

Community focused schools – a joint vision

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‘We want to see a much closer relationship between schools and the communities they serve. We want schools to act as a community resource – not just in school hours but out of hours and in vacations as well.’

The learning country: a paving document, National Assembly for Wales, 2001

The **Association of Directors of Education Wales** and **ContinYou Cymru** want to provide a framework for the development of community focused schools across Wales – a framework that is flexible but that points towards the full potential and the possible breadth of provision. This is based on the guidance provided by the Welsh Assembly Government in December 2003 and September 2005.

‘A community focused school is one that provides a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. Across Wales many schools already provide some community services including adult education, study support, ICT facilities and community sports programmes.’

Community focused schools – Guidance circular, National Assembly for Wales, 2003 and 2005

What we believe

We believe that community focused schools can help to achieve the seven core aims of the Welsh Assembly Government – to ensure that all children:

- have a flying start in life
- have a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities
- enjoy the best possible health, and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
- are listened to and treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional well-being
- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

We believe that every school in Wales should be a community focused school, and should be able to demonstrate this in its practice, either individually or as part of a cluster or family.

We believe that it is important to have a national understanding of the development of community focused schools that offers flexibility to meet the specific needs of different schools and communities.

We believe that the development of community focused schools is not just a short-lived project or initiative, but a real opportunity for schools and communities to work together in new ways for the future benefit of children, young people and adults.

What we will do

Community focused schools will:

- **always be supportive of the core mission of schools** – to improve pupils' ability to learn, and to support their families.
Examples of this are: a rich and varied curriculum; the use of different learning styles; the promotion of positive behaviour; personalised learning; the existence of a school council; recognition of achievement; training and professional development for staff; support and learning opportunities for parents and families; pre-school childcare and education.
- **provide a range of activities/learning opportunities outside the school day** for children, young people, families and adults. Some of these will be available to the wider community.
Examples of this are: breakfast clubs for pupils/families; out-of-school-hours opportunities that extend, enrich and enable pupils' learning; out-of-school-hours childcare; citizenship activities, including community volunteering; adult and family learning classes; youth clubs and activities; Duke of Edinburgh Award; training for volunteers; play schemes; outdoor education and activities, such as residential and visits.
- **provide a range of additional services/opportunities and relevant information** for children, young people, families and the wider community.
Examples of this are: information on existing services and provision of new ones, including adult and family learning/training; family support services; health services, such as drop-in clinics or speech therapy; community libraries; Citizens Advice and outreach services; social services; mobile shops; residents' associations; councillors' surgeries; lunch clubs for senior citizens; community volunteering; engaging with police and crime prevention; One Stop Shops.
- **be sustainable schools** that consult with their communities, engage in community life, work in partnership with others and think about the local and the global environment.
Examples of this are: consulting with pupils, families and the community; being a Healthy School; being an Eco School; being a member of regeneration groups, boards and residents' associations; having a school council; being a partner in community development applications, including funding; undertaking sustainable development; having links with schools and communities in other areas and countries; being part of local voluntary groups such as those concerned with the environment, arts and sports.

Every LEA will provide a policy framework and strategic leadership to support schools and communities in developing community focused provision.

ContinYou's 'Supporting Community Focused Schools' service will work with the Association of Directors of Education Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and all those involved in the development of community focused schools to:

- offer support and guidance
- develop capacity and expertise
- avoid the duplication of effort
- share good practice
- promote networking and produce materials and resources that can be applied and adapted for different local needs. This will include working with LEAs and schools to develop a quality assurance process which will enable schools to evaluate themselves in relation to their community dimension and to receive external accreditation for the stage of development they have reached.

'Learning that happens in school buildings, but out of school hours, can have many advantages. It can make better use of school buildings, involve the school closely in community life, make learning more fun and offer childcare for families.'

Annual report 2003–04, Estyn