

Department of Education & Children

Education and Children Scrutiny Panel 'Report on School Visits'

Date: Spring Term 2018

OUR DEPARTMENTAL VISION.....

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Contents:

1. Background and context	Page 3
2. School visit schedule and attendees	Page 3
3. School visit findings	Page 4
4. Next steps	Page 12



1. Background and context:

The Spring Term, 2018 programme of School Visits focused its attention on availing members with the opportunity to discuss ‘teaching and learning’ provision across a range of primary and secondary schools. Each visit attempted to provide an open agenda which would facilitate observations and discussion sessions in partnership with school staff and leaders. To this end, members were provided with a guided ‘Learning Walks’ along with group discussion sessions which included Headteachers, senior leaders / Additional Learning Needs Coordinators.

2. School visit schedule and attendees:

Group Members	School / Date
Visit Group 3: Cllr Darren Price Cllr Edward Thomas Cllr Betsan Jones Cllr Emlyn Schiavone Cllr John Jenkins Cllr Bill Thomas Officers: Andi Morgan / Llinos Jones	Ffederasiwn Llechyfedach – Tymbl Federation 20.3.18
Visit Group 2: Cllr Edward Thomas Cllr Kim Broom Cllr Dorian Williams Cllr Gary Jones Mrs Jean Voyle Williams Cllr Jean Lewis Officers: Andi Morgan / Elin Forsyth	Ysgol Gynradd Llangynnwr Primary School 26.3.18
Visit Group 1: Cllr Darren Price Cllr Dot Jones Cllr Ieuan Davies Mrs Vera Kenny Officers: Andi Morgan / Elin Forsyth	Ffederasiwn Bryngwyn – Glanymôr Federation 27.3.18

3. School Visit Findings:

School Visit One: Llechyfedach & Tumble Primary School Federation

The visit commenced in Llechyfedach Primary School. Members and officers were welcomed to the school by Mrs Neris Samuel-Thomas, HT and Mrs Catrin Nicholas, Assistant Headteacher.

Mrs Samuel-Thomas provided a verbal presentation to the visiting group which outlined the development of the current formal Federation across a period of time. The presentation highlighted the positive impact and role of a mentor / Headteacher consultant to guide and support both schools during the initial stages of the informal Federation and in particular, their emergence from Estyn follow-up categories (Llechyfedach – Significant Improvement / Tumble – Estyn Monitoring). The restructuring of the Senior Leadership Team (to include Headteacher, Assistant Headteachers, ALNCO and Phase Leaders) across the Federation was also highlighted as a key factor in securing ongoing effectiveness and success. All school leaders interviewed noted that this structure enabled high levels of communication and collaboration across both schools.

The Group benefited from a detailed 'Learning Walk' through both school settings (moving from Llechyfedach to Tumble during the morning break) which provided all members with the opportunity to observe teaching and learning provision and environments.

The visit culminated with Group members sharing an open and broad discussion across a range of issues with the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher (Tumble School).

A concise overview of the key points raised during the visit are noted below:

Current strengths:

- Restructuring of Senior Leadership Team to include 'Phase Leaders'
- Whole school commitment to collaboration within the Federation and with external partners / support agencies (reference and thanks made to valuable support from ERW Challenge Adviser, Llinos

Jones and Executive Headteacher Kevin Phelps –
Tavernspite/Templeton Federation)

- Consistency of practice across the Federation (supported and developed by the collaboration / joint-working agenda)
- Open and honest approach to self-evaluation which ensures an appropriate and accurate set of improvement priorities (set within each School Development Plan)
- Support and commitment of the Governing Body (ability to draw on a range of skill sets)
- Transition partnership with Ysgol Maesygwendraeth (reference was made to effective work in MfL and an example of successful TAF (Team around the Family) approach in supporting a Year 6 pupil, including counselling services)

Areas for development / further consideration:

- School leaders drew reference to the current content of the School Development Plan which jointly focuses on:
 - Mapping and tracking of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework
 - Mapping and tracking of the Digital Competency Framework
 - Further develop the 'Voice of the Learner'
 - Further develop provision in support of the pupils' awareness of their rights and citizenship
- Continue to develop involvement in the Erasmus Project (reference was made to the benefits drawn from this e.g. Finnish example of IT strategy)
- Whilst there are no capacity issues in either school, Tumble School would like to enhance its links with Early Years (nursery) provision further (Llechyfedach draws more directly on the available 'local provision')
- Ensure consistency of collaborative approaches through multi-agency working (reference was made to experience gained from dealing with a range of agencies in support of specific levels of need)

Group feedback:

- Group members noted that the format of the visit had worked out successfully though a visit to a 'single site' may not require as much time – this element could remain under review
- Current arrangements for administrative support require further analysis / comparison with schools of a similar size etc
- Pleasing to note that both ERW and Estyn recommendations had been met (supported by the Federation's pro-active responses/approach to these areas)
- Praise for the Federation's 'forward thinking' across a range of issues and activities
- Suggestion for the next cycle of visits to include Ysgol Maesygwendraeth as a natural 'follow up' activity based on today's experiences and commentaries

School Visit Two: Llangunnor Primary School

The visit commenced with welcomes and introductions by the Mr Aled Davies, Headteacher supported by the Deputy-headteacher, ALNCO and Assistant Heads. Mr Davies provided an overview of the school's class structure, teaching and learning arrangements (with reference to the 'language journey' successfully undertaken) and aspirations for the future. Mr Davies praised the efforts and commitment of all staff and highlighted the effective impact of the 'Senior Leadership Team' in achieving their agreed goals. Mr Davies also drew reference to the value and role of the Governing Body's 'Strategic Direction Committee' consisting of some 4 / 5 members, focusing tightly on progressing the school's key objectives. The committee has been able to provide higher levels of challenge to the Senior Leadership Team across a range of aspects e.g. performance data analyses, outcomes of external audits / inspections etc. Senior Leadership members praised the input and support received from the ERW Challenge Adviser Team. This had been particularly valuable during the Estyn inspection preparation period (focusing specifically on self-evaluation and school development planning).

The school's ALNCO guided the Group through numerous elements of ALN practice and provision including:

- Estyn 'effective practice' case study based on the school's successful inspection in September 2017
- Whole school approach to 'early intervention' to a range of strategies and focused learning activities e.g. ChATT
- Emphasis on 'value added' for each individual as opposed to colder comparisons with 'expected performance'
- Engaging parents at all times (provision of regular surgery sessions to discuss progress / next steps through Individual Development Plans etc)
- Whole school preparation for 'Person Centred Practice'

Group members enjoyed the opportunity to raise points with regard to parental involvement, formal statementing processes etc. The school demonstrated an informed and inclusive approach to support for all Additional Learning Needs issues. Following a detailed and informative 'Learning Walk' Group members were provided with the opportunity to raise and discuss additional issues. A concise overview of this activity, coupled with the introductory presentation by staff is captured under the following sub-headings:

Current strengths:

- The role and impact of the Senior Leadership Team in taking the school forward 'together'
- Whole school culture of promoting 'pupil voice' (use of Speakr highlighted)
- Whole school approach to developing 'values', wellbeing and attitudes to learning for all pupils
- Whole school approach to effective use of space / learning environment
- ALN systems and provision
- 'Cynllun Callio' attendance programme (used supportively)
- Links with parents, community and external agencies (reference drawn to success of holiday / after-school provision)

Areas for development / further consideration:

- Senior Leaders drew reference to the School Development Plan content, focusing on:
 - Developing Hwb as whole school practice
 - Continue to monitor 'gender progress and performance'
 - Further develop the Digital Competency Framework across the school
 - Continue to monitor and support performance of More Able and Talented
- Continue to monitor and support progress of the school's language journey along the Welsh medium continuum
- Continue to monitor and enhance the school's financial profile through pro-active ventures (appreciation of support for school budgets was noted)
- Continue to develop the effective use of space (further aspirations for external developments were shared)

Group feedback:

- Group members noted their contentment with the format of the visit and felt the information pack was useful
- The process of undertaking a 'Learning Walk' together was constructive
- Group members noted their appreciation of observing 'happy children' enjoying their work, supported well by hard working staff
- For schools in general:
 - there could be a need to deal with the uncertainty of 'parental involvement' – reference was drawn to a useful presentation at the recent Governors Wales Conference
 - the value and positive impact of extra-curricular work must not be missed

School Visit Three – Bryngwyn & Glanymôr Secondary Federation

Mr Paul Jones, Executive Headteacher and Mr David Williams, Deputy-headteacher welcomed the Group to Bryngwyn School. The visit proceeded with a pupil led 'Learning Walk' combined with a discussion opportunity across the whole campus. Group members benefited from the opportunity to observe and discuss a range of provision and environment issues in a 'walk and talk' manner alongside Year 11 pupils.

This activity was followed by a presentation by the Headteacher and Deputy-headteacher, focusing on:

- the Federation journey and aspirations for the future
- success of recent Estyn inspection (reference to 'effective practice' Case Studies as shared with Scrutiny Panel during the
- supporting each pupil in a bespoke manner and 'going the extra mile' for each one
- getting the curriculum right through ventures such as 'Baby Bacc' and 'Irresistible Curriculum'
- engaging with Prof Donaldson and curriculum review
- delivering the '6Cs' namely, Consistency, Collaboration, Challenge, Capacity, Climate and Competition

The visit then reconvened in Glanymôr School with Mr John Jones, Deputy-headteacher leading Group members through an informative presentation, focusing on:

- the highly positive impact of the Federation journey (drawing reference to enhanced leadership, provision, standards and financial performance improvements)
- strength of links with parents, community and impact of this on pupil pride in their school
- desire to further develop Welsh provision
- value of ongoing collaboration between the Federation across a wide range of activities and objectives

In a similar manner to the Bryngwyn School experience, all Group members were taken on a pupil led 'Learning Walk' across the campus. Once again, this proved most enjoyable, successful and productive.

Current strengths:

- Whole Federation approach to empowering 'Pupil Voice' (emphasis placed on pupils holding school / GB to account) and 'Building a Life' as the underlying mantra
- Federation culture of ensuring a 'dialogue approach' to school life between all partners ...in support of all pupils
- Federation agenda raises aspirations for all – pupils, parents, staff, governors, communities
- Federation approach to effective professional development for all
- High levels of pupil achievement as a result of focusing on 'getting the curriculum right' for learners to ensure engagement
- Success in preserving individual school identity and pride, but not at the cost of the progress of the Federation
- Excellent links with primary feeder schools – exchange of knowledge and aspirations for pupils
- '3As' approach – Attendance / Attitude / Achievement

Areas for development / further consideration:**Bryngwyn:**

- Further develop discussions and potential options with LA following the Behaviour Services Review
- Further develop catering/dining hall facilities (reference was made to the success and beneficial impact of the 'Pod in the Quad' venture led by the School Council)
- Further develop outdoor / sports environment and facilities
- Continue to develop content of the current School Development Plan:
 - Improve all teaching and assessment to match the best in the school
 - Improve the quality of departmental improvement planning
 - Improve the rigour of line management to ensure consistency in middle leadership across the school

Glanymôr:

- Investigate further support / options for current transport costs
- Continue to develop and benefit from strong community links
- Further develop 'blended learning' approaches to support specific curriculum areas
- Further develop Welsh provision
- Continue to develop content of the current School Development Plan:
 - Improve all teaching and assessment to match the best in the school
 - Improve the quality of departmental improvement planning
 - Improve the rigour of line management to ensure consistency in middle leadership across the school

Group feedback:

- Due to the size and nature of the Federation, Group members noted the need for additional time for a visit of this scale
- Group members were grateful for the opportunity to meet and discuss with pupils, however, this aspect could be further enhanced during future visits
- Group members praised the high and ongoing focus on wellbeing for pupils and staff across the Federation
- For the Scrutiny Panel's work in general, the following items were noted:
 - Information on staff absence data
 - Examples of successful income generation ventures (potentially linked to TIC activities)
 - Transport costs (queries raised with regard to creation of a 'central fleet?')

4. Next Steps:

Much enthusiastic discussion has been shared during the visits with regard to the content and format of the programme for the Summer Term, 2018. Please find below a brief synopsis of comments and thoughts which may support our 'next steps' and provide an enhanced experience for us all.

- Summer Term schedule of schools to be linked to secondary school links e.g. Llechyfedach / Tumble – Maesygwendraeth?
- Revise timings as necessary to ensure sufficient time for larger settings e.g. commence at 10.00 a.m. and continue until 2.30 / 3.00 p.m.?
- Enhance opportunities for interaction / discussion with pupils e.g. School Council session to be included?