

Schools
for the Future

**BACK
THE
PLAN**

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Schools for the Future community plan

A community response to Pembrokeshire County Council's proposal for the reorganisation of secondary education in Mid and NW Pembrokeshire.

21 April 2015

The plan was developed with input and support from the communities of the St Davids Peninsula and was researched and drawn up by the steering group of **Schools for the Future**. Supporting information and **community focus documents** can be found at www.schoolsfuture.co.uk

Foreword

In February 2015, following a charged and passionate meeting of the St Davids Peninsula community in response to Pembrokeshire County Council's proposal for the reorganisation of secondary education in the area, a voluntary steering group with 23 members was set up to develop a community-backed proposal for a better way forward. That steering group, under the banner of St Davids **Schools for the Future**, set out to create a community plan for 21st Century education in Mid and Northwest Pembrokeshire. The plan aims to provide a foundation on which excellent teaching can give our children the education they deserve. Its **objectives** are to:

1. raise standards and improve outcomes
2. increase student choice
3. ensure sustainability
4. increase efficiency, make best use of funding, and reduce surplus places
5. increase participation and reduce the post 16 drop out rate

Because the plan evolved from the need to respond to Council proposals for the St Davids Peninsula, section 1 specifically addresses sustainability issues there. Sections 2 and 3 include ideas which could equally well be adopted by Fishguard and Haverfordwest. And section 4 offers an approach to 6th form provision that has the potential to address the desires of all three communities.

We suggest that **community focus documents** could be added to the plan, if Fishguard and Haverfordwest choose to, to tailor, make additions, or express preferences from the perspective of each community, with the aim that we all pull together behind a single community response to the consultation by May 5th.

Summary

The Schools for the Future community plan has four elements.

1. A sustainable school

We propose to ensure the long term sustainability of education on the St Davids Peninsula through the creation of a split-site, 3-16, all-through school, amalgamating the management and governance of Ysgol Dewi Sant, with at least two local primary schools, plus the enlargement of the school catchment area.

2. A transformational strategy to raise standards

We propose a strategy to improve standards and outcomes by making interactive and web-based learning, and integrated community involvement the foundation for excellent teaching and inspired learning.

3. A building based on educationally-led design

Fundamental to this transformational strategy is the redevelopment of the new school sites using 21st Century schools funding to add brand new facilities for interactive and web-based learning, and for community involvement in an educationally-led design approach.

4. P6 - a sixth form college for the 21st century

We propose the creation of a new, independent, centrally funded and administered, split-site 6th Form College for Pembrokeshire with community campuses in Haverfordwest, St Davids and Fishguard. Making intelligent use of interactive and web-based learning, producing considerable economies of scale as an A-level provider for over 500 learners, and working in an integrated partnership with Pembrokeshire College this would provide a full range of academic and vocational learning options for post-16 learners.

This approach would give us “local solutions for local needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach” as advocated in PCC’s *Tribal* report, and we believe it can provide equal access to the best possible learning environments, facilities, and education to children across Mid and Northwest Pembrokeshire.

Detail

1. A sustainable school

The creation on the St Davids Peninsula of a split site 3-16 all-through school under a single management team, through the amalgamation of YDS and at least 2 local primary schools would give economies of scale that would make the school sustainable into the future. Without such an amalgamation the predicted surplus places at YDS would make it too expensive to keep open. Without YDS we believe that its feeder primaries would lose students and also risk closure.

An all-through school could bring huge benefits to our children and our community. All-through schooling has transformed the effectiveness of Scottish rural education, strengthening community ties and creating a flow of learning from 3 to 16 without the often difficult move from primary to secondary schooling which can slow up children's progress. This is exactly in line with what Prof. Graham Donaldson, the architect of the improvements in the Scottish system, has called for in his Review of the Welsh curriculum.

We also propose the enlargement of the school catchment to include the whole of Roch, and to explore ways to ensure that pupils of feeder primaries not directly part of the 3-16 school share in the benefits of all-through education, possibly by formalising or expanding existing co-operative arrangements.

We support the principle of the new school becoming a Church in Wales VA school (pending full clarification of financial and funding implications) formalising the strong connection between school and Cathedral. This has the potential to reduce LEA building and maintenance costs and attract more students from Church-based primary schools outside the catchment.

We expect these and the other proposed changes, along with the proven commitment of the staff, governors and community to the success of our school, to bring about a significant long term improvement in educational standards and the appeal of the school to out of catchment students (currently over 20%). This, along with the effects of proposed housing developments and any potential changes in Welsh medium primary provision in the area, must be taken into account in predicting future pupil numbers/surplus places.

2. A transformational strategy to raise standards

The Council's consultation document calls for a strategy for 21st Century education that is cutting edge, innovative and aspires to excellence for all. We propose that interactive and web-based learning, and integrated community involvement are the way to do that.

Web-based learning

In rural communities the internet is the key to sustainable economic growth, and in education it is the route to giving our children equal access to educational resources and opportunities.

Web based learning is infinitely flexible, can adapt to the changing needs of employers and universities, and offers access to high quality and cost effective education. Research in the USA suggests that online or blended online/face-to-face learning achieves better results than traditional learning methods alone. In its Strategic Plan for School Organisation 2012-2016, Pembrokeshire County Council was glowing about the potential of digital technology to “support teaching and learning across all areas of the curriculum, and provide a continuum of resources that will bind the educational community together and support learners in highly innovative ways.” This approach “will reduce support and transport costs by enabling learners to access wider curriculum options at the point of need.”

The Donaldson Review puts digital skills at the heart of the Welsh Curriculum. This is clearly in line with Welsh Government thinking, and its provision of Hwb as a basis for digital learning means that the software infrastructure for this transformation is immediately available. With all these benefits, we want to see interactive and web-based learning at the heart of our school sites.

Integrated community involvement

The community is an underused resource that has the potential dramatically to improve standards and outcomes, and prepare our children for the wider world. We want the adult community to contribute to the education of our children and the children and their school to contribute to life-long learning of our community.

Teachers using community businesses as real life examples would make the curriculum more relevant and engaging; from maths and business studies to RE and ethics, and art and design. Small business units on the school sites could be let at below market rents to start up businesses whose experiences then become the focus for life-skills and business education within the school. All this would give students from 3 to 16 access to experience, know-how and inspiration by bringing new voices and perspectives into the school, sow the seeds for future apprenticeships and community-based work experience, and allow learners to make career and training choices informed by direct experience.

The development of the school hall as an educational/community/tourism facility for music, drama and cinema performances could raise student standards by increasing opportunities for public performance, attract performers and artists to come and inspire and provide master classes for the students, and make the school an integrated community asset. The use of school facilities out of hours and out of term time for summer camps, summer schools, weekend courses, and evening classes could create new life-enhancing, extracurricular learning opportunities for learners from 3 to 99! This would integrate adult and pre-19 education, and make the St Davids Peninsula a learning destination for out-of-season tourists.

Many of these proposals would raise revenue that could be ploughed back into improving educational standards, and endowments from local business could be used to encourage excellence and fund additional educational opportunities. Taken together, web-based learning and integrated community involvement would be a cutting edge, innovative, transformational approach to creating a foundation for excellent teaching and giving our children an education that lets them excel.

ALN provision

We welcome the Council proposal for increased Additional Learning Needs provision at Ysgol Bro Gwaun, but propose the continuation of the existing level of ALN provision within the mainstream schools which currently works to the benefit of the children and families.

3. A building based on educationally led design

We propose to embed this transformational educational strategy into the physical design and structure of the school in the form of i-Learn centres, onsite small business units, and by remodelling access to the school hall and other potential community facilities. We propose doing this by using 21st Century schools funding to redevelop the school sites.

“There is a clear and statistically significant link between rapidly improving standards for young people, and new buildings created through an educationally-led design process which focused first on clear strategies for transformational educational change.” says the Partnership for Schools report on the educational impact of the English ‘Building Schools for the Future’ programme. Pembrokeshire County Council also calls for the use of “an educationally-led design approach to ...enhance and transform the learning environment and opportunities for learners.”

The proposed YDS redevelopment would include the building of a number of Stepping Stone/Carrreg Sarn business units on the site, and the remodelling and improvement of learning spaces and the school hall with careful zoning that will allow and encourage parental and community involvement and create community resources available to all.

We also propose the construction of the i-Learn Centre, a flexible on-line learning space that will literally and metaphorically place interactive and web-based learning at the heart of the new school. Designed in a modular form that is flexible and expandable depending on changing future needs, such a concept could also be incorporated into the other Pembrokeshire school redevelopments and made available as a model for 21st Century school design across Wales and the UK.

These measures would transform the current 20th Century school structure into one which actively supports engagement, motivation and excellence into the future. They would provide the same opportunities to the children of the St Davids Peninsula as are currently proposed by the remodelling of Fishguard and Haverfordwest schools, and they could simultaneously be used to tailor school facilities to meet recalculated future pupil numbers.

4. P6 - a sixth form college for the 21st Century

We propose the creation of a new, independent, split-site 6th Form College for Pembrokeshire, P6, with community campuses in Haverfordwest, St Davids and Fishguard. It would be centrally administered and funded, make intelligent use of interactive and web-based learning, take a strategic approach to the provision of courses and facilities on the three sites, and work in an integrated partnership with Pembrokeshire College to offer a full range of academic and vocational options for post 16 learners.

The objectives of P6 would be to:

1. achieve excellent standards and outcomes for all students and widen their life chances and opportunities
2. ensure that a full range of learning options is available so that learners can study subjects that fit their interests and abilities
3. provide high levels of expertise in the teaching of A-level and vocational subjects
4. provide specialised pastoral support and careers advice
5. provide the best possible learning environment and facilities
6. allow 6th formers to maintain a pivotal and inspirational role in school sport, music, and drama, and to act as role models and advisors to younger pupils in developing their aspirations and future plans
7. recognise that “some learners benefit from the additional structure of the school environment.” A large 6th form college “can be too much freedom, they don’t cope well with that. In those cases they would probably be better off in a school sixth form.” (Wessex report)
8. address the issue of yr 12/13 drop outs and ensure improved participation rates, whilst recognising that, “The need for learners to travel significant distances may cause them to disengage from learning at 16.” (Tribal report)
9. address issues of motivation and the advantages of larger peer groups

10. ensure value for money, and reduce inefficiencies and unnecessary duplication, recognising the WAG view that “inefficiencies are more likely to arise when school sixth forms operate with fewer than 150 students, but rural issues must also be taken into account.” (Tribal report)

The P6 St Davids and P6 Fishguard campuses would be collocated with the new St Davids all-through school and Ysgol Bro Gwaun, taking advantage of their newly remodelled facilities. The larger P6 Haverfordwest campus would be collocated with either the new Haverfordwest 11-16 school or Pembrokeshire College after careful consideration of the pros and cons of each. This flexible solution could potentially be expanded to offer the same advantages to other 6th forms in the south of the county.

Centralised expertise and management

P6 would have an independent management team with proven expertise in A-level provision including representatives of the three secondary schools, governors, students, the College, the LEA, communities and businesses. It would be responsible for driving up standards, ensuring value for money and driving out inefficiencies. That will be made possible by the centralised management of A-level provision, timetabling and funding, the economies of scale of the new 500+ 6th form college, and the financial savings associated with online learning.

Online learning

Making shared use of the **i-Learn Centres** in the schools means that there is effectively no limit to the post 16 courses that could be offered. Online learning or blended online/face-to-face learning outperform traditional teaching in US studies. Online learning creates a much larger peer group than is possible even in large school A-level classes and so removes the problems associated with small peer groups. Online learning also reduces costs (a fully online 2 year course might cost about £300 compared with £750 for a conventionally taught A-level), and if guided where appropriate by fully qualified A-level learning facilitators, rather than subject teachers, it could make the provision of minority interest subjects entirely cost effective at all community campuses.

Strategic course provision

Some subjects require specific physical facilities - labs, rehearsal/performance spaces, studios - and P6 might decide that these subjects are best provided on one rather than all community campuses. But use of the i-Learn centres for distance learning and video tutorials could minimise the need for daily travel even in these subjects.

P6 might also decide to consolidate a strategic core of teacher-led A-level courses in the communities - courses that were in the best interests of the pupils to have available at a local level. This would be a flexible system as educational and workplace priorities evolved, so the designated core could be modified to keep up with the needs of learners and incentivise the teaching of core subjects to a high standard at GCSE.

The core subjects could be based on one or more of the following:

- subjects that would best satisfy the business needs of the local economy
- subjects that would have a spin-off in terms of facilities to boost the tourism economy
- Subjects based on what each locale offers in education terms
- Subjects best co-located with vocational courses to allow easy combination or movement between them
- some or all of the Russell Group “facilitating” subjects: English lit, geography, history, languages, maths, physics, biology, chemistry.
- aspirational subjects that the communities wanted to develop locally

The centralisation of A-level funding would mean that if the core courses fell in some instances below the break even class size of twelve, these courses could be maintained through economies made through online learning and a strategic redistribution of funding brought in by classes that were over twelve.

Informed choices and pastoral care

By centralising the funding stream and planning of post-16 provision it would be possible to design and run a dedicated post-16 pastoral care system, making intelligent use of online as well as face-to-face contact.

In addressing the year 12/13 drop out rate, the Council's consultation document says that key contributors are "insufficient and/or ineffective guidance at pre-16 to choose the right course, coupled with a narrow and limited range of course options." And it warns that "education providers are faced with having funding removed if a student switches a course."

So we propose a centrally run service providing advice on education, training and employment, along with, for years 10 and 11, study-experience weeks (like work experience) to give pupils a realistic taste of post 16 learning possibilities. A key role of the 6th formers on the community campuses would also be to provide honest advice to the lower school based on their personal experience.

In summary, the P6 approach to sixth form education allows:

- as full a range of options in terms of course choices and learning environment/location as is practically possible given financial and geographical constraints
- sharing of expertise and strategic planning to drive up standards
- economies of scale to drive out inefficiencies associated with smaller 6th forms while addressing the needs of rural communities
- improved careers, educational and pastoral advice to increase participation and attainment and reduce drop out rates and course switching
- minimised need for learners to travel significant distances that may cause them to disengage from learning at 16.
- the flexibility of local solutions for local needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, providing the best possible learning environments, facilities and standards of teaching for all learners.

Schools for the Future

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More info and **community focus documents** at www.schoolsfuture.co.uk

back the plan!

If you believe that this plan forms a sound basis for high quality education for our children and communities in the 21st Century, the only way to lend your support and make your voice heard is to write to, or email the Council directly. A petition will not help. **Only by writing personally can you make a difference.**

Whether you are aged 9 or 99 you have a voice that the Council must listen to. If the communities of Mid and Northwest Pembrokeshire speak with one voice it will carry huge weight. And **you do not have to agree with every bit of the plan to support it.** You can add your own ideas or tailor it to your own community. You could write:

“As part of the statutory consultation on the future of secondary education in mid and northwest Pembrokeshire I would like to state my support for the **Schools for the Future plan** but

- I disagree with.....
- I think it would be improved by.....
- I particularly support the ideas in the *Fishguard focus* or *Haverfordwest focus* document (available at www.schoolsfuture.co.uk)

Your letter or email can be as short or as long as you want. But whatever you do, please tell the Council your view.

You must write by Tuesday May 5th

email: educationconsultations@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

write to: Director for Children and Schools, Pembrokeshire County Council,
County Hall, Haverfordwest SA61 1TP

or we'll send it for you if you put your letter in the drop boxes at shops where you see the big yellow spot of the Schools for the Future newpoint sign.

and on behalf of future generations in Pembrokeshire

Diolch yn fawr!

read more at www.schoolsfuture.co.uk

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