



## **2009 South East Wales Regional Conference Report**

### **'Yr Ymchwil am Ragoriaeth' 'In Search of Excellence'**

On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2009 the first regional conference for governors in the South East Wales area was held at the Christchurch Centre in Newport. The conference was organised in partnership by Governors Wales and Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Local Education Authorities with the theme being 'In Search of Excellence'.

Over 120 delegates, including officers from the four LEAs and Governors Wales, attended the conference.

The conference was opened by Hugh Patrick MBE, Chair of Governors Wales. The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt, delivered the keynote speech on 'Effective Governance'. This was then followed by an informative presentation on 'The School Effectiveness Framework' by Steve Vincent.

### **KEYNOTE SPEECH - 'SCHOOL GOVERNANCE'**

Jane Hutt opened by thanking Governors Wales for arranging the conference and inviting her to speak. She welcomed the conference theme 'In Search of Excellence' as a mission which should be at the forefront of the minds of all involved in education: whether in the classroom, a governing body, the local authority or the Welsh Assembly Government. All were engaged in a common mission with the purpose of doing the best we can for children and young people. She explained that she would concentrate on the governors' role and how she expected governors to contribute to some of the Welsh Assembly Government's most important initiatives.

She drew attention to the proud history of education in Wales and willingness to do what is right for Wales - abolishing SATs and league tables, and introducing ground breaking new policies such as the Foundation Phase and 14-19 Learning Pathways, and new ways of working like the School Effectiveness Framework - an initiative to make sure that all schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government work well together – tri-level reform. The Framework is in its pilot stage but it is here to stay. At its heart is the idea that by working together and learning from one other we will work in a way which is more open and collaborative which will mean improved policy making and implementation and better leadership in schools. This culture change will mean a search for excellence to raise standards. It promotes the idea of schools learning from one other and working together. Where there is good practice in the education system it must be spread. Where someone is trying something that works, let's look at it and use it in other places. This is a culture change in the education system that is about looking around, understanding what others are doing – in Wales and further a field – picking what's best

and putting it into practice. It is a search for excellence.

14-19 Learning Pathways aims to improve and broaden the learning experience offered to young people. It purposefully makes no distinction between the value of academic and vocational learning because they are equally worthwhile. It means much more working between schools and between them and further education institutions. Making it work well means looking for opportunities for your school to work with others nearby or further away, thinking about what your school can offer for your own pupils and for those elsewhere, and considering how best your school can work collaboratively with other schools and education providers to do more for all pupils.

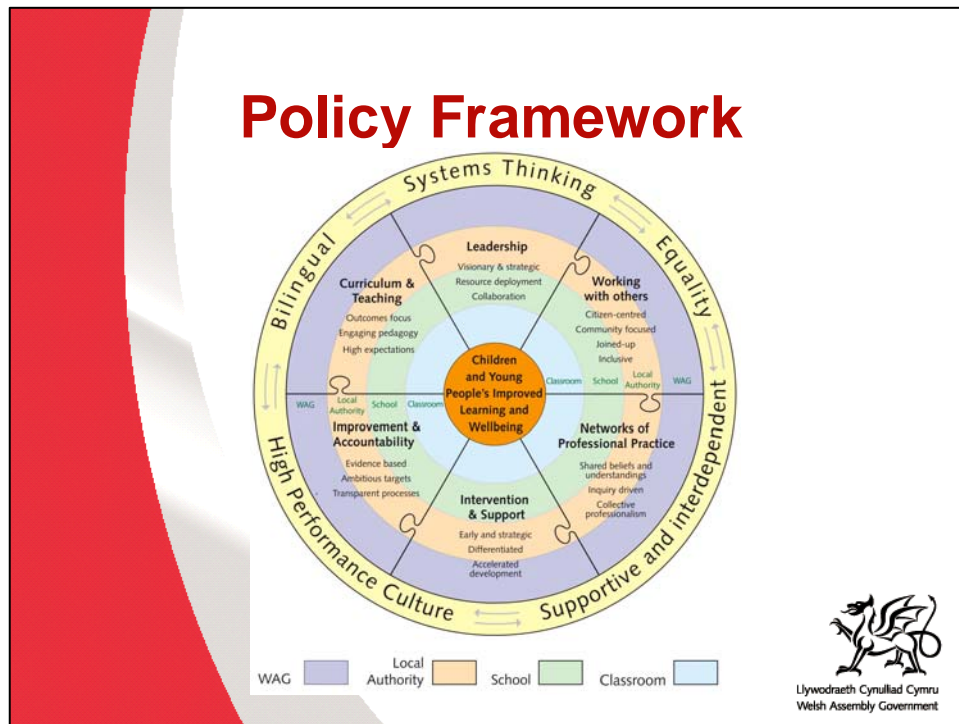
The School Effectiveness Framework and 14-19 Learning Pathways are big initiatives. Governors have a very important role in making them work, a role that means reaching out, searching for excellence and challenging the status quo.

She stressed that she wanted governors to lead the thinking, planning and action that get schools and learning providers to work together successfully. Schools must not exist in isolation - collaboration is a fundamental part of their search for excellence. Whilst she understood that governors might feel uncomfortable in asking such questions they were responsible for the success of the school and what it achieves for pupils and brought knowledge and skills from being parents, business people and members of the community. It was their place to ask and challenge and they should. Asking questions in governing body meetings, evaluating data about your school and others, and using it to test and make sure that your school's development plan is sound is very important. The governor's most important role is to challenge: to challenge the head; to challenge yourselves; and to challenge the school in a never ending search for excellence in the quest to do better. How effective is your governing body? How could it do better? In all your work your guiding principle should be, do not accept what has always happened is good enough.

Realising that to work in these ways takes skill and understanding she encouraged governors to take up local authority training opportunities and the support that Governors Wales offered. She finished by paying tribute to governors efforts, thanking them for the time they committed for the public good. Her message was that the search for excellence would mean new ways of working, based on collaboration and challenge.

## SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK

Steve Vincent introduced his presentation on the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) with the diagram below:



He explained that the framework diagram set out the key characteristics required to improve learning and well-being outcomes in schools throughout Wales. It was based on schools, local education authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government working collaboratively and in alignment.

He updated delegates on progress made as follows:

- SEF Pilot was operating in 96 schools across Wales and was supported by key professionals who were testing self-evaluation and developing professional learning communities
- SEF was in the process of being aligned with the work of ESTYN
- An initial evaluation had been undertaken which had looked at two specific areas - best practice and developing a framework to measure change.
- Tri-level reform was leading to collaborative working supported by organisational structure and reporting mechanisms.
- Good communication seen as a key element of the process and had led to a specific website, newsletter and opportunities taken to address stakeholders.

He stressed the importance of the creation of professional learning communities which embraced:

- Collaboration rather than competition
- The sharing of good practice
- The application of knowledge and feedback

In conclusion he informed delegates that the next steps included:-

- The pilot running until the end of the summer term 2009
- Attention would be focused on Local Authority effectiveness and performance
- Further publicising of the role of governors

## WORKSHOPS

All delegates were offered the opportunity to attend two workshop sessions from a choice of five available options:-

***“The Foundation Phase”*** lead by Maggie Teague  
Headteacher, Monmouthshire LEA

***“Looking for Evidence – the Role of the Governor”*** lead by Mike Maguire  
Estyn

***“The 14-19 Agenda”*** lead by Steve Davies  
Torfaen LEA

***“The Pupil’s Voice”*** lead by Gareth Jones  
Policy and Service Evaluation Officer  
Children’s Commissioner for Wales

***“Handling Complaints”*** lead by Steve Gullick  
All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research

***Copies of materials used in the workshops are to be found at the end of this report.***

## EVALUATION

61 Forms returned: Below are some of the comments received:

1. **Organisation of the day:**  
Excellent 35 Very Good 25 Satisfactory 0 Unsatisfactory 0

### Comments:

- An excellent venue.
- Excellent accessible venue.
- Good location.
- Lovely venue, easy to find and comfortable to use.
- Smooth and friendly. Even clearer map needed to guide us to the centre, e.g. access to it from the north.
- Very good venue, very good food.
- Very informative.
- It went well.
- Excellent venue and buffet lunch.
- Good venue, organisation good, topics good.
- Whilst the overall day was good in hindsight the greater time, should have been given to workshops.
- Very well organised – friendly team. Thank you all.
- A very valuable and interesting conference.
- Kept to time. Well managed.

- Just a bit rushed.
- Good venue – plenty of space etc.
- Food environment and facilities.
- Well structured, excellent facilities.
- Excellent venue – very helpful assistants– good movement between sessions.

## 2. **Speakers:**

Excellent 20    Very Good 23    Satisfactory 15    Unsatisfactory 4

### **Comments:**

- More time could have been allocated for questions and answers.
- Would have liked some inspiration and guidance in the role of governor.
- Perhaps even more scope for questions.
- Informative! – Food for thought.
- Glad the Minister was able to attend.
- Very impressive and educational.
- Varied from satisfactory to excellent
- Some were very good.
- Very mixed, challenging from DCELLS.
- A good mix with a wealth of knowledge and experience.
- Related 'real life' issues into presentations.
- An opportunity to engage sufficiently on School Effectiveness Framework was missed.
- Very enjoyable.

## 3. **Workshops**

### **Foundation Phase**

Excellent 17    Very Good 8    Satisfactory 0    Unsatisfactory 0

### **Looking for evidence**

Excellent 27    Very Good 9    Satisfactory 1    Unsatisfactory 1

### **14-19 Agenda**

Excellent 9    Very Good 8    Satisfactory 3    Unsatisfactory 1

### **The Pupil's Voice**

Excellent 10    Very Good 3    Satisfactory 1    Unsatisfactory 0

### **Handling Complaints**

Excellent 13    Very Good 2    Satisfactory 3    Unsatisfactory 0

### **Comments:**

- Foundation Phase workshop was good.
- Very good.
- Good- good relations – communication.
- Both workshops – very interesting and informative.
- Foundation Phase – very interesting experiences.
- Interactive – informative. Useful to hear other peoples' views and opinions.
- Good opportunities for participation and learning from both professionals and other Governors.
- Interesting issues debated.

- Good speakers lot to take in for a new governor of 3 months
- A lot of information to cover in an hour. However very informative.
- More time needed in 14-19 workshops.
- Very informative.
- Afternoon session too short. Excellent could have used longer time. No time to ask questions.
- Workshop 14-19 less of a workshop more a presentation. Looking for evidence didn't allow enough time.
- Helpful and inspirational but not enough time for questions.
- Handling complaints very good presentation and handouts to take away.
- Very informative and interesting agenda.
- Very good.
- Very informative.
- Enthusiastic. Well presented, based on empirical experiences.
- Looking for evidence – very good.
- Exchanges of information and ideas.
- Very useful and helpful.
- Excellent workshops.
- Handling complaints – gave out what I think most of us wanted to hear.
- Enjoyed the foundation workshop, very interesting and thought provoking. Perhaps some general handouts would be useful.
- Foundation Phase.
- Foundation phase – interesting, especially with Finland and Germany input. 14-19 – very interesting, great pace. It might be preferable to separate primary schools and secondary school governors in order to target information and guidance.

#### 4. Catering Arrangements

Excellent	42	Very Good	17	Satisfactory	1	Unsatisfactory	0
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#### 5. General Arrangements:

##### Information received prior to the Conference

Excellent	25	Very Good	23	Satisfactory	10	Unsatisfactory	0
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##### Handouts

Excellent	20	Very Good	20	Satisfactory	16	Unsatisfactory	1
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##### Other Information

Excellent	15	Very Good	20	Satisfactory	8	Unsatisfactory	0
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##### Comments

- No handouts given.
- More leaflets and information should have been available.
- Handouts were great in handling complaints workshop.

#### 6. Any other comments you would like to make:

- Very enjoyable and enlightening.
- Handouts were great in handling complaints workshop.
- Informative day.
- If we don't have the slides as handouts – please make available on Governors Wales website.
- A positive opportunity to meet other governors and share practice, issues and observations.

- Only wish more of my school governors had been there. Please repeat the day (even without speakers) so governors can learn more about their roles. Perhaps a Saturday. Workshop so helpful.
- Overall opportunity to discuss with others but not much time to follow through. I think organisers have made a good start and will learn from experience as next time will be better.
- Event like this should be repeated next year. Its good for governors from neighbouring LEA's to come together.
- Good Leaflets available at conference.
- Good venue.
- Would like more handouts although presentations have been made available.
- Good opportunity to meet other governors from a variety of schools with different levels of experience. As a new governor was very interesting.

**7. We would welcome any suggestions you might have for future conferences (speakers/topics/themes)?**

**Comments:**

- Would like a conference aimed at new governors although a training session may be adequate – will have to wait and see!
- More time for workshops.
- How about “The voice of the governor”.
- Issues much more topical to school – Are exams being dumbed down? Issues affecting Welsh schools and under achievement etc.
- Case studies – Learning from the experience of other.
- Workshops – Encourage interaction with peers.
- Current and future educational issues.
- Excellent, environment – venue.
- Future educational networking and practical overview of collaboration and partnerships.
- Need more audience participation.
- Perhaps this type of workshop day for 1. New governors 2. All governors – new developments in education.
- The new inspection framework (For Sept 2010).
- Governors' relationship with staff, pupils.
- Collaboration between secondary, further and higher education to assume that education beyond schools is not just for the “brighter” students.
- Health and safety in schools - A governor's view.
- Build in more opportunities to swap ideas across authorities – perhaps ask one or two to say “what they do” under a specified topics.
- Statutory guidelines for governors.

## WORKSHOP MATERIALS

**“The 14-19 Agenda”** led by Steve Davies, Torfaen LEA

### Presentation by the Torfaen Learning Pathways Team

The 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Team are currently working with Coleg Gwent, University of Wales Newport, Acorn Training and Torfaen Training to offer vocational learning experiences to learners in yr 10 and yr 11. Courses range from City and Guilds Awards in Construction, Motor Vehicle Studies, Salon Services, Customer Services and Animal Care. A new project this year has been a Level 2 BTEC Qualification in Media. Acorn Training are delivering Customer Services linked with work experience based at Llantarnam School. Engineering is also offered at the school.

The salon units at Croesyceiliog School have also opened this year and City and Guilds Salon Services is delivered there by Coleg Gwent tutors.

One full time member of staff and 1 term time member of staff from the 14 – 19 team organise and co-ordinate the courses while supporting the young people on these campuses 4 afternoons a week. Staff also monitor attendance, quality of provision and behaviour, reporting to designated members of staff at each of the 6 Comprehensive Schools in Torfaen.

All partners work to the 14 - 19 protocols in monitoring areas such as Health and Safety, Child Protection and Discipline. Learners are transported to and from their courses organised by Torfaen Transport Department.

### Courses 2008 -2009

Campus School	Course	Level	Total number Yr 10	Total number yr 11	Notes
Pontypool	Construction	City and Guilds1	32	30	
	Salon Services	City and Guilds1	37	46	12 Croesyceiliog students based at school
Caerleon University of Newport	Media	Btec 2	15		First Year to run
Usk	Animal care	NVQ 1	18	10	
	Construction	City and Guilds 1	20	19	
Newport	Motor Vehicle	City and Guilds 1	31	28	
Llantarnam	Engineering	1	15		
Llantarnam	Customer Services	NVQ 1			A mix of yr 11/12/and 13 students delivered by Acorn Training

## New Courses 2008 - 2009

Provider	Course	Level	Total Number Yr 10	Total Number Yr 11	
Torfaen Training	Fitted Interiors	NVQ 2	15	N/A	
Coleg Gwent Pontypool	BTEC Certificate Construction	2	15	N/A	

This procedure is intended to deal with disciplinary procedures whilst students are attending College or other learning provision. **Learners attending outside bodies are ultimately the responsibility of the school.**

There are five stages to this disciplinary procedure. (See full details in procedures file)

### Stage 1 : Informal Resolution/ Verbal Warning

Most incidents are resolved at this stage.

1. discussing the incident
2. agreeing the appropriate action to be taken

This may include the giving of a warning in the form of a yellow card which are held by college staff and copies held by 14 – 19 staff who will keep records (this may be recorded but deleted if no reoccurrence).

The student may be involved in acts of restorative justice or undertake not to repeat the incident. This may be reported to School contact depending on severity of situation.

### Stage 2: Second Verbal Warning

The student's behaviour will be discussed and reviewed. School will be contacted and letter will be sent to parent.

1. Student will be asked to revisit original student contract and asked to sign new contract.

### Stage 3: Formal Warning

This stage is marked by a formal meeting between appropriate staff from college/ provider and or school and student (the school may nominate the College Link Co-ordinator to act on their behalf)

1. The incident will be discussed and representatives will agree on action to be taken.
2. This will result in a formal warning that will be recorded and copies sent to school and parent /carer.
3. A probationary period may be set and a plan of action undertaken.
4. Strategies for dealing with recurring behavioural problems will be discussed with the school and applied where appropriate. In most cases the school will take their own disciplinary action.

### Stage 4: Final Written Warning

Learners will be given every opportunity to improve their behaviour and strategies for improvement will be given every opportunity to be effective.

1. A final written warning will be sent to parent /carer and copies issued to school.
2. Informal action such as 'time out' or suspension may be imposed from college /provider provision. (Work will be provided where necessary)

3. Parent /Carer may be required to attend meeting at schools discretion or may be contacted by phone and outcome recorded on disciplinary record.
4. Student may be asked to revisit and sign contract signed at time of joining the course.

### **Stage 5: Withdrawal from College**

This stage is appropriate where the learner is involved in gross misconduct (as noted in procedures) including any behaviour that affects the health and safety of other learners or staff or where the disciplinary procedure has already been followed up to stage 3.

1. Parent/ carer should be invited to attend meeting.
2. Following consultation the learner should be withdrawn from the college and the course.
3. The school, College and parent/carer will be supplied with written confirmation of the action taken.

**“Handling Complaints”** led by Steve Gullick (All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research).

It was pointed out that all schools must have a complaints policy in place, and that it is a legal requirement that its existence be publicised, though not necessarily the complete policy, on, for instance, the school web-site or in the school prospectus. A list of areas not covered by a complaints policy was then considered.

*A complaint should be dealt with by the Complaints Committee which should be established at the start of the school year and consist of three members. At any of its meetings, though, a fourth person should be present, usually the governing body clerk, to clerk the proceedings. Preparation for a complaints hearing was then discussed and handouts on this topic and also two possible procedures distributed*

The importance of always acting within the school's complaints policy was emphasised and also of acting impartially. Finally a list of tips on handling complaints was distributed.

### **Areas not covered by Complaints Policy.**

- Exclusions
- Special Education Needs
- Admissions
- Religious Education
- Alleged misconduct of staff
- Child Protection
- Criminal Investigation