



Ysgol Uwchradd LLANIDLOES High School

GOFAL

Giving Opportunities For All to Learn



MINUTES

Llanidloes Schools' Federation Governing Body Meeting; Wednesday 5th July 2023, 6.30 pm at the secondary school

PRESENT

Margot Jones, Daniel Owen, Elen Chenetier, Clare Bound, Linda Broughall, Lorna Morris, Diane Jones-Poston, Adrian Foulkes, Heather Willis, Lisa Ashton, Kelly Hawkins, Gareth Morgan and Glyn Preston

IN ATTENDANCE

Richard Williams (secondary school assistant headteacher), David Quick (LA School Improvement Adviser), Helen Rees (clerk)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Karen Swann, Eloisa Isaac, Christoph Schultz and Jamie Jones.

The meeting was quorate, therefore business proceeded.

The chair welcomed David Quick, the secondary school School Improvement Adviser, to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST/BUSINESS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made relating to items on this agenda.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The chair reminded governors that many terms of office would come to an end over the coming months as the federation approached four years old. The chair thanked governors and the headteachers for their support of her. Glyn Preston was welcomed to his first governing body meeting.

4. BUSINESS OF MEETING

It was agreed to follow the order of business as set out in the agenda. No items were identified to be discussed under 'any other business'.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the governing body held on 26th April were confirmed and would be filed in the schools' file.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT INCLUDED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

It was agreed that the chair would write to the members of staff with long service in the primary and secondary schools and canteen who would retire at the end of term.

The chair noted that recent meetings had not always been quorate so decisions could not be made. Governors were encouraged to attend all meetings.

The clerk was thanked for her support to the governing body.

7. ESTYN THEMATIC REPORT; SCHOOL GOVERNORS – ACTING AS CRITICAL FRIENDS AND THE IMPACT OF GOVERNOR TRAINING

and

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ADVISERS; GOVERNING BODY SELF-EVALUATION

Mr Quick told governors that a crucial element of their role was to gather first hand evidence in order to effectively support and challenge the headteachers. Governors were reminded that they were not educational professionals conducting lesson observations but rather supporting the self-evaluation process. Activities undertaken by governors on another governing body included assigning a governor to each AoLE, analysis with SLT of a parental survey and holding a standards meeting every term. Governors attended learner voice events to observe activities rather than ask questions and work scrutinies together with SLT. Learning walks were carried out according to the school monitoring timetable. Headteacher's reports were circulated a week before meetings in order that they could be carefully considered by governors and committees were linked to department meetings to enhance feedback. These activities combined to ensure that governors were confident that they understood the school well and made decisions informed by relevant evidence. Governors had also gained the trust of staff who had observed that governors visited school to look at learning rather than judge teaching.

Governors commented that many of these activities were currently carried out effectively within the federation and that the governing body was providing an appropriate level of support.

Governor training was available either from the LA or privately. The LA would try to provide training in any area requested by governing bodies. Governing bodies could compile their own training calendars to follow – for example, they could agree to undertake safeguarding training every year, two years or three years.

The headteachers told governors that the school monitoring calendars for the forthcoming year would be circulated and that governor visits would be welcomed.

Mr Quick told governors that Georgie Bevan, LA Head of Education, intended to form a group to consider the provision of effective support for governors. The Department for Education had produced a handbook for governors, including the key features of effective governance, much of which was applicable to schools in Wales:



Governance
Handbook, DfE.pdf



Competency
framework for govern

Governors asked how they could be more proactive in arranging visits to the schools and were told that different departments had different procedures and staff would be reminded to invite governors as appropriate. Visits would be focussed on the needs of the schools as identified in their SDPs. The secondary school headteacher told governors that there were three 'listening to learners' events in the monitoring calendar for the forthcoming year that they would be welcome to attend and would be a valuable source of first-hand evidence. Governors were reminded that it was important to record all visits and feed back to the Curriculum and Strategic Planning committee to evidence the impact of the work of the governing body. Mr Quick told governors that LA officers' visits would probably be aligned with school monitoring calendars and that it would be useful for governors to be involved in these visits. Mr Quick had previously been shadowed by governors during support visits to schools. The primary school headteachers reminded governors that visits did not have to be aligned to the formal monitoring calendar and could be arranged according to governor availability.

Estyn had found that only a minority of governing bodies had carried out skills audits. Governors were advised to carry out an audit to facilitate the effective use of every governor's skills and expertise. It was agreed that an audit would be carried out in the Autumn term.

9. SELF-EVALUATION AND TARGETS; PRIMARY SCHOOL

The headteacher told governors that there had been many governor visits during the year; all the resulting visit forms had been analysed and fed into the school self-evaluation. From this, three possible priorities had been identified.

The first priority was proposed to be the development of thinking skills. It had been identified that numeracy skills were not always reflected in the results of reasoning tests and that the use of inference and deduction skills when reading could be improved. Year 4 CAT test results in the forthcoming year would be analysed by plotting non-verbal skills against reading skills so that useful interventions could be identified.

Secondly, a continued focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) was suggested. Some effective, fun interventions had been used that had effectively strengthened these skills in every year group. Helen Bowen's techniques in LLC would be researched. Governors asked whether work in this area was necessary due to the pandemic and were told that it pre-dated this as society increasingly regarded inaccuracies and Americanisms as acceptable. Governors asked how this would be addressed and were told that an example was Big Write. Across the school, every six weeks, Big Write was the literacy focus for a week. Each day of the week classes would consider vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation (VCOP) that were specific to the chosen task, then on the Friday, every learner would write about the topic continuously for around 40 minutes. Governors asked what the school target would be and how progress would be measured. A baseline would be taken in September against which progress for every learner could be measured. The Curriculum for Wales was more bespoke to each learner with principles of progression at the heart of the curriculum.

The third suggested priority was to carry on the work of planning for progression across the curriculum. It had been noted that, in a recent survey, a minority of parents had requested increased engagement with their children's learning and also that a recent open day had been very popular, with over 55% of children represented by at least one parent. The headteacher told governors that these could usefully be built in to planning for progression so that during the continuous cycle of assessment, school, learners and parents all knew the fact that, and how, learners were making progress.

It was planned to invest in the outdoor learning provision in the upper school.

Governors agreed that the proposed priorities had been thoughtfully identified, especially the focus on SPaG, and felt it was positive that so many children wanted their parents to be involved with their school life.

10. SELF-EVALUATION AND TARGETS; SECONDARY SCHOOL

The headteacher told governors that six draft priorities had been identified that would be refined once external examination results had been received. Grade boundaries had now been raised post-pandemic, so outcomes were predicted to be lower than the previous year. Value-added performance would be carefully analysed. A recent meeting with a group of governors to analyse the LA FADE reports had helped to identify the priorities.

The first suggested priority was to 'Secure strong progress and outcomes in Years 11-13, including GCSE maths and Welsh (IA1) ESTYN Recommendation 1'. Level 2 outcomes, value-added and CAT9 scores would all be analysed together with evidence from quality assurance activities.

The second priority was to 'Improve the wellbeing of pupils (especially around persistent absenteeism) (IA2)'. This had been identified as a national post-pandemic issue. The school's attendance had dropped from 94.5% pre-pandemic to 90%. Governors were told that when the All Wales Core Data Set was published in September, it would be known how this figure compared to other schools. Proactive measures had already been put in place, including offering individual support and plans, home visits and letters. These had resulted in attendance rising during the year, when usually attendance would drop off through the year.

The third priority was to 'Improve teaching (especially around advanced skills provision using the LNF and DCF) and assessment (especially written feedback) to ensure strong learner progress (IA3) ESTYN Recommendation 4'. A new assessment policy had been written which would be embedded during the forthcoming year.

The fourth priority identified was to 'Improve literacy (esp. oracy and reading comprehension), numeracy (esp. problem solving within authentic contexts) and digital competency skills in Years 7-9 (IA1, IA3)'.

The fifth priority would be to 'Review, refine and develop an inspirational curriculum in Years 7-9 that helps pupils become highly skilled, ambitious, confident, aspirational and well-informed individuals (IA3).'

The final priority would be to 'Improve leadership at all levels, especially around improving progression in numeracy, literacy and digital skills (IA5) ESTYN Recommendations 2 and 3.'

The headteacher told governors that the LA suggested a maximum of five priorities for secondary schools, but that all six areas identified were considered high priorities and it had not been possible to agree one to be discarded. Governors asked Mr Quick whether he considered the priorities to be realistic. He replied that he had not analysed the school's self-evaluation document, but that the priorities seemed to be sensible. They were all linked to inspection areas and covered learning and teaching experiences, skills and pedagogy.

The primary school headteacher told governors that two of the priorities were cross-federation and would be incorporated into the federation improvement plan.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Primary school: the headteacher told governors that a recent health and safety audit with the LA adviser Terry Hampton had been very positive and no issues had been identified. Work to install a new entry system at the front gate had been completed and would be commissioned in the near future.

Secondary school: the headteacher told governors that health and safety issues were included within the headteacher's report. Fencing and site security would be addressed by the LA. Mr Quick would highlight site

security issues to the LA as a safeguarding concern. Governors asked whether there was adult supervision at the front of the site during break and lunch times and were told that there was a rota to cover this area and the caretaker was responsible for shutting external doors. A new lockdown alarm had been installed and training for all staff had been arranged. Governors asked whether the issue of the public footpath on site had been addressed by the LA and were told that fencing and gating arrangements had not yet been decided. As the footpath ended in a dead end at the school car park, the headteacher had requested that the right of way be removed.

12. SAFEGUARDING

Secondary school: the recent tragic death of a parent directly affected three pupils. The LA had offered a bereavement service which had not yet been required but could be useful when these three pupils returned to school. Wellbeing support was available to all other pupils.

13. POLICIES AND PUBLICATIONS

Governors were told that a new Assessment Policy had been drafted by the secondary school, drawing on reports recently published by Welsh Government and Estyn. The policy would be carefully reviewed as it was embedded over the coming two terms. Governors agreed to adopt the policy.

The Teachers' Pay Policy 2022 – 2023 had been received and was adopted.

14. SCHOOL FUND ACCOUNTS 2021 – 2022, YSGOL GYNRADD LLANIDLOES

The audited school fund accounts 2021 – 2022 were received and accepted.

15. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The minutes of the Curriculum and Strategic Planning committee on 10th May had been circulated to governors. Several visit forms had been received, including from a governor visiting the primary school headteacher to review the FADE report and SDP. The recommendations had been analysed to enable the governing body to provide effective support. It had been decided to postpone a governor event planned for 3rd June to the Autumn term as not enough governors had been able to attend for it to be productive. A group of governors had visited the secondary school to discuss their FADE reports.

Following a visit to the primary school Eco Committee, Russell George, MS for Montgomeryshire, had asked a question about the Eco Committee's plastic milk bottle project in the Senedd which had been greatly appreciated by the children. The First Minister had agreed to arrange for someone to support the school in running a pilot. Governors commented that they were very proud of the work of the committee.

The Staffing and Finance committee had met on 21st June. As the meeting had not been quorate, the chair would make proposals to this meeting for decisions.

Two members of primary school staff were due to leave according to the LA Voluntary Severance Scheme at the end of term. Governors agreed that whichever route HR recommended, voluntary early retirement or voluntary redundancy, would be taken as they would both have the same impact on the budget. A vacant TLR2 would not be filled in September but it was proposed that two or three TLR3s would be offered to lead specific projects. Governors were told that the school would identify the projects and specify timescales for completion. It was envisaged that these would help to develop leadership capacity. Governors agreed the proposal.

Daniel Owen, Elen Chennetier, Heather Willis, Lisa Ashton, Richard Williams and Helen Rees left the meeting

It was resolved according to The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005, Section 48 that part of this item be minuted as confidential.

Daniel Owen, Elen Chennetier, Heather Willis, Lisa Ashton and Helen Rees rejoined the meeting

16. GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT

Governors were reminded to complete their mandatory training and inform the clerk of any training completed. It was agreed that online training was efficient and convenient.

17. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT, PRIMARY SCHOOL

The report had been circulated to governors, although the headteacher apologised that it had not been available seven days before the meeting due to the time taken to write 300 individual comments in learners' end of year reports. The headteacher highlighted that RADY (Raising Achievement of Disadvantaged Youngsters) was a golden thread through the school's priorities.

Governors were invited to contact the headteacher with any questions regarding the report.

18. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT, SECONDARY SCHOOL

The report had been circulated to governors. The headteacher commented that much of the content had already been discussed and drew governors' attention to the many pupil achievements celebrated in the last section of the report.

Governors were invited to contact the headteacher with any questions regarding the report.

19. DOCUMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND/OR CLERK

A letter had been sent to the Welsh Government to challenge the admission number for the secondary school. This number was calculated according to the square meterage of teaching area available and was currently 117. An increase to 128 had been requested. Governors noted that there had been 170 applications for a place in Year 7 in September 2023. An increase in the admission number would reduce the number of families experiencing the pressure of going through the appeals process.

Governors were told that the primary school had the same issue with an admission number of 38 and a capacity of 266. The actual capacity had been calculated as 374. The headteacher had recently become aware of in-year applications being refused by the LA when a year group exceeded 38, without consulting the school.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT CONSIDERATION

There were no such items.

21. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

It was resolved according to The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005, Section 48 that part of item 15 be minuted as confidential.

22. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No items were identified.

23. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Full governing body; to be confirmed in the Autumn term.