

## **Improving Outcomes For Young People – Reviewing Town Centre Schools**

Wrexham Council has agreed that the most appropriate way to improve the aspirations, learning and achievement of young people in the town centre in the short term is to continue to support and challenge Ysgol Clywedog and Ysgol Rhosnesni High School to improve as two community focused 11-16 comprehensive schools. This decision follows a consultation on proposals to review, and potentially make significant changes to, the way that education is provided in Wrexham town centre. Proposals were to consider whether there was stakeholder interest in exploring the value of a 3-16 through school approach in improving attainment and learning at these schools and across the primary-secondary transition in the longer term.

The strong and consistent message arising from the consultation was that the priority for both the schools and for the Local Authority should be to improve attainment and to move both schools out of an Estyn category before considering structural changes.

The consultation also highlighted concerns about pupils' experience of the transition between primary and secondary education, an issue which the Senedd Yr Ifanc (Young People's Parliament) have chosen as the key topic for their Education priority group.

### **Survey Responses**

The on-line survey received 510 responses. 94.78% (472) of respondents' preferred option for town centre schools was for the Authority to continue to challenge and support Ysgol Clywedog and Ysgol Rhosnesni High School to improve in their current form.

The most common reasons respondents gave for their preferred option were:

- The schools need more time and support to improve (183);
- Insufficient evidence about the through school option (57);
- Concerns that a through school would negatively impact on primary school which currently provide high quality education (51);
- The smaller schools are the better (51);
- Don't want such an age range of pupils on one site (51).

Respondents were also asked to put forward any other options that they wanted to see considered. The most frequent suggestions were:

- Create smaller schools (31);
- Consider the Governors and Leadership at existing schools (19);
- Invest more money in schools (14); and
- Support good teachers and improve training for others (11).

### **Members Workshop**

The Members workshop considered presentations on the through schools concept from Eifion Evans, Director of Education at Ceredigion, and Karen Evans, Former Head of Ysgol Y Grango School. General conclusions of the workshop were that:

- The need for strong leadership is the key factor in the success of any school;
- The through school model could provide a number of exciting opportunities – particularly around transition and standards; and
- Neither Ysgol Clywedog nor Rhosnesni High School are necessarily the most suitable schools to introduce a through school within, particularly at the current time.

### **Discussion Group**

Representative parent governors and staff from town centre primary and secondary schools, and representatives of town centre community councils were invited to a discussion evening at Glyndŵr University. The through-school concept was explained by David Williams, Headteacher at the Ysgol Bro Pedr through-school in Lampeter. The overall conclusions of the discussions were that:

- The focus should be on supporting Ysgol Clywedog and Ysgol Rhosnesni High School to improve;
- Parents prefer smaller schools rather than larger ones;
- There is a need to improve the transition of pupils between primary and secondary schools;
- Concern that the focus is all on secondary education and, as such, primary education could suffer under any new proposals
- Teachers should be supported, and under-performing teachers should be tackled;
- Need to encourage Wrexham pupils (and their parents) to stay in Wrexham for their secondary education – focus on reputation;
- There are definite merits to the through school model, particularly for learners in national Curriculum Years 5 to 8, which are worthy of exploration and implementation in schools that are not currently in an Estyn category.

Concerns were also raised over the timing of the consultation and whether the focus was on the through school concept or more specifically on how to best improve standards at Ysgol Clywedog and Ysgol Rhosnesni High School.

### **Senedd Yr Ifanc**

The Senedd Yr Ifanc (Wrexham's Youth Parliament) have a number of priority groups in place considering key issues facing young people. The Education priority group are focusing on transition issues between primary and secondary school and held a discussion on the through school concept. The overall conclusions were:

- The transition between primary and secondary school can be good for some – it allows you to grow up and start again with a clean slate;
- Need to prepare people for transition through ideas like transition week

- The key issue is teaching - having a more limited number of teachers when starting secondary school is great if the teachers are good, but not if you have a poor teacher;
- If a through-school is poor, you're there for 13 years;
- Need to fund schools properly – maintain school buildings; and
- Need to ensure good behaviour and if you have fewer teachers, you will know them better. And the better you know a teacher, the more likely you are to behave for them

## **Written Responses**

The Council has received around fifty letters and emails from local individuals and groups regarding the proposed options for improving town centre education. The key message arising is consistent with the other consultation responses received - strong support for supporting and challenging the schools to improve in their current format.

In their formal responses to the consultation, both governing bodies set out their support for option one; to support and challenge both Ysgol Clywedog and Ysgol Rhosnesni High School to improve.

The relevant reports to the Council's Executive Board, and the minutes of the meetings where these were discussed, are available on the Council's website:

Decision to consult:

<http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/MinutesData/ExBoard/Reports/hll1813.pdf>

Decision on final option:

Not yet available