

**Mochdre Area – Nominated Stakeholder Meeting Notes**  
**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**Present:** Geraint James (GJ) (Statutory Head of Education Services)  
Bethan Jones (Corporate Director for Improvement & Development)  
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 A. Tansley

**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. Noted that having 62 schools in place is not sustainable for the future.

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

- Q: In page 10 of the document, it lists the benefits of infant and junior amalgamations and have said this is the way forward for the future. It seems that this decision has already been made. Would you accept our views if we don't want to amalgamate?
- A: Will definitely take the views on board. The benefits listed have been highlighted by other authorities and it doesn't mean that these benefits don't exist in the schools currently.
- C: The idea of amalgamation was put forward by Clwyd Council over 15 years ago. A feasibility study was undertaken and it was agreed that the infants could not be accommodated on the Cystennin site. If it was to go ahead, a new site would be required. .
- A: This can be further discussed in the workshop section of the meeting.
- Q: Unhappy with the number of unfilled places listed for Ysgol Mochdre and the fact that parents in Mochdre are choosing schools outside of their community. Is there anything that can be done to stop this happening?
- A: Nothing can be done as parental choice is the law.
- Q: Are there schools in Conwy which have over capacity?
- A: Yes and this needs to be addressed in the future. Policies are in place to state that schools will not be extended if they are taking too many pupils from outside the catchment.
- Q: The document talks about amalgamation but no mention of federalisation. Is this still a possibility?
- A: Yes this is still an option.

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. Understand that 'fit for purpose' is not one size fits all but if a new school was built, this list of attributes is what it would ideally incorporate.

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

Q: Are part-time children included in the calculation of unfilled places and Nursery floor space included in the calculation?

A: This will be checked and an answer passed to the headteacher.

Q: Why are the projected number of pupils in Cystennin reducing in the future.

A: Due to the number of pupils who will leave the school over the next 5 years and the number who will come into the school during the same time period. More pupils leaving the school than entering the school.

C: The flying start initiative at Mochdre is increasing pupil numbers.

A: This will be taken into consideration as projections are reviewed annually. Also accept that recession will possibly increase the number of pupils in the future.

C: Believe that Mochdre Infants is steadily growing and important.

Q: Why does the document state that Cystennin is suitable to adapt when it cannot accommodate the infants?

A: Cystennin can be adapted but that does not mean for the infants. The document is simply stating that the space is available.

C: There is therefore 4 options available: Keep status quo; 2 sites and federalisation; 2 schools amalgamated on an existing school site; amalgamation on a new site.

GT explained workshop part of the meeting.

### **3. Workshop Feedback**

#### What Works now?

- Flying start – increase in intake numbers
- Small schools a preference to parents – people want to move to Mochdre because of the schools
- High housing benefit area – many single parent families/low income families where transport is an issue so need a local school
- Children are settled and results from schools are good
- Look at the number of pushchairs and pregnant women on the playground!
- Healthy eating award school – most children on school lunches - Personal touch
- Flying start is also educating parents on local schooling
- 2 community focussed schools
- Close links & relationships between schools (continuity, transfers, IT shared)
- Governing Bodies interaction
- Both schools have "Investors in People"
- Staff development good
- Infant school in the centre of the village
- Without stairs – able to cater for wheelchair users/buggies
- Ideal for foundation phase(all doors open to outside covered area)
- £1,000 of outdoor resources (only just been resurfaced)

- Economical re heating – lots of sunshine which gives a healthy environment for children
- Lots of space – used throughout the day for new foundation phase
- As F.Ph. is totally covering 3-7 year olds the whole school can be devoted to F.Ph. development and therefore a change at the end of year 2 (school + Curr) matches the curriculum
- Flying Start initiative having a huge impact on increasing numbers
- Academic achievement in small schools is often superior to that in large schools
- “Wrap Around Care” – excellent value for money
- Estyn news release, 24 February 2006, “ Children in Wales achieve just as good results in small primary schools (less than 90 pupils) as they do in larger schools, the education and training inspectorate Estyn has revealed. Partnership with parents is generally good. In the smaller schools the close relationship between schools and the parents make a positive contribution to school life.

What could be improved?

- Education of parents in the catchment area
- Send their children to local school
- Cystennin – downstairs to be brought up to the standard of upstairs
- Cystennin – outdoor play area
- Secure site at Cystennin ( fencing etc)
- Traffic issues at Cystennin – particularly in poor weather conditions
- Keep education in Mochdre!
- More staff – more funding please!
- Review of parental choice – legally (think of your carbon footprint)
- More positive press from Ed department
- More new housing – dairy would have been ideal site
- None – parents are happy, both schools have good Estyn inspections
- IT upgrade for infants
- Cystennin not suitable for infants – pedestrian & vehicular access
- Cystennin play & sports area – sloping & split level – not for infants
- This was decided by Clwyd CC 20 years ago!
- The school has to be kept in Mochdre
- Schools capacity could be used for Conway Road (unfit) & no permanent head teacher
- Access to Cystennin could be improved

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

- C: Concerned that both schools are going to close. Parents won't send their children to these schools if they think they're going to close.
- A: There will be a school in Mochdre in the future.
- Q: How will things change in Mochdre? If not going to close schools and there is no site to amalgamate, what is going to happen?
- A: There may be pieces of land that the Council own so that both schools can be amalgamated.
- C: There is no land in the centre of Mochdre that is available.
- A: When the draft Strategy is printed, you will be provided with solution for the Mochdre area. There will be further consultation with each school on the solution put forward for them. If we found a site in

Mochdre where both schools could be amalgamated, would you be interested in this?

Q: Do you have the money to do this?

A: Money will come from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century funding.

C: I don't want a mixed infant and junior school.

A: Remember that we have to consider your children's children and some schools are not fit for purpose.

C: I think figures in the document are very important and these should be checked.

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

#### Idea/Worry Wall

- Mochdre cheaper area of housing market – many 1<sup>st</sup> time buyers to feed into schools
- Will jobs be safe?
- Cost per pupil is only slightly higher than average – and I believe children numbers will rise to even this out
- Foundation Phase requires more floor space
- People on council housing list choose Mochdre 1<sup>st</sup> because of schools
- Land on Cystennin not suitable (in my opinion) for young children of infants school age
- The forecast statistics only reflect the near future
- Wraparound care working at school – helps parents to develop e.g. university – helps the community
- Flying start available to everyone for free - we would have more pupils
- Mochdre high housing benefit area – benefit from local school
- Some children taken out of village infants school will return to Cystennin school are these in the numbers?
- Flying Start will increase intake numbers over the coming years
- Close Conway Road school
- Parents more concerned with standards of teaching than age of building
- Children from Conwy Road infants can be sent to Babannod Mochdre
- Less staff at Dinerth Road would free up funding for schools