

P-05-828 Presumption in favour of rural schools – Correspondence from the Chair of Governors, Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd, 18.09.18

As Chair of Governors for the above school I write to fully support the above petition.

As a County Councillor for the Canolbarth Mon ward I support the County Council's Schools Modernisation Programme. However, every case has to be treated on its merits and I am strongly of the opinion that the the case to close Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd does not hold water.

To date the main driver on Anglesey resulting in school closures has been the high number of surplus places in a number of rural schools. However this is not the case in this instance. Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd only has 1.6% of surplus places and there is no indication that future numbers are likely to fall. The primary reason for closing the school is because Ysgol Corn Hir, Llangefni is full to overflowing and therefore it is proposed that a new school should be built to accommodate the pupils of Ysgol Corn Hir and Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd.

In the report presented to the Executive reference was made to other less compelling reasons for closing Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd such as increased repairs and maintenance costs which I accept. However it was also stated that moving to a new school would also help to raise pupil performance, a view that is strongly refuted by the school governors.

The current School Organisation Code 2013 refers in section 1:7 of specific factors to be taken into account in the consideration of school closures:

"...in some areas, a school may also be the main focal point for community activity, and its closure could have implications beyond the issue of the provision of education. This may be a particular feature in rural schools if school buildings are used as a place to provide services to the local community".

This is certainly the case with Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd as there is no community hall anywhere in the village other than the school hall ("Y Ganolfan") which is regularly used for various community activities. The Council has acknowledged that if the school closes there would be a need to collaborate with the community in order to identify a solution that would allow community activities to continue. However, it is not clear how that will be accomplished, especially given the fact that any business case would need to include proceeds from the sale of the site.

The aim of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and a key goal to fulfil this aim is to build "cohesive communities". Ysgol Gymuned Bodfordd is the glue that binds the local community together and the fact that so many people have signed this petition is evidence of that fact. Yes we need a new primary school in Llangefni (and the Welsh Government should provide the necessary funds in full), but that should not mean closing this invaluable rural school.

Diolch/Thank-you.

Councillor Dylan Rees
Chair of Governors, Ysgol Gymuned Bodffordd