



## **SUMMER CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **Date and Venue**

The conference was held on Saturday 16th June 2007 at Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells.

### **Participants**

Local Governor Associations and groups from the whole of Wales were invited to send up to three representatives to the conference. In addition LEA Directors of Education and Councillors with an Education portfolio or their representatives were invited to attend. Along with other guests a total of 53 delegates attended the event.

### **Theme**

The theme of the conference was 'Community Focused Schools'.



### **Presentations**

#### **Keynote address**

#### **Mike Keating, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council.**

Mike Keating pointed out that a community focus had been a feature of educational development since the 1920's. He illustrated his presentation by reference to practical examples of the initiative in his authority, Rhondda Cynon Taff, and in summary covered the following four areas:

#### **Background and Principles.**

An effective school should be working towards:

- Increasing educational attainment and achievement for all by providing access to wider opportunities.
- Providing a more comprehensive and holistic approach to the needs of children, young adults and their families and the communities in which they live.
- Providing additional services that would not normally be available in a locality by developing a school beyond its traditional use.
- Working with its community as an important element in raising standards for all.
- Building partnerships with other organisations that can contribute to the education of pupils.
- Helping to strengthen the community through providing opportunities for lifelong learning, personal development and the pursuit of sporting, artistic and cultural opportunities.
- Serving the families of pupils as well as local businesses, voluntary groups and individuals who live and work in the schools community.

### Community Schools in Action.

The elements of the community school in practice can be varied and will depend on the nature of the community and the knowledge that the school has of its community. However, some key elements may be identified:

- Home-school relationships
- Pre-school provision
- Family and adult learning
- Curriculum
- Use of resources

### The Current Agenda

The seven core aims of Rights to Action must be considered:

- Have a flying start in life.
- Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.
- Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation.
- Have access to play leisure sporting and cultural activities.
- Are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
- Have a safe home and community, which supports physical and emotional well-being.
- Are not disadvantaged by poverty

The key is to extract, identify and clearly state the outcomes, which arise from each aim. The task then is to recognise the role of the community focused school and be clear about the outcomes which can be achieved and also the ways in which the school can contribute to the wider picture.

### Implications for Governors

Governors have a crucial role in providing the leadership, vision and support to schools which are developing as community focused schools. In many cases, governors will offer that continuity when headteachers, who are particularly committed to an extended schools approach, leave. Other roles include ongoing monitoring and overseeing of the extended activities, maybe as part of a steering group; helping to locate supplementary funding sources for initiatives; safeguarding the delegated budget; securing suitable insurance and appointing extra staff.

Governors will also need to take account of who is involved and the nature of the school. The key characteristics of a community school are that it:

- Is a listening school

- Is partner-rich
- Is healthy
- Devolves leadership
- Re-models the workforce.

### **Community Focused Developments and Strategy in Carmarthenshire County Council**

- (a) Supporting Community School and Cluster Working  
Gwyn Thomas, Community Focused Co-ordinator.

Gwyn Thomas began by asking his audience to consider the question 'What is a school'?  
 In terms of time, management and funding.  
 He then went on to suggest that:-

- There is no blueprint for the types of activities that community focused schools (CFS) can provide, or how they might be organized
- Working with partners, schools can develop as little or as much provision as they think suitable for their own community
- Experimentation is good

He cited the following positive features of community school focus:-

- Participation of school in the community
- Staff development
- Extended day for pupils with a wide range of activities
- New experiences and skills for pupils and the community
- Meeting the needs of vulnerable students
- Participation of students from neighbouring schools in third session of the day
- School facilities used extensively
- Quiet areas for pupils to work
- Staff working in different roles
- Promoting responsible behaviour and motivation to pupils and staff
- Social development of pupils
- Raising standards

The way forward would require:-

- The inclusion of CFS in the delivery of Local Authority community education courses
- The co-ordination of a county-wide partnership
- Provision of opportunities to enhance skills including accreditation
- The involvement of other county and area organisations
- The continuation of CFS funding
- An improved partnership with leisure services
- The services of a CFS officer
- Continuing partnership working
- The involvement of youth workers in a sensitive way with young people
- CFS as a 'tool' to facilitate transition
- The involvement of multiple agencies
- The extension to deliver lifelong-learning opportunities
- The involvement of voluntary sector to provide services and access funding

In conclusion he introduced the concept of '**learning focused communities**' where

the involvement of whole communities in CFS where CFS is not an initiative or a project but a new way of thinking about how learning opportunities are provided for everyone.

(b) Developments involving a rural secondary school and its primary partners  
Carol Dyer, Consultant Primary Headteacher.

Carol Dyer described the establishment of the scheme which brought together a secondary school and seven primary schools in a project with annual funding of around £20,000. In essence the scheme sought to promote working together and ensure opportunities for all.

The group involved Menter Bro Dinefwr (a voluntary organisation) at an early stage to:-

- ensure close working between local schools and communities
- devise a programme of activities
- manage the activities
- provide some activities
- co-ordinate the scheme
- provide financial administration

The scheme provided the following activities:-

- Professional entertainers
- Miri'r Nadolig (family activity)
- Work with the Urdd activities
- Work with after-school clubs
- Individual school (Llangadog) pilot scheme
- Youth and children's theatre
- Various secondary trips
- All kinds of workshops

In conclusion the project assisted in the development of public, voluntary and community and business and private sector partnerships.

(c) Developments in a Comprehensive School  
Paul Jones, Deputy Headteacher, Bryngwyn Comprehensive.

Paul Jones introduced the initiative at Bryngwyn where the school is in partnership with a number of agencies in order to improve the opportunities and well-being of children, young people and families within the wider community. At the heart of the initiative is BYZ (Bryngwyn Youth Zone) a flexible framework and hub to provide a changing menu of learning, skills, leisure and transition activities.

In summary the school has:-

- Changed the school day for an early finish and 'third session' day
- Changed the climate of the school, CFS is a 'state of mind' rather than a physical aspect. It is more than dual use. It has been embedded rather than 'bolted on'.
- A community development officer, who is critical to the operation, is in place
- Developed the BYZ to drive forward developments
- Gone through a full inspection with CFS at the forefront and achieved 'outstanding feature' status

This provided the following benefits:-

- Positive impact on relationships with pupils
- Positive impact on relationships with parents/carers in general
- Positive difference to school community
- Pupils own the BYZ initiative
- 'Out of hours' 'taster' activities are possible
- peer mentoring
- greater awareness of environmental and safety issues
- creation of credit union
- natural entry point for external agencies

There are challenges i.e.:-

- Funding
- Sustainability
- Premises related issues
- Disability discrimination implications
- Personnel issues
- Health and safety
- Competition and overlap
- Community funding issues
- Transport

Vision:-

- Develop the 'family of schools' approach
- Community services, voluntary organization and police involvement enhanced
- Counselling services
- Healthy lifestyle and sport
- Improved parenting- engagement and support
- Integration of children's services on site
- Library and learning center
- Citizens' advice
- Vocational and lifelong learning opportunities on site
- Family health
- Social services access

### **Workshop Sessions**

The three workshop sessions concentrated on the role of school governors in community focused school developments. The following points were raised in the workshop sessions

#### **Group 1 (led by Gwyn Thomas and Paul Jones, Carmarthenshire County Council).**

- Importance of management of change.
- Working at pace appropriate for school/community.
- Funding.
- Practical implications i.e. health and safety, insurances, CRB checks, DDA.
- Need to avoid competition/duplication/overlap - need to audit, development plan – SDP.
- Partnerships at all levels that is sustainable. Need interagency collaboration. Need to also value all partners in school community.

#### **Group 2 (led by Ian Bottril, Contin You Cymru)**

- Lot happening – not just from CFS funding, projects embedded in schools.

- Overcoming reluctance of others by changing the culture.
- If money not ring-fenced concerns it won't be used as intended.
- Pressure on headteachers – need delegation and support for projects and new ideas.

### Group 3 (led by Heledd James, Contin You Cymru)

- Community focus will be individual to each school, no all-purpose fit-all tool kit.
- Local involvement is important – there must be relatively positive attitudes between school and locality.
- Inspirational leadership needed and clear professional commitment.
- Concern about governors leading on it.
- Governors should include it in their overall strategic role
- Serious questions about teacher workload

### Evaluation Questionnaires

22 questionnaires were returned

The majority said they found the conference useful and informative.

A detailed analysis is given below:-

### **Did you find the conference useful & informative?**

Yes 21            No 0            To some extent 1

### **Give reasons:**

- Good and useful conversations with other governors and LEA officers. Subject matter of conference heard before at other events.
- Informative and focus the mindset.
- Very relevant topic and very well presented.
- Best bit was strategy and context and practical examples for community focused schools.
- All speakers gave very relevant talks – good content – good networking opportunities.
- Real examples of CFS working.
- Good range of speakers – focused on one major issue.
- My first time. Picked up useful background and understanding of Governors Wales' aim/objectives, personalities, responsibilities, accountability, etc.
- the use of the school as a community facility is causing concern and issues at the school where I am a governor.
- it is interesting to hear of issues in Wales, coming from England - so many in common, but differences too.
- Many useful examples of good practice.
- A good variety of contributions and viewpoints.
- Equality in everything.
- Whilst fully supportive of CFS, there is no mention of 'health warning' for governors' roles, responsibilities and liabilities (legal, etc).
- Please, wherever possible, send out reports prior to the conference, so that they might be read and commented on. It is difficult to respond to something you are reading at the same time.
- Good quality presentations and sharing of views.
- It was well presented and interesting, also very informative – well done.

### **Which part of the conference was most useful?**

Keynote address: 7    Presentations: 9    Workshops: 4

### **Give reasons:**

- Lack of consistency between community school agenda and multiple funding sources is a key problem. and disincentive governors 'role in community schools was side-stepped in workshop.

- Lively.
- All – could not distinguish.
- Practical examples of what can be done.
- Most practical in ideas, advice and discussion.
- I found the workshop very interesting and informative. Answered every question raised thoroughly.
- All of equal value and use. Well presented and interesting.
- Excellent address and splendid presentations.
- Both topical address and presentations were good.
- All from my point of view.
- All equally useful.
- All 3 were very good. Useful debate in the workshop and I found the keynote address very interesting.
- The contributions of professional people with their feet on the ground working so much better than a self righteous political speech from the Government.
- Presentations and workshops: more output than input! Problems of governor involvement and role not fully addressed.
- Case studies of what is actually happening.
- All played a valuable part.
- 3 well-balanced presentations, also the topics are very important.

**How would you rate the venue and facilities?**

|                     | <b>Excellent</b> | <b>Good</b> | <b>Fair</b> | <b>Poor</b> | <b>Very Poor</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>Location</b>     | 12               | 8           | 1           |             |                  |
| <b>Venue</b>        | 11               | 5           |             |             |                  |
| <b>Refreshments</b> | 13               | 8           |             |             |                  |

**Please note any general comments or list contact details if you would like to receive any further information about Governors Wales:**

- The balance between presentations and workshops got a bit distracted – not enough time left for the workshop.
- Llandrindod is not going to attract representatives from North Wales – 3 hours each way on the road!
- The workshops were good but there could have been more interactivity.

**Future topics for Governors Wales’ conferences: (suggestions welcome)**

- OSHL
- Dealing with rising levels of violence in schools. A standardised approach.
- Foundation Phase and Skills Based Curriculum.
- The Exam system, the future, A levels/Baccalaureate?; Making Standards; University costs; Outside influence on education (see Sue Williams “Toxic Childhood”); Sports facilities; Use of technology (video teaching/linking up schools).
- In two years’ time, “Community Focused Schools maturing”.
- Health & Safety - securing your school and its pupils/staff in our use of school in the community.

**Conclusion**

The conference achieved its aim of enabling participants to explore the following issues relating to community focused schools:-

- The national perspective of community focused schools
- The role of school governors in community focused school developments

- The importance of partnership working
- Drawing on good practice/case studies relating to community focused schools

Governors Wales intends to build on this successful conference and hopes in addition to hold regional events in, 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 a number of authorities. Governors Wales would however, welcome more governors from any part of Wales making their voice heard and would be interested to hear from anyone who would like to in participate in any local governor arrangements.

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

