

Penmaenrhos Area – Nominated Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Thursday 19th 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)
Cynan Jones (CJ) (TJB)

Observers: Cllr D. W. Smith
Cllr B. Cossey
Cllr C. Carlisle

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. Explained that page 10 of the Areas for Review Document was not a criticism of separate infant and junior and it did not mean that the separate infant and junior schools were not offering these benefits now.

DP then gave a presentation on the specific school data including information on 'fit for purpose', unfilled places and catchment areas. All areas with an infant and junior school were being discussed in the same manner. There were some areas who were interested in amalgamation. 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. Housing projections were noted and it was reported that if there was a significant build in an area of around 2000 – 5000 houses, we would ask the builder to provide a new school.

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. It was noted that the document was correct at the time of printing and any changes since would be reflected in the draft strategy.

It was noted that there would be a local school in Penmaenrhos in the future, it was just a question of whether there would be a separate infant and junior school, an amalgamated school on one of the existing sites or an amalgamated school on a new site.

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

Q: In terms of pupil projections, do you take into account future build?

A: As previously noted, we do take the housing projections into account and we know that both schools as they currently exist can take on another 100 pupils.

C: Both schools do have a reputation problem but they are very good schools.

C: We need to change people's mindset about this.

A: The Education Authority is very proud to talk about the success of these schools as both of them are good schools. We want to ensure that parents in the community don't send their children elsewhere. The Head teachers of both schools are offering visits to new parents. There are very good points about these schools and they are both developing strong links with Bryn Eilian.

Q: If unfilled places did reduce, would you still be discussing amalgamation?

A: Yes because we are visiting all areas with separate infant and junior schools. Need to discuss whether there is an interest in amalgamation now that we know there is 21st century capital funding from WAG available to make this happen.

GT explained workshop part of the meeting. Want to know 'What is working well at the moment?' and 'What could we improve?' All that is written on the flipchart paper will be taken down as well as the notes here tonight and placed on the internet. You can also continue to feedback on the consultation up until 30th November via TJB or Education Services.

3. Workshop Feedback

Tan Y Marian

What Works well?

- Community links / involvement – Flying start, way of life, youth club, NSPCC, RSPCA, Baby clinic, Climbing club, Morris dancing, Carnival

guild of Wales, Mother and toddler, working links, community carol service, environmental day.

- Parental involvement – Reading volunteers, family learning, PTFA
- Support and well being for the children and parents
- Breakfast club
- Caring atmosphere / ethos
- Staff – Happy, welcoming, friendly
- Improving standards
- Well resourced
- Opportunities and experiences given to the children – additional swimming sessions, music, range of equal opportunities, gardening club, choir club, cooking club
- Developing bilingualism across the school – all staff
- Willingness to change / adapt
- Inclusive – support for A.L.N / More able & talented (identify and act on needs quickly)
- Improving the learning environment – Inside & outside
- Good links with Penmaenrhos & Bryn Elia
- Up-to-date with new teaching styles – sharing good practice with other schools

How can we improve things?

- Raising the profile of the school - positive (attract more of the 53%)
- Standards – Maintain and improve on
- Continue to develop welsh
- Appearance of the school - update building
- Marketing the area
- Security
- Improve on sustainability (beyond recycling)
- Keep working well with Penmaenrhos, the community etc.

Ysgol Penmaenrhos

What Works well?

- Leave us as we are – please
- Good – Great atmosphere and ethos and values (commented on by all)
- Always stay within our budget
- Proper community school
- Good links with – parents, children, outside agencies, church & chapel, local shops, quarry, residential homes, family learning workshops
- Welfare – children feeling happy and confident with all staff, and safe route to school
- Transition links are strong and continue to improve. It's important to us.
- New foundation phase area is great
- Community – on site playgroup
- Building IS fit for purpose
- Well resourced
- Free breakfast club
- Excellent staff – happy staff
- Full disabled Access
- We do have an outside education area
- All spaces are fully utilised
- ALN unit – children out of county and our school – and encourages tolerance in all our children

How can we improve things?

- Let us lease – from 'Cartrefi Conwy' - a piece of the field opposite – which we have repeatedly done for last 2 years.
- More advertising to promote the school in the community – to disprove the negative image created over the years

- Assistance from L.E.A to attract / persuade local people to use local facilities in the interest of the community
- Not to allow schools that are full to accept additional children
- Clarify dual registration of pupils

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

- Q: Is there a point at which the lack of money will override what we're feeding back?
- A: The money that is passed to the Council from WAG for schools is reducing and the Council also has other demands to meet. We could keep 62 schools in place but each year, every single school will get less money to the point where they cannot survive.
- C: There might be areas in Conwy where infant and junior amalgamation might work but if you amalgamate here you will lose the family atmosphere of the smaller schools.
- A: You could create the same atmosphere in a larger school – is it the building that creates the ethos or is it the staff? Could have 2 separate buildings on one site if you did amalgamate.
- C: Headteachers in other large schools think they can meet children's needs but they don't.
- C: Smaller class sizes are important. Small class sizes really make a difference to those with special education needs.
- C: Have to focus on what is good in both schools.
- C: These schools encourage children to take part in things and they make each child feel more involved.
- C: Everybody should congratulate the teachers as their attitude is fantastic.
- A: Any changes that could possibly be made are not based on the standards of education in the schools.
- Q: Is the Tan y Marian site big enough to amalgamate both schools?
- A: Would need a feasibility study to assess this

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

Idea/Worry Wall

Ysgol babanod Penmaenrhos – notes to meeting

- Is amalgamation likely to become the county policy?
- As an individual school – when can we expect to know what will happen to OUR school?
- Staff are obviously concerned about jobs – will there be redundancies? Will re-deployment be an option? Will salaries be safeguarded? Will staff have to re-apply for their jobs?

- Our school has an LEA place Additional Learning Needs Resources Base on site – what will happen to this and the staff if the two schools are joined?
- Why are other schools allowed to accept children that are out of their catchment area?
- Planning permission for 200 new houses has been approved for the land at Tir Mawr Farm – has this been taken into consideration?
- An infant school has a different ethos to a through school, many of our children have low self-esteem and a lack of confidence – they need a nurturing environment
- We may not have a lot of outside space – but what we do have is being fully developed and we are looking into leasing part of the field opposite the school to maximize the space available to us.
- Excellent facilities for staff as well as children
- Appreciation of each child as an individual – i.e. – “not toilet trained, can’t come in” – we do accept the work with parents on toilet training programmes etc
- Separate staff and parents car park
- Good development of skills (not just academic) – but socially & confidence
- Aesthetically pleasing inside and out

Ysgol Tan y Marian

- Separate schools does not mean we don’t work together
- Let’s focus on the “good” – and make it “better”
- Children love going to school and want to get involved
- Distinct area with distinct needs (educational and social), correct schools can reflect this
- Openness to embrace new ideas
- Both schools developing well
- Decision – cost us added value
- Need – PR Drive
- Local schools add to sense of community