



Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2015/16

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Committee Membership 2015/16



Cllr. Eirwyn Williams
(Chair)
Cynwyl Gaeo
(Plaid Cymru)



Cllr. Ryan Bartlett
(Vice-Chair)
Betws
(Labour)



Cllr. Cefin Campbell
Llanfihangel
Aberbythych
(Plaid Cymru)



Cllr. Mansel Charles
Llanegwad
(Plaid Cymru)



Cllr. Ieuan Wyn Davies
Llanybydder
(Independent)



Cllr. Gwyn Hopkins
Llangennech
(Plaid Cymru)



Cllr. Peter Hughes-
Griffiths
Carmarthen North
(Plaid Cymru)



Cllr. John James
Burry Port
(Labour)



Cllr. Pat Jones
Burry Port
(Labour)



Cllr. Jean Lewis
Trelech
(Plaid Cymru)



Cllr. Hugh Richards
Felinfoel
(Independent)



Cllr. Tom Theophilus
Cil-y-Cwm
(Independent)



Cllr. Jan Williams
Lliedi
(Labour)



Mrs. Emma Heyes
Elected Voting
Parent Governor
Member (Llanelli)



Mrs. Kate Hill
Elected Voting
Parent Governor
Member (Dinefwr)



Mrs. Vera Kenny
Roman Catholic
Church Representative
(Non-Elected Voting
Member)



Mrs. Alex Pickles
Elected Voting
Parent Governor
Member
(Carmarthen)



Revd. Canon Bryan Witt
Church in Wales Representative (Non-Elected Voting Member)

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 municipal year. The report provides a comprehensive summary of the work undertaken by the Committee during the period May 2015 to April 2016.

It has been a challenging period for the Council, particularly the unprecedented budget situation faced by the Education & Children Department. However, I feel that this Committee has continued to play its part in terms of scrutinising performance and contributing to key council policies and decisions. It was also pleasing to see public participation at one of our meetings as parents and community representatives from Llanedi addressed the Committee with a series of questions during the meeting in March 2016.

In September 2015, the Committee established a task and finish group to research and review the attainment gap for e-FSM learners. It has been an interesting and valuable experience with the Group receiving presentations and considering evidence from a range of stakeholders, including head teachers and the Wales Centre for Equity in Education. It is envisaged that the Group will publish its final report in the autumn.

We have continued to visit different schools across the county and following our visit to Cwrt Henri CP School in October 2015, the Committee has now visited all the county's schools, since the programme first started in 2009. I am sure that you will agree that this continues to be an invaluable experience for us as members and has allowed us to see a cross-section of the county's schools for ourselves and

to speak with head teachers, staff, school governors and pupils. These visits continue to inform our discussions at our main committee meetings.

As we reflect on the past year, we remember Cllr. Keith Davies who sadly passed away in August 2015. Keith was a valued member of the Committee and had also served as the Executive Board Member for Education & Children following the last election. It is also with great sadness that I must note the recent death of Cllr. Tom Theophilus, another valued member of this Committee, in July 2016. Their commitment to the work of this Committee and regular attendance on site visits and contributions to task and finish reviews, is and will be greatly missed.

In April 2015, we welcomed three new co-opted parent governor representatives as members of the Committee, namely, Emma Heyes, Kate Hill and Alex Pickles. I look forward to working with you all during the forthcoming year. I would also like to thank Simon Pearson, the former parent governor member for his valued contribution during his time as a member of the Committee.

In March 2015, Bernadette Dolan who served the Committee as our support officer for several years, moved on to another post. On behalf of everyone, I wish to thank Bernadette for all the excellent work she did and for all the valued guidance she offered during her period with us. It goes without saying that we wish her every joy and success in her new post.

Matthew Hughes is now our support officer and we are all very grateful to him for his diligence and unstinting support and his unfailing enthusiasm. On behalf of all of us, I wish to thank him for his good work and his readiness at all times to go that extra mile.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the other members of the Committee for their support and constructive input during the course of the year. I must also express my thanks and appreciation to the Vice-Chair, Cllr. Ryan Bartlett for his on-going support and to all the officers who have provided support, advice and guidance throughout the year.

Cllr. Eirwyn Williams
Chair of Education & Children Scrutiny
Committee

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Introduction

Purpose of Annual Report

The following report has been prepared in order to comply with Article 6.2 of the County Council's Constitution which states that a scrutiny committee must:

“Prepare an annual report giving an account of the Committee's activities over the previous year.”

The report:

- Provides an overview of the work of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee during the 2015/16 municipal year.
- Identifies key areas to be included in the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee's 'Forward Work Programme' for 2016/17.

Number of Meetings

In all, the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee met on 11 occasions between May 2015 and April 2016. Of these, three were joint meetings, two with the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee in May and November 2015 and one with the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee in September 2015.

The Work Programme for 2015/16

In the main, meeting agendas were consistent with those outlined by the Forward Work Programme for 2015/16, which was confirmed by the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 18th May 2015.

The Forward Work Programme (FWP) was

mainly based on key areas identified as objectives within the Integrated Community Strategy and Improvement Plan together with standard items such as performance and budget monitoring reports, action plan monitoring reports, and specific requests from the scrutiny committee itself. Additional reports were also requested by the scrutiny committee during the year and the Forward Work Programme was amended accordingly.

The development of the concept of the Forward Work Programme and the process for its agreement, has allowed each scrutiny committee to determine their own work agendas. The benefits of such an approach has led to an improved level of debate and input during scrutiny committee meetings.

The Committee's Remit

The Education & Children Scrutiny Committee's key responsibilities are for:

- Educational Standards & School Performance
- Inclusion & Additional Learning Needs
- Welsh Medium Education
- School Modernisation
- Adult Community Learning
- Youth Services
- Youth Offending
- School meals
- Safeguarding
- Children's Services including Social Services & Family Support Services

Key issues considered during 2015/16

Standard Scrutiny Monitoring Reports / Items

Half-Yearly Performance Management Reports

- One of the principal roles of scrutiny committees is to monitor the performance of services and functions within its remit. They undertake this work mainly through the consideration of half-yearly performance monitoring reports and various action plan monitoring reports. The performance monitoring report provides a balanced picture of performance across the relevant service areas. The Committee considered the half-yearly performance reports for its remit at its meetings in July and November 2015.

Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Reports

- The Committee received quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets. These reports enabled members to monitor the level of spend in each area and the progress made in any capital works.

Actions & Referrals Updates - During the course of the municipal year several requests for additional items were made by committee members to assist them in discharging their scrutiny role. In total, 36 recommendations / requests from the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee were recorded. These quarterly reports were produced to give an update on progress and information was also circulated to members outside the formal committee meetings.

Strategic Issues / Progress Monitoring

Carmarthenshire Adult & Community Learning Service: Progress Report on ACL Service Provision 2015-16 - In July 2015, the Committee considered a progress report which

outlined implications of recent Welsh Government funding cuts on the service and the proposed transfer of the provision to Coleg Sir Gâr, as well as options for delivering the service during 2015/16. The Committee discussed the future of the Community Education Centres having been informed that the Education & Children Department would not have sufficient funding to continue to run these facilities from the 2016/17 financial year onwards, unless additional funding from outside the Department could be found.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Board be asked to consider the possibility of finding funding to maintain the Community Education Centres going forward.

OUTCOME - This matter was considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on the 2nd November 2015. The Board was advised that as a review was currently being undertaken on the usage of the community education centres, it was felt that consideration of the referral should be deferred pending completion of that review. The Board therefore unanimously resolved that consideration of the referral be deferred pending completion of the current review on the usage of the community education centres.

Young People Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET): A Carmarthenshire Perspective - In September 2015, the Committee considered an update regarding the current actions to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education and training (NEETs), as requested at its meeting on the 18th May 2015.

Youth Services Update Report - In April 2016, the Committee considered a report providing an update on the progress made by the Youth Support Service and related partners in the following areas:

- the implementation of the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement & Progression Framework initiative during the 2015/16 academic year;
- a review of the Youth Clubs 2014 Scrutiny Task & Finish Review Action Plan;
- the impact of efficiency savings on the service and progress made with restructuring.

The Committee discussed the work carried out by the Young Farmers' Clubs (YFC) in relation to youth services and what more could be done to ensure that the Authority worked more closely with the YFC network.

RECOMMENDATION

Resolved that officers make concerted efforts to strengthen the links between the Authority and the YFC network in the county.

OUTCOME - The Committee's suggestion have been noted by officers and will be considered further.

Schools

ERW Business Plan 2015/16 and Review of 2014/15 - In July 2015, the Committee received a presentation in relation to the work of the Education through Regional Working (ERW) Consortium during 2014/15 and its business plan for the year ahead. The presentation outlined ERW's functions, the continuation of the statutory responsibilities within each local authority as well as the collaborative working

across the region. The Managing Director ERW attended the meeting.
me for 2015/16.



Results of the 2015 Teacher Assessment and External Examinations - At its meeting in September 2015, the Committee received a report detailing the results of the 2015 teacher assessment and external examinations. Whilst the report contained unverified data, it provided the Committee with an early overview of the results of Carmarthenshire's children and young people at the end of the 2014/15 academic year.

Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Site Visit Activity Report 2014/15 - In January 2015, the Committee received an activity report on its visits to schools and children's centres undertaken during the 2014/15 academic year. A total of 15 facilities were visited between October 2014 and May 2015

School Performance and Achievement 2014/15 - In January 2016, the Committee considered the report on school performance and achievement which summarised the key issues arising from an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the performance of schools during the academic year 2014/15.

The report included:

- Annual Report on Standards & Outcomes (Teacher Assessments and Examinations, Attendance and Pupil Exclusions)
- Outcomes of School Inspections
- Developing values and skills for lifelong learning.

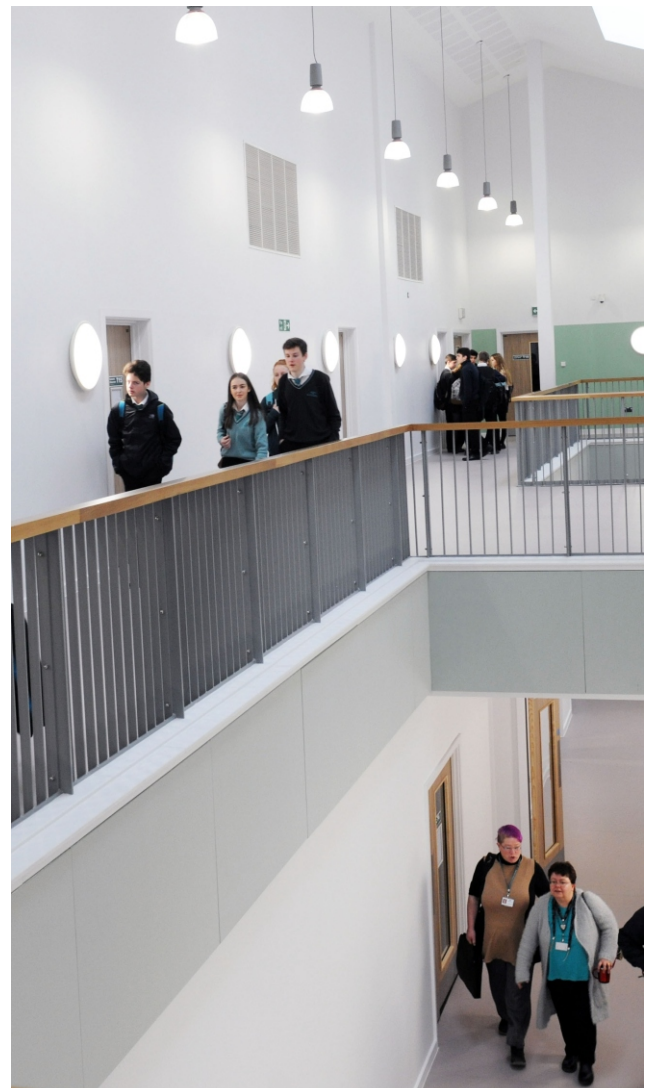
The Committee was informed how performance and standards in the county's schools compared with best performing schools across the ERW region. The Committee requested that comparative data from ERW be included in future reports.

Carmarthenshire's School Categorisation Outcomes 2016 - In The Committee considered a National Categorisation Summary Report for Carmarthenshire Schools in 2016. The information outlined within the report highlighted the current position of the County's schools as well as areas for improvement. Overall, the Committee noted that the proportion of schools placed in a Green or Yellow category across Carmarthenshire, was 8% higher as compared to 2014/15, with well over three quarters (77%) of schools now in a Green or Yellow category. The proportion of Green schools in Carmarthenshire had increased by 2% as compared to 2014/15 with 26 (23%) of schools categorised as Amber but no schools categorised as Red. The Committee was informed that the greatest improvement in 2015/16 had been the number of schools moving from the Amber to the Yellow category.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan update - In November 2015, the Committee considered the report which provided an update on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), performance data in relation to the Welsh language in schools, shared progress in respect to 'Codi Caerau Sir Gâr' and marketing materials

as well as other developments relating to Welsh in education.

School Attendance - At its meeting in April 2016, the Committee received an update report on progress made in respect of improving school attendance. Following the ESTYN inspection of the Authority's education services in March 2012, Carmarthenshire was rated as 'Good' with 'Good' prospects for improvement, however, attendance in schools was judged to require improvement. This report provided progress of the Authority and schools' response to the ESTYN recommendations.



Children's Services / Safeguarding

Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the effectiveness of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire 2014/15 - In June 2015, the Committee received the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services on the Effectiveness of Social Care Services in Carmarthenshire for 2014/15, giving specific attention to the Children's Services element of the report. Members noted that there was a statutory requirement for the Director of Social Services to report annually to their Council on the delivery, performance and risks as well as plans for the improvement of the whole range of Social Services. This was the sixth such annual report and was considered during a joint meeting with the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committees unanimously resolved to endorse the report to the Executive Board.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 8th July 2015, County Council resolved to endorse the Executive Board's recommendation that the Annual Report be approved.

CYSUR (Regional Safeguarding Children Board) Annual Report 2014/15 - At its meeting in September 2015, the Committee considered a report which highlighted what CYSUR had achieved in the past year and what the priorities were going forward for the regional board, including a review of the current arrangements. The report also considered trends and themes within Carmarthenshire. The Committee discussed elected member engagement in the process as well as expressing concern at the lack of elected member representation on the CYSUR Executive Board. The CYSUR Regional

Board Manager attended the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Resolved to request that the CYSUR Executive Board gives consideration to Elected Member representation on the Board.

OUTCOME - This issue was raised at the meeting of CYSUR Executive Board held on 5th October 2015 and agreed at that meeting for the Head of Children's Services to feedback the outcome of the discussions to the Scrutiny Committee.

Introduction of a Corporate Safeguarding Policy to cover all Council service areas - In September 2015, the Committee considered a draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy which had been developed in response to a 2014 Wales Audit Office review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of the Council for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures were in place and being adhered to. The review was specifically in relation to children and overall the findings were that the authority had adequate systems in place. One of the recommendations was to develop and introduce a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that covered all service areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Unanimously resolved to endorse the proposed policy.

OUTCOME - The draft strategy was considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on the 28th September 2015 and unanimously resolved to recommend to Council that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy be endorsed. County Council resolved to adopt the Policy at its meeting in October 2015.

Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2015-18, Action Plan and Children's Rights Promise - In September 2015, the Committee welcomed a report including The Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2015-18, the Action Plan to deliver on the 10 priorities and a Children's Rights Promise, developed by children and young people across the county to give a clearer understanding of children's rights.

RECOMMENDATION

To endorse the Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2015-18, Action Plan and Children's Rights Promise to the Executive Board.

OUTCOME - The report was considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on the 2nd November 2015 where it unanimously resolved to recommend to County Council that (1) the Children & Young People's Strategy, Action Plan & Promise be adopted and that (2), the Lead Member for Children and Young People (Cllr. Gareth Jones) take on the role of Lead person (member) for Children's Rights, as set out in the promise.

Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales' (CSSIW) Inspection, Evaluation and Review of Local Authority Social Services 2014/15 - In November 2015, the Committee considered the Annual Inspection and Evaluation Review 2014/15 of the Local Authority's Social Services undertaken by Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales. This report was also considered during a joint meeting with the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee.

Mid & West Wales Adoption Service - In April 2016, the Committee received a report and presentation providing an update on the Mid &

West Wales Adoption Service, since its establishment in April 2014. The Committee noted that Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys came together in April 2014 to form the Mid & West Wales Adoption Service (MWAS) with Carmarthenshire as the Lead Authority. MWAS was part of the National Adoption Service, which was launched formally in November 2014. The Director of the National Adoption Service Wales and the Senior Practitioner from the Mid & West Wales Adoption Service attended the meeting.



Corporate Parenting & Safeguarding Panel Annual Report - In April 2016, the Committee received Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding Panel Annual Report, which detailed how the Council is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities as outlined in the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The report detailed the number of children looked after by Carmarthenshire County Council and how well they were doing in relation to the Council's aspirations for them as outlined in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Modernising Education Programme: Proposed discontinuation of Copperworks Infants & Nursery School and Lakefield Primary School and the establishment of a new primary school

- In May 2015, the Committee considered the consultation document and observations received following the consultation process held in relation to the proposed discontinuation of Copperworks and Lakefield Schools and the establishment of a new primary school in that area of Llanelli.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee unanimously resolved to:

- Endorse to the Executive Board the proposed discontinuation of Copperworks Infant & Nursery School and Lakefield Primary School and the establishment of a new primary school following the statutory consultation process.
- Ask the Executive Board to convey to Welsh Government the Committee's concerns about the lack of Welsh Government funding to support improvements to the road infrastructure at new school sites thereby ensuring safe access.

OUTCOME: The Executive Board considered the proposal at its meeting on the 15th June 2015 and unanimously resolved to recommend to Council that the proposal to discontinue Copperworks and Lakefield Schools be proceeded with and a Statutory Notice be published to implement the proposal. It also unanimously resolved that concerns about the lack of Welsh Government funding to support improvements to the road infrastructure at the new school sites, be conveyed to Welsh Government.

In January 2016, a further report was considered on the proposed implementation of the proposal to discontinue Copperworks Infant & Nursery School and Lakefield Primary School in Llanelli.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee unanimously resolved to recommend that the Executive Board and County Council endorse the proposal to discontinue Copperworks Infant & Nursery School and Lakefield Primary School (and establish a new primary school) and to implement the proposal as detailed in the Statutory Notice of 3rd November 2015.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 10th February 2016, County Council unanimously resolved that the Executive Board's recommendation to 'discontinue Copperworks Infant and Nursery School and Lakefield Primary School and to implement the proposal as detailed in the Statutory Notice dated 3rd November, 2015', be adopted.

Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2016/17 to 2018/19 - In December 2015, the Committee considered the annual consultation report for the Revenue Budget Strategies for 2016/17 to 2018/19. The Committee expressed concerns about the new policy proposal to reduce the scale of specialist provision for out of school hours respite for disabled children and young people. It was felt that there was insufficient detail about the potential impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee resolved to:

- Request that the Executive Board reconsiders the new policy proposal to reduce the scale of specialist provision for out of school hours Short Breaks/ Respite for Disabled Children & Young People.
- Endorse the Charging Digest for the Education & Children Department.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 1st February 2016, the Executive Board proposed that for the Education & Children Department, the saving for short breaks/respite for Disabled Children and young people be removed altogether, taking away a cut of £50,000. In addition it proposed that there be additional investment into the Youth Service (worth £50,000) to bolster professional capacity to strengthen expertise in safeguarding vulnerable young people, especially with respect to sexual exploitation and the risk of radicalisation, thereby supporting prevention and early intervention strategies to avoid disengagement, supporting pathway to employment or training opportunities and minimising the number of young people at risk of becoming NEET.

Modernising Education Programme: Proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Myrddin from Bilingual (2A) to Welsh-medium (WM) - In July 2015, the Committee received a report outlining a proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin.

The Committee was informed that the Education & Children Department fully supported the school's desire to continue along the Welsh language continuum and to change the language category to Welsh Medium (WM). Members were informed that informal consultation with pupils, governors, staff and parents of existing and prospective pupils had recently been completed. However, under the 2014 School Organisation Statutory Code a regulated alteration such as a change in the language category of a school required a proposal to be published to formalise arrangements. The Authority was therefore required to complete a statutory consultation process which, if approved, would commence in the Autumn Term 2015.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee welcomed the report and the proposal and unanimously resolved to endorse the proposal to proceed with the statutory consultation process regarding the planned change in the language category of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 14th October 2015, County Council resolved to adopt the Executive Board's proposals that (1) officers be authorised to initiate formal consultation on the proposal during the Autumn 2015 term; and that (2) a report be submitted to the Executive Board at the end of the consultation period.

In January 2016, the Committee received a further report relating to Bro Myrddin, outlining the observations received following the consultation period and the proposal to publish a statutory notice to implement the changes in April 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee unanimously resolved that the proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Myrddin from Bilingual (2A) to Welsh-medium (WM) be endorsed and that the Executive Board and County Council be urged to proceed with the publication of the statutory notice.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 22nd February 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved to recommend to County Council that the proposal change the language category of Ysgol Bro Myrddin from Bilingual (2A) to Welsh Medium (WM), be proceeded with and a Statutory Notice be published to implement the proposal. At its meeting on the 10th March 2016, County Council unanimously resolved to adopt the Executive Board's recommendation.

Modernising Education Programme: Proposal to discontinue Llangennech Infant School and Llangennech Junior School and establish Llangennech Community Primary School - In November 2015, the Committee considered a report proposing that the Council proceed to discontinue Llangennech Infant School and Llangennech Junior School and establish a new Llangennech Community Primary School. It was proposed that new School would be a 3-11 Welsh Medium language category with a nursery provision.

Modernising Education Programme: Proposals to change the age ranges of Betws, Pembrey, Pwll and Bynea Primary Schools from 4-11 to 3-11 - In March 2016, the Committee considered the observations received following the consultation undertaken in relation to changing the age range of Betws, Pembrey, Pwll and Bynea CP Schools, from 4-11 to 3-11. It was informed that following the end of the Statutory Notice period, no objections were received by stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee unanimously resolved that it be recommended to the Executive Board that it approve the publication of a statutory notice to implement the proposal to change the age range of Betws, Pembrey, Pwll and Bynea Primary Schools from 4-11 to 3-11.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 21st March 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that the observations received following the statutory consultation period be received and that a Statutory Notice to implement the proposals be published.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the proposal.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 4th January 2016, the proposal was considered and approved by the Executive Board and following this, a period of consultation commenced which ended on the 18th March 2016.

Modernising Education Programme: Proposal to discontinue Llanedi Primary School - In March 2016, the Committee considered a proposal to discontinue Llanedi CP School and initiate formal consultation on the proposal during the Summer Term 2016. The Committee received a number of questions from representatives of the Friends of Llanedi School prior to the consideration of this item.

During consideration of the item, members suggested that issues contained within the report, as well as those raised by the Friends of the School, would make it difficult for the Committee to make any recommendations to the Executive Board, without further information being presented. Reference was also made to the Committee's school visit programme and it was suggested that schools under threat of closure should be visited in the future. It was also pointed out that the Committee had last visited Llanedi and Hendy schools 4-5 years previously and it was proposed that members visit these two schools prior to making any recommendations to the Executive Board.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee unanimously resolved that:

- Prior to making any recommendations to the Executive Board regarding the future of the school, the Committee considers a further report clarifying the data presented by officers and the claims made by Friends of Llanedi School during their public questions.
- Prior to making any recommendations to the Executive Board regarding the future of the school, the Committee undertakes visits to both Llanedi and Hendy CP Schools.

OUTCOMES - At its meeting on the 21st March 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that (i) consideration of initiating formal consultation on the proposal to discontinue Llanedi Primary School be deferred to allow further time for officers to clarify information given to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee by means of public questions and for officers to review and evaluate such information and (ii), that a period of three months, until the end of June 2016, be allowed for this process to take place and that officers subsequently report further to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board as soon as practicable thereafter.

The Committee visited Llanedi (pictured left) and Hendy CP Schools on the 24th May 2016.

Modernising Education Programme: Proposal to discontinue Bancffosfelen Primary School -

In March 2016, the Committee considered a proposal to discontinue Bancffosfelen CP School and initiate formal consultation on the proposal during the Summer Term 2016. The Committee also noted that the item included a response to the proposal from the Governing Body of Bancffosfelen in the form of a bilingual report which had been included for members' consideration.

During consideration of the item, it was proposed that as with Llanedi, the Committee undertake visits to Bancffosfelen and Pontyberem Schools prior to making any recommendations to the Executive Board. The Committee also decided that the neighbouring schools of Ysgol Y Fro in Llangyndeyrn as well as Llanddarog, also be visited. The Committee welcomed the proposals put forward by the School Governing Body and suggested that the governors and other stakeholders connected with the school be afforded the opportunity to build upon their initial proposals by developing a detailed business plan to describe how they would achieve their vision for the school, especially the funding aspects.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee unanimously resolved that:

- Prior to making any recommendations to the Executive Board regarding the future of the school, the Committee receives a presentation from Bancffosfelen School's Governing Body on its proposal to establish a community charitable trust and re-categorise Bancffosfelen as a voluntary aided school.
- Prior to making any recommendations to the Executive Board regarding the future of the school, the Committee undertakes visits to Bancffosfelen, Pontyberem, Y Fro and Llanddarog schools.

OUTCOMES - At its meeting on the 21st March 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that (i) consideration of initiating formal consultation on the proposal to discontinue Ysgol Bancffosfelen be deferred to allow further time for the Governing Body of the school to present a full business case to the County Council for the continuation of the school, as proposed in its submission and (ii), a period of three months, until the end of June 2016, be allowed for the business case to be submitted to the Council, following which officers would be required to evaluate the feasibility of the business case and subsequently report further to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board as soon as practicable thereafter.

The Committee visited Bancffosfelen (pictured left), Pontyberem, Y Fro and Llanddarog schools on the 14th June 2016.

Modernising Education Programme: Proposal to discontinue Llanmiloe Primary, Tremoilet Voluntary Controlled and Laugharne Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools and create a new area school - In March 2016, the Committee also considered a proposal to discontinue Llanmiloe Primary, Tremoilet Voluntary Controlled and Laugharne Voluntary Controlled Primary (VCP) Schools and create a new area school. If approved by the Executive Board, formal consultation on the proposal would be initiated during the Summer Term 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee unanimously resolved that:

- It be recommended to the Executive Board that officers initiate a formal consultation process on the proposal during the Summer Term 2016.
- A report be submitted to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Board at the end of the statutory consultation period.

OUTCOMES - At its meeting on the 21st March 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that consideration of initiating formal consultation on the proposal to discontinue Llanmiloe CP, Tremoilet Voluntary Controlled and Laugharne Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools and to create a new area school be deferred for a period of three months, until the end of June 2016, to allow further information to be gathered and evaluated, and for officers to bring a subsequent report to the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board as soon as practicable thereafter. The Education & Children Scrutiny Committee is also scheduled to visit Tremoilet, Llanmiloe and Laugharne schools on the 24th June 2016.

Policy Development and Review

Future provision of Adult Community Learning by the Education & Children Department

- In December 2015, the Committee considered the report which provided an update on the current financial position facing the Adult Community Learning (ACL) Service. It was advised that the service was not core funded by the County Council and therefore dependent on Welsh Government (WG) grants to function which had significantly reduced. The Committee was asked to consider and comment on the recommendations in the report within the context of the approximately. £435,000 funding that should be available in the 2016-2017 financial year.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee resolved to endorse the recommendations relating to the Adult Community Learning Service, to the Executive Board.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 4th January 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that (i) the report detailing the need to restructure and refocus the work of the Department for Education and Children's Adult Community Learning Service following significant Welsh Government funding costs be received; (ii) the recommendations for the future delivery of the Adult Community Learning Service within the identified budget for the 2016/17 year, as detailed above, be endorsed; (iii) information about courses offered by organisations and individuals in Carmarthenshire be listed on i-Local.

Proposals for 3-19 curriculum and assessment reform in Carmarthenshire Schools - In January 2016, the Committee considered a report relating to 'Paving the Way: A Strategic Review of 3 – 19 Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Carmarthenshire'. The proposals had been developed in order to implement the Donaldson (Successful Futures) recommendations, the Furlong Review and the New Deal in all the County's schools and special settings. The purpose of the review was to:

- Outline the main themes and challenges in the present-day curriculum and assessment planning, in response to imminent and far reaching reforms at a national scale.
- Propose original responses to complicated problems posed by impending curriculum and assessment reform.
- Offer firm strategies for implementing meaningful curriculum reform and transformation, in order to benefit the education of all learners in Carmarthenshire.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the report for consideration by the Executive Board.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 1st February 2016, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that the internal interim report be received.



Consultation

Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report 2014/15 and Improvement Plan 2015/16 - In May 2015, the Committee considered the relevant extracts for its service remit from the Council's draft Annual Report 2014/15 & Improvement Plan 2015/16. The Committee noted that annual reporting was one of the prime opportunities for review, monitoring and reflection and an opportunity for the authority to capture its on-going activity around meeting the general and specific duties. It also noted that the Council was held by law to publish an Improvement Plan as soon as it is reasonably practicable after the start of the financial year (i.e. April 1st) and also publish an Annual Report on past performance by the end of October each year.

RECOMMENDATION

Unanimously resolved that the extracts be endorsed for consideration by the Executive Board.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 8th July 2015, County Council resolved to endorse the Executive Board's recommendation that the Annual Report be approved.

Sustaining Post-Sixteen College/School Transport - In September 2015, the Committee held a joint-meeting with the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee in order to consider a proposal to charge for post-sixteen college/school transport. The report was presented to members of both committees in order that they might offer comments, as part of the formal consultation process.

The Committees declined to endorse the proposal outlined in the report and it was proposed that prior to proceeding further, the Executive Board request further details from the other Welsh local authorities who had already implemented charges for post-sixteen transport, to clarify how these had been implemented and their effect on post-sixteen education in the long term.

RECOMMENDATION

It was unanimously resolved that the Executive Board be requested to ask the other Welsh local authorities for full details of how they implemented charges for post-sixteen transport and seek clarification as to whether these had affected post-sixteen education in the long term.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 30th November 2015, the Executive Board unanimously resolved that the referral from the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting be acted upon, and that the other Welsh local authorities be asked for statistics for a period of more than one year together with information on the level of charges, and how they were implemented i.e. on a term by term basis or one off annual payment. At its meeting on the 1st February 2016, the Executive Board proposed that the introduction of a charge for home to school transport be deferred for 2 years.

Investigative Scrutiny

Modernising Education Programme: School Organisation Decision Making and Determination Process - In May 2015, the Committee considered a report outlining Carmarthenshire County Council's current school organisation decision making and determination process. The process applies to proposals to make significant changes to schools and regulated alterations. The report also included alternative options for Carmarthenshire's statutory procedures as requested by Committee members in an informal school visit feedback meeting on 17th April 2015. The report included 4 options within the legislation and new School Organisation Code introduced in 2013 as follows:

- Option 1 – The current process agreed by County Council in April 2014 (circa 24 months to complete)
- Option 2 – Executive Board approve stages 1 and 2 with final determination by County Council (circa 18 months to complete)
- Option 3 – A Local Determination Panel approves all 3 stages relating to School Organisation proposals (circa 12 months to complete)
- Option 4 – A Local Determination Panel approves stages 1 and 2 with final determination by County Council (circa 15 months to complete)

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee resolved to recommend to the Executive Board that it considers Option 4 (The implementation of a Local Determination Panel to determine stages 1 and 2 with final determination by County Council) in relation to the School Organisation decision making process, in order to reduce the timescales of the process.

OUTCOME - At its meeting on the 27th July 2015, the Executive Board unanimously resolved to recommend to Council that, in order to reduce the length of time taken to complete statutory procedures for making significant alterations to schools in accordance with the statutory School Organisation Code, Stages 1 and 2 be considered by the Executive Board with final determination being made by Council. This recommendation was endorsed by County Council at its meeting on the 9th September 2015.

Sickness absence management within schools

- In January 2016, a report outlining support provided by the Local Authority to schools in relation to sickness absence management was presented to the Committee. Members noted that the use of supply cover in schools to cover sickness absence had been discussed during a previous school visit and that members had subsequently requested this report as part of its forward work programme.

The Committee was informed that following the introduction of the Authority's new Sickness Absence Policy in April 2014, a model policy was sent to all schools for adoption during 2015. Members were also informed of the different initiatives provided by the People Management & Performance Division (within the Chief Executive's Department) to support schools in better absence management, including the Occupational Health Centre and Human Resources advice.



Task & Finish Review 2015/16

At its meeting on 24th September 2015, the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee considered provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results.

During discussions, it was noted that one of the Authority's priorities for the year was to improve the performance of those learners who were eligible for free school meals (e-FSM). The Committee was informed that this was a national as well as a local priority and whilst there were positive examples locally of how the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) had been used, there were also examples where there had been no improvements, despite the PDG. The Committee was informed that the Welsh Government now wanted the outcomes from the PDG and, going forward, schools where less than 30% of e-FSM learners achieved Level 2 (5 GCSE A*C passes), would automatically be classed in the amber category 3.

Following discussions, the Committee suggested forming a task and finish group to research and review the attainment gap for e-FSM learners.

A total of 6 meetings were held between December 2015 and June during which the Group received presentations and considered evidence from a range of stakeholders including head teachers and the Wales Centre for Equity in Education. The sessions were designed to provide the Group with the relevant information, context and background to the topic.

Following its first meeting, the Group agreed that the scope for the review would be:

- Learners eligible for free school meals, including Looked After Children, and the attainment gap in Carmarthenshire.

The Group agreed that the main aims of the

review would be:

- To research the attainment gap for learners eligible for free school meals in Carmarthenshire.
- To identify trends at all key stages and key indicators.
- To review how the Pupil Deprivation Grant is being used in our schools.
- To identify best practice interventions in the County's schools, across ERW, the rest of Wales and the UK.
- To raise the profile of the challenge of overcoming the attainment gap in the midst of shrinking budgets, other priorities and curriculum changes.
- To formulate recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.

The Task and Finish Group's membership was as follows:

- Cllr. Ryan Bartlett
- Cllr. Peter Hughes-Griffiths
- Cllr. John James
- Cllr. Hugh Richards
- Cllr. Tom Theophilus
- Cllr. Eirwyn Williams (Chair)
- Mr. Simon Pearson – Parent Governor Representative (until 31st March 2016)
- Mrs. Vera Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

The Democratic Services Unit based in the Chief Executive's Department, provided research and general support to the Group.

The Group is expected to report back on its findings and recommendations in the autumn of 2016.

Site Visits

During the last municipal year, the Committee continued with its regular programme of school visits. In all, it visited 14 schools / Children's Services facilities between May 2015 and April 2016:

- Llandeilo CP School
- Ysgol Teilo Sant, Llandeilo
- Ysgol Cwrt Henri
- Ysgol Nantgaredig
- Llangynnwr CP School
- Children's Services, Morfa, Llanelli
- Tŷ Mair Family Centre, Burry Port
- Ysgol Peniel
- Ysgol Cae'r Felin, Pencader
- Ysgol Brynsaron, Saron (nr. Llandysul)
- Ysgol y Bedol, Garnant
- Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Ammanford
- Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn, Newcastle Emlyn
- Ysgol Penboyr, Drefach-Felindre

Following its visit to Cwrt Henri in October 2015, the Committee has now visited all the County's primary, secondary and special schools, along with the 3 integrated family centres, since the programme commenced in 2009/10. It has now begun to re-visit schools, linking in with the School Improvement Panel's work programme and the Authority's Modernising Education Programme proposals.

Children's Services also organised a series of visits for members of the Committee to frontline teams between May and July 2015:

- Tŷ Elwyn, May 2015 – Central Referral Team, Llanelli Assessment Team, Llanelli East and West Childcare Teams, Fostering Service, Reviewing and Conference Team, Education Welfare Service and the Young Carers Service
- Carmarthen, June 2015 – One session with the Carmarthen based teams such as the

Carmarthen Childcare Team, Mid and West Wales Adoption Service, Children's Disability Team and Transition Team. Another session was for the Carmarthen/Dinefwr Assessment Team and Dinefwr Childcare Team

- Blaenau and Llys Caradog Respite Centres and the Garreglwyd Unit, July 2015
- Tŷ Elwyn, Llanelli, November 2015 – Llanelli Assessment Team, Llanelli East Childcare Team and the Fostering Team

The aim of these visits was to provide members with a better understanding of the work being undertaken to safeguard vulnerable children and to meet the staff working with these children on a daily basis.



Other activities during 2015/16



Development Sessions

A scrutiny-specific development session was held in November 2014/5 for members of the Committee, as part of the site visits programme.

The development session was held in the Flying Start Offices, New Street, Llanelli (pictured above) where the Committee received presentations on the following:

- Overview of the Flying Start Service
- Overview of the Families First Programme & Team Around the Family (TAF) model
- Llanelli Women's Aid – Case Study

The morning session was followed in the afternoon by a visit to the Tŷ Mair Family Centre in Burry Port where the Committee received an overview of the services provided at the centre as well as speaking with the Centre Manager and a representative from Plant Dewi.

The following all-member development sessions were also held during 2015/16, to which Committee members were invited:

- Social Media and Members (June 2015)
- Customer Services (October 2015)
- Responsibilities under Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and Equality Act 2010 in relation to Gypsies and Travellers (December 2015)
- Safeguarding Children (January 2016)
- Trading Standards (February 2016)

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee have attended 1 meeting of this regional group during the past year. This Forum, established in September 2015, consists of the chairs and vice-chairs of other education / children's services scrutiny committees from across the ERW region which meets twice a year to discuss matters of common interest within the consortium's remit. The Group's meetings are administered by the City & County of Swansea's Scrutiny Team.

Support for the Scrutiny Function

In July 2015, support for Carmarthenshire County Council's scrutiny function was transferred from the former Scrutiny & Consultancy Team, based in the People Management & Performance Division, to the Democratic Services Unit, based in the Administration & Law Division of the Chief Executive's Department.

Support for the Scrutiny function includes:

- Providing constitutional advice to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and to members of those Committees as well as producing minutes of their meetings and ensuring items arising from those meetings are actioned
- Giving support and advice in relation to the functions of the Council's Scrutiny Committees to executive and non-executive members of the Council and its officers
- Managing the strategic development of Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire through engaging in national and regional Scrutiny networks and initiatives, supporting the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum, and the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Executive Board Forum
- Advising and supporting the implementation of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 as guidance is published
- Managing the co-ordination and development of the Scrutiny forward work programmes in conjunction with Scrutiny members
- Managing and co-ordinating Scrutiny review work, including the operation of scrutiny task and finish groups, authoring reports in

conjunction with the groups, and assisting in the implementation and monitoring of completed reviews

- Managing the Scrutiny member development programme.
- Despatching agendas for Scrutiny Committee meetings a minimum of 4 working days prior to the meeting.

For more information on scrutiny in Carmarthenshire including work programmes, task and finish reports and annual reports, visit the County Council's website at:

www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/scrutiny

To contact the Democratic Services Unit, please call 01267 224028 or email:

scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Committee Member Attendance

Attendance by members of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee during the 2015/16 year is shown in the table below. A total of 9 committee meetings were held between May 2015 and April 2016.

Scrutiny Committee Member	No. of meetings attended
Cllr. Ryan Bartlett	7
Cllr. Cefin Campbell	8
Cllr. Mansel Charles	8
Cllr. Ieuan Wyn Davies	4
Cllr. Keith Davies (<i>20th May - 29th August 2015</i>)*	1
Cllr. Terry Davies (<i>until 20th May 2015</i>)**	1
Cllr. Gwyn Hopkins	7
Cllr. Peter Hughes-Griffiths	7
Cllr. John James	7
Cllr. Gareth Jones (<i>until 20th May 2015</i>)***	1
Cllr. Pat Jones	4
Cllr. Jean Lewis (<i>as of 20th May 2015</i>)***	6
Cllr. Hugh Richards	8
Cllr. Tom Theophilus	7
Cllr. Eirwyn Williams	7
Cllr. Jan Williams (<i>as of 9th December 2015</i>)****	1
Mr. Chris Brown (<i>until 21st December 2015</i>) ♦	0
Mrs. Emma Heyes (<i>as of 1st April 2016</i>) ♦♦♦	1
Mrs. Kate Hill (<i>as of 1st April 2016</i>) ♦♦♦	1
Mr. Simon Pearson (<i>until 31st March 2016</i>) ♦♦	6
Mrs. Alex Pickles (<i>as of 1st April 2016</i>) ♦♦♦	0
Mrs. Vera Kenny	6
Revd. Canon Bryan Witt	2
Substitutes	No. of meetings attended
Cllr. Sue Allen	3
Cllr. Tegwen Devichand	1
Cllr. Jeff Edmunds	1
Cllr. Tyssul Evans	2
Cllr. Ivor Jackson	1
Cllr. Joy Williams	1

Executive Board Members	No. of meetings attended
Cllr. Keith Davies (<i>until 20th May 2015</i>) *	1
Cllr. David Jenkins	1
Cllr. Gareth Jones (<i>as of 20th May 2015</i>) *	7

Changes to committee membership during 2015/16

* Councillor Keith Davies passed away on the 29th August 2015.

** Following Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual General Meeting on 20th May 2015, Councillor Keith Davies replaced Councillor Terry Davies as a member of the Committee.

*** Following Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual General Meeting on 20th May 2015, Councillor Jean Lewis replaced Councillor Gareth Jones as a member of the Committee.

**** Following Carmarthenshire County Council's meeting on 9th December 2015, Councillor Jan Williams replaced Councillor Keith Davies as a member of the Committee.

◆ Chris Brown was disqualified as a Parent Governor Representative as he had failed to attend a Committee meeting for over 6 months (effective from 18th May) and had not tendered apologies during this period.

◆◆ Simon Pearson's term as Parent Governor Representative came to an end on the 31st March 2016.

◆◆◆ Emma Heyes, Kate Hill and Alex Pickles were elected as Parent Governor Representatives onto the Committee, with effect from the 1st April 2016.

* Following Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual General Meeting on 20th May 2015, Councillor Gareth Jones replaced Councillor Keith Davies as the Executive Board Member for Education & Children.

Attendance by members of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee at joint meetings during the 2015/16 year, is shown in the table below. The Education & Children Scrutiny Committee held 3 joint meetings between May 2015 and April 2016.

Committee Member	Joint SC&H (i)	Joint E&PP	Joint SC&H (ii)
Cllr. Ryan Bartlett	1	1	0
Cllr. Cefin Campbell	1	1	1
Cllr. Mansel Charles	1	1	1
Cllr. Ieuan Wyn Davies	0	0	1
Cllr. Keith Davies	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cllr. Terry Davies	1	N/A	N/A
Cllr. Gwyn Hopkins	1	1	1
Cllr. Peter Hughes-Griffiths	1	1	1
Cllr. John James	1	1	1
Cllr. Gareth Jones	1	N/A	N/A
Cllr. Pat Jones	1	1	0
Cllr. Jean Lewis	N/A	1	1
Cllr. Hugh Richards	1	1	1
Cllr. Tom Theophilus	1	1	1
Cllr. Eirwyn Williams	1	0	1
Cllr. Jan Williams	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mr. Chris Brown	0	0	0
Mrs. Emma Heyes	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mrs. Kate Hill	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mr. Simon Pearson	1	1	1
Mrs. Alex Pickles	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mrs. Vera Kenny	0	1	1
Revd. Canon Bryan Witt	0	0	0
Substitutes	Joint SC&H (i)	Joint E&PP	Joint SC&H (ii)

NONE

Executive Board Members	Joint SC&H (i)	Joint E&PP	Joint SC&H (ii)
Cllr. Keith Davies (Education & Children)	0	N/A	N/A
Cllr. Hazel Evans (Technical Services)		1	
Cllr. Gareth Jones (Education & Children)	N/A	1	1
Cllr. Jane Tremlett (Social Care & Health)	1		1

8

committee meetings held in 2015/16

3

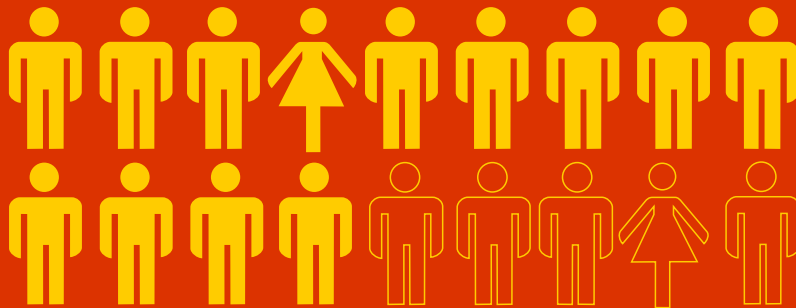
joint-meetings held in 2015/16

036

formal recommendations / requests for information were recorded during 2015/16



14 schools / family centres visited during 2015/16



69% attendance in 2015/16

Glossary of Terms

ACL - Adult & Community Learning

Bilingual 2A - At least 80% of subjects apart from English and Welsh are taught through the medium of Welsh to all pupils. One or two subjects are taught to some pupils in English or in both languages.

CP School - Community Primary School

CSSIW - Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

CYSUR - Children and Youth Safeguarding and Unifying the Region

E&C - Education & Children

E&PP - Environmental & Public Protection

e-FSM - (Pupils) Eligible for Free School Meals

ERW - Education through Regional Working Consortium

ESTYN - The Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

FWP - Forward Work Programme

i-Local - Carmarthenshire County Council's online resource for residents with facilities to pay for services, report problems and search for local services.

MWAS - Mid & West Wales Adoption Service

NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training

PDG - Pupil Deprivation Grant

SC&H - Social Care & Health

TAF - Team Around the Family

VCP School - Voluntary Controlled Primary School

WESP - Welsh in Education Plan

WG - Welsh Government

WM - Welsh-Medium

YFC - Young Farmers' Club

Ysgol - School