

Llanfairfechan Area – Nominated Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Monday 9th November 2009

Present: Geraint James (GJ) (Statutory Head of Education Services)
Dilwyn Price (DP) (Head of School Improvement Services)
Emma Bayliss (EB) (Project Manager)
Gareth Thomas (GT) (TJB)
David Batten (DB) (TJB)
Cynan Jones (CJ) (TJB)

Observers: Cllr W. E. Jones
Cllr. W. Roberts
Cllr. A. Hinchliff

1. Introduction

DB provided an introduction to the meeting and explained what would be involved including the workshop element.

2. Presentations

GJ gave a presentation on the progress of the project so far and the development of the Areas for Review document. Reference was made to page 10 of the Areas for Review document and it was noted that the benefits listed for infant and junior amalgamation were taken from another authority. It did not mean that these benefits were not been achieved by the two schools separately. Noted that DP would put forward the benefits of separate infant and junior schools in his presentation.

Question and Answer Session (Q = question, A = Answer, C= Comment)

C: This is an excellent opportunity to move forward and amalgamate schools together into one new modern school. The advantages are tremendous and we can provide children with all the resources they require.

A: If there is an interest to engage from the community and to move this forward, then this area can be prioritised in the strategy.

DP then gave a presentation on the specific school data including information on 'fit for purpose', unfilled places and catchment areas. Referred to page 10 of the Areas for Review document and stated that both schools are achieving these benefits. Page 10 is not a criticism of schools and how they are operating now. The way it is written on page 10 could look like infant and junior amalgamations are a strategy but this is not the case and apologies for this. The benefits listed came from Torfaen and were approved by the Welsh Minister as a list of possible benefits. DP then gave list of possible benefits for separate infant and junior schools:

- Infant and junior schools focus solely upon one key stage.
- Staff in these schools focus their teaching and learning specifically for the age range of pupils.
- Staff specialise upon one key stage and access specific key stage related opportunities for continuous professional development.

- Staff career pathways are more specific.
- Infant aged pupils are given increased opportunities to accept responsibilities.
- Separate infant and junior playgrounds allow for age related focussed play and development opportunities.

It was explained that school capacity was calculated by using a formula provided by WAG based upon the floor capacity of the school. If there was a Nursery class, this floor space was not included. In terms of unfilled places, only full time pupils were considered in this calculation.

Reference was made to pupil projections and how this was calculated – the intake for the last three years was looked at and then an average was used to project pupil numbers. Over the last 12 years, the pupil projections for each school had been within 1% correct. Pupil projections were also reviewed annually.

The list for 'Fit for Purpose' had been produced via review of Building Bulletins and the suggestions received at the initial road shows. The list was not a list of essentials but if a new school was built, it would include all these aspects. Noted that statistics are only correct on the day they are written.

Question and Answer Session (Q = question, A = Answer, C= Comment)

- Q: Is the 'fit for purpose' list saying that Ysgol Pant Y Rhedyn can be adapted and Ysgol Llanfairfechan is not?
- A: Yes this is correct.
- Q: Floor space is only the classroom space?
- A: Yes this is correct.
- Q: If there was a new build of an amalgamated school, would one option be to look at a green field site?
- A: This will come from your discussions during the workshop part of the meeting as would like your feedback on this as a possibility. If you did want to go ahead with an amalgamated site, there would be a feasibility study at the next stage to look at possible sites.
- Q: Have you done any research into why people are not sending their children to their local school?
- A: The graphs show that only 3% of children are not going to their local school for reasons unknown and 16% are going to schools in Gwynedd. It is unclear as to why as we have not asked the parents directly and it is a case of parental choice. Some reasons could be work patterns, parental perceptions of schools, old traditions and parents wanting their children to go to secondary school in Bangor.
- C: Need improved word of mouth about how good the schools are in the local area.
- A: PR for the schools is very important and we are trying to improve this.
- C: As the playgroup now directly feeds into Ysgol Llanfairfechan, this is increasing the number of children going to the school. The main reason that parents take them from the playgroup to another primary school is because of work patterns.
- Q: If all children in the local area did come to the local schools, would we still have unfilled places?
- A: Yes there would still be unfilled places.

GT explained workshop part of the meeting. Two questions were put forward to the groups; what works now? and what can be improved? Also referred to ideas / worries full.

3. **Workshop Feedback**

What Works well? Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn

- Separate schools – children cope well in a smaller school environment
- Location of babanod – central in village
- Head teachers with relevant experience
- Easy for parents to interact with teachers / head teachers
- Having playgroup on the same site as infant school
- Breakfast club works well
- Lunch club can help
- Good teaching environment - teacher retention good.

What Works well? Ysgol Babanod

- Breakfast club
- Lunch club – after school clubs
- Nursery & playground on site
- Accessible centre of the community
- Local activities / community
- Association with the church
- Excellent communication – parent / staff management
- Economy of local community
- Parents workshop – getting to know one another
- Links – police, library
- Playgroup – Increased numbers
- Hyrwyddo Cymraeg *Promote Welsh*
- Not too big – Not too small – Good community size

What can we improve? Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn

- After school provision
- Physical environment – age of buildings
- Continuous improvement of Welsh provision
- Better facilities in a new build
- Sports facilities improved
- Safety of schoolchildren with better parking etc
- Use of buildings for community use
- Access to school – convenience
- Disabled Access
- Continuity of education

What can we improve? Ysgol Babanod

- Community use – community training
- Toilets
- Play areas outside – Babanod
- Developing play area
- Multi-purpose hall
- After school club
- General infrastructure
- Car parking facilities
- Traffic calming measures outside school
- Security of schools
- ICT suites
- More outdoor space
- Better staff facilities / Office – staff room
- SEN – Suites
- Sustainability – Energy – Eco

GT noted that he would collate all the information and feedback via the Head teachers. Notes that ideas and opinions could still be put forward after this meeting in the form of an e-mail to TJB or to Education Services.

4. Final Question and Answer Session (Q = question, A = Answer, C= Comment)

- C: Cylch Meithrin is very important in order to increase the number of children attending local schools. New school has to be very modern and central to the community.
- C: If a brand new school was built, this would encourage parents to send their children to the local school.
- C: Need to increase the awareness of the Cylch Meithrin and promote local schools.
- A: We would definitely take the Cylch Meithrin into account if a new school was to be built.
- C: If another site were to be considered, it needs to be ensured that there are safe routes to school where children can walk to school easily. Need to ensure that any new site is not too far outside of the village.
- A: Will definitely take safe routes to school into consideration when looking at the feasibility of any new sites.
- C: Also need to take children who live in Pendalan into account and ensure they are encompassed.
- A: This will all be considered during the feasibility study.
- C: Have to ensure that children with learning difficulties would still receive the same standard of education.
- A: Anything that was provided on a new site for children with learning difficulties would have to be to the same standard as it is now or better.
- Q: As Ysgol Llanfairfechan is Voluntary Controlled – what would happen with the links to the church?
- A: Would discuss this with the Diocesan Office and would hope that church involvement would continue if there was a new amalgamated site.
- Q: Is amalgamation the only way forward?
- A: In my professional opinion, there would be more chance of obtaining funding from the Welsh Assembly if we were going for a one site solution as their main aim is to reduce unfilled places. This does not mean though that there could not be 2 separate buildings on one site.
- Q: Would there be staff redundancies through the amalgamation?
- A: Once we have a preferred option for each area, we will set up a HR Team to work with the Unions to advise staff and achieve the best possible outcome for them. Logic is that if we are maintaining the same number of pupils, we would still require the same number of classes in an amalgamated school – we would just move all the staff to one site. A decrease in pupil numbers however in the years to come could lead to a review of the number of classes.
- Q: Whilst we are waiting for funding to come through for any new build, would you still invest in the schools as they stand now?
- A: Funding in terms of revenue will still be provided on a yearly basis to the schools so they can use this to invest in resources. There will still be a repair and maintenance budget in place to provide upkeep for the schools. When devising the strategy, it will be written with a priority

list so this will provide some timescale for when the money will be received.

Q: Do you have a survey of the structure of both buildings?

A: Yes we do have this data and it can be obtained from our Site Management department.

C: Both buildings do require investment to bring them up to date.

DB thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the meeting as a lot of important information was gained.

Idea/Worry Wall

- Clubs
- Nursery / Playgroups
- Location of new build
- What to do with old site
- History of school / whole village – community use
- Links with church
- Economy – Shopping locally
- Training, play areas, hall, car parking, traffic, staff facilities, SEN, Eco Schools.
- Teacher accountability
- Focus of age group
- Central location
- Teacher retention
- 99% of children in playgroup stay in Ysgol Babanod – Breakfast and lunch clubs improve the situation.
- That parents would be aware of the status of the school when amalgamated - Church assisted school
- The recession will have an effect on the population. Has further research been undertaken with historic data taken into account for such periods?
- There has to be change.
- Numbers are falling from Conwy (especially Llanfairfechan) and going to Bangor because of the Welsh language policy. We only live a few miles from the county border, yet have to follow policy of Conwy. Increase language from 25% to 50% will keep some pupils here.