



Interim Executive Board (Governors) Newsletter, May 2019.

Dear Parent/Carer/Guardian,

Please accept my thanks once again for all the encouragement you are giving the school and our students. In my relatively short association with the school as Chair of the IEB it has been heart-warming to meet so many of you and appreciate how committed you are to help Ysgol Treffynnon become an excellent school. You totally understand that after love and security, one of the most valuable gifts you can give your children is a good education. Our teachers and support staff, good as they are, can only help your children achieve their full potential with your support. It's a team effort. Team Treffynnon.

Both the Regional School Improvement Consortium and Estyn recognised our team effort and the hard work of our students when they observed that the school is making good progress. There's still much to do, but it's pleasing for me and my fellow governors to report that the school has established a solid foundation on which to build future success.

You will be aware that there have been several changes and additions to the staff over the last year. Reports tell us that all have settled in well and are having a positive influence on student progress. The Heads of Faculty have all made presentations to the IEB to highlight strengths and areas for improvement to work on. With this information governors can ask questions and reach a deeper understanding of the challenges and also celebrate success. We're very grateful to our middle leaders and their teams for all their hard work, dedication and commitment to improving teaching and learning during the year and for the care and consideration they give to students.

Estyn carried out a monitoring visit in March and a summary of where we are against their expectations of the school follows:

1. Improve standards

The Inspectors noted that good progress had been made and the majority of students have positive attitudes to learning.

From the governors' perspective, we know that most of our students are hard-working and want to do well, but some underestimate their ability and are not aiming high enough. We have high expectations of all our students and want them to aspire to be the best they can be.

In this respect, some of our students are causing us concern. High absenteeism amongst these students will also hinder their chances of success in whatever walk of life they choose. We will all need to work harder to persuade reluctant students to recognise the value of education and support them to improve their life chances.

2. Improve levels of attendance

This was not scrutinised at the recent visit, but continues to be an area of deep concern for governors. All the information we have tells us that students who miss lessons have poorer outcomes and don't do as well as those who have good attendance. This is particularly a problem at the start of the academic year (September) when some families are tempted to take holidays. Students who miss the start of the year are significantly at risk of falling behind in their learning. There is a direct relationship between the number of lessons missed and under-achievement.

We want all our students to achieve what they are capable of and be successful, whatever success means for them. Most parents, carers and guardians understand that their children can be seriously disadvantaged when they miss lessons and they ensure that their children are good attenders.

3. Reduce the number of fixed term exclusions

Suitable steps have been taken to address poor behaviour and engagement in lessons. Clearer expectations have been established regarding acceptable conduct in the classroom and around school.

The number of exclusions has increased. The IEB and School Leadership Team (SLT) are determined to reinforce a culture where good behaviour and effort is recognised and rewarded. The reverse side of that coin is that bad behaviour will not be tolerated. Staff will be consistent in dealing quickly with any disruption to learning, supported by the leadership team. We are grateful to parents, carers and guardians who support this 'no-nonsense' approach to school discipline.

4. Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment

Inspectors did not evaluate this recommendation during the March visit, but feedback from students and comments from GwE and Estyn indicate that the quality of teaching and learning has measurably improved and most students are responding well. This will help to improve Year 11 results and we are confident that results over the next few years will be better. Mentoring and coaching of Year 11 students in recent months has been a key feature of the extra support put in place to assist them in achieving their targets.

Improved student tracking and evaluation of progress is being strengthened.

Currently we are working to improve the care and support provided by non-teaching staff that some of our students need to help them progress and succeed.

5. Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels through more rigorous accountability and stronger arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning

The LA, GwE and Estyn have all noted that the school has taken some big steps to strengthen leadership. Heads of Faculty are very clear about their expectations and are consistent in dealing with any under-performance. This is having a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, especially in raising students' expectations of themselves. The restructuring at senior and middle-management level has improved communication, developed a common purpose, encouraged the sharing of good practice and has had a positive influence on staff morale.

Again, there is more work to do and the changes will take time to fully realise the improvements we expect, but the IEB is encouraged by what we see and hear.

'Pupil Voice' is important to us and our new Deputy Headteacher, Mr Colbert, has taken responsibility (amongst his other work) for supporting the School Council. I've met with the School Council to listen to what they have to say and discuss topical subjects.

6. Resolve the budget deficit effectively

Inspectors did not evaluate this recommendation during the recent visit.

However, the financial deficit is forecast to increase, and we continue to have discussions with LA officers about a school funding formula that hinders our attempts to get the finances under control. We are very grateful to Flintshire LA for their consideration and support.

Can you make a difference? Are you interested in becoming a school governor?

The IEB's aim is for the school is to be out of 'special measures' by the end of this year. With that in mind we are already planning for the IEB to handover the governance of the school to a normally constituted governing body by January 2020.

The governing body will have a range of skills, experience and knowledge (including knowledge of the local and wider community) to enable it to be a high-performing team, but first and foremost we look for a passion for education, good communication and team-working skills and a commitment to help the school become a centre of excellence.

If you think you have what it takes to make a difference to young people's lives and your community and to create a school that Holywell can be proud of, we'd like to hear from you. Please contact me through the school.

If you're not sure and would like to have an informal chat with me to understand what's expected before volunteering, I'd be very happy to meet you at the school.

Parent/Carer/Guardian Forum – Tuesday 11th June; 5.30 to 6.30pm. Ysgol Treffynnon.

We look forward to welcoming you to the next Forum to continue our discussions about the school's progress and plans for the future.

If you have any suggestions for discussion at the meeting, please let us know by email – info@yt.flintshire.sch.uk or a note to the school office. As with previous meetings, please note we cannot discuss issues related to specific individual students in an open forum.

Ray Wells

Chair, Interim Executive Board