

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny

Committee

26th July 2018

REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION

ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – A REPORT ON A NEW 21ST CENTURY SCHOOL BUILD.

Purpose of report

1. To inform Members of a review of the educational impact of a new, 21st Century School build, together with lessons learned. The evaluation of Ysgol Bae Baglan after the first year of opening will inform the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme's planning, practices and procedures for future new builds and school reorganisation.

Executive summary

2. A review of Ysgol Bae Baglan was undertaken at the end of the first year of opening to evaluate how the school has grown and developed as an educational establishment, and how those most involved view the school at the close of the first year of operation.

3. The review was conducted by SSIP team members, staff at Ysgol Bae Baglan and the acting head teacher of Ynysmaerdy Primary School (a partner primary). The review had the full support from the head teacher and Governing Body of Ysgol Bae Baglan.
4. The review took place during July 2017 and involved speaking to key focus groups including pupils, staff, governors and partner primary schools. Information was also gained from a Safeguarding review, an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) review, Education Development Service (EDS) and the school based Wellbeing review.
5. The overwhelming view of all groups is that the new school has been a positive event for pupils. All focus groups viewed the school as 'successful' and are proud of what has been achieved.
6. The review also highlighted a number of challenges which have had an impact on the development of the school in the first year.
7. Additionally the review clarified that opportunities exist for future school reorganisations and new build projects to learn from some of the successes achieved and from the challenges faced in establishing Ysgol Bae Baglan.
8. In 2018 four new build schools will open across the county and already lessons learned from Ysgol Bae Baglan have helped to improve the processes involved.

Background

9. The Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. The Council has established a Strategic School Improvement Programme

(SSIP) to deliver its school organisation responsibilities which involves reviewing the existing school estate and determining the number and type of schools needed to deliver education effectively and efficiently across the County Borough.

10. Provision is reviewed on the basis of:
 - educational standards
 - the need for places and the accessibility of schools
 - the quality and suitability of school accommodation
 - effective financial management

11. In delivering parts of its school organisation programme of change the Council has accessed capital grant monies from the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme which, combined with match funding from its own resources and borrowing capacity, has facilitated state of the art, new school builds.

12. Underpinning successful bids for Welsh Governing funding has been a requirement for new build projects to be transformational. This review draws upon the experience of the Council's largest investment in a school build, Ysgol Bae Baglan, a purpose built all-through school, with a large specialist provision for pupils with SEN and extensive community facilities. Its build design supports the innovative delivery of education and community provision.

13. In October 2010 the Council's executive approved the development of a proposal to change the provision of education for children living in the areas currently served by Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive, Glanafan Comprehensive and Sandfields Comprehensive schools, including Traethmelyn Primary school and Learning Support Centre provision.

14. Consultation took place during March and April 2013, with the final

approval given by Welsh Government in December 2013.

15. A full business case was submitted and in July 2014 Welsh Government gave approval in principle to the scheme. Planning permission was granted in September 2014 and in January 2015 building work commenced.
16. From 2014 to the date of opening in 2016 detailed procedures and processes were put in place including
 - establishing a temporary Governing Body
 - appointing a head teacher
 - appointing key senior staff
 - resourcing the new school
 - naming the school
 - designing the logo and uniform
 - communicating with all stakeholders including pupils and parents
 - arranging visits to see progress of the build
 - arranging transport
 - making key decisions on the day to day aspects of the school, including how pupils would be managed and safeguarded
 - setting the budget
 - ensuring delivery of the curriculum for the four key stages that the school caters for – from Foundation Phase to Key stage 4
 - preparing for the inclusion of 120 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need (SEN) to be transitioned into the schools learning resource provision
17. The new school, Ysgol Bae Baglan opened to pupils in September 2016, the first all through, purpose built 3-16 school in Neath Port Talbot with 1,519 pupils – 290 pupils aged 3-11, and 1229 pupils aged 11-16 including 118 statemented pupils in the specialist learning support centre.

18. Ysgol Bae Baglan is an English-medium, community school serving Port Talbot, Aberafan and Briton Ferry. Its large learning support centre provides for secondary age pupils from across the County Borough. Approx. 33% of pupils across the school are eligible for free school meals which is significantly above the local authority average of 22% and the national average of 17%.
19. The school has a high percentage of pupils with additional learning needs – 27% across the school, again above the local authority average of 26% and the national average of 22.5%.

Review Process

20. From the point of opening Ysgol Bae Baglan has won numerous architectural awards for its design and innovation including 'UK Building project of the Year 2017' Constructing Excellence Awards, 'Best Educational Building' LABC Building Excellence Awards, and 'Gold medal for Architecture' in the National Eisteddfod of Wales.
21. The school was named a Microsoft Showcase School which indicates the school has created 'immersive and inclusive experiences that inspire lifelong learning, stimulating development of essential life skills so students are empowered to achieve more.' (Microsoft Schools Programme).
22. In its first year the pupils and staff, have taken part in a wide range of enriching visits and experiences and have achieved many successes in academic, sporting and creative activities, with a host of team and individual successes.
23. This review was undertaken as an evaluation of the first year of opening as a whole, recognising the more public achievements but, importantly,

also seeking to evaluate how the school has grown and developed as an educational establishment, and how those most involved view the school at the close of the first year of operation.

24. The review considered the following points –
- What planned and unexpected successes and challenges have there been?
 - Were the well documented concerns of stakeholders realised or were they unfounded?
 - What is the reality of a 3-16 school for pupils and staff?
 - Are the stated aims of the SSIP programme being met?
 - What lessons can be learned for the future – for the school and for the local authority?
25. The review was conducted by SSIP team members, staff at Ysgol Bae Baglan and the acting head teacher of Ynysmaerdy Primary School (a partner primary). The review had the full support from the head teacher and Governing Body of Ysgol Bae Baglan.
26. The review took place during July 2017 and involved speaking to key focus groups including pupils, staff, governors and partner primary schools. Information was also gained from a Safeguarding review, an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) review, Education Development Service (EDS) and the school based Wellbeing review.
27. Sincere thanks to Mike Tate, Head Teacher, Ysgol Bae Baglan, for kindly making his school available for this review in what was a very busy time for all concerned during the first year of opening. Thanks also to all those who contributed to the evaluation process and helped deliver a very informative review.

Summary of Review findings

Successes

28. The overwhelming view of all groups is that the new school has been a positive event for pupils – improved provision achieved through the 21st century build has brought greater opportunities and experiences, leading to raised expectations and a more purposeful learning environment.
29. All groups viewed the school as 'successful'. The adult groups recognise that the school, and their role within the school are in the early stages of development and that there are some areas for improvement. Pupils speak proudly of their school and all groups recognise the accomplishments of the first year and are proud of what has been achieved.
30. Transition into the new school, with staff and pupils moving from the four separate schools into one, has proven to be much easier and smoother than anticipated and overall the move is perceived to have gone well.
31. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are recognised to be hard working, supportive and approachable; a clear vision and ethos has been created and developed through the first year.
32. Pupil wellbeing has been given high priority, there is a strong inclusive ethos which is shared by all groups. Pupils themselves report that they feel safe and recognise their own responsibilities for creating a positive learning environment.
33. The 3 -16 element is viewed by all as very positive, and will be a focus for further development in the future. Older and younger pupils demonstrate mutual respect and support and are forging links naturally through whole school aspects such as the Pupil Leadership Team, Eco

Council and other whole school groups and activities.

34. Pupils feel that staff have higher expectations of them and feel motivated to succeed. Many pupils articulate the sense of privilege they feel at being a pupil at Ysgol Bae Baglan and the wide range of opportunities that are available to them. All groups feel that in general pupils have made progress in the first year through improved self-confidence, better interaction and development of social skills, greater self-esteem and wellbeing, greater motivation and willingness to participate and improved academic attainment.

Challenges

35. The review also highlighted a number of challenges which have had an impact on the development of the school in the first year.
36. It was felt by a number of staff and governors that the long period of time leading up to the closures created uncertainty and anxiety about the future and was a stressful period.
37. Despite no compulsory redundancies and the creation of extra posts in the new school, a number of staff still expressed their dissatisfaction with the process, and spoke of their employment uncertainty in the months before the school opened.
38. In the period prior to closing some of the school communities were fearful that there would be instances of bullying between pupils coming from the different schools and between the younger and older pupils (due to the 3-16 element). Concerns were also expressed about disruption to the educational progress of pupils, and about the need to maintain high standards. None of these aspects were mentioned as ongoing concerns now that the school has opened.
39. Some comments received indicated that greater involvement with the

design and construction process would have been welcomed by some groups.

40. The size of the school presented challenges, both building size and the greater number of pupils and staff. Some staff talked about their early experiences of no longer knowing all of the pupils or other staff by name and how this was a change for them which was difficult to adjust to. However they also spoke about plans which were being developed by the staff themselves to overcome this, and it was recognised that the size of the school also had advantages in terms of the provision being offered. Year 7 pupils explained how they had quickly devised a colour coded timetable to enable them to easily find their way around, and were of the view that the size of the school had not been an issue for them on entry.

Data

41. At the time of the review Ysgol Bae Baglan had been open for just 10 months and no verified pupil performance data for the end of any key stage was available. Even if data had been available it is notably difficult and somewhat unreliable to measure performance after such a short time, particularly for Key Stage 4 pupils as the majority of pupils would have had most of their education experiences in their previous schools. However, in preparation for school improvement planning in the autumn term 2017 the school were able to identify positives and areas for development from their first year of operation.

– Foundation Phase

In 2017 many Foundation Phase pupils attained the expected outcome in all key indicators at the end of the phase, despite the low level of literacy and numeracy skills on entry to school. The school is placed in quartiles 3 and 4 in all areas, which is a decline from previous years.

– Key Stage 2

Pupils at the end of key stage two performed well against all indicators with 86% of pupils attaining the core subject indicator (CSI), level 4 in Maths, English and Science. This is an improvement on the previous year and places the school in quartile 2 for all subjects except mathematics.

– **Key Stage 3**

Pupil performance had been variable at key stage 3 in the previous schools and in 2017 pupils performed better in English but not as well in Maths when compared to previous year's data. Improving outcomes in English, maths and science at Key Stage 3 has been identified as a priority for the school this year.

– **Key Stage 4**

Outcomes attained at Key stage 4 by pupils in their final year of secondary education were good and in many key indicators exceeded predictions. The school recognised and responded effectively to the challenges faced through the transition into the new school, ensuring the outcomes for this cohort of pupils were not affected adversely by the move, which was a matter of great concern for many before the school opened.

When compared to similar schools, at key stage 4, performance in many indicators has placed the school in quartile 1 and 2. In 2017 37% of pupils achieved L2+ (5A* -C including English and maths). Pupil outcomes were above modelled expectation (+1.3%) and the school is placed in the top 50% of similar schools.

The proportion of pupils achieving 5+ A*/A is good, at 8%. The school is above the family average of 6.4% and is ranked 2nd in its family group. The local authority average is 14% and all Wales is 17%.

Performance at level 2 (5A* - C) is also above the family average,

positioning it 4th in the family. In 2017 52% of pupils achieved level 2. The school is placed in the top 50% of similar schools.

Changes to the assessment processes at key stage 4 impacted upon the performance of all Neath Port Talbot schools and, similarly, across Wales. In 2017 the number of pupils attaining 5 GCSE A* to C grades including English and Maths across Neath Port Talbot schools fell to 51.4%, a 9.5pp drop from 2016. Across Wales the decrease was 5.7pp (60.3% to 54.6%). However at Ysgol Bae Baglan the percentage was 37.3%, a decrease of 6.7pp from the combined percentage of Cwrt Sart, Sandfields and Glan Afan in 2016 which is slightly greater than the national average but nearly 3pp below the decrease across all Neath Port Talbot schools.

Attendance

42. Attendance data for Ysgol Bae Baglan has remained stable when compared to the previous schools, with a slight increase in the primary phase from 93.2% to 93.6% and a slight decrease from 92.2% to 91.8% in the secondary phase in 2016-2017. The school identified improving attendance as a priority for 2017 -2018 and targeted persistent absentees in particular, as well as raising awareness of the importance of good attendance with parents /carers. By May this year attendance had risen to 92.7% in the secondary phase which is higher than the data combined from the three previous schools in all years, and at the time of writing absenteeism has decreased by 50%.

Pupil Voice

43. The school has a fully inclusive pupil voice system of committees covering; active travel, wellbeing, healthy eating, eco-schools, digital leaders and academic committees including subject ambassadors. Each committee has two representatives on the Pupil Leadership Team (PLT). Members of the PLT are involved in the self-evaluation process and staff interviews where they take an active role. Subject

ambassadors assist heads of department in the evaluation and development of schemes of work.

44. In 2017 members from Year 2 to Year 10 of the PLT successfully presented at an All Through Schools Conference reporting on their roles and the successful work undertaken in the first year of existence. The presentation focussed on the bringing together of the school community and pupil voice, and the bond between the different age groups of pupils was evident. The PLT are supported by two members of staff – the head of middle school and a reception class teacher, demonstrating 3-16 cross phase work in practice.

Pupil Behaviour

45. Throughout the review all groups reported that the behaviour of pupils is generally good and there is universal confidence in the SLT to deal with any issues as they arise.
46. In 2015-2016 data indicates that 5 permanent exclusions were made across the three previous secondary schools, while in 2016 -2017 just 1 permanent exclusion took place in Ysgol Bae Baglan. Additionally the number of fixed term exclusions at the same time in the secondary phase reduced from 210 to 123, although the number of days lost at 445.5 was slightly higher than the 3 year average of the previous schools at 438.
47. Exclusion data for the secondary phase available currently for 2017-2018 indicates a further fall in all areas with 1 permanent exclusion, 114 fixed term exclusions and 258.5 days lost, demonstrating the continuing success of the school in this area.

Community usage

48. At the end of the first year over 30 different community groups regularly

made use of the school facilities. Ysgol Bae Baglan offers a diverse range of activities including a range of sports, drama, dance and Welsh language and youth groups.

49. The school is open from 5.00pm -9.30pm every evening and for most of the weekend, with an average of 9 user groups on site every evening.
50. It is reported that over 70, 000 users accessed the facilities in the first year, with an estimated income from hire charges of approximate £50k. This income enables the school to offset the cost of out of hours use including staffing, running and maintenance costs, important factors as the community facilities need to be self-supporting and not reliant on the school budget.

Partnership working with primary schools

51. The Ysgol Bae Baglan partner primary group is one of the largest in Neath Port Talbot, and is very diverse, with some schools situated in some of the most disadvantaged wards while others are in more affluent areas of the county borough. The closure of the three small secondary schools to create one larger all through school has meant partner primaries having to become part of a much larger group, with many of the schools themselves being part of school reorganisation processes adding to the challenges faced.
52. Time has been needed to allow the schools to develop as one group, bringing with them differing experiences of what partnership working means in practice and learning to work together within this new structure.
53. The chair of the partner group is a primary head teacher who is active in leading developments. It has been recognised that staff at Ysgol Bae Baglan have needed to focus their attention on developing their own school in these early stages and as such the primary schools have

needed to take a greater role than previously in partnership working.

54. Despite early concerns by some of the primary schools, mainly around fears of being 'taken over' and not having a voice in collaborative working, it is felt that an effective partnership approach has been developed with Ysgol Bae Baglan and work has been undertaken on creating consistent policies across the cluster; for example the attendance policy is common to all the schools.
55. It was noted that that Ysgol Bae Baglan has been particularly accommodating to partnership working through sharing facilities including providing rooms for meetings and offering the use of the Ysgol Bae Baglan minibus.

Conclusion

56. The review confirmed the many successes achieved by the school in its first year of opening, and verified that the aims and aspirations of the Council/SSIP programme in developing the school have been largely met.
57. Additionally the review clarified that opportunities exist for future school reorganisations and new build projects to learn from some of the successes achieved and from the challenges faced in establishing Ysgol Bae Baglan. As highlighted by groups involved in the review, these included the need for:
 - Improved communication with key groups throughout the school reorganisation process
 - Enabling greater pupil/staff/governor involvement in the design and construction process
 - Greater recognition of the importance of transition and more support to facilitate this – more shared training for staff prior to opening, pupil transition days etc.

- More support and monitoring for closing schools and better co-operation between schools and the local authority.
- Greater awareness of the challenges faced by school communities throughout the reorganisation process and during the early years of a new school opening.

Benefiting from ‘lessons learned’

58. In 2018 four new build schools will open across Neath Port Talbot and already some of the lessons learned from Ysgol Bae Baglan have helped to improve the processes involved. These include :
- SSIP officer attendance at newly established temporary Governing Body meetings to assist and improve communication, to provide support for Governors in recognising priorities and making key decisions, and in guiding them through the formal and informal processes needed for establishing a new school
 - SSIP officer attendance at all design and construction meetings with a view to becoming the link between schools and the design and construction teams, particularly in the early stages of a build before key school staff are appointed and when many important decisions have to be made.
 - Greater communication with closing schools, providing step by step guidance and support for many months before closure and involving many different local authority teams, to enable schools to feel in control of the process and to make the best choices for the pupils and staff transferring to the new builds.
 - Greater support for pupil involvement – SSIP officers to facilitate work with construction community liaison officers and schools, to ensure pupil involvement in build progress, and to maintain links with the schools and pupils during the process.
 - Greater communication and involvement of other education groups – Education Development Service, inclusion services, Support for

Learning teams, etc. to further provide support leading up to opening and in the early years to ensure the best decisions are being made for pupils.

Financial Impacts

59. There are no financial impacts directly associated with this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

60. There are no equality impacts directly associated with this report.

Workforce impacts

61. There are no workforce impacts directly associated with this report.

Legal impacts

62. There are no legal impacts directly associated with this report.
63. The Council's school organisation programme is being delivered in accordance with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and associated Welsh Government School Organisation Code.

Risk management

64. There are no risks directly associated with this report.

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

65. There are no Welsh language impact assessment issues directly associated with this report.

Consultation

66. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

67. The report is for information purposes only.

Reasons for proposed decision

68. Not required

Implementation of the decision

69. Not required

Appendices

N/A

List of background papers

- a) Cabinet Report: May 2013
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20130529/Agenda/\\$CAB-290513-REP-EL.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20130529/Agenda/$CAB-290513-REP-EL.doc.pdf)
- b) Cabinet Report: July 2013
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20130717/Agenda/\\$CAB-170713-REP-EL-AE.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20130717/Agenda/$CAB-170713-REP-EL-AE.doc.pdf)
- c) Strategic School Improvement Programme Principles Paper: September 2008
[https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/\\$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf](https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20080924/Agenda/$CAB-240908-REP-EL-KN.doc.pdf)
- d) Welsh Government - School Organisation Code: July 2013
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130719-school-organisation-codes->

en.pdf

e) School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/1/pdfs/anaw_20130001_en.pdf