

Copy of letter sent to Cllr A Jones (Cabinet Member for Education) and Mr I Roberts (Head of Schools Service) sent on behalf of the Governing Body

4 December, 2015

Dear Cllr Jones and Mr Roberts,

### **South Powys Secondary School Reorganisation Programme**

I am writing to you as Chair of Governors of Brecon High School in relation to process of secondary school transformation in south Powys.

The reason for this letter is to communicate to the Council the Governing Body vision for School and its future purpose and role in the provision of education within south Powys. In addition, we wish to set out the position of the School in response to specific points within the Council's school transformation.

#### Purpose & Role of the School

The new Brecon Community School will be a bilingual 4-18 school with an emphasis on quality of provision and inclusivity. Alongside academic excellence, this will offer transformational vocational pathways developed through links with major employment providers in the Brecon area, e.g. public services and the National Park.

The School will advocate open access and opportunity to all. Pupil progress will be proficiency based and learning opportunities will be personalised and based upon competency. The School's learning goals will be directed by pupil aspirations and life options and will be inspired and influenced by links to community partners and employers. Pupil motivation and community involvement will be facilitated by a relevant curriculum and enhanced by a new school building. The entire learning experience will be built upon the curiosity, wonder and involvement in the unique sources of inspiration provided in our local community.

#### Response to School transformation

In relation to school transformation in south Powys, the Governing Body supports the following proposals:

- a. The creation of a new 4-18 'through' school in Brecon;
- b. Continuation or new partnerships for vocational education to age of 18;
- c. The building of a new school in Brecon and the co-location of the new school and any other community partners (Brecon Campus);
- d. Continuation of teaching through Welsh Medium at the new school; and
- e. The location of one or more primary schools into the new school;

The Governing Body's support for each proposal is for the following reasons:

#### a. The creation of a new 4-18 'through' school in Brecon

The Governing Body recognises the challenges faced by secondary schools, pupils, the Council and the Welsh Government in the provision of secondary education in Powys. There is acceptance and recognitions of the financial impediments put forward in the Strategic Outline Case dated 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015 in relation to a 'critical mass' of pupils being required. The Governing Body supports proposals to reach such critical mass if such is necessary for the school's future success and viability.

However, we do not consider that transformation of education provision should be limited or constrained by an arbitrary decision to consider secondary education only. We would support and believe that transformation of education would need to include provision for the ages of 4-18, post-

16, academic and vocational and Welsh Medium. Due to the current financial challenges, this opportunity maybe once in a generation and we should make the best and most informed decision we can for the benefit of all pupils in south Powys.

b. Continuation or new partnerships for vocational education to age of 18

The Governing Body recognises that success of a school and a pupil is not necessarily measured by academic results only and successful education involves having access to other opportunities to develop, find alternative career pathways and vocations. We recognise that a traditional school environment may not be beneficial to all pupils and that there are other bodies and partners that are more suited to providing opportunities for pupils especially in vocational training.

The Governing Body would work closely with any other partners that promote learning and increased opportunities. We support any such arrangement with such partners that improves learning outcomes for pupils. Our emphasis is on inclusion, quality of provision and the provision of a curriculum that is pupil led. We would work with any agency with similar ethos.

The Governing Body supports and encourages opportunities for vocational education at Brecon Campus for pupils throughout their school years to the age of 18.

c. The building of a new school in Brecon and the co-location of the new school and any other community partners (Brecon Campus)

The Governing Body believes that building a new and fit for purpose building in Brecon is the cornerstone of school transformation in south of Powys. This needs to be flexible, sustainable and future proof.

The Governing Body recognises that public services have to change to meet the financial challenge and the requirement to deliver services differently. We will support that the school building should be fit for the school, the location of the Pupil Referral Unit, any other partners but also any requirement that enables school and community provision to be more sustainable and successful. Opportunities for co-locating other community, public sector and charitable sector services are supported where these assist generating improved outcomes for pupils.

d. Continuation of teaching through Welsh Medium at the new school

The Governing Body supports the ambition of the Welsh Government and the Council to increase the use of the Welsh language. We believe that such an ambition can only be realised by promoting opportunities for the uptake of the language and this must start during a pupils formative years. We understand the need for a critical mass of pupils but do not believe this can be achieved by centralising learning distant from a pupil's home and removing opportunities.

By the creation of a 4-18 through school, the Governing Body intends to embolden teaching in both Welsh and English to promote the uptake of Welsh but also to provide parental choice. This will be flexible and demand-led where pupil and parental choice will be supported within the means and overall sustainability of the School. The Governing Body believes that promoting uptake of Welsh from an early age will improve the use of the language and generate the necessary critical mass to offer sustainable bi-lingual teaching of pupils.

e. The location of one or more primary schools into the new school

The Governing Body recognises the financial challenges faced in education. We believe that this new opportunity to create a new school should be extended into primary education where the benefits of new and fit for purpose facilities can be extended beyond the scope in the Strategic Outline Case.

Where co-location of primary schools is not warranted, cost effective or necessary then all centrally supplied services can be located at Brecon Campus. Financial savings can be made by central purchasing and having a single support site would enable education to become more flexible to

meet pupils' requirements in the School but for other schools in the area. We believe that even where primary education is not provided by the through school, central services such as IT, cleaning, printing and support staff can be offered to other primary schools in the area with the aim of improving the education offer to all whilst making provision more sustainable and cost effective.

### Summary

The Governing Body has the best interests of the pupils as its primary focus and will do its utmost to assist the Council in improving academic results and educational outcomes. We believe that our proposal best serves the interest of all stakeholders and are willing to assist and partner the Council in delivering this. Brecon High School has always had a good reputation academically and culturally.

The Governing Body's ambition is these proposals for a new community school will be a 'beacon' for transformational learning within the County and beyond.