

Llangernyw Area – Nominated Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Monday 16th 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 E. M. Wynne
Cllr D. O. Roberts

1. Introduction

GT 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.

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

- Q: Have you put our two schools together because of geographical reasons because the two schools are completely different?
- A: Yes we did group you together because of their geographical location but this does not mean that there has to be a solution for these two schools. We could include another school in this group, you can be looked at separately or you may wish us to consider grouping you with another school elsewhere for future options.
- Q: Why is the presented data incorrect?
- A: DP will go through the data sheets to explain what was published for your area. Any data is only correct on the day of publication. On the list of 'Fit for Purpose', it does state that your schools don't have certain items but the way in which it has been presented means that you only get a tick by that item if it exists as a stand alone room and is not a shared facility. The data will be reviewed again prior to the writing of the draft strategy.
- Q: Was the data checked prior to uploading it on the internet?
- A: Yes the data was checked but have to accept there is room for human error.
- Q: Will we have an opportunity to correct the data tonight?
- A: Yes you can provide comment and additional information.

DP then gave a presentation on the specific school data including information on 'fit for purpose', unfilled places and catchment areas. 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. If one room had 2 uses, it was only considered to have its main use as ticked on the list. It was noted that the document was correct at the time of printing and any changes since would be reflected in the draft strategy. The list was not one size fits all and it was not being used to compare one school to another.

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

- Q: Schools want the computers in the classroom so why does it matter if they are separate or not?
- A: The 'Fit for Purpose' list details what we would want if we built a brand new school and in this we would want a separate ICT Area.
- Q: Some of these areas do exist in our schools. If the 'Fit for Purpose' list is not right, how can we be confident in any of the other data?
- A: The 'Fit for Purpose' list was discussed and agreed with each head teacher.
- Q: Why hasn't it been picked up since that there have been changes and the schools and certain areas have been created?
- A: If these rooms did not exist when the data was agreed they will not be included. The list will however be reviewed prior to writing the draft strategy.
- Q: Why hasn't the increase in the numbers at the Cylch Meithrin been included?
- A: Will be included in next year's projections as reviewed annually. All the figures will be updated prior to any options being put forward.
- Q: Do you understand how important the accuracy of the information is? You've presented our schools in a negative light.
- A: We have not tried to present the schools in a negative light. we know that the educational standards are excellent in both schools. The list just states the facts of what exists in the schools presently.

DP discussed the catchment areas and noted that there was parental choice. The Education Authority had not asked parents directly why they were choosing certain schools but were thinking of doing so in the future.

- Q: School capacity focuses on full time pupils?
- A: Yes
- Q: Why is there concern about unfilled places at Ysgol Bro Cernyw as nearly at capacity?
- A: Not all children from the catchment area go to the school and Bro Cernyw does take children from outside the catchment area. We need to ensure that local schools can cope with the number of local children. We need to consider Bro Cernyw alongside other schools in the area and as you don't have much room to spare we need to ensure that we invest in schools for the future.
- Q: Why isn't Betws y Coed under initial review?

- A: Betws y Coed will be reviewed in 2-5 years as there are underlying issues that need to be resolved. You have to be reminded that we haven't come to any area to close schools. We just need to know from you whether there is any way in which the schools can work together. It will be difficult to maintain all the schools as they exist now.
- Q: At the end of this meeting you are not going to say 'this school will be closed'?
- A: No definitely not. We will discuss the schools with you during this meeting and then go back and consider various options for the future.
- Q: Do you know whether houses are going to be built in this area?
- A: We have reviewed the Local Development Plan and taken housing projections into consideration but do not know whether there definite plans to build houses around this area.
- C: In order to improve what is shown on the 'Fit for Purpose' lists you need to invest in Ysgol Talhaiarn.
- A: We do understand this but the capital pot is not that large. We need to put together a strategy in order to access the 21st Century Capital funding from WAG and build brand new schools in the County. Some areas might get brand new schools because old schools cannot be adapted. We have taken small steps to invest in the past and this is our opportunity to take large steps.
- Q: The school in Llangernyw is a Welsh Language school and Talhaiarn is a bilingual school. How do you see these schools working together?
- A: It is not naturally these two schools that could look at working together. There are other options. We need feedback from you to see what available options there are for working together in the future.
- C: Think Llansannan and Llangernyw should have been linked together

GT introduced workshop and asked for feedback on what all present wanted education to know about the area and their schools.

3. Workshop Feedback

Ysgol Bro Cernyw

Education in a rural area

- An extension of family culture gives valuable opportunities
- A school in a community is vital to support & bind the community
- Support and enrich the Welsh Language and Culture
- The focal point of the community
- Enrich their education and the needs of the curriculum
- Older people and the community get a lot back from the children
- Education in a rural area is much more than academic achievements
- Even though Llanfair Th and Ysgol Bro Cernyw are in the same local area they are very different and offer different education

- Data shows that the education given leads to high attainment - much higher than Wales average
- Leads on naturally to membership of Aelwyd Bro Cernyw, one of the few aelwyd groups left

Buildings and Resources

- School centre and the centre of the community
- A Heart and focus for the community
- Breakfast and after school club daily
- Good resources - children get opportunities - after school e.g. dance classes, Urdd, sports, cooking, all weather court in the school
- Good sports resources on school campus - all weather court etc.
- Building designed for education in the community, and adapted in the last 5 years for foundation phase and the requirements of CC2008 - the school and Parent/teachers assoc met these costs e.g. £6,000 adventure education course
- Outdoor education - willow house, foundation phase area x2, orchard, adventure play course, climbing wall, wildlife area, woodland, vegetable garden, muga, football pitch, athletics, orienteering, sports, netball court
- Nursery group on site
- Parents & Teachers paid for adaptations of 2 classrooms for foundation phase
- Interactive whiteboards in each classroom
- IT specific area

Values of Rural Schools

- Natural Welsh Language - mother tongue in the school
- Culture - support and importance
- Excellent standard of education- Data supports this, Bro Cernyw is consistently better than Wales average, and similar areas. Conwy Council should be proud
- 5 previous pupils under 30 have attained a PhD. This proves that it is not a disadvantage to receive a Welsh language education
- Rural Conwy is very different to the coast and education should reflect this, not 'one size fits all'

- Children in rural school look after one another, as a team, because of the nature of the community

Children's needs and welfare

- The right of children to receive an education through the language and culture that their parents choose
- Opportunities that children get - tradition, culture, identity
- Experiences through co-operation with other schools from within the cluster and wider
- Children like a family looking after each other and being developed as worldly, confident citizens
- A school with a homely, positive, happy, safe ethos
- Offers nursery, breakfast club and after school club for children
- Older people get meals at the school
- Children learn social and communication skills and respect for others and themselves

Community use of buildings

- Weekly library
- Local elections
- Nursery Group
- After school club
- MUGA for public
- Community Centre for local people
- Gardening club, choir, bowling, needlework, football club, snooker, funeral teas, committees, dramas, concerts, eisteddfodau, gardening show
- Other schools use the extension when in the area

Social issues

- Culture
- Welsh language - not only to continue the language for the Welsh families but also the families that move in and choose to learn the language

- A naturally Welsh area - one of the few in Wales
- Teach local children to take part in eisteddfodau - urdd, local, county and national - and through this to travel throughout Wales and get to know other children
- Link with community police - to prevent anti social behaviour

The school as part of the community

- School yard language develops the Welshness of the community
- Older people get a weekly lunch
- Take part in local eisteddfodau
- The community come & listen to the children read
- Thanksgiving in local chapels/churches
- Contribute to local charities
- School organises local sports day
- Partnership with local museum
- y Visit the old people's home - The Vicarage
- Take part in cristingle
- Christmas Fair in the Church
- Parent teacher evenings
- Contribute to y Gadlas (local newsletter)
- "Not in my back yard" project with police - improve village facilities - lessen vandalism
- A member of the community comes to help with gardening

Llanfair TH

Education in a rural area

- Provides a service for local people
- Educated in environment that they live in but also brings people together
- Develop importance of being part of a community

- Smaller class sizes
- “Priceless”
- Teachers who know their children. More time for each child – helps them to develop as individuals
- Children described at parents evenings better than parents could
- Generations of people educated at school
- Bullying is easy to prevent, children of all age groups learn to respect each other and help each other
- Many community events give children a sense of belonging
- Direct interaction with nature / seasons. They live it. Plants, animals, weather etc can be experienced first hand
- Eco school, healthy school – easy to do up
- Geographical position of school being at a junction with roads to Llangernyw / Llansannan and Abergele
- Smaller carbon footprint
- Foundation years the most important – to create well balanced young people that will go on in the world knowing right from wrong

Community use of buildings

- Use of school kitchens for Age Concern lunches (18/sessions)
- Children proud of school as old building – history etc
- Available for night classes
- After school activities for children – sports, cookery
- Cake stall
- Used for the Urdd
- Also supports memorial hall
- School space could be used for village but no great demand as the village has a memorial hall and church house. But could be open to night classes etc

Social Issues

- Local children know the people in the community
- Local village children grow up and learn together in a safe environment
- The fact that children would have to travel to another village, they won't have a sense of belonging anywhere
- Smaller school - know children better
- More attention by teachers – recognise strengths /weaknesses / backgrounds of children
- *Younger children learn from older ones. Family atmosphere*
- If there is no school in the community children will be scattered and wont know each other
- Community supports school productions i.e. Christmas play. It is a social event for young and elderly people living within the village
- Closing school would have impact on local businesses and village as a whole – young families may choose to live elsewhere – a village of elderly and holiday homes
- Unique school in the area offering bilingual education. Welsh 1st language developed alongside learners. Develop children confident in both languages when they leave in yr 6. Both languages important and respected. Developing Welsh and the confidence of non-Welsh speaking parents crucially done in a sensitive way

Children's needs and welfare

- Being transported out of the village. More journeys you make the more at risk you are – trauma of possibly changing schools
- Bi-lingual
- Parents have chosen to keep their children in local schools so they can grow up knowing their environment and friends
- Environmental issues of walking to school
- Class size – children treated as individuals not a flock!
- Special needs children develop well and are far less at risk from bullying
- Problems caused by the weather e.g. floods - can now walk to school
- Pupils not a number

- Getting to know the complete child - background important/know the family/close relationship with [parents benefits the child - by the gate and at any other time, formally or informally
- Each child takes part in school activities - concerts or sports events. No problems that they are left out and developing low self esteem. Develops respect for each other and their own self esteem
- In small school possibility for children with special needs to be independent
- School is unique in that it introduces welsh language to children who would not get the same exposure to welsh in an English medium setting

The school as part of the community

- Taking part in the community important - thanksgiving service, Christmas, Armistice, entertain older people, entertain WI
- Support local eisteddfod
- Village flower show
- Local community members give talks to pupils - e.g. Miss Hannah Roberts (92 yrs old)
- Fundraising for local charties
- Work around the village - nature conservation/knowing their local area
- Visit the village/area
- Know people in the community
- Village cake stand - older people transported to the school
- Friends association excellent
- Put down roots and get to know and respect their local community that creates good citizens
- Llanfair pupils are recognised by their polite manners when going on to high school
- Family atmosphere – safe, friendly, environment
- Sports committee donated substantial amount of money to school
- Elderly transported to school for school events by staff

Buildings and resources

- Historic building, valuable, unique. 1878 - will still be standing when modern buildings have gone
- Children and staff proud of the building
- Bell tower - still being used
- Yard area - plenty of room
- Foundation phase - developing daily
- Can extend - land next door ready for development
- Have invested and still doing so
- Unique
- Every visitor impressed with our beautiful school
- Pool in the garden being developed
- What about an investment in the building or a new build with community facilities?

Values of rural schools

- Easy access to school
- School part of the community – helps make good citizens
- Feel of safety if children educated close to home
- Family environment
- Use of local environment as classroom – cleaner air
- Quieter environment
- Opportunity for children to take part in community activities – e.g WI, church, elderly, chapel, eisteddfod, sports
- Better control of behavioural problems
- More aware of seasons / nature
- Better support for disability
- Able to assess individual needs
- Heart of the community
- School children support community activities, without their support the community would 'die'

- Offers bilingual education in the area - no other bilingual rural school in the area

The views of children in Ysgol Llanfair Talhaiarn

Education in a rural area

- Less noise
- Going out of school to see wildlife
- Not many cars
- Not so dangerous
- Less chance of being bullied - less children
- Beautiful and interesting area
- Everything on our doorstep
- Studying wildlife easier
- Know people in the village/community better - they know us better
- More chance to see how beautiful our area is
- Concentrate better - less people, nicer place
- Know where everything is
- Less mess/pollution
- You get more attention from the teachers

Social Issues

- Know more people
- Everybody are friends
- Do more with other children
- Do more work
- Easier to concentrate
- Less chance of being bullied
- More chance to represent the school e.g. school council, eco council, rugby team

- Know other children better
- Everyone looks after each other e.g. older children look after younger ones
- Educational visits - more time because less children

Needs and welfare of children

- More friends of all ages
- Less bullying
- Better education - less children, less noise, easier to concentrate
- More time on computers
- Children get better care - parents can see teachers easier, if there are problems can share with friends or staff
- Everyone gets a chance to take part/represent the school - nobody disappointed

School as part of the community

- Bike it
- *Christmas, thanksgiving, remembrance*
- *Carol singing around the village*
- *Christmas Fair*
- *Take part in the village and Urdd eisteddfodau*
- Entertain WI – gwyl Ddewi
- *Wash cars*
- *School sport - friends & family come to watch*
- Christmas Child - people and children bring items to send
- Vicar and minister come to the school
- Easter disco
- Cake stand - people from the village bring cakes to school
- Sing/entertain older people

The building

- Old and with a long history
- Unique - nobody with a school like ours, school bell works, bell tower
- Beautiful and interesting building
- Good size
- A lot of interesting things inside
- Garden pool here
- Big yard - Good!
- Small but big enough - like the Tardis!
- Interesting architecture
- Nice school/good for the environment

Use of building in the community

- Pre school playgroup
- Nursery group
- Urdd
- Toy library

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 Education Services and this would be provided via the Head teachers.

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

None raised

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

Worry and Ideas Wall

- Stats etc need to be reviewed and corrected
- Llanfair Th is in an ideal geographical position
- Llanfair Th class sizes

- Assets can be used by other agencies e.g. police – helps to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Cost to the community using the building for other activities
- Building currently fit for purpose – must be fit for future as well
- Ysgol Talharian – travelling costs and implications if moving to school outside village
- Llangernyw area is unique – probably due to school being in the centre of the village
- Bro Cernyw – if we are to co-operate with another school it must be Welsh
- Why not put Betws yn Rhos with Llanfair - similar schools and used to co-operation?
- School is a hub for other activities and for local organisations
- Ysgol Talhaiarn – Losing village community spirit
- A bi-lingual environment is more welcoming for non-welsh speakers
- Mixing of ages within the school
- School more family orientated
- Llanfair Th is the only bi-lingual school in the area hence the reason I travel with my children from Abergele
- Very important to recognise the importance of the Welsh language and it's culture - educational strategies and policies - not a tokenistic add on
- The Welsh language is seen as an add on more & more - it must have equal status to be developed amongst children
- High majority of children attend a welsh high school after Llanfair Talhaiarn schooling
- School and area of Llangernyw has a high reputation