

**TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY FOCUSED
SCHOOLS STRATEGY
February 2007**

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“We want to see a much closer relationship between schools and the communities they serve. We want schools to act as a community resource – not just in school hours but out of hours and in vacations as well. We see them as being integral to community capacity building – providing a basis for delivering, not just education and training ... but also a range of other services like family support, health and enterprise promotion ...”

“The Learning Country” National Assembly for Wales (2001),

INTRODUCTION

This strategy document links directly to the Welsh Assembly Government Circular No 34/2003: ‘Community Focused Schools’ and provides the Local Authority and schools with guidance on how to develop existing provision in partnership with a range of agencies.

The Education Act 2002 clarified and strengthened the legal position of schools wishing to provide services beyond the core task of educating pupils. Sections 27 and 28 of the Act, gives governing bodies powers to provide services to help meet the needs of their pupils, their families and the wider community.

The Community Focused Schools’ agenda will help deliver the seven ‘rights to action’ of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Children and Young People Framework for Partnership Policy, i.e.:

- A flying start in life
- A comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities
- The best possible health, free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
- Play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
- Be treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised
- A safe home and community
- Children and young people not disadvantaged by poverty

Children and Young People: Rights to Action, 2004

The Children Act 2004 also highlights the potential role of schools in providing a focus for community based services. The proposals are far reaching and will provide challenges to how schools are currently resourced and managed. e.g.:

- Partnerships should plan to increase the extent to which services are delivered by multi-disciplinary teams in easily accessible places. Local partnerships are encouraged, in line with policy on community focused schools, to use schools as a base for locally delivered family and child support, health services, youth services and adult education, and to act as a delivery point for provision to those with specialist needs.
- The community focused schools initiative is exploring new ways of enabling schools to build on local partnerships across local authorities, partner

agencies and local communities to develop schools as community resources – not just in school hours but out of hours and during vacations.

- Schools are well placed to play a central part in community life and provide a base for locally delivered family and child support, health services, youth services and adult education. They can play an important part in delivery of Welsh medium provision in particular communities. Schools can also act as a delivery point for preventative services and provision to those with specialist needs. This role is particularly important in areas where alternative facilities do not exist and perhaps where local people are unlikely to take up opportunities outside their immediate areas. For some schools, this may mean that one multi-agency team serves a cluster of schools.

The purpose of this strategy is to clarify the Council's commitment to:

- Support schools in developing partnerships with their local communities
- Consider the implications for community schools of all its policies
- Actively align service delivery with the community focus of schools in mind
- Plan with Head teachers and governing bodies to improve the range of activities and services they can offer
- Support schools both with Council resourcing and in identifying and securing external funding
- Facilitate actively the sharing of good practice.

The strategy aspires to develop excellent working relations between schools and the Council with schools for their part being committed to:

- Listening to the needs of young people and their families and members of the community
- Supporting pupils to engage in out of school hours learning and to become life-long learners
- Developing in pupils the attitudes and skills required to become responsible and active members of their communities
- Endeavouring to become centres for an appropriate range of learning, cultural and leisure activities outside the school day for both pupils and adults.
- Working with partners to offer support and preventative services for pupils and their families
- Be willing to share premises in a mutually agreed way with community groups and partners.

The work of other agencies and partners is crucial to the development of the community focus of schools and the Council and its Head Teachers, staff and governors will expect them to play their role in:

- Creating policy frameworks that support community focused schools.
- Engaging in join planning with the Council and its schools and other services to support the community dimension of schools.

Aligning services where appropriate to support community focused schools in response to community need. (The Health Service, the Police, Youth Offending Teams, Careers Wales and the Voluntary Sector are amongst a large number of agencies who will be key partners).

The detailed aims of the strategy are outlined as an Action Plan attached as an appendix.

COMMUNITY FOCUSED SCHOOLS - RATIONALE

Both schools and communities can be enriched when they engage with each other more fully. The report of the Wales Assembly Government/Welsh Local Government Association Task and Finish Group - '*Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools*' (October 2002) found that where schools engage with their local community this has a direct impact on pupils' attainment and raises their aspirations to progress from school to further education, training and employment.

The benefits of community focused schools have been identified as:

For schools:

- higher levels of pupil achievement
- increased pupil motivation and self-esteem
- Interventions which prevent young people progressing to greater levels of risk
- specialist support to meet pupils' wider needs
- additional facilities and equipment
- enhanced partnership working with the community
- enhanced status for learning in the local community
- reduced pupil disaffection

For families:

- improvements in child behaviour and social skills
- greater availability of specialist support for families
- greater parental involvement in children's learning
- more opportunities for local adult education and family learning
- Improved access to supportive and preventative services

For communities:

- better access to essential services
- improved local availability of sports, arts and other facilities
- local career development opportunities
- better supervision of children outside school hours
- promotion of community cohesion by re-engaging adults (and in particular parents) in learning – reinforcing relationships between school and home
- helps regenerate and strengthen communities.
- Improved collaboration with other agencies to promote better community safety.

Torfaen's vision is to make our schools hubs of their local communities by placing each school at the centre of a partnership which, through the development of the whole child, will maximise the achievements of our young people and maximise the opportunities available to them. Central to this vision will be:

Effective partnerships between:

- Schools and their local communities
- Schools with each other
- Schools and the Local Authority

Recognition of the principles of:

- The inclusion of all children
- Equity of provision
- Equality and mutual respect between all partners

COMMUNITY FOCUSED SCHOOL AIMS

Community focused schools are far from a new concept. However, experience has shown that where schools build partnerships with their local communities there are major benefits for young people, their families and the communities in which they live. Such schools become centres of activity beyond the school day and become part of a framework for effective multi-agency working.

In Wales, the *Narrowing the Gap* report identified close links with the local community as a key factor in raising levels of pupils' achievement, raising aspiration and encouraging progression into continued education and training. Similarly in England, Extended Schools have experienced major improvements in pupil attendance and attainment, reductions in exclusions and greater staying on rates. In Torfaen progress has been made but the Council has never explicitly adopted a policy position which proactively encourages the development of the community roles of schools

Anti social behaviour, ill health, abuse, marginalisation and low educational achievement are closely linked and reinforce each other. Projects such as 'On Track' in Rhondda Cynon Taff have shown the benefits for young people of effective multi agency working and early intervention. A Community Focused School can become the focus for a range of preventative and support services which will allow children and their families to succeed.

Community Focused Schools are also central to the outcomes of the Children's Act and the Torfaen Corporate Plan. The outcomes of The Children's Act include a flying start in life, access to education and training, the promotion of good health, access to out of school activities and tackling poverty; each of these outcomes is directly addressed by Community Focused Schools. Such schools also relate directly to The Corporate Plan's aims of reducing crime and anti social behaviour, improving the quality of education, equipping citizens with skills for employment and improving health.

The Community Focused School's strategy will promote work in a multi-agency context to:

- support individual or clusters of schools in delivering their core mission – to improve pupils' ability to learn and to support families
- provide a range of activities and learning opportunities outside the school day for children, young people, families and adults
- provide a range of additional services, opportunities and information for children, young people, families and the wider community
- target the engagement of disaffected and vulnerable young people and their families in particular
- ensure that schools consult with their communities, engage in community life, and work in partnership with others contributing to community regeneration
- ensure equality of opportunity by improving access to learning and other services in local areas based on the Integrated Learning Community model.

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT

This strategy is founded in the principles outlined below which provide the basis for the Council's approach to all its schools and the basis for developing their community role:

- **Recognition and support of the core mission of schools:** by giving young people the ability to learn, develop their talents to the full, be active citizens and be able to support themselves and their families.
- **Partnership working:** involving and engaging with Headteachers and Governors, young people and the wider community including partner agencies, the business and voluntary sector.
- **Consultation:** activities and support for young people and their families will be driven by local needs and circumstances and be based upon consultation with those living in local communities.
- **Flexibility:** by recognising that one model of provision will not meet the needs of all communities.
- **Equity:** by working towards equality of entitlement for children, young people and the community across the County Borough to out of school hours learning and activities.
- **Inclusion:** improved access for all groups to Community Focused Schools, with particular emphasis on children in care and with disabilities or at risk of marginalisation.
- **Prevention:** working with partners in the community so support children and young people in pro social activities and helping children and young people address areas of risk to themselves and the community.
- **Sustainability:** Community Focused Schools must be established on a basis that allows them to serve young people and their families in a sustainable way.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Developments are guided by the vision statement agreed between the Association of Directors of Education Wales and ContinYou Cymru (December 2005). This vision builds on the Welsh Assembly Government's Community Focused Schools guidance.

Community focused schools will:

- always be supportive of the core mission of schools – to improve pupils' achievement and attainment
- provide a range of activities/learning opportunities outside the school day
- provide a range of additional services/opportunities and relevant information

A VISION FOR TORFAEN

The development of community focused schools supports the priorities within the Corporate Plan, and is included or cross referenced in a range of other plans and initiatives such as: the Single Education Plan. The Local Authority is committed to the development of community focused schools, as reflected in the following:

- Single Education Plan; Children's Services Plan
- Basic Skills Strategy
- Children and Young People Framework Partnership
- Integrated Children's Centres
- Flying Start
- Sure Start
- Genesis Wales
- 14 – 19 strategy
- Play Strategy
- Safety Partnership developments
- Healthy Schools Strategy
- PE and School Sport/Dragon Sport/5x60
- Economic Regeneration Plans
- Communities that Care
- Communities First.

The Local Authority has introduced a number of initiatives to support the development of community focused schools as follows:

- The establishment of a Community Focused Schools Project Board which meets regularly to:
 - continually develop and update the Local Authority's strategy for Community Focused Schools;
 - support and direct the implementation of the Action Plan ;
 - monitor and evaluate outcomes of initiatives and projects;
 - review and evaluate expenditure;
 - oversee grant applications;
 - ensure close links with CYPFP

- ensure all statutory responsibilities are met;
- Two co-ordinators, north and south of the county borough, have been appointed to co-ordinate community focused schools developments within the county.
- A Community Focused School Conference was held to launch the project in Torfaen. Participants included elected members, departmental officers, head-teachers, education officers, representatives from all agencies and organisations within the county borough.
- An audit of OSHL provision and community focused schools activities is currently taking place.
- An Integrated Children's Centre has been built on the campus of Hollybush Primary School (2005).
- Good practice visits have been undertaken to investigate the development of school based preventative services including a seminar on the "On Track" project in Rhondda Cynon Taff.
- Aspects of community focused schooling are continually being developed including:
 - Out of school hours learning
 - Family and learning support
 - Adult education
 - Video conferencing links between schools
 - Community led learning
 - Enriched curriculum/community partnership projects
 - Developing the arts
 - 5x60 and Dragon Sport
 - Forrest Schools
 - Wraparound childcare
 - ESDGC and eco schools projects
 - Summer schools and play schemes
 - Youth work
 - Community history projects involving local people and organisations
 - Community gardens
 - Proposals for additional ICC(s)

These examples will be used to promote and share good practice already identified.

FUNDING AND RESOURCING.

The development and sustainability of community focused schools is not simply about funding and resources - it is also about ethos and using resources in new and innovative ways. However, the Project Board recognises that additional funding to support programmes and activity is needed both at the implementation stage and for the longer term.

In planning and developing community focused schools the Project Board recognises that there is a need to be innovative in looking for funding sources, and maybe a

need to combine several grant funds in order to provide broader programmes across the Local Authority. Revenue funding sources will depend on the local area and the types of services being offered. e.g.:

- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships to support the development of affordable childcare for children up to the age of fourteen
- The Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Lifelong Learning and Skills, Basic Skills Agency and the Local Authority by providing funding for adult education and family learning classes
- The National Lottery Fund by a variety of specific programmes aimed primarily at areas of disadvantage
- The Better Schools Budget providing some funding annually to support out of school hours activities
- Sports Council Wales providing support for the appointment of a 5X60 development Officer
- Cymorth
- Business support opportunities
- Other funding opportunities available through trust funds and grants.

The Welsh Assembly Government's Community Focused Schools Grant (2005 - 2008) will be used to fund projects that have a clear and explicit link to the concept of community focused schools as outlined in circular 34/2003. Schools receiving such funding will be expected to work within Welsh Assembly Government guidelines and:

- be committed to the agreed Community Focused Schools vision and strategy
- work in partnerships, consulting and collaborating
- offer a broad range of services
- include reference to community focused schools in school development plans
- actively involve the Governing Body
- provide information for monitoring and evaluation

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

This strategy supports the Local Authority's equality aims by aiming to provide appropriate opportunities accessible to everyone. It aims to provide equal access to services irrespective of language, disability, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or age.

Disability Discrimination Act. 1995 (DDA)

Under the Disability Discrimination Act.1995, schools, and institutions providing post-16 education are under a duty not to treat disabled pupils or students less favourably than their peers. They are also required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that those who are disabled are not put at a substantial disadvantage.

Schools offering non-educational activities and services to the wider community are also covered by Part Three of the DDA (access to goods and services). In practice, the duties that relate to pupils and the wider community are complementary.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Responsibility.

Community focused schools development and sustainability is led by the Community Focused Schools Project Board.

A formal process of review of implementation of the Strategy will take place during quarterly Project Board meetings. The findings of the review will be presented to and discussed with the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as through appropriate reporting mechanisms in each agency represented on the Project Board.

Monitoring and Evaluation.

Community focused schools development in Torfaen is led by the CFS Project Board chaired by the Strategic Director Children and Young People which has accountability for the implementation of the action plan attached at Appendix 1. Individual accountability for implementation of elements of the action plan is also defined in the action plan.

Where community focused schools activities are featured within Strategic Plans and school development plans they will be monitored within agreed processes and procedures.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an important role in scrutinising progress on the community focused schools agenda. It will receive regular reports on the work of the Project Board.”

The Local Authority is required to submit a progress report to the Welsh Assembly Government as indicated in the timetable below:

<i>Date(2006-07)</i>	<i>Action</i>
April 2006.	Initial indication of the projects to be developed during the year Provide a profile of expenditure for each instalment
30 April 2006	Payment of first instalment

September 2006	Submit list of approved projects Advise on under-spend Payment of second instalment
December 2006	Update on approved projects Notify of any likely under-spend
January 2007	Payment of third instalment
February 2007	Notification of 2007-2008 grant allocation
April 2007	Progress report to Welsh Assembly Government Return audit certificate

Self evaluation of community focused schools programmes will be undertaken with particular regard to the Estyn Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales and Standards Key Question Three – *How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?*

The Local Authority will encourage schools/clusters to use self evaluation methods to support community focused schools development and delivery. The ContinYou Cymru ‘Supporting Community Focused Schools’ service provides a model for such self-evaluation. This model will also support Estyn inspection. The Local Authority will encourage schools to make use of this framework.

ContinYou Cymru as part of the ‘Supporting Community Focused Schools’ service has developed an evaluation tool. This tool will be used to enable the Local Authority to establish a base line and gather interim and final information. A report will be produced giving local and national information.

The Local Authority is currently collecting a range of information. Examples of information that will be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes include both qualitative and quantitative data as follows:

- Range of activities
- Number and frequency of sessions
- Percentage attendance within school population
- Attendance at community focused schools activities
- Improvement in skills and knowledge
- Improvements in self confidence, self-esteem, behaviour in formal and out school time

- Improved attendance in school
- Number of awards and certificates
- Improvement in tests, exams
- Improved personal and social skills
- Range of partner organisations involved in delivery.

Lin Millward
Head of Learning and Community Participation
September 2006