

**TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
EDUCATION SERVICE**

TORFAEN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

**Summary of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18th March 2008 at 6.30 p.m.
at County Hall, Cwmbran**

Present: A. Cowhig (Brookfield) Chairman
Cllrs G. Caron (Llanyrafon) and J. Biggs (Ysgol Gymraeg
Cwmbran)
Mesdames P. Pearson and Y. Balakrishnan (Ysgol Bryn Onnen)
A. Davies (Coed Eva Jnr) E. Clark (Victoria) and Y. Jones
(St Davids)
Messrs B. Hancock (Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw) A. Page (Ysgol
Gymraeg Cwmbran) S. Smith (Llantarnam) M. Osborne (New
Inn) A. Tait (Hollybush and Pontnewydd) R. Marchant
(Abersychan) P. Underwood (Brookfield) N. Jones (West Mon
and Kemys Fawr) D. Weaver (Garnteg), M. Davies
(Pontnewydd)

Also Present: Mike de Val, Strategic Director for Children and Young
People
Mrs T. Parsons, Head of HR and Governor Services
Mr D. McChrystal, Head of Pupil Support and
Partnerships
Mr D. James, Deputy Head of Education Resources
Miss A. Jenkins, Clerk to the Association

Apologies: Cllr J. Turner (Executive Member), T. Walker (Acting Chief
Education Officer)
Mesdames P. Whitcombe (Hillside N), J. Cresswell (Maendy)
M. Morden (Ponthir) K. Ward (Brynteg N)
Cllr P. Seabourne (Blenheim Rd)
Messrs B. Whitcombe (Hillside) M. Davis (Croesyceiliog
Jnr/North rd Infts) J. Phillips (Greenmeadow) R. Phillips
(Fairwater High) P. Friswell (Cod Eva Inft)

1. Single Children's Plan

1.1. As part of the consultation process on the Plan, Mike de Val gave a
presentation and responded to governors comments. Issues raised:

- Plan is currently only in draft form, comments will be considered before
final version is produced
- Delay in providing document in Welsh – this was due to the need to
have copies available for consultation. Welsh version is now available
- Lack of support and activities through medium of Welsh at post 16 level
– this issue will form part of the Youth Services Review being

undertaken. Initiatives being planned as part of Community Focus Schools Scheme

- Lack of free sports facilities and activities for all pupils to help combat obesity – Core Aim 4 relates to fitness related activities and there is a strong commitment to this issue throughout the plan
- Welsh education is seen only as Welsh medium school provision but support for learning Welsh in English Medium schools also needs to be of high quality – Torfaen hosts the Welsh Language Support Service and there is a commitment to the Welsh Language in general
- Core Aim 1 relates to Early Years but funding for schemes such as Flying Start and Sure Start are only available to certain areas. Ysgol Bryn Onnen is located outside these areas but admits pupils from them, needs to be equality of funding and support across the borough – it is acknowledged that some funding will need to be re-allocated and schemes reviewed, this will include Welsh medium provision
- There has been poor communication regarding the consultation on the plan. On past experience sharing of information and co-ordination between partners will need to improve. MdeV apologised if people had not received details, there is a commitment to improve partnership working
- The Plan is based on schemes in England, is there any evidence of their success? Concern that free school meals data is used as an indicator when actual take up rate drops at secondary level. Torfaen is to be congratulated on inroads in the provision of Welsh but more collaboration is needed with other LEAs. – Initiatives in England differ to those in Wales so direct comparisons are not possible, it is hoped to move away from the use of free meals data in the future with a new method being used. Although the issue of admissions to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw are not part of the Plan MdeV agreed it was an issue which needs to be addressed as Torfaen cannot fund the school alone.

1.2 Pupils will be able to give their views on the plan via an on-line questionnaire which they can access in school. Governors wishing to obtain a copy of the Plan, or a summary, can do so via www.tcypp.org.

2. Budget 2008/09

2.1 Governors received a copy of the letter sent to all headteachers and chairs of governors outlining the details of 2008/09 budget. All schools are now receiving their budget packs. Elements of the budget include teachers pay fully funded at 2.5%, a 10% increase in energy funding, increase in school repairs and maintenance funding, no energy savings for schools. The LEA is awaiting confirmation from WAG regarding the RAISE grant and Foundation Phase funding.

2.2 Concerns expressed that a staffing ratio of 1:8 for Foundation Phase will not be funded as it is a recommended figure not compulsory. DJ agreed that staffing is a big issue which is being raised with WAG by several organisations. It needs to be properly funded in order to be implemented.

2.3 Governors were pleased with budget provided by Torfaen given the settlement from WAG. It was agreed WAG should be informed of TASG concerns at the lack of commitment to Foundation Phase funding.

3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of 22 January were approved subject to addition of J. Phillips(Greenmeadow) in those present.

4. Matters arising

4.1 Still concern at use of double decker bus to transport pupils to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw and the fact that it is used as a service bus for the Trevethin area which means pupils often being left behind. Governors noted a similar situation exists at St Albans RC High school.

4.2 It was agreed a full review of bus services is required with clarification of the regulations. Issue to be raised with S. Hill.

5. Acting CEO items

5.1.1 Inclusion update

DMcC explained that following consultation it had been agreed to proceed with the reduction of units and discussions are taking place with HR regarding staffing issues.

5.1.2 There will be changes at MLD Resource Bases but he assured governors that there has been no 'hidden agenda' to close units. Criteria has not changed but a general drop in pupil numbers and parents making different choices have all been contributory factors. Resources now need to be targeted at the correct areas as many pupils are now taught in mainstream schools. MLD Resource Bases will still exist to meet the needs of specific children. Discussions are continuing between the LEA and headteachers regarding provision.

5.1.3 Following concern over provision for pupils with emotional behaviour difficulties, approval has been given for a new Pupil Referral Unit for KS3/4. Primary provision at Oakfield is being re-addressed in consultation with governors, head and staff.

5.1.4 A governor requested that Welsh Medium provision be considered in any new arrangements. DMcC explained recruitment of Welsh speakers in this service was difficult but he hoped that an Outreach Worker would soon be available for Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw.

5.1.5 D.McC was aware there will be anxiety over the changes which will also include:

Changes in provision for Crownbridge pupils

A review of Hearing Impaired Resource Bases
5.2 School Improvement Inspection

5.2.1 A summary of the Inspection report was circulated. All TASG members will be sent a copy of the Action Plan following the Easter holiday. Individual responses can be forwarded to Anne Jenkins, Governor Support, and will be collated prior to the next TASG meeting when further discussion can take place. The Chairman urged governors to read the full report.

5.2.2 Governors agreed it was important that an LEA Officer should attend the next meeting and that this request be forwarded to T. Walker, Acting Chief Education Officer.

5.2.3 It was noted that the Inclusion and Support Services will be inspected in May and that TASG will be involved in the process.

5.3 Asset Management Plan

5.3.1 Schools have now received the Asset Management Plan and officers have discussed individual entries with heads, many heads have also discussed the report with their governing body.

5.4 Partnership Agreements

5.4.1 TP outlined details of new regulations relating to Partnership Agreements between the LEA and governing bodies. Information has only just been received from WAG and guidance is still awaited. When available the LEA will draft model documents for consultation with groups such as TASG.

5.5 Chief Education Officer's post

5.5.1 Following extensive consultation with headteachers, Alison Ward has agreed to proceed with an appointment. Arrangements will be made through central HR services and external consultants.

5.5.2 TASG wished the Chief Executive Officer to be informed:-
i) of their concern at the constant delays since the autumn relating to this appointment
ii) the lack of attendance by a Chief Officer at TASG meetings

6. Scrutiny Committee Report

6.1 This item was deferred as the representative was not present.

7. Governors Wales

7.1 AT circulated a news update relating to publications being prepared by Governors Wales and the AGM/Conference. Proposals for a revised

constitution will be put to the AGM for approval. TASG may wish to consider resolutions at their next meeting, possibly relating to the Foundation Phase.

- 7.2 TASG approved the nomination of A. Tait for Treasurer of Governors Wales.

8. Healthy Living Event

- 8.1 Governors received and supported a report relating to possible Healthy Living and Well Being events for school staff. TCBC has held events for staff at Civic Centre and County Hall and is anxious that school staff have similar opportunities to access information and treatment sessions.

9. Referrals

- 9.1 West Mon governors had expressed concern about the exam syllabus used by schools in relation to AS students. It was agreed to defer this item and governors were asked to identify boards used by their school for the next meeting.

10. Future Meetings

- 10.1 Meetings for summer term to be held on
Tuesday, 22 April at 6.30 p.m. at County Hall
Tuesday, 1 July at 6.30 p.m at County Hall

11. Any other business

- 11.1 There were no items of any other business

Anne Jenkins
Clerk to the Association
31 March 2008