

**Anglesey Primary Schools’ Co-operation Plan 2014**

**Guidance for development**

The Anglesey Primary School Families’ initiative has been in existence now for a little over six months. During that period, significant steps have been taken to strengthen co-operation and the relationship within the seven Families, with a substantial amount of excellent initial work completed at every level, activities that are to be greatly commended.

However, it is timely to consider developing a more robust structure for the co-operation model so as to ensure that we realize the tremendous potential that exists for improving the education service and provision for Anglesey’s pupils. It is appropriate for us therefore to take a step back and look in detail at our structures so that we can set a clear direction for the future, a direction that will lead to improving the quality of education and raise standards further within the Authority. That is the aim of this short guidance.

It appears increasingly obvious that the path that Anglesey has chosen will be the model that is recommended by the Welsh Government in due course. There is piloting of the “Leading and Emerging Schools” scheme, but the number of schools that are involved in this plan is very limited. If standards within Wales’ education system are going to improve, it is only by spreading good practice amongst ourselves on a large scale that it can happen. The system in Anglesey is already displaying signs that structured co-operation can lead to better understanding of the provision and that process will give birth to opportunities to co-operate further and raise standards.

**Background**

McKinsey’s influential report, ‘How the world’s most improved school systems keep getting better’, is essential to all that we are trying to achieve here. In short, the report draws evidence from around twenty education systems that have shown considerable improvement during the last ten years. The research has given birth to identifying key elements in the process of strengthening and improving any education system. The main findings can be summarized under eight headings:

1. Any education system can improve, from wherever it begins.
2. Not enough attention is being given to education processes in our current systems.
3. There is a need to look at systems in detail and objectively and then to intervene to improve.
4. How to make changes is more important than why those changes need to be made.
5. There are six aspects that appear in every example of systems that have developed - improving teachers’ teaching skills and head teachers’ management skills, assess learners effectively, improve data systems, refine policies, review standards and curriculum and acknowledge staff performance
6. Successful systems decentralize responsibilities into the hands of head teachers and teachers.
7. Educationalists take advantage of the opportunities to change for the better.
8. Leaders in the world of education, on every level, are consistent and continue in their place for extended periods.

Not every one of the above is completely relevant to our situation, but there are elements to which we should definitely give attention.

**Timely considerations**

* There is an increasing commitment to the Families system and the values that are attached to the venture. Positive reports come from the direction of the majority of head teachers and that is very encouraging. In general, the Family’s work is making good progress, although some families naturally have acted and developed sooner than others. This is to be expected.
* During the first months there is evidence that there has been scrutiny of the different schools’ procedures within the Families. By now, members of the majority of Families know each other’s schools very well.

* Some confusion still exists between the Catchment’s role and the Families’ role; in general, the Catchments system are for *business meetings* and the Families is a *development system*. There will be a need to further define what the Catchment’s role is within the new County structure in due course.
* There are examples of much sharing of good practice across the County. However, this needs to be extended systematically across every family and clear objectives and expectations set for the future.
* The boundaries have come down between several schools and the head teachers have come to know each other much better- there is much evidence to state that head teachers have become more open with each other and far more willing to collaborate.
* Evidence is seen that the collaboration has begun to spread beyond the body of head teachers and is also by now in the hands of teachers and assistants. The ownership of the system amongst all school staff is essential for the success of this collaborative plan. The plan’s success can only be measured when collaboration and sharing takes place between the whole workforce and its effect is to be found in the quality of our pupils’ experiences.

**Anglesey Families’ Terms of Reference**

**THE STRUCTURE OF THE ‘SCHOOL TO SCHOOL WORKING’ PLAN**

* The Anglesey School of Families will be a central and integral part of the County’s education system. The Family procedure will be utilized for a wide range of activities. The Families will be permanent, and will elect a member, seven in all, to sit on the Education Strategic Group side by side with the Catchment representatives, five of them. Creating sub-groups within the Family or smaller groups amongst head teachers is completely appropriate, but the seven official families pre-emanate every other partnership. The Authority decides on the membership and structure of the Families. If there is a valid and insurmountable reason why a school cannot be related to a specific Family, a discussion with the Authority will be held before any change in membership.

**COMMUNICATION**

* Every Family will nominate a contact person to convene the Family meetings and will record the discussions. This person will share those reports on the Anglesey Education website, ‘Addysg Mon’. It would be entirely appropriate for individual Families to consider appointing a chair and recorder/secretary for the work. The Authority should be notified regularly who this /these person (s) is/are so that it is possible to contact each individual Family as required.

**WORK PROGRAMME**

* It is expected that every Family will create some form of a simple development plan annually, at the beginning of the academic year, a plan that will outline their aims for the year’s activities. This work programme will list and explain how the Family group aims to deal with all the elements that are in this guidance and how they will include all members of the Authority’s primary school workforce. It will reflect the freedom that the Families have to follow their own direction and reflect the agreed accountability that is involved in the system.

**SCRUTINIZE STANDARDS THROUGH DATA**

* Head teachers and senior managers will take advantage of opportunities to scrutinize in detail each other’s core school data. It is strongly suggested that all Family members should look at each other’s data in detail before Visit 1 in the autumn. The individual Families can choose the most suitable method to do this of course e.g. partners could consider writing and presenting short reports based on the findings of looking at data identifying the strengths and weaknesses and suggesting a direction for development for each other in smaller groups, or perhaps look at the family’s school data together and hold an oral discussion. The Families should give appropriate attention to each other’s school quartiles.

**DISCUSSING SIP and SAP**

* Under this procedure, there is an expectation that head teachers and management teams look at each other’s School Improvement Plans a and Self-Appraisal Plans and discuss their contents. This will lead to developing a developmental collaborative relationship where a school can assist a partner school by offering a new pair of eyes to look at plans ‘from the outside’, and become critical and supportive friends.

**SHARING WORK PLANS**

* It is appropriate for school Families to give attention to each other’s education plans and place focus on special areas according to requirements. This will give the opportunity to learn from each other and offer an opportunity to reduce work by sharing. It would be appropriate for Families to create sub-groups for this purpose.

**INCLUDE STAFF AND INSET ARRANGEMENTS**

* It is crucially important that a good relationship is nurtured between teaching and ancillary staff of the various schools within a Family. It should be arranged that there are opportunities, when it is possible and appropriate, for staff to come together to discuss or carry out specific tasks. It would be advantageous if all the county’s schools agreed to set aside one or two of the five INSET days for facilitating collaboration. The Families should seek opportunities to offer sessions for sharing specialism or for arranging courses for the Family, or for other Families, as appropriate.

**SCRUTINIZING WORK**

* Opportunities should also be created to look objectively at pupils’ work in all the schools within the Families and compare the content and standard - this will give birth to opportunities to ask questions about teaching methods and curriculum content. Teachers should be equipped with the right questions to ask in order to carry out this work. It would be appropriate for the Authority to offer a package of appropriate questions to use for this purpose and perhaps guidance on different elements such as appraising School Improvement Plans or Self-Appraisal Plans, appraising the School Council’s role etc. It would be appropriate for the Families to present requests for such guidance to officers of the Authority, following discussions.

**LESSON APPRAISAL**

* In time, there should be consideration to facilitating opportunities for staff to observe lessons in each other’s schools. This will be an appropriate way to spread strong and effective teaching practices.

**SHARING SPECIALIZM**

* Every Family should create a list of good practices in their schools in each curriculum area and place that list on the Addis Mon website so that it is possible for schools who are seeking specialized information, or an example of good practice, to be able to do so with ease. A treasury of good practice exists in our schools and there is a great willingness to share it.

**COMMUNICATING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION**

* The Addysg Mon website will be the main medium of communication for Anglesey school Families. Every family will contribute to the website regularly by providing access to others to their meetings’ minutes, their findings and discussions and regular reports of their activities and development plans for the future.

**COURSES AND PROJECTS**

* When it is appropriate, County courses are arranged on the level of Families or groups of Families. When collaboration is required on tasks or projects, that is carried out through the Families.

**MONITORING**

* It will be appropriate for the Authority, through GwE procedures, to look at the Families’ work outcomes in due course as part of the school monitoring and support system.

**MANAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP**

* The management of Family activities is in the hands of head teachers but it is appropriate for every school within the Family to identify staff who would promote collaboration and facilitate activities on a school level for a school with the head teacher.

**SHARING**

* The Family should share policies, or offer new or revised policies for the attention of members of other families to ease and lighten individuals’ load.