and better meet the specific cultural needs of the children. We consider that it is in “the best interests of learners” to ensure that they have access to a high-quality education, within a reasonable length working day, based in a location which reflects and supports its rural community.

7 Rural Community Case Study

7.1 Mrs Prosser

A case study - How living in a rural community and the relationships formed through the local rural primary school has impacted on a farming family's daily life for the last 40 years.

My name is Sheila Prosser and I am a former pupil of Cradoc Primary School. I believe that the proposed closure of Cradoc Primary School could be a huge detriment to the existing community and leave a hole in a rural community that has existed for the last 50+ years since the opening of Cradoc Primary School in 1969.

We moved to a farm in Lower Chapel nearly 40 years ago aged 22 and 25 as a newly married couple. We were both from farming families and knew what it was like living in a rural area with neighbours sometimes a few miles away. When we started our family, we soon realised that the only way we were going to get to know other families with children of the same age was at the local rural school - Cradoc Primary School. Fortunately for us, this school has been a focal point for our family throughout our lives. I became a pupil of Cradoc Primary School when the rural schools in Upper Chapel, Merthyr Cynog and Battle were closed by Powys County Council along with mine and my husband's siblings.

My three daughters attended Cradoc Primary school. This was the nearest Primary school to us and was a 30 minute bus ride for them from when they started school at 4 years old. They thrived in the community environment and thoroughly enjoyed going to school with children from similar farming backgrounds. Their teachers understood the community and were aware of the children's commitments to the farm outside of school hours. They were also able to support the children through significant farming events such as the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001.

As the children travelled on school transport, we relied on community events organised by the school to meet other parents of children the same age. We therefore attended fetes, Christmas concerts and St David's day gatherings in the school in order to get to know other families in the rural community. Through these events and our children forming friendships with other farming families, we began to realise that the farming community was a precious resource that we could rely upon, help out and develop firm friendships with. My three daughters are now in their 20's and 30's and are all still firm friends with the children that they met in Cradoc Primary School and we have a huge community in which we can call our friends. We have celebrated the turn of the millennium, royal weddings and jubilees within our community.

There is also another reason why the rural farming community is so important to maintain and therefore why I strongly oppose the proposed closure of Cradoc Primary School; the pulling together of a community in times of need. In June 2002, we had two days of shearing our sheep booked which involved a large number of staff: mine and my husband's parents and our children. Sadly, my father suddenly died on the night of the first day of shearing. When shearing is booked, it has to go ahead as it is timed with the weather, when staff can come and for the welfare of the animals. With this sad news and the shearing still needing to go ahead, I don't know how, but word got around the community and help started to arrive, without us making a single phone call. Neighbours came to help with the shearing and others turned up with food and cakes to feed everyone. All very much appreciated in time of need and a reason why the Cradoc Primary School community needs to be preserved.

It is an uplifting feeling that we know every farm within a 5-mile radius of the school and our area because if something happens or you have an accident, I know that I could ring anyone in the community and, even if they were busy, they would still drop everything and come. With our three daughters living in Cardiff, we rely on the help of our neighbours. Just last year, when my husband had a blood clot in his leg and had to rest for a week, there were regular offers of help, phone calls and visits as the farm work still needs to get done and the animals still need looking after.

Rural living does have its downside though. Even if an ambulance is available in Brecon we know that it is not going to get to our community for at least 30 minutes. Which is why we decided as a community to invest in 5 defibrillators which have been placed in all the local villages that surround Cradoc Primary School. The knowledge that we have these and that we have trained at least 100 people to use these defibrillators put the minds of the community at ease that help can get to any one in need quicker.

My concern would be that young families in the community will not be able to access this vital support network via Cradoc Primary School. This may result in them being isolated and increase the risk of developing mental health problems. We know that farmers are already at increased risk of mental health problems and rural isolation will only exacerbate this.

For over 50 years, Cradoc Primary School has been the focal point that begins and maintains relationships that last a lifetime. It is the pin that holds the surrounding communities together. If the proposals for closure were agreed, the communities would be dispersed as families would have to choose different schools for their children to attend. Therefore, I am sure that this close knit community would suffer significantly and these families wouldn't have the security and friendships that have benefitted my family.



Merthyr Cynog community celebrating the Millennium in Upper Chapel Hall



Yscir community celebrating the Millennium in Cradoc Primary School

7.2 Mrs Gardner Statement

My name is Bethan Gardner. I am 28 years old and am now employed as a Medical Secretary at Brecon surgery. I was a pupil of Cradoc C.P School from 1997 -2004 and wish to state my support for saving the school in its current state.

Attending a close-knit rural school such as Cradoc benefitted me in more ways than I could ever truly express. I have Cerebral Palsy, so required additional help and support during my school years. I honestly feel that attending a close-knit, loving and supportive rural school such as Cradoc was immeasurably helpful to my development. I truly felt like a name rather than a number there. My needs were met without my needing to ask for help, and the staff members who worked closely with me in Cradoc and did all they could to assist became like family to me. I am still close to them now.

I feel like the small, country feel of Cradoc was a key reason for self-belief and confidence I built over my years there. I felt safe there, always listened to and supported, never overwhelmed. Being able to attend the same school as my sisters so close to home was also key to the feeling of security and familiarity. I honestly don't think I would have made such progress had I attended a primary school located in town, and so I wouldn't be the person I am now,

I am unable to walk unaided due to my disability but getting exercise and practising walking was vital to my health, particularly in my early years. Having the beautiful views, fantastic playgrounds and open space afforded by Cradoc's rural location meant that I loved being outside, and so made great strides. Cradoc's grounds and views cannot be bettered in my opinion. It would be a great shame for children of the future to miss out on the sense of freedom and joy life at Cradoc affords those lucky enough to attend this special school.

In later years, I went on to get both an undergraduate and master's degree. The strong foundation of both learning and character afforded by my time in such a close knit and supportive environment gave me the confidence and belief to go on and do this.

The rural location of Cradoc school is an integral part of its identity and what makes it so special and unique. It would not be the same place if this was lost.

I ask that you please preserve Cradoc Community Primary School on the current site. Thank you.

Cool Kids @ Cradoc is an after school and holiday club, held in the main school hall. They are open five days a week, between the hours of 7:45am to 9.05am (breakfast club), 3.30pm and 6.00pm term time, and between 7.45am and 6.00pm during the school holidays.

The service is registered to care for 32 children up to the age of 12 years from both Cradoc and other schools.

As an essential community service running 48 weeks of the year, one of a very few Holiday clubs operating in the Brecon Area, with extended hours of operation.

The service judged as “Excellent” in all areas in the CIW inspection in 2020.

The proposal makes no mention whatsoever of the provision of wrap-around care or holiday childcare.

8.3 3@Cradoc

This service provides local children of +3 years in the rural setting an opportunity to provide Early Years education which is included under the Childcare Offer for Wales, from 9am to 3.30pm daily during term time.

The majority of children attending the setting reside within the local, rural community.

The proposal makes no mention whatsoever of the provision of 3+ setting education or childcare.

I moved back to the area specifically to access Cradoc School for the education based around the rural way of life and farming calendar that it represents and provided me with. It has already reunited me with old friends and new ones through the parent toddler sessions prior to COVID and we would be devastated to lose the school as a social venue as well as for the education it provides our children with, right on my doorstep. The amazing wrap around care provision on the same site as the core school day is a huge asset, as is the 3@Cradoc provision, limiting any disruption to our children and a smooth transition into school life.

8.4 Community resources provided by Cradoc Community Primary School on site:

On-going permanent book exchange where children and adults can swap books – honesty donation box

Community “swap shop” for plants, produce, eggs, all supported with an honesty box. This runs at various times throughout the year as need arises.

Opportunities for music tuition provided on site, via peripatetic music teachers, including piano, violin, brass, flute, clarinet, singing. These are all provided by outside teachers or volunteers who use our premises.

8.5 Woodlands Trust

Cradoc regularly works with the three community councils from which the majority of our pupils live in. Enhancement of the school through the Woodland Trust Charter for Trees, the installation of a sensory and butterfly garden is just one example to balance the school with environment in the Yscir Community.

8.6 Storage Facilities

The school provides storage and parking facilities for the local play network, enabling them to make better use of their resources for schools across the South Powys rural area and reducing running costs for the network.

8.7 School Hall

The School provides the only remaining public building in the Yscir Ward and we make our meeting hall and facilities available when possible, to local organisations.

Closure of the school means that there is no other facility in the ward for them to take place and they would either cease or be diminished.

Some of the regular uses include:

8.7.1 Shake, Rattle & Roll

A music group meet weekly in term time, supporting Early Years education for babies to 4 year olds and supporting family integration and community cohesion. The sessions are very well supported.

8.7.2 Parent and toddler group

The group meet weekly in term time, supporting new parents to meet others and develop a support network of peers, which helps to reduce rural isolation and improve mental health. Again this is well supported.

8.7.3 Meetings for the Community

- Half termly committee meetings and AGM of the local Play Network.
- Periodic meetings of the local Church, including some Dan y Epynt services.
- Involvement in local shows e.g. Lower Chapel etc
- Peripatetic Music – piano, brass
- Singing lessons – link with the Cathedral choir
- Choir has taken part in the Cathedral Carol Concert by invitation for a number of years
- Harvest festival – including where older members of community invited to school for celebration and tea.
- St David's Day events and Eisteddfodau – where the wider community are invited

- Whole school Christmas concerts
- Governing Body meetings

8.7.4 Community Events

The hall is used for all sorts of community events, and periodic celebratory parties/events, including but not limited to:

- Royal Wedding (and other) street parties (as the roads in Cradoc are not safe enough to do this)
- YFC Carol Singing (use of car park and toilet etc facilities)
- Community Summer Sports competition
- Honddu Rural Community Association Easter Egg hunts
- Community Summer Fete, Eisteddfodau, Halloween party/disco
- Local anniversary events, eg 50@ celebration (over 300 attended this outdoor event)
- We have an active “Friends of Cradoc Primary School” who meet formally each half term, and run events for the children, their families and the wider community. In pre-pandemic times, these events were usually half termly or more frequently.
- Use by Hay, Brecon & Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees to hold Refugee Away Day, giving refugees an experience of rural Wales rather than their usual urban environment.

8.7.5 Training and CPD Events

- The hall is used for periodic community training courses, including:
- First aid course (open to full community)
- Internet safety course (open to full community)
- Financial awareness course (open to full community)
- Powys County Council Early Years training (converting CCLD level 3 to Playwork level 3)
- ERW Newly Qualified Teacher support meetings) (site chosen due to central location of our school and good parking facilities).
- NHS use, eg South Powys Mental Health In-reach courses (site chosen due to central location of our school and good parking facilities).
- Substance Misuse course (open to full community)

8.7.6 Election counting station (and historically as a Polling Station).

It is noted that “the polling place must be an area in the district” and that the school is the only suitable public place within the ward that is not privately owned.

8.8 Community Engagement

Cradoc Community Primary School leverages the community to further pupils' understanding of the curriculum and their sense of place in the rural community.

The school is at the heart of our local community and it will be devastating to lose it.

8.8.1 Local Links

Local links to The Crug, The Gaer, Roman Fort, the old railway line and Cradoc Halt have been accessible by foot and many generations of children within Cradoc Community Primary School have benefitted from hands-on learning, being able to visit these local sites as part of their local history/geography and science curriculum.

Visits to Abersycir church and to gardens of local resident experts on local wildlife have formed a huge part of the children's education. The relationship that Cradoc Community Primary School has established within the community is unique. Often, members of the local community are invited into the school to share with the children their wealth of local knowledge in many areas ranging widely from Mountain Rescue to Sikhism to rural crafts. This approach has formed part of the strong links between the pupils, the area and the local community.

8.8.2 "Cradoc in Bloom"

A wonderful shared intergenerational community experience where not only do the children of Cradoc Community Primary School learn about life cycles and growth, but they also learn to care for and respect and take pride in their community, school and sense of belonging. The benefits from this are incalculable; this improves the community environment by maintaining areas that would otherwise be neglected, and grows strong bonds between the pupils and members of the community.

8.8.3 Rural Business Links

Within walking distance of Cradoc Community Primary School is Cradoc Golf Club. The community relationship between the school and the golf club is invaluable. Children are able to experience sessions in the driving range for PE lessons and the club are incredibly supportive for school events and fundraising activities.

Pupils of Cradoc have benefitted from visits to local rural businesses, further enhancing learning about rural crafts and the rural economy, firmly in line with Powys' Local Development Strategy.

8.8.4 Cross Generation Support

Cradoc Community Primary School receives high levels of support from parents, grandparents and the community as a whole. The school hosts regular community events including Sports Days, Community Bingo, and Community Picnics.

Cradoc Community Primary School has been a vital cog in the workings of Cradoc and the surrounding areas. Many local residents, especially the elderly who live close to the school have explained how the sound of the children playing outside is uplifting and has a positive impact on their own well-being. The Health and Care Strategy for Powys 2019 – 2022 aims to ensure that “The environment /community I live in supports me to be connected and to maintain my health and well-being”.

Cradoc has established deep links with many local nursing homes, and the School Choir are often invited by the homes themselves; the Brecon Lion’s Club even provide transport funding for these events.

I was brought up living right opposite the school and went to Cradoc school. When my children were of school age at that time you had to move into the area for your children to attend Cradoc School. We moved into the area so that they would have the excellent education which Cradoc was renowned for. My mum was the cook in Cradoc school for over 29 years and still lives opposite the school. It will be a very sad day for Cradoc, past and current pupils to lose a extraordinary school which gives so much to the local community.

8.8.5 Agricultural Links

Cradoc Community Primary School serves a wide rural community. By its very nature it has a rural, farming culture and character and many children in school are involved in the ups and downs of farm life on a daily basis. Being a rural school, Cradoc is in a position to support Powys County Council’s initiative to promote mental health and well-being amongst farming families and farming communities to support resilience, as set out in the “Supporting farming communities at times of uncertainty” document. Cradoc Community Primary School has worked with the Rural Dean and other partners to access support for children with issues around mental health in farming families. These have included focus on early prevention, including understanding mental health and the need to seek help.

Cradoc Community Primary School hosts community focussed events, such as Harvest Festivals, Social evening etc provide increasing opportunities for farmers and communities to connect. These events strengthen social networks. These events help to reduce the “gradual decline of the rural communities” set out in the “Supporting farming communities at times of uncertainty” document mentioned above.

Cradoc Community Primary School supports other local organisations and works with them to develop understanding for the children. For example, the children learned about the UNCRC and to empathise and support others as part of our Rights Respecting School work. They were able to show compassion, promote equality, and uphold inclusion and consequently Cradoc became the first primary school in Wales to become a School of Sanctuary.

“You’re a small school with a big heart.” Kirsty Williams

As a former pupil of the school and with family still living in the area and attending the school. A rural school is vital to the Community and the children and families within it, especially to those of a rural and particularly agriculturally based upbringing. Welsh government state when referencing agricultural and rural policies that they view agriculture and generational farms as the most significant aspect of culture and community and Welsh language and culture, which must be protected at all costs! The local school of Cradoc is the most valuable part of this community and thus must be protected at all costs, otherwise it is a complete disregard of Welsh Government policy aims and objectives.

8.9 Environmental Governance

The school is a place in the community is at one where a balance is found between rural farming needs and the environment. These events are supported by families and wider members of the community, including the Wildlife Trust. Our children and families celebrate this with the school through a range of Eco-events:-

- including maintenance and improvement of the school grounds,
- wildlife pond
- erection of bird and bat boxes
- placing of hedgehog homes
- building bug hotels etc.

8.10 Farmvention

Building on the rural and agricultural culture of the school, we participate in the NFU Farmvention programme, which supports children to learn about the day-to-day issues faced by farmers and growers in England and Wales. This enable them to develop skills and knowledge to support them in an agricultural future, should they wish to pursue this, further supporting succession planning and encouraging the development of rural skills, both areas of focus for the Welsh Government.

8.11 Community Play Spaces

The outdoor play space at Cradoc is well used after school hours and during the school holidays. Cradoc has always encouraged the play areas within the school grounds to be used by the local community. The facilities for outdoor play at Cradoc are well used and relied upon by local children. They are used for the adventure play areas, the fields for sport, and the playground as a safe area to learn to ride bicycles away from the dangerous rural roads. From the Cradoc Working Group Survey, this was highlighted several times as an area that is central and depended upon for children to be able to play locally. This is in line with Powys Local Development Plan (LDP) Objective 14, which encourages active healthy lifestyles by enabling access to open spaces, areas for recreation and amenity including allotments or growing spaces, and to ensure development provides opportunities for walking, cycling, open and play spaces where required.

The school grounds are used out of hours on a pretty much daily basis by children for playing, riding bikes etc. Those children would either have to stay indoors or be forced to play on the roads, with the consequent risks and dangers, including potential fatality, that would entail.

Within the 'Play Sufficiency Assessment Executive Summary' 2019, Powys County Council indicated that it "recognises the importance of playing fields to children's play when any disposal decisions are made". If the school closes, this community play facility will be lost and would be contrary to Powys stated Objective 14 above.

Matter B1 of the Play Sufficiency Assessment relates to ensuring that "The play requirements of children living in isolated rural areas are understood and provided for." The loss of these facilities to the community would increase rural deprivation for the children, where there is no public transport available to take them to town to access play and where it is unsafe to walk. Consequently, children will either end up playing on the unsafe rural roads, which will increase the risk of potential injury or fatality, or they would simply not go out to play.

My 3 nieces and nephews now attend Cradoc, and the school site provides us with a safe play area which is fully accessible and well utilised throughout the school holidays.

8.12

Car Parking

Residents of Cradoc heavily rely upon the school car park outside of school hours due to the lack of safe parking in the village. There were concerns raised from our survey that if the school was to be closed, then this facility could be lost and cause many safety issues for local residents.

Appendix A

Welsh education has been in focus after the PISA 2009 / 2012 results were shown to drag the UK education performance down in international rankings. This triggered a number of independent reviews and led to the change in policy in a number of areas. Critical to understanding the Welsh performance is understanding poverty in all its forms in Wales.

PCC Strategic Plan

The strategic plan set out by PCC, has not been driven by educational reform, it has been driven by economic reform. In taking this surgical approach to change it has left behind important needs for rural education in Wales.

A strategic plan, can only be considered a plan if it has a clear direction of travel, that considers all constraints and desired outcome. The strategic plan sets out the presumption of rationalisation without setting down specific measurable outcome on which any strategy can be tangibly measured.

Executive Summary

This research study sought to investigate the potential benefits and challenges faced by rural schools in Wales. Small rural schools can often be associated with lower learning outcomes and can be at risk of closure as part of budget cuts. However, small rural schools may also have advantages that are often missed by policymakers and budget holders, such as higher levels of student wellbeing and sense of belonging. This study responded to this debate in the Welsh context, adopting a mixed-methods approach. We conducted a survey with 73 headteachers in the ERW consortia, followed by a mixed-methods study in eight schools (three urban and five rural).

The key findings of the investigation were:

- Student sense of belonging and wellbeing declines from the beginning of primary school to Year 11. The sharpest decline for students in rural schools is noted between Year 6 and Year 7, which is the transition from primary to secondary school. The overall decline is noted in both urban and rural settings.
- On individual measures of wellbeing and belonging, students from rural schools on average scored higher than those in urban settings.
- Students in rural schools indicated they enjoy learning more than children in urban settings
- Students expressed a higher sense of physical and emotional safety in rural schools compared to urban
- Students in rural schools participated in more extra-curricular activities, though the provision of extra-curricular activities was problematic in both settings. In the rural setting, provision could be problematic due to low staff numbers which limited the range of potential lunchtime and after school clubs offered. In an urban setting, it was reported that many of the same children attend multiple clubs, with the remainder of students not attending any.
- Parental participation could be problematic in both rural and urban settings. Both settings were aware of the difficulties however and were seeking to address them.

Overall it is evident that when looking beyond academic outcomes, there are many advantages to small rural schools. This report delves into each of the above topics in more details, exploring the value of rural schools and the potential for urban and rural settings to learn from one another.

The PCC documents use vague language that not only obfuscates its intentions, but provides little or no framework by which the impact on children’s education can be measured. Additionally, the report fails to take advice or recommendations from the School Organisational Code 2nd edition, the Rural education action plan, Improving Schools in Wales, Education childcare - August_2019

The strategic plan uses sweeping language about rationalisation, lumping together rural and urban schooling in the process. This is in stark contrast to the ERW report sighting the importance and quality of rural education.

Standards of Education

The language used in many of PCC document has the presumed position that teaching in a rural setting delivers a poorer outcome for these children in those settings. This is factually inaccurate and can be demonstrated through the attainment of school children across both England and Wales.

Pupils leaving school with English and Maths at A* to C grades at GCSE level, based on residency of pupils

Achievement of English and Maths GCSEs at grades A* to C or equivalent in England, based on pupil residence

The 2001 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authorities has been applied to all data up to 2012/13, from 2013/14 the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification has been applied which prevents comparison with previous years (see notes).
Methodology change: Introduction of a new 9-point scale for GCSE classification, where a 4 or above is equivalent to the old A* to C measure (see notes).

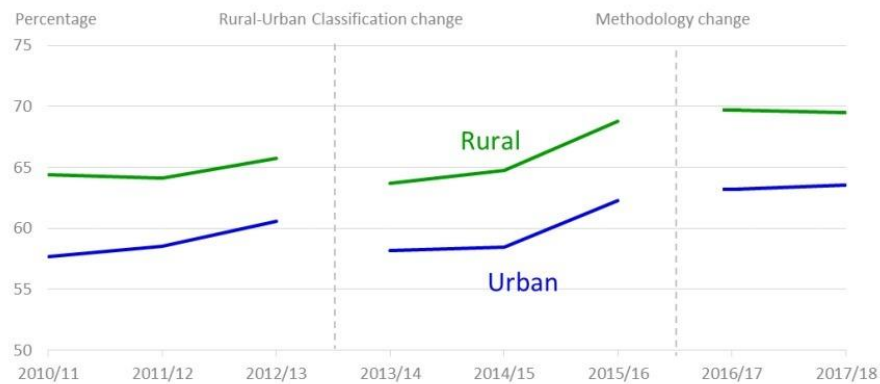


Figure 10: Extract from Education & childcare Report 2019



Appendix B Questionnaire

Cradoc-School-Research Fact Check

The purpose of this survey is to capture facts about Cradoc school and its community. The information supplied will help inform the impact assessment about what effect closing the school might have.

This electronic form is designed for you to provide us with your honest feedback about the school and its community. By completing this form, you provide your consent for the answers to be used by the Cradoc School Working Group, in the preparation of an independent impact assessment.

It would be helpful if you were willing to supply some contact details, for example, your email or telephone number. Our survey will take a few minutes; we would like to thank you in advance for helping build an accurate picture of the school's contribution to the community.

***Required**

Contact Name

Your answer

Contact details (Optional) (Email / Phone)

Your answer

What was/is your connection with Cradoc School? (tick all that apply) *

- Family/Parent/Guardian of pupil
- Former pupil
- Parent of a former pupil
- Former member of staff
- Current member of staff
- Associated with the school through a club or society
- Member of the Community
- Parents planning to send pupils to the school in the future
- Other:



When at the school, where did you travel from? *

- Cradoc
- Battle
- Llanfihangel / Nant Bran
- Lower Chapel
- Upper Chapel
- Merthyr Cynog
- Trallong
- Llanddew
- Pontfaen
- Garthbreny
- Brecon
- The Surrounding Rural Community
- Other:



What year were you or your child last active at Cradoc school?

Choose ▼

How many miles a day did you/your child travel to the school? *

Choose ▼

What's the closest school to your home, if Cradoc School closes? *

- Sennybridge
- Mountstreet
- Llanfaes
- Priory School
- Builth
- Other:

If Cradoc School closes, which school would you like your child to attend?

Your answer

Your feelings about the plans

Let us know what you think about the proposed closure of Cradoc School

Do you object to the closure of the school? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

In favour of closure Strongly Object

Would you support a new school built on the existing site?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do think its reasonable to merge the management of the schools before the council has secured its funding and developed detailed plans and costings?

- Yes
- No



Which activities/events have you attended? (Tick all that apply)

- 3@Cradoc
- Cool Kids @ Cradoc (AM/PM)
- Extra-Curricular Activities, like Netball, football, rugby, cricket, tennis, athletics and more....
- Music Tuition (Range of Teaching staff)
- Rural Play Pod, providing access to the wider community
- Shake Rattle n Roll
- Parent & Toddler Group
- Community Play Ground (Safe open Space)
- Pilates
- Book Exchange
- Community Swap Shop
- Church Benifice Meetings
- Cradoc Womens Choir
- Play Networks Meeting
- Use of the school ground out of school hours
- Community Summer Sports Competition
- Honddu Rural Community Association events
- Alumni Events like 50@Cradoc
- Whole community Events (Royal Weddings / Street Parties / summer Fetes)
- Community Training (First Aid / Internet Safety / Financial Awareness/ Substance Misuse)
- Friends of Cradoc Community Events

- Christenings
- Young Farmers Club
- Vote Counting / Polling Station
- Cool Kids Summer Club
- Access the Car Parking
- PTA Fund Raising Events
- Hosting Refugee Away Days
- Storage & Parking Facilities for local play network
- South Powys Mental Health in-reach Courses
- Other:

How satisfied were/are you with the quality of education? *

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Not at all very satisfied

Will friendship groups be lost in the school transition, and will this affect the community? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you rely on a bus service provided by the local council for your child to attend school?

- Yes
- No



Would you be happy with the school site being sold to developers for housing?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you feel that the local authority has included you in its consultation about the planned changes to the school?

- Yes
- No

Prior to this survey, do you feel like your views have been included and considered as part of the planning for the school closure?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

How did you hear about the plans?

- In the Press
- From the School
- from Powys County Council



Do you feel that COVID19 has prevented the local council from carrying out its obligated duties to consult with interested parties?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Did hearing about the planned closure change your mind about your child attending the school this year or in the future?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you think that the process should be delayed until the pandemic has passed and community meetings can resume?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

If the school is rebuilt on the Cradoc site, with a community hall, meeting room, kitchen and multi agency room, what would you use it for?



Feel Free to share any other detail with us you feel might be relevant.

Your answer

Thanks for your input, we really appreciate it.

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