



POST-16 EDUCATION

Overview



Contents

Introduction

Foreword by the Cabinet Member for Education

Foreword by the Head of Education

The Vision

Part 1: Case for change

Addressing changes in education

Preparing for the economy of the future

Addressing the workforce needs of North Wales' core sectors

Part 2: Current provision

The national situation

Post-16 provisions in Gwynedd

Sixth Form in Arfon schools

Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium

Dwyfor Meirionnydd and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

Part 3: Arfon Post-16 Education

Sixth form pupil numbers

Ensuring a choice of subjects

Class sizes

Results

Ensuring a comprehensive bilingual provision

Ensuring appropriate resources

Local budgetary situation

Transportation costs

Part 4: Moving forward

Opportunities to improve the provision

Foreword

“My vision is to establish a post-16 education system that places the needs of all of our learners at the centre of our provision.

Your background, location or circumstance should not determine your choices or your future path. I would like to see a system that is flexible, and one that provides the highest quality of education and training, fostering skills that are in demand in the local, regional and national economy, in order to ensure clear pathways towards prosperity for every young person in Gwynedd.”




Cllr. Cemlyn Rees Williams
Cabinet Member for Education



Garem Jackson
Head of Education,
Gwynedd Council

“The landscape for post-16 education in Wales is changing.

In order to ensure excellent opportunities, choices and experiences for post-16 young people, it is essential that we, our partners and our stakeholders pave the way, acknowledging what we do well, what we can improve, and developing an ambitious system to ensure the best for learners. The foundations of our post-16 education system dates back forty years, therefore, there is an ideal opportunity for Gwynedd to be innovative and create a fit-for-purpose post-16 education system that combines the vocational, technical and academic, ensuring that every learner achieves his or her potential.”



Ensuring fairness and strong support for every post-16 learner in Gwynedd to succeed and realise his or her potential”

Our vision for post-16 learners in Gwynedd is to:

- I. ensure fairness in the choice of courses and provide flexible and sustainable high quality learning experiences which equip them as independent learners with the correct information and skills to progress.
- II. provide effective transition into post-16 education provision, and develop and maintain access to a broad range of appropriate pathways for the individual learner and ensuring that post-16 provision evolves as the requirements of the learner and local economy changes in future.





Part I: Case for change

Addressing changes in education

1. The landscape for post-16 education in Wales is changing with the Welsh Government proposing to introduce a new act in 2020. Therefore, it is timely to review whether the provision in Gwynedd is effective for the needs of young people in the county and addresses the impact of schemes to ensure new skills for key jobs in the future.
2. In January 2020, the Welsh Government Minister for Education published her vision for a new post-16 education framework which will lead to higher levels of skills that promote innovation, facilitate investment and improve leadership and management. Learners are expected to gain access to a series of broad and appropriate pathways which enable access to learning at all levels. There will be a need for a smooth transition between vocational, technical and academic pathways. The Minister expects the pathways to be clear, to meet the needs of the individual, and consider the economic and social priorities of Wales.
3. Professor Hazelkorn, 'Towards 2030' (2016), which included a proposal to establish one new authority for the regulation, supervision and coordination of the post-compulsory sector. The Welsh Government has stated its intention to establish the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research for Wales (CTER) to provide supervision work, strategic direction and leadership for the post-compulsory education and training sector.
4. The strategic plan of the new Commission would be based on the principles of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and it would focus on outcomes. In 2015, the Welsh Government set seven well-being goals for Wales, namely, A Prosperous Wales, A Resilient Wales; A More Equal Wales; A Healthier Wales; A Wales of Cohesive Communities; A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language and a Globally Responsible Wales.
5. Gwynedd needs to prepare for a new landscape and direction for post-16 education in Wales. In addition, the education system in the future will need to address the emerging needs of the economy locally and regionally and develop employable skills.

6. The need to improve employability skills will be the foundation of all post-16 provision, to raise employment ambitions and meet aspirations of learners in Gwynedd and will be a key objective when planning the provision. Therefore, it is anticipated that post-16 provision will be planned and prioritised to reflect the needs of the local and national labour market, as well as deliver the skills that are required by local employers. For learners who choose an academic pathway, it is also essential that those learners have the necessary skills for their employment following post-16 education and higher education. In order to achieve this, providers will need to offer a coordinated and flexible range of provision which is suitable for every learner.
7. In order to implement this approach, a specific focus should be placed on ensuring that individuals are being supported continuously to develop, maintain and improve their learning and skills, throughout their education and careers. The encouragement given to learners to continue with education and learning in work will lead to a greater likelihood that young people in Gwynedd will stay longer in the labour market, and will be better able to adapt to changes when transferring from jobs and careers with various employers and sectors.
8. The national direction has been steered by Prosperity for All, a national strategy published by Welsh Government in 2017. One of the main area is 'Ambitious and Learning' with 'Skills and Employability' also identified as a priority. The Welsh economy has changed substantially over the past 20 years, where a decline has been seen in manufacturing jobs, from 18% to 10% of all jobs. 98.5% are businesses that employ fewer than 50 people, with 76.6% being sole traders. It is estimated that 46.4% of jobs in Wales have the potential to change as a result of automation, and the Welsh Government has established a Review of Digital Innovation to report on the potential impact of automation on Wales.
9. Ensuring that post-16 education offers training in the skills sought out by employers is a key element of the strategy. In a Welsh Government survey in 2017, 66% of employers with vacancies noted that a lack of specialist skills for the role was a substantial factor in the failure to appoint applicants. In addition, 45% were concerned that applicants were unable to demonstrate the ability to solve complex problems.
10. Gwynedd Council is a member of the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (North Wales RSP), which has identified new operating methods to support businesses to benefit from new powers. In its 2019/21 plan, the Partnership has noted the need to address the growth in inconsistencies across the region, as well as ensuring a progression programme for some sectors. Research has highlighted the under-use of advanced skills, shortages and gaps in skills across the majority of our key sectors, as well as recruitment difficulties and a lack of STEM skills (including the take-up of STEM subjects after GCSEs).
11. Therefore, it will be important for an ambitious plan for post-16 provision to acknowledge that skills requirements such as digital skills and SMART technology are still changing, and there will be a need to develop a flexible workforce with fit-for-purpose qualifications that will drive innovation and enterprise skills.
12. In a survey on behalf of the North Wales RSP in 2018, 29% of workers noted that new workers were not 'ready for work'. Specifically, there was a lack of specific work skills, lack of work experience, lack of qualifications and poor attitudes and motivation. Just over half of employers currently offer work experience for school/Further Education or University students in North Wales.

13. The future economy will require relevant skills for new industries such as digital services, the aerospace industry, de-carbonisation, automation and artificial intelligence. It will be essential for plans for the provision of post-16 education to acknowledge changes in the nature of the economy, both nationally and locally, and prepare young people for the opportunities deriving from the new jobs.



"Learners are expected to gain access to a series of broad and appropriate pathways that allow access to learning on all levels. There will be a need for smooth bridging between vocational, technical and academic pathways. Pathways must be clear, meet the needs of the individual, and consider the economic and social priorities of Wales."

Kirsty Williams AM - Minister for Education

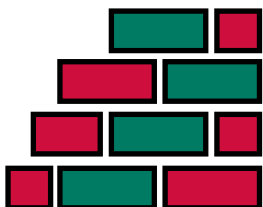


**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government**

14. It is expected that the post-16 education plan will respond to the future needs of core sectors through providing education and training in relevant skills. The North Wales RSP survey shows that all core sectors face substantial challenges.



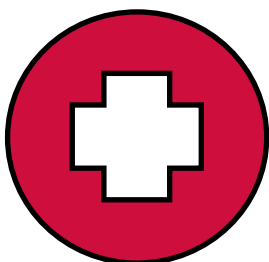
15. **The Energy Sector:** 50% of energy sector businesses are currently facing challenges, with a high percentage in the professional, technical and skilled trade occupations. Apprenticeships are an important pathway for the energy and low-carbon economy, which is specifically tailored towards employers' needs. The majority of employers in the sector employ apprentices on level 3, with degree apprenticeships offered in engineering at level 4+.



16. **The Construction Sector:** 78% of businesses in the construction sector are currently facing skills challenges, with a high percentage of them in skilled trades, professional, associated, technical jobs. Apprenticeships are an important access pathway into the construction sector, with 66.7% of employers in the sector employing apprentices, mainly on levels 2 and 3, and one or two high-level apprenticeships.



17. **The Financial and Professional Services Sector:** the sector makes a substantial contribution to the region, as a key employment source, relevant to employment in the Foundation Economy. It is also a key resource through its provision of specialist services for businesses across all sectors. It is a relatively balanced sector in terms of the need to use the Welsh language and a high number in the sector are younger than 50 years of age. In a recent survey, 43% of employers were projecting that current digital skills will be a challenge to their business in the future.



18. **The Health and Social Care Sector:** this sector provides almost a third of all apprenticeships across Wales. This investment in skills is essential to the sustainability of the health and social care sector and meets the government's programme for the Foundation Economy. There is a consistent demand from employers for level 2 and 3 trained domiciliary care staff, in line with the need to comply with the regulations.



19. **The Tourism and Hospitality Sector:** this sector is acknowledged as a key contributor to the North Wales economy. Tourism and hospitality contributes £2bn per annum to the region's economy and employs 40,000 people. In North West Wales, Travel and Tourism and Hospitality and Catering courses are currently offered mainly in Bangor, Dolgellau and Llandrillo.



20. **The Food and Agriculture Sector:** the North Wales RSP survey shows that 46% of food and agriculture industry businesses in North Wales request Welsh language skills in the workplace. 67% in the industry were facing challenges with skills such as skilled trade occupations, professional occupations, and processing, plant and machinery workers. 58% of employers in the food and agriculture industry reported that they had experienced difficulties when recruiting quality assurance and technical managers, as well as automation engineers and health and safety officers.

Fostering Welsh language skills and proficiency

21. Census data shows that generally the number of people speaking Welsh reduces between the age 16-25. Between 2001 and 2011, the greatest reduction in the percentage of Welsh speakers was seen in the 16-19 year old group, with a reduction from 41.9% to 38.9% in 2011. In Gwynedd, the greatest reduction was seen in the percentage of Welsh speakers in this age group, from 75.8% in 2001 to 68.6% in 2011.
22. The Welsh Government's strategy for the Welsh language, published in 2017, places a new focus on the Welsh language, and it notes Welsh Government's ambitious vision for ensuring million Welsh speakers by 2050. This vision involves further developing the methods which are most likely to achieve the required goal, namely the transfer of Welsh from one generation to the next, and developing and maintaining Welsh language skills throughout the education and training system
23. One of *Cymraeg 2050*'s main objectives is to ensure that fewer young people lose their Welsh language skills as they move from statutory education to post-16 education and higher education, and that more of them reach their mid-20s and beyond with a continued grasp of the language. In 2017, Estyn published a report on Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning in further education across Wales. Estyn identified that not many learners continued to study through the medium of Welsh or bilingually when moving from school to college. This lack of progression between different periods of education and the world of work result in that those who have received a Welsh-medium education or those who have learnt Welsh at school, often losing their skills.
24. Given that over half of our learners leave school at 16 years, and that the majority move on to further education, work-based learning or employment, post-compulsory education and training providers, therefore, have a key role to play in terms of maintaining the Welsh language skills of learners in order to respond to the increasing demand for a bilingual workforce and contribute to the government's vision of a million speakers. Learners and young people need to be aware of the benefits of continuing to develop their Welsh language skills and the importance of making regular use of the language in order to maintain proficiency and confidence when preparing for the work-place, and employers need to be encouraged to offer more opportunities to use the Welsh language in the workplace. In this respect, apprenticeships are important in terms of ensuring that Welsh speakers continue to use the Welsh language after their education comes to an end. Welsh medium apprenticeships could help to respond to the demand for Welsh skills in the work-place, as well as benefit the economy.
25. The North Wales Regional Skills and Employment Plan shows the need for Welsh language skills amongst the region's workforce, now and in the future. In North Wales, as well as being the first language in many workplaces, the demand for Welsh language skills is increasing in a number of growth sectors, both regionally and nationally. In 2015, the greatest need for Welsh language skills (57%) was in North West Wales, and the largest number of jobs noting that Welsh language skills were essential or desirable could also be found in North West Wales.
26. Consequently, we have a duty to ensure the whole range of post-16 education in Gwynedd in the future delivers a comprehensive bilingual provision for young people that will enable them to further develop their Welsh language skills, and respond to the needs of employers and the economy in Gwynedd, in the North Wales region, and beyond.

“The highest percentage of employers noting that the Welsh language is 'essential' in the region are located in Gwynedd.”



27. The Vision of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

“In the field of A Level provision in schools and the post-16 provision offered by further education colleges, we will work closely with partners to ensure that the broadest possible range of provision is available through the medium of Welsh. This will include supporting the A Level provision where the number of pupils is low, where appropriate.”



Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

28. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 creates a single legislative system for supporting children and young people aged between 0 and 25 years who have ALN. It will supersede the two systems currently utilised to support children and young people of mandatory school age who have Special Education Needs (SEN); and young people in further education with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LDD).
29. The new system supersedes the existing support plans (including SEN Statements, individual education plans for learners, and Learning and Skills Plans for post-16 learners) with a new statutory plan referred to as an Individual Development Plan (IDP).
30. If a young person has SEN and attends a maintained school or further education establishment, that young person will be entitled to receive an IDP. However, the Act does not give the right for young people with SEN to receive continuous education up to 25 years. Its intention, rather, is to provide access to further education or training on an equal basis as those without SEN.
31. It should be noted that the Act does not extend to higher education, work-based learning or apprenticeships. Nevertheless, our vision is to ensure that young people with ALN are also able to benefit from the whole range of opportunities and experiences in the field of post-16 education and training, and to transition conveniently from education to work-based learning, apprenticeships or employment.

Part 2: Current provision

The national situation



32. In Wales, post-16 education is provided by tertiary establishments, sixth form centres and schools for 11-18 year olds. In some areas, further education colleges are the only formal education and training providers for people aged over 16 years and the sector has a role to enable young people and adults to realise their potential, and provide a skilled workforce. However, in the majority of areas, the sixth forms of secondary schools co-provide A Level education as well as some vocational courses.
33. In 2008, the Welsh Government published the policy "Transforming the Education and Training Provision in Wales". Some of the policy's objectives were to reduce duplication in the provision, and improve the choice for further education college and sixth form learners. In order to address these objectives, the policy noted the need to identify local solutions, rather than determine one national model.
34. The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure came into force in 2009, and consequently, arrangements were put in place across Wales to ensure the ability of secondary schools to act in accordance with the Measure's requirements, to offer high quality learning experiences and a high standard of education. The Measure also noted that every post-16 establishment had to develop a local curriculum offer that would include at least 30 courses, with five of those courses being vocational courses, and at least five being general courses.

Post-16 provisions in Gwynedd



35. Historically in Gwynedd, sixth form classes in every secondary school in the county provided A Level courses for young people. The core subjects were offered at each school and the wider offer depended on the expertise and timetables of each individual establishment. Little travelling between schools took place.
36. The way in which post-16 education was provided in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd was changed in the 1990s. Sixth form classes were abolished at the secondary schools in those areas, excluding Ysgol y Berwyn, and a tertiary college was established to which the pupils transferred at the end of their statutory education at 16 years of age.
37. The current post-16 provision in Gwynedd is provided at six secondary schools in Arfon, namely Ysgol Brynrefail, Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Ysgol Friars, Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen and Ysgol Tryfan, and at two further education colleges, namely Coleg Menai (Bangor) and Coleg Meirion Dwyfor (Glynllifon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau) which are a part of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. There is also a sixth form at Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Bala.
38. Since 2013, Arfon secondary schools have been in partnership with the Gwynedd Local Authority, Anglesey secondary schools, Anglesey Local Authority and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, referred to as the Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium, to set the area's post-16 curriculum by means of a partnership arrangement. This, in addition to other activities, enables the schools to address the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 which states that every post-16 establishment must offer 30 choices in terms of courses for learners, five of which have to be vocational courses. Since the Consortium was established, a number of changes have occurred in the education field, it is timely therefore to look at whether the efficiency of the current arrangements continue to deliver the original strategic vision.

Sixth form in Arfon schools



- 11-18 secondary school located in Bangor.
- 1,367 pupils: 219 learners in the sixth form.
- Bangor primary schools are in the school's catchment area and the school is also accepts pupils from the wider area including Anglesey.



- 11-18 secondary school located in Bangor.
- 430 pupils: 81 learners in the sixth form.
- Similar to Ysgol Friars, Bangor primary schools are in the school's catchment area.



- 11-18 secondary school located in Caernarfon.
- 864 pupils: 118 learners in the sixth form.
- The school's catchment area includes Ysgol Hendre, Ysgol Maesincla, Ysgol Rhosgadfan, Ysgol Llandwrog, Ysgol Rhostryfan, Ysgol Bontnewydd, Ysgol y Gelli, Ysgol Santes Helen, Ysgol Y Felinheli and Ysgol Felinwnda.



- Ysgol uwchradd 11-18 wedi ei lleoli ym Methesda.
- 464 o ddysgyblion: 56 o ddysgwyr yn y chweched dosbarth.
- Mae ysgolion cynradd y dalgylch yn cynnwys Ysgol Abercaseg, Ysgol Penybryn, Ysgol Llanllechid, Ysgol Tregarth, Ysgol Bodfeurig, Ysgol Rhiwlas a Ysgol Llandygai.



YSGOL BRYNREFAIL

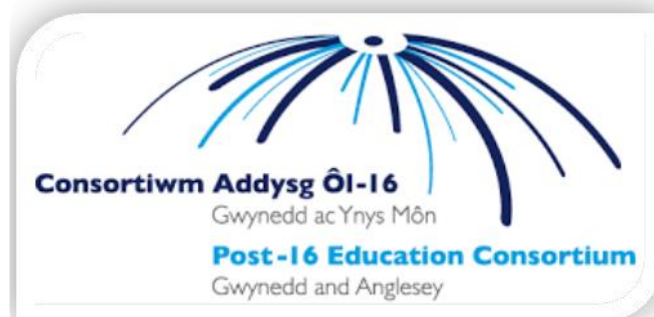
- 11-18 secondary school located in Llanrug.
- 773 pupils: 117 in the sixth form.
- The school catchment area includes primary schools at the foot of Snowdon, namely Ysgol Bethel, Ysgol Waunfawr, Ysgol Gwaun Gynfi, Ysgol Dolbadarn, Ysgol Llanrug and Ysgol Gymunedol Penisarwaen.



- 11-18 secondary school located in Penygroes.
- 419 pupils: 58 learners in the sixth form.
- Primary schools in the catchment area include Ysgol Bro Lliffon, Ysgol Brynaerau, Ysgol Llanllyfni, Ysgol Baladeulyn, Ysgol Nebo, Ysgol Bro Lleu and Ysgol Talysarn.

Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium

39. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Consortium's curriculum provision is identified and agreed through the partnership contract rather than being carried out by individual schools and colleges. Although the governing board of an individual establishment is free to request that a post-16 course is provided at its establishment, the request must be considered by the partnership as part of the area curriculum.
40. Despite the fact that the Consortium has managed to rationalise the AS and A Level offer, the current system does not offer the same experience for every learner. Across schools in Arfon, the number of subjects provided at individual school sites which do not have to follow the partnership agreement



varies, along with the number of learners who study their chosen subjects at other schools across the partnership. As a result, learners travel during the day between schools and/or colleges for their lessons in a block of at least two hours, with some of those lessons running until 5.00pm, and being held twice a week.

Dwyfor/Meirionnydd

Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn

41. Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Bala, a 3-19 all-through school, opened its doors in September 2019 following an investment of £10.27 million. The school has modern resources for the area's pupils, as well as a public library and bespoke resources for the arts, such as a dance hall and theatre. Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn is the only secondary school in Meirionnydd and Dwyfor with a sixth form. It has 349 pupils (with 182 in the primary), including 46 sixth form learners. The school serves an extensive rural area, which includes the catchment areas of Ysgol Bro Tryweryn, Ysgol Ffridd y Llyn and Ysgol OM Edwards primary schools.
42. Strategic arrangements have been established between Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn and the Coleg Meirion Dwyfor site in Dolgellau, with the intention of offering an extensive choice of relevant choice of academic and vocational courses, improving educational resources and the learners' experience in the sixth form. The school offers 18 courses for year 12 and 13, which are taught on the site, and no children travel to other sites at present.



43. Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLIM) was established in 2012 following the merger of Coleg Llandrillo, Coleg Menai and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor. It is recognised as the largest further education college in Wales, with learning sites in the counties of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy and Denbighshire. It employs 2,000 staff and provides courses for approximately 27,000 students. A broad range of academic and vocational courses are offered in more than 35 field subjects.
44. GLIM offers the largest choice of A Level courses in North Wales. It is possible to choose from 40 AS/A Level subjects and to study on a full-time or part-time basis. The A Level campuses are located in Bangor, Dolgellau, Pwllheli, Rhos-on-Sea and Rhyl sixth form. The number of general education students in 2018/19 was 238 at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor (Pwllheli and Dolgellau) and 59 at Coleg Menai (Bangor).
45. The post-16 learners from Ysgol Botwnnog, Pen Llŷn, Ysgol Glan y Môr, Pwllheli and Ysgol Eifionydd, Porthmadog, tend to choose to study at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, Pwllheli for Level 3/ vocational courses. The post-16 learners of Ysgol Ardudwy, Ysgol y Moelwyn, Ysgol Bro Idris and Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn tend to choose to study at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, Dolgellau for level 3/ vocational courses. Agriculture and forestry courses are provided at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor Glynllifon, near Caernarfon.
46. At Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, 27 A Level courses are offered at the Dolgellau and Pwllheli sites, along with a range of vocational courses. There is video conferencing provision between the Pwllheli and Dolgellau campuses. At Coleg Menai, there is vocational provision and some A level provision. The site offers a choice of technology courses, although the provision is not as extensive as Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor due to provision at the schools in Arfon.



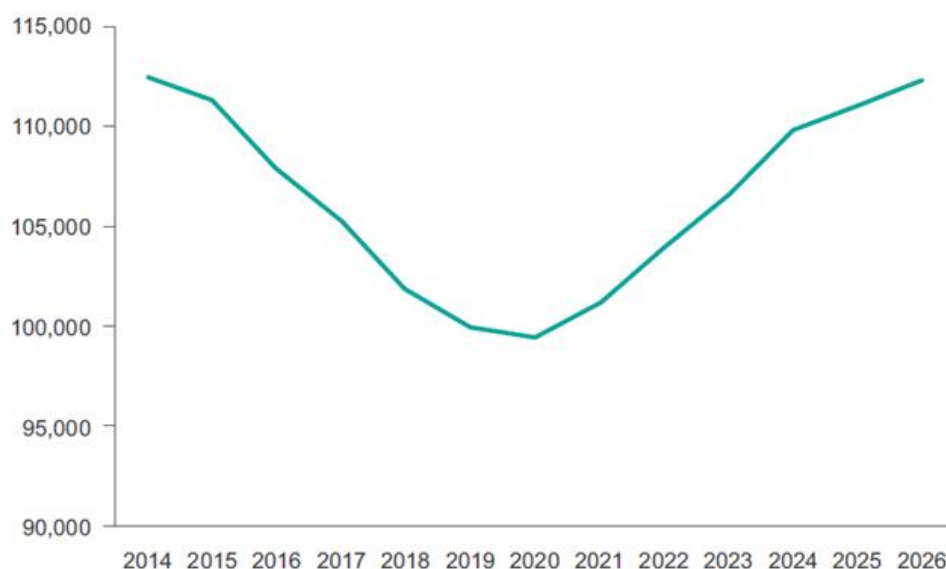


Part 3: Arfon Post-16 Education

47. In considering the key factors, it is necessary to ensure that the provision will not only address operational challenges which have already been identified, but will also build a strategic framework for post-16 education for the long-term. The key factors in ensuring efficient and viable future provision are included in this section, as well as noting stakeholders' views on their experiences of the current system.
48. Cwmni Iaith Cyf were commissioned by the Educational Department to collect evidence through interviews and focus groups with learners and students, parents, and leaders of secondary schools and colleges. The parameters for the research were agreed and the questions to be asked in the interviews and questionnaires were determined following input from officials from the Education Department. The work was carried out between December 2018 and April 2019.

Sixth form pupil numbers

49. The number of 16 to 18 year olds in Wales has fallen steadily since 2014, with a 11.6% reduction in numbers by 2020. As a result, a reduction in the 16-18 population has led to a reduction in the number of learners feeding into post 16 education. However, numbers are expected to return to the 2014 level by 2026, with the situation in Gwynedd close to the national average.

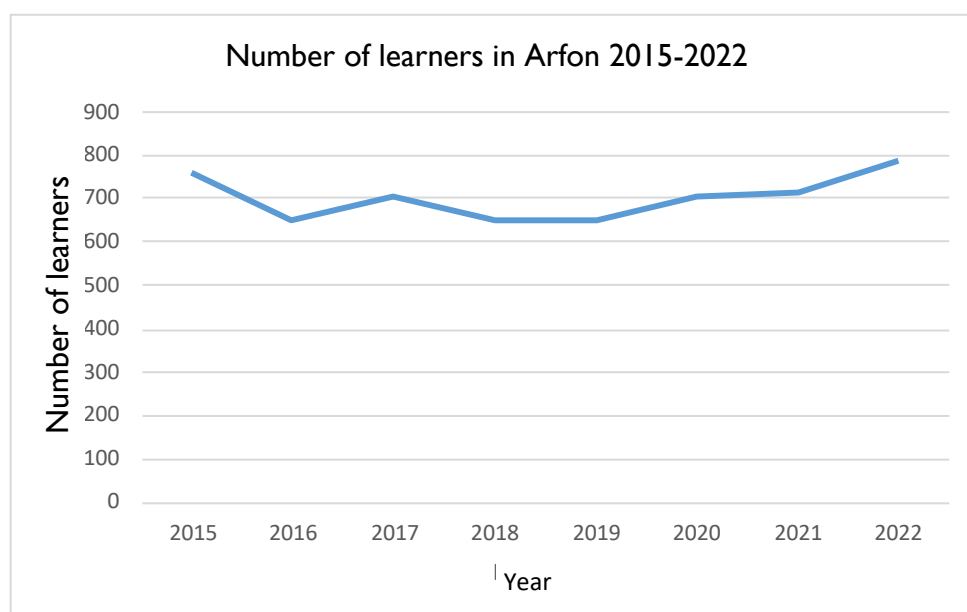


50. Currently, there are 647 learners in the sixth form (Years 12 and 13) at Arfon secondary schools (September 2019), with over two-thirds of the learners either studying at Ysgol Friars (229 pupils), Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen (118 pupils) or at Ysgol Brynrefail (117 pupils).

Number of learners in Arfon sixth forms (September 2019)			
School	Yr. 12	Yr. 13	Total
Friars	119	100	219
Syr Hugh Owen	71	47	118
Brynrefail	66	51	117
Dyffryn Nantlle	31	27	58
Tryfan	52	27	79
Dyffryn Ogwen	27	29	56
Total	366	281	647

Source: September 2019 Census

51. There has been a reduction in the numbers who attend sixth form education at Arfon schools, with around 100 fewer learners at present, compared with the numbers in 2015. Nevertheless, projections for learner totals over the next three years show an increase in the number of learners, where it is anticipated that there will be 844 learners at Arfon schools by September 2022.



52. Based on historical evidence, the Government has identified that at least 150 learners (across years 12 and 13) are needed as a minimum to ensure a viable sixth form. Given this threshold, only Ysgol Friars has a viable sixth form in Gwynedd, with numbers at Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle and Ysgol Tryfan significantly below the figure of 150 learners.



Ensuring a choice of subjects

53. Gwynedd is a rural county with a population demography who live in villages or small towns. Ensuring a broad choice at individual schools, where learner numbers for some subjects are low, is an ongoing challenge. The arrangement in place since the Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium was established has assisted with the aim of attempting to increase the number of subjects available to learners at individual schools in Arfon.
54. The colleges and secondary schools in Arfon, through the Consortium arrangements, are able to address the need to offer 30 subjects, in line with the Measure. The partnership system has resulted in every school, regardless of the size of their sixth form provision, being able to offer 25 A Level subjects and 5 Level 3 BTEC subjects, thus reaching the required 30 subjects which every school must meet. In addition, current arrangements mean that Arfon secondary schools are allowed to offer the core subjects, namely Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Welsh and English.
55. Nevertheless, there is a substantial difference in the choice available from one college and school to the other:
 - Grŵp Llandrillo Menai is moving in the direction of establishing specialist centres in Arfon/Anglesey, with the Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor provision offering a general choice.
 - Some secondary schools in Arfon are able to can offer subjects without assistance from the Consortium arrangements, whilst other secondary schools are more dependent on the partnership courses in order to be able to offer the 30 subjects.
 - Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn has a restricted choice of post-16 courses, and is unable to offer 30 subjects without the partnership with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor
56. The size of the sixth form does not necessarily correspond to the number of subjects offered at each establishment.

School	Numbers	Number on subjects offered internally in 2018/19
Brynrefail	117	13
Dyffryn Nantlle	58	10
Dyffryn Ogwen	55	11
Friars	219	23
Tryfan	81	11
Syr Hugh Owen	118	16

57. Nevertheless, the number of learners attending external courses is constrained by factors such as:
 - the guidelines of individual schools on allowing one external subject only per pupil,
 - the practicality of travelling from the registered school to some of the external courses,
 - the language medium of external courses,
 - fewer internal courses available at some schools.

This has resulted in three quarters of Arfon Y12/13 learners choosing only a combination of in-house subjects - in practice, their actual choice of courses may be less than the total of over 30 courses provided through the joint working arrangements.



The views of the parents, learners and leaders about the post-16 curriculum choice.

58. At the schools where subject choice columns are available for A Level courses, some pupils refer to conflict as their subjects of choice were in the same column. The vast majority of learners in the focus group were able to choose the subjects they wished, although there were some barriers, mainly due to the need to travel to another setting or due to the numbers who wished to follow the course.

"I would have chosen one subject in a different school; however, going to a different school was too much."

"I chose not to follow a subject as I could not follow it at the my preferred school."

The learners said that they had plenty of course choice, with a few exceptions,

"No state school in the area offered Economics."

"We wish to see greater variety of opportunities for learners, and see them able to move seamlessly between different parts of the sector."

Kirsty Williams AM - Minister for Education

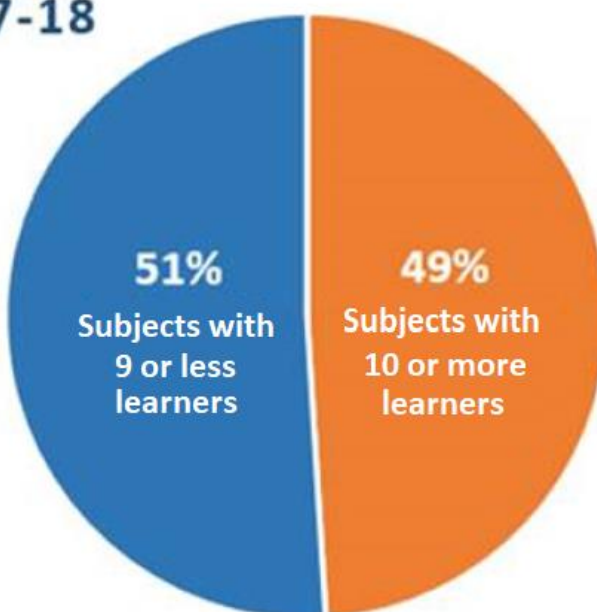


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

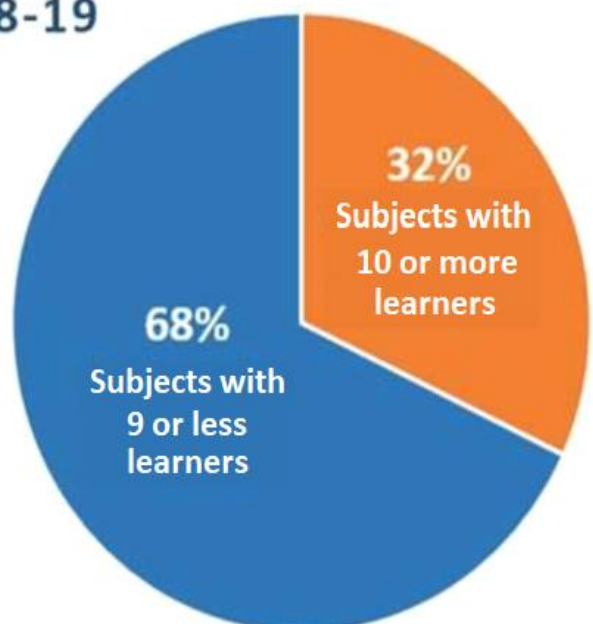
Class sizes

59. Nationally, on average, there are 11 or 12 learners in an A Level class in a sixth form, but in some sixth forms, the number is substantially lower. In comparison, on average, there are 18 or more learners in an A Level class at Further Education colleges and sixth form colleges.
60. Financially, it is considered that a minimum of 9 learners are needed to ensure that a post-16 subject is viable. Therefore, it will be a challenge for every sixth form with a number of classes with fewer than 9 learners to run efficient courses within the budget available to them to provide a post-16 education. This could lead to pressure on the year 7-11 budgets to maintain small numbers in sixth form classes
61. As all Arfon secondary schools are allowed to offer a minimum of 6 core A Level subjects, some subjects will be held with fewer than 9 learners at present.
62. In 2017/18, 51% of core A Level subject classes in Arfon had fewer than 9 learners. Within a year, the percentage of classes with 9 or fewer learners has increased substantially. In 2018-19, 68% of all core courses have 9 or fewer learners, this is an increase of 17% since 2017-18.

2017-18



2018-19



The views of the parents, learners and leaders about the support with post-16 choices

63. When discussing the bridging arrangements from pre-16 education to post-16 education and advice regarding courses, the learners' experiences were similar at the majority of the schools.

"Strong advice from teachers and family members to choose the subjects I enjoyed as well as my strongest subjects."

"Had some advice from the school - teachers etc., but not enough in my opinion. I depended a lot on the previous experiences of people who had studied the subjects in the past, rather than the school."

"My ambition is to develop a post-mandatory education and training system for Wales that is easy for our learners to navigate and which supports our ability to compete in the future on the global stage."

Kirsty Williams AM - Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



- 64 Gwynedd Council has set the goal of continuous improvement in the consistency of education standards and access to specialist subjects as part of post-16 provision in the county.
65. **Nationally, in 11-18 schools, sixth form educational attainment and outcome measures are reported upon, in terms of:**
- **Level 3:** How many learners achieve the level 3 threshold (2 A Level qualifications or equivalent at grades A*-E)
 - **3 A*-C:** How many achieve 3 A*-C A Level grades (or equivalent qualification) after enrolling for at least 2 A Levels (or equivalent qualification).
 - **3 A*-A:** How many achieve 3 A*-A A Level grades (or equivalent qualification) after enrolling for at least 2 A Levels (or equivalent qualification).

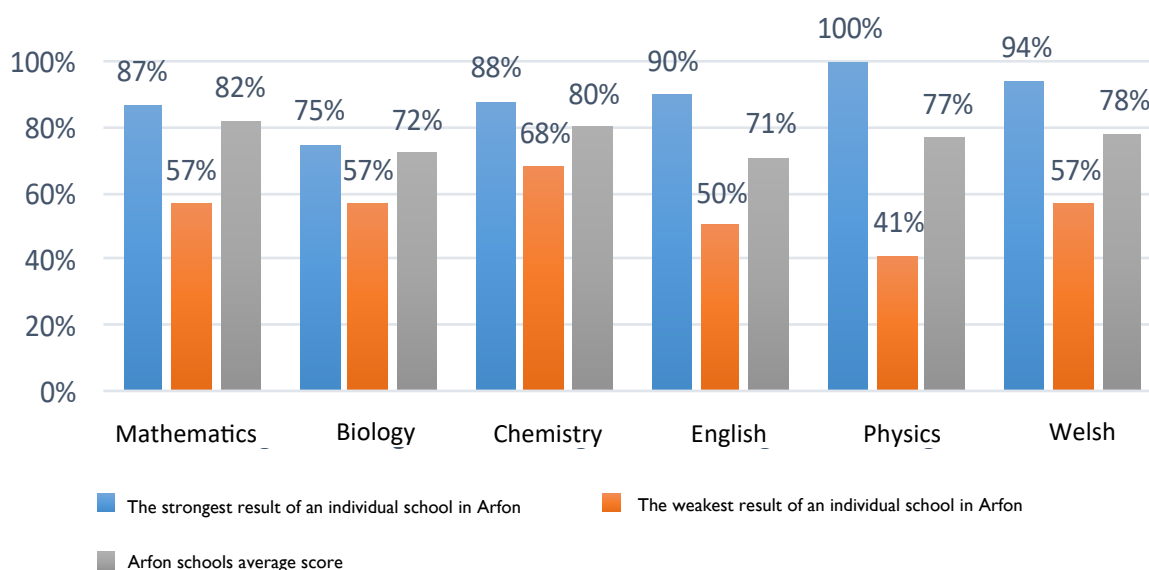
		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% who entered for at least 2 A levels and achieved 3 A* - A grades	Arfon secondary schools	12.5	14.3	13.8
	Wales	10.5	13.4	13.2
% who entered for at least 2 A levels and achieved 3 A* - C grades	Arfon secondary schools	62.2	60.6	61.7
	Wales	54.7	57.9	58.4
% who reached the Level 3 threshold	Arfon secondary schools	97.9	97.5	97.5
	Wales	97.1	97.3	97.9

66. The existing system has led to a variance in the performance in individual subjects at some schools. One additional external factor which could impact on results is the number of learners who receive private lessons in addition to the provision available to them at the schools. In examining the average results of all schools over a three-year period, it is possible to see a variation across schools.

	16-19 number of learners	A*-A	A*-C	D-E	A*-E
Mathematics	233	105 (45%)	190 (82%)	37 (15%)	227 (97%)
Biology	187	46 (25%)	132 (72%)	53 (27%)	185 (99%)
Chemistry	191	69 (36%)	152 (80%)	34 (17%)	187 (97%)
English	144	24 (17%)	106 (71%)	38 (29%)	144 (100%)
Physics	131	43 (33%)	99 (77%)	27 (21%)	128 (98%)
Welsh	158	37 (23%)	123 (78%)	35 (22%)	158 (100%)

67. The following graph demonstrates that there are marked differences in the number of learners across the Arfon schools receiving grades A*-C in the core subjects.

Post-16 A* - C core subject results for Arfon schools 2016-19



Mathematics: Over a 3 year rolling period, in four out of the six schools in Arfon, 40% of all learners managed to achieve A*-A grades. At every school in Arfon, except one, over 70% of the learners managed to achieve A*-C grades. On average across Arfon, 97% of all learners at the schools managed to achieve A*-E grades.

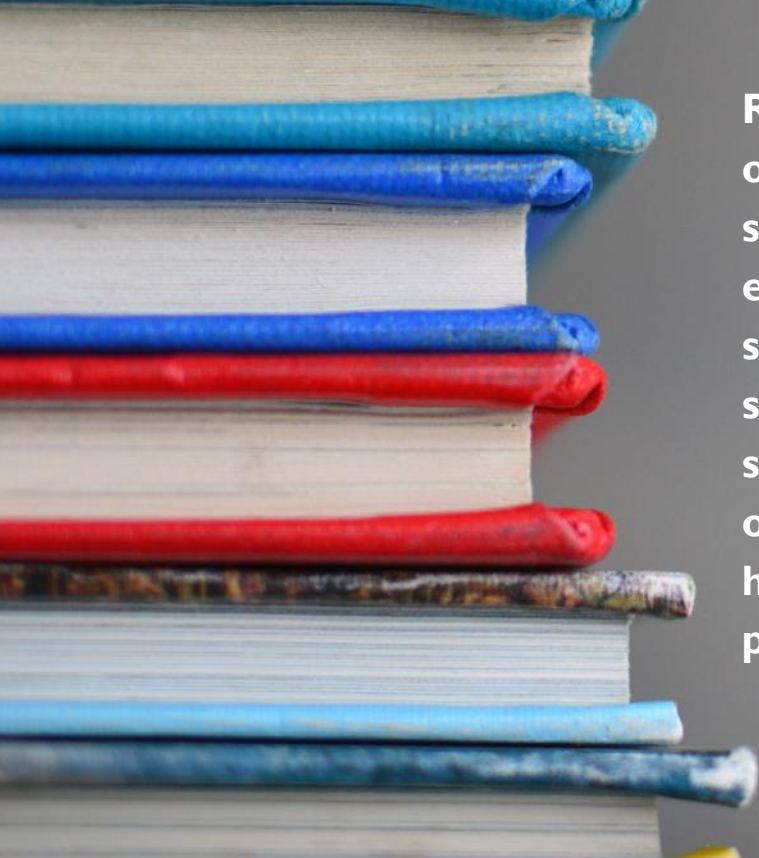
Biology: Over a 3 year rolling period, in four out of the six schools in Arfon, all learners managed to achieve A*-E grades. On average, 25% of all learners managed to achieve A*-A grades, with 99% of all learners achieving A*-E grades. Over a 3 year rolling period, variation is seen in the number who studied the subject from one school to another, with 81 sitting examinations in the subject at one school, and only 8 sitting an examination in the subject at another school.

Chemistry: Over a 3 year rolling period, variation is seen in the Chemistry results across schools in Arfon, with schools varying from 14% to 55% of learners achieving A*-A grades. All learners in five out of the six schools in Arfon managed to achieve A*-E grades over a 3 year rolling period.

English: Over a 3 year rolling period, 144 learners in Arfon sat English examinations, with 17% of those achieving A*-A grades. In two schools, fewer than 4% of learners achieved A*-A grades. Although all learners at Arfon schools managed to achieve A*-E grades, 29% achieved D-E grades.

Physics: Over a rolling period, on average, 33% of all learners in Arfon managed to achieve A*-A grades, and 77% of all learners achieved A*-C grades. Despite these successes, the results in this subject varies across Arfon schools.

Welsh: Over a 3 year rolling period, 40% of learners at one school in Arfon achieved A*-A grades, whilst 33% of learners at another school in Arfon achieved D-E grades. In general, 100% of all learners at Arfon schools managed to achieve A*-E grades, with 78% achieving A*-C grades and 22% achieved D-E grades.



Removing an under-performing course or a non-viable course from that school's offer does not necessarily enable the school to make savings, as staff may be employed across the school and may teach more than one subject. In addition, unless the school offers the subject for learners, it would have to pay for another school to provide the course on its behalf.

Ensuring a comprehensive bilingual provision

68. In accordance with the Gwynedd Education Language Policy, post-16 courses are available through the medium of Welsh or bilingually at the majority of Arfon secondary schools, with the exception of Ysgol Friars, where the post-16 provision at the school is English-medium. At the remaining secondary schools, from the evidence received to date, it appears that learners are given an open choice as to which language they wish to study their A Level courses, with a number choosing to study Sciences and Mathematics through the medium of English, but with some use of Welsh during lessons.*
69. In terms of the provision at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, Pwllheli and Dolgellau sites, it was noted that all A Level subjects are available through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, with staff capacity allowing for 90% of the courses to be available bilingually. However, there is no Welsh medium A Level provision at Coleg Menai (Bangor) as the A Level provision there is restricted, so as not to undermine the Welsh medium provision of Arfon (and Anglesey) secondary schools.
70. It is acknowledged that there is a general lack of Welsh medium resources for post-16 courses and this is an obstacle for the medium of the provision and for the learners choosing to study through the medium of Welsh. It was also noted that some awarding bodies were based in England and therefore, it was not possible to study some courses through the medium of Welsh.

**Revision (November 2020): As requested by the school, it is added that Ysgol Tryfan in Bangor teaches the vast majority of subjects through the medium of Welsh.*

The views of learners about the Welsh-medium provision:

71. Learners' views of Welsh-medium provision:

"I was not advised to follow them through the medium of Welsh, but I do follow my courses in Welsh."

"Teachers do not encourage either way, except for mathematical and scientific subjects where they favour English."

72. Among the reasons for choosing to follow courses in Welsh are:

"Have remained with Welsh through school, not going to change my way of life with tasks."

"I succeed better in Welsh but there is a lack of Welsh resources."

73. Among the reasons for studying through the medium of English are:

"I chose to follow the majority of my subjects in English as more resources were available and there is a need to know the scientific terms in English in order to go to university. Discuss in Welsh as that is what is natural."



Ensuring appropriate resources

The national financial situation

74. Further education establishments and sixth forms in schools are funded in a different way. The colleges receive their financial allocations directly from Welsh Government, with an allocation for the sixth form in schools being distributed by Welsh Government to local authorities annually, which then transfers the funding to individual schools. Since 2015-16, the budgetary allocations for further education colleges and sixth forms are determined under the new post-16 Planning and Funding Framework, which superseded the former National Planning and Funding System (NPFS).

Local budgetary situation

75. The size of the post-16 grant in Gwynedd varies substantially across the individual schools, mainly in accordance with the numbers of year 12/13 learners and the number of subjects studied by every learner - from £294,990 to £848,216. Consequently, the funding has a substantial impact on the ability of some schools to maintain an appropriate provision and on the financial sustainability of the sixth form.
76. The varied nature of total numbers in Y12 and Y13 across individual schools (between 50 and 206), can substantially affect the financial sustainability of the post-16 provision at individual schools.

77. The table below outlines the % of post-16 learning lessons represent as a %/number of the total lessons across yr7- yr13 in every secondary school in Arfon.

Number of Learners, Curriculum and Staffing	YDO	YB	YDN	YF	YT	YSHO
% of year 12 and 13 learners out of total school	12%	16%	17%	16%	16%	14%
Number of Y12 and 13 learners	55	115	71	206	67	121
Year 12 and 13 lessons	88	131	99	321	103	176
Total number of lessons	635	917	610	1,679	535	1,146
% Curriculum and Staffing of post-16 lessons	13.9%	14.3%	16.2%	19.1%	19.3%	15.4%

78. The average contribution to post-16 curriculum and staffing at Arfon secondary schools was 16.6%, varying from 13.9% to 19.3%. Any change in the number of internal subjects and/or in the number of weekly lessons at the school could lead to a significant change in this staffing percentage and thus in the financial sustainability of the sixth form.

Transportation costs

79. The total cost of transporting learners to external courses is £92,458, which represents 2.9% of schools' expenditure for their sixth form. This is a relatively substantial amount, bearing in mind that the percentage attending external courses is restricted by individual schools to a varied degree.

Number / % of Pupils Attending External Courses	ARFON	
	Number	%
Attend 0 External Course	471	74.2%
Attend 1 External Course	146	23.0%
Attend 2 External Course	18	2.8%
Attend 3 External Course	0	0.0%
Total	635	100.0%

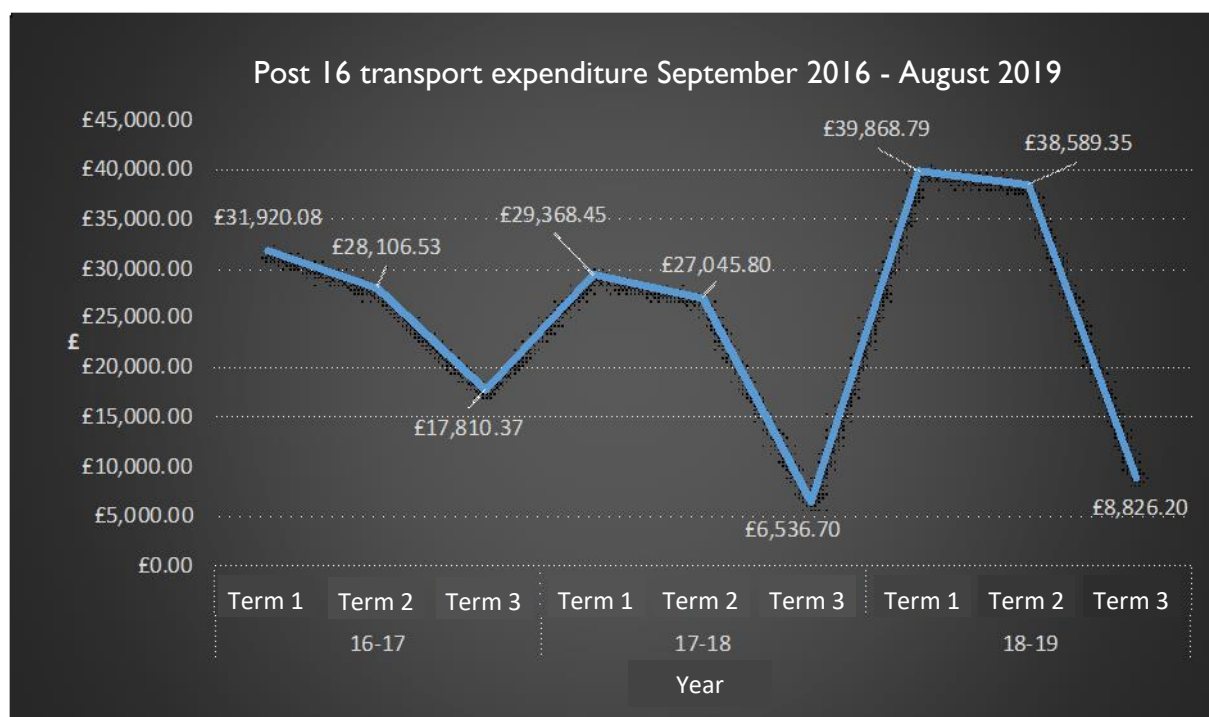
80. The number of pupils attending external courses is constrained by factors such as the guidelines of individual schools on allowing only one external subject per pupil, the practicality of travelling relatively far from a few schools to some of the external courses, the medium of the external courses, the availability of fewer internal courses at some schools, etc. This has led to three-quarters of the learners of Y12/13 in Arfon only choosing a combination of internal subjects – and as a result, the actual choice of courses available to them is much less than the total of over 30 courses being provided via the collaboration arrangements.

Annual transportation costs 2015-19

Year	£	Number of learners
2016-17	£77,836.98	258
2017-18	£62,950.95	248
2018-19	£87,284.34	196
Total	£228, 072.27	702



81. The current transportation arrangements allow the post-16 education partnership to operate with the timetables of a cross-section of subjects at a number of education centres. Therefore, relatively 'fixed' transportation arrangements can be drawn up for the journeys and requirements of every pupil.
82. Despite the success in collecting and transporting around 234 learners from various education establishments in a year, over 20 journeys are cancelled every month due to pupil absences and lessons being cancelled for various reasons. This in turn affects the likelihood of local taxi companies undertaking the work, which then restricts the market and increases costs. Another factor that affects the probability of taxi companies tendering for the work is the drop in the need for learners to be transported to lessons during the summer term every year.
83. Any change to the education provision of individual education establishments tends to impact the transport costs of another school. For example, if a school offers a subject internally, rather than sending their learners to another school, this would result in increased costs for the schools which still require transport for their learners to attend a course at another establishment.



The views of the parents, learners and leaders about the travelling to other education establishments.

84. A vast number of focus group members said that a sufficient number of courses were available to them, although some commented that there was insufficient choice within the schools. The majority of the comments related to travelling time, settings and the associated practicalities.

"One weakness as a result of the travelling is that working time is swallowed up when travelling in a taxi - there is no opportunity to get on with things immediately after the lesson and no opportunity to foster a relationship with the teacher and access support outside the lessons, e.g. Design and Technology course as Dyffryn Nantlle - it would be nice to be able to spend more time at the school to work on practical aspects and use the resources there, but I have to catch a taxi!"

On the other hand, some learners said -

"All travel time was acceptable and was no more than 30 minutes each way."

85. Leaders, learners and some parents feel that enough choice of courses are available within a reasonable travelling distance. Some learners have not chosen a specific subject due to the need to travel to another setting. A few pupils have moved schools for post-16 courses in order to avoid travelling and to be able to follow all of their subjects in one setting.
86. Travelling to another setting is viewed by headteachers and pupils as a waste of time and loss of learning time.



87. The aim for our ambition to develop a new post-16 education system in the county is to achieve fairness and strong support for all learners in Gwynedd to succeed and realise their potential. The vision set out in this document is to ensure fairness in the choice of courses by providing high quality, flexible and sustainable learning experiences. As a result, our children will develop as independent learners with the right knowledge and skills to move forward. Providing for an effective transition to post-16 education, developing and maintaining access to a wide range of appropriate pathways for the individual learner will be an important part of the task of ensuring that provision evolves and meets the new needs of the future economy.
88. This overview seeks to summarise the current position of post-16 education provision in the county's secondary schools through the Consortium's planning system, highlighting the merits of that system and identifying the considerations necessary to ensure that we offer the provision and the best possible standards for our learners.
89. Therefore, on the basis of all these factors, it shows that it is timely to look afresh at the opportunities to improve provision, in particular to address:
 - the variable outcomes and quality of provision leading to a lack of consistency in the opportunities and experiences provided for learners across the county;
 - small teaching groups in a number of subjects and a lack of peers to enrich the learning experience, the extent to which a real offer of 30 courses is achieved due to practical constraints and the restraint of the offer by individual schools;
 - travel challenges including costs and lost educational time; the need to ensure opportunities for learners to take advantage of the provision of courses available through the medium of Welsh and bilingually.
90. To begin planning for the forthcoming national developments relating to the post-16 education system, it is intended to organise local discussions with a representation of stakeholders for post-16 provision in Arfon during 2020. There will be an opportunity to discuss the provision for the Meirionnydd area under a previously identified project. The discussions are expected to include how we will:
 - support providers to deliver high quality, modern, sustainable education for learners,
 - ensure consistency in choice and learning experiences for young people,
 - prepare learners for the opportunities which will emerge from the future economy.
 - prepare a business plan for improving post-16 education provision by applying to Band B - 21st Century Schools Programme up to £18m with 65% of cost funded by the Welsh Government
91. Meetings and activities will seek to identify views locally and to develop and identify possible solutions which would address the challenges facing post-16 provision in Arfon. Discussions with relevant representation from stakeholders are planned for March to June 2020. It is then anticipated that a report will be prepared for Gwynedd Council's Cabinet in the Autumn term 2020 reporting back on the outcome of those discussions.

All photos or graphics used are part of the collections available from 'Freepik.com', 'pexels.com,' and 'unsplash.com'.

They are all 'free to use' category photos.