

School & Governor News

Summer Term 2011



COUNCILLOR STEPHEN HAYES PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEARNING AND LEISURE



With the Council moving to a 'cabinet' system of governance at its Annual Meeting in May, this edition of School and Governor News seems a good opportunity to introduce myself as the cabinet member with responsibility for Learning and Leisure.

I've been county councillor for the town of Montgomery, where I am also a school governor, for just over six years now. For the last three I've been on the council's Board as portfolio-holder for Corporate Property and Corporate Governance – a role which has given me a fascinating insight into the heart of the council's operations, whilst also facing the challenge of rationalising the huge and varied range of properties the council inherited from the previous shire and borough councils, overseeing the county farm estate, and being involved in the development of new buildings and the regeneration of older ones.

The new cabinet will be the council's 'executive', with the nine cabinet members having wide powers to take decisions in their portfolio areas, so long as they are within policy and within budget.

I'm certainly taking over the Learning and Leisure portfolio at a time of exceptional interest - and exceptional pressures, with education very much in the public eye. Together, we have to work out a way to ensure past high achievements can be maintained and even improved in the new, harsh financial climate, and with school rolls falling dramatically. That may not be comfortable. We will all - staff, governing bodies, and also the schools team at County Hall - have to take a hard look at our current practices and attitudes, and not be afraid to change them if required. That doesn't mean change for change's sake, but I do expect that some change, even radical change, will be necessary. Some of it may stem from new initiatives coming out of the Welsh Assembly. Some will be forced on us by bleak financial realities. Some will come simply because we realise that there are things that we could in fact be doing better.

Whatever the future brings, I am confident our focus will be on excellence of opportunity for all our learners. Ultimately, all of us are here to serve that aim. If Powys builds and nurtures confident pupils, equipped and eager to take their place in the modern world, we will have done our job.

I look forward to working with you.

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DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS AS CRITICAL FRIENDS

At Ysgol Penmaes we have been able to develop an active and committed governing body through close partnership working. At my very first non-pupil day staff and Governors worked on developing our collective Vision for the school, with engagement of all stakeholders to finalise our Vision and Aims. These are re-visited on an annual basis to ensure they continue to capture our ethos and direction of travel.

In September 2009, Estyn reported that, “the Governing Body and the SLMT co-operate very well with the headteacher to set a clear direction for the development and improvement of the school”. They stated that, “the role of the Governing Body as a critical friend is an outstanding feature of supportive management”.

The strategies we have used to arrive at this position are not ground breaking in any way, but they have been systematically developed and enhanced over the years. They include:

- Developing the role of a Pastoral Governor who is responsible for visiting the school termly and providing a written report covering areas such as school/classroom organisation, displays/appearance of school and behaviour and ethos. The written pastoral report is shared with the full Governing Body as well as being included in our termly school newspaper so that all stakeholders have access to detailed information about our school.
- All Governors are linked to an area of the curriculum and meet regularly with subject leaders. This allows them to develop a close working knowledge of the curriculum. This approach ensures that Governors have detailed knowledge of their particular area(s) but they are also able to develop an overview of the curriculum as a whole. Curriculum working between Governors and staff culminates in an annual Curriculum Evening in the summer term when subject self-evaluation and development plans are agreed.
- Governors have open access to all in-house INSET and regularly join staff for training and development; this practice has become embedded into our everyday practice. This is a powerful way of working and facilitates close partnership working between Governors and staff. It also allows Governors to access the support and development they need to enhance their role across the school.
- Governors join staff for our self-evaluation events; this ensures that they contribute to and understand the self-evaluation report; it also enhances partnership working and secures a shared accountability.
- Governors complete an annual self-evaluation/questionnaire which includes: their role, involvement in policy development, the school and community and financial management. This also allows Governors to list the positive features of the school as well as including areas that need to be explored and developed over the coming year; this provides valuable first hand evidence and secures their involvement in the school improvement process.
- The Governors have developed excellent links with the School Council. Our teacher Governor is responsible for the liaison between the School Council and the Governing Body. Minutes of all School Council meetings are discussed at full Governing Body meetings, with feedback provided to the School Council.
- My termly headteacher’s report to the Governing Body provides detailed information on curriculum and policy development, progress towards targets in the school development plan, pupil achievement (academic, social and sporting), partnership working, continuing professional development, finance etc. Providing Governors with accurate information allows them to provide the necessary challenge and support at individual and whole school levels.

DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS AS CRITICAL FRIENDS CONT . . .

- Following a Governing Body consultation with parents it was agreed to establish a Governing Body noticeboard in the school foyer. This board displays photographs of Governors, dates of meetings, Annual Report to Parents, minutes of all Governing Body meetings etc. (other than those that are confidential). This has helped to raise the profile of the Governing Body.

- Governors are regular visitors to the school and through an agreed protocol they are able to gain first hand experience that allows them to develop their role as a “critical friend”. The Chair of Governors and I meet on at least a fortnightly basis. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that the relationship between the Chair and the headteacher is pivotal to securing whole school improvement and accountability. We have a close working relationship that is anything other than “cosy”. We have established an effective working partnership which is based on integrity, professional challenge and mutual respect.

The above is by no means an exhaustive list but aims to give a flavour of some of the successful strategies we have been able to develop over the years that have resulted in a shared understanding and ethos. Our approach is open and collegiate and deemed to “*provide outstanding leadership and direction for school development*” (Estyn, 2009). Working in partnership with the Governing Body has allowed Penmaes to continually improve its performance and secure better outcomes for all learners (pupils, parents/carers, Governors and staff). Having well informed Governors, who hold the headteacher and wider school community to account ensures the realisation of our Vision and Aims.

“The Governing Body is well placed to make decisions on future priorities and ensure that the realistic and often challenging targets and improvement goals are met” (Estyn, 2009).

Ian Elliott
Headteacher, Ysgol Penmaes

GOVERNOR TRAINING 2011-12

The Governor Training Brochure for 2011-12 has recently been sent to governing bodies via the Chair, Clerk and Training Link Governor. The brochure can also be viewed on the Governors area of the Powys website at <http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=3061&L=0>.

The training schedule includes a range of topics for example Health and Safety, Financial Management, Redundancy and Disciplinary training.

Governor Induction Training is to be held towards the end of the autumn term and in line with the Education (Wales) Measure it is essential that all new governors attend. It is also important that each governing body is represented at the Understanding School Data training planned for November/December 2011.

To book a place on a training session **IT IS ESSENTIAL** to contact:

**BSF Training Administrator,
BSF Unit, Schools Service,
Powys County Hall,
Llandrindod Wells,
Powys, LD1 5LG.**

Tel: 01597 826716

Email: bsftraining@powys.gov.uk

SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS GRANT 2011-12

Following a review of specific education grants, from April 2011 the Welsh Assembly Government has brought together a number of existing grants into a new School Effectiveness Grant. The School Effectiveness Grant is to be used to drive the three key priority areas of literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of child poverty on educational attainment.

The Authority has delegated 81% of its grant allocation to schools – 67.95% via direct delegation based on a formula relating to pupil numbers and notional teacher numbers and 11.05% via targeted delegation to support:

- Schools in “Need of Significant Improvement” or requiring “Special Measures” following Estyn inspection (support will focus on the inspection recommendations);
- Schools who require an Estyn follow up visit following inspection (support for these schools will focus on the inspection recommendations);
- Schools where standards of literacy are a concern;
- Schools where standards of numeracy are a concern;
- Schools where the impact of poverty is having an impact on educational attainment.

Documentation has been issued to schools, with a request that a costed spending plan, linked to the school’s development plan and/or post inspection action plan, be produced and submitted to the Local Authority.

The remainder of the grant funding will be retained centrally to support strategic priorities, including:

- Support for the curriculum and teaching (literacy and numeracy);
- Support for leadership and management and the School Effectiveness Framework drivers of leadership, intervention, improvement and accountability;
- Support to address the impact of poverty on educational attainment through a community focused strategy;
- Support for school leaders and parents in respect of ensuring the needs of children and young people with a range of additional learning needs are met.

Rosie Davies
Principal Policy Officer

SECONDARY & POST-16 MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

Powys County Council would like to thank all governors, parents, staff, pupils and community members for their contributions to the recent Informal Consultation. The consultation events have been extremely well attended across the county, and our meetings with staff and pupils have also been very informative.

The consultation finishes on the 6th June and all comments and responses will be analysed over the summer, which will help inform the Council in making a decision about whether to take forward any of the current proposals. The analysis will be available on our website www.powys.gov.uk. Again, thank you for all your support and contribution.

Marianne Evans
Secondary Modernisation Project Manager

PRIMARY MODERNISATION

There has been a great deal of activity on the primary modernisation front as the County Council continues to grapple with the issue of falling rolls, rising costs and deteriorating buildings whilst striving for first class education for our young people. Whilst future funding of new and remodelled schools is dependent on capital finance from the Assembly Government through the 21st Century School Programme, the area review programme continues apace in anticipation of a positive outcome of the bids made.

Ystradgynlais

At the time of writing ministerial approval is still awaited on the statutory proposals to close the ten schools in the catchment and replace them with four new ones. This decision will now come after the Assembly elections. This situation will produce significant challenges for the build programme although the schools are still programmed for completion in September 2012.

Delegated planning approval has been granted for the four new schools at Penrhos, Abercrave, Brynderi and Glanrhyd as well as for the relocation of Cwm Wanderers to Bethel Road.

A contractor – Wilmott Dixon – has been appointed to build the four new primary schools and complete the refurbishment and extension of Ysgol Maes-y-dderwen.

Consultation has taken place on a process for appointing the governors to the four shadow governing bodies for the new schools and the target for these to be in place is the end of the school year 2011 although this very much depends on the timing of the ministerial decision.

Work has begun on a draft staffing structure for the four schools and consultation will take place in June on a Management of Change document which will outline how the council proposes to get from the existing to the proposed staffing structure. The target is for the four headteachers to be appointed in the Autumn of 2011.

Gwernyfed

Following the decision of the Area Project Board in January to reconfigure the schools in the catchment area from ten to five, two drop in sessions were held in early April in Hay-on-Wye and Talgarth to explain the process. The sessions were well attended and the results will be reported back to the Council's Cabinet where a decision will be made about when formal consultation will take place on the proposals. The proposals on which the Council is consulting are the provision of two new schools in Hay-on-Wye and Talgarth, the reconfiguration of Archdeacon Griffiths, Llangors and Clyro schools and the closure of Glasbury, Ffynngynydd, Rhosgoch, Bronllys and Llanigon schools.

John Beddoes

The Area Project Board considered the future configuration of schools in the catchment area in early May. The recommendation considered by that meeting was to reduce the number of school sites in the catchment area from six to three which would mean consulting on a proposal to close Beguildy, Whitton and Gladestry schools.

Welsh Medium Severn Valley

The Area Project Board considered a report in early May which recommended the provision of a new Welsh medium primary school in Newtown. The future of the Welsh medium schools outside of Newtown will be considered by the reviews in Llanidloes/Machynlleth and Welshpool.

Llanidloes/Machynlleth

Early discussions of this Area Project Board have focused on the concept of an all through school i.e. 3 to 16/19 in both towns and catchment areas, and two sub groups have been established to investigate this further.

PRIMARY MODERNISATION CONT . . .

Small schools including Aberhafesp

The Council's Board has considered the future of small schools i.e. those with below 35 pupils on two occasions and received information on the eleven schools that fall outside of the catchment reviews. As a result, meetings have taken place with these schools in order to gather data and seek views before the Council's Cabinet considers the issue again.

One of those small schools, Aberhafesp CP, has progressed further due to a significant decline in pupil numbers and the falling standards at the school. A public meeting was held on 14th April to discuss the Council's proposal to close the school by Christmas 2011. The closing date for comments on this proposal is 31st May, after which the Council's Cabinet will consider the comments received although it has already agreed to publish statutory notices for closure in June. The period for publication of a statutory notice is now one calendar month (as opposed to two months as previously) but the receipt of one objection to the notice still triggers a decision by the Minister at the Welsh Assembly Government.

This article was written in the first week of May and primary school modernisation is moving very quickly, so for up-to-date information on any of the above please contact Owen James on **01597 826709** or owen.james@powys.gov.uk

Owen James
School Modernisation Support Manager



The Young Ambassador Movement aims to empower and inspire young people to become role models and leaders through sport, by developing their confidence and skills in order to increase physical activity participation in others. The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics will be used by the Young Ambassadors as a catalyst to inspire change in others. The initiative will recognise and reward committed young sports leaders in our schools and communities with further training and opportunities.

3 Gold Young Ambassadors have been selected to represent Powys, they are James Davies and Nia Breeze from Llanfyllin High School and Rhiannon Howells of Gwernyfed High School. Each secondary school has also appointed 2 adiStars who will assist the gold ambassadors with their role. The adiStar training day took place at the Hotel Metropole Llandrindod Wells on 8th April and was



organised and run by the 3 gold ambassadors. Martyn Lewis, Welsh Badminton player, and Gwennan Harries, ambassador for women's football in Wales, were present and the pupils had the opportunity to speak to them and ask questions. The adiStars will now start their role within their schools in the summer term. These leaders have been identified through their involvement within the school curriculum (PE and wider) and involvement with extra-curricular activities like Dragon Sport and 5x60.

Active Young People Team

EDUCATION (WALES) MEASURE 2011

The Education (Wales) Measure 2011 received Royal Approval on 10th May 2011. The Measure furthers the Welsh Assembly Government's policy to make the education system more effective and efficient by creating new law for collaboration and federation, and preventing the creation of any more foundation schools. The Measure also addresses points raised by the National Assembly's 2009 review of school governors with respect to governor training and clerking. These changes will strengthen the governance of the school education system.

The intention is that all of the changes will be in place by September 2012 for the start of that academic year.

The main points are listed below:

Collaboration

There is a new duty on education bodies – local authorities, schools and further education institutions – to consider whether they could provide education and training for learners aged under 19 in ways which use public resources more efficiently and effectively.

Federation

The important change is the creation of a new power for local authorities to propose and implement school federations. Until now only school governing bodies could choose to do this.

School Governor Training

The Measure introduces a means to regulate for compulsory training in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's aims to raise standards in schools. The first training topics to be made compulsory are likely to be induction for new governors, training for chairs of governing bodies and training on how to understand and use school performance data.

Clerking of School Governing Bodies

Local authorities will have to offer all schools a governing body clerking service. Schools will be free to make their own clerking arrangements if they wish and authorities will be able to charge for any service they provide directly or arrange for another to provide the service. Clerks will be required to meet a Wales wide standard to be set in regulations and training will have to be made available for clerks to meet that standard.

Foundation Schools

The Measure prohibits the creation of more foundation schools.

The text of the Measure and an Explanatory Memorandum are available on the National Assembly's website at:

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-legislation/bus-leg-measures/proposed_education_wales_measure_2011.htm

IN BRIEF

Pupil Participation

Pupil participation is about developing a culture in schools where all children and young people have a voice and have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that affect their learning and well-being, as set out in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Although having an active School Council is an essential part of this approach, it is only one aspect.

Pupil participation should happen in a variety of ways and at different levels of school life. Some of these are:

- As part of teaching and learning;
- Processes such as circle-time, focus groups, and consultations;
- Participatory groups such as the school council, eco-committee, healthy schools and peer mentors;
- Having structures in place so that all pupils can be involved in decision-making, including those with additional learning needs;
- Using the National Participation Standards (www.participationworkerswales.org.uk)

Examples of how pupil participation can lead to more effective schools can be found on the School Effectiveness website (www.sef.wales.org.uk) and on the Pupil Voice Wales website (www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk).

Complaints procedures for school governing bodies in Wales

Consultation on revised guidance about complaints procedures for school governing bodies has recently been carried out by Welsh Assembly Government. The guidance is being made simpler, shorter and more user-friendly and will include a model procedure for school governing bodies to use when dealing with complaints.

The final guidance and model procedures will be available later this year.

Powys RE Agreed Syllabus

The Authority's Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education has been reviewed by the Powys Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). This locally agreed syllabus is based on the National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education for 3-19 year olds in Wales (2008) produced by the Welsh Assembly Government and has been written to comply with the legal obligations for a locally agreed syllabus. The Agreed Syllabus has been adopted for the five year period 2011-2015.

The document has been issued to schools and is also available to download from the Education and Learning area of the Authority's website at www.powys.gov.uk

Statutory Compliance Testing

The County Council has decided that the statutory maintenance, testing and inspection of all its buildings, plant and equipment will be undertaken centrally to ensure full legal compliance. This policy also applies to schools, although schools have the option of opting out of the central arrangements and undertaking their statutory testing responsibilities themselves. Whether schools opt in or out, the decision will cover the whole range of services requiring testing.

Schools who wish to participate in the centrally organised arrangements are able to do so via a Service Level Agreement. Those schools who decide to make their own arrangements will be subject to monitoring by the County Council.

A Statutory Testing Allowance has been established within schools' delegated budgets which will equate to the cost of undertaking the required statutory testing. Schools have been made aware of these arrangements.

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