

SchoolReport

Annual Meeting for Parents 29 November 2000

This year's Annual Meeting will be held in the new Cybercafé, starting at 7 p.m. Parents will be invited to discuss issues relating to the management of the school with the Governors. If sufficient parents are present the meeting may pass resolutions which the Governors must consider at their next meeting.

Agenda

- Presentation of the 1999-2000 report by the Governors
- Discussion
- Any other business

If you have a specific issue you would like to raise, please write to the Chair of Governors, Matthew Griffiths, at the school address.

Keep in touch with your school... visit us on the Web at **www.barrycomp.com**

A year of achievement



This was an exciting year for Barry Comprehensive School. It was a year during which we moved on to a single site, and our plans to provide the finest possible environment for learning for Barry's young people took a long step forward.

And it was a year in which the hard work of students, staff and parents was rewarded by excellent results in public examinations.

The school's motto is *Opportunity to Succeed*, and we are increasingly confident that we offer that chance to all our pupils. We were delighted when European Vice President Neil Kinnock visited the school to present achievement awards last summer, and when First Minister Rhodri Morgan spoke at the Barry Sixth Form presentation evening in September.

We had another famous visitor when the new Sports Hall was opened this November by Welsh Rugby coach, Graham Henry.

We believe that young people deserve every chance to do their best. Good buildings are but one

aspect of an effective school. The school improvement strategy developed by head, David Swallow, and his colleagues, builds on past achievement. Results in this year's summer exams reflect sound planning and professionalism. There was a thirteen percent improvement in the GCSE 5 A*-C pass rate, to 37%, while the 5A*-G rate reached 84% and well over 90% of year 11 left school with recognised qualifications. The school's mentoring procedures, based on assessment practices which enable careful targeting to help individual students do their best, are part of this story; so too is the support given to their children by parents.

This year will see further development of the mentoring programme and the exciting introduction of Saturday clubs where committed KS4 students will be offered additional GNVQ courses.

The Barry Sixth Form once again proved the benefits of our successful collaboration with Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School. The A-E pass rate rose to 94%, which represents an excellent outcome for sixth formers; and 54% of students achieved

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A year of achievement

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“The record of the Barry Sixth Form speaks for itself”

at least one C grade. We are building on success this year by offering yet more subject choice within the sixth form, with new courses in Psychology and Film Studies on the Barry Comprehensive Site. This year sees the beginning of the new AS and A2 examinations, which replace traditional A levels, and sixth formers will often now follow a broader course, and are offered the widest choice of subjects available in the Vale, with many different academic and vocational combinations possible.

The role of governors is strategic, and it is focused on working with head and staff to ensure that the policies that set out the framework for the development of the school are both appropriate and effectively implemented. Detailed work goes on behind the scenes in the working groups that cover finance, buildings, curriculum and pupil welfare, and these, together with regular meetings of the full governing body provide an opportunity for all governors to participate in the school’s management. Governors have been fully involved in the updating of the school development plan and the annual round of budgeting. The governing body meets at least twice each term, and more often when a particular issue needs special attention.

Two aspects of the school’s development were the focus of much detailed work by the governing body and staff.

The first of these was the man-

agement of the move on to one site, and the need to ensure that in return for passing Lower School on to our Welsh school neighbours, the new accommodation at Port Road matched our needs and was properly resourced.

Before and during the redevelopment of the site, governors and staff were involved in detailed negotiation with the Vale on the content of the building programme and the funding of new equipment, in what proved, despite some hairy moments, to be a highly successful partnership. We are grateful to the Vale, both for the quality of what has been achieved in academic provision, and for the council’s underwriting of the Sportslot bid which brought us a new Sports Hall — operated in the evenings and out of term as a community facility.

Governors also negotiated with the Vale and the governors of Ysgol Bro Morgannwg to ensure that both schools had appropriate playing field provision, and agreements were reached which have enabled BCS pupils to enjoy the use of the Colcot Sports Centre pitches at the same time as the new Welsh school has user rights on our own pitches at the western end of the Port Road site. An open and friendly working relationship has been established with our Welsh school partners which enabled issues such as access to the Lower School site, the provision of fenced boundaries, and school day timings to be resolved in a spirit of partnership.

Also an issue has been the development of our partnership with Bryn Hafren School.

It is widely recognised that the Barry Sixth Form enables opportunities to be offered to all students in Barry that would not be possible if Bryn Hafren and Barry Comprehensive offered separate provision.

The governing bodies of both schools aspired in 1993 to widen course choice, enable greater flex-



Neil Kinnock was one of several notable guests this year. He presented achievement prizes at our summer Presentation Evening.

ibility in the combination of choices, extend the vocational curriculum, and enable male and female students to study together in a mature co-educational atmosphere.

After six years, the record of the Sixth Form speaks for itself. It has exceeded expectations in terms of the improvements that have been achieved in staying-on rates and examination results. The range of courses on offer cannot be bettered. There has been significant progress until recently in achieving a balanced distribution of genders on each site. By and large the inevitable tensions over organisation and teaching in the Sixth Form have been overcome by effective joint working between senior management teams.

This year, however, saw a cloud over the future of the Sixth Form. Disagreements arose once again between Bryn Hafren and the LEA over funding arrangements, and for a period meetings at management level ceased.

An interim agreement was brokered by the LEA which enabled staff to work together to ensure a by and large smooth start to the

Sixth Form in September 2000. We regard it as an urgent matter that the issues that have troubled Bryn Hafren can be resolved and we look forward to the opportunity to work with the new governing body of our sister school to achieve this. It is very clear to us at least that, with new funding arrangements starting at 16+ in April, schools that do not collaborate will be failing their pupils and will be unable to sustain satisfactory sixth form provision.

Meanwhile, it is reassuring that advice from the National Assembly and from Estyn, the Welsh schools inspectorate, has been received that the Sixth Form could not be dismembered without statutory consultation procedures being followed.

As always this has been a year when additional responsibilities have been placed on governing bodies.

From April the so-called “Fair Funding” system devolved further budgetary responsibility to schools (see Finance report). The first chill blasts of performance management have reached the school, and governors spent many happy hours establishing scale ranges and performance targets for head and deputies. Senior management has been established as a leadership group, with new posts of Assistant Heads being offered to four staff.

It now seems sadly inevitable that at some stage soon teachers will be forced to submit themselves to the unfair processes designed to see if they qualify for “threshold” payments. Governors feel that not only is this system unfair to staff whose *collective* effort enables children to progress, but that the bureaucracy involved will add further to the burden of a senior management whose primary role should be that of lead teaching professionals.

Working group reports

Curriculum

David Kennett

The committee has dealt with the oversight of the School Development Plan, timetabling sixth form issues and examinations and examination results.

It has been a year in which the confidence of the school as a whole has risen as a result of much improved exam results at GCSE and continued success at A level. The results, which the school is proud to publish, are included in the appendix to this report.

The key issue now is to hold the gains and provide further opportunities for improvement over the coming two years. The school is planning to broaden the curriculum up to age 16 by introducing more vocational opportunities for pupils. This takes the school back to its post-war role when it was classed as a Technical school that excelled in both academic and vocational opportunities.

In the Sixth form we have introduced Curriculum 2000 that provides a mixture of two-year AS/A2 courses, one-year AS levels and GNVQ opportunities to offer students access to a still wider range of subjects during their sixth form experience.

The school is also starting to plan for the introduction of the new Community Consortium for Education and Training (CCET). These will be a commissioning body that will co-ordinate post-16 education throughout a geographical area. The objective of the new arrangements will be to cut out expensive duplication and increase the breadth of post-16 education in the Vale.

The CCET will have a profound effect on the Barry Sixth Form, the effects of which are not yet known. The school will be treating the proposed changes as an opportunity to develop yet further post-16 opportunities for students in the Barry Sixth Form.

Pupil Welfare

Kath Beaudette

Governors this year responded to several National Assembly guidance documents, including those on school attendance, behaviour and discipline and pupil support and social inclusion.

These policies enabled us to reflect on our development plan and related school policies. We have also had a special focus on other aspects of our legal responsibilities consist of, amongst other things, ensuring that:

- The Special Educational Needs Register is up to date;
- IEPs (Individual Educational Plans) for pupils are in place and up to date;
- Exclusion procedures are followed correctly.

Governors from the working group have 'shadowed' Special Needs staff for a working day.

Our findings suggest that the school is addressing a wide range of learning problems with a variety of initiatives, not all of which we have observed to their full extent. However, it has become obvious to us that our Special Needs staff and our mainstream teaching staff are having to deal with a range of sometimes quite specific educational needs. This can happen within a small group of pupils or within a larger mainstream class. We actually made this quite clear to a phone-in programme on BBC Radio Wales

The school has in place a variety of strategies for dealing with a multiplicity of learning difficulties. One of our chief achievements has bring together the curriculum needs of pupils who also present the school with behaviour and discipline problems. This has enabled us to keep pupils on the road to constructive activity, without having the black mark of exclusion on their record.

Although the formal exclusion process is regulated by legislation, we continue to operate our system of 'intervention' at a pre-

liminary stage. Governors continue to be willing to meet with parents/guardians and pupils who are at risk of exclusion to try to "head them off at the pass".

Environment

Phil Toms



A new environment for learning...

The last decade of the 20th Century saw huge changes for Barry Comprehensive. We have come from three sites spread across Barry with some premises nearly 100 years old to a single site with some of the most modern, purpose-built educational buildings in the Vale. Last summer saw the completion of consolidation plans for the school with some superb facilities coming 'online' — not least the Cyber Café which is proving hugely popular with the pupils.

The IT and Food Technology capacities of the school are now on a par with the Design and Technology facilities, widely considered to be some of the best in South Wales. Sporting provision has also taken a great leap forward with the new Sports Hall and Barry Comprehensive is now set to become a centre of excellence in many new subject areas.

Changes in how schools manage their premises will mean a greater involvement for teachers, governors and other stakeholders in decisions affecting repairs and maintenance as well as a curriculum development. The Governors in partnership with the Head and staff are developing a capital investment strategy and asset management plans to ensure that the head start into the 21st Century is maintained.

Finance

Russell Grant

This has been a slightly unusual year. The local authority settlement from the National Assembly enabled a small amount of growth in the school's budget, and additional money came from the Assembly for all schools in Wales.

We were also helped by the money provided by the Vale to equip our new facilities — which amongst other things helped us to install a food technology suite and to vastly improve our stock of computers.

The curriculum has benefited through the extension of the whole-school network, two cyber cafés, and extensive access to the internet,

This was also year when governors took on greater responsibilities in terms of financial control. The "100%" delegation of the budget for the school under "Fair Funding" demands much closer scrutiny of the school's financial systems. Accordingly we established a financial monitoring committee to plan and oversee both spending and financial management. This year the committee will work closely with the Curriculum Working Group in the preparation of the School Development Plan and medium and long term forecasting.

The school now operates "cheque book" management and can earn interest on investment of its budget. The switch to the new system went smoothly and we have received an excellent audit report from the Vale, which has praised the quality of our procedures.

Governors had the opportunity to contract out services traditionally undertaken by the Vale. By and large we have not gone down this path. Consideration was given to establishing our own payroll system, but for the time being we get good value for money from the Vale Council.

The Governors 1999–2000

The Governing Body is made up of elected parents, nominees of the local education authority (the Vale Council), elected teaching and non-teaching staff, co-optees, and the head teacher. The Governors are:

Parents: Kath Beaudette, Pat Beard*, Tina Webb, Steve James, John Doel (one vacancy)

LEA: Blodwen Morgan, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Emlyn Williams, K. Tancock, G. Ellis

Teachers: Jeff Brown, Brian Williams

Non-teaching staff: André Desrosiers

Co-optees: Russell Grant, Matthew Griffiths, David Kennett, Nick Paulakis, John Stacy Marks

Headteacher: David Swallow
*nominated governor for special needs.

In addition Phil Toms was co-opted to serve on the Environment Working Group and attend the Governing Body as an observer, and Derek Butler was co-opted to serve on the Pay and Performance Committee, also with observer status.

During the year, the following also served as governors: Steve Griffiths, Kevin Francis, Derek Butler, and David Woodward (parents), John Doel and Neil Brown (LEA); and Phil Toms (co-opted). The next full elections for parent governors will be held in September 2004.

The Chair of the Governing Body is *Matthew Griffiths* and the Vice Chair is *David Kennett*. The Chair may be contacted via the school. The Clerk to the Governing Body is *Janice Davies*, who should be contacted through the Department of Learning and Development at the Vale of Glamorgan Council (tel 01446 700111).

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Planning for school improvement

The school will be inspected during the summer term, 2001, six years after our last inspection. In 1994 we were praised amongst other things for our caring environment, our effective pastoral system, our assessment and planning — all of which were bringing about an improvement in results. Our action plan focused on underachievement, attendance, and the development of the Barry Sixth Form.

Our current School Development Plan builds on the success we have had in implementing action post-inspection. It concentrates on assessing performance to tackle underachievement, the monitoring and evaluation of what happens in the classroom, and strategies to support students and set targets for them to do their best in tests and exams. It also focuses on the provision of the right environment for learning — including factors such as the use of the LRC to support the curriculum and independent study. The Plan is under review at the time of writing, and will focus on a three-year, costed strategy that builds on the school's achievements. We look forward to learning from inspection and building its outcomes into our future planning.

Meanwhile, key elements in raising achievement at GCSE, for instance, have included the use of internal assessment data as well as the county's sophisticated

“value added” analyses to identify children who need close support and mentoring, and the involvement of parents in the process of target setting that sets progressive goals for improvement.

These resources have enabled governors to set targets for the school that are ambitious but realistic.

Work during the past year has included the development of consistent recording and collation of performance data for pupils in years 7 to 9. The school needs to be able to draw on an academic profile for every child as a basis on which to help each to have the fullest opportunity to succeed.

Attendance, of course, remains a key issue, and substantial progress is being made towards satisfactory attendance in each year group, with systems in place to follow up first day absence quickly, monitor patterns of absence, and reward those who achieve good attendance.

At sixth form level, we have focused on extending the range of subject options available for students — both academic and vocational. We have worked with staff at Bryn Hafren to ensure that the new Sixth Form pattern of AS and A2 exams is introduced smoothly. We believe firmly that co-operation at sixteen-plus provides the best way of giving sixth formers in Barry the best possible range of course options, and an appropriate social environment in which to study.

Sporting achievement

The school continues to support a fine tradition of competition and success for its teams and for individual pupils. Significant achievements this year include:

Athletics: Our senior boys were county champions, and reached the final of the Knock-out Cup. James Nugent (Y9) represented the county at multi events and gymnastics. Calum McLaggan (Y9) competed in 100m, 200m and 4x100m events and



was Welsh champion at 200m. Joel Sheppard (Y9) was Welsh long jump champion. Dominic

Lack (Y9) was Welsh champion in the 1500m walk. Chris McGhan was senior boys county champion at high jump.

Rugby: Our Y7 team were Vale champions; out under-13 and over-16 teams competed in the Roslyn Park Sevens. Marvin Cordle and Joel Sheppard played for South Wales at under-14 level in Rugby League, beating the South of England at Rodney Parade.

Football: Barry Comprehensive's team were under-19 county champions, and reached the final sixteen of the English and Welsh schools tournament.

Community links

The school actively seeks and positively encourages close working links with the local community.

As a result many local organisations and clubs use the school's facilities on a regular basis.

The Barry Adult Education programme is based at Barry Comprehensive, with classes taking place on four evenings in the

week that make full use of our resources, including our extensive ICT facilities.

Other organisations regularly using the school include football and rugby clubs, karate, aerobics, line dancing, the Air Cadets, caravan clubs and the Barry Town Library service.

Duke of Edinburgh students support the Cwm Talwg Wood-

lands Residents Group through ground clearing and maintenance projects. They also support the Knap Beachwatch project.

Many pupils support national and local charities through school activities. Recently 70 year 9 students and their teachers took part in a twenty-four hour “Teachathon” in aid of Shelter.