



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Adroddiad Cwblhad

Crynodeb o ystyriaeth y Pwyllgor Deisebau ar P-03-103 Addysg
Gyfrwng Cymraeg yn Sir Fynwy

Awst 2008

Cyflwynwyd

4 Chwefror 2008

Dyfarnwyd yn Dderbyniol

28 Chwefror 2008

Ystyriaethau Cychwynnol

6 Mawrth 2008

Cytunodd y pwyllgor i:

- Wahodd y deisebwyr i roi tystiolaeth mewn cyfarfod yn y dyfodol

(Gweler Atodiad 1 ar gyfer y darn perthnasol o'r trawsgrifiad ar gyfer y cyfarfod ar 6 Mawrth 2008)

Ystyriaethau Pellach

10 Ebrill 2008

Clywodd y Pwyllgor dystiolaeth lafar gan y deisebwyr, a chytunodd i:

- Ofyn i'r pedwar awdurdod lleol yn ardal yr hen Went am eu safbwynt ar hyn o bryd, o ran gweithio fel consortiwm i ymdrin â'r ddarpariaeth o addysg uwchradd drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, a manylion unrhyw sylwadau y maent wedi eu cyflwyno i Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
- Ofyn i Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru am fanylion eu cynllun strategol ar gyfer addysg uwchradd drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg er mwyn gweithredu'r ymrwymadau polisi yn 'Iaith Pawb'

(Gweler Atodiad 1 ar gyfer y darnau perthnasol o'r trawsgrifiad ar gyfer y cyfarfod ar 10 Ebrill 2008, Atodiad 2 ar gyfer y llythyr a anfonwyd gan Gadeirydd Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Tor-faen ac Atodiad 3 ar gyfer y llythyr a anfonodd y Cadeirydd at y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau)

22 Mai 2008

Ystyriodd y Pwyllgor ymateb y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau, a chytunodd i:

- Ysgrifennu eto at y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau

(Gweler Atodiad 1 ar gyfer y darn perthnasol o'r trawsgrifiad ar gyfer y cyfarfod ar 22 Mai, Atodiad 4 ar gyfer ymateb y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau, ac Atodiad 5 ar gyfer y llythyr a anfonwyd wedi hynny at y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau)

9 Gorffennaf 2008

Ystyriodd y Pwyllgor ymateb y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau.

Cytunodd y Pwyllgor i:

- Gau'r ddeiseb, gan na ellir mynd a hi yn ei blaen ymhellach.
- Ysgrifennu at y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau i ofyn a ellir cynnwys y deisebwyr ar unrhyw restrau ymgynghori yn y dyfodol sy'n ymwneud â darparu addysg drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg.

(Gweler Atodiad 1 ar gyfer y darn perthnasol o'r trawsgrifiad ar gyfer y cyfarfod ar 9 Gorffennaf 2008, Atodiad 6 ar gyfer y llythyr a gafwyd gan y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau ac Atodiad 7 ar gyfer y llythyr a anfonwyd at y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau)

**Clerc y Pwyllgor Deisebau
Awst 2008**

Atodiad 1

6 Mawrth 2008

Val Lloyd: We now move to the provision of Welsh language education in south-east Wales. The petitioner provides a covering letter outlining the background, which states that all children receiving secondary Welsh-medium education in Newport and Monmouthshire are bussed to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Torfaen. There is no comprehensive-level, Welsh-medium provision in Monmouthshire and some children are travelling for up to two hours each way to receive such an education.

Michael German: I declare a constituency interest here. This issue is vexing my postbag at present. Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw covers Newport, Torfaen and Monmouthshire councils and children go from all three local authority areas to that one Welsh-medium secondary school, and there is now a wholesale turning down of parents and there is no alternative position. It is a major incident—‘crisis’ is the right word for it. We need to hear the petitioners on this matter and I suspect that we will get a very full meeting, because petitioners from other parts of south-east Wales are going to be engaged in this.

Val Lloyd: I suggest that we also have a paper from the Members’ research service on the provision of Welsh-medium education in south-east Wales and to clarify the Assembly Government’s position so that we can see how far or not—

Michael German: When we say ‘south-east Wales’, we should make it clear what regional part of south-east Wales we are talking about: it is the former Gwent area, namely Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouth and Newport, as opposed to Caerphilly and Merthyr. Caerphilly has much stronger provision.

Val Lloyd: So it is east south-east Wales.

Michael German: It is difficult. It is east Gwent, I suppose.

Val Lloyd: That is a very large catchment area.

Michael German: It is a very large catchment area anyway.

Val Lloyd: I take your point.

Andrew R.T. Davies: So we are directing that a paper be done for those four authorities?

Michael German: I am just giving advice. We can talk about the whole region but we already have a big catchment area for this one school, and we are talking about four local authorities and that is overburdening it.

Val Lloyd: I think that it is clear which area we are talking about.

Michael German: This should have been talked about a long time ago.

Val Lloyd: It is not the whole region of south-east Wales.

Michael German: No. That would go down to Bridgend.

Val Lloyd: I do know the area. [*Laughter.*]

Michael German: It is just that I used to sit on the regional committee.

Val Lloyd: That concludes our section on the new petitions.

10 Ebrill 2008

**Addysg Cyfrwng Cymraeg yn Sir Fynwy
Welsh-medium Education in Monmouthshire**

Val Lloyd: Good afternoon, ladies. I will start by inviting you to introduce yourselves to the members of the committee.

Ms Hill: I am Emma Hill, and I am the chair of Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg, gogledd sir Fynwy.

Ms Feakes: I am Lynne Feakes, and I am the secretary of RhAG in south Wales.

Val Lloyd: I did not quite catch your surname.

Ms Feakes: Lynne Feakes. It is an unusual name.

Val Lloyd: Thank you. It is probably down to my hearing rather than your diction.

Ms Maher: Elin Maher wyf i, rhiant yng Nghasnewydd. Yr wyf yn gweithio fel swyddog datblygu cenedlaethol i Rieni dros Addysg Gymraeg.

Ms Maher: I am Elin Maher, and I am a parent in Newport. I work as a national development officer for Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg.

Val Lloyd: I am sorry, but I missed your name, too.

Ms Maher: Elin Maher.

Val Lloyd: Thank you. We will ask you to present your case, and you will have 15 minutes in which to do so. I have not included the time that you just spent introducing yourselves. You can allocate that time how you like, but we do keep to the time limit. Following that, the members of the committee will have up to 15 minutes to ask you questions. I will explain the rest after that. Whichever of you would like to start, please do so.

Ms Feakes: First, we thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to attend today's meeting. We have already introduced ourselves, and, by way of a preamble, we welcome such Assembly initiatives as 'Iaith Pawb', which recognise the importance of bilingualism in Wales, as well as the pivotal contribution of Welsh-medium education to increasing the percentage of Welsh speakers. We do feel, however, that there is a lack of national planning and co-ordination with local planning to achieve the aims set out in that document. Our problem, of course, is the situation with Welsh-medium education in our particular corner of Monmouthshire and Newport. We thought that, just to give you a flavour and a context, we would explain the situation with primary education in the county.

There is strong growth in Welsh-medium education in Newport and in Monmouthshire. We have two Welsh-medium primary schools in Monmouthshire at present. One is Ysgol y Fenni, which is a single-form entry in the north of the county, and that will be almost full to capacity in September 2008. The other is in the south: Ysgol y Ffin. Ysgol y Fenni was finally moved to a purpose-built building in Abergavenny in 2007 after been housed in a youth centre, and we welcome the authority's actions in providing suitable accommodation there. Similarly, Ysgol y Ffin had been in temporary accommodation for almost six years, and will be moved to a more suitable facility in September 2008. We welcome that initiative from the local education authority in response to parents' concerns and RhAG's concerns.

In Newport, there is a two-form primary school in the east of the city, which is full to capacity. As a result of that, Newport LEA is opening a second primary school in the north west of the city in September 2008. It will have a nursery facility, a reception class and a year 1, I believe.

It seems that there are also capital plans in the council's programme for the provision of a third Welsh-medium primary school in Monmouthshire. That will probably be in Monmouth, but it needs evidence that it can fill surplus places at the other schools before that can happen. We feel that those surplus places are not realistically filled by children from Monmouth, because the travel times between Monmouth and Chepstow, Caldicot and Abergavenny are very long, especially for primary school children.

1.10 p.m.

We welcome the fact that there has been some movement on facilities for primary education, but we would also like to note that the LEA, in its statutory notice on the movement of Ysgol y Ffin, admitted that it had actively suppressed Welsh-medium education in the area by not providing suitable facilities. A recent survey of the demand for Welsh-medium education identified that demand at the primary level was suppressed by the failure to provide progression to key stage 3, as there is no secondary school within easy travelling distance.

Moving on to the comprehensive schools in the Gwent area, we do not have a Welsh-medium secondary school in Monmouthshire and Newport. Pupils from Welsh-medium primary schools must attend English-medium comprehensives or face a very long journey to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Torfaen. For most Monmouthshire schoolchildren, Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw is a three-hour round trip every day. I stress that this is not for children in rural areas, but for those in the towns of Chepstow, Caldicot and Monmouth. That is the travelling distance. We feel that that is excessively long. In addition, Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw will be oversubscribed by 343 places in 2009. We are aware that the LEAs in the area, as a consortium, have been meeting to address this overcapacity issue and short-term and medium-term plans have now been put in place for 2008 to ensure that the children who were turned away this year can be accommodated.

There is a long-term plan to put capital expenditure into the school, which I believe has come forward today. This will take the situation forward to around 2012, so they will be able to accommodate most of Monmouthshire's schoolchildren until that point. We feel that that is not really a long-term plan but a short-term plan, and they will run into trouble very quickly. The schools in the area are expanding, and there is strong growth in the whole of the primary sector. There are probably at least two new primary schools being planned in addition to the new school opening in Newport.

That gives us a problem for the future and we feel that they need to start planning now.

As I have mentioned, this year, 80 per cent of Monmouthshire's pupils in Ysgol y Ffin were refused admission to Gwynllyw. Those children will probably now be accommodated, but the situation for secondary schools is very difficult because the adjacent schools are also almost full to capacity. In 2009, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, which is the next available Welsh-medium school, will also be full. So, we will see a squeeze on places across the area. Moving west, you are probably more than aware of the situation in Cardiff and the phenomenal growth that has occurred there. So, there is nowhere for children from Monmouthshire and Newport to go at the moment, other than Gwynllyw. The other schools are far too distant; three hours is far too long for a round trip, and adding to that would be reprehensible. Sorry, I should have put this slide up earlier to give you an idea of the travelling times to and from the school. We believe that these are some of the longest travelling times in the UK for schoolchildren, and they underline our case for the need for additional provision within the area.

What are the options to solve the problem? The expansion of Gwynllyw will solve the problem only in the short term, and it will not resolve unacceptable travelling times to the school for children in Monmouthshire. We welcome that expansion in the short term, because new schools cannot be built overnight. However, we feel that planning for a new secondary school is needed urgently. The LEA's projections for the expansion of Gwynllyw over the next years will take it through to 2012. That is not far away in terms of planning for a new school, so we would like pressure to be brought to bear urgently for it to start that planning and to start identifying a capital fund to build a new school within the Monmouthshire and Newport area that is accessible to those pupils, to start identifying sites, and to involve parents and local groups in that planning process so that we are fully aware of what is going on. We have been aware of a problem with Gwynllyw for several years, and Torfaen's school organisation plan in 2005 identified that the school would be over-full by 300 places in 2009.

We have met with the LEAs and explained to them that we think that there is a problem. Up until this point, we have always been kicked back and told that Gwynllyw will accommodate the pupils, but earlier this year, it became clear that it could not. So, we feel that there needs to be much more pressure from national Government to ensure that the LEAs plan appropriately for Welsh-medium provision in the area and that something is done about this crisis in Monmouthshire as soon as possible.

So, from our perspective, we need capital funding for a new school. Sites for new schools do not become available overnight. While it is easier at the primary level to find old sites that new schools can be started in, secondary school sites are more difficult to find. We also need somewhere that has access to major road networks to reduce travel time. A major problem with Gwynllyw at the moment is that it is on a twisty road way up the Valleys. Even if you get children onto a bus up the A48, the M4 and up to Cwmbran, they face quite a long travelling time from there onwards. So we need somewhere that is accessible to all of the different pupils in that area.

So, we have a few questions that Elin will follow up in terms of national planning. On 'Iaith Pawb', is the Assembly truly committed to that goal? If so, how will the Assembly ensure that LEAs plan appropriately for that? We appreciate that it is difficult for LEAs to plan independently for Welsh-medium education, particularly in the south east, because, as individual LEAs, they have relatively small numbers in

the county—that is certainly the case for Monmouthshire LEA—so they need to plan at more of a consortium level. So, we would like to see more planning at that level. The responses that we have had to this current crisis from the Schools Management Division at the Assembly has been less than encouraging.

Val Lloyd: Ms Maher, you have about four and a half minutes.

Ms Maher: Hoffwn ategu'r hyn y mae Lynne wedi ei ddweud. Deallwn y problemau sydd gan awdurdodau lleol i sicrhau bod lleoedd gwag yn cael eu llenwi a bod hwnnw'n gorfod cael ei bwysu a'i fesur gyda darpariaeth addysg Gymraeg. Deallwn y cymhlethdodau trefnu addysgol o fewn lleoliadau addysg. Fodd bynnag, erbyn hyn, teimlwn, yn enwedig yn ein hardal ni, fel y mae Lynne wedi ei bwysleisio, nad yw'r awdurdodau lleol yn gallu cynnal ysgolion uwchradd cyfrwng Cymraeg. Nid yw'n bosibl am resymau ariannol ac o ran adnoddau, felly mae angen edrych ar ffyrdd newydd o weithio ar draws consortiwm.

Ms Maher: I wish to endorse what Lynne has said. We understand the problems that local authorities have with ensuring that surplus places are filled and that that has to be balanced with the provision of Welsh-medium education. We understand the complexities of making arrangements for education in education settings. However, by now, we feel that, particularly in our area, as Lynne has emphasised, the local authorities are unable to maintain Welsh-medium secondary schools. It is not possible for reasons of finance and resources, therefore we need to look at new ways of working across a consortium.

Yr ydym yn falch iawn o'r hyn sydd wedi digwydd hyd yn hyn ac yr ydym wedi derbyn newyddion heddiw bod y consortiwm wedi dod i benderfyniad ac yr ydym yn canmol hwnnw. Fodd bynnag, mae angen sefydlu dilysrwydd y consortiwm hwnnw yn gyfreithiol fel nad ydym yn wynebu heriau yn y dyfodol. Drwy hynny, yr wyf yn golygu ein bod yn edrych ar systemau mynediad ysgolion ar lefel consortiwm yn hytrach nag ar lefel awdurdod lleol, gan fod anghysonderau o ran polisiâu mynediad pob sir sy'n golygu ei fod yn anodd cael cydraddoldeb o ran sut y mae'r plant yn cael mynediad i ysgolion. Felly, mae angen edrych ar ddilysu'r lefel consortiwm fel bod pob sir yn cael perchnogaeth ar yr ysgol yn hytrach na bod lleoliad ysgol yn pennu perchnogaeth.

We are very pleased about what has happened to date and we have received news today that the consortium has reached a decision and we applaud that. However, we need to establish the validity of that consortium on a legal basis so that we do not face challenges in the future. By that, I mean that we need to consider issues of access to schools on the consortium level rather than on the local authority level, because there are inconsistencies in terms of the access policies of the various counties, which makes it difficult to achieve equality in how the children access schools. So we need to validate the consortium level so that every county can take ownership of the school rather than a school site determining ownership.

Hyd yn hyn, mae awdurdod lleol Tor-faen wedi gorfod edrych ar sefyllfa Gwynllyw oherwydd dyna lle mae'r ysgol wedi ei lleoli. Yr ydym yn sôn am ysgol a oedd ar y cychwyn wedi ei sefydlu yn yr hen Gwent, ond sydd bellach mewn sir newydd, sef Tor-faen. Felly, mae angen edrych ar ddilysrwydd y consortiwm fel ei

Up until now, Torfaen local authority has had to look at the position of Gwynllyw because that is where the school is located. We are talking about a school that was originally located in the old county of Gwent, but is now in the new county of Torfaen. So we need to consider the validity of the

fod yn cael ei wireddu er mwyn sicrhau nad ydym yn wynebu sefyllfa o'r fath yn y dyfodol.

Pwysleisiaf unwaith eto fod angen strategaeth addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg cenedlaethol i fynd i'r afael â materion o'r fath ar lefelau lleol fel bod cynlluniau penodol ar gyfer anawsterau neu heriau rhanbarthol yn cael eu hystyried ac er mwyn i ni allu osgoi sefyllfaoedd o'r fath yn y dyfodol ac osgoi gorfod dod i bwyllgorau fel hyn. Nid ydym am fod yma, ond, yn anffodus, rhaid i ni fod yma y tro hwn. Nid ydym yn ymddiheuro ychwaith am lenwi'ch blychau e-byst tan eu bod yn orlawn. Yr ydych wedi gweld y pwysau sydd y tu ôl i'r cyfan yr ydym wedi bod yn ei drafod â chi dros y pythefnos neu dair wythnos diwethaf, ac yn gofyn arnoch, felly, i symud ymlaen gyda hyn ar lefel genedlaethol ac annog yr awdurdodau lleol hefyd i weithio gyda'i gilydd.

consortium so that that is achieved and so that we do not face such a situation in the future.

I emphasise once again the need for a national Welsh-medium education strategy to get to grips with these issues at a local level so that specific plans are considered to tackle regional difficulties or challenges and so that we can avoid such situations in the future and our having to come to committees like this. We do not want to be here, but, unfortunately, we have to be here on this occasion. We do not apologise either for filling up your e-mail inboxes until they are overflowing. You have seen what the pressures are behind everything that we have discussed with you over the last two or three weeks, and we therefore ask you to progress with this at a national level and also to encourage local authorities to collaborate.

Val Lloyd: Thank you. If you want to speak, Mrs Hill, you have one minute.

Ms Hill: No, thank you.

Val Lloyd: Thank you very much for your presentation. We will now open it up to questions from the Members. We, too, have to keep to the 15-minute rule. Does anyone wish to start?

Michael German: I will, Chair. The problem—and I have experienced it through my own casework in relation to people who have not been able to get into Gwynllyw this year—is that we are dealing with a big problem that should have been anticipated. However, that does not solve what you should do next, and we have people who have real problems and have been waiting with bated breath to get their children into the school of their choice and then find that that is not possible. That is not always based on distance either, because sometimes they live quite close to Gwynllyw.

You talked about a consortium, and mentioned Monmouthshire council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council independently. Do you believe that, from where we are standing at the moment, a consortium approach—in other words, the three councils talking together and planning Welsh-medium provision together—is the right approach, or do you think that Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Newport should go off on their own? I then have a second question, depending on your thoughts on that.

Ms Feakes: We feel that the consortium approach is the right approach, in that within Monmouthshire itself, from our perspective, we do not have sufficient numbers

to justify an independent school at this point. However, with feeders from other areas, we feel that there is the possibility to set up a school that would have 50 to 100 entrants a year immediately, from Newport and Monmouthshire, without prejudicing the growth of Gwynllyw dramatically. With Welsh-medium education, you are taking children from a broad area and therefore a consortium approach is appropriate, especially considering that there is rapid growth in the sector across the whole of south-east Wales. There needs to be a more centralised planning approach in order to ensure that the provision is in the appropriate place at the appropriate time, allowing plenty of access for all children, so that we do not reach crisis point again.

Ms Maher: Yr hyn sy'n amlwg yw bod pob sir yn unigol, yn eironig efallai, yn cynllunio ar lefel unigol yn y sector cynradd, ond gan nad oes digon o blant gyda hwy yn y sector hwnnw ar hyn o bryd, nid ydynt yn teimlo bod rheidrydd arnynt eto—yr wyf yn dweud 'eto', oherwydd maent wedi dweud, erbyn 2020, bydd yn rhaid i bob sir edrych ar y ddarpariaeth o fewn eu siroedd hwy—i wneud hynny. Yr hyn sy'n eironig, gyda'r elfennau o fewn y cyfnod sylfaen—lle bydd dwyieithrwydd yn datblygu'n ran allweddol—yw bod mwy o gyfle erbyn hyn yn y cyfnod cynradd, lle mae'r Gymraeg yn datblygu ar raddfa gyflymach, ond mae angen edrych wedyn ar yr un datblygiad yn y cyfnod uwchradd.

Un peth sy'n dda o ran cynllunio consortiwm yw eich bod yn gwneud mwy o dir ar gael o ran lleoliad ysgol. Efallai nad oes gan un sir leoliad pwrpasol ar gyfer ysgol, ond bod un gan sir arall, felly mae'r elfen hon yn adroddiad Beecham o weithio ar draws y ffiniau yn hollbwysig, er mwyn inni sicrhau bod y gwasanaethau yn cyrraedd y bobl yn uniongyrchol.

Michael German: One of the problems with Beecham is that it is tended to look at what is within councils rather than between council areas. Cross-border services are the most difficult of all to deal with where you have unitary authorities. The consortium approach could deliver a second school in Cwmbran, of course, which is very accessible, but would also then be in Torfaen, if that would be an inappropriate approach. If local authorities are to be forced to work together, can you tell us what has happened so far between the three local authorities concerned in terms of any planning in this respect, and what do they say is the problem with proceeding with

Ms Maher: What has become apparent is that, perhaps ironically, every individual council plans at an individual level in the primary sector, but because, at present, there are not enough children in that sector, they do not feel that it is necessary yet—I say 'yet', because they have said that by 2020, every county will have to look at the provision within their own counties—to do that. What is ironic, given the elements within the foundation phase—of which bilingualism will become a key part—is that there is more opportunity within the primary sector, where the Welsh language is developing at a quicker pace, but we also then have to look at the same development coming right through into the secondary sector.

One good thing about consortium planning is that you are opening up the land available for a school site. One county may not have a proper site available, but another county may, so this element in the Beecham report of working across boundaries is crucial, in order for us to ensure that the services are delivered directly to the people.

getting to the next stage of having a planned secondary school?

Ms Maher: Mae pedwar awdurdod lleol; mae Blaenau Gwent yn rhan o'r hafaliad hwn hefyd. Mae Caerffili a Chaerdydd hefyd yn dod i mewn ar rai materion o fewn y consortiwm, ac addysg yw un ohonynt.

Cynhaliwyd cyfarfodydd y flwyddyn hon, a chyn hynny, i ystyried y mater, ac mae gwaith yn mynd rhagddo, ond mae problem o ran cyllid—mae mor syml a hynny. Mae pob cyngor yn cyfeirio at gyllid drwy'r amser. Credaf fod yr awydd yno ymysg y cynghorau, ac mae rhieni yn gofyn am hyn. Cafwyd arolygon yng Nghasnewydd a sir Fynwy sy'n dangos bod angen mwy o leoliadau a darpariaethau addysg cynradd Cymraeg, ac mae darparu addysg uwchradd Cymraeg yn ychwanegol at hynny. Fodd bynnag, mae'n dod yn ôl at gyllid bob tro.

Bethan Jenkins: Diolch i chi am ddod yma heddiw. A ydych wedi ystyried cysylltu â'r Gweinidog neu a ydych wedi bod yn gweithredu ar lefel leol? Bu ichi sôn am gael strategaeth genedlaethol. A ydych yn credu y byddai system addysg uwch gyda choleg ffederal yn cael ei thanseilio oherwydd diffyg yn y sectorau addysg cynradd ac uwchradd ar hyn o bryd?

Ms Feakes: Yr ydym wedi bod yn cysylltu â'r Is-adran Rheolaeth Ysgolion ynglŷn â'r broblem gydag ysgol Gwynllyw, ond mae problem ehangach.

Ms Maher: Yn genedlaethol, bu'r mudiad yn trafod y mater gyda'r Gweinidog, a bu inni drafod dogfen gyda hi'n ddiweddar. Yn anffodus, ni anfonais y ddogfen honno atoch, ond gallaf wneud hynny ar ôl y cyfarfod hwn os byddai hynny o fudd. Mae'r ddogfen yn amlinellu'r chwe pwynt y teimlwn yn genedlaethol y dylid eu

Ms Maher: There are four local authorities; Blaenau Gwent is also part of this equation. Caerphilly and Cardiff also come in on some issues within the consortium, and education is one of them.

Meetings have been held this year, and before then, to consider the issue, and work is ongoing, but funding is a problem—it is as simple as that. Every authority refers to funding all the time. I think that the will is there among authorities, and parents are asking for this provision. Surveys have been conducted in Newport and Monmouthshire that show that more Welsh-medium schools and provision are needed in the primary sector, and the provision of Welsh-medium secondary education is additional to that. However, it comes down to funding every time.

Bethan Jenkins: Thank you for coming here today. Have you considered getting in touch with the Minister or have you been acting on a local level? You mentioned the need for a national strategy. Do you believe that a federal college in higher education could be undermined because of the shortage of provision in the primary and secondary sectors?

Ms Feakes: We have been in touch with the Schools Management Division regarding the problem with Gwynllyw school, but there is a broader issue.

Ms Maher: On a national level, the organisation has discussed this issue with the Minister, and we have discussed a document with her recently. Unfortunately, I did not forward that document to you, but I can do so following this meeting if that would be of use. The document outlines the six points that we feel, nationally, should be included in the strategy, which

cynnwys yn y strategaeth, sy'n cynnwys: hwyluso a phrysurol twf ysgolion Cymraeg; sicrhau darpariaeth Gymraeg mewn siroedd lled wledig; sicrhau dilyniant rhwng addysg cyn ysgol ac addysg cynradd, uwchradd, bellach ac uwch; sicrhau cydweithrediad traws-sirol; a chludiant. Mae awgrymiadau yn y ddogfen ar sut y dylai strategaeth addysg Gymraeg fod pan gaiff ei llunio a'i hargraffu. Felly, yr ydym wedi bod yn trafod hyn ar lefel genedlaethol ond yr ydym hefyd wedi bod yn trafod y mater yn lleol gyda chynghorwyr, rhieni, Aelodau Seneddol ac Aelodau Cynulliad.

Bethan Jenkins: O ran yr ochr leol, a ydych wedi dod ar draws enghreifftiau o bobl sydd wedi gorfod anfon eu plant i ysgolion cyfrwng Saesneg oherwydd nad oes ysgol uwchradd Gymraeg ar gael, neu a oes trefniadau tymor byr er mwyn osgoi hynny?

Ms Hill: Yn sir Fynwy, mae plant wedi gorfod mynd i ysgolion Saesneg oherwydd bod eu rhieni yn meddwl ei bod yn rhy bell iddynt deithio i ysgol Gwynllyw.

Ms Feakes: Mae'r un peth yn wir o ran Ysgol y Ffin. Mae un rhiant wedi anfon ei blentyn i ysgol Saesneg eleni oherwydd y pellter.

Bethan Jenkins: A oes gennych ystadegau clir ar hynny?

Ms Feakes: Gallwn greu ystadegau clir. Mae'r niferoedd yn isel iawn, felly mae'n anodd creu ystadegau, ond gallwch gael y niferoedd.

Ms Maher: Yr anhawster gyda hynny yw, unwaith bod rhieni wedi gwneud penderfyniad, yr ydym yn eu colli neu maent yn diflannu i mewn i'r system. Mae'n anodd iawn tracio'r ymatebion i'r math hwnnw o ymchwil. Hoffem roi

include: facilitating and speeding up the growth of Welsh-medium schools; ensuring that there is Welsh-medium provision in semi-rural counties; ensuring continuity between pre-school education and primary, secondary, further and higher education; ensuring cross-border collaboration; and transport. There are suggestions in the document as to what we think a Welsh-medium education strategy should look like once it has been drawn up and published. Therefore, we have discussed this on a national level, but we have also discussed it on a local level with councillors, parents, Members of Parliament and Assembly Members.

Bethan Jenkins: On the local side, have you come across examples of people who have had to send their children to English-medium schools because there is not a Welsh-medium secondary school available, or are there short-term arrangements in place to avoid that?

Ms Hill: In Monmouthshire, children have had to go to English schools because their parents feel that it is too far for them to travel to Gwynllyw school.

Ms Feakes: The same is true of Ysgol y Ffin. One parent has sent a child to an English school this year because of the distance.

Bethan Jenkins: Do you have any clear statistics on that?

Ms Feakes: We can create clear statistics. The numbers are very low, so creating statistics is difficult, but we can give you the numbers.

Ms Maher: The difficulty with that is that, once parents have made a decision, we lose them or they disappear into the system. It is then very difficult to track the responses to that type of research. We would like to give parents a questionnaire

holiadur i rieni i ofyn a wnaethant ystyried addysg Cymraeg ac, os dewisant addysg Saesneg, beth oedd y rheswm am hynny. Mae'n anodd iawn tracio a dadansoddi y math hynny o ddata. Byddai'n well ac yn fwy rhagweithiol pe bai'r dewis yn amlwg i rieni o'r cychwyn. Un o fanteision cynnal arolwg yn gynnar iawn ym mywyd plant—pan bod y plentyn yn 18 mis oed—yw fod rhieni yn cael amser i feddwl am y math o addysg y maent ei eisiau yn hytrach na'u bod yn mynd gyda'r llif a bod eu plant yn mynd i'r ysgol agosaf, er enghraifft, heb iddynt wybod am y dewis sydd ar gael a manteision y dewis hwnnw.

Ms Feakes: Hoffwn ategu rhywbeth at y pwynt hwnnw. Mae sir Fynwy wedi cynnal arolwg ar y cynnydd mewn addysg Gymraeg ac i weld beth mae rhieni ei eisiau o ran addysg. Dywed yr arolwg:

'significant numbers of respondents reported that even if they sent their children to a Welsh-language primary school, they would still be reluctant to send them on to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw'.

Dywed hefyd fod y ffaith nad oes ysgol uwchradd Gymraeg lleol yn effeithio ar y niferoedd o bobl sy'n anfon eu plant i ysgolion cynradd Cymraeg. Mae pobl yn ystyried ysgolion uwchradd pan maent yn dewis ysgol gynradd, ac mae hynny'n cael effaith ar y niferoedd sy'n mynd i mewn i'r sector Cymraeg.

1.30 p.m.

Bethan Jenkins: Felly, pe bai'r awdurdod lleol yn cynnal rhyw fath o holiadur o ddechrau oes plentyn, byddai hwnnw'n hwyluso datblygiad y system addysg Gymraeg.

Ms Hill: Yn bendant.

Val Lloyd: What is the capacity of the current Welsh-medium secondary school,

that asks them whether they considered Welsh-medium education and, if they did not, why that was the case. It is very difficult to track and analyse that sort of data. It would be easier and more proactive if the choice was apparent to parents from the outset. One of the benefits of conducting a survey very early on in a child's life—when the child is 18 months old—is that parents have time to think about the type of education that they want, rather than going with the flow and sending their children to the nearest school, for example, without knowing about the options that are available and the benefits of those options.

Ms Feakes: I wish to add something on that point. Monmouthshire has conducted a review on the increase in Welsh-medium education and to see what parents want in terms of education. The review states that:

It also states that the fact that there is no local Welsh-medium secondary school affects the numbers of people who send their children to Welsh-medium primary school. People consider secondary schools when they choose a primary school, and that affects the numbers who go into the Welsh-medium sector.

Bethan Jenkins: So, if the local authority conducted some sort of survey at the start of a child's life, that would facilitate the development of the Welsh-medium education system.

Ms Hill: Definitely.

Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw?

Ms Maher: In 2007, there were 780 pupils.

Val Lloyd: That is at maximum capacity, with no room to expand.

Michael German: They are in the Terrapins.

Ms Maher: Yn ogystal, mae adolygiad o rifau statudol pob ysgol uwchradd ar hyn o bryd, sydd yn golygu bod nifer disgyblion Ysgol Gwynllyw wedi cwmpo. Mae'r adolygiad o ysgolion cynradd wedi ei wneud yn barod, ac yr wyf yn credu y bydd yr adolygiad o ysgolion uwchradd yn dod i mewn yn 2009.

Ms Maher: In addition, there is currently a review of the statutory numbers of each secondary school, which means that the number of pupils in Ysgol Gwynllyw has fallen. The review of primary schools has already been done, and I believe that the review of secondary schools will come in in 2009.

Val Lloyd: I know that, in your answer to Bethan, you explained why you thought that you did not have absolutely correct figures for those who wish to attend a Welsh-medium comprehensive, but could you give us your best guess? I appreciate that it will be a guess.

Ms Feakes: I missed a section of that question, I am afraid.

Val Lloyd: When you were replying to Bethan's question, you said that you were unable to give us figures for the desire for a Welsh-medium secondary education, because people, knowing it was unavailable, perhaps made other choices. However, could you give us a guess as to the figures? I accept that it will be an estimate.

Ms Maher: Pe baech wedi gofyn beth fyddai'r twf yn y nifer o blant a fyddai eisiau addysg uwchradd Gymraeg yng Nghaerdydd llynedd, byddai neb wedi dweud y byddai'n 10 y cant. Nid wyf yn credu ei fod yn deg gofyn beth fyddai'r twf heb wybod yn union beth yw'r angen, ond hefyd mae'r angen yn mynd gyda'r ddarpariaeth, felly, os bydd darpariaeth, bydd hynny'n effeithio ar yr angen. Dyma a welwn dro ar ôl tro gydag addysg cyfrwng Gymraeg: pan fod darpariaeth ar gael, bydd mwy o rieni yn ymateb iddi.

Ms Maher: Had you asked what the increase would have been in the number of children who wanted a Welsh-medium secondary education in Cardiff last year, no-one would have said that it would have been 10 per cent. I do not think that it is fair to ask what the increase would be without knowing exactly what the demand is, but demand goes hand in hand with provision, therefore, if the provision exists, that will affect demand. We see this time and again with Welsh-medium education: when provision is available, there is a greater parental response.

Ms Feakes: I would like to add that it is probably a moving target. In the survey that Monmouthshire conducted into the demand for Welsh-medium education, it reported

that there was a rise, from 17 per cent to 23 per cent, in the proportion of respondents saying that they would be very or quite likely to send a child to a Welsh-medium primary school. That is a 6 per cent increase in one year, so it is a moving target, but there is an increase.

Val Lloyd: I would accept that, but I was trying to get some feel for the scale of the problem. Are there any further questions?

Andrew R.T. Davies: I am sorry that I have not had the chance to digest this Monmouthshire County Council survey of school choices, but it was only set before us as we sat down. Just looking through it, I see that some of the figures are based on 59 people responding, so it does not look as if, in certain sections, there was a big response from people. However, I look forward to digesting it later, and it might give me a better picture. We are an Assembly committee, and many people are loath to interfere in local government decisions, because a local authority must make the decisions in its remit and area, must it not? It is charged with running local education services in its patch. What would you like us as a committee to do to engage with this, and how would you like us to instruct the Welsh Assembly Government? I am a new Member, and came in in May, and there is a cross-party drive and push to try to make the Welsh language, and Welsh-medium education in particular, as accessible as possible to everyone in Wales to encourage the growth of the language. So what exactly are you looking for from the Welsh Assembly Government or the National Assembly for Wales that is not a dictatorial stance against local authorities providing services in their own patches? At the end of the day, a local authority is elected by local people to deliver local services.

Ms Feakes: We appreciate that, but the problem is that Welsh-medium education presents a unique challenge to local authorities, because of the growth that has been experienced, and in terms of the policies that local education authorities put in place in the past to track and to plan for new schools. They were based on such things as birth rates, which are of very little use in developing policies for Welsh-medium education, because they simply do not reflect the growth that we see in the sector.

Also, in terms of planning, it is very difficult for LEAs, especially rural LEAs, to be able to plan effectively to provide education capital funding for these sorts of projects when they are going to have to find new money to do it. In that respect, we would like to see the National Assembly reviewing and developing its guidelines and thinking strategically about how it is going to deliver the goals of 'Iaith Pawb' in those unique situations where LEAs cannot respond individually to the growth in demand that they are seeing in the sector.

Ms Maher: Yn syml iawn, mae angen strategaeth addysg Gymraeg genedlaethol.

Ms Maher: Quite simply, there is a need for a national Welsh-medium education strategy.

Quite simply, there needs to be a framework. Everybody else in education works within a framework, so why not in Welsh-medium education?

Pam na allwn gael fframwaith addysg
Gymraeg yn ogystal?

Why can we not have a Welsh-medium
education framework as well?

Ms Feakes: We obviously do not want Monmouthshire County Council to be spending money that it does not have. We want to see a strategy and it will save money if people work together as a consortium to provide appropriately within a slightly wider area than that which an individual LEA can respond to. I think that there would probably be financial benefits to the Assembly in looking at this, in addition to the educational benefits that will be provided. There will also be benefits in terms of achieving the goals in 'Iaith Pawb'.

Val Lloyd: That is a perfect end to our allotted time. It was almost spot on. The clock ticked over to the right figure as you finished speaking and so I am pleased that you were able to finish what you were saying. Thank you very much for your presentation and for answering our questions.

The format now is that you will retire to the public gallery and we will discuss the issues raised by the previous petitioners. By the time that you are settled in your seats, we will have dealt with the first one and then we will be reviewing your case.

Ms Maher: Diolch yn fawr.

Ms Maher: Thank you.

Val Lloyd: Thank you for the paperwork and the presentation.

Val Lloyd: Thank you. We now turn to P-03-103, Welsh-medium education in Monmouthshire. I open this up for discussion.

Michael German: There are two things that we need to know before we go any further, one of which is what the Government's proposals are for a Welsh language strategic plan, taking forward 'Iaith Pawb' into firmer action. Secondly, what level of discussion has there been between the four local authorities concerned and what were the outcomes of those discussions? Have they have communicated a joint view to the Government for support? In other words, do they have a plan?

Bethan Jenkins: I did not know that Cardiff was involved as well—perhaps you understand it more. Are the consortia already quantified bodies or have they come about because of the problems that they have in their own areas?

Michael German: I was not clear on that either. Gwynllyw school currently serves three local authorities and some parts of Blaenau Gwent. The route from Blaenau Gwent to the school is tricky—all of the routes are. There is Welsh-language secondary provision in Caerphilly and Cardiff, which is growing, and they are dealing with that. Some children who live in Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent or Newport will want to come to Cardiff, but, in general, people want a local solution.

Andrew R.T. Davies: It is not a viable option for those living in Chepstow—they are already travelling for three hours.

Val Lloyd: My understanding is that they were brought in to say that that is not an answer because it is too far, and that they are stretched themselves.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I would like to hear the views of the consortia and the councils and how they propose to address this issue. From the numbers, it is clear that, in isolation, the authorities are not capable of doing this. This is a balancing act; you have to spend to accumulate, and you must start the ball rolling. However, we can also appreciate the difficulty in finding that resource within a difficult budget. Are you going to rob Peter, namely English-medium education, to pay Paul? If it is possible, I wish to hear their opinion on how they could strategically make this provision, which is clearly in demand.

Val Lloyd: I think that that was Mike's suggestion, was it not, namely that we approach the four authorities to see whether they wish to comment?

Michael German: Yes. We should also approach the Welsh Assembly Government.

Val Lloyd: Yes; we should also ask the Government about its strategy for 'Iaith Pawb'. The other issue is that Andrew Davies is the Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery, and there is spoken and unspoken agreement that service delivery can cut across boundaries. The Assembly Government is proposing that we should be considering more where we can have more effective service delivery for users.

Michael German: I agree with that. Beecham got it absolutely right on this matter, but the emphasis has been on getting bodies within councils working together and setting up service boards, and so on, and perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the other part, which is about what services can be better provided across council borders, and this service is certainly one of those.

Val Lloyd: So, this is also ticking that box. We are agreed on the way forward; we will request the Government's proposals for the strategic planning for 'Iaith Pawb' and get in touch with the four relevant local authorities to ask their views on the consortia and what planning is taking place, and explain our reasons for doing so.

Michael German: We should perhaps explain to the petitioners who are here that this is only the next step in the process; it is not the end.

Val Lloyd: Yes. Following the steps that we have outlined, we will review the issue when we receive the replies. I thank Mike for reminding me to make that clear. Our next step depends on the replies that we receive. We often take that for granted.

Michael German: Yes, but often the petitioners will not have heard that message before.

Val Lloyd: You are quite right to remind us.

22 Mai 2008

Turning to the next petition on Welsh-medium education in the former Gwent area, we have had a very encouraging response from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Andrew R.T. Davies: We will have to see what happens at the consortium meetings that have been proposed, as you do not want to prejudge what they are endeavouring to achieve.

Val Lloyd: Not at all.

Bethan Jenkins: The only thing that I noted from the letter was that 'Iaith Pawb' does not specifically question the co-operation between local authorities on this issue. Can we perhaps probe the Minister further about whether her department has any more plans to look at this issue again, considering that local authorities will have to work so much closer together in future?

Val Lloyd: Yes, we can do that.

Jenny Randerson: I think that there is a suggestion that they are looking at this from the point of view of future policy. The issue with 'Iaith Pawb' in relation to education is that it is relatively less detailed than it is about other aspects of the language, so there is clearly a gap to be plugged here. I happened to meet the headteacher of the school concerned last week at an event. I had last met him about five years ago, and he said, 'Oh yes, we are doing fine; we have another three huts on the site'. This year, it is grossly overcrowded. The only concern that I have about the Minister's letter is that I do not get any comfort from it that anything is going to happen this year, so that we can be absolutely sure that there will be a solution even by September 2009.

Val Lloyd: From what we had before, we definitely agreed that we would await the outcome. What about the letter suggested by Bethan? Do you want to deal with that?

Bethan Jenkins: The paragraph goes on to say that the document draws attention to the need for coherence and consistency in schools planning. However, I think that it is only because, having heard the evidence, they mentioned that there were no comprehensive strategies between local authorities at the moment. Obviously, they will be building on that via the consortium, but the Minister may have plans to put that in guidance in the future from a national point of view.

Val Lloyd: Is that on working together? You are right; we are going to need more of that, I am sure, across boundaries. Are there any views on that? Does anyone wish to write a letter to the consortium also?

Jenny Randerson: In some way, we need to try to hurry people up a bit, to give it a sense of urgency. That is all.

Andrew R.T. Davies: We will pop a letter in the post and wait for a reply from the consortium.

Val Lloyd: So, what is the final decision? I know that we are all agreed on the consortium.

Bethan Jenkins: As Jenny said, we need some urgency on it, so, if it shows that we are replying to this and taking issue with that point in 'Iaith Pawb', that would be relevant.

Val Lloyd: We will write to the Minister for education about the 'Iaith Pawb' issue.

Mr Sanchez: Are you asking her specifically to clarify this issue of inter-county co-operation and joint working?

Bethan Jenkins: Yes, and whether she has any plans to issue new guidance within any new strategy in future.

9 Gorffennaf 2008

Janice Gregory: We will now move on to Welsh-medium education in the former Gwent area. There is a letter from the Minister, Jane Hutt, to the petitioners. I do not know whether you agree, but it is quite a positive response to the petitioners. Are there any comments on that?

Andrew R.T. Davies: The letter sets out the timeframe for what the Government aspires to achieve through the consultation process. The local education authorities will be the collaborative organisations on this, driving it forward to make the provision. As a committee, we have tried to tread very carefully when we have looked at local government issues, because there are areas where responsibility is devolved from here and people have to make their decisions and live with them. Based on the Minister's letter, I am not sure how much further we can progress this particular petition, as there is a framework being subscribed to.

Janice Gregory: In the penultimate paragraph, the Minister says:

'I agree that the issuing of guidance to Local Education Authorities on cross-county working is a matter that should be considered further'.

I thought that that was a positive comment. The Minister goes on to say:

'indeed, it is one of the issues that will be discussed and considered in the preparation of a national Welsh-medium Education Strategy under the One Wales commitments'.

Bethan Jenkins: Could we not—as we have done in relation to other petitions—explain to the petitioners how they can be involved in the consultation process? We would then be making it clear to them how they can further this on their own agenda, instead of leaving them in the dark. They will want to do so; they have come to us because they need a new Welsh-medium school in their area. We could clarify where they go from here.

Mr Sanchez: Are you suggesting that we close it and, in closing it, write to them to explain how they can progress?

Bethan Jenkins: Yes, because I do not see what else the committee can do. It is now up to the Minister and her consultation process on the future of Welsh-medium provision in secondary education to initiate discussion with this organisation, Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg.

Kirsty Williams: I agree with what Bethan has said. In closing the petition, we should make it clear to the petitioners that they will have an opportunity to participate in any public consultation that the Minister begins next spring, which will hopefully deal with the issues and demonstrate to them that the petition has had some effect in changing the guidance that will go out to local authorities. Can we also write to the Minister or the person in the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills who will be responsible for this strategy to make sure that the petitioner's name is added to the list of consultees, so that they will be formally invited to make a response to the consultation exercise? Given that they have expressed this interest, I do not think that it is beyond the wit of DCELLS to ensure that this person gets a direct copy of that consultation exercise and is encouraged to respond.

Janice Gregory: I think that that is a good idea.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I think that it is an established organisation; it has been in to give evidence to us.

Kirsty Williams: My understanding is, from the RhAG work that I am aware of, that there are constituted RhAG groups. So, while there is a national RhAG organisation that might well be making a consultation response, it is important that the Gwent group is directly asked, given that it has taken the trouble to submit a petition.

Janice Gregory: Absolutely. Are you content? I see that you are.

Atodiad 2

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Education and Learning
Torfaen County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Pontypool
NP4 6YB

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: PET-03-103

21 April 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

PETITION: WELSH MEDIUM EDUCATION IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

On 10 April 2008, my Committee considered a petition in relation to the provision of Welsh medium secondary education in the former Gwent area. At this meeting the Committee took evidence from the petitioners that suggests that current provision is insufficient to meet demand and that it results in exceptionally long journey times for some pupils.

The petitioners suggested that a local authority consortium approach to enhancing provision for the region may offer a solution. The Committee agreed to investigate this further, and to contact the local authorities in this region to find out whether this approach is being considered.

Consequently, I should be grateful if you could aid the Committee with its consideration of this petition by providing details of any consortium work that you are currently undertaking, or considering, to address this issue. I will also be writing to your colleagues in the other affected local authorities to ask for their position. I thank you for considering this request and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Val Lloyd
Chair, Petitions Committee

Atodiad 3

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Jane Hutt AM
Minister for Education, Lifelong learning
and Skills
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: P-03-103

23 April 2008

Dear Jane

PETITION: WELSH MEDIUM SECONDARY EDUCATION

On the 10 April 2008, my Committee considered a petition in relation to the provision of Welsh medium secondary education in the former Gwent area.

The Committee agreed to ask if you could aid it in its consideration of this petition by providing it with details of your implementation of Iaith Pawb in this area and any work you have done, or are planning to do, in relation to coordinating regional provision of Welsh medium secondary education.

I have also written to the relevant local authorities to gather further information.

I should be grateful for your consideration of this issue and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Val Lloyd
Chair, Petitions Committee

Atodiad 4

Jane Hutt AC/AM

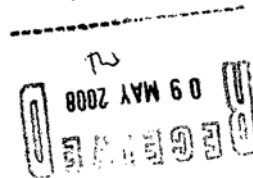
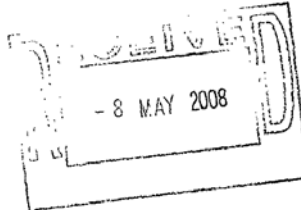
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-103
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/00625/08

Val Lloyd
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



6th May 2008

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 23 April, about the petition your Committee recently considered regarding Welsh medium secondary provision in the former Gwent area. You asked about the implementation of *laith Pawb* in relation to co-ordinating regional provision of Welsh medium secondary education.

The *laith Pawb* policy document does not deal specifically with the question of inter-county cooperation or of making Welsh medium provision at a regional level when there is insufficient demand from one LEA area alone to sustain a secondary school. The document does however draw attention to the need for coherence and consistency between the planning of school places and Welsh Education Schemes, and there is an overarching expectation that all organisations and bodies should comply with their Welsh Language Schemes (of which Welsh Education Schemes form a part).

Each local authority is thus expected to make effective plans to meet parental demand for Welsh-medium education, as long as this is compatible with efficient use of resources. How best to achieve inter-county cooperation for Welsh-medium education and training is an issue that may need more detailed discussion, and perhaps additional guidance, in the light of the issues that have arisen in the Gwent area. This will be an element considered in the new Welsh-medium education and training strategy which will be prepared during 2008-09.

In terms of inter-county cooperation in the 14-19 age group, you may know that Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw is in a successful partnership with Ysgol Cwm Rhymini in Caerphilly to provide extended opportunities, particularly vocational, through the medium of Welsh to learners at the two schools. This is a good example of the partnership agreements that have been funded to assist the development of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision throughout Wales since 2006 under bilingual funding and then 14-19 funding. There are also significant opportunities for cooperation across county boundaries as a result of funding for 29 Welsh-medium and bilingual schools to be equipped with state-of-the-art videoconferencing equipment.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

Turning to the specific problem that arose recently and which led to a number of children attending Welsh medium primary schools in Newport and Monmouthshire being refused admission to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, it may be helpful if I explain the background. In September 1990 Gwent County Council established Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Pontypool to provide Welsh medium secondary provision in the area. In 1996, following local government reorganisation, Torfaen County Borough council became responsible for the school. Since then the school has provided places for children from Torfaen and the neighbouring authorities of Newport, Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent and to a limited extent, Caerphilly, Powys and Cardiff. The school has been expanded a good deal over the years by the addition of demountable classrooms.

However for September 2008 the school received more applications than there were places currently available. Torfaen Local Authority therefore allocated places through the application of its published over subscription criteria. These standard criteria give priority to pupils with older brothers or sisters already at the school and then use the distance from home to school as the next determining factor. Clearly this method is more likely to leave pupils from neighbouring authorities without places than those from Torfaen and of course does not take into account the length of journey which such pupils would face to access an alternative Welsh medium secondary school. This resulted in parents of children currently attending Ysgol y Ffin in Monmouthshire and Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd in Newport being informed that they had not been allocated a secondary school place at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw for September 2008.

I was disappointed by the apparent lack of forward planning by the authorities in the former Gwent area to avert this situation. It is the responsibility of local authorities to plan provision and provide school places in the light of local needs and demand from parents. There is a duty (under S14 of the Education Act 1996) on authorities to ensure that there are sufficient schools for their area and this applies to all four authorities concerned, even where the provision being made is not located within their boundaries. However, there is no specific statutory duty to provide schools which offer education through the medium of Welsh, just as there is no statutory duty to provide education through the medium of English. Although S9 of the 1996 Act requires authorities to have regard to the principle that pupils should be educated in accordance with parental wishes, they must do so only to the extent that is compatible with the provision of efficient education and does not involve unreasonable public expenditure.

Nevertheless we have encouraged authorities to be pro-active in assessing demand for Welsh medium places and to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet that demand. I am pleased that many have done so. Clearly, authorities who are planning to expand primary education should also consider how secondary education will be provided. All LEAs also have agreed Welsh Education Schemes with the Welsh Language Board and these should set out their plans for meeting demand.

I am looking to the four Gwent authorities to work together to address the short and long term issues of Welsh medium secondary provision in the area. Torfaen has identified a need to improve and to enlarge the accommodation at Ysgol Gwynllyw in the long term. Any significant enlargement by Torfaen would require the publication of statutory notices and the authority would need to ensure that it had funding in place in order to bring forward such a proposal. Torfaen already receive a per capita contribution to both revenue and capital budgets in recognition of the pupils who attend Ysgol Gwynllyw from other areas. The authority is not therefore disadvantaged in terms of the day to day running costs of Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw by taking pupils from other areas, indeed without those pupils the school would scarcely be large enough to be viable. Similarly their allocations of both School

Buildings Improvement Grant and general capital funding take account of numbers on roll, including pupils who come from neighbouring authorities. However a major redevelopment will require significant levels of capital investment. I understand that Torfaen is discussing potential contributions with the other authorities, who would clearly need to seek some assurances that if they fund an expansion of places at the school, the admissions arrangements will reflect that contribution and secure access, particularly for pupils for whom there is no practical alternative.

Officials from the Schools Management Division of DCELLS attended a meeting of the authorities with an interest in Ysgol Gwynllyw at the end of the Spring term. There were constructive discussions aimed at resolving the situation for September 2008, and for the longer term. I am essentially looking to the Local Authorities to resolve the matter between them, with Welsh Assembly Government officials providing advice on any statutory procedures necessary and funding issues as the need arises. My officials will be discussing with Torfaen Local Authority options for the revision of the admission arrangements and the oversubscription criteria in the future.

I understand that all pupils seeking a place for September 2008 have now been offered places at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw following an agreement between the authorities involved about the way forward.

Bert Hisher,

Jane

Atodiad 5

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Jane Hutt AM
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong
Learning and Skills
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: PET-03-103

6 June 2008

Dear Jane

PETITION - WELSH MEDIUM EDUCATION IN THE FORMER GWENT AREA

Thank you for your letter of 6th May, providing a detailed response to the Committee's earlier queries. The Committee considered this petition and your response on 22nd May, and noted that *laith Pawb* does not specifically detail any requirements for local authorities to cooperate when there is insufficient demand from one LEA area alone to sustain a secondary school. It is clear that you are expecting local authorities to work closer together to tackle problems with provision of Welsh Medium education, and the Committee agreed to ask whether you would be considering issuing guidance to LEAs detailing that they should do so.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Val Lloyd,
Chair, Petitions Committee

Atodiad 6

103

Jane Hutt AC/AM

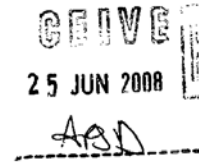
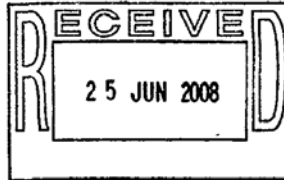
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Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref Pet-03-103
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/00850/08

Val Lloyd
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



24th June 2008

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 6 June, about the petition your Committee recently considered regarding Welsh medium secondary provision in the former Gwent area. You asked whether I would be considering issuing guidance to Local Authorities in relation to co-ordinating regional provision of Welsh medium secondary education.

Cross-county boundary collaboration between Local Education Authorities to tackle problems with provision is an important issue for the future of Welsh-medium education. This is particularly the case in rural areas and in areas where Welsh-medium schools are geographically distant from other Welsh-medium provision.

At present, Local Education Authorities have been encouraged to be proactive in assessing demand for Welsh-medium places and to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet that demand at primary and at secondary level. Collaboration across county boundaries is currently voluntary, and lack of collaborative forward planning may lead to the kind of problems that have been experienced recently with Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Gwent.

I agree that the issuing of guidance to Local Education Authorities on cross-county working is a matter that should be considered further, and, indeed, it is one of the issues that will be discussed and considered in the preparation of a national Welsh-medium Education Strategy under the One Wales commitments. This strategy is in preparation during 2008-09, and will then be subject to public consultation in the spring of 2009. Internal and external stakeholders will be consulted in the preparation of this strategy.

One of the actions that will be considered for the Implementation Programme accompanying the high-level Strategy is whether guidance to ensure effective cross-boundary working between LEAs would be appropriate and effective in order to improve opportunities for Welsh-medium learners.

Best wishes,

Jane

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Atodiad 7

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Jane Hutt AM
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong
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Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: PET-03-103
Your Ref: JH/00850/08
21 July 2008

Dear Jane

PETITION - WELSH MEDIUM EDUCATION IN THE FORMER GWENT AREA

Thank you for your letter of 24 June 2008 regarding Welsh medium secondary provision in the former Gwent area, which was considered at the Committee meeting on 9 July 2008.

In addition to closing the petition, the Committee agreed to ask that Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg Sir Finwy (Gogledd) be added to the list of consultees for the forthcoming consultation on a Welsh-medium Education Strategy due to take place in spring 2009. The Chair of the group is Ms. Emma Hill, and the contact address for the group is Ty Copyn, 40 Rhodfa Wyesham, Wyesham, Trefynwy, Sir Fynwy, NP25 3NF.

On behalf of the Committee I thank you for considering this request, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Val Lloyd,
Chair, Petitions Committee