

School Report

Dear Parents

A school's Annual Report to parents is an opportunity to bring everyone up to date with the school's successes during the past year. It also sets the scene for the Annual Meeting for Parents, which gives everyone an opportunity to come together, exchange views, and ask questions about the school.

This year's annual meeting will take place on November 29th, at 7 pm in the Cybercafé. The governors and head teacher, David Swallow, look forward to meeting you then.

This year's report brings you up to date on an exciting year. For the first time all our students are on one site, following the building programme that enabled the new Welsh school to open at Colcot Road.

The meeting is *your* opportunity to discuss issues relating to the school,

its organisation and performance directly with the governing body.

If sufficient parents are present there is also the opportunity for the meeting to require the governors to consider motions passed at the annual meeting.

Please come along at 7 o'clock on 29 November, and feel free to ask us questions about any aspect of this report, or any other issue that you would like to raise. You can give notice of questions in advance, if you like, by writing to me at the school address.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Griffiths
Chair of the Governing Body



A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE?

In September 2000, the school moved onto a single site, as Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg took over the lower school buildings at Colcot Road. As Kath Beaudette notes elsewhere in this report we now have very "user-friendly" buildings, and younger children have their own special area so that they don't feel swamped by bigger pupils.

We continued to develop our mentoring programmes, and we were delighted by the results gained by students in the summer exams. These are tabulated in full in the annex to this report. Our GCSE 5 A*-C pass rate reached 42%, an increase of 5% over 2000. Meanwhile the A level pass rate on the Barry Comprehensive site was 97%, an increase of 25% and the highest in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Sixth Form

Despite the time tabling nightmare of the new pattern of AS and A2 courses, the Sixth Form partnership with Bryn Hafren continues to demonstrate its potential. We hope to work closely with governors in our partner school to plan the development of the Barry Sixth within the new framework of 16+ education and training partnerships. Meanwhile we have widened year 10 options by offering GNVQ Health and Social Care in partnership with Barry College, following the lead set by our successful joint provision of Hospitality and Catering. We have also started a twilight course in GCSE Spanish.

These innovations are signs of exciting possibilities for the school's development over the next few years.

Community

While there is uncertainty as to how the new community educational and training partnerships will work to enhance 16+ provision, the Barry Sixth Form has the potential to expand its provision beyond the school day, opening its doors to the community to offer courses to adults keen to continue their education as well as to young people.

The school should be at the heart of the community. Our successful partnership with the Vale's community education service helps meet this objective, but there are broader opportunities still. Extending the school day would not only make the delivery of existing courses easier, but it would let us offer new subjects, with the potential that we could

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become a specialist centre for the Vale of Glamorgan in some subjects.

This open approach to learning in the community is in tune with the Assembly's recent paving document *The learning country*, which sets out government aspirations for schools and colleges in Wales.

Local comprehensive schools are identified as future centres for community learning. And our superb information technology resources position the school well to be a focus for ICT in the community. There will be other ways, too, in co-operation with Bryn Hafren to encourage education as a lifelong activity in Barry.

Linking with primary schools

The learning country signals other changes. We have been working over the past year to extend our links with local primary schools in order to smooth the transition to secondary education for pupils entering year 7. The government plans to set up formal consortia between secondary schools and their feeders; we believe this would be a very positive development.

While we have aspirations for which we seek to plan strategically, there are areas of uncertainty that need to be recognised. Above all difficulties for all local schools stem from the problems faced by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Money

Not only do Vale schools get less cash per pupil than other schools in Britain, but lack of money means that the Vale finds it hard to offer effective support to schools. Governors have resolved to avoid staff cuts at all costs; but inadequate budgets could mean cuts in teaching materials, and, with numbers of students entering the school rising significantly, a possibility that, over time, class size may have to increase. The solution to this situation lies with the Assembly, which surely has a duty to ensure that pupils throughout Wales are treated equally, and that the Vale Council has the money to maintain an effective advisory service.

Another key area of uncertainty surrounds the future structure of secondary schooling in Barry. The Vale, which was inspected itself this year, has not found the opportunity to develop its proposed consultation on co-education. Governors have urged the Vale to ensure that this consultation does take place and that the option of reorganisation is included in its 2002 School Organisation Plan.

Inspection

Matthew Griffiths



Parents have received a detailed summary of the inspection which took place last May. The inspection team enjoyed their time at the school. Staff found the inspection rigorous, but supportive.

The inspection team concluded that ours is a "well-led school with many good and some very good features." Amongst other aspects, we were complimented on the pupils' behaviour, relationships between children and teachers, the significant upward trend of our results, and the school's "outstanding leadership".

Action plan

Governors responded to the key issues flagged up by the inspectors in the mandatory post-inspection Action Plan, approved in September.

The plan seeks to enhance the quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement; and to continue to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. It addresses standards of achievement in the few areas where this was found to be unsatisfactory. We will continue our efforts to improve attendance and punctuality and address the quality of planning for the delivery of key skills across the curriculum.

As in many other schools we have problems meeting the legal requirements for religious education but we will look at how we can achieve these in respect of years 11 and 12 and consider how to meet the duty of providing a daily act of religious worship for all pupils.

Our school development plan will be updated to incorporate all post-inspection issues. However, we were pleased that our SDP had previously identified most of the points inspectors suggested we focus on.

Governors must report annually to parents on progress against the action plan.

Finance

Russell Grant

Schools in the Vale of Glamorgan receive less money per pupil than any other schools in England and Wales. This is a result of the way the National Assembly determines the council's revenue support grant.

Our limited budget continues to restrain the ambitions of staff and governors for the school's development. To balance the 2001-2 budget it has been necessary to make cuts of over £250,000.

We gather that the Vale's position is unlikely to improve next year. All parents should be concerned by this situation.

Monitoring

In order to ensure that the school is cost-effective and achieves value for money the governors' Finance Committee works closely with school management. During the course of the year the former finance working group was replaced by a committee with delegated powers, which include the monthly authorising of financial commitments and expenditure and the regular checking and monitoring of expenditure and income against budget.

Our key concerns are to ensure resources to deliver our development plan while maintaining current staffing levels and protecting teachers' jobs. In order to provide the up-to-date computers that the information technology curriculum demands governors have approved the leasing rather than purchase of equipment. Resources are protected in order to renew equipment at the end of the current leasing agreements.

From April 2001 we have operated our own banking facility. The school's administrative staff have once again been highly commended by the Vale council's audit department. Inspectors likewise commented on the efficiency of our internal accounting systems and the financial skills demonstrated by school management. The expertise of the Bursar and her staff free governors and senior management team to manage financial planning strategically.

● If you share the concerns of teachers and governors in the Vale about school funding, why not raise this issue with your Assembly member, Jane Hutt? Write to Jane at the National Assembly, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff.

Curriculum

David Kennett/Kath Beaudette

Two key approaches have contributed to the school's improvement in exam performance: the continued development of pupil and family support measures, and the effort to produce a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils and gives parity of esteem to vocational and academic subjects.

Many parents will be aware of our mentoring and pupil support programmes but they may not realise how hard teachers have to work to achieve the school motto:

“Opportunity to Succeed.”

Parents may not also realise that as well as the simplistic “5 A*-C” benchmark popular with the media, this school scores very highly in “value-added” terms — the difference between potential achievement on entry to the school and outcomes at 16+.

Many students exceed their forecast results and this reflects credit on pupils, parents, teachers and school alike.

Meeting the challenge

A broader and more flexible curriculum has given pupils more freedom of choice to pick subjects that best suit their interests and abilities. This improves both motivation and attendance — with students voluntarily attending school outside normal hours to study a wider curriculum.

Barry College of Further Education has been very supportive in helping us to improve choice in vocational subjects by innovative sharing of resources and time tabling.

Challenges

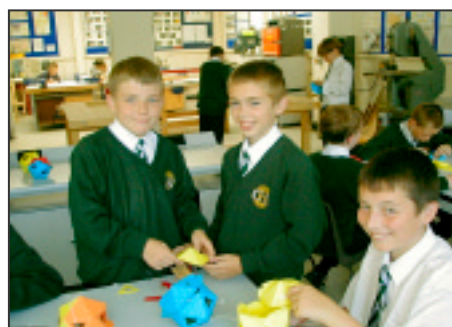
The coming twelve months will see major changes in funding for post-16 education. These changes will require the school to look at innovative patterns of delivering education, both for 16-19 year-olds, and for adult learners.

Our partnership with Bryn Hafren is a good basis on which to go forward, as are our links with adult education in Barry and Barry College. The National Assembly has set an agenda for lifelong learning, and, in conjunction with our partners, we can place this school at the heart of a learning community.

The past three years have shown that we are capable of meeting these challenges and with the continuing support of parents, pupils and the community at large we will continue to do so.

Staffing

David Kennett



In line with Welsh Assembly requirements the school has had to develop new approaches to management. The Governing Body's role under the new pay and performance legislation has developed during the year.

Senior management is now structured as a Leadership Group, which is made up of the head teacher, two deputies (David Giles and David Walker) and four assistant heads (Hugh Griffiths, Lyn Howells, Mike Jones, and Caroline Oxenham). This team is responsible for leading and directing the school's development.

Management objectives are based on the school's development plan, as approved by the governing body. Through its Staffing Committee the governing body agrees personal targets for the head and his colleagues that are related to individual responsibilities within the development plan.

The committee monitors and reviews the achievement of these targets and makes recommendations to the governing body that relate pay to performance.

The Staffing Committee also conducts an annual staffing review each summer in order to determine teachers' pay from 1 September.

During the year teaching staff were able to apply to cross the pay threshold established by government.

This is understood to have been stressful for staff concerned, as well as having demanded a considerable diversion of the head teacher's time in order to carry out assessment of each application. It is not clear that the exercise has been necessary to improve the quality of teaching or learning.

Pupil welfare

Kath Beaudette/Pat Beard

The school year September 2000 – July 2001 revolved around two key events: the consolidation of the school onto a single site and preparation for the school inspection in May 2001.

Parents had expressed concerns about pastoral welfare on a single site, especially for the younger pupils who had previously started their secondary education in the rarified atmosphere of lower school. However, the physical layout of the new parts of the building and transferring the lower school pastoral style ensured that new pupils in particular were confidently welcomed into a new school. During the year some physical adaptations to the second atrium have improved the appearance and user-friendliness of what has become “their space.”

Preparation for the school inspection at the beginning of the summer term provided ample opportunity for governors on the Pupil Welfare Working Group to ensure that we were completely up to date with all pastoral welfare issues and particularly new legislation and requirements for pupils with special educational needs, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and those at risk of exclusion. School inspections and boatloads of paperwork are now synonymous and the pulling together of the school's policies document was a major task in which the pupil welfare governors were able to give staff practical assistance. Governors also spent a couple of days in school ‘shadowing’ special needs classes and year tutors. We also visited the classes at the Amelia Trust. The physical isolation of the Trust is one of its attractions; however governors need to remember that it can also be professionally isolating for staff, who are teaching Barry Comprehensive School pupils and we need to continue to support them as well.

Pupil Welfare governors have worked closely with staff, particularly on the co-ordination of special needs provision, the behaviour support programme and the closer integration of teaching and learning with pastoral issues. That we have been modestly successful and are getting better was recognised in the Inspection Report and governors are keen not to lose this impetus. The appointment of Mr Andreas Huws as the Special Needs Co-ordinator, with Mr Dave Pereira taking over the behaviour support programme and the appointment of additional support assistants, makes this a strong team.

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Governors also have the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring both fixed term and permanent exclusions from the school. We have continued our practice of holding pre-exclusion meetings with pupils who are at risk of exclusion from the school and their parents/carers. Although this is not a legal requirement, and exclusion procedures are tightly regulated, there have been no permanent exclusions from the school in over two years, reflecting once again what governors see as a more constructive and integrated approach to pupil welfare.

Sporting achievement



The school continues to offer rich opportunities for children to achieve at sport. We run extra-curricular clubs in football, rugby, basketball, cross-country, athletics, judo, cricket, badminton and gymnastics.

Regular football fixtures were arranged with other schools for teams from all our year groups.

The U16 and U19 teams reached the last sixteen of the English Schools FA Cup. Kirk Huggins and Scott Richards played for Wales at U16 level.

Rugby matches with other schools were also arranged for all year groups, and our Y8 rugby side were runners up in the Vale Schools Cup.

At U19 we competed in the TSB Saturday morning leagues for the first time, and won four out of eight matches.

Gymnastics teams competed in the county championships, and demonstrations were given at competitions in Cardiff, London and Glasgow.

Our Athletics squads competed at every level in the Knockout Cup and County Championship.

We won the B final of the cup competition for Y9 and Y10, and five boys were county champions in their events. Calvin McLaggan and Jamie Nugent competed at international

level in the Welsh Schools' Athletics team.

At Badminton several students competed in county singles and doubles events, while Michael O'Shea earned a place in the Welsh U13 cricket team.

The school competed at U14 and U16 levels in basketball, and the county U16 finals were held in the Barry Comprehensive School sports hall.

Community links

The school has been praised by inspectors for the quality of its relationships with the community, schools, and industry.

In particular they noted how well staff work with partners in Bryn Hafren and



with our feeder primary schools. Care is taken to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school. Meanwhile, we are working to strengthen relationships with feeder schools through stronger curriculum links.

The school has become the base for adult education in Barry, and this helps to ensure the use of our facilities as a community resource for learning and for sport, during the week and at weekends, as well as to extend our good relationship with the local education authority.

Our active PTA has organised an exciting series of events, including the Summer Ball, that not only raise money but bring many friends to see the school.

Industry

Close ties with local industrial partners provide a context for our programme of work experience, which inspectors rated as "excellent". Links with business and further and higher education contribute to the quality of our growing vocational provision.

Young Enterprise competitions, in which several governors are involved, introduce young people to business planning and management, while Activities Week, in the summer term, also enables us to offer pupils a variety of industrial experience.

GOVERNORS

Barry Comprehensive School governors are committed to the school and to the role of Barry Comprehensive in the community. We strongly support the school's partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan council and community schools throughout the Vale.

The Governing Body is made up of elected parent and teacher representatives, members nominated by the local education authority, and people co-opted for their commitment and their expertise. The head teacher is a governor. The next full election for parent governors will be held in September 2004.

The Governing Body meets formally twice or more a term to consider issues relating to the school's development, management and curriculum. Committees and working groups of governors deal with pupil welfare, special needs, staffing and performance curriculum, premises and finance.

Parent Governors: Kathy Beaudette, Pat Beard, John Doel, Tina Webb, Steve James, Mary Dyas

Co-opted Governors: Matthew Griffiths, Russell Grant, David Kennett, Nick Paulakis, John Stacey Marks

Teacher Governors: Jason Hicks, Brian Williams

Non-teaching staff Governor: André Desrosiers

LEA Governors: Tony Hampton, Emlyn Williams, Keith Tancock, Graham Ellis, (one vacancy)

Headteacher: David Swallow

Additional non-voting co-optees: Derek Butler, Philip Toms

We are grateful to the following past governors who left office during the year: Jeff Brown, Blodwen Morgan.

The Chair of the Governing Body is elected annually, in September. The present chair is Matthew Griffiths. He can be contacted by via the school, or via the Clerk to the Governors, Mrs Janice Davies, at the Vale of Glamorgan Council Education Department. The Vice Chair is David Kennett.

Minutes of the Governing Body can be inspected at the school or on the school web site.

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