



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5TH JULY 2016

SUBJECT: ALL THROUGH SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of Members on the benefits of all through schools and to consider a pilot proposed to establish a Rhymney 3-18 school.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report identifies the features of all through schools and the potential benefits and challenges to their provision.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The report considers provision of school places to ensure the Council's key strategies are best achieved.
- 3.2 The report links directly to the Education for Life, sustainability, regeneration and equality strategies.

4. THE REPORT

Background

- 4.1 An all through school may be defined as:
- 'A school that comprises multiple phases of Education provision (usually primary and secondary) in a single institution'.
- 4.2 An all-through school can offer a positive environment for learning in which all staff work together to ensure that young people make successful transitions between the different stages in their education. Such schools are well placed to ensure that their young people experience challenge and progression through consistent, well-planned teaching which is flexible and responsive to their distinctive geographical, cultural and social contexts.
- 4.3 There is a growing body of evidence to support the benefits of all-through schools. Importantly, in England the Department for Education and Skills identifies that new school leadership/management arrangements, curriculum design and improved delivery that results from working within an all age institution leads to:
- Raised attainment in all Key Stages throughout the school, by reducing performance 'dips' that occur when pupils transfer from one school to another;

- Improved teaching and learning opportunities for personalised learning;
- Enhanced opportunities for the recruitment, retention and deployment of all staff;
- Improved pastoral care for pupils, in challenging circumstances through offering a 'joined-up' strategy for additional and behavioural needs;
- Improved continuity for multi-agency involvement across phases; and,
- Effective sharing of resources and economies of scale.

4.4 The all-through schools agenda is gathering momentum in Wales, driven by a need to raise standards across the board and to modernise the school estate. The Welsh Government's 'Successful Futures' report produced by Professor Donaldson lays the foundation for a 21st Century curriculum for Wales, based on a continuum of learning from the ages of 3-16/18. Donaldson identifies 4 'enablers' that underpin the new curriculum in Wales.

- Working in partnership and the development of 'Pioneer Schools';
- Strong school to school working across all ages and year groups to plan for progression;
- Inspiring leadership; and,
- Inclusivity.

4.5 In a similar context the UK's National College of School Leadership (NCSL) suggests that there are five main drivers for all-age schools:

- Personalisation (raising achievement)
- Pedagogical (sharing expertise – cross-phase)
- Care and support (Every Child Matters and shared ethos)
- Community (engagement in learning)
- Organisational (shared expertise and resources).

4.6 Blaenau Gwent has led on the creation of a 3-16 Peer Group of Local Authorities in Wales. The LAs currently involved include:

- Blaenau Gwent
- Caerphilly
- Ceredigion
- Newport
- Neath/Port Talbot
- RCT
- Bridgend
- Cardiff
- Powys

4.7 4 key issues have emerged from the discussions, namely:

- Standards – developing and sharing case studies to illustrate how 3-16 learning settings can contribute to raising standards.
- Finance – developing a model of finance for revenue budgets for all-through schools through the establishment of an ADEW Finance sub-group.
- Leadership – understanding current leadership models in existence, sharing those models and analysing their relative strengths and areas for further development.
- Admissions – options for incorporating arrangements for all schools on a fair and equitable basis.

4.8 The group's contributors recognised that a 'one size fits all' approach to leadership is not appropriate and felt that local context plays an important role in the adoption and development of new leadership patterns and structures.

The 3 leadership structure examples shared by the 3-16 Peer Group are detailed below:

- Blaenau Gwent-Ebbw Fawr Learning Community. This model is based on a 1,200 place secondary phase and 420 place primary phase. The leadership structure has a Director of Learning and 3 Phase Directors, covering secondary, primary and curriculum cross phase transition.
- Neath/Port Talbot-Afan Valley. This federation model relates to the Federated Schools of the Afan Valley. This model involves the strategic leadership of 5 schools and has a Headteacher and 2 Deputies covering provision, standards and quality and wellbeing and support.
- Powys-Ysgol Hyddgen 3-18. This is a Welsh medium 3-18 all-through model. The school involves a secondary and primary provision, with a Headteacher, and 2 Deputies covering secondary/primary and 2 Assistant Heads again with responsibilities for secondary and primary.

4.9 A summary of the potential benefits and challenges to all through school developments is enclosed as an Appendix.

4.10 In developing this proposal, a number of issues will need to be considered, namely:

- Quality and standards of education
- Leadership and management
- School admissions.

4.11 In the event that the proposal proceeds, then a statutory process will commence with the issuing of a consultation document.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Specific school organisation proposals will be implemented in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2013. As part of this process, detailed equality impact assessments will be developed.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 These will be dependent upon specific proposals, the detail of which will form part of the School Organisation Statutory Processes.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 These will be dependent upon specific proposals.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members views are sought on the benefits of all-through schools and to consider a pilot proposed to establish a Rhymney 3-18 school.

10. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To apprise Members of the features of all-through schools in the context of a future School Place Planning Strategy.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
School Admissions Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Admissions Appeal Code 2013 (Welsh Government)
School Standards & Framework Act 1998.

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Background Papers:

School Places Plan 2013/14-2023/24

21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme.