

Appendix 2 – Ruthin Review – Progress of the initial proposals from 2013

1.0 What were the proposals?

- 1.1 Cabinet considered in June 2013 a range of proposals to identify the way forward for primary sector education in the Ruthin area. The proposals impacted on all schools in the area which had differing implications.
- 1.2 In total 6 recommendations were brought forward to enable a more long term sustainable provision in the Ruthin area. The report stated that the extent and rate of change will depend on financial resources. In the following paragraphs the initial recommendations and rationale are provided in italics and the progress made follows.

2.0 Proposal 1 – Creation of new Area School to serve the communities of Clocaenog and Cyffylliog



Ysgol Carreg Emlyn's New area School, opened in June 2019.

- 2.1 *The review process identified a strong desire to retain education provision in the rural areas to the West of Ruthin. At present 55 full time pupils attend the two schools, with Ysgol Clocaenog experiencing a high demand at present, whilst numbers have dropped in recent years at Ysgol Cyffylliog. As neither of the sites is suitable for extending, it is recommended that Denbighshire creates a new area school to serve these communities. In the initial stage, the area school will be based on the existing sites with Reception to Year 2 (Foundation Phase) pupils attending the Cyffylliog site and Years 3 to 6 (Key Stage 2) pupils attending the Clocaenog site.*
- 2.2 *This should be considered as a two phased approach with a longer term commitment to create a single site school which could enable both existing sites to close and a new facility being opened, potentially linked to community facilities. It is suggested that this first phase of change should occur for the start of September 2014.*
- 2.3 Following the decision of Cabinet a formal consultation was progressed to enable a new Area school to be created. Following careful consideration of the views of the community a statutory notice was published. This drew a small number of objections and following review of these the Cabinet agreed to proceed with the proposal.
- 2.4 This allowed a new Temporary Governing Body (TGB) to be formed and Denbighshire worked closely with the TGB to enable the new school named Ysgol Carreg Emlyn to be established as of September 2014. The TGB agreed to operate with Foundation Pupils attending the Cyffylliog site and Key Stage 2 pupils (7-11) attending the Clocaenog site.

2.5 In terms of the long term external funding was secured via Band A of the 21st Century Schools Programme and following a lengthy planning process a new school was opened in June 2019. This has enabled the two former sites to be declared surplus to requirements and discussions are ongoing with the local communities in respect of their future use.

3.0 Proposal 2 – Closure of Ysgol Llanbedr with the transfer of pupils to Ysgol Borthyn, Ruthin subject to parental preference

3.1 *The review process noted the recent decline in pupil numbers at Ysgol Llanbedr and the concerns of the Governing Body and others that this issue should not be considered in isolation when any decision was made on the future of the school. However in considering provision within the town of Ruthin and its close environment, there appears to be significant over provision of English medium places. Ysgol Llanbedr, (as is Ysgol Borthyn) is an English Medium Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled School. At present, analysis of parental demand has identified only 20 pupils within the natural catchment area for the school opting for English medium education. At present within close proximity there would be an alternative English medium church school at Ysgol Borthyn (2.8 miles) and non –faith provision at Ysgol Gellifor (2.3 miles) and Rhos Street (1.9 miles). Therefore in view of the need to reduce the overall supply for such provision, it is recommended that consultation should commence regarding the recommendation that Ysgol Llanbedr should close at the end of the 2013/2014 academic year.*

3.2 A proposal to close the school was progressed and approved in January 2013. The closure was subsequently referred to the Welsh Government in February 2014. In January 2015 the Welsh Government confirmed that the decision should not be supported due to “procedural flaws”.

3.3 The Council after careful consideration agreed to undertake further consultation on the future of the school and a second decision to close the school was made in February 2016. The matter was referred to the Welsh Government in March 2016. The merits of the referral were considered by the Welsh Government for over 2 years with a decision finally made by the Cabinet Secretary in October 2018 to allow the school to remain open.

3.4 During the decision making process on the second consultation in 2016, Ysgol Llanbedr initiated a partnership approach with Ysgol Trefnant, also a Church in Wales school, with a shared headship agreed. As a consequence of the decision for the school to remain open the two Governing Bodies in 2019 agreed to formalise this arrangement and agreement in accordance with the Federated Schools regulations was made in September 2020.

4.0 Proposal 3 – Ruthin Town Area



Ysgol Pen Barras and Rhos Street School relocated to the Glasdir site in April 2018

- 4.1 *The review noted strong support for the continued provision from all three town schools, whilst acknowledging the long term difficulties associated with the Rhos Street / Ysgol Penbarras site. This shared site has significant access problems from the main A494 Trunk Road with no suitable drop off areas for pupils, leading to congestion and safety issues. This site also relies heavily on mobile provision, particularly for Ysgol Penbarras. The findings of the review and an assessment of the suitability of the site suggests that as an immediate priority, the Council should identify the suitability for potentially building a new school campus at the Glasdir site to the North of the Town. Initial feasibility has suggested that the land currently allocated in the Local Development Plan for a new school may be able to accommodate the needs of both Rhos Street and Ysgol Penbarras. This option needs to be considered in greater detail before any decisions are made.*
- 4.2 *Linked to any proposal for the Glasdir site is the future for both Ysgol Borthyn and Ysgol Rhewl. The need to ensure diversity of choice through continued faith provision (particularly should the recommendation to close Ysgol Llanbedr be progressed) has led to the recommendation that Ysgol Borthyn should be retained.*
- 4.3 *The study of the Ysgol Rhewl site identified scope to expand the current provision. However in considering this, the state of the current buildings at the site need to be considered and the need for investment in these buildings to bring them up to a suitable standard for long term provision. Overall, it may be difficult to justify significant investment in the Ysgol Rhewl site should new provision be built on the Glasdir site. Therefore the findings of the review suggest that the future of the school should be considered in conjunction with the Glasdir development. This would include the option for the closure of Ysgol Rhewl upon completion of the works for the new school(s). Any proposal that may arise to close Ysgol Rhewl, would require formal consultation and the publication of a statutory notice.*
- 4.4 *In respect of formal proposals, should either or both Rhos Street and Ysgol Penbarras move from their existing site to the Glasdir site, if the school does not change significantly in size, there would be no need for statutory proposals to be published as the school would transfer sites by less than a mile.*
- 4.5 This recommendation commenced feasibility works to establish options for investment. The conclusion was the development of a business case for investment in new facilities for Ysgol Penbarras and Rhos Street School and the progression of a closure notice for Ysgol Rhewl.
- 4.6 The funding via the 21st Century Schools Programme for the investment in the new facilities was approved in June 2016 with the two new school buildings opening in

April 2018. Alongside this the Cabinet approved the statutory proposal for the closure of Ysgol Rhewl with the school closing as of August 2018.

5.0 Proposal 4 – Proposed Federation of Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd and Ysgol Pentrecelyn



Ysgol Llanfair DC opened in February 2020

- 5.1 *The consultation process identified strong support for the retention of educational provision in the communities around Llanfair DC and Pentrecelyn. From Ysgol Llanfair DC, a clear case for investment in the facilities was identified and it was accepted by many that the existing school was not fit for purpose. At Ysgol Pentrecelyn, the importance of the school within the community was also emphasised alongside the difference between providing Welsh medium and dual stream provision. In considering the needs of the wider area and the need for significant investment, a phased approach is suggested.*
- 5.2 *The first phase would involve retaining both schools and recommending that both Governing Bodies enter into discussions to form a federation. Denbighshire County Council would seek for an agreement in principal to progress this, to be in place by January 2014 with a view to the new federation commencing in September 2014. The long term plans that would form part of Band B proposals (scheduled for 2019 onwards) for 21st Century Schools, would see progression towards a new area school to serve the communities of Pentrecelyn and Llanfair DC. Any move towards a new area school would require formal consultation and this would be progressed at the appropriate time.*
- 5.3 Initial discussions with both Governing Bodies were progressed but a change in Welsh Government regulations prevented the Federation progressing. The focus switched to an amalgamation of the school. The proposal would allow an area school to be formed with the school operating across two sites in the first instance. The proposal noted the scope for a longer term vision seeing a new building established and the school moving to a single site. This was approved by Cabinet but referred to the High Court by a former pupil. The High Court quashed the decision on the grounds of “failure to take into account the language and community impact of the creation of a new single site school”.
- 5.4 Cabinet subsequently agreed to seek a replacement building for Ysgol Llanfair and for the status quo to remain for Ysgol Pentrecelyn. Funding was secured for a replacement building for Ysgol Llanfair and the new facility was opened in February 2020.

6.0 Proposal 5 – Support for Federation of Ysgol Bryn Clwyd and Ysgol Gellifor

- 6.1 *During the informal consultation stage, it was suggested that Ysgol Bryn Clwyd should be included within the Ruthin review, despite its close geographical proximity to Denbigh. This was because of the implications for any recommendation for change at Ysgol Gellifor as the schools have combined leadership and management arrangements following their federation in 2011.*
- 6.2 *Ysgol Gellifor is a popular school serving the community of Gellifor and surrounding areas. The school draws in a number of pupils from outside of its natural area and is currently at capacity. There is limited scope to extend the school.*
- 6.3 *In terms of the federation arrangements, there is a clear difference between pupil numbers at both sites: Ysgol Gellifor has a small number of surplus places (4%) whereas Ysgol Bryn Clwyd has a significant number of surplus places (67.6%). Clearly this has implications for the long term sustainability of the federation arrangements.*
- 6.4 *One of the matters questioned during the informal consultation stage was the language categories of both schools. Currently both schools are identified as Category 5, which means that only the minimum amount of Welsh has to be taught in the schools. Moving along, the Welsh language continuum would see the amount of Welsh taught in the schools increase as a response to the views of stakeholders.*
- 6.5 *The Governors have sought assurances regarding the future of Ysgol Bryn Clwyd as a consequence of this review and a desire that the long term future of the school be linked to any proposals emerging from the Ruthin review. The Council acknowledges this to prevent any further uncertainty regarding the federation.*
- 6.6 *Therefore the Council recommends to the Governing Body that the status quo should remain, subject to agreement to explore the future language category of Ysgol Bryn Clwyd. The balance of pupils at both schools will need to be addressed through the admissions arrangements.*
- 6.7 *No significant progress has been made by the schools in progressing along the language continuum.*

7.0 Proposal 6 – Retention of Ysgol Bro Famau

- 7.1 *The review has identified that the school serves predominately its local area and that both sites at Llanferres and Llanarmon are generally in good condition. However it is noted that at present there are significant surplus places at the school.*
- 7.2 *On balance, it is recommended that the status quo should remain. In the short term, the Authority will work with the Governing Body to review its current use of space.*
- 7.3 *Discussions regarding the current use of school space have taken place. As a consequence the school have reviewed how they operate and now undertake split site arrangements between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 to enable a greater focus on the respective areas of the curriculum. This has also enable a review of the capacity with a small decrease in size.*

8.0 Impacts of the findings of the review

School Places

- 8.1 Overall the Ruthin area has seen a decline in primary aged pupils attending school over the last 7 years. This has seen a decrease of 58 pupils, a reduction of just over 6% during this time period.
- 8.2 The proposals sought to remove surplus capacity via a mixture of proposals. The external decisions which led to the retention of provision at Llanbedr and Pentrecelyn has retained surplus capacity within the Ruthin area. The projects for new build sought to introduce where possible school models close to the pattern of ½ form entry, one form entry of 1.5 form entry. This has seen a small increase in capacity at these schools.

Quality of Buildings

- 8.3 The proposals and subsequent investment has made a significant impact on the quality of buildings in the Ruthin area. The proposals have seen 6 school buildings deemed surplus to requirements with the provision of 4 new school buildings. For other schools in the area investment has occurred via the Schools Building Maintenance allocation.

9.0 Feedback from the School Community

- 9.1 As projects have progressed feedback has been sought on a range of levels. Overall the feedback on new projects has been positive as the teaching and learning environment has been transformed. The investment in buildings and ICT as part of has assisted learners and for many of the schools access to school halls, breakout spaces and external areas has transformed the way schools can operate.
- 9.2 Of particular relevance has been the ability to schools to operate in recent months due to COVID 19 requirements. Some of the former sites would have raised significant challenges due to the layout of buildings to provide a safe environment.
- 9.3 Members have previously received an information report on the impact of the closure of Ysgol Rhewl. This looked at the work undertaken to assist in the transition for pupils into the new learning environment.
- 9.4 The Glasdir development has had a positive impact on Ysgol Penbarras and Rhos Street School in terms of changing the way they can deliver the curriculum and the environment for pupils. Feedback is provided in Appendix 3
- 9.5 Appendix 4 details the feedback from Carreg Emlyn on how the learning environment has been transformed for the benefits of pupils, staff and the community. The work undertaken with Governors prior to the school moving to the single new site ensured that the school was part of the wider community of Derwen, Clawddnewydd and Cyffylliog in addition to Clocaenog.
- 9.6 To date Ysgol Llanfair have been on site for less than 10 weeks. They moved into the building at the end of February with schools closing in mid March in response to COVID 19. To date they have been open fully for just over a month this term and feedback is provided in Appendix 5.
- 9.7 As part of the Closure reports for Welsh Government further discussions will take place with school stakeholders in the coming months.

Appendix 3

Glasdir development

Impact the new learning environment has had on the following:

Pupils Wellbeing

- All pupils have are now located within the same building. Previously both schools were split across various buildings and mobile accommodation.
- More toilets in school for children. Previously pupils located in mobiles had to walk across the school yard to use a toilet.
- Classrooms are larger on the whole with enough room to move around the desks. This means that the pupils have a better working environment.
- Each school has their own school hall which is available for PE and for dining.
- Additional rooms available for ALN support – more privacy and less disruptions during sessions.
- Additional room available for peripatetic music lessons.
- Outside Play Area – the children now have ample space to play outside including access to a MUGA, school yard and field.

Educational attainment

- Both schools have been awarded Excellent by Estyn for standards since moving into their new accommodation (Rhos Street – Nov 2018, Pen Barras – March 2019).
- Classrooms are suitable for the 21st century with direct access to outdoor areas.
- Ancillary rooms enable better additional support for learners.
- Better acoustics within the building – sound doesn't carry.
- Interactive screen in each class provide teachers with the tools to do their work.

Staff morale improved

- Staff have adequate space within the building with staffroom, work room and suitable offices.
- Spacious car park – staff don't need to worry about finding a parking space.
- Working environment improved:
 - More space inside and out.
 - Comfortable building both in winter and summer.

Safety

- The site is more secure – secure fence around the site and access control within the building.
- Safer for children to walk to school using network of footways around the site.
- Large car park which is used only by the schools.

Appendix 4

Ysgol Carreg Emlyn

Impact the new learning environment has had on the following:

Pupils Wellbeing

- Pupils no longer have to travel from one site to another and many have a much shorter journey to school. It is therefore less tiring for them and has had a positive impact on the Foundation Phase children especially.
- Siblings see each other during the school day and the older and younger children mix on the playground. We can now have a whole school assembly. This is beneficial for both younger and older children. It gives the school more of a family and caring feel.
- Outside Play Area – the children now have ample space to play outside including a MUGA, school yard and field. They have more space to play and socialise during their free times.
- Classrooms are larger on the whole with enough room to move around the desks. This means that the pupils have a better working environment
- School hall is available for PE during winter months. This saves the weekly journey to Canolfan Cae Cymro.
- More toilets in school for children (and staff.)
- Additional rooms available for ALN support – more privacy and less disruptions during sessions.
- Additional room available for Instrumental lessons – meaning less disruption to the sessions.
- Children can now eat lunch in the hall all together rather than in the classroom by their desks – no lingering smell all afternoon.

Educational attainment – difficult to give evidence but -

- All the above add up to happier children that in turn achieve more in general.
- We now have a school hall which can be used for PE lessons with suitable gymnastics equipment which raises the standard of gymnastic and dance skills.
- More teaching time as we do not need to travel for PE lessons
- The hall is used for other lessons such as drama, music etc. The sound and light equipment as well as a stage add to the effectiveness of the lessons and make them more enjoyable and educational for the children. The children have more chances to perform and this has improved oracy and music skills.
- Classrooms are more suitable for the 21st century.
 - o More spacious and therefore a calmer feel in the classrooms.
 - o Covered outside areas off the classrooms that can be used as a learning environment throughout the year.
 - o Interactive Board in each class
- Cylch Meithrin on site – children settle in quicker when they start school and are ready to learn.

Staff morale improved

- Spacious staffroom where staff can relax during break times.
- Spacious car park – staff don't need to worry about finding a parking space near the school any more!
- Staff from both sites have got to know each other better and more of a united feel to the school.
- Staff no longer need to travel 4 miles for a staff meeting – therefore less time wasting.
- Working environment improved
 - o Spacious classrooms

- Warm building
 - More space inside and out
- Separate offices for secretary and head teacher and therefore easier to have peace and quiet to work. Also space for private meetings.

Safety

- The school is more secure – impossible for strangers to come in and for children to walk out.
- Safer for children to get on and off the minibuses as we are now off road.

Appendix 5 – Ysgol Llanfair DC development

Pupils Wellbeing

- Pupils have parity of experiences with their peers across Wales - access to a safe space to eat as well as do PE and collective worship in the hall.
- More toilets in school for children. Previously pupils located in mobiles had to walk across the school yard to use a toilet.
- Access to sufficient and hygienic toilets. Some pupils were housed in damp mobile classrooms or eating in their classes.
- Outside Play Area – the children now have ample space to play outside including access to a MUGA, school yard and field.
- Classrooms are larger providing space to move around and adapt the class room setting. Resulting in a better working environment.
- Additional rooms available for ALN support Music lessons and break out space – more privacy and less disruptions during sessions.

Educational attainment – difficult to give evidence regarding attainment but -

- Classrooms are suitable for the 21st century with direct access to outdoor areas.
- Improved ICT infrastructure in each class, providing teachers with the tools to do their work.
- Ancillary rooms enable better additional support for learners.
- Acoustics within the building are vastly improved, providing a better learning environment.

Staff morale improved

- A big boost to morale as staff can develop their classrooms to provide continuous provision and set out their classrooms in a style conducive to learning especially in the foundation phase.
- Being housed in a light, bright school without dampness also has helped with staff wellbeing and physical health.
- Access to the outdoors ensures that teachers are able to enhance the provision using the safe space for learners outside their classrooms. Also, due to the fact that we have safe boundaries means that it enables the staff to give pupils a degree of independence.
- Staff have adequate space within the building with staffroom, work room and suitable offices.
- Car park – staff don't need to worry about finding a parking space, having issues transporting resources and equipment from their car to the school.

Safety

- The site is more secure – perimeter fencing around the site and access control within the building.
- Improved routes to school due to improvements to network of footways and safe route to the site.