



MINUTES

Llanidloes Schools' Federation Governing Body Meeting; Wednesday 3rd July 2024, 6.30 pm at the primary school

PRESENT

Margot Jones, Clare Bound, Daniel Owen, Elen Chenetier, Linda Broughall, Eloisa Isaac, Sarah Purdy, Adrian Foulkes, Christoph Schultz, Jamie Jones, Lisa Ashton, Heather Willis, Jordan Davies

IN ATTENDANCE

Huw Cripps (LA School Improvement Adviser), Richard Williams (secondary school assistant headteacher), Sue Bound (business manager), Helen Rees (clerk)

The chair welcomed governors to the meeting and read a statement on behalf of the chair and vice chair regarding recent press coverage of the secondary school:

We are unable to share any specific information with you as governors other than what has been released publicly in press releases or in communication to the school community. We are sure we can all agree this is a complex and difficult situation for all concerned and we are in discussion with the local authority about the way forward. We are working together to respond to the situation whilst being aware of the need to move things forward quickly and we are making every effort to do so and will share as much detail as we can as soon as we are able to do so. However, until we can confirm exactly what the next steps are, it would not be appropriate to share any further information as it is possible that governors may be asked to conduct a role of some kind at a later stage. Be assured the wellbeing of learners and the school community are central to all thinking around this issue.

Huw Cripps, LA School Improvement Adviser (SIA), was welcomed to the meeting. Mr Cripps told governors that he had been a headteacher for 17 years and was now part of the LA Schools Improvement Service. He had been working with Mr Owen since the Estyn inspection. Mr Cripps had spent the whole day at the secondary school, getting to know the school and staff. Following the inspection the school had been placed into Estyn review category and given five recommendations. After working on the recommendations for approximately one year, Mr Owen would write a report on progress for Estyn, then meet with the lead inspector to discuss. Mr Cripps would also write a report which would be sent to Estyn and Anwen Orrells, the LA Head of School Improvement and Learning, who would also meet with Estyn. The lead inspector would then decide whether to remove the category or escalate to 'requires significant improvement'. Mr Cripps told governors that the recommendations from Estyn had been written into the SDP and much progress had already been made. Other SIAs would also support staff to make improvements and the school should be in a good position in a year's time. Governors commented that they wanted to ensure that good progress was made and that they were aware of the school's situation. Mr Cripps told governors that there were three dates when he and Anwen Orrells would be in school for a full day, and that he would regularly be in school for meetings with senior and middle leaders. Written reports would be compiled. The headteacher told governors that that evidence had already been gathered, for example at the recent Listen to Learners event, when the SIA had been present. Mr Cripps commented that the LA officers would be working in partnership with the school to secure improvements.

Huw Cripps left the meeting

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Karl Lewis and Louise Jones.

The meeting was quorate, therefore business proceeded.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST/BUSINESS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Gareth Morgan had been appointed to another term of office as an LA governor.

Karl Lewis had nominated Sally Fowler as an LA governor, leaving one vacancy for an LA governor.

4. BUSINESS OF MEETING

It was agreed to follow the order of business as set out in the agenda. The chair had identified two items to be discussed under 'any other business'.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting of the governing body held on 24th April were confirmed and would be filed in the schools' file.

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

There were no such matters.

7. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT, SECONDARY SCHOOL

The headteacher told governors that the Spring term review visit had been cancelled by the LA due to the Estyn inspection. He detailed the progress that had been made in relation to the SDP as highlighted in the headteacher's report. A report was being finalised following the recent listen to learners and work scrutiny event. The SIA had requested that two additional recommendations around standards and the curriculum be added to the SDP but the Senior SIA had made clear that the five priorities in the SDP could correspond directly with the Estyn recommendations. A current focus was increased precision in planning for progression. Governors were told that the approach of senior and middle leaders would be standardised and the fortnightly schedule of line management meetings would be reintroduced to increase accountability. The Senior SIA would be closely involved in order to capitalise on his experience.

School attendance had been identified as a national issue and had been over 94% pre-pandemic, 88.6% during the Estyn inspection and was now nearly 90%, better than some other local schools. It was anticipated that attendance

would be below modelled outcomes, indicating that further work was needed. The pastoral team met weekly to focus on identified individuals and there was a programme of incentives in place including trips, chocolate rewards and a termly brunch. Governors asked how children who had good attendance perceived rewards given to children with poor attendance and were told that all pupils were rewarded equally for attendance.

Governors asked if the reasons for non-attendance had been analysed and were told that parental attitudes to school attendance had changed and that children were more likely to be kept at home for feeling 'under the weather'. A spreadsheet was maintained of all pupils whose attendance fell below a specific threshold and used to track the impact of interventions. For example, a place on the Game Changer project had been enough to make a significant difference in some cases, whilst in others, every avenue had been explored with very little effect. These cases tended to culminate with the parents choosing Elective Home Education (EHE) for their child as they did not intend their child to return to school. Governors were told that the LA was currently reluctant to issue fixed-penalty notices for unauthorised absences.

Governors asked whether the primary school had the same issues and were told that the school had worked hard to improve attendance. A spreadsheet was used to track and identify patterns of absence which were then targeted for action. Attendance had been adversely affected by a high number of term-time holidays, which was at least partly due to the price differential between holidays taken during term-time and school holidays. The LA Education Welfare Officer was developing a cluster attendance pathway to help ensure a consistent approach. The headteacher told governors that the primary school did not use a reward programme but, if issues were identified, considered the fulfilment of individual learners.

The secondary school headteacher told governors that David Thompson, LA School Estates Manager, had visited the school regarding the fencing works required. Plans for traffic management at the front of the school would have to be finalised before fencing was installed. Anwen Orrells had agreed to expedite this. It was noted that the action plan submitted to Estyn had a deadline of December for completion of the work.

Governors were told that the Health and Wellbeing AoLE had been given more curriculum time in Years 7 and 8 and now included food and fashion to increase curriculum breadth. Cross-curricular working had also been strengthened. Strong Welsh Bacalaureate results were expected in the summer and the Sweet programme continued to be delivered in tutor time in Years 9, 10 and 11.

The actual budget outturn for 2023-24 showed a £37K variance from the probable outturn due to issues already identified to governors. Governors asked whether it was correct, as stated, that an additional £18K had been spent on supply cover in February during the lead-up to inspection. The headteacher told governors that this amount included cover for three long-term sickness absences. The 2024-25 budget was in slightly better position than originally forecast and showed a £170K surplus at the end of the year with the options as costed and a £25K surplus at the end of 2025-26. Staff would continue to work to maximise resources and there would be reviews of the curriculum provision and leadership structure. The LA planned to conduct a thorough review which could potentially identify areas for further savings, or highlight shortcomings in the funding formula.

A new financial management software package would be rolled out to schools from September. The software provided useful analysis and should be clearer for governors to use. The business manager offered to show the software to any interested governors.

8. SECONDARY SCHOOL SDP PRIORITIES 2024-25

The headteacher told governors that the SDP priorities for 2024-25 had effectively been set by Estyn and were as previously circulated and agreed.

9. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT, PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

Governors were told that there was a three year plan for each AoLE with every member of school staff included. The timetable of staff meetings had been changed to support curriculum development.

The number on roll was currently 261. The admission number had been incorrectly set at 38, had been re-calculated and gone through consultation, so would be 53 from September 2025. Unfortunately this meant that some children had been refused a space due to capacity, without the school's knowledge. It had been agreed that, from now until September 2025, the school would be consulted on any admission requests for years in which there were between 38 and 52 children.

The secondary school headteacher told governors that the admission number was 117 and was oversubscribed by around 50 applications for Year 7 places every year.

Attendance for the first half of the summer term was just under 93%, so lower than pre-pandemic.

Mid Wales Opera Company had carried out a week's residency with children in Year 3 and 4. The children had written an opera, made props and costumes and performed it to their parents at the end of the week. The primary school had been one of just two English-medium schools taking part in Sioe Cynradd at the opening ceremony of the Urdd Eisteddfod. 25 children had been involved and the Sioe had been a great success. Children in Year 6 were rehearsing Matilda Jr for their leavers' show. Governors were invited to the performance at 6.00 pm on Wednesday 10th July.

10. PRIMARY SCHOOL SDP PRIORITIES 2024-25

The headteacher told governors that a Support Visit with the LA SIA, Linda Green, was scheduled for 8th July. Governors were asked to consider the SDP priorities for 2024-25 which would be discussed further with the SIA during the visit.

The headteacher asked governors to consider that Priority 1, to develop consistent planning for progression across the curriculum, should be continued from the previous year as planned. The aim would be to improve the depth and breadth of learning and to embed sideways progression, increasing knowledge and encouraging independent learning. It was suggested that Priority 2 should be Estyn's first recommendation, to improve pupils' writing skills in English, and that Priority 3 should be Estyn's second recommendation, to provide more purposeful opportunities for pupils to improve their work in response to feedback.

Governors commented that these priorities had already been identified and that it was essential to allow time for changes to become embedded. It was felt that the priorities had been sharply defined and it was important not to dilute their focus. Governors agreed that choosing one thing and doing it well before moving on had been a successful strategy for improvement. Governors asked how Priority 3 would be addressed and were told that the school had undertaken extensive research into feedback which all pointed to verbal feedback being more effective than written feedback. Therefore, every three weeks, children reviewed their own learning, considering whether they had achieved their targets and what their next steps were. Some classes used treasure boxes for children to place examples of their progress in which were then regularly reviewed and revisited. Approaches such as these had made a real difference with children being responsible for their learning and making improvements come alive for them. The headteacher told governors that an ongoing challenge was to make this consistent for every child. Governors commented that learning how to learn was a vital life-long skill.

11. POLICIES AND PUBLICATIONS

The Teachers' Pay Policy 2023-24, as circulated, was adopted by the governing body.

12. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Works to the secondary school DT block roof meant that the usual fire exit would not be available. An alternative fire exit plan had been written and signed off by the LA. Two ceilings would be renewed during the summer holiday with the work financed by the LA.

Lighting for the primary school car parks would be installed over the summer holiday. Two sets of windows, four fire doors and ceiling tiles in two separate areas would also be replaced with all works financed by the LA.

Governors asked whether the issue over children transferring buses in the primary school bus lane for onward travel to Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon had been resolved and were told that the children now transferred at the secondary school site, carefully supervised by the drivers. Governors were told that the arrangement was safer for the children. Improved routes to encourage walking and cycling to school were being considered. Governors agreed that the planned double yellow lines on the road outside the schools could well make congestion worse at the beginning and end of the day.

13. SAFEGUARDING

No matters were identified for discussion.

14. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The meeting of the Curriculum and Strategic Planning Committee planned for 12th June had been cancelled due to bereavement.

15. GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT

Adrian Foulkes and Linda Broughall had completed safeguarding training. Elen Chenetier and Helen Rees had attended Exclusion Appeals training; Linda Broughall had attended part of this training.

16. DOCUMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS AND/OR CLERK

Both schools had been pleased to receive congratulatory letters from the Town Council following publication of their Estyn reports.

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

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

A governor requested that correspondence be read out, but the content was deemed confidential and the Chair reminded all of the statement shared at the beginning of the meeting.

Governors were invited to the Federation Summer Concert at the high school on Thursday 4th July.

Eloisa Isaac, Jamie Jones, Lisa Ashton, Heather Willis, Jordan Davies, Richard Williams and Sue Bound left the meeting

18. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

It was resolved according to The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005, Section 48 that parts of items 9 and 17 be minuted as confidential.

19. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Governors were asked to notify any such items to the clerk.

20. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Full governing body
25th September 2024

Curriculum and strategic planning committee
Autumn term 2024

Staffing and finance committee
Autumn term 2024