

SCHOOL MODERNISATION STRATEGY

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Introduction

Flintshire is committed to securing high quality learning opportunities for all.

Today's children have access to a wider range of educational experiences than ever before. We must ensure that our resources are deployed to prepare every child and young person with the skills and knowledge for today's world.

We face a challenge. The challenge is to ensure that our schools continue to provide an appropriate 'fit for purpose' environment at a time when there is limited money to deliver increasing expectations. Too many of our schools are also in inappropriate buildings that cannot meet the needs of current or future pupils and staff. Key issues that inform the debate are:

- the duty to provide sufficient school places in the right places;
- population forecasts indicating demographic changes affecting both urban and rural communities;
- raising educational standards through high quality teaching and learning and improving the learning environment;
- seeking to minimise the impact of transitions between different stages of education;
- local and national initiatives to make all school buildings "fit for purpose" and removing excessive surplus places;
- future financial settlements leaving decreasing financial room for manoeuvre;
- significant differences in the way schools were funded, with very small provision being disproportionately expensive;
- the breadth of educational and extra-curricular provision very small schools can provide;
- schools and their buildings being important to their communities, and being able to do more than provide education for children; and
- the challenge of refurbishment and renewal without sufficient money to replace, remodel or improve all adequate school buildings.

In its 2009 report on the strategic management of education in Flintshire, ESTYN identified tackling school modernisation as a key recommendation. Estyn recognised that considerable preparatory work had been undertaken over the last year, but that this needed to be followed through with key decisions in relation to some school communities.

The purpose of this document is to provide a policy framework in which schools and communities can engage in discussions to help identify solutions and options for change.

Part 1: Responsibility & Vision

1.1 School Modernisation Responsibility

All Local Authorities (LA) have a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 '...to ensure that schools in its area are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide education suitable for the different ages, abilities and aptitudes and special educational needs of pupils of school age.' The way in which the Council discharges this duty is crucial in ensuring that limited financial resources are spent to best effect. An effective educational infrastructure is vital to realise the Council's aims to improve educational standards and attainment.

The task involves:

- forecasting pupil numbers;
- managing the supply of school places;
- managing demand through admissions and appeals procedures;
- ensuring that a framework is in place to secure improvement through school organisational change;
- being prepared to take difficult decisions; and
- monitoring and evaluating the impact of decisions.

The current pattern of school provision is largely based on the demographic patterns of the past. There have been significant changes in recent years that have resulted in some schools being over-subscribed, whilst others have significant numbers of unfilled places.

The challenge for the Council is to provide the right number of places in the right locations. In responding to this challenge, the Council needs to make the best educational provision for its area, taking into account current provision, community issues, demographic factors, the conditions of schools buildings, surplus places and the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

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- schools and their buildings being important to their communities, and being able to do more than provide education for children; and
- the challenge of refurbishment and renewal without sufficient money to replace, remodel or improve all inadequate school buildings.

An initial way forward to address the challenges would be to establish the Council's policy position on key issues. This was last undertaken in 2004. A key second step would be to undertake a programme of individual school and local area reviews, involving pupils, parents, carers, staff, governors, service partners and other interested parties, considering the following options:

- removing temporary or unused accommodation;
- developing new school uses of surplus accommodation;
- developing community use of premises;
- non-school use of surplus accommodation;
- closure of part of a school; and
- federations, merging/amalgamating schools, and where appropriate, school closure.

1.2 School Modernisation Vision

Flintshire's educational vision is to secure high quality lifelong learning opportunities for all throughout life.

Our aspirations for learners consist of nine statements which form a coherent framework for learning which has been endorsed by schools and the local authority.

We aspire that all learners will:

- work in a physical and emotional environment, which enhances learning;
- learn with their mind, body and emotions;
- have fully meaningful learning experiences;
- experience learning in a variety of different situations, both structured and unstructured;
- experience learning which matches their academic, emotional and social needs;
- have lifelong learning attitudes and skills integrated into their learning;
- have opportunities to be involved as partners in learning with the wider community;
- have the broadest range of their achievements valued and recognised; and
- have their range of achievements assessed in a constructive way.

The vision and aspirations serve to provide:

- a shared sense of direction for learning providers and partners in Flintshire;
- a challenge to move learning from 'good' to excellent; and
- a foundation for future policy and strategy development.

In order to deliver the vision and aspirations we have developed the School Modernisation Strategy. The Strategy requires delivery of five key themes. They are summarised as follows:

Learning & Achievement

Children and young people in Flintshire will develop essential life skills, a strong desire for lifelong learning and be very well prepared for the world of work. All children and young people will be supported to progress through transition between different phases and settings. Every child and young person will be entitled to a learning programme that will be personalised to make the most of his or her abilities. Children and young people will learn in an exciting and innovative range of styles and settings. These will include vocational, enterprise, voluntary, spiritual,

cultural and sporting learning experiences. School organisation will provide opportunities for Welsh and English medium provision, and also faith provision.

Inclusion & Wellbeing

Partners will work together to deliver sufficient excellent provision for all children and young people. Barriers to learning will be addressed to enable all to achieve to their potential. Schools and other learning providers will provide a range of well planned community focused services for families. They will play an important role in promoting community cohesion, wellbeing, inclusion and diversity. Partners will be committed to ensuring that the emotional, social and physical needs of children are fully met.

Workforce Development

The high quality of Flintshire's learning provision will be secured through attracting and retaining the best professionals. Flintshire will be a leader in the professional development of its learning workforce. Creative succession planning will inspire talented professionals to become senior leaders. Governors will be supported to fulfil their key leadership role in shaping the future of learning in their communities.

Improved Learning Environments

Our modernisation programmes will deliver high quality environments that inspire users to learn. In new school buildings and refurbishments we will endeavour to deliver:

- buildings and grounds that are welcoming to both the school and the community whilst providing adequate security;
- good organisation of learning spaces that are easily “legible” and fully accessible;
- internal spaces that are well proportioned, fit for purpose and meet the needs of the curriculum;
- flexible design to allow for short-term changes of layout and use, and for long-term expansion or contraction;
- good environmental conditions throughout, including optimum levels of natural light and ventilation for different activities;
- well-designed external spaces offering a variety of different settings for leisure, learning and sport;
- a sustainable approach to design, construction and environmental servicing; and
- good use of the site, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and cars and enhancing the school's presence in the community.

Working in Partnership

The School Modernisation Strategy will provide a common sense of direction among partners. It will enable them to embrace change and engage effectively with government at all levels. The Local Authority will ensure that there are local opportunities to discuss school modernisation with a clear focus on ensuring sustainable high standards. Parents, children and young people will play a key role in decision making, and in the delivery of high quality learning across the county. Partners will work together to find innovative ways of providing mentoring to ensure that children and young people benefit from the wide range of individual and group learning opportunities available.

Part 2: Key Considerations

2.1 Learning & Achievement

Our aim is that children and young people in Flintshire will develop essential life skills, a strong desire for lifelong learning and be very well prepared for the world of work. All children and young people will be supported to progress through transition between different phases and settings. Every child and young person will be entitled to a learning programme that will be personalised to make the most of his or her abilities. Children and young people will learn in an exciting and innovative range of styles and settings. These will include vocational, enterprise, voluntary, spiritual, cultural and sporting learning experiences. School organisation will provide opportunities for Welsh and English medium provision, and also faith provision.

Standards

Figures show that the education system is performing at or above most key national indicators. They also show an improving trend over the tabulated period. There are, however, some significant differences in outcomes between individual schools. The schools and the Council are working effectively in partnership to improve outcomes.

In order to continue to progress, schools and the Council need to:

- in a context of annual budget pressures, ensure that all resources available to schools are focused on improving outcomes for children and young people;
- implement an agreed consistent approach to the collection, analysis and usage of information (knowing where every child is in terms of their learning);
- share consistent guidance on the range of support available (bespoke packages dependent on need) with rigorous monitoring to ensure that advice and support is acted upon and is achieving the desired outcome;
- use consistent and effective tracking systems so that any amendments in support can be made as quickly as possible (knowing the progress of every child);
- value learners and learning by improving learning environments that are “fit for purpose” and capable of supporting children’s future educational needs; and
- continuing commitment to the professional development of school staff.

Year	CORE SUBJECT INDICATOR RESULTS 2000-2008						5+ GCSE A* - C	
	KS1		KS2		KS3		KS4	
	Flintshire	Wales	Flintshire	Wales	Flintshire	Wales	Flintshire	Wales
2000	80.2	80.0	65.5	63.8	51.6	49.1	50.4	49.1
2001	80.4	80.9	71.2	68.1	51.2	50.8	47.4	49.8
2002	80.3	80.4	69.8	69.6	54.6	52.5	50.9	56.5
2003	79.6	79.4	69.6	70.6	56.0	54.4	53.0	51.1
2004	79.9	80.1	73.5	71.9	63.1	56.9	53.4	51.4
2005	81.1	80.9	72.1	74.3	64.7	58.3	55.2	52.2
2006	82.4	80.6	75.1	74.2	60.7	58.2	56.8	53.8
2007	81.6	80.1	73.3	74.1	62.4	56.7	53.0	54.2
2008	80.7	80.0	77.9	75.5	64.6	59.6	57.0	56.0

2008 RESULTS BY SUBJECT

Subject	KEY STAGE 1 2008		KEY STAGE 2 2008		KEY STAGE 3 2008		5 GCSE A*-C 2008	
	Flintshire	Wales	Flintshire	Wales	Flintshire	Wales	Flintshire	Wales
English	84.8	82.4	81.9	79.8	75.7	69.5	62.0	61.0
Welsh	92.7	88.5	81.7	77.0	61.4	72.3	37.0	41.0
Maths	87.0	86.8	84	81.3	76.7	72.5	50.0	51.0
Science	90.6	89.7	88.6	85.6	78.2	73.7	63.0	59.0

At Key Stage 1 the CSI (Core Subject Indicator) for Flintshire over the past four years has been consistently above the All Wales averages. At Key Stage 2 the trend is in the main above the All Wales % average.

In 2008 the % of pupils achieving at least the expected level in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was higher than the All Wales averages in all core subjects of English, maths, science and the CSI (Core Subject Indicator).

In Key Stage 1 this placed Flintshire in =9th position for the Core Subject Indicator out of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales and in 5th position in Key Stage 2 moving the Local Authority into the Upper Quartile. KS1 and KS2 has improved over time, but with the greatest improvement at KS2.

General improvement priorities for the Primary phase include:

- developing basic and key skills across the curriculum;
- promoting the wellbeing of children, including Children and Young People's Plan implementation, Healthy Schools and Appetite for Life agendas);
- implementation of the School Effectiveness Framework; and
- developing community focused schooling and out of school activities.

These are all a key part of School Modernisation. Specific priorities for improving outcomes in the Primary phase fall under three priority areas:

- improving attainment;
- improving pedagogy; and
- improving leadership and management.

Improving attainment involves:

- raising standards in the Foundation Phase/Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2;
- monitoring, supporting and challenging school improvement plans;
- increasing the value added for all pupils in terms of attainment; and
- increasing the number of schools in the top two quartiles for outcomes.

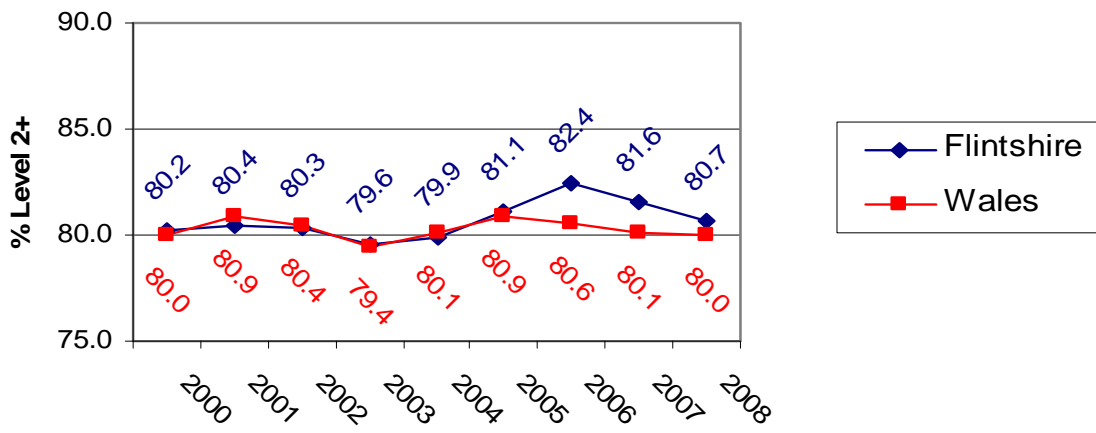
Improving pedagogy involves:

- introducing curriculum content and pedagogy that will raise attainment and at the same time increase pupils' wellbeing and self-esteem (including Foundation Phase and the Skill-based Curriculum for Key Stage 2);
- facilitating effective transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 and from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;
- ensuring that schools are "fit for purpose" to meet changing educational needs;
- further development of the more able and talented programme;
- increasing bilingualism through the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2; and
- monitoring of the accuracy of end of Key Stage data and the use of data by schools.

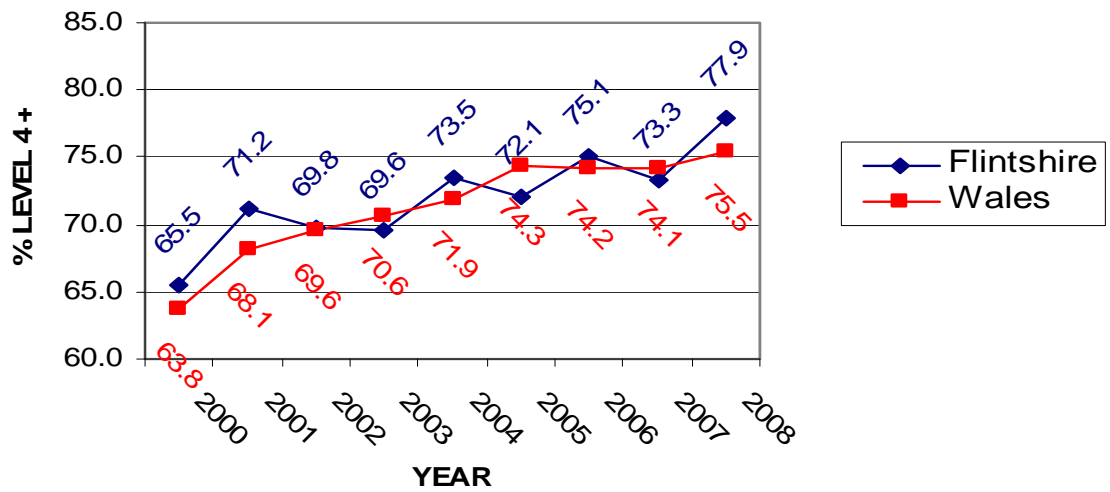
Improving school leadership and management involves:

- continuing induction arrangements for new headteachers through the PHIP programme;
- continuing leadership training through Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Conferences and Inset;
- developing programmes and methods which will prepare headteachers and aspiring headteachers for leadership and management in the 21st century;
- supporting effective liaison between schools, school improvement, business support services and school organisation functions; and
- developing the strategic management capacity of Governing Bodies.

KEY STAGE 1 CSI RESULTS 2000 to 2008



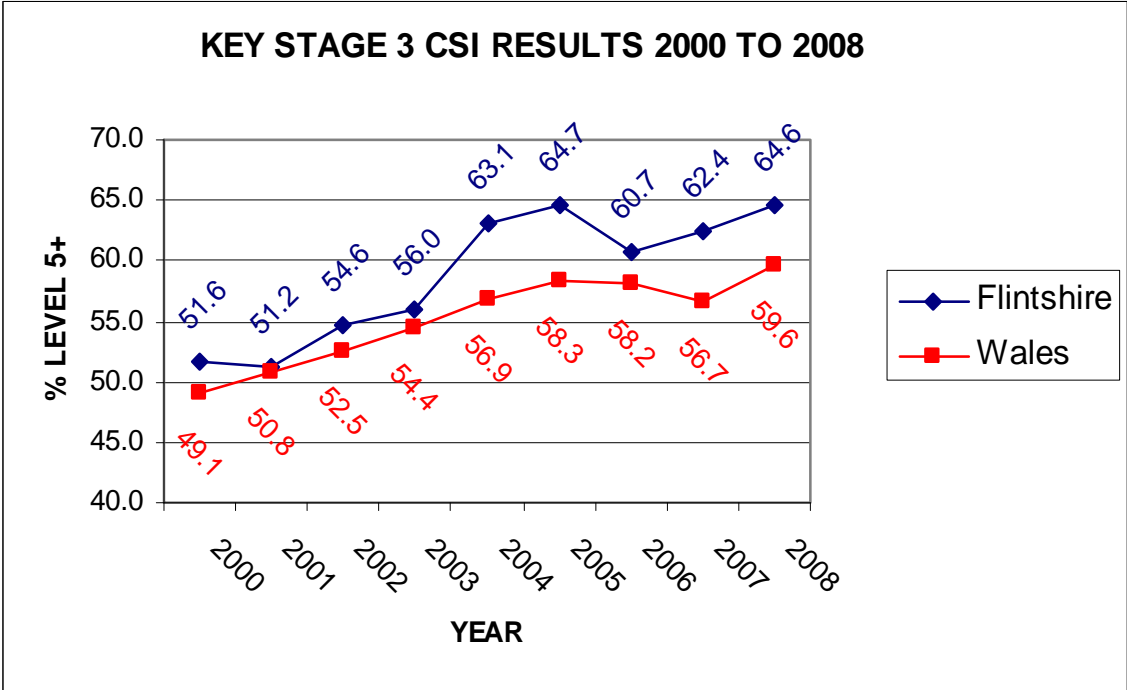
KEY STAGE 2 CSI RESULTS 2000 TO 2008



At Key Stage 3 the CSI (Core Subject Indicator) for Flintshire has been consistently above the All Wales average in recent years, with the Flintshire figure of 64.6% of learners achieving the CSI in 2008 compared to 59.6% across the whole of Wales.

The trend of performance of learners in Flintshire schools has also been upward, with a temporary downturn in performance only in 2006 and 2007 when figures reflected Teacher Assessment rather than results of tests for the first time.

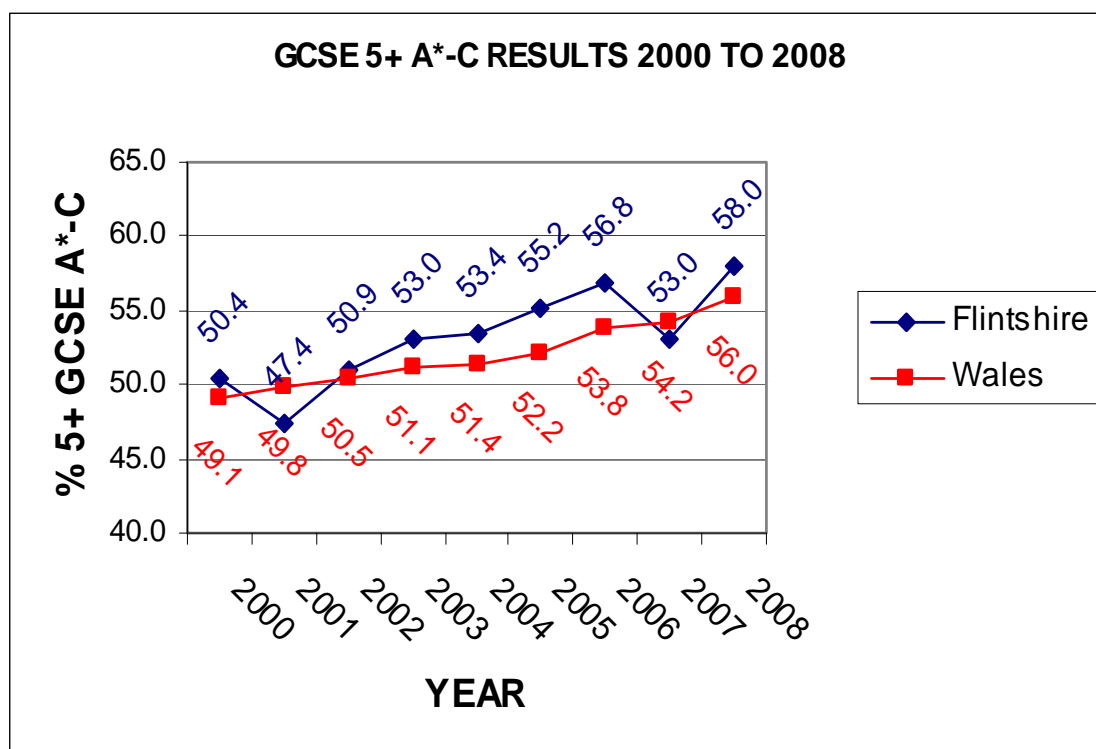
Results in the individual Core subjects at Key Stage 3 are also above All Wales averages with 75.7% of learners achieving Level 5 or above at Key Stage 3 in English in 2008 compared to an All Wales figure of 69.5%. In Mathematics, 76.7% of learners in Flintshire achieved Level 5 or above in 2008, compared to 72.5% for Wales and in Science the equivalent figures were Flintshire 78.2% and Wales 73.7%.



At Key Stage 4, the trend of performance of learners in Flintshire in the key GCSE 5A*-C indicator is upwards in recent years and with only one exception, in 2007, the performance of learners in Flintshire is above that of learners in Wales as a whole in all years since 2002.

Flintshire learners have also performed well in recent years within the GCSE 5A*-G indicator, with the figure of 90% of learners achieving in this indicator in 2008 being in line with performance in recent years and comparing to a Wales average of 86% in 2008.

Figures for the percentage of learners achieving the CSI at Key Stage 4 also show a generally upward trend in recent years, with the Flintshire figure of 43% in 2008 compared to 41% for Wales as a whole.



Priorities for improvement in the secondary sector include:

- supporting schools, including implementing the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF), local authority partnership agreements, the new inspection framework, measuring the impact of school improvement support and developing the schools' intranet;
- supporting partnership working, by developing collaborative working between schools;
- supporting workforce remodelling, including the implications of school modernisation and implementing "rarely cover" requirements;
- developing school self-evaluation, through common approaches, identifying good practice and boosting use of data;
- developing teaching and learning, through developing skills, the Key Stage 3 strategy, the more able and talented programme and the pedagogy framework;
- developing inclusion, through reviews of the Behaviour Support Service and funding for children with additional learning needs;
- extending opportunities through the Children and Young People's University and the review of the School Library Service;
- developing curriculum themes of wellbeing, respecting others and bilingualism;
- supporting middle leader development; and
- making progress is ensuring that more school environments are "fit for purpose", value learning and are capable of meeting curriculum delivery needs in the 21st century;
- developing provision in accordance with the agreed 14-19 strategy to ensure effective delivery of the Curriculum offer; and
- to examine the delivery of Key Stages in schools to ensure efficient delivery of a broad curriculum to students.

Post 16

Analysis of A level results in Flintshire over the past six years has shown that the percentage of students achieving at least two passes is at or above the Welsh average. The percentage of students achieving at least two passes at A* to C is lower than the Welsh average. The average points score is also slightly lower in Flintshire than the Welsh average.

Preliminary analysis for 2009 indicates improvement on 2008, with 98.7% passes compared to 98.3% in Flintshire in 2008 and 97.6% across Wales in both years. 79.4% of all Flintshire entries resulted in top (A-C) grades, a significant increase on the figure of 75.2% at the same stage last year. 23.7% of Flintshire WJEC entries resulted in A Grades compared to 18% in 2008, but just below the 2009 figure of 25.0% across Wales as a whole. The improvement trend is greatest amongst the larger sixth forms in Flintshire.

The Council has a work programme agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government focused on transforming education and training provision in Flintshire. Key challenges include:

- widening the options available for students;
- reducing unnecessary duplication of provision by increased levels of collaborative working and reorganisation; and
- moving to excellence across all providers, by improving the quality of provision and students' learning experience.

Transformation work needs to focus on:

- an improvement in levels of basic skills;
- an increase in the rate of participation in education, training and employment of 16 to 18 year olds;
- an increase in the rate of participation in education, training and employment of 19 to 24 year olds;
- an increase in overall learner success rates, reflecting higher levels of learner completion as well as the achievement of qualification aims; and
- an increase in progression to higher level learning and employment.

These challenges are being addressed at a time in which the funding mechanism for post 16 education is coming under particular pressure.

Progress can be achieved through:

- undertaking local area reviews to ensure that local provision is sustainable and meets learner needs in terms of breadth of opportunity and quality;
- building on developing federated and collaborative arrangements to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery where appropriate, including developing governance models for post-16 delivery;
- increasing the vocational offer available to all learners across the County, without creating new duplication of provision;
- engaging employers to secure access to work based learning and apprenticeships;
- developing commissioning arrangements that improve efficiency in delivery; and
- developing improved access to educational provision through the medium of Welsh.

Earlier School Modernisation papers did not always address the transformative role of ICT in delivery of the modern curriculum and in providing personalised learning opportunities matched to learners' progress. There are significant implications from this in terms of design of the County-wide and individual school infrastructure for learning.

County-wide infrastructure challenges are acknowledged in the recent Estyn Inspection and the post-inspection Action Plan. Individual school implications are addressed in School Improvement Plans, and will be a specific focus in planning for any school refurbishment or building projects. The specific focus will include:

- the critical contribution that improved school design and use of new technologies can play in personalising learning;
- how the school will develop flexible approaches to learning that meet the individual needs of learners;
- how the school will develop assessment for learning that includes the use of data to set and review personal targets;
- how the school will support the development of innovative approaches to learning including the use of ICT;
- how ICT will enable the school to provide greater and more flexible access to a range of learning environments; and
- how technology will be able to help to encourage and enable greater parental awareness and involvement in their children's learning.

Small Schools

The WAG policy position on small schools is set out in "School Organisation Proposals" which states that in the case of rural and small schools particular considerations include:

- the educational challenges faced by small schools, such as:
 - teaching mixed age classes containing more than 2 or 3 age groups;
 - the restricted size of peer groups and sufficiency of challenge;
 - limited opportunities for social interaction;
- difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff;
- excessive burdens on staff ;
- increased expertise required to support pupils with additional educational needs;
- limited choice of options for learners aged 14 and over;
- the additional cost per pupil of keeping small schools open in a sparsely populated area; and
- older school buildings which need substantial investment or which are less energy efficient.

These factors need to be weighed against other considerations such as:

- the home to school transport implications, including the impact on emissions, and increased journey times;
- the overall effect on the community of closure, and the extent to which the school is serving the whole community as an important resource for lifelong learning or other services e.g. childcare or services that meet the particular needs of older people (findings of community impact appraisal);
- the potential impact on the Welsh language in educational and community terms (findings of language impact appraisal);
- suitability of and distance to alternative schools;
- availability and cost of public transport to alternative schools, and potential impact on private travel;
- impact on local services and shops;

- effect on young people in the area in terms of accessibility to after school activities, which help to broaden children and young people's experiences and promote healthy lifestyles;
- any impact on child poverty in the communities affected.
- effect on potential future workforce; and
- potential impact on vocational and other training providers in the area.

The Welsh Assembly Government does not have a presumption against closing rural schools. The Government position is that there is not a presumption in favour for or against closing rural schools. Any case for closure must be robust. Proposals must be in the best interests of educational provision in the area. An assessment should be undertaken so as to establish whether the case for closure outweighs other considerations.

The Welsh Assembly Government also notes that Local Authorities identifying the need to retain primary schools with fewer than 90 pupils must accept that such schools require additional support so as to ensure that pupils have, as far as possible, access to similar opportunities as pupils in larger schools.

2.2 Inclusion and Wellbeing

Our aim (in accordance with Flintshire's Children and Young People's Plan) is that partners will work together to deliver excellent provision for all children and young people. Barriers to learning will be addressed to enable all to achieve to their potential. Schools and other learning providers will provide a range of well planned community focused services for families. They will play an important role in promoting community cohesion, wellbeing, inclusion and diversity. Partners will be committed to ensuring that the emotional, social and physical needs of children are fully met.

Additional Learning Needs and Those Who Are Vulnerable or At Risk

All schools in Wales are likely to have some children on roll who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Every school or area review therefore has an implication for ALN provision, whether in terms of access to the curriculum or physical access to school premises.

School modernisation provides the opportunity to consider the most effective ways of ensuring that appropriate ALN support is provided for pupils. This may be in mainstream schools, in specialist resource bases attached to mainstream schools, or where appropriate, in Flintshire's recently modernised special schools. The modernisation of Flintshire's special schools, in itself, provides opportunities for new ways of configuring outreach provision to sustain young people in local educational provision.

Individual school and local area reviews should consider strategies to deliver:

- appropriate provision and smooth transitions for children with ALN;
- appropriate disabled access, and enable inclusion of children with ALN;
- proposals that will help in improving attendance and behaviour, and in reducing bullying; and
- proposals capable of delivering improved achievement for underperforming groups and for those who are at risk or vulnerable.

There will also be consideration given to the size, location, nature and environment of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision through a separate but linked modernisation strategy.

Children and Young People's Plan

Area reviews provide the opportunity to ensure that services and physical accommodation support the goals of the Children and Young People's Plan in relation to the wellbeing of children and young people.

As part of area reviews, work will be undertaken within and with external partners (including Health) to ensure that we have joined-up planning, funding and delivery of integrated services for children, particularly through community focused schools provision. Work will also be undertaken to ensure that area plans consider the opportunities to support relevant corporate priorities (e.g. neighbourhood renewal and regeneration) as well as community cohesion.

Most schools are under utilised, yet they are an expensive investment in the community. Community focused schools expand the range of activities that take place in a school as they seek to provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of pupils, their families and the wider community. There is no blueprint for the types of activities that schools might provide, or how they might be organised, however, working with local partners, schools can develop the community they serve. Working in this way schools can provide a base for delivery of:

- lifelong learning;
- childcare;
- health and social services;
- cultural and sporting activities; and
- others e.g. Police etc.

The Council's Community Focused Schools and Healthy Schools programmes will prioritise capacity to support area reviews. Plans for community use will be based on a realistic audit and assessment of need, taking into account the views of children, parents and the wider community. Local plans may be reflected in redeployment of partners' financial and staffing resources, or in work commissioned as part of physical refurbishment or rebuild. Efforts will be made to "join up" available funding streams to maximise the potential for offering sports, leisure or community use. Area reviews will also consider the opportunities for better ways of delivering service provision (see also Leisure Strategy for alternative models of delivering sports facility provision).

Support During School Organisational Change

The County Council recognises that times of school organisational change are times of uncertainty for children, young people, parents and carers. This is often heightened for vulnerable students. During any school organisational change it is important that the local authority takes steps to protect the most vulnerable children in schools. This support will include looked-after children, those with additional learning needs and attention to other potential factors of vulnerability such as pupils with English as a second language or those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

As part of any reorganisation implementation, the Council will:

- identify the number of children and young people with Additional Learning needs attending mainstream schools;
- consider the type/range of need experienced by the pupils;

- identify patterns/profiles of need;
- identify the risk factors involved in school reorganisation as they impact upon vulnerable children;
- draw up a protocol for monitoring and managing any proposed change of school for vulnerable children;
- establish a mechanism whereby the voices of both the young person and their families can be listened to and their views recorded and addressed;
- identify a key person in each area to be a Link Person for the young people and their families to ensure they are fully informed and involved in any proposed change;
- develop a model of working that can be transferred to other Areas as necessary.

2.3 Workforce Development

As stated earlier in the vision statement, our aim is that the high quality of Flintshire's learning provision will be secured through attracting and retaining the best professionals. Flintshire will be a leader in the professional development of its learning workforce. Creative succession planning will inspire talented professionals to become senior leaders. Governors will be supported to fulfil their key leadership role in shaping the future of learning in their communities.

Change Management to Deliver the School Modernisation Vision & Aims

A key focus of the Workforce Remodelling Partnership, school improvement professionals and training providers during the School Modernisation Programme would be develop the change management programme to prepare all staff (in schools and the authority) to implement new policies and teaching/learning practices.

Implementation Support

It is important that Governors and Headteachers receive support in the following areas during the implementation of school reorganisation proposals:

- curriculum and Assessment;
- staffing;
- finance;
- governance; and
- inspections.

It is also important that support is available to all members of the workforce in affected schools, which would need to include:

- helping schools to audit their existing skills and identify where and when additional support is needed;
- maintaining a focus on school leadership, ensuring we retain high quality leaders who feel confident leading change;
- disseminating good practice, including training and development opportunities for school staff to support them in delivering new methods of teaching and learning, encompassing ICT, 14-19 etc;
- acting as a signposting agency helping schools to identify additional support or expertise;
- providing expertise and programmes to meet identified needs at both a County and local level;

- providing advice and guidance to staff; and
- encouraging change teams in schools, representing all staff roles

This support will be offered through prioritising the work programme of relevant school support professionals. Additional capacity may be required at key points in the implementation of proposals. This is not yet possible to map as the number of specific school reorganisation proposals is not agreed.

2.4 Improved Learning Environments

The School Modernisation Programme aims to deliver sufficient high quality environments that inspire users to learn. In new school buildings and refurbishments we will endeavour to deliver:

- buildings and grounds that are welcoming to both the school and the community whilst providing adequate security;
- good organisation of learning spaces that are easily “legible” and fully accessible;
- internal spaces that are well proportioned, fit for purpose and meet the needs of the curriculum;
- flexible design to allow for short-term changes of layout and use, and for long-term expansion or contraction;
- good environmental conditions throughout including optimum levels of natural light and ventilation for different activities;
- well-designed external spaces offering a variety of different settings for leisure, learning and sport;
- a sustainable approach to design, construction and environmental servicing; and
- good use of the site, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and cars and enhancing the school’s presence in the community.

Sufficiency

The Welsh Assembly Government in its policy paper “School Organisation Proposals” stated that “It is important that funding for education is used cost effectively. Some spare places are necessary to enable schools to cope with fluctuations in numbers of pupils, but excessive numbers of unused places, with consequentially excessive numbers of schools, mean that resources are tied up unproductively.”

Local Authorities are recommended to review individual schools where they have “significant” levels of surplus places (defined as 25% surplus and a minimum of 30 places), require significant investment or have a catchment area which is unlikely to provide sufficient numbers of pupils to make it sustainable for the future. Local Authorities are recommended to ensure that schools to be retained are of an appropriate number and are located so as to maximise potential engagement with the community. Local Authorities are also recommended to retain no more than 10% surplus places overall, although levels in individual schools may be higher than this. The current level of surplus places in Flintshire is 15.8%* in the Primary phase and 12.55% in the Secondary phase, although the highest percentages in individual schools are 75% in Primary and 28.7% in Secondary.

* Primary figures based on full-time pupils.

As an important “building block” for School Modernisation decision making the County renewed its pupil forecasting system in 2008-09 to take into account:

- current projections of the number of pupils in the school system overall;
- population projections and forecasts of inward or outward migration;
- birth rates within the area;
- changes in demand for a particular schools and types of provision e.g. Welsh medium schools;
- plans for economic or housing development;
- for post-16 proposals, student demographics and participation rates, economic and labour market data and skill shortages information.

School capacity information and projections have also been agreed with schools. The agreements will be renewed prior to commissioning of any individual school or local area organisation review.

A demand study (2009) has also been undertaken into Welsh Medium Education across Flintshire.

The Authority is now well placed to begin a programme of individual school or local area reviews focused on matching pupil numbers and future demand estimates to provision of places.

Admissions

The recent Estyn Inspection of Flintshire (2009) concluded that the Council manages admissions effectively. During implementation of any individual school or local area review the specific plans will need to be in place to maintain the Council's record of:

- clear comprehensive information for parents in English and Welsh; and
- liaison with other local admissions authorities (such as Aided Schools).

Elected members have also commissioned a separate assessment of options in relation to managing secondary admissions, considering the benefits and challenges with prioritisation by catchment area or distance from home.

Condition & Suitability

Maintaining and improving the quality of school buildings is an important task for the council and its schools. Changing the environment of a school can have a positive impact on the learning and teaching. Capital building improvements have a key part to play in realising the Council's aspirations for children and ensuring that our schools are maintained and equipped to meet the needs of learning and teaching in the 21st century.

Good recent progress has been made in developing "Fit for Purpose" documentation and the Education Asset Management framework. However the condition of school buildings remains a key strategic risk within the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges. It is estimated that almost £40million is required to address issues identified in school condition surveys alone. An examination of the Council's Authority's portfolio of school buildings also indicates that there are serious shortcomings in the suitability of a number of sites and buildings.

The need to maintain a large number of ageing school buildings and the supporting infrastructure can have a serious impact on capital expenditure. A more effective use of limited capital programmes can be achieved by rationalising the number of school buildings or other Council buildings (perhaps by utilising surplus places in

schools). Options can be identified by local area reviews. Taking such action would also make revenue savings.

Sustainability

The identified issues in suitability, sufficiency and condition of some school buildings mean that there are significant challenges for Flintshire with regard to sustainability. Over the next few years, the population of some schools will continue to fall, leaving some small schools whose viability will inevitably be affected. The Council must consider steps that will provide a sustainable basis for addressing the challenges of the next several decades and, if it does not go ahead with change, how it will ensure that these challenges can be met.

A School Modernisation programme brings with it the opportunity to promote high standards of practice in sustainability. As part of any individual school change proposal or area review we can consider:

- the potential environmental impact of possible changes to the organisation of schools;
- how carbon emissions arising from schools' direct use of heat, power and transport will be reduced;
- how we can enable schools to showcase good sustainability practices in energy, water, waste, travel, food and procurement to their pupils, staff and communities;
- how we can improve the teaching of sustainable development through the provision of innovative learning environments, inside and outdoors; and
- how we can catalyse further environmental improvement and regeneration efforts in the local area to improve local environmental quality and quality of life.

Transport

Any reorganisation proposals would be subject to a sustainability assessment, including careful consideration of efficient provision of transport. Any proposals should not have the effect of unreasonably extending pupils' journey times and should be set against Welsh Assembly Government objectives to reduce traffic congestion, reduce carbon emissions, and promote alternatives to the car. An important consideration is the welfare of children if journeys one way would exceed 45 minutes for primary pupils or one hour for secondary pupils. Additional consideration would be given to the welfare of pupils with special educational needs. The possible effect of any transport difficulties on pupils' engagement and attendance at school will be assessed. The safety of likely walking or cycling routes and accessibility will also be considered. In addition the recurrent cost to the Council of transporting pupils to schools further away needs to be taken into account (as part of the Financial appraisal).

2.5 Working in Partnership

The School Modernisation Programme will provide a common sense of direction among education stakeholders and service partners. It will enable them to embrace change and engage effectively at all levels. In order to achieve this there is a need for clear communications and engagement strategies to develop a sense of collective understanding, involvement and ownership of the process. Great attention needs to be paid to effective communication and consultation with:

- Headteachers, staff and Governors;
- parents, carers and pupils;

- elected members of the Council and representatives of Community Councils;
- Local MPs, AMs and MEPs;
- Diocesan Authorities;
- Appropriate Trade Unions;
- Media; and
- Neighbouring Authorities and other education providers.

The Local Authority will ensure that there are local opportunities to discuss school modernisation with a clear focus on ensuring sustainable high standards. Parents, children and young people will play a key role in decision making, and in the delivery of high quality learning across the county.

Partners will also ensure that their communications and engagement routes are used to ensure that “hard to reach groups” are able to have their say on the future of education provision in their communities. Partners will work together to find innovative ways of providing mentoring to ensure that children and young people benefit from the wide range of individual and group learning opportunities available and delivering other Children and Young People’s Plan priorities.

The Local Authority recognises that Community Councils and the communities that they serve are key partners. They should be consulted on developing ideas for the future of education provision within their area. In some areas, a school may be the main focal point for community activity, and reorganisation could have implications beyond the issue of provision of education. In all reviews a Community Appraisal should be undertaken which would consider the feasibility of co-locating local services within the school to offset the costs of maintaining the school.

The County Council recognises that Diocesan Authorities are key partners in delivering education in Flintshire. Their views should be integral to developing proposals for the future of local education in the County. Any proposals for future provision will either maintain or enhance the balance of faith provision within the County.

The County Council recognises that Trade Unions are key partners in delivering education in Flintshire. The Trade Unions and their members will have developed views on how education provision can best be sustained and enhanced across Flintshire’s communities. Updated staffing protocols will be agreed with the relevant Trade Unions addressing communication, engagement and consultation, together with processes for considering Early Voluntary Retirement, redeployment and other staffing issues as part of any specific proposals.

These issues are among the most sensitive to be dealt with as part of a school re-organisation and will require attention to detail and close dialogue with schools as well as the teaching and support staff unions.

Part 3: School Organisation Policy & Recommendations

3.1 Primary Education: All-through Schools

Flintshire County Council supports all-through primary education. An all-through primary school is one where children start statutory education with the school and continue through until they move on to secondary school.

There is a general trend towards amalgamating infant and junior schools into all-through primary schools. All-through primary schools are able to provide children with a continuity of education, thus removing a transition which can cause disruption at an early age. With the implementation of the Foundation Phase replacing Key Stage 1 in Wales there is also an increased need to minimise disruptive transition to Key Stage 2.

All-through primary schools provide the following benefits:

- **Continuity and progression.** An all-through primary school means there is greater continuity and progression for pupils aged 4-11 in all aspects of teaching and learning. With the implementation of the Foundation Phase and a focus on a skills-based curriculum there is a greater need for staff to work and plan together across the curriculum and across key stages.
- **Vision.** One head teacher supported by one governing body will present a single vision of education and a common ethos. Research shows that clear and visionary leadership and management is the key feature of successful schools. In separate infant and junior schools, however good liaison, they remain single establishments with differences in approach. Continuity of governance is also greater as parent governors are less likely to resign when their child moves from the Infant to the Junior School.
- **Tracking pupils' progress.** An all-through primary school has common expectations of pupils' progress, based on whole school approaches to assessment, recording and target setting. Through schools are more responsible for their own actions related to 'value added' and pupils' overall progress from age 4 to 11 years. Through schools avoid the dip in progress that can occur when pupils move from one school to another.
- **Additional Needs.** An all-through primary school has consistent whole school approaches to the management of pupils with additional or behavioural needs. These can be identified early and their progress tracked more effectively from Nursery to Year 6 by one ANCO (Additional Needs Co-ordinator) so that time is not lost in meeting children's needs. A continuous relationship with external agencies is beneficial for the school and parents.
- **Resourcing.** There is more efficient use of a wider range of resources, particularly for older pupils with additional needs who may benefit from access to resources more common to KS1 to meet their needs. In addition high cost/low use equipment, which may be too expensive for a single school, can be used to benefit the whole school e.g. a PA system, stage lighting, a new piano, musical or art equipment.
- **Staff specialism/professional development.** Two schools combined can provide a larger team of staff who can work more flexibly in terms of covering all the subjects of the curriculum. There are increased opportunities for staff to develop skills and specialisms across the whole primary range e.g. music or PE, making best use of teacher expertise and providing higher quality teaching and learning across the full age range. Teachers and teaching assistants have greater opportunities to teach cross-phase e.g. for a KS2 teacher to teach in KS1 and vice versa.

- **Staff responsibilities.** In separate schools, a smaller number of staff take on a greater number of curriculum responsibilities. A larger school provides more flexibility in the way in which responsibilities are apportioned. There is greater flexibility in deploying teaching assistants to undertake intervention/booster classes.
- **Leadership and management.** An enhanced head teacher role can make it easier to recruit and retain a good leader. In larger schools there are more opportunities for career development and for teachers to develop as leaders and managers.
- **Accommodation.** There are greater opportunities to be creative and flexible in the use of internal and external space to improve the learning environment/opportunities for all pupils. There is potential for more effective site maintenance.
- **Admissions and relationships with parents.** Parents make one application for a place to an all-through school and build a relationship with senior leaders and staff across all of the primary phase. Evidence shows that transition from one phase to another can be traumatic for children, however good the liaison. An all-through primary school will make this transition much smoother and siblings are also more likely to go to the same school. The opportunity for the through primary school to work with one parent body over a longer period of time strengthens relationships. A larger school also gives greater resilience to fluctuations in pupil numbers
- **Pupils' social development.** Pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable or have low self-esteem, get to know all staff through daily contact in the playground, assemblies, breakfast and after school clubs so that there are no issues nor uncertainties on transfer between KS1 and KS2. Older pupils can act as role models and mentors with younger pupils e.g. on paired reading, as playground buddies, on the School Council, supporting richer personal and social development. Other advantages include consistency of approaches to inclusion and well-being.

Flintshire County Council will consider infant and junior amalgamations as an option during an area review. Outside of an area review, the Council will consider amalgamating infant and junior schools at the request of a Governing Body or if the Headteacher of an infant or junior school announces his/her decision to leave the post.

When the decision to amalgamate an infant and junior school is taken, the authority will aim to amalgamate both schools onto one campus site. Where this is not immediately possible the infant and junior schools can be amalgamated into a single school based on two sites. The County Council will then adopt a strategy to move the school onto a single site.

Flintshire County Council will also consider the future viability of separate nursery school provision in the relevant area review.

3.2 Primary Education: Small Schools

Current WLGA recommendations are that schools of less than 90 pupils should be reviewed. However, the past and current policy for small primary schools in Flintshire is underpinned by a number of principles:

- commitment to reviewing small schools on their individual merit;
- commitment to consider first and foremost the quality of education they offer;
- recognition of the achievement of small schools in Flintshire;
- recognition that a number of the small schools are Church schools;

- that all partners must be involved in discussions on schools under review;
- that a comprehensive assessment of the cost of small schools and the cost of alternative provision will be undertaken
- recognition of parental preference;
- recognition of the value of small schools in the context of small communities;
- commitment to minimising the disruption on small children in relation to travelling; and
- recognition that federations may be a way forward.

There is a need to ensure that all schools and school sites are able to provide children with the widest possible learning and social opportunities. As a result the local authority must also consider the educational challenges faced by small schools or sites, including (Estyn – Small Primary Schools in Wales, 2006):

- teaching mixed age classes containing more than 2 or 3 age groups;
- the restricted size of peer groups and sufficiency of challenge;
- limited opportunities for social interaction;
- difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff;
- excessive burdens on staff;
- increased expertise required to support pupils with special educational needs.

To minimise the effects of these challenges schools need sufficient pupil numbers on roll within each Key Stage. Where the number of full-time pupils on roll at specific school or school site has fallen below 15 pupils in Key Stage 1 and/or 20 pupils in Key Stage 2 for three years in succession; the authority reserves the right to review the school or site within the context of the area.

The Governing Body of a school being reviewed will be given the opportunity to consider, test and adopt the Federation model at (3.3) below. If the model does not provide the best range of educational opportunities for children or have an impact on cost effectiveness further review may be commissioned (see (3.4) below). Any subsequent stage of review would have to take into consideration the availability of sufficient places within an alternative school that could provide an equal or improved educational experience for pupils within the schools affected.

Where a review subsequently determines that a school is to be closed, statutory notices would need to be published in order to close any primary school including those within a federation. Statutory notices would not be required when closing a specific site within a primary school (see (3.4) below).

3.3 Primary Education: Federated Schools

The Federation under a single governing body could enable small schools to share leadership and curriculum expertise, whilst retaining the separate identities of the schools involved. Benefits include:

- improved teaching and learning opportunities through increased specialism and access to a range of expertise;
- a way for schools to collaborate, learn from each other and share best practice;
- models of good practice to extend curriculum entitlement and improve teaching, learning and inclusion;
- the potential for a stronger teaching team through the appointment of shared staff, better access to professional development opportunities; and
- savings in planning, administration time and resources.

The decision to form a federation must come from the governing bodies of the schools involved. Where schools refuse to consider the option of federating, the Council may look at alternative proposals for the area including the formation of area schools.

Specific details regarding the structure of the federation (such as addressing Welsh Medium or Faith issues) would be considered prior to formation. The final decision as to how a federated school operates will be down to the governing body of each individual federation.

Schools must be prepared to commit time and resources to ensuring that the federation is effective and sustainable. They will also need a commitment to raising standards of achievement in all of the communities involved.

3.4 Primary Schools: Area Schools

Area schools are formed through amalgamating two or more schools onto one site to deliver improved educational experiences for the children attending those schools.

Where at the request of schools, selection or through area review there is consideration of amalgamation into area schools, it involves closure of one or more of the schools concerned. If there is no consensus on which school should be a continuing school, then all the schools concerned should be closed, with a new school opening on one existing site or on a new site. This may require investment on an existing site.

The benefits of area schools are as follows:

- improved facilities and equipment;
- opportunities for improved teaching and learning through increased specialism and shared expertise;
- additional time available for leadership and management;
- increased opportunity for community services/facilities in line with the 'Community Focused Schools' programme;
- more class organisation options;
- cost savings through reducing the fixed costs associated with maintaining several sites, with opportunity to re-direct these savings to provide better educational provision;
- increased opportunities for professional development among staff, giving the opportunity to develop strengths and expertise in wider areas, leading to improved recruitment and retention of staff; and
- increased leadership capacity.

3.5 Secondary Education: 11-16

Flintshire County Council is committed to all schools being able to deliver the entitlements in the Welsh Assembly Government's 21st Century Schools Vision. A school with four forms of entry at 11-16 will be capable of providing and sustaining the facilities and opportunities described in this vision. Therefore the Council accepts that the minimum size for any new secondary school will be a four-form entry school providing 600 11-16 places.

Any review of secondary school provision will take into consideration the Learning Pathways available to pupils within the area. It is important that any changes secure the best possible learning environments for children and young people, maximising curriculum breadth, quality and inclusion. Secondary schools should also be the 'hub' for a range of community focused services.

Where a secondary school has fallen below 600 pupils (11-16) for three years in succession, the authority reserves the right to review the school.

Ysgol Maes Garmon is the only Welsh-medium High School in Flintshire. A specific strategy needs to be adopted to ensure sustainable local access to Welsh Medium Education reflecting patterns of increasing demand in the primary phase and transfer from English medium schools at year 7.

3.6 Secondary Education: 16-18

Transforming Education and Training in Wales sets out ambitions for the future of post-14 learning across the Country. Flintshire County Council is currently developing its plans to ensure that there is sustainable local access to high quality local vocational and non-vocational educational provision. The Council's detailed plans are set out in separate detailed 14-19 strategy documents. Flintshire, in common with other authorities, faces sustainability and improvement challenges through the presence of some small sixth forms.

Small class sizes in sixth forms can lead to limited student interaction which diminishes the effectiveness of learning (Transforming Education & Training in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

In presentations on the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Transformation Education and Training in Wales' officials have stated that sixth forms with less than 150 pupils are potentially unsustainable. Flintshire County Council takes the view that this would unduly limit access to local or Welsh Medium Provision.

Flintshire County Council takes the view that area plans for post 16 education should be developed to ensure that local provision offers the best possible opportunities for learners. In addition, in any secondary school where the number of pupils within the 6th form has fallen below 120 for three years in succession, the authority reserves the right to review the school, in order to consider sustainable options for post-16 education. It may not be viable for all secondary schools to have 6th forms; it is dependant on the availability of post-16 provision within an area.

Ysgol Maes Garmon is the only Welsh-medium High School in Flintshire. A specific strategy needs to be adopted to ensure sustainable local access to Welsh Medium education reflecting patterns of increasing demand.

3.7 Surplus Places

Where a school has more than 25% (and a minimum of 30) surplus places in either the primary or secondary sector, it should be reviewed as part of an area review of provision with an aim of developing options to reduce surplus places within the area.

Any review on the basis of surplus places will take into consideration past numbers and future projections for the schools involved. Strategies for addressing significant surplus places include identifying alternative uses for part of the building

(sometimes delivering alternative Council services) or removal/redesignation of surplus accommodation.

The Council will also pursue a strategy of removing mobile school accommodation as part of its programme to ensure that school buildings are fit for purpose. Mobiles are designed for temporary use and do not generally meet with sustainability goals because of higher maintenance costs and energy demands of such buildings. WAG and the Council recognise that inadequate buildings make improvements in standards of achievement more challenging (Estyn, *An Evaluation of Performance Before and After Moving into New Buildings or Significantly Refurbished Premises*, 2007).

This strategy may involve decommissioning of mobile accommodation in neighbouring schools to those with excess surplus accommodation, and consideration of admissions numbers at all of the schools involved.

However, the Council does recognise that mobiles can have a valuable role to play in addressing temporary accommodation shortages:

- in an emergency (for example in the case of fire or flood);
- during building works so that the school can continue to operate with minimum disruption to pupils; or
- to meet a short term increase in pupil numbers in areas of population growth with no alternative school places.

It may also be appropriate to consider the strategies for Area Schools at (3.4) in seeking a solution to over capacity in the area.

3.8 Underperforming Schools

The County Council will consider at an early stage the long term viability of schools judged by Estyn to require special measures or significant improvement. The Council will consider closing such schools where there are places available nearby at better performing schools. Opening a new school on the site of the old school will only be considered where there is a need for the places and there is no suitable alternative available.

3.9 Key Considerations in Decision Making

Key issues which should be taken into consideration in promoting any school organisational change proposal include:

- the effect on the standard of education to be provided in the area, including provision for pupils with additional learning needs, delivery of the Foundation Phase and the 14-19 Transformation Programme (Educational Impact Assessment);
- the need for the particular type of provision that is proposed, for example the level of parental demand for Welsh medium education or impact on the proportion of places in faith schools in the area (Demography and Demand Assessment)
- the effect on compliance with equality legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for tackling child poverty (Equalities Impact Assessment);

- the effect on accessibility to schools, particularly in rural areas and on the journey times to school (Sustainability Assessment);
- the effect on the Welsh language, its maintenance in the community and the extent to which proposals would contribute to the aims of Iaith Pawb (Welsh Language Impact Assessment);
- whether the proposal includes additional community focused facilities or preserves existing community service provision offered by a school, together with the impact on the local community and on social cohesion (Community Impact Assessment);
- the views of those most directly affected, such as children, young people, parents, staff, governors and other schools or providers in the area (Consultation Assessment);
- whether the proposal contributes towards achieving the County Council's agreed strategy for making all its school buildings fit for purpose (Asset Management Assessment); and
- the cost-effectiveness of proposals and whether adequate financial resources are available to implement them (Financial Assessment).

Full impact assessments should be undertaken for action proposed under 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8.

Part 4: Programme Management & Phasing

4.1 Programme Governance

The recent Estyn Inspection (2009) analysed the Council's capacity to deliver a School Modernisation Programme. It noted positive leadership from elected members and officers in the programme development work so far. It concluded that the planning for the programme appropriately takes a "holistic approach to improving pupils' attainment...to ensure that the authority has the right number of school places in fit for purpose buildings in the right locations."

The inspection also noted that the Authority has also not recently been tested by difficult School Modernisation and Organisation decisions. The key issue in this is that the School Modernisation Strategy represents a long-term transformational programme of school improvement and improvement of children's services. It will provide both opportunities and risks for the Council and these need to be considered carefully at each stage.

If approved to progress, the programme is of such a size that it will need to be seen as a Council-wide corporate priority. Estyn recognised a high level commitment to addressing the issues of school reorganisation and inadequate buildings across Council teams.

Key decisions on the future of individual schools are reserved to the Executive. The Executive may refer draft policy issues and individual proposals for consideration by Scrutiny, and the decisions of the Executive may also be "called in" using normal constitutional rules. Executive and Scrutiny processes can be supported by officers involved in managing the programme.

Under a School Modernisation programme there is much evidence to consider and there are significant additional influential roles that can be undertaken on both a County-wide and local basis. A further set of local groups for Area Reviews could also be commissioned to assist in development of the pattern of schooling in each area. A group of local Councillors, Headteachers, staff, parents and governors, with approved terms of reference, could be involved in the identification of the range of possible options in line with overall School Modernisation Strategy principles. The conclusions of these discussions would subsequently require consideration and approval for consultation from the Executive.

4.2 Programme Progression

One of the key factors in considering how School Modernisation should proceed is the Council's capacity to complete the work required. School Organisation work involves statutory processes to develop and present proposals relating to specific schools. The statutory processes involve compliance with Welsh Assembly Government regulation and guidance.

An initial stage (Stage 1) for area reviews would be local engagement with Headteachers and Governors to develop initial local proposals for school modernisation and school organisation.

For individual school reviews and the second stage of area reviews (Stage 2) every relevant school and governing body must be consulted, including parents and their wider community. This would involve meetings with staff, governors and parents at each school. This phase of consultation will entail informal discussions with Heads and Governors, a formal consultation period with staff, governors and parents, and consultation with prescribed consultees (e.g. Diocesan Authorities.) The consultation will, of course, require the preparation of options and option appraisals (see 3.9).

Stage 2 is a substantial undertaking. Good practice would normally require a consultation period of no less than 6 weeks and the meetings would need to be held at a sufficiently early point to enable the proposals to be understood and considered before responses are made. This would involve a concentration of meetings in the first half of the consultation period, involving officers and Councillors.

Following consultation, Stage 3 would involve proposals coming to Executive for a final decision to be taken and the authorisation of statutory notices. Following the publication of these notices, there will be a period during which objections may be made to the proposals. If such objections are made and not withdrawn, the matter will be referred to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills for a final decision which would be binding on all parties.

Given the need for careful management of Stages 1 to 3, it would not be possible to attempt reorganisation in one phase. Instead, by grouping schools it would be possible to manage the process based on geographical school organisation (Appendix 2 P.41) areas. The following is recommended for prioritisation based on addressing:

- the policy criteria at 3.1 to 3.8;
- areas of socio-economic deprivation; and
- issues of sustainability for post-16 provision.

The following methodology would be adopted:

- *Review individual schools compliant with 3.1 to 3.4 or 3.8 as part of the area review programme progresses;*
- *Complete county-wide review of Welsh Medium provision (compliant with 3.1 to 3.7);*
- *Complete post 16 strategy;*
- *Complete PRU Commissioning Strategy; and*
- *Review any additional individual schools becoming compliant with 3.1 to 3.4 or 3.8 as the programme progresses;*

The pace with which work will be progressed to will depend on availability of capital and revenue resourcing to support developments. The projected length of the initial consultation and decision making is likely to be two years.

Area reviews should not prevent the promotion of change in where governors consider it desirable or opportunities (such as additional capital funding) occur.

The following table sets out an example timeline for submission of a proposal:

Year	Term	Activity
2009	Autumn	Consideration of School Modernisation Strategy by Partners, Scrutiny and Executive
2010	Spring	Informal discussions with Headteachers and Governors about outline proposals Executive approval for initial draft proposals and draft consultation documents
2010	Summer	Consult with schools, parents and others on draft individual school proposals Analyse responses and draft Executive report
2010	Autumn	Report to Executive Publish statutory proposals
2011	Spring	Consider any formal objections Refer proposals to WAG
2011	Summer	Minister decides for or against proposals Inform schools, parents and others of decisions
2011-12	Autumn-Summer	Planning for Implementation
2012-	Autumn-	Implementation

On this exemplar timescale, all schools in their area review will know what will happen locally within five terms or 18 months of the process starting. Implementation would take place in September 2012 for any Primary School changes and from September 2012 in any Secondary School changes involving multiple year groups.

A paper will go to Executive at the commencement of each area review.

4.3 Programme Management

The programme would consist of a number of linked projects within each phase overseen by a programme team of key Council officers and representatives of key partners. This programme team would regularly report into the governance arrangements at 4.1. The programme team would develop the detailed proposals for:

- project governance,
- project management structures, roles and responsibilities;
- fulfilment of commitments to BREEAM/ CAFE best practice etc;
- project team budget and resource approvals;
- considering project documentation, including Project Initiation Documents, Briefs, Plans, Business Cases, Risk Logs, Issues Logs, Communications Plans, Quality Plans, Change Control processes, Lessons Learned Logs and End Stage Reports where appropriate; and
- facilitating programme progress and project exception reporting.

Individual projects would be managed in accordance with Flintshire's new Project Management Principles. Senior managers have recently been trained on the Principles. There will be a need for further training for others taking project sponsor or management roles.

In order to have sufficient capacity to deliver on the envisaged early area reviews there will need to be some changes to responsibilities and reporting arrangements within relevant Lifelong Learning Directorate teams. There will need to be leadership and coordination capacity dedicated to the programme. Proposals for these changes are due to be considered shortly.

Implementation of any school change proposals may also require further additional temporary capacity to facilitate curriculum, staffing and buildings development.

4.4 Financial Issues

The speed of implementation of any School Modernisation Programme is subject to the availability of resources. While it may be a clear aim to implement the programme, it may not be possible to do this in the planned timescale if funding is unavailable.

Each individual school proposal and area review will need a full financial appraisal identifying revenue savings, cost pressures and any programme of capital investment. Action will be necessary to enhance capital allocations, generate capital receipts and develop self-funding opportunities (such as through prudential borrowing and asset disposal).

Whilst much of the overall programme will be supported through reprioritisation of existing staff work programmes, there may be a need to identify funding to resource implementation support pressures and a core time limited project team.

Attention also needs to be given to the future resourcing scenario for schools. School reorganisation involves the generation of revenue savings. Consideration needs to be given (with the School Budget Forum) to:

- the funding implications of alternative options for primary school organisation (including the possibility of further amalgamations, federation and closures);
- the funding formula and the case for changing it to ensure it is fair to all schools;
- the prospect of using revenue savings to support capital funding for school modernisation through prudential borrowing;
- setting up models for the projected savings accruing from any proposed amalgamations, federations or closures (taking into account all of the knock-on effects of transport, possible Early Voluntary Retirement etc).

Work with the Corporate Asset Management Group also needs to consider strategies with regard to:

- maximising external capital funding (through 21st Century Schools, SBIG, SCIF and other external sources);
- asset disposal;
- ensuring sufficient funding to deliver minor works as part of organisational change; and
- developing a prudential borrowing programme.

Given the significant capital investment needs arising from the School Modernisation Programme and the need for the Council to focus its limited resources on the assets which it owns and must provide (such as roads, community school buildings and so on), disposal of sites that are being closed will form a key part of the funding package.

In terms of revenue funding, 60.77% of Flintshire's total income is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The number of pupils in our schools is a significant factor in the Welsh Assembly Government deciding how much money the Council needs to deliver its services for all people in Flintshire. A fall in pupil numbers or pressures in the use of funding must be addressed.

Appendix 4 sets out the allocation of revenue funding to individual schools. The average amount of money provided for Primary Schools was £2,935 per pupil. This ranged from as low as £2,605 per pupil (in a school with 402 pupils) to as high as £6,866 per pupil (in a school with 26 pupils). Funding per pupil rises significantly in the smallest schools in order to sustain facilities and curriculum delivery.

The average amount of money provided to Secondary school was £3,584 per pupil. This ranged from as low as £3,365 per pupil (in a school with 1,023 pupils) to as high as £4,151 per pupil (in a school with 472 pupils).

(figures do not include resourced special units).

Appendix 1: Ministerial Decision Making Checklist

Standards of provision

These considerations are of prime importance:

- whether the proposals are likely to improve the standard of education provision in the area;
- the standard of education currently provided and the continuing ability of the school to maintain satisfactory standards;
- whether the proposals will ensure delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum, including all the required elements of the curriculum for all affected age groups, and pupils with varying needs, including the requirements for wider choice and flexibility for learners aged 14 and over, taking into account arrangements for co-operation with other schools, Further Education Institutions and training providers in the area;
- whether the proposals are likely to lead to increased participation in learning by pupils beyond compulsory school age;
- the effect of the proposals on other schools and educational institutions.

In assessing the impact of proposals on standards of education the Minister will normally seek advice from Estyn, refer to the most recent Estyn reports and take into consideration any other information available on a school's performance.

The Minister would not normally be prepared to approve closure of a popular and effective school unless evidence is presented that the alternative proposed would offer at least equivalent quality and diversity of education at lower total cost than would have been available had the school remained open.

Need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools

The Minister considers:

- whether there is surplus provision in the area and the effect of the proposal on that surplus;
- where a school is proposed for closure, that there will be sufficient capacity at alternative schools of at least equivalent quality, and of equivalent linguistic type, paying due regard to the language categories of schools set out in "Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision" Welsh Assembly Government Information document No: 023/2007;
- whether there is evidence of a current or future need for additional places in the area or demand for a particular type of provision, for example Welsh medium provision or provision for particular faiths or denominations;
- the resulting journey times for pupils, the provision of, and accessibility to, safe walking and cycling routes, public transport, and, where relevant, the home-school transport arrangements proposed by those bringing forward proposals;
- the length and nature of journeys to alternative provision; in particular whether primary school pupils will have one-way journeys in excess of 45 minutes or secondary school pupils journeys of over an hour;
- whether the proposal will improve access for disabled pupils in accordance with requirements under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Finance

The Minister considers:

- the financial implications for both recurrent and capital costs, and an assessment of the relative cost effectiveness of alternative options, including the status quo;
- whether the proposals represent a cost-effective use of public funds, including consideration of the long term transport, environmental and building maintenance and repair costs;
- the existence of written confirmation from the body or bodies concerned that any capital funding needed for the project will be available at the level required and at the right time;
- whether the necessary recurrent funding is available, including consideration of whether, without the proposals, the schools would face budget deficits;
- the scale of any projected net savings over a period of at least three years;
- whether the proceeds of sales (capital receipts) of redundant sites are to be made available to meet the costs of the proposal or contribute to the costs of future proposals which will promote effective management of school places;
- whether any savings in recurrent costs will be retained in the LA's local schools' budget; and
- in the case of closures, what capital investment would be needed if the school were to stay open and bring it up to a proper standard for delivery of the curriculum.

Before approving proposals, the Minister will need to be satisfied that the proposals can be implemented; in particular, that any necessary recurrent and capital funding will be available. The Minister will check that the proposals can be implemented by reference to information provided by promoters. Usually this information is provided by means of written confirmation from the source of funding on which the promoters rely.

Views of interested parties

The Minister considers:

- the views of children and young people, parents and other local residents, including views relating to parental choice and the impact on the local community;
- the concerns of any LA affected by the proposals;
- the concerns of any diocese affected by the proposals;
- if the proposals affect the provision of post-16 education, the view of: local employers; the Careers Service; the 14-19 Local Area Network; relevant Further Education and Higher Education Institutions and work based providers.
- the views of other schools, playgroups or other providers in the area;
- the level of objections and the validity of points raised by objectors.

Consideration of alternatives

The Minister considers:

- whether the establishment of multi site schools has been considered as a means of retaining buildings, and the reasons for not pursuing this option;
- whether alternatives to closure have been actively considered, in particular whether clustering or collaboration with other schools have been looked at by the proposer (taking account of the scope for use of ICT links between school sites) and the reasons for not pursuing these as an alternative to closure;
- whether the possibilities of making fuller use of the existing buildings as a community or an educational resource have been explored.

Other issues

The Minister considers:

- the overall effect of a closure on the local community (the community impact assessment), particularly in areas receiving funding as part of regeneration activity;
- the overall effect of a closure on the Welsh language including effect on the community and progression opportunities for learners (the Welsh language impact assessment);
- whether the statutory consultation has been sufficient, allowing sufficient time and providing sufficient information for interested parties to make an informed response;
- whether school age children and young people have had the opportunity to participate in the consultation process;
- whether publication procedures have been properly carried out;
- the existence of safe walking, cycling and bus routes to the proposed site;
- any effect of the proposals on statutory class size limits and junior class size policy; and
- any sex discrimination issues.

Additional factors taken into account for proposals to reorganise Secondary Schools or to add or remove sixth forms

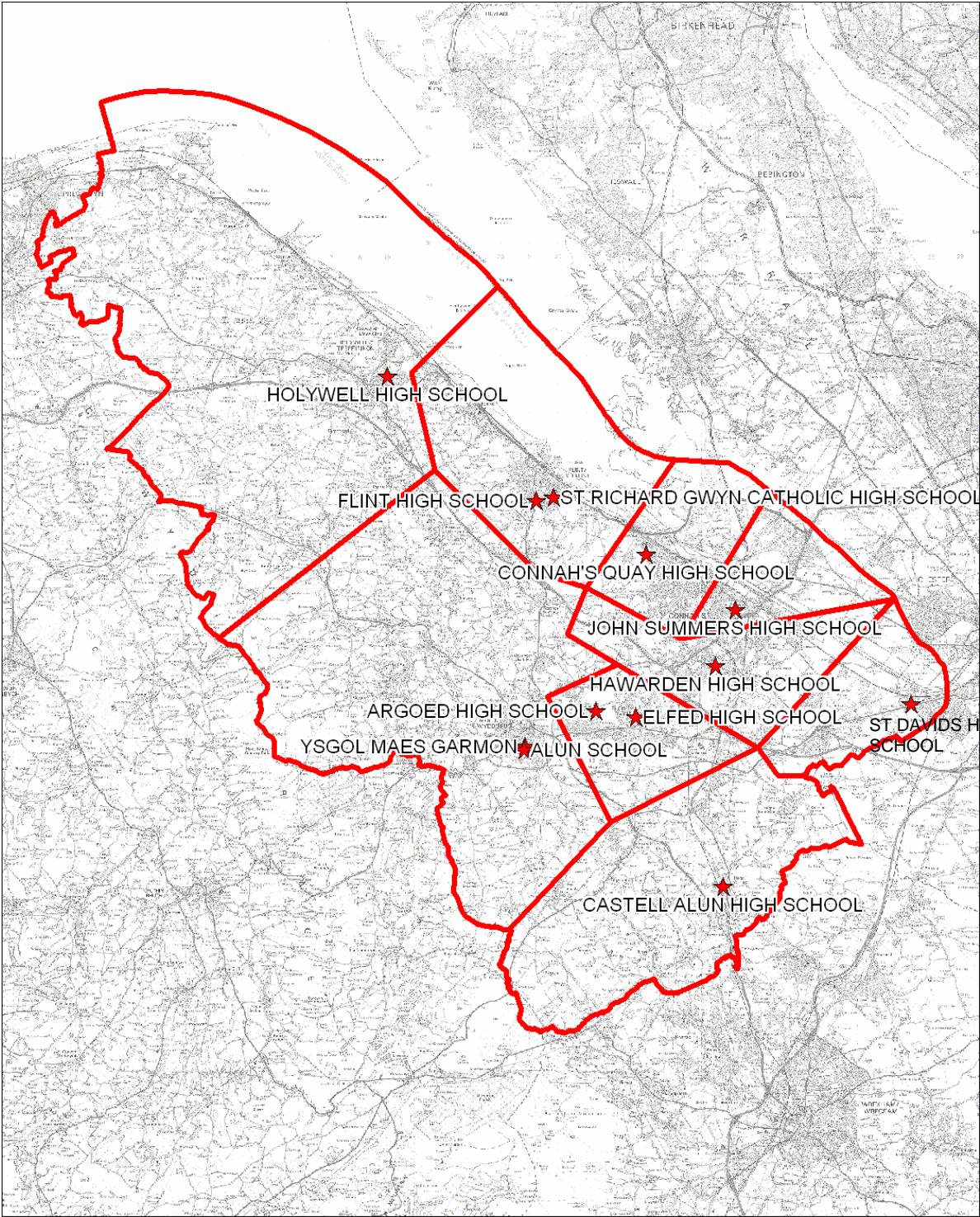
The Minister considers:

- whether the proposed provision will contribute to the wider range of relevant courses and qualifications and high quality, employer informed, vocational learning routes targeted at pupils of all abilities, whilst maintaining GCSE, AS/A level and other established courses which is required under the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008 for 14-19 year old learners;
- the views, of relevant divisions in the Welsh Assembly Government, and whether they approve in principle the necessary financial support. The views of the local 14-19 Network will also be a key consideration in deciding such proposals;
- whether the proposed post 16 provision is of sufficient size and quality to deliver a range of courses appropriate to the particular needs and abilities of the likely intake, without adverse effects on 11-16 provision at schools;
- how the proposals would affect the viability of institutions already providing good-quality post-16 provision, including school sixth forms, Further Education Institutions and private training organisations;
- the effect of the proposals on the 'staying-on' rate;
- whether there are already sufficient, and appropriately diverse 16-19 places in the area;
- the effect of the proposals on the range of provision available to students;
- how proposals might affect the sustainability and enhancement of Welsh medium provision in the local 14-19 network and the wider cross-country area;
- the views of young people, parents, schools and colleges in the area;
- current levels of collaboration and innovation and the extent to which proposals will provide additional learner benefits compared with the status quo and other tenable options for Post 16 organisation.

Schools Causing Concern

When considering any proposals relating to schools causing concern, the Minister will in such cases have regard to the length of time the school has been in special measures (or requiring significant improvement), the impact on its ability to take forward its action plan, the progress it has made, the prognosis for timely improvement and in the case of closure proposals, whether sufficient places will be available at neighbouring schools.

Appendix 2: School Organisation Areas in Flintshire

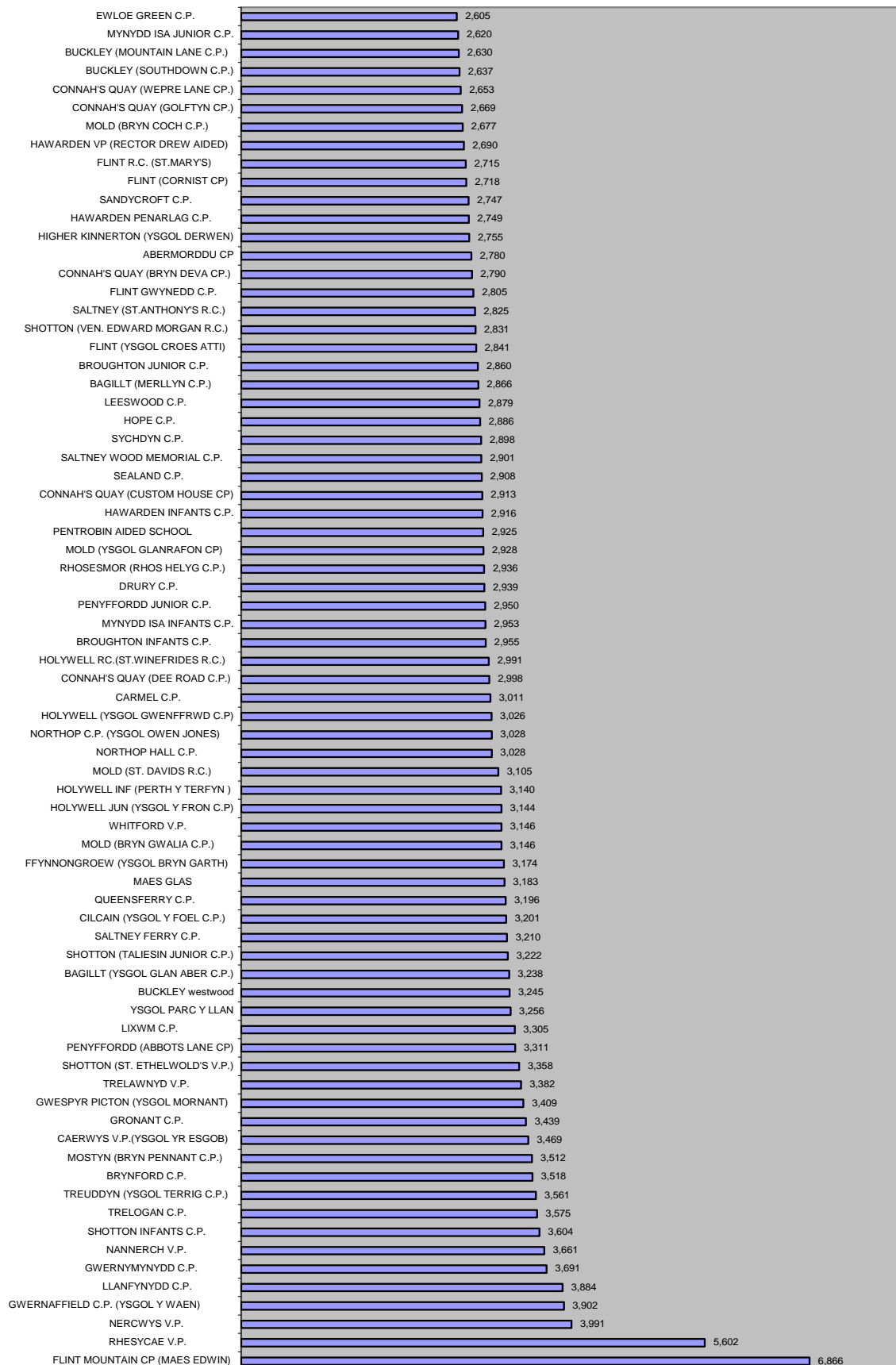


Appendix 3: Revenue Resources

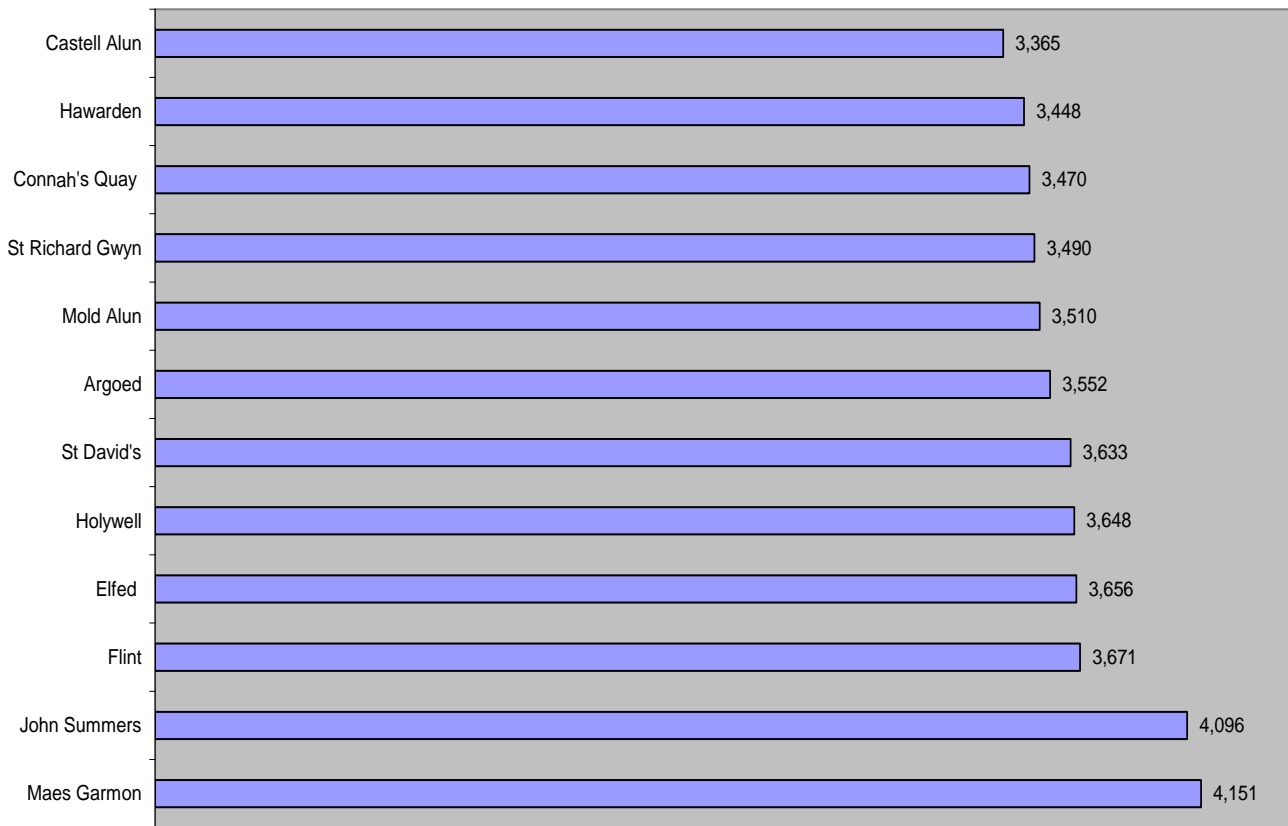
60.77% of Flintshire's total income is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The number of pupils in our schools is a significant factor in the Welsh Assembly Government deciding how much money the Council needs to deliver its services for all people in Flintshire.

In Flintshire, the average amount of money provided for Primary Schools was £2,935 per pupil. This ranged from as low as £2,605 per pupil (in a school with 402 pupils) to as high as £6,866 per pupil (in a school with 26 pupils).

The average amount of money provided to Secondary school was £3,584 per pupil. This ranged from as low as £3,365 per pupil (in a school with 1,023 pupils) to as high as £4,151 per pupil (in a school with 472 pupils).



11 -16 funding per pupil 2009-10



Appendix 4: Background Documents

- Flintshire County Council: Estyn Inspection Report & Action Plan
- Flintshire County Council: Lifelong Learning Directorate Plan
- Flintshire County Council: Education Asset Management Plan
- Flintshire County Council: Fit for Purpose Schools: Primary
- Flintshire County Council: Fit for Purpose Schools: Secondary
- Flintshire County Council: Welsh Education Scheme
- Flintshire County Council: Strategic Outline for 14-19 and Post 16
- Flintshire County Council: A Policy for Small Schools 2004
- Flintshire County Council: Leisure Strategy
- Flintshire County Council: Project Management Principles
- A Fair Future for Our Children - The Strategy of the Welsh Assembly Government for Tackling Child Poverty
- A Guidance to Asset Management Planning in Wales
- Building Bulletin 98: Briefing Framework for Secondary School Projects
- Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects
- Defining schools according to Welsh Medium Provision - Welsh Assembly Government Information document No: 023/2007
- Disability Discrimination Act 2002
- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Estyn: Small Primary School in Wales 2006
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7 year olds in Wales
- Guidance accompanying the School Organisation Proposals by the National Council for Education and Training in Wales Regulations 2004 (The National Assembly for Wales Circular 48/2004)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Iaith Pawb
- Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008
- Learning and Skills Act 2000
- Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance: National Assembly for Wales Circular Number: 37/2004
- National Assembly for Wales Circular No 15/2004: Planning to Increase Access to Schools for Disabled Pupils
- One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998: Organisation of School Places The National Assembly for Wales Circular 9/99
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Shared Planning for Better Outcomes: Planning Guidance and Regulations for Local Authorities and their Partners on Children and Young People's Plans: Welsh Assembly Government Circular No 31/2007
- Skills That Work for Wales - A Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The 1999 School Premises Regulations: Welsh Office Circular 15/99

- The Change of Category of Maintained Schools (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2005
- The Change of Category of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2001
- Education (Infant Class Sizes) (Wales) Regulations 1998
- Education (Maintained Special Schools) (Wales) Regulations 1999
- Education (School Organisation Proposals) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2004
- Education (School Organisation Proposals) (Wales) Regulations 1999
- Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999
- The Learning Country
- The Learning Country: Vision into Action
- The National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales: Iaith Pawb
- The School Organisation Proposals by the National Council for Education and Training for Wales Regulations 2004
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales
- Welsh Language Act 1993
- Survey for the demand of Welsh Medium Education
- Estyn Inspection of PPRU

Appendix 5: Performance Indicators

Learning & Achievement

- Local Monitoring of Quality of Teaching
- Estyn Inspection Judgements
- Results from Student Survey
- Data on improved outcomes at Key Stages and Post 16
- Data on provision and use of ICT

Inclusion & Wellbeing

Local Authority monitoring data on ALN
Results from student, parent and community survey
Higher population of pupils with statements with complex needs in Local Authority schools
Audit of Community Focused Schools offers & community needs
Data on behaviour & attendance
Data related to healthy schools standards
Improved quality & quantity of out of school activities & sports provision from baseline
Staying on & NEET rates
Use of schools by adults to gain vocational skills & qualifications

Workforce Development

Involvement of staff in preparation for later School Modernisation projects
Visits to School Modernisation schools by other schools
Change team participation at School Modernisation schools
Results from staff survey

Improved Learning Environments

- Surplus places
- Proportion of admissions for first choice schools
- Energy usage before and after development
- Design Quality Indicators (DQI) post occupancy
- Breeam Very Good & Better standards
- Occupant satisfaction survey
- Cost per square metre for refurbishment and rebuilding
- Operational costs per square metre post occupancy

Working in Partnership

- Involvement and engagement of partners in programme delivery