



NORTH WALES REGIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Date and Venue

The conference was held on Saturday 28th April 2007 at the Quays Hotel, Deganwy North Wales.

Participants

Governing bodies from Gwynedd, Ynys Mon, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham were invited to send two governors to the conference. 80 delegates attended the event

Theme

The theme of the conference was 'Managing School Places'. This is a very topical subject. Local Authorities have been asked by the Welsh Assembly Government to carry out a review of their school places and how they will be managing them.

Presentations

The host for the conference was the BBC broadcaster, Mr Roy Noble.

Small Schools – Arwyn Thomas Estyn

Mr Arwyn Thomas from Estyn made the first presentation on 'Small Schools'. He gave the governors present, facts, figures and graphs to illuminate the problem Local Authorities face in managing the surplus places in their schools.

He set the challenge for governors as follows: -

- **Are your pupils getting the very best? The needs of learners must come first**
- **Understand the big picture**
- **Be a positive influence on local strategy**
- **Where does your school fit into the jig saw**
- **Status quo is not an option**

Estyn have produced a publication 'Small Primary Schools in Wales', this is available on their website www.estyn.gov.uk

Guidance also available from National Assembly for Wales Circular no: 23/02 School Organisation Proposals, available on www.new.wales.gov.uk

Progress up—date on the 14-19 Pathways Agenda – Liz Williams, Youth and Adult Learning Opportunities, Welsh Assembly Government

Elizabeth Williams from Youth and Adult Learning Opportunities, Welsh Assembly Government gave a progress up-date on the 14-19 Pathways Agenda. Learning Pathways provide for young people in the 14-19 age range to have an individually tailored learning pathways programme with a wider choice from a range of domains - the collaborative option menu. Wider learning consisting of skills knowledge, understanding and values i.e., the Learning Core. The Pathways Agenda will mean that pupils will not always be catered for on the school site and as a result they may need to attend for part of the time, different colleges, schools etc. This will create a challenge for school management teams and governors in managing this process of change for the benefit of their pupils.

Hard copies of the guidance can be requested from 14-19@wales.gsi.gov.uk or can be downloaded from: www.wales.gov.uk/learningpathways

Post 16 Education – Robin Beckmann, DELLS

The final speaker was Mr Robin Beckmann, Regional Director from DELLS, he gave a very interesting presentation on the work of geographic pathfinders. The 6 pathfinders consultations have been looking at how best to provide post 16 education across Wales. He used 3 quotations from '**Beyond Boundaries**' which highlighted the resistance to change ("Beyond Boundaries: Beecham Review of Local Service Delivery, launched on 10th July 2005).

Without very strong leadership, including transforming the culture to focus on all learners, and challenging the delivery system to achieve excellence for all, change will be blocked by institutional resistance and aspirations for quality, choice and personalisation will not be realised (Beyond Boundaries Box3.2.)

The scope for innovation will be severely limited if particular buildings and services are immune from change (para 3.16)

But progress in improving services will be limited if protecting the status quo is valued more highly than improving effectiveness. (para 3.17)

Further reading

**Delegation of 16-19 Provision Organisation Proposals to Local Authorities Consultation 2006
The Learning Country 2: Delivering the Promise**

THE HANDOUTS GIVEN OUT AT THE CONFERENCE WILL BE AVAILABLE ON GOVERNORS WALES' WEBSITE: www.governorswales.org.uk or can be requested by email governorswales@btconnect.com or tel. 029 2048 7858

Conclusion

The conference achieved its objective of:

- providing information to governors on this topical subject.
- asking questions of the people working directly in the field
- bringing governors from all the six North Wales counties together.

Governors Wales intends to build on this successful conference and hopes to hold more events in North Wales, helping to build up a network of governors who would like to become involved with Governors Wales.

Informal governor forums as well as governor federations and associations have been set up in some of the North Wales authorities. Governors Wales would however, welcome more governors from North Wales making their voice heard and would be interested to hear from anyone who would like to participate in any of the above local governor arrangements. You might also like to attend the Governors Wales' conference on 16th June 2007 at Llandrindod Wells on community focused schools. Please contact the Governors Wales' office (029 20487858) or Janet Jones – Development Officer on 01745 859580 if you would like further information

Evaluation Questionnaires

We received 30 questionnaires back

The majority said they found the conference useful and informative, 27 said they would attend another regional conference in the future.

Here are some of the comments received:

Lucid overview

This is an area that at this moment interests me

Much room for thought in change from Status Quo

Opportunity to network with other governors

More networking time

Prominent national issue

Governors Wales should provide independent information on educational issues

Related to my role as a Primary School Governor

Chance to network and exchange views

A chance (at long last) to have the state of progress report on the pathfinder in general

Enjoyed very much, could we have an all day conference

Highlighted the main problems in this area

Good Presentations

Applied to me as a Chair of Governors Wales

Informative and clear, useful to my own work

Good to meet with other across Wales in Education, many thanks

Waiting for an update on 'Guide to being a governor' the other one very out of date

Interesting to hear something of what maybe in the wind