

TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

TORFAEN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Summary of the meeting held on Tuesday, 22 April 2008 at 6.30 p.m. at County Hall.

Present: Mr A. Cowhig (Brookfield) Chairman
Messrs R. Phillips (Fairwater) T.N. Jones (West Mon & Kemys Fawr) G. Barnett (Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw) M. Davies (Pontnewynydd) R. Marchant (Abersychan) N. Smith (Griffithstown) M. Osborne (New Inn) N. Jones (Woodlands) Mesdames J. Forward (Croesyceiliog Jnr) Y. Balakrishnan and Rev P. Pearson (Ysgol Bryn Onnen) Y. Jones (St Davids)

Also present: Mr T. Walker, Acting Chief Education Officer
Mrs L. Millward, Head of Learning and Community Participation
Mr J. Tushingham, Business Manager
Mr M. Barker, Governors Wales
Miss A. Jenkins, Clerk to the Association

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mike de Val, (Strategic Director) Cllrs J. Biggs (Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran) P. Seabourne (Blenheim Rd) L. Irwin(Cwmffrwdoer and Penygarn) Messrs P. Friswell (Coed Eva Infants) J. Phillips (Greenmeadow) A. Tait (Hollybush and Pontnewydd) S. Smith (Llantarnam) Mrs M. Morden (Ponthir)

2. School Improvement Inspection

2.1 The chairman welcomed the Acting Chief Education Officer. All TASG representatives had received a summary of the inspection report plus a copy of the LEAs draft action plan. A number of comments had been received which TW addressed:

- clarification between recommendations and comments in report was needed for the final plan
- Action plan is not required to contain details of how expected outcome will be achieved. This is given in the Service Organisational Plan plus contributory documents
- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the role of overseeing what is being done to address issues. Headteachers and TASG are represented on this committee. The Action Plan will be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee at regular intervals
- Each area has a lead officer but they will be supported by other senior officers as required

- Role of governors has been highlighted in report and LEA is keen to have further discussion with governors especially relating to MISC
 - Alison Ward has had several meetings with heads and is keen to continue this theme of communication to help clarify the strategic direction of the LEA, governors will also be involved in process
- 2.2 Governors still had concerns over response from LEA and will await the updated version of the action plan. Concerns expressed over lack of clarity on the role of Strategic Director and Chief Education Officer as well as delays in making a CEO appointment. The advertisement will appear this week with the assessment taking place during May.
- 2.3 Confusion still exists over roles of individual officers within the LEA, this was also identified in previous report. There have been improvements in communication and these will continue to move forward.
- 2.4 Governors role in monitoring was referred to in the report but no mention of TASG. The Association has an important role to feedback to governing bodies. It was proposed that an update on the report be given to TASG in the autumn term. TW was happy to do this and would want to discuss with TASG the best way to consult with them in the future.
- 2.5 In order to explain the role and purpose of various posts in the education service, TW agreed to attend the next meeting to discuss the Senior Management Structure.
- 2.6 TW explained the LEA is currently in a phase of transition with the Education Strategic Plan being replaced by the Single Children's Plan. The Operational Plan for Education will contribute to this and contain the detail in relation to the Action Plan.
- 2.7 Schools are currently undertaking medium term financial planning which is made difficult by the uncertainty over funding for areas such as Foundation Phase. TW acknowledged the Foundation Phase as an exciting initiative but shared governors view that the process and timing was unacceptable with some LEAs refusing to implement it. Regional seminars are being held between LEAs and WAG to discuss the issue. Darren Joseph will update heads following Torfaen's meeting on 24th April.
- 2.8 The inspection report refers to SATs results being below the Welsh average, however, Estyn were quite complimentary about the 8 schools they visited. Schools recently inspected have achieved a number of grades 1 and 2 for the seven key questions so despite SATs results schools are performing well and this needs to be highlighted. As a member of the inspection team, Lin Millward assured governors she had promoted schools good features. The use of data covering the whole of the borough compared to only 8 school visits contributed to the apparent discrepancy in Estyn's findings.

2.9 The Action Plan will be amended in light of comments received from various groups, signed by the Executive Member and submitted to Estyn for approval by early next week. Once approved the plan will be re-issued.

2.10 The chairman thanked officers for the opportunity to discuss the action plan.

3. Governors Wales News Update

3.1 MB gave details of new and forthcoming publications from Governors Wales:

- A CD on Community Focus schools has been issued to schools and information is available on the website
- Guidance on head and deputy appointments has been issued. This has been compiled in conjunction with LEA governor support officers
- WAG has commissioned Governors Wales to prepare a model complaints policy. Although some LEAs already have policies in place WAG is keen for a standard model of good practice across all authorities. This is due to be issued in the autumn.
- Fact files are being produced in the future on
 - i) Annual Meeting with Parents
 - ii) Associate Pupil Governors
 - iii) Role of governing body as a critical friend
 - iv) Dynamics of a governing body

3.2 WAG has now accepted a bid from Governors Wales to introduce a national award for clerks to governing bodies, similar to the one in place in England.

3.3 Amendments to GW constitution have been approved by the Management Committee. A new document will be submitted to local associations for comment prior to adoption at the agm in July.

3.4 The theme for the summer conference will be School Effectiveness Framework and will involve an Estyn Inspector and headteachers.

3.5 All recommendations in the Governors Wales Action Plan have now been met including improvements in the relationship with LEAs. A new partnership agreement is now in place which will be reviewed annually.

4. Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)

4.1 LM discussed the policy which relates to parents' right to withdraw their child from school and provide an alternative education. Procedures are in place to discuss parents decision and reasons, next steps if parent still chooses this option. The situation and provision provided would be

reviewed annually. If parents change their mind after an initial period of EOTAS a process is in place for the pupil to have a phased return to school. The full policy is available to headteachers via the IT system if and when it is required.

- 4.2 12 pupils are currently taught outside school. Ages range from 6 to 17 years and reasons are varied (issues in school, parents lifestyle and beliefs etc). There is no statutory responsibility on the LEA to provide support but we do offer curriculum support and give contact details of Education Otherwise which is a charitable organisation.
- 4.3 The new policy brings together a number of policies which have existed and governing body involvement would be limited unless the pupil wished to return to school.
- 4.4 A governor enquired how the policy links with Travellers children and who meets the cost of a phased return to school. These pupils have the same rights as other pupils. LM explained a phased return encourages pupils back to school in consultation with their parents. Funding for pupils stays with the school until they are removed from the register. This is not done until it is certain the pupil will continue in the EOTAS system.

5. Minutes

- 5.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2008 were confirmed as a true record.

6. Matters arising

- 6.1 All representatives had received details of the consultation meetings for the Single Children's Plan.
- 6.2 WAG is holding regional meetings with LEAs regarding issues relating to the Foundation Phase . The LEA view is that all initiatives must be fully funded. The outcome of the meeting will be forwarded to schools. There are major concerns over the implementation of 1:8 staffing ratio.
- 6.3.1 Torfaen policy for transport provision is over the statutory requirement and costs over £2m. At secondary level, pupils are expected to use public transport where available as part of an integrated transport policy. The LEA works with bus companies regarding numbers of pupils to ensure sufficient places are provided. A review is being undertaken which will include public services.
- 6.3.2 TW is in regular contact with the head of Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw. He explained that using public transport enables pupils to use their season ticket if they miss a bus, have additional activities in school etc. Torfaen was the first authority to abolish '3 to a seat' and limit the number of

standing passengers. Concerns were also raised about transport for St Albans RC High pupils which will be investigated.

7. Acting CEO items

7.1 There were no additional items

8. Governors Wales Conference

8.1 It was agreed that TASG would forward a resolution regarding concerns over the implementation and funding of the Foundation Phase.

8.2 Representatives will be A. Cowhig, A. Tait and M. Osborne

9. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9.1 Issues from meeting held on 5 March 2008:

- Senior Advisor for implementation of MISC policy and SODP post agreed – K. Godwin appointed
- Budget details were discussed. Half of Torfaen schools will be reviewing staffing levels but this includes vacancies and not necessarily redundancies
- A number of issues are being looked at as part of the Youth Services Review. LEAs are expected to have an Outdoor Education Adviser to ensure policies/risk assessments etc are in place for outdoor activities and trips. Discussion on a joint appointment with other LEAs is taking place. Schools are also expected to have an Outdoor Activity Co-ordinator.

10. Referral

10.1 West Mon governing body raised the issue of having a standard examination board for all schools in Torfaen. Diversity of boards | 11-18 schools presents problems for students studying for AS qualifications. LM suggested issue be raised with 14-19 working group and will discuss on behalf of TASG.

11. Next meeting

11.1 Tuesday, 1 July at 6.30 p.m.

11.2 Agenda items: Job evaluation update
Senior Management Structure of Education Department

12. Any other business

12.1 Concern was raised over the varying quality of training available for Teaching Assistants working for L3 qualification. LM to follow up availability and level of training.

- 12.2 Concern over issues raised by Financial Management Standards in Schools regulations which put additional burden of financial responsibility on individual governors. This is currently an issue in England and clarification on position in Wales needs to be sought.
- 12.3 It was noted there has not been a meeting of Health and Safety Co-ordinators for a considerable time. The clerk was asked to raise the matter with GP.

Anne Jenkins
Clerk to the Association
28 April 2008