

To:

Phyl Davies cllr.phyl.davies@powys.gov.uk

Lynette Lovell lynette.lovell@powys.gov.uk

Clive Pinney clive.pinney@powys.gov.uk

Jane Thomas jane.thomas@powys.gov.uk

Geraint Rees geraint.rees3@powys.gov.uk

Pete Roberts cllr.pete.roberts@powys.gov.uk

Suggest to also CC the following councillors as they are in the Cabinet in Powys.

Education is in Cllr Phyl Davies' portfolio but I think they would all have to vote on any changes.

Cllr.rosemarie.harris@powys.gov.uk

Cllr.aled.Davies@powys.gov.uk

Cllr.Rachel.powell@powys.gov.uk

Cllr.myfanwy.alexander@powys.gov.uk

Cllr.lain.mcintosh@powys.gov.uk

Cllr.graham.breeze@powys.gov.uk

Cllr.heulwen.hulme@powys.gov.uk

Dear Cllrs Phyl Davies, Lynette Lovell, Clive Pinney, Jane Thomas, Geraint Rees and Pete Roberts,

I am a parent of children at Clyro Church in Wales Primary School and I am contacting you following Powys Council's decision on 18th December to suspend the school's right to control its own budget and your plan to make staff redundancies in the New Year. I am aware of the reasons you give for this course of action in your press release, however I believe this decision is wrong for the reasons I outline below.

Until last year, Clyro C in W Primary was running without a deficit and was taking a surplus into the following year. This changed in 2019 because pupil numbers fell just below the 91 pupil bracket, causing funding to be immediately cut by over £50,000, to what in real terms constitutes a three-class school. **The governors' subsequent decision not to condense four classes into three, was based on knowledge of the school, fairness and a decision to prioritise the pupils' learning.** The damage and disruption it would cause to the whole school community, pupils, staff and parents was quite rightly considered as a priority.

The school had just received a highly praised Estyn report, and condensing pupils into three classes of up to 38 children and across Key Stages was judged to be detrimental to the educational standards of the school and wellbeing of pupils. Pupil numbers are predicted to rise above the 91 pupil threshold again by the 2022-23 academic year, therefore the drop in pupil numbers would only be a temporary dip. The popularity of the school's rural location in the aftermath of recent 'lockdowns' can only accentuate this.

Pupil numbers naturally fluctuate, but this clumsy formula makes planning an already tight budget virtually impossible. It is also worth mentioning that in 2018 Powys Council moved the school into a new 21st Century Transformation building with four classrooms.

Following Powys CC's Estyn Inspection, you published an Action Plan in 2019, in which you state you will investigate the 'fair' funding formula. If this action has not been taken, why not? **Crucially, what justification can be given for your punitive actions against Clyro School in light of the fact that you have not investigated the dubious formula on which your decision was entirely based?**

Serious questions have been raised over the 'fair' funding formula's effectiveness. Have the Council answered the questions raised in the summary of the report by 'Level The Playing Field'? This extensive report shows there are other schools suffering unfairly under this crude and clumsy formula.

http://leveltheplayingfield.wales/application/files/8815/7348/7648/Powys_school_funding_-_an_analysis_of_the_2019_funding_formula.pdf

Is it appropriate to base your actions solely on an algorithm to make such vital decisions about the running of a school? We have seen in recent months that algorithms are a crude and inhuman tool, especially when used in relation to pupils' education. Calling your funding system 'fair funding' does not make it fair to pupils, since it is a system of large crude steps, instead of a sliding scale as used in Denbighshire. The consequence in this case is a mistaken decision for the school's pupils.

Many other schools in Powys are also in deficit, some to a far greater extent, and over a much longer period of time. Could you clarify if all these schools are receiving the same measures? And if this is not the case, for what reason is Clyro C in W School undergoing different treatment? What is the percentage of debt per pupil for Clyro C in W School in comparison with the other schools in deficit?

In light of the above, it is astonishing that Powys CC have described the actions of the Headteacher and governing body as 'mis-management' when in fact they have been working tirelessly managing a skeleton budget in the face of a pandemic and continuing chronic underfunding. **The actions of Powys CC are frankly shameful and place Clyro C in W School at risk.** Several members of the governing body have resigned as a result as they feel they cannot support your decision. If the entire governing body were to follow, what would be the effect of this upon the school?

The decision to do this on the last day of term also appears particularly heartless – was this really necessary? I would like to ask what this sequence of events will actually cost? Are members of an improvement board paid to fulfil this task? What will the cost of redundancy be, and is this worthwhile if numbers rise and the school needs another teacher again? Will the parents be consulted? Will this board have to talk to parents, as governors do?

The school has an excellent headteacher, fantastic teachers and staff team, a dedicated governing body and has been achieving high educational standards and excellent

well-being levels for many years. **Your decision to take control away from the governing body is unfair and unjustified, and risks damage to the school far outweighing the damage caused by a relatively small short-term deficit to the Council's budget.**

I urge you to reinstate the board's financial powers and offer them reasonable support needed to find a solution which all parties are satisfied with and, again, I ask that the 'fair' funding formula is assessed as it is clearly flawed.

I look forward to your response,

Regards,

Parent