

Ysgolion Tyddewi ar gyfer y dyfodol

St. Davids schools for the future

news 3

20 March 2015

Our future Our life Our legacy

In 2013 our school, Ysgol Dewi Sant, was heavily criticised by Estyn and told that it was in need of "significant improvement". In 2 years its management team, staff, and governors had worked together to turn that situation around.

This January the Leader of Pembrokeshire County Council announced a plan to close YDS for good. The people of the Peninsula marched together on County Hall. Within a week the plan was dropped.

When it was replaced by a plan to remove the YDS 6th form, the people of the Peninsula came together again to demand better, and **St Davids schools for the future** was born.

Since then the Council position has shifted significantly, but the next few weeks are critical. We now have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to agree a plan of our own - a realistic and practical vision of the 21st Century education that we want for our children and our communities - and to campaign for that vision to become the future of our infants, the life of our families and our legacy for the next generation.

The Council's public consultation starts at **St Davids City Hall at 6.30 on Monday 23 March**. In this edition of Schools for the Future News you'll find all you need to know to have your say and make a real difference.



The view from the community

These are excerpts from just a few of your comments and testimonials. There are many more on the website. What's **your** view? Tell the Council directly at the public consultation meeting. St Davids City Hall, **Monday March 23rd** 6.30 - 8pm. Call to book your place 01437 764551

Gracie Morris Yr 12 student

"My family were pupils during the 30s, 40s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 00s to the present day, with me in year 12 and my younger sister in year 8.

My mother isn't from St Davids. She was brought up in London and went to a 2000 strong comprehensive school. She remembers it as being a harsh, anonymous experience and she doesn't have the same sense of shared history and community as we have here. We, as a family, are all agreed that Ysgol Dewi Sant is the centre of our community and if the school closes St Davids will suffer."

Wil Chant – The Waterings – former Head Boy

"Many 17 year olds are not ready for University style lecture teaching and still require a more formal classroom approach. Centralising will result in more A-level failures or drop-outs. The extended commute for many children to Pembs College will see a poorer uptake of A-levels. And taking the 6th forms away from secondary schools will result in teachers with "specific subject expertise" gradually leaving to teach elsewhere, negatively impacting on the standard of GCSE's and teaching of the lower age groups.

If PCC push this idea through then ultimately I believe there will be fewer young people going onto study at University leading to an overall drop in the standard of education throughout the county. Long-term that will clearly have a negative impact on industry and commerce in Pembrokeshire. The idea of a huge centralised 6th form offering an abundance of subjects, career choices and excellent teaching standards is idealistic, but not practical (not in my eyes anyhow)."



Meg James Yr 8 Pupil. From a letter she sent to all the County Councillors

"I go to YDS because of this... YDS is a warm hearted school that my father and grandfather went to, this school has been the key to the door, unlocking many pathways for their education, giving them good GCSE and A level grades because of the teaching staff who cherished and treated them like individuals. Are we a small school? Yes. Are we the best performing school in the Pembrokeshire County? Yes. Our school is small and to you it may make you think we are vulnerable and an 'easy target' but I tell you we will fight for our community."

Jill Lewis, mother of Helwen who went on from YDS to Cambridge Uni.

“In the internet era of Skype and distance learning it is clearly possible to run courses at A-level (and other levels) where students are located in their own local school. Why spend an hour each way on a bus only to sit in a desk in a classroom just like the classroom back in your own local school?

Rural students, in addition, need to become absolutely familiar with distant learning and working ... If the county is not going to lose its brightest young entrepreneurs to London, Cardiff and abroad, they need to know how to run businesses and be part of businesses working remotely from here, so they can earn a decent salary, not tied to depressed rural wages..

So, yes, amalgamate schools into administrative "families" for efficiency and cost-savings, but invest in IT, highly skilled staff, and attractive modern surroundings to work in.... not wasteful bus journeys. Bring student groups together with their tutor/teachers from time-to-time of course, work on the Open University model, make school libraries centres of training in how to learn, and support for students in their locality, no matter what age or stage.

It is all possible... and St Davids will be the better for it.”

John James - Solva boy and first Rugby Captain in YDS



“I was very happy at YDS, the school not only provided a secure environment, but also provided me and my peers with the confidence to embrace the next phase of our lives. We all knew each other, from first year to end year, and our relationship with the teachers, Grif Maths, Grif Lab, Lloyd Phys and Tom History, was so very positive.

A small community and caring school provides the foundation to believe in yourself, education is important, but fundamental to this is the value of security, of belonging and having a sense of place. After school, us kids would meet up and go swimming off Solva Harbour, straight there, no commuting for hours to get to and from home, just fun.

YDS is the backbone to this community, I went there, my kids went there and in time I want to see my grandchildren have the opportunity to experience the same positive schooling as I had.

I believe that the school has the potential, with all our support, to move into a definitive 21st century educational phase and I shall for one will be looking on with excitement. “

Share your views with the community.

Have your say on the website www.schoolsfuture.co.uk

email our **families and community team** at myvoice@schoolsfuture.co.uk

write to Schools for the Future, Tregyddulan, St Nicholas, Goodwick, SA64 0LX

come to the St Davids Rugby Club meeting Thursday March 26th 6.30 - 8pm

8 things to know by Monday!

1. What's a surplus place?

Each school or college building has a running and maintenance cost and a maximum number of students it can physically house. If it's not full then there are surplus places, but building costs stay the same, so surplus places waste money. Welsh Government is pushing hard for Local Councils to cut surplus places and save money, and this is one of the main drivers for reorganising our schools. PCC looks at projected numbers for each school over the next 3-5 years and estimates the number of surplus places that there will be. Based on that they decide to combine schools, close schools etc.

YDS has a capacity of 482 students. Right now it's full, but the forecast is for 160 surplus places by 2020 (although that ignores about 120 out-of-catchment students currently at the school).

Pembrokeshire College has about 2,000 full-time places. Plans for it to run a new vocational unit in Pembroke would shift students there from its main site leaving it with about 400 surplus places. Basing the proposed 6th form unit at the College would instantly remove that problem.

2. What's in the Council proposal?

The key points of the January 29th proposal that is now up for public consultation are these:

- To turn Ysgol Dewi Sant into an 11-16 school
- To turn Ysgol Bro Gwaun into an 11-16 school with new Additional Learning Needs places
- To create a new 11-16 secondary school on the current Sir Thomas Picton site
- To centralise A-levels for all of these at a new 6th form centre at Pembrokeshire College
- And to turn Tasker Milward into a 3-16 Welsh medium/bilingual school

3. What's new since January?

We now know from Kate Evan Hughes, the Director for Children and Schools at the Council that the 11-16 YDS would be too small to survive unless it combines with at least two local primary schools to make a 3 site "all-through" 3-16 school. (see the all-through schools page)

Although the plan is for all A-level funding to be routed through the College, the detailed decisions about A-level provision would be made by an "A-level Committee" including school heads and governors, but with no representation from the College.

Kate Evan Hughes and Sharon Lusher, principle of Pembroke College, are now open to the idea of YDS retaining a few A-levels as part of what she calls a Hub and Spoke model.

4. Hub and what?

The hub and spoke model is a potential shift from the idea of centralising all A-levels at Pembrokeshire College. The suggestion from PCC and the College is that YDS might retain a handful of A-levels, or possibly become a centre of excellence for those A-levels, if it could get enough students (12 or so) to run the courses. It is not clear whether this might also work for Ysgol Bro Gwaun. It's hard to see how it could work for Sir Thomas Picton, being so close to the College site. The details of how this model would work have not yet been presented.

5. Who pays for what?

All our secondary schools are funded by Pembrokeshire County Council with money from Welsh Government. Pembrokeshire College is funded directly by Welsh Government and, unlike the schools, is also able to raise income by charging overseas students, consultancy work, etc. Its income is 88% government, 12% self-generated.

A-level courses should only run if there are enough funded students to pay for them. YDS and other Pembrokeshire schools have been subsidising A-levels with too few students from 11-16 money to keep them going. That is going to be clamped down on, so YDS will simply not be able to afford to keep running the range of A-levels it does now. Pembrokeshire college is free to subsidise small A-level courses from self generated income and does so to keep them going.

6. What is 21st Century funding?

It's a big pot of money from Welsh Government to invest in physical projects that transform school buildings, transform the use of resources, reduce costs or cut surplus places. If your project is not transformative, you need not apply!

PCC won £76 Million which it has had to match with £76M of its own. £20M is set aside to fund a loan for the Council's share. So there is around £132M to transform our schools. It's earmarked for

- Replacing the Bush Road school in Pembroke with new 460 vocational places £42M
- alterations to Sir Tomas Picton £38M
- alterations to Ysgol Bro Gwaun £7M
- building the 6th form unit at the College £4M - another £4M to be provided by the college

There is currently no 21st Century funding allocated to Ysgol Dewi Sant.

7. Who is Donaldson?

Prof Graham Donaldson is a former teacher who rose through the ranks to play a leading role in the Scottish Government's curriculum reform programme which is the foundation for Scotland's current success in education. Last year Welsh Government commissioned him to do the same thing here. His report is not yet policy, but it's a strong indicator of the way things will go. Important for us are: putting the web and digital skills at the heart of education, stronger links between schools and local economy and community. Scrapping Key Stages and making the progress through schooling much smoother - especially the transition from primary to secondary. See the ["all through" schools page](#).

8. What is a Voluntary Aided School?

In a VA/Voluntary Aided school the capital costs of running the school buildings switch from being the responsibility of the Local Authority to being split between the Church (15%) and Welsh Government (85%). The Church in Wales has offered to make YDS a VA school. The thinking is that this would reduce the cost of YDS to Pembrokeshire County Council, and would potentially attract new pupils from outside the catchment whose parents want them to have a Christian-based education.

The Church is absolutely clear that the school would be inclusive and welcome and take into account the different traditions and beliefs of all faiths. This would formalise a strong link between School and Cathedral that already exists. It would however mean that any future building projects related to the school would depend on the Church supplying or applying for Government funding. There would no longer be access to Council funding for school improvement.

All-through schools = joined up learning

By our schools and education team

All-through schools are taking off across the UK. They join together primary and secondary education on one site or across 2 or more sites under a single school establishment. Successful all-through models have developed quickly in Scotland, especially in communities in the Highlands and Islands, many with much smaller school rolls than here, yet these schools are leading the way in terms of results and are now among Scotland's best performing schools.

In England the number is growing rapidly through the free schools programme. Natalie Evans, director of the New Schools Network, a charity set up to support free schools, said that as many as 25 per cent of proposals for new free schools are now based on the all-through model. "The main thing appears to be dealing with the issues around transition," she said, "Children find it difficult to go from primary to a bigger secondary environment and can slip back at that point. Quite a lot of motivation for doing this is about preparing children properly for secondary education and maintaining something of the primary environment at the age of 11 and beyond."

Prof Graham Donaldson, architect of the Scottish education transformation says that all-through schools provide much more than just academic success. "Of particular importance to all-through schools are partnerships with parents, local employers and community groups. All through schools have significant responsibilities to work with local partners in nurturing, supporting and educating their young people to be productive members of sustainable local communities, as well as confident citizens ready to step out into the wider world."

Some communities in Wales' top county for education, Ceredigion, as well as Lake Bala and Machynlleth, have already sought out the Scottish all-through model as a way of aiming for excellence within the school and providing a viable, sustainable blueprint for the future of a community. And with the Donaldson review of Welsh education seeking a route to excellence within Welsh schools, and Donaldson's enthusiasm for All-through education it seems it won't be long until large parts of Wales are putting in the foundations for this school model within their community, however big or small.

Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, the new all-through school in Machynlleth



Ann Evans, former YDS teacher, spoke to Headteacher, Dafydd Jones

The school has been operational since last September and consists of 1 Primary and 1 Secondary, with a few federated Primary Schools. It is a split site school so staff move between the primary and secondary campuses and the federated schools are involved in much of the planning, but are further away.

Discussions began back in the 90's when they had only 30 in the 6th form and less than 300 in the secondary school. After years of negotiations the school started to involve politicians and councillors and, after many delays it was finally agreed that the school would be "established" in 2014. Dafydd Jones was an Acting Head Teacher of the Secondary and there was an Acting H/T of the Primary. She did not apply for the post but continued as Deputy H/T and, in fact, her salary rose because the school became so much bigger than her original primary.

Already staff are working between secondary and primary, for instance a Maths graduate primary teacher is covering maternity leave for the secondary Maths department, secondary P.E. and French teachers teach in the Primary school, and Dafydd Jones is looking to develop that to Music and Art next year. And in the 6th form the New Machynlleth school links with schools in Aberystwyth and Llanidloes and a FE/HE College in Dolgellau to provide the greatest range of courses.

As for standards, the secondary is in the new Estyn green band of highly effective schools, whereas the Primary is in the red: in need of greatest improvement, so Dafydd Jones is expecting the combining of resources to have a beneficial effect at Primary results. Interestingly, pupils can opt to go to the school from nearby towns in Ceridigion and Gwynedd.. and they do!

A view from the community



"I personally am not opposed to an amalgamation of the local primary schools with Ysgol Dewi Sant if this ensures the security of education provision in St Davids for the children of St Davids and surrounding areas. If this model is working successfully for rural communities in other parts of Wales, we should be able to make it work for us here in St Davids. We all want the best for our children so we need to move with the times and modernise and adapt.

As a new business owner in St Davids it hugely concerns me that the school is under threat, St Davids without YDS would not be the same place to live that it is today. The school is at the centre of our small community. Without it, we are in effect closing St Davids off to the younger generation and sadly families will consider moving out of the area which will have a huge detrimental effect on the population. How are local businesses able to survive in an area where its population is dwindling?" **Elaine Owen - The Veg Patch – St.Davids**

All-through St Davids?

Kate Evan-Hughes - director for Children and Schools at Pembrokeshire County Council has told **Schools for the Future** that the only way to keep secondary education on the St Davids Peninsula is to amalgamate YDS and at least two local primaries, creating an all-through school for St Davids (see News sheet 2). So what do you think?

Have your say on the website www.schoolsfuture.co.uk
email our **schools and education team** at myvoice@schoolsfuture.co.uk
write to Schools for the Future, Tregyddulan, St Nicholas, Goodwick, SA64 0LX
come to the St Davids Rugby Club meeting Thursday March 26th 6.30 - 8pm

Could online learning save our sixth form?



Online communication, advertising, research, entertainment - it's at the heart of 21st Century business and at the heart of 21st Century homes. Digital skills are central to the Donaldson Review and the Welsh Government's vision of 21st Century education. Could online learning give us a 21st Century solution here?

Toby's story

Former YDS sixth former, Toby Houston-Sime, was frustrated not to be able to take an Environmental Science A-level at the school, so with the school's support he did it online.



The course was provided by Oxford Learning College. It only costs around £300. He's now studying for an Environmental Resource Management degree at University of the West of England.

"I had a lot of support from the school in terms of examinations and that was really good, but there was so much information and support available through the internet and I had allotted times for web chats with my tutor that I didn't need a lot else." Toby avoided the distractions of working at home by using his self study periods at school to do the work, and it got him the A-level he needed. "It was absolutely vital. Without it I couldn't have done what I wanted to do. And it's such a cheap and easy way to provide schooling in rural areas."

If Toby can do it off his own bat, surely there's a way that we can build in the option of distance learning, based at the school, to broaden all students' A-level choices? Maybe some combination of school-based distance learning and weekly face-to-face tutorials could give our students a base at YDS while studying with a tutor in Fishguard or Haverfordwest? That would save time and reduce travel costs and pollution. Distance learning, starting with correspondence courses, has been part of rural education for decades. Online learning is helping rural communities from Anchorage to Alaska - should we do it here too?

Hwb?

“The internet at school is useless”, I’ve heard over the dinner table.

It’s the view of a frustrated 14 year-old, but it’s true. We can do more online at home than the kids can do at school. How can our children get ready for life in a digital world with the online equivalent of a writing slate?



Well one possible answer is called Hwb. Hwb is a safe digital learning environment designed specifically for schools. It’s provided by Welsh Government and since 2012 some counties have been lapping it up and applying for Government money to install it in their schools.

Janet Hayward is a primary Headteacher and Chair of the National Digital Learning Council for Wales.

“Our starting point for this vision is the belief that teachers and learners now live in a world where communication and knowledge are routinely digital and highly interactive, and that the processes of learning and teaching can, and must, take advantage of what digital technologies offer.”

Rosie Davies lives in St Davids and teaches at Dyffryn Taf School in Carmarthenshire. “We’ve been using Hwb for some time. It is a full suite of MS Office 365 available online for every learner, along with an interface where students can access documents, videos, images etc and upload their own. We have used it to instigate and manage the delivery and assessment of The Welsh Baccalaureate, develop a literacy blogging project, to provide collaboration between groups of learners - wherever their location - and generate 24/7 access for all learners to course support materials.”

Hwb is designed to work from nursery to A-level, and for each school that signs up access is provided for every staff member, pupil, parent and governor free of charge. Hwb on its own won't cut surplus places or save 6th forms, but if it becomes a central part of school life, then it's a short step to distance learning and all the advantages that would bring.

Pembrokeshire County Council on digital learning

3 years ago PCC committed itself to making the very best use of digital technology in schools.

In its Strategic Plan for School Organisation 2012-2016, the Council said it would use digital technology to:

- Support teaching and learning across all areas of the curriculum
- Offer a ‘mixed economy’: whole class; group; mini suite; laptop; specialist suites, etc.
- Enable schools and learners to access provision remotely, and enable learners to work independently and to follow personalised learning programmes.
- Seek, where appropriate, to remodel surplus spaces to develop resource areas that will support personalised and independent learning.

It wanted to use

- Video conferencing and a transformational virtual world to provide a continuum of resources that will bind the educational community together and support learners in highly innovative ways.

It said

- This approach will, over time, reduce support and transport costs by enabling learners to access wider curriculum options at the point of need.

What great ideas! Maybe we could use them in the current proposal?



So what now?

The Council's public consultation begins on Monday 23 March and ends Tuesday 5 May

St Davids schools for the future is holding two meetings during that time to gather your views and turn them into a proposal on behalf of the whole community. We will gather support for the proposal through a petition and if we can speak with one voice it will carry a lot of weight.

The Council can then choose to incorporate our views or ignore them. If it ignores them we can object which will force the decision to go to the Welsh Government. If things go that far there will be a lot of lobbying to be done in the run up to next year's Council and Assembly elections!

But the council is showing flexibility and a willingness to listen so hopefully things won't go that far.

Council consultation meetings, St Davids City Hall

Monday 23 March 6.30 - 8.00 pm

Wednesday 15 April 6.30 - 8.00 pm

To book a place phone 01437 764551

for other venues see www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk

St Davids schools for the future meetings, St Davids Rugby Club

Thursday 26 March 6.30 - 8.00 pm

Thursday 16 April 6.30 - 8.00 pm (revised date)

please do come or make your contribution by post or email

leave your comments and keep up with the news

www.schoolsfuture.co.uk

or wherever you see a newspaper sign

email your views to

myvoice@schoolsfuture.co.uk

write to

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As baby Alexandra says...

