

14th January 2021

Dear Members of Clyro C in W Primary School Management Board,

As concerned parents of children at Clyro C in W Primary School, we are writing to you to express our confidence in our Headteacher and staff team, and our concern in the notion of reducing the school from four classes to three.

Opposition to the redundancy is very strong and this is seen from letters from parents and local businesses. It is also demonstrated by the increasing Go Fund Me donations and the parent-led 'Friends' of Clyro's willingness to provide substantial financial support to the budget to avoid such a large deficit so that a recovery plan can be implemented.

We are extremely concerned about the many harmful effects that condensing our four classes into three would have for the welfare, wellbeing and education of our children, for the standards of the school, and for its future. Reducing our wonderful school to three classes would begin a process of downward spiral which we fear would see the demise of Clyro School. We set out to you below our reasons.

We have taken some time to model different class size combinations across the following years in order to see how a three class system would work in practice for our children and teachers. ***Please see data and summary appendix.***

There are of course serious implications of larger class sizes during this pandemic. The Net Capacity Calculation document provided to governors when the school was built, states that when classrooms were designed, the square metre classbase (to BB103) was for 29, 29, 30, and 30 pupils respectively. Our data modelling shows a class size of 38 is unavoidable on current projections. A class of 38 children which is designed for only 30 will of course be far less Covid safe for pupils, families and teachers. Social distancing will be impossible. We consider this point highly important as we do not foresee the dangers of Covid19 to be eradicated by September. When the school does it's annual PLASC census return to the Welsh Assembly showing that there are too many children in the classes, what qualifying measures will be put in place to ensure Powys do not force the school to contravene the Schools Admissions (Infant Class Sizes Wales) Regulations 2013 and the target of 30 for juniors created by Welsh Government and as set out in the School admissions Code?

Further implications for condensing pupils into three classes are numerous. We cannot see how this model will operate without the risk of a scenario in which the school is unable to accept new pupils in certain classes due to class size limitations. Splitting year groups also appears to be inevitable. We do not want to have to tell our children, after the uncertainty and stress they have already been through due to Covid19, that they are going to be separated from their peers. Also, teaching across key-stages is a nonsensical and inefficient waste of teachers' time. For teachers to be covering multiple key stages whilst next door the same key stage is also being taught as well as the stage above, is simply illogical and unreasonable in a school of this size. What would Estyn's view be on this arrangement?

In full recognition of The Well-being of Future Generations Wales Act 2015, one of the cornerstones of the new Welsh Curriculum places great emphasis on each child as an individual, their health and wellbeing as well as their academic progress. Now we are living in a pandemic, wellbeing is of course doubly important. What will pupil wellbeing be like if our children are learning in the environment outlined above? Clyro's recent Estyn report states our school is a "caring community where pupils are happy and feel secure...behaviour is excellent and pupils thrive as confident capable learners." We are proud of this high achievement and simply do not see how these high standards of wellbeing and education could continue in a three-class school.

Have PCC considered the building development at the Castle Estate in Clyro which includes six or seven family-sized dwellings? Large numbers of new housing are also being built in Hay on Wye. This is likely to mean a sustained increase in numbers coming from Hay because Hay Primary School will be oversubscribed year-on-year. Clyro is ideally placed to allow capacity locally. Add to this the cost to the LA in funding transport to neighbouring English schools if Clyro is full, with no other benefit for this outlay.

In the minutes from July 2020 Powys Schools forum, we notice the following comment made by Mari Thomas, interim Schools Finance Manager: "...overall school balances had now moved from surplus to deficit and the position was especially acute in secondary schools...Schools have been unable to make redundancies because they are on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. Welsh government may cover some costs incurred by COVID-19. Retaining staff could be one of them." In light of this minuted information, we wonder why, in light of the ongoing pandemic, is the school being asked to make a redundancy in complete contradiction to this sentiment and position of understanding from Mari Thomas.

Fundamentally, we as parents do not believe that Clyro is overstaffed. We believe that numerous Powys primary school deficits (referenced by Cllr. James Gibson Watt in his letter to you on 8/1/2021) are a red flag that Powys Schools are underfunded, and as a result, understaffed. Attempting to reduce a primary school with one of the best Estyn reports in Powys by comparing staffing levels with other primaries, shows a lack of foresight. Our pride in the school is in its exceptional educational and welfare standards, which is an example to other schools in Powys.

In his letter to you, Cllr. James Gibson-Watt states that ten other Powys primary schools are projecting 2020/21 deficits higher than Clyro. We therefore conclude that Powys's action resulted from the governing body's refusal to submit a recovery plan with one week's notice in December. Had there been a dialogue-based approach instead of taking what Cllr. Gibson-Watt has described as a "highly unusual" step of removing the governing body's powers, we feel this would have resulted in a more amicable situation. The manner in which this action was taken, physically summoning all staff into school when they were staying at home in order to ensure a Covid-free Christmas following a ten day isolation period is another questionable decision.

As a result of removing the governing body's delegated powers, volunteer governors, staff and parents have all been left with a feeling that Clyro School is being singled out for unfair treatment. Governors have reported that at meetings with yourselves, when the three-class scenario was proposed and rejected, they then asked for an alternative to be offered, but that none was given. We feel that an alternative should have been provided at this time, and doing so would have avoided the regrettable situation the school is now in. It is hard not to feel that Clyro School is not being dealt with equitably with other schools, when you compare our projected deficit with those authorised for other Powys schools.

Cllr. Pete Roberts states in his letter to us (24/12/20) that as Chair of PCC's Scrutiny Committee, he received assurances from Powys CC that there would be lenience in dealing with schools hovering around the 'fair' funding formula boundaries. We kindly ask that you now show lenience by acknowledging the wishes of all of the signatories below who do not want to see Clyro School reduced to three classes and lose a teacher.

Because we believe the application of the 'fair' funding formula is the cause of this regrettable and wholly avoidable situation, we will be in communication with you again regarding this broader issue in due course.

We acknowledge that during this pandemic Powys County Council is under multiple additional pressures, however, we do not wish to see our wonderful school suffer at this time or any other. We believe the board of governors to be wholly capable of fulfilling their duty, and ask that their delegated authority be returned to them.

We are incredibly proud of the brilliant staff team at Clyro, who work exceptionally hard at the best of times, and this year in particular we are more grateful than ever for their effort and commitment to our children's education.

Yours sincerely,

Parents of Clyro School Pupils

[names included]

Parents of 84 children attending Clyro School

Summary of the attached class projections data:

NB: This data is wholly sourced and created by parents through our own research.

Running a school with near 90 pupils and just 3 classes will pose a number of challenges;

1. In a 3-class September 2021 Clyro school there is likely to be 29, 28 and 30 in Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 respectively, with a Reception intake of 12 (the average year group size), and with the 14 pupils in Year 4 split between Class 2 and Class 3.
2. In the 2021-22 year, without splitting year groups, there would be 29, 20 and 38 in Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 respectively, with the 38 being above the recommended Key Stage 2 class size of 30, and above the planned capacity for the now overcrowded classroom.
3. If, however, there:

- a. are not any other new pupils
- b. the Reception intake for 2021 is between 12 and 15 pupils
(NB over 15 would result in there being >90 pupils in the school)

then there will be a Class 1 (Foundation) with more than 30 pupils (which is not allowed under the School Admissions (Infant Class Size Wales) Regulations 2013 if year groups are kept together. Or with split year groups, Class 2 will then be made up of four different year groups (two of them split) across two different Key Stages.

Last Updated: 13/01/2021		School with 4 Classes (Current)													
CLASS	Year Group	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		2025-26	
		No. in Year	No. in Class	No. in Year	No. in Class	No. in Year	No. in Class	No. in Year	No. in Class	No. in Year	No. in Class	No. in Year	No. in Class	No. in Year	No. in Class
Class 1	Reception (F)	17	17	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Class 2	Year 1 (F)	10		17		12		12		12		12		12	
	Year 2 (F)	10	20	10	27	17	29	12	24	12	24	12	24	12	24
Class 3	Year 3 (KS2)	14		10		10		17		12		12		12	
	Year 4 (KS2)	12	26	14	24	10	20	10	27	17	29	12	24	12	24
Class 4	Year 5 (KS2)	12		12		14		10		10		17		12	
	Year 6 (KS2)	6	18	12	24	12	26	14	24	10	20	10	27	17	29
TOTAL PUPILS		81		87		87		87		85		87		89	
Potential pupils from new housing (not incl in figures above):		8		95		95		95		93		95		97	
2020-21 pupil numbers confirmed as correct as of Jan 2021															
Future intake numbers match the current (2020-21) average year group size of 12															
Potential reception Class intake for 2021:		7	(this is the minimum, assuming all are accepted - from asking around the parents & pre-school)												

Pupils Per Class With 3 Classes (Proposed) & Non-Split Year Groups									
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2025-26	
OPTION 1	Year Group	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class
Class 1	R	17	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Class 2	1, 2 & 3	34	37	39	41	36	36	36	36
Class 3	4, 5 & 6	30	38	36	34	37	39	41	
OPTION 2	Year Group	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class
Class 1	R & 1	27	29	24	24	24	24	24	24
Class 2	2, 3 & 4	36	34	37	39	41	36	36	36
Class 3	5 & 6	18	24	26	24	20	27	29	
OPTION 3	Year Group	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class
Class 1	R & 1	27	29	24	24	24	24	24	24
Class 2	2 & 3	24	20	27	29	24	24	24	24
Class 3	4, 5 & 6	30	38	36	34	37	39	41	
OPTION 4	Year Group	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class
Class 1	R, 1 & 2	37	39	41	36	36	36	36	36
Class 2	3 & 4	26	24	20	27	29	24	24	24
Class 3	5 & 6	18	24	26	24	20	27	29	

*** PURPLE NUMBERS SHOW CLASS SIZES > 30 PUPILS *** Foundation phase cannot be in classes of over 30 pupils - so these numbers have been struck through (KS2 has a target of 30 pupils per class set by Welsh Government).
There are "exceptions" when certain pupils in some circumstances may not be counted in the class size (these numbers should be used as a guide only).
NB Figures further into the future get less and less reliable as they are based on an average intake (which then progresses through the classes)
If the 2021 Reception intake is over 13 pupils, then Option 3 (as the only viable option) ALSO BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE as class size will be > 30 pupils.

This only leaves the option of splitting year groups between two classes.

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2025-26						
OPTION 4	Year Group	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class	No. in Class					
Class 1	R (F)	17	12	12	12	12	12	12	12					
	1 (F)	10	17	12	12	12	12	12	12					
	2 (F)			7	31		24		24					
Class 2	1 (F)													
	2 (F)	10		10		12		12						
	3 (KS2)	14	10	10	17	12	12	12	12					
	4 (KS2)		8	28	10	30	4	33	7	31	12	36	6	30
Class 3	4 (KS2)	12	6			6		10				6		
	5 (KS2)	12	12		14	10		10			17		12	
	6 (KS2)	6	30	12	30	12	26	14	30	10	30	10	27	17

FUTURE SCENARIO 1: Class 3 over-full with Class 2 full

	Year Group	No. in Class	
Class 1	R (F)	12	26
	1 (F)	14	
	2 (F)		
Class 2	1 (F)		30
	2 (F)	13	
	3 (KS2)	17	
	4 (KS2)		
Class 3	4 (KS2)	10	34
	5 (KS2)	10	
	6 (KS2)	14	
TOTAL		90	

FUTURE SCENARIO 2: Class 2 with 4 year groups

	Year Group	No. in Class	
Class 1	R (F)	13	28
	1 (F)	15	
	2 (F)		
Class 2	1 (F)	4	30
	2 (F)	10	
	3 (KS2)	10	
	4 (KS2)	6	
Class 3	4 (KS2)	8	32
	5 (KS2)	12	
	6 (KS2)	12	
TOTAL		90	

FUTURE SCENARIO 3: No capacity for new students

	Year Group	No. in Class	
Class 1	R (F)	13	30
	1 (F)	17	
	2 (F)		
Class 2	1 (F)		30
	2 (F)	10	
	3 (KS2)	10	
	4 (KS2)	10	
Class 3	4 (KS2)	5	30
	5 (KS2)	13	
	6 (KS2)	12	
TOTAL		90	

