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## **1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **1.1 Background and Purpose of the Report**

1.1.1 The Council has for several years, given detailed consideration to primary schools reorganisation within the County.

1.1.2 The process commenced in November 2004, when a Working Group was established to examine Gwynedd Primary Schools Organisation.

1.1.3 The main steps taken since then are listed below:

- A report was received from Roy James, Education Adviser and Former Principal Inspector for Education in Wales, on primary schools organisation in the County, at the end of 2004;
- A report by the County's Primary Headteachers Federation as regards releasing non-contact time for headteachers to enable them to lead and manage, was considered;
- Evidence and research from other counties in Scotland, England and Wales was gathered so as to consider good practice and possible models;
- In September 2005, the Development Scrutiny Committee and Council Board gave approval to core principles, upon which the process of considering the County's primary schools organisation would be based. The full Council also supported these principles and "the need for change" in its meeting held in October 2005;
- Consultation meetings were held with governors and parents between Summer 2006 and Easter 2007. Over 50 meetings were held in the different catchment areas, mainly to raise awareness and stimulate discussion within communities across the County;
- Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, held a review on Access and Organisation of the County's Schools. The report was received in December 2006 and the recommendations were approved at a meeting of the full Council in July 2007;
- A report was presented to the Development Scrutiny Committee and to the Council Board in May 2007 identifying the criteria so as to consider the sustainability of some of the County's schools. Members approved the report;
- A series of meetings were held with the Working Group's Elected Members during July, August and September 2007 so that ideas and guidance could be aired during the preparation of a new Plan for Gwynedd's primary schools.

1.1.4 Financial matters also received detailed consideration, particularly the impact of cuts on school budgets in light of the Assembly and the Council's financial strategy.

1.1.5 The discussions held with the parents and Governors between Summer 2006 and Easter 2007 was an important step in the process of preparing the Plan. The purpose of those discussions is outlined below;

- Explain why the reorganisation of the County's primary schools is required;
- Present initial information on possible models for different catchment areas;
- Share ideas on developing the educational provision for children in the County's primary school sector and receive feedback.

1.1.6 Following all the discussions and consultation, and evidence-gathering from various sources, we are now able to present a Plan for the reorganisation of the County's primary schools for the attention of Council Members.

1.1.7 This Plan will be based on the basic principles that have already been approved by the Council at its meeting held in October 2005, namely:

- Recognise the future unsustainability of current arrangements in Gwynedd;
- Acknowledge that formal co-operation between school will have a key role in future and that this may Lead to more formal co-operation between large and small schools, clustering of schools and the establishment of federal schools in certain areas;
- Be aware of the possibility that Area Schools may be established in certain areas;
- That specific criteria should be developed so as to decide on future sustainability of smaller schools.

1.1.8 In addition to the above-mentioned principles, some of the key messages presented in the Estyn report (December 2006) need to be addressed, namely:

- That the cost of educational provision is high due to their being so many small schools within the Authority;
- The Council has in the past been criticized for giving inadequate attention to school organisation and reduction of surplus places;
- In certain schools, the condition and suitability of the buildings limit the range of the educational facilities.

1.1.9 Estyn's clear recommendation with regard to primary schools organisation was that the Council should "*prepare and present a strategy which provides a high quality education. The strategy should place a suitable emphasis on buildings which are appropriate to provide a modern education, reduce surplus places and develop use of school buildings to present community based services.*"

1.1.10 In light of the above, the purpose of this report is to present the Comprehensive Plan for the reorganisation of the County's primary schools.

1.1.11 The report is divided into the following fields:

- Policy Context;
- The Case for Change;
- The Plan's Aim and Objectives;
- The Main Strategy;
- The Proposed Plan for Gwynedd;
- Details of the Comprehensive Plan;
- Conclusions and Recommendations.

## 2. POLICY CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The principles and aims of the Council's key strategies received careful consideration when deciding on the priorities of this Plan for the reorganisation of the County's primary schools.

2.1.2 The purpose of this section is to identify those key strategies which form an important context for the Plan.

### 2.2 Promote the Well-being of Children and Young People

2.2.1 It is important that this County schools reorganisation Plan is considered within the context of the 2004 Children's Act – and to the Council's efforts to fully respond to some of the requirements of that Act, such as;

- Ensure that the LA makes arrangements to promote co-operation between the relevant bodies to improve children's well-being;
- Ask every LA to prepare a Children and Young People's Plan so as to provide a strategic direction for services provided for children and young people in their areas;
- Place an obligation on key bodies, including LA's to protect and promote the well-being of children and young people.

2.2.2 As part of the process of preparing Gwynedd's initial Children and Young People's Plan, the Council and its partners have published the document '*Children and Young People of Gwynedd Today*', namely an assessment of the needs and well-being of children and young people.

2.2.3 This document contains several statistics so as to provide a comprehensive profile of the current requirements of the County's children and young people.

2.2.4 This work indicates that all the children and young people who currently reside in Gwynedd are denied access to opportunities, services and resources that enable them to develop and achieve their maximum potential. Consequently, it is imperative that there be firm arrangements that will enable local agencies to come together to plan and provide integrated services which fully respond to the requirements of children and young people, especially those of some of the most deprived children and young people in our communities.

2.2.5 The Council has been at the vanguard in responding to the requirements of the act, and has identified as one of its principal priorities, the need to promote the well-being of children and young people. The Council's aim in this field is to "*ensure that every child and young person in Gwynedd has access to the best opportunities in life*". This objective is supported by six strategic themes which are a feature of all the Council's work and services, namely:

- Firm Leadership and effective co-operation;
- Positive participation;
- Promote health, well-being and the best possible start;
- Educational achievement and develop confidence;
- Entrepreneurship and skills;
- Ensure the safety of children and young people.

2.2.6 The Council has also adopted the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is in the process of establishing a Charter for the Children and Young People of the County.

2.2.7 This Plan to re-organise the County's primary schools will be developed within the above mentioned context.

### **2.3 Gwynedd Regeneration Framework**

2.3.1 The County's Regeneration Strategy has also been focused upon. This strategy sets a direction for the County's regeneration programmes.

2.3.2 Here are some of the Strategy's core values:

- Promote equal opportunity for all the County's residents;
- Promote social inclusion, disseminating economic benefit and growth throughout the County;
- Secure a prominent and central role for Welsh within a bilingual community.

2.3.3 The Strategy will also focus on targeting deprived communities, prioritising them in supporting their efforts to plan and develop regeneration projects.

2.3.4 In addition, Area Plans will be developed in 8 catchment areas within the County, so as to establish local regeneration priorities. There will be a specific focus on projects involving the well-being of children and young people, entrepreneurship and promoting the Welsh Language in these Area Plans.

### **2.4 Gwynedd Single Education Plan**

2.4.1 The objective of this Plan – and the service provided within the Council – is to ensure that all Gwynedd's children and young people receive education of the highest possible quality.

2.4.2 Maintaining and raising standards across all curricular fields in the County's schools and supporting under-achieving schools is a high priority in the Plan. It is also noted that it is intended to develop foundation phase principles throughout the LA's primary schools.

2.4.3 Developing schools which have a community based focus is also a high priority within the Plan. The need to promote and establish more schools with a community based focus is mentioned, as is the need to promote co-operation between schools, services, businesses and other organisations in the local community.

2.4.4 Schools also need to implement aspects of equal opportunity legislation, so as to ensure that learners obtain the best opportunities through eliminating possible discrimination, as well as promote equal opportunity and encourage equality.

2.4.5 In this respect, schools have an obligation to ensure appropriate provision that provide opportunities for all the County's learners to develop a knowledge and understanding, skills, values and aspects to participate in their local community, and equip them for life as global citizens.

### 3. THE CASE FOR CHANGE

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Here are the principal reasons for reorganisation of Gwynedd primary schools:

- Reduction in pupil numbers;
- Average size of schools low;
- Shortage of Headteachers and pressure of work;
- Career structure for Headteachers’;
- Condition and suitability of the County’s primary school buildings;
- Significant variation in cost per child;
- Low capacity utilisation of schools;
- Significant variation in class sizes;
- Financial factors.

3.1.2 Evidence for the case for change – under the above mentioned headings – is presented in the following section of the report.

#### 3.2 Reduction in Pupil Numbers

3.2.1 In 1980, there were 1,977 nursery and primary schools in Wales. By January 2007 there had been a reduction to 1,558. This implied that 419 or 21% of nursery and primary schools in Wales had closed since 1980.

3.2.2 Gwynedd currently has 106 primary schools. Only one school within the County has closed since the early 1970’s. However, major changes, especially in the structure of the population, have occurred during this period, with a reduction in children of primary school age from 10,080 to 9,161 (namely 9.1%) between 1996-2005.

3.2.3 This reduction has not been consistent throughout the County, with the primary catchment areas of y Moelwyn, Y Gader and Berwyn having faced a reduction of over 15% over this period. The following table contains details of all the catchment areas.

**Table 1: Percentage change in numbers of primary school age pupils per secondary schools catchment area (Source: Gwynedd Research Unit, 2005)**

4+ to 10+ pupils according to secondary school catchment areas	1996-01 (%)	2001-05 (%)	1996-05 (%)
Dyffryn Ogwen	-6.6	-4.1	-10.4
Botwnnog	-0.3	-7.1	-7.4
Brynrefail	-3.0	-0.6	-3.6
Dyffryn Nantlle	1.4	0.5	2.0
Eifionydd	-1.3	-2.4	-3.6
Y Gader	-15.4	-6.7	-21.1
Moelwyn	-6.3	-11.0	-16.6
Tywyn	-3.3	-1.7	-4.9
Berwyn	-8.9	-15.1	-22.6
Ardudwy	-11.4	-1.4	-12.7
Syr Hugh Owen	-9.2	-3.5	-12.4
Glan y Môr	1.8	-5.1	-3.4
Tryfan / Friars	-10.3	2.7	-7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>-6.2</b>	<b>-3.1</b>	<b>-9.1</b>

3.2.4 We can also scrutinise Reception Year pupil numbers in September 2006, in comparison with the situation back in September 1999. The following table shows a significant reduction, with major implications for the County's age-structure for the future.

**Table 2: Reduction in number of Reception Year pupils per area**

<b>Number of Reception Year pupils</b>	<b>Arfon</b>	<b>Dwyfor</b>	<b>Meirionnydd</b>	<b>Gwynedd</b>
September 1999	682	293	356	1331
September 2006	634	233	287	1154
	<b>48 (-7%)</b>	<b>60 (-20%)</b>	<b>69 (-19.3%)</b>	<b>177 (-13%)</b>

3.2.5 The level of reduction gives grounds for significant concern; socially, economically and linguistically. The scale of reduction in some of the catchment areas especially Meirionnydd, undoubtedly has significant implications for the vitality of the County's communities as well as for the future structure and nature of public services.

3.2.6 A continual reduction in pupil numbers in the county over the coming years is envisaged.

3.2.7 Gwynedd Council Research Unit projections state that a further reduction of approximately 9.2% will occur in the number of primary school age pupils between 2006-16 (estimate only). This implies a reduction in numbers of 9,129 in 2005 to 8,414 in 2014. This is also very similar to the scale of reduction witnessed in pupil numbers attending the County's primary schools between 1996 and 2005.

3.2.8 Independent research commissioned by Tribal company (2006) has confirmed these figures.

3.2.9 Consideration has been given to the age structure and gender of the population in every catchment area, birth rates amongst girls of various ages, and death rates when deciding on these projections.

3.2.10 When considering the catchment area level projections, 7 catchment areas (of the 14) will face a reduction of over 15% in the number of primary school age pupils between 2006-16, namely Dyffryn Ogwen, Botwnnog, Glan y Môr, Moelwyn, Tywyn, Berwyn and Ardudwy.

3.2.11 The following table contains details of these projections between 2006-16 for each catchment area:

**Table 3: Projections for each secondary school catchment area until 2016**  
(Source: *Gwynedd Research Unit, 2005*)

<b>Secondary Schools Catchment areas</b>	<b>Change (%)</b>
Dyffryn Ogwen	-16.7
Botwnnog and Glan y Môr	-23.4
Brynrefail	-1.3
Dyffryn Nantlle	-9.3
Eifionydd	-12.3
Y Gader	-14.7
Moelwyn	-19.1
Tywyn	-21.5
Berwyn	-21.4
Ardudwy	-21.5
Syr Hugh Owen	-11.3
Tryfan / Friars	-6.8

<b>Total</b>	<b>-9.2</b>
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- 3.2.12 The significance of the reduction that has occurred and which is envisaged in pupil numbers cannot be ignored. As regards the direct impact on schools, a reduction in pupil numbers could lead to a reduction in the County's education budget which in turn, will lead to a reduction in schools' allocation.
- 3.2.13 The Council is obliged to consider the demographic trends and projections in the future planning of education services and schools organisation. A failure to focus on schools organisation and the structure of primary education in the County, may lead to a situation where a high percentage of the County's primary schools will have a high number of empty places, and numbers will be so low in some catchment areas that certain schools will not be viable.

### 3.3 Average Size of Schools is Low

- 3.3.1 The average size of the County's schools is extremely low, particularly in comparison with other LA's. In January 2007, 9978 pupils attended the County's primary schools (including nursery class pupils) – implying that average school sizes is 94. This is the second smallest in Wales. The Welsh average is 172. Gwynedd and Ceredigion are the only two Counties in Wales with primary schools that on average have less than 100 pupils per school.
- 3.3.2 Put in simple terms, to bring the size of Gwynedd schools up to the National average, the number of primary schools would have to be halved.
- 3.3.3 When considering the situation only in Rural Authorities in Wales, schools average size reduces to 116 – and is still significantly above the average in Gwynedd (over 20%). Considering future population projections, there will be a significant deterioration in this situation, especially in the rural areas.
- 3.3.4 The following table indicates the change in pattern of schools' size since September 1998.

**Table 4: Pattern of change in schools' size in Gwynedd**

<b>Pupil Numbers</b>	<b>0-33</b>	<b>34-75</b>	<b>76-90</b>	<b>90-300</b>	<b>301+</b>
<b>Number of Schools September 1998</b>	16	39	11	38	2
<b>Number of Schools September 2001</b>	16	41	10	37	2
<b>Number of Schools September 2004</b>	21	37	9	37	2
<b>Number of Schools January 2007</b>	22	37	13	31	3

- 3.3.5 It is evident from this information that an increase is occurring in the number of smaller schools in Gwynedd, and that they are expected to provide the same provision as larger sized schools. They are required to introduce all National Curriculum subjects and meet all the relevant assessment and monitoring requirements. They are expected to achieve all this with mixed age-groups including a few pupils within year groups and this may lead to a lack of competition and stimulus.
- 3.3.6 The Headteachers of the smaller schools will, of necessity, combine being in charge of a class with managerial responsibility. This dual pressure may lead to a shortage of applicants for Headships at small schools. The teachers are under pressure to teach a wide range of subjects and due to an inflexible staffing situation; they have greater difficulty in attending inset courses.
- 3.3.7 Roy James' report of September 2004 emphasises that there is no significant difference between the standards that they achieve and those achieved by larger sized schools. It is mentioned that the greatest influence on pupils' achievement is quality of education. However, the report notes that the "*small number of pupils in year groups in the smallest year groups, leads to less academic competition and stimulus, and less opportunity to take*

*advantage of a diverse range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences. It is almost impossible for a small school to present the same range of curricular, extra-curricular and social experiences compared to a larger school. This is certain to impact on their capacity to develop pupils to their full potential”.*

3.3.8 According to Estyn (2007), *“the cost of the educational provision is high as the LA maintains a large number of small schools which are expensive to maintain”*. Unless this situation is addressed in Gwynedd, a reduction will occur in average school sizes over a period of time, with a significant increase in empty places.

### **3.4 Shortage of Headteachers and Workload**

3.4.1 Gwynedd has over 100 headteachers – much more than any other County in Wales. Over the next 5 years, over 50% of current Headteachers are eligible for early retirement. Taking into account the Assembly’s current NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) policy to select applicants at a National level, and its impact on numbers from Gwynedd who succeed in gaining a place on the course, it is likely that a significant number of the County’s primary schools will not have a qualified Headteacher unless there is a change in procedures.

3.4.2 However, there is a current recruitment problem, especially in the smaller schools and more obviously in the rural areas.

3.4.3 There is also concern that so many headteachers have to take at least part-time responsibility for a class, as well as provide leadership for a school. In schools where the headteacher also has a significant educational commitment, especially in mixed age classes, it is now very difficult to effectively fulfil the requirements. In addition, individual teachers shoulder a very broad range of responsibilities for curriculum planning.

3.4.4 According to a report prepared by the County’s Primary Headteachers Federation in 2004, the vast majority of Headteachers were of the view that the non-contact time they were allocated to lead and manage a school and implement all the requirements was inadequate. Consequently, Headteachers have to use play time, dinner time, periods before and after work, weekends and holidays finding time for leadership and management, and this has a negative impact on the time they spend planning and preparing class work. This is one of the factors which imposes substantial pressures on Headteachers, especially at those schools where Headteachers teach for a significant amount of time.

3.4.5 It is however appropriate to note that a high percentage of those who teach in the County’s primary schools who are headteachers, is high. In 2005-06, the basic teacher allocation in the primary sector is 455 and of these 106 (23.3%) are headteachers. It could be argued that this is not an effective managerial structure for our primary schools.

3.4.6 The current pattern of 106 schools, with a headteacher for all of them, increasingly seems unsustainable and cannot either be justified.

3.4.7 Unless the situation is addressed, there will be significant recruitment problems, and a substantial number of primary schools will face a situation where they will not have a permanent headteacher.

### **3.5 Career Structure for Headteachers**

3.5.1 The structure of the County’s current schools organisation limits the number of opportunities available to teachers to effectively develop managerial skills. Only a comparatively small number of schools are large enough to establish deputy posts and the salary structure does not now encourage deputies at the largest schools to take up Headteachers posts at the smallest schools. There are very few opportunities for those who are not deputies to receive the required professional development and consequently an increasing number of teachers with little relevant managerial experience are appointed as Headteachers.

- 3.5.2 Gwynedd's current organisation, with a significant number of small schools and a very small number of larger schools, hinder career development and significantly reduce opportunities to move from a small school to a larger school.

3.5.3 When considering future schools organisation, it is essential that the models adopted incorporate structures that provide opportunities to develop individuals in managerial posts.

### **3.6 Condition and Suitability of the County's Primary Schools**

3.6.1 There is genuine concern about the condition and suitability of the County's primary schools. The buildings require substantial investment so as to comply with health and safety issues and to attain today's standards. Several schools are in a poor condition. As estimated by the Council's Property Unit, an investment of £6.64m is required to up-grade the condition of the County's schools so that they are of an acceptable standard. It is also estimated that an investment of £2.42m is urgently required.

3.6.2 Another concern is that so many of the County's schools are unsuitable to provide the new curriculum due to the nature, size and character of the schools. The estimated cost of making the County Primary schools buildings "appropriate" to meet the requirements of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (e.g. developing a suitable space for the foundation phase, ITC space, staffroom) is £10,896,000.

3.6.3 In addition, a substantial majority of the schools are ineffective as regards energy conservation, and therefore maintenance costs are high considering the size and use made of the buildings.

3.6.4 According to Estyn's report in 2007 (Evaluation of schools' performance prior to and after moving into new buildings or property that have undergone substantial repairs); "*old school buildings which are in poor condition cannot meet modern teaching and learning requirements. Inadequate buildings make it more challenging to make improvements in standards of achievement*".

3.6.5 The report also states "*the quality of teaching has improved at those schools that have moved to a new building or a renovated building. Improvements in the quality of buildings has a very beneficial impact on quality of teaching and staff morale which has a positive impact on pupils' performance.*"

3.6.6 The Council's total delegated budget for the County's Primary Schools in 2007-08 is £29,105,750. Of that budget, £2,676,431 (9.2%) is committed to costs of running 106 buildings – namely the infrastructure. Average allocation of running costs for a building in the sector is £25,249 with the minimum cost at an individual school being £8,795 and the maximum at an individual school is £103,420. These high maintenance costs which maintain the infrastructure imply that the Council is unable to invest as it should in primary school education.

3.6.7 During 2004-06, cuts in a school budget, together with a reduction in pupil numbers, has meant that most schools receive less and spend less on building maintenance.

3.6.8 The condition of our schools will deteriorate, and maintenance costs will increase, unless a comprehensive programme is developed to consider the future of the County's primary sector structure.

### **3.7 Significant Variation in Cost per Child**

3.7.1 The range of per capita cost expenditure within the County's primary schools is very high. Of all the counties of Wales, only Carmarthenshire has a larger range. However, it should be noted that Carmarthen are currently in the process of reorganising their primary schools. Details of per capita range within Wales Rural Authorities is presented below:

**Table 5: Range of cost per capita for each Rural Authority in Wales (Source: Research by Gwynedd Schools Service, 2005)**

	Minimum £	Maximum £	Range £
Carmarthenshire	2,344	15,532	13,187
<b>Gwynedd</b>	<b>2,125</b>	<b>10,444</b>	<b>8,139</b>
Ceredigion	2,505	9,489	6,983
Monmouth	2,100	7,731	5,631
Powys	2,283	7,167	4,884
Denbighshire	1,923	6,189	4,266
Isle of Anglesey	2,263	5,465	3,202
Pembrokeshire	2,557	4,966	2,408
Wales	1,923	15,532	13,609

- 3.7.2 From the table, you see that one primary school in Gwynedd receives £10,444 of per capita expenditure, whilst another receives £2,125 per capita expenditure. Placing this in context, only in 5 Counties - at Denbigh, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wrexham, Torfaen and Monmouth – is there a primary school which receives less expenditure per pupil.
- 3.7.3 The Council therefore allocates almost five times as much per pupil for the school with the highest per capita allocation as it does for the school with the lowest per capita allocation. Bearing in mind that the above-mentioned amounts only refers to the delegated budget and that central services costs such as transport, school dinner, the Council's responsibility for maintenance etc are not included, it is recognized that the actual difference between per capita cost is even more significant. These differences have a direct impact on the number of teachers who can be employed at the schools and as well as on class sizes.
- 3.7.4 Average per capita cost of running and maintaining a school with 50 children or less in the County is £4,460. The equivalent figure for a school with more than 50 children is £2,872. i.e. the average cost of running the smaller schools is 50% higher compared with all the school that have 50+ pupils.
- 3.7.5 In addition, several schools serve areas of high social deprivation which sets a substantial additional challenge. A substantial majority of these schools are amongst the County's largest schools and the table below compares average per capita allocation of primary schools in the constituency wards which appear amongst the highest 10% of all wards in Wales, with average per capita allocation of all the County's primary schools. The analysis shows that per capita allocation at these schools is significantly less than the county average:

**Table 6: Comparison of per capita average allocation for all primary schools**

Schools Background	Per capita allocation (£)
Schools in urban wards is the highest 10% of social deprivation (7 schools)	2,832
Remainder of Gwynedd schools	3,164

- 3.7.6 Unless the structure of the County's primary education is addressed, there is a significant risk that this range will increase. This would have a detrimental impact on some of the County's schools and the children who attend them, especially those schools which serve deprived and urban communities where per capita expenditure is currently extremely low.

### 3.8 Low Capacity Utilisation of Schools

- 3.8.1 According to Estyn and the National Audit Office, schools need to be working within the boundaries of 85% and 105% of their capacity.
- 3.8.2 As regards the situation in Gwynedd, it is estimated that there will be a reduction in “average use” from the current 83% to 74% by 2014 in the County’s primary schools – well below the national average.
- 3.8.3 This would signify that Gwynedd would have 23 schools with (“capacity utilisation”) of below 50% (currently 16). Average utilisation at those schools would be 38%.
- 3.8.4 Unless the primary education structure within the County is addressed, the capacity utilisation will reduce even more, creating an unacceptable situation if the objective is to make best possible use of resources for children’s education.

### 3.9 Significant Variation in Class Sizes

- 3.9.1 34% of Gwynedd’s primary school classes have fewer than 20 pupils. We observe that there are more very small primary school classes in Gwynedd than in all but three of the other counties in Wales. The average number of classes with fewer than 20 children amongst Wales’s rural counties is 20%, and the Welsh average is 17.5%.

**Table 7: Distribution of registered classes in maintained primary schools, 2001-2002**

	Isle of Anglesey	Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Powys	Ceredigion	Pembrokeshire	Carmarthenshire
Less than 20	38.43%	34.52%	17.26%	20.85%	37.65%	52.67%	22.02%	35.40%

- 3.9.2 There is no doubt that class sizes vary, particularly between the smallest and largest schools within the County. From the research held, it appears that small schools have a significant advantage over the larger schools – over 50% above the teacher / pupil ratio for the schools. Some large schools therefore face difficulties due to the situation. Indeed, there are classes of around 30 pupils at some large schools - and this may place unacceptable strain on the teacher and impact the children’s standards of achievement. Obviously, such a situation is unsustainable in future.
- 3.9.3 The information contained in the following table is applicable to this:

**Table 8: Pupil / Teacher ratio**

	5 Largest Schools	43 Smallest Schools
Number of pupils	1,539	1,491
Percentage of all Gwynedd Pupils (%)	15	14.5
Number of Headteachers	5	43
Number of Other Teachers	54	49
<b>Total Headteacher / Teachers</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>92</b>

- 3.9.4 The above table indicates that the number of teachers at the five largest schools and the 43 smallest schools is significantly different although the number of pupils taught in both cases is comparatively similar.

3.9.5 The following table contains additional details.

**Table 9: Urban Schools in Communities First Areas  
(Traeth, Y Gelli, Maenofferen, Cymerau, Hendre, Maesincla, Glancegin)**

	<b>Gwynedd</b>	<b>Communities 1st</b>	<b>Remainder</b>
Number of schools	106	7	99
Pupil Numbers	9419	1589	7830
Number of classes	423	57	366
Average class size	22.27	27.87	21.39

3.9.6 Unless schools organisation is addressed, some schools will continue to face a situation where the class size will be high, and thus create difficult conditions for teacher and child.

### **3.10 Financial Factors**

3.10.1 The reduction in numbers will naturally have a direct impact on schools - in financial terms. These implications apply to every school but will have a disproportionate affect on larger schools as the smallest schools (i.e. those with fewer than 37 pupils) will be protected from the effect of cuts by the safety-net in the Council's current allocation policy.

3.10.2 Any further reduction in the primary budget will coincide with the additional efficiency savings imposed by the Assembly over the next two years and any constraints that may be imposed on grants.

3.10.3 A combination of several factors have very recently placed a considerable strain on the County's primary education budget. The Council has for several years received from the Assembly a below average Revenue Support Grant increase, and this has meant that the Council has had to make cuts and savings across every service, including Education. A future change in this situation is not envisaged. Receiving a low level of grant from the Assembly, and the impact of several other factors highlighted above, will certainly have a significant impact on the funding available for Gwynedd primary schools and on services for schools.

3.10.4 The Scrutiny Committee has already received a report on the implications of cut-backs in 2005-08 on the County's school budgets, as well as the projections for 2008-10. The possible impact on the budgets of larger sized primary schools especially needs to be considered – possibly some of these primary schools will be unable to adhere to the statutory requirement to ensure that no more than 30 pupils attend certain classes. In light of this, it is essential that financial considerations be addressed when planning for the future of the County's primary schools.

3.10.5 Gwynedd already spends amongst Wales' highest quartile on education, and on delegating funding to schools. According to Estyn (2007), the Council had allocated a per pupil net teaching budget for 2006-07 of £4,322 compared to an average of £4,094 for the whole of Wales. However, a significant proportion of the budget goes towards maintaining poor buildings, a high number of sites and on empty places. Obviously, this does not represent the best use of our resources.

3.10.6 On the above evidence, it becomes apparent that the County's primary education system is very ineffective and uneconomic.

- 3.10.7 Indeed, the Estyn report (2007) mentions that Gwynedd has 21.2% empty places in primary schools. Estyn also reports that “...*there are a substantial amount of empty places in 32 of the 106 primary schools (30%)...*”, i.e. more than 30 places in schools with fewer than 90 pupils, or more than 25% of places at a school with more than 90 pupils, are empty. The Schools Service has noted that empty places in the primary sector has cost the LEA £850,000 in 2007, and that a projected reduction in primary school population could increase the cost to £1.2m by 2016.
- 3.10.8 According to the Audit Commission, a surplus number of empty places “*takes up resources which should be used to improve education*”.
- 3.10.9 **The real risk is that substantial resources will go towards maintaining a very ineffective structure and infrastructure at the expense of investment in the education of the County’s children. There is an urgent need to make better use of the resources currently available in the system.**
- 3.10.10 A radical response is therefore required so as to establish firm foundations for primary education during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## 4. THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The County's primary education structure needs to be re-considered and amended so as to meet the challenge facing us over the coming years.
- 4.1.2 In that respect, it was agreed some time ago that a Comprehensive Plan was required for the entire County, which identified a new arrangement and contemporary structure for primary education – and for the urban as well as the rural areas.
- 4.1.3 Before presenting details of the Plan, it is essential that the vision that we have as an LA for primary schools in the new arrangement is clear to everybody.

### 4.2 The Aims of the Plan

- 4.2.1 **The aim, simply, is to develop community based and sustainable schools in Gwynedd.**
- 4.2.2 Under the new arrangement, the County's primary schools will serve as **a focal point for community based activities of their catchment areas**. The community will fully utilise the resource, mostly after school hours, in accordance with the Assembly's agenda to develop "extended schools". The school will therefore assist in meeting the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community, providing an integrated service for the area.
- 4.2.3 There are certainly opportunities for them to provide additional services or activities, for instance, play groups, sports clubs and voluntary establishments, which will in turn involve parents, members of the community and local groups.
- 4.2.4 There is evidence to show that schools who are involved with their local community have a direct impact on pupils' attainment, raising their aspirations. The benefits for parents from greater involvement in their children's education, and for the community through providing better facilities for them. (Roy James - September 2004).
- 4.2.5 But we are eager to go one step further, and propose that a strand of non-contact Lead Headteachers be created which will provide guidance on curricular, community based and language issues in their catchment areas.
- 4.2.6 We also envisage that Headteachers of this type will have an opportunity to play a central role in promoting primary school children's well-being and rights, and support the process of joint planning of services for children in their catchment areas.
- 4.2.7 We are also eager to make future **schools sustainable and viable in the long-term, and** create the best possible conditions for educational provision for all the County's primary school pupils.
- 4.2.8 In light of the demographic trends, especially in the rural areas, there is an urgent need to increase pupil numbers in schools, and increase average size so as to ensure future viability. This would reduce the number of empty places, and make better use of resources allocated for the education of primary school pupils.
- 4.2.9 There are also opportunities to establish new schools in some locations - so as to replace some of the current schools who are in a wholly inappropriate condition - providing contemporary and new facilities for primary school pupils to receive their education.

4.2.10 Achieving the above-mentioned aim is conditional on re-structuring the primary education infrastructure in Gwynedd. In simple terms, it is impossible for the LA to maintain 106 sites in future. Closing several schools will have to be considered, as well as creating federal schools and developing new area schools to meet the challenge faced by the County. Through developing such an arrangement, the appointment of a strand of Lead Headteachers to lead their catchment areas educationally and at a community level will be crucial.

4.2.11 The aim is to establish a new primary education system for Gwynedd which will include community, sustainable and viable schools – for the educational well-being of all the County's children.

### **4.3 Objectives of the Plan**

4.3.1 The following are presented as objectives for the new system for primary education in Gwynedd:

- Make the best possible use of the resources available so that all children in the county who receive primary school education may benefit;
- Reduce inequalities and promote equal opportunities for the children of all the County's communities;
- Continue to promote quality and standards of the educational provision, as well as enrich experiences acquired by children in primary schools;
- Ensure that facilities and buildings in the primary sector are suitable in light of new curriculum requirements;
- Develop the leadership role of Headteachers and make them non-contact so as to enable them to provide guidance on curricular, community and language issues in their catchment areas;
- Increase the average size of the County's primary schools so as to create sustainable and viable units for the future;
- Develop the County's primary schools as a focal point for community based activities in their catchment areas.

4.3.2 As an Authority we will ensure that proposals to adapt the current arrangements will improve the standard of education locally and ensure a broad and well-balanced curriculum, including all necessary elements of the curriculum for every age-group impacted.

**4.3.3 The challenge, in simple terms, is to develop a Plan which will provide equal opportunities for all primary school pupils in Gwynedd, and establish schools, especially in the rural areas, which are much more robust and viable. If this challenge is successfully met, firmer foundations for primary education within the County in future will be established.**

## **5. THE MAIN STRATEGY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 So as to achieve the aim and objectives, a new arrangement for primary schools within the County will need to be established. The process will need to involve all schools within the County, large and small, rural and urban, as the provision across the entire spectrum requires rationalization.

5.1.2 However, it has to be recognized that the greatest challenge lies in the rural areas and their dispersed population.

5.1.3 In simple terms, the Council is faced with 2 options when considering primary schools future organisation:

- Close a high number of schools and establish a network of Area Schools within the County which would have significant financial benefits;
- or
- A combination of different arrangements to respond to local situations within the County's catchment areas, including the closure of certain schools, establishing Federal Schools and develop some new Area Schools. Obviously, such a model will not be as financially advantageous, but would respond to the objectives.

5.1.4 Careful consideration was given to establish a network of new Area Schools throughout the County. Establishing such a network would have educational benefits for children within the County, and enable them to receive education in modern buildings with high quality facilities and equipment. Concern was voiced about the social cost, and in particular the impact on rural communities.

5.1.5 So as to try and ensure that schools are kept open in as many of the County's communities as possible, and so as to comply with the Plan's aim and objectives, it is proposed that a strategy based on a combination of different arrangements is developed. The implications are that some schools would close, some would become part of a Federal arrangement, others would become part of an Area School, and others would also remain as they are. The option of which system to follow in a specific catchment area will be dependent on local circumstances.

5.1.6 The following models are therefore a key part of the County primary schools reorganisation strategy:

- Federal Schools;
- Area Schools;
- Closure of certain Schools;
- No change in certain Schools.

5.1.7 Further details on the various models are presented below;

### **5.2 Federal Schools**

5.2.1 The aim of establishing a series of federal schools throughout the County has a central role in the proposed new arrangement. Federalisation is the system whereby several small schools become one school under a Lead Headteacher and a single governing body, but still maintains and uses the original sites where possible.

5.2.2 Some of the merits of a federal school are listed below:

- Ensure the future of certain sites that would otherwise not be viable;
- Provide an additional resource for the catchment area through having non-contact Lead Headteacher to provide guidance on educational and community based issues;
- Provide a more enriching curriculum and extra-curricular programme due to the progress made and within the available range of resources;
- Take pressure off current Site Headteachers and allow them to focus on teaching;
- Develop a career structure for Headteachers;
- Promote co-operation and curricular joint-planning between schools.

5.2.3 This objective of increasing numbers and average size of the County's primary schools is central to the strategy. In larger sized schools such as the new federal schools, there is an opportunity to foster specialisations of individual teachers in specific subjects. Through their work as subject co-ordinators, this has a beneficial impact on pupils' standards of achievement. This cannot be so easily achieved in small schools where individual teachers are expected to be responsible for co-ordinating several subjects as well as key skills such as literacy, numeric and information technology and communication.

5.2.4 Increasing the numbers within the federal schools will therefore provide an opportunity to present a range of curricular, extra-curricular and social opportunities – and have a positive impact on pupils' ability to develop to their maximum potential.

5.2.5 The aim is to ensure that the County's new federal schools will include either three or four sites. That is what is reasonable, in our view, taking the requirements on the Lead Headteacher, into account. However, in exceptional cases, and mainly due to geographical factors, there will be a requirement to establish some federal schools on only two sites.

5.2.6 Several factors have been taken into account when establishing federal models, including community links, numbers, distance between various sites and geographical factors.

5.2.7 We will try and avoid a situation where a federal school has fewer than 90 pupils between the various sites - so as to ensure that school's long-term viability. 90 represents the number which is recognised by the Assembly as constituting a "viable" school. However, it has to be accepted that there are exceptions, and due to the County's geography, it is possible that some federal arrangements may develop where there are fewer than 90 pupils.

5.2.8 Appendix 1 presents background information on federal schools, as well as examples of good practice. Appendix 2 also includes a job description for the Lead Headteacher, and a job description for the Site Headteacher. This arrangement will enable the Site Headteacher to focus much more on teaching the children.

### **5.3 Area Schools**

5.3.1 Establishing area schools has also been considered as part of the strategy. This arrangement brings together all the advantages of the federal system, but also leads to new building and facilities.

5.3.2 As well as providing education for pupils and creating a community spirit amongst parents, the area school has both the opportunity and facilities to make broadly-based provision for the community it serves. Several examples are to be found in Wales where area schools have brought villages together, and by doing so, have reinforced the community life of the area as well as improved the educational provision (Roy James - September 2004).

5.3.3 Many of the advantages stemming from the federalisation of schools process apply equally to the establishment of an Area School. The merits of an Area School are summarised below:

- A high quality modern building so as to provide the new curriculum, with relevant facilities and equipment;
- Better access for the community to other services such a doctor's surgery, lifelong Learning, social services, library and community hall;
- Greater competition between pupils leads to higher motivation and higher standards of achievement;
- Reduce the need for mixed age-group classes;
- Cost savings through reducing the fixed costs associated with maintaining several sites – there is an opportunity to re-direct these savings to provide better educational provision and raise standards;
- A non-contact Headteacher for the schools so as to provide curricular, community based and language leadership for the catchment area;
- Secure a more viable team of staff.

5.3.4 There are 2 categories of area school:

- An area school on a current site, where there is capacity to admit children from a school which is closing, and without involving any substantial work to the structure of the building;
- An area school on a new site, where the condition of the current school/schools is wholly inappropriate and where a new school is required to serve the primary catchment area.

5.3.5 A non-contact headteacher will be appointed for federal schools and new area schools. Indeed, there is now a clear consensus at a professional level within the County that organisation models should be examined which establish Headteachers' posts not involving a teaching commitment. The current organisation pattern does not allow this and Headteachers non-contact time cannot be further increased without a very substantial investment.

5.3.6 It will also be a requirement to ensure that Headteachers of schools who will not become part of the new arrangements also become non-contact, especially at the largest schools. This is crucial if our objective throughout the County is to be realised, and especially in the County's most deprived communities.

5.3.7 Examples of Area/Community based Schools are presented in Appendix 3.

## **5.4 School Closures**

5.4.1 As part of the Comprehensive Plan, the Council will have to close some current primary schools and re-direct resources saved in order to realise the objectives of the reorganisation Strategy.

5.4.2 When considering which schools should be closed, the following criteria was addressed:

- Pupil numbers (including children from outside the catchment area), projections and impact on finance;
- Suitability of buildings;
- Community based contribution;
- Distance and travelling time;
- Educational standards.



- 5.4.3 The aim is to protect sites in marginal rural areas, and wherever possible, include them in a federal arrangement. Closing similar sites would also create a geographical void in some areas, and it would be unfair to compel children to travel a substantial distance to the nearest school. This therefore has been an important factor in developing the Comprehensive Plan.
- 5.4.4 It is recognized that it will not be easy for a community to accept the closure of the local school - especially in cases where the children will move to a nearby federal or area school. The Council will make every effort to work with these communities, and will establish firm arrangements to work with them so as to plan for their future, specifically focusing on possible use of the school building, where appropriate. In this respect, the County's regeneration officers will have a central role.
- 5.4.5 School closures will also inevitably have an impact on posts. The Council will shoulder the responsibility as an employer and try and reduce the impact on posts as far as possible. We will work with the unions concerned and current governing bodies to achieve this. The period up to September 2009, when it is envisaged that the initial steps of the Plan will be implemented, will be important.

## **5.5 Schools where there will be no change**

- 5.5.1 Some of the County's schools will remain unchanged under the new arrangement.
- 5.5.2. The only difference will be that additional resources will be directed towards these schools so as to ensure that the Headteacher is non-contact.
- 5.5.3 The Headteacher will be required to lead and manage the school, as well as develop the school as a community based resource and support efforts to promote children's well-being within their catchment areas.

## 6. PROPOSED PLAN FOR GWYNEDD

### 6.1. Introduction

6.1.1 The aim of this part of the document is to present detailed proposals for County primary schools reorganisation.

6.1.2 The proposals are based on the aims, objectives, and main strategy of the Plan as identified in the document.

### 6.2. Summary of the Proposals

6.2.1 Some schools will close, some will become part of a Federal arrangement, others will become part of an Area School, and some will remain unchanged in the detailed proposals.

6.2.2 The following table provides a summary of the proposals for primary schools' reorganisation in the County.

**Table 10: Summary of the County's Plan**

Arrangements	Number of sites	Number of schools
No change	19	19
Area School on current site	3	3
Area school on new site	8	8
Federal School	55	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>48</b>

6.2.3 This implies that there will be 48 :

- Schools
- Budgets
- School headteachers
- Governing Bodies

6.2.4 85 sites will need to be maintained.

6.2.5 55 schools will formally close but immediately re-open as part of a new federal arrangement. Site Headteachers will therefore need to be appointed to these sites.

6.2.6 The number of school sites will be reduced from 106 to 85.

6.2.7 Here is a prospective summary of primary school organisation in 2013.

**Table 11: A prospective summary of the situation in 2013**

Issue	2007	2013
Number of schools	106	48
Number of Headteachers and governing bodies	106	48
Number of sites	106	85
Average school size	94	206
Average number of pupils per site	94	116

### 6.3 Schools which will form part of a Federal arrangement

6.3.1 It will be possible to establish Federal arrangements for some of the County's primary schools as from September 2009.

6.3.2 A summary is provided below:

**Table 12: Summary of Federal Schools**

Issue	Number
Number of federal schools	18
Number of federal schools on 2 sites	4
Number of federal schools on 3 sites	9
Number of federal schools on 4 sites	5
Number of sites	55
Total number of pupils attending federal schools	3486
Average number of pupils attending a federal school	193
Largest federal school	297
Smallest federal school	105

6.3.3 The following factors were considered when deciding on Federal arrangements:

- Contact between the communities and opportunities to co-operate;
- Problems in recruiting Headteachers in the area;
- Long-term viability of some of the sites (if they are to remain as they are);
- Geographical distance between the sites.

6.3.4 A Federal School arrangement will provide the following:

- A Lead Headteacher to provide guidance on educational and community based matters in the catchment area;
- Site Headteacher for each site;
- Curricular joint-planning between the schools;
- Foster specialisation in specific subjects and curriculum;
- A more viable team of staff, with opportunities for managerial experience;
- Provide support for schools that would not otherwise be viable sites;
- Opportunities to exchange staff and use individual teachers' specialization when planning teaching and monitoring of a subject;
- Educational and social benefits for the child.

### 6.4 Schools which will form part of an Area School arrangement

6.4.1 A summary is provided below:

**Table 13: Summary of Area Schools**

Issue	Number
Number of area schools	11
Total number of pupils attending an area school	2245
Average number of pupils attending an area school	204
The largest new area school	301
The smallest new area school	74

6.4.2 These were some of the considerations when deciding on the above-mentioned arrangement:

- Condition and suitability of the schools;
- Travelling distance for the child;
- Current numbers attending the individual schools;
- The need for a new “community based” resource in the area in question;
- Educational progression within a catchment area.

6.4.3 An Area School will provide the following:

- A new building of high quality to present the new curriculum;
- Provide a new community based resource;
- A more viable team of staff;
- Lead Headteacher to lead on curricular and community based issues;
- Educational and social benefits for the child.

6.4.4 It should also be noted that some Area Schools will be established on a current site i.e. where there is capacity so as to admit children from schools which are closing, and thus, without having to do any substantial amount of work to the building’s infrastructure.

## 6.5 Sites which will close

6.5.1 A summary is given below of those sites which will close.

**Table 14: Summary of sites which will close**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number</b>
Number of sites	29
Total number of pupils attending sites which will close	1894
Number of pupils attending the largest site which will close	200
Number of pupils attending the smallest site which will close	9

6.5.2 The following table provides details of those sites which will close.

**Table 15: Details of sites which will close  
(Statistical information provided by the Schools themselves)**

School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Y Garreg	23	53	43%	26%	Close Ysgol Croesor in September 2009. Establish Federal School Cefn Coch / Y Garreg from September 2009. A new area school at Penrhyndeudraeth from September 2012/3	Low and falling to 18 by 09	1.2 miles to Penrhyndeudraeth	Poor state, no hall, part of staffroom, inadequate parking space	1 daily 1 occasional	Low numbers and falling (18 by 09) significant number of empty places (57%) 26% of pupils from outside the catchment area No hall or staffroom
Croesor	13	30	43%	60%	Close Ysgol Croesor in September 2009. Establish Federal school Cefn Coch / Y Garreg from September 2009. A new Area School at Penrhyndeudraeth from September 2012/3	Very low and falling to 11 (09)	4.2 miles to Penrhyndeudraeth	Poor state no hall or staffroom	None	Numbers very low significant % from outside the catchment area (60%) Cluster Scheme with Ysgol Y Garreg since Sept 07 very expensive to maintain Permanent Head retired Summer 07 Building in poor condition No hall or staffroom No community use
Clogau	28	32	88%	77%	Federal School	Stable, but only 8 children within the catchment area	3.1 miles to Llanelltyd	Deteriorating no hall, field, poor access, inadequate parking	1 daily 1 weekly 1 occasional	Numbers low 77% of pupils from outside the catchment area Unsuitable building No field, hall, poor

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						attend				access No parking facilities
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School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Llwyngwriil	40	50	80%	14%	Establish Federal School Llwyngwriil / Llanegryn / Aberygynolwyn / Brynchrug from September 2010. New area school in the Brynchrug area from September 2012/3	Falling – 40 down to 31 (09)	6 miles to Brynchrug	Acceptable state, no hall and inadequate access	Nil	Inadequate access falling numbers 25% over 3 years An opportunity to develop a new area school for the area
Llanegryn	40	49	82%	34%	Establish Federal School Llwyngwriil / Llanegryn / Aberygynolwyn / Brynchrug from September 2010. New area school in the Brynchrug area from September 2012/3	Low but stable	2 miles to Brynchrug	Acceptable state, no hall, access, staff room. And parking inadequate	None	No hall Access, staffroom and parking inadequate Numbers comparatively low No social use Opportunity to develop a new area school for the area
Abergynolwyn	19	60	32%	0	Establish Federal School Llwyngwriil / Llanegryn / Aberygynolwyn / Brynchrug from Sept 2010. New area school in Brynchrug area from Sept 2012/3	Very low and falling to 16 by 09	5 miles to Brynchrug	Acceptable state, no hall, access, staffroom and parking inadequate.	1 occasional	Inadequate access, staffroom and parking Very low numbers High % of empty places (68%) Numbers down to 16 2009 Opportunity to develop a new resource for the area

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School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Aberdyfi	26	101	26%	5%	Close and move children to Penybryn (Tywyn)	Low but stable	5 miles to Tywyn	Acceptable state, poor access, parking a problem	Nil	Low numbers significant amount of empty places (74%) Headteacher recruitment problems No social community use
Llawr y Betws	9	49	18%	25%	Federal School OM Edwards / Ffridd y Llyn / Bro Tryweryn	Very low, stable, increase to 11 (09)	4.8 miles to Ffridd y Llyn	Acceptable state – no hall	1 monthly 2 occasionally	Very low numbers – second lowest in the county No hall Empty places = 82% 25% of children come from outside the catchment area
Parc	17	40	43%	25%	Federal School OM Edwards / Ffridd y Llyn / Bro Tryweryn	Very low , stable, rise to 21 (09)	3.3 miles to OM Edwards	Fair condition no field or staffroom	2 weekly 2 monthly 3 occasional	Numbers very low No field or staffroom
Rhydyclafdy	4	42	15%	NA	Close by September 08	4 children at the school 07	4.6 miles to Bentreucha	Poor No hall staffroom and inadequate access	1 fortnightly 1 monthly	4 children in Sept 09 No progress envisaged 85%+ empty places No hall or staffroom Poor access
Llidiardau	31	47	66%	7%	Area School Aberdaron	Low and down to 22 by 09	3.1 miles to Aberdaron	Hall, staffroom and access inadequate	1 occasional	Low numbers and falling to 22 (09) 34% empty places Hall, access, staffroom inadequate. Very little community use



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School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Morfa Nefyn	23	68	34%	39%	Establish Nefyn / Morfa Nefyn Federal School from September 2010. New Area School at Nefyn from Sept 2012/3	Increase to 31 (09) high % from outside the catchment area	1.2 miles to Nefyn	Acceptable state no hall or parking inadequate staffroom	1 daily	Numbers very low High % of empty places High % of children from outside the catchment area (39%) No hall or parking inadequate staff room Little community use
Abersoch	19	41	46%	18%	Sarn Bach Federal School as part of federal arrangement with Foelgron and Llanbedrog	Low and down to 15 (09)	1.4 miles to Sarn Bach	Deteriorating, no parking or hall	1 weekly 2 occasional	Very low numbers (15 by 09) 54% empty places Only a mile to Sarn Bach No hall, no parking
Borthygest	80	78	103%	53%	Area School Porthmadog	Stable numbers but down to 67 (09) High percentage from outside the catchment area	1.3 miles to Eifion Wyn	Poor state No field, access and parking a problem	1 weekly	Quite high numbers but falling to 67 in 3 years. Building in a poor state, no field access and parking a problem High % of children from outside the catchment area (53%) Very little community use
Llanystumdwy	58	46	126%	53%	Establish a Federal School/ Treferythyr / Llanystumdwy from September 2009. A new Area school at	Stable number Building full high % from outside the catchment	2 miles from Criccieth	Poor state but facilities available except for parking problems	Nil	Concern at the condition of the building; No community use High % of pupils from outside the catchment area.

Reorganisation of Primary Schools in Gwynedd for the Educational Benefits of all our Children

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					Criccieth from September 2012/3	area				
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Reorganisation of Primary Schools in Gwynedd for the Educational Benefits of all our Children

School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Baladeulyn	27	58	47%	54%	Area School Llanllyfni as part of a federal arrangement with Talysarn	Stable but low high % from outside the catchment area Already draws children from Talysarn	2 miles from Talysarn	Poor no staffroom Inadequate access and parking New building at Talysarn with adequate capacity	1 occasional	Low numbers Capacity utilisation 47% 54% from outside the catchment area Room at Talysarn to admit all the children without making adaptations to the building No staffroom Concern at the condition of the building; Low levels of community use.
Bronyfoel	35	47	75%	24%	Federal School Groeslon / Carmel / Rhostryfan / Rhosgadfan	Low and down to 25 (09)	1 mile from Carmel	Poor state, inadequate hall, no parking or staffroom	Nil	Low numbers and falling to 25 09 No community use Building in poor condition no staffroom and inadequate parking
Bodfeurig	27	61	44%	33%	New area school in Tregarth area	Constant but low high % of empty places	1 mile from Tregarth	Poor state adequate facilities except for parking	Nil	Numbers low high % of empty places (56%) high % of pupils from outside the catchment area already in a cluster with Tregarth building in poor state no community use

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School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification		Reasons
								Building	Community Use	
Rhiwlas	51	92	55%	17%	Area School in Tregarth area	Fairly constant, 48 in 09	4 miles from Tregarth, not a convenient journey	Poor state satisfactory resources	Occasional	Low numbers high % of empty places (45%) Concern at the condition of the building; Occasional community use only.
Cefn Coch	179	207	87%	6%	Area School Penrhyndeudraeth	Large school falling to 165 (09)	NO	Poor Small hall, parking and access inadequate	Nil	Building in poor state A new building required Inadequate hall Parking and access inadequate Numbers high but falling No community use Opportunity to develop an appropriate school for the wider area
Ysgol Dolgellau	169	236	72%	10%	School 4-16 Town Dolgellau	Constant(167 in 09)	NO	Satisfactory	Nil	Space scarce within and outside school Traffic heavy by the school gates. A busy narrow road separates the Junior/Infants site Parking arrangements add to H & S problem.

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School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Bryncrug	27	87	31%	22%	Establish Federal School Llwyngwriil / Llanegryn / Aberygynolwyn / Bryncrug from Sept 2010. New area school in the Bryncrug area from Sept 2012/3	27, down to 24 (09)	NO	Fair state Inadequate capacity for area school Parking inadequate	1 daily 3 weekly 5 monthly 4 occasional	4 very small schools in a wide geographical area. Need to maintain education in the area, but need to rationalise sites High % of empty places (78%)
Nefyn	165	224	74%	10%	Establish Federal School Nefyn / Morfa Nefyn from Sept 2010. New area school at Nefyn from Sept 2012/3	Significant reduction in numbers – down to 106 by 09 implies CU of less than 50%	1.2 miles to MN	Very poor Requires substantial amount of work (£260K+)	5 weekly 1 occasional	Substantial pupil reduction (33% in 3 years) Implies 50% of empty places Building requires substantial amount of work (£260K)
Treferthyr	120	152	79%	4%	Establish Federal School Treferthyr / Llanystumdwy from Sept 2009. A new area School in town of Criccieth from Sept 2012/3	Stable and adequate	1.9 miles from Treferthyr to Llanystumdwy	Very poor Requires £260K expenditure	2 weekly 3 occasionally	Building in poor state – requires expenditure of £260K New building required for Criccieth and for the wider community
Tregarth	131	123	107%	31%	Area School Tregarth	Stable numbers	2 miles to Bodfeurig 5 to Rhiwlas	Unsuitable building	1 weekly	Firm and stable numbers – school full Unsuitable building High % of pupils from outside the catchment area An opportunity to develop a new

Reorganisation of Primary Schools in Gwynedd for the Educational Benefits of all our Children

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										standard resource for the area
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School	Pupil numbers 2007	Capacity	Capacity Utilisation	Outside the catchment area	New arrangement	Financial Numbers	Travel	Justification Building	Community Use	Reasons
Abercaseg	121	100	121%	10%	Establish Bethesda Town Federal School from Sept 2009. New area School at Bethesda from Sept 2012/3	Numbers constant Building full	Less than a mile from Penybryn	Satisfactory	Nil	Policy to merge infants and junior schools An opportunity to develop a standard resource for the town of Bethesda
Penybryn	122	190	64%	12%	Establish Bethesda Town Federal School from Sept 2009. New Area School at town of Bethesda from Sept 2012/3	Stable (95 by 09)	In the town	Satisfactory, but no field and access and parking poor	1 weekly	Policy to merge infants and junior schools An opportunity to develop a standard resource for the town of Bethesda; Very unsuitable site
Maenofferen	200	269	74%	9%	Area School Town Blaenau Ffestiniog	Falling numbers high % of empty places	NO	Very poor Requires substantial expenditure to repair the building	None	Building in very poor state – requires substantial expenditure An opportunity to develop an appropriate new school Forge links with the secondary school No community use Falling numbers
Manod	90	107	84%	16%	Area School Town of Blaenau Ffestiniog	Increase to app 100	Less than half a mile to Maenofferen	Poor state, inadequate hall and access	Nil	Inadequate hall and access No community use Opportunity to develop a new resource for town of Blaenau

6.5.3 29 sites will close, with the need to identify 8 new sites for new area school buildings. **i.e. there will be 21 fewer school sites in the County by the time the Comprehensive Plan is implemented.**

6.5.4 A combination of reasons are offered for the closure of these sites – reasons such as small number of pupils, suitability and condition of buildings, empty places and a more viable school nearby.

6.5.5 The closure of these schools is crucial so as to enable the LA to re-direct resources that will enable the previously listed aims and objective to be realised. Following such a strategy will enable better use of resources, for the benefit of the education of all primary school pupils within the County.

## 6.6 Schools where there will be no change

6.6.1 A summary is provided below:

**Table 16: Summary of Schools where there will be no change**

Issue	No
Number of schools where there will be no change	19
Total number of pupils at a school where there will be no change	4,168
Average no of pupils attending a school where there will be no change	219
Largest school where there will be no change	381
Smallest school where there will be no change	139

6.6.2 Although there will be no change to the schools in the Comprehensive Plan, the LA will ensure that the Headteacher in each of these schools will be non-contact under the new arrangement.

## 6.7 Time-table for Implementation

6.7.1 The aim is to establish 3 categories for the Plan's implementation programme:

- Category A – with the statutory notices being issued in September 2008 and implementation in September 2009
- Category B – with the statutory notices being issued in September 2009 and implementation between September 2010 and 2011
- Category C – with the statutory notices being issued in September 2011 and implementation by September 2013

6.7.2 The planning cycle for the above will be as follows.

**Table 17: Category A**

January / February 2008	– Consultation period and hold discussions with the school governing bodies named in Category A;
June / July 2008	– Report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Full Council on the final list in Category A;
September 2008	– Issue a statutory notice to schools in Category A;
September 2009	– The new arrangement is implemented.

**Table 18: Category B**

January / February 2009	– Consultation period and hold discussions with the governing bodies of schools named in Category B;
June / July 2009	– Report back to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Full Council on the final Category B list;
September 2009	– Issue a statutory notice to schools in Category B;
September 2010-11	– The new arrangement is implemented.

**Table 19: Category C**

January / February 2010	– Consultation period and hold discussions with the governing bodies of the schools named in Category C;
June / July 2010	– Report back to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Full Council on the finalised Category C list;
September 2011	– Issue statutory notice to schools in Category C;
September 2012-13	– The new arrangement is implemented.

- 6.7.3 It should be noted that the proposals to schools organisation in the above-mentioned categories may change in the event of new information or evidence being presented. This could lead to revised proposals for some catchment areas should this happen.

**Table 20: Number of schools per category – new models**

Category	Number
Category A	10
Category B	6
Category C	8
No change	3
Categories A / C	2
Categories B / C	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

- 6.7.4 The number of “new” schools which will be established within the Scheme’s implementation programme are outlined below.
- 6.7.5 Category A/C and B/C are mentioned in the table above. These are the categories that include those schools which become part of a Federal School arrangement in the first instance, and then become part of the development of a new Area School in the longer term - in accordance with Category C time-table. Here are the only models where it is envisaged that Federalisation will be a step towards another arrangement. It should be emphasised that the remainder of the Federal Plans have been developed so as to ensure their robustness and viability for many years.
- 6.7.6 Future economic, social, demographic and financial trends and their potential impact on the County’s primary education are difficult to forecast. However, it is crucial that the situation is monitored and ensure that the structure of the County’s primary education is *suitable, viable and provides the best educational benefits for children within the County*. So as to ensure this, it is strongly suggested that primary schools organisation should be reviewed once again before 2020.

## **7. DETAILS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Separate document – A3

## 7.2 Financial Implications

7.2.1 The implications of the new organisation Scheme's revenue are outlined below:

- Implementing the proposed Plan would release annual savings to the value of £1.444 million in the long-term (after funding additional transport costs of £264,000);
- From this savings, £935,000 will be permanently re-invested amongst all schools involved in the proposed Plan so as to try and ensure a non-contact Headteacher and non-contact time for Site Headteachers;
- Of this £935,000, £258,000 will be invested to secure a new non-contact Headteacher at the 19 schools where there will be no change, £102,000 at the 11 Area Schools, and £416,000 at the 18 Federal Schools. In addition £159,000 will be invested so as to secure adequate non-contact time for Site Managers under a Federal arrangement;
- Transitional total costs funding to the value of £2.493 millions will be required which includes salary and redundancy protection costs. A reduction in this amount is expected due to the changes/opportunities that will occur/arise during the periods prior to the implementation of the various time-tables;
- The temporary costs will have been funded within a maximum of 6 years using the Plan's financial savings;
- In the long term, having funded an additional investment for a non-contact Headteacher and having funded transitional costs, there will be a minimum annual saving of £509,000 available with the aim of reinvesting it within schools;
- Implementing the Plan will reduce pupils allocation range on basis of current prices/ numbers by between £2,452 and £11,959 as appears in the Gwynedd Council document Section 52 2007-08 to between £2,481 and £5,002 under the proposed Plan. **Per capita allocation of 70% of Gwynedd primary school pupils increases under the Plan.**
- Under the proposed Plan, Gwynedd's central services will face financial cuts of £104,000.

7.2.2 The proposed Plan will increase the maintenance expenditure as resources will now be targeted towards a fewer number of sites.

7.2.3 A substantial amount of the net saving is also expected to be directed towards improving the condition of the County's primary schools.

7.2.4 Due to the need to develop new Area Schools, capital resources will need to be committed to implement aspects of the Plan. In this regard, the Council will secure capital resources from various sources, including the Prudential Code, the Council's own Capital Programme, and Assembly Grants to fund the new developments. It is estimated that capital investment by the Council and its partners will amount to approximately £30 million during the life-span of the Scheme.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 Conclusions

- 8.1.1 This report has presented a very clear case for the reorganisation of the County's primary schools. Several reasons for doing so have been mentioned, including a reduction in pupil numbers, shortage of Headteachers and the condition and suitability of the County's primary schools.
- 8.1.2 An argument has been presented that the surplus of empty places currently at the current primary schools have taken up resources that should be used for teaching the County's children. It has also been mentioned that there is a real risk that significant resources will go towards maintaining an extremely ineffective structure and infrastructure at the expense of investing in school children's education.
- 8.1.3 We are of the view that the adopted strategy fully complies with the Plan's aim and objectives, and offers the best way forward for primary education within the County. The strategy is based on a combination of different arrangements – dependent on local circumstances within particular catchment areas. This implies that some schools will close, others will become part of a Federal arrangement, others part of an Area School, and others will remain as they are.
- 8.1.4 Establishing lead and non-contact Headteachers is central to this new arrangement. This would imply that catchment areas would have an additional resource so as to provide curricular, language and community based leadership for the future. We will also endeavour to release as many as possible of the County's teachers, particularly the Site Headteachers, to focus on teaching children.
- 8.1.5 Under the new arrangements, Gwynedd will have 48 schools on 85 sites. The Council will therefore maintain 85 sites rather than the current 106 sites.
- 8.1.6 The closure of certain sites are due to a combination of factors – such as small number of pupils, buildings suitability and condition, empty places and proximity to a more viable neighbouring school. The closure of these schools is key so as to enable the LA to re-direct resources to realise the Plan's aim and objectives.
- 8.1.7 Some of the Plan's principal merits are outlined below – and that in light of the aim and objectives;
- **Make better use of resources available so that all children in the County who receive primary school education may benefit.** Implementing the Plan will lead to less expenditure on maintaining an ineffective infrastructure, and more investment in educational provision for primary school pupils within the County. In addition, non-contact Headteachers will be established for the County's schools, creating conditions that are conducive for them to provide leadership and management at their schools. This will lead to the development of effective planning arrangements – especially curriculum planning for their catchment areas, which will in turn lead to better use of resources to educate primary school pupils. Fewer resources will also be wasted on empty places within the County's schools – leading to a much more effective system. It has already been noted that the level of empty places at present costs the Authority £850,000.

- **Reduce inequality and promote equal opportunities for pupils in all the County's communities.** As a consequence of implementing the Plan, 70% of children of primary school age will experience an increase in per capita allocation. In addition, there will be a reduction in the range of per capita expenditure within the schools, and class sizes throughout the schools will be much more consistent. There will also be an additional allocation for those schools who serve deprived urban communities, so as to ensure that the Headteacher operates on a non-contact basis to effectively lead and manage. A new and contemporary Area School will also be developed in certain communities which have a high level of deprivation, such as at Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bethesda. This investment can create a catalyst for the regeneration of these areas and be a focal-point for community based activities.
- **Continue to promote quality and standard of education provided, and enrich children's experiences at primary schools.** Implementing the Plan will provide educational and social benefits for children within the County. There will be more educational resources available for schools as there will be less expenditure in comparison with having to maintain 106 sites. In addition, there will be opportunities to use individual teachers' expertise in subject planning and monitoring under the new arrangement and there will be much more co-operation and joint-planning amongst teachers as they develop policies and Plans of work. Many more extra-curricular opportunities and experiences can also be provided for the pupils, such as creating sports teams and teams for other competitions. It is also considered that there will be social benefits. For instance, the children will become well-acquainted with their peer-group in the other units at a Federal or Area School through the joint activities, thus ensuring a smoother transition to the Secondary School. It is also intended to develop new Area Schools - to replace schools which are in a serious state of disrepair. Improvements in quality of buildings will have a beneficial impact on quality of education and staff morale – which in turn has a positive impact on pupils' performance. It should also be noted that the new arrangement will take a significant strain off Site Headteachers at a Federal School – and enable them to focus on teaching. Therefore, under the new arrangement, teachers/Headteachers time will be put to better use, and this will have a positive impact on the quality of educational provision for children within the County.
- **Ensure that the facilities and buildings within the primary sector are suitable in light of the new curriculum requirements.** As a consequence of the Plan's implementation, some of those schools who are in a very poor state will close – with the children being re-located to either an Area School or a Federal School. In addition, substantial capital investment will be made (approximately £30m) during the Plan's duration to develop 8 new Area Schools - such a school will provide a modern high quality building so as to provide facilities and relevant equipment to cater for the new curriculum. As there are fewer sites to maintain, there will be an opportunity to increase maintenance expenditure on the sites of the 48 schools which will form part of the new arrangement. It was previously stated that an investment of £4.1m is required to up-grade the condition of the County's primary schools. £1.77m of this investment will be required at those schools earmarked for closure under the new arrangement. It could therefore be argued that closing these sites releases a substantial amount so as to deal with defects in other buildings.

- **Develop the lead role of and make them non-contact so as to provide leadership on curricular, community based and language issues within their catchment areas.** As a consequence of the Plan's implementation, there will be lead Headteachers in post, to provide leadership for their schools and catchment areas. In addition, under a Federal arrangement, Site Headteachers will invest much more time in teaching children. £935,000 will be invested so as to ensure that this occurs - which indicates the commitment towards achieving this objective. The Lead Headteacher will have a key role in planning curricular, language and financial issues at the school, and also in developing the school as a community resource. In addition, the Lead Headteacher will have a central role in promoting the well-being of children within their catchment areas and supporting the process of jointly planning services for children. As previously mentioned, additional resources will be directed towards the County's largest schools, so as to ensure that the Headteacher becomes or remains non-contact – and therefore, enables him/her to lead and manage the school. It should also be noted that under the new arrangement, a career structure for Headteachers will be developed in Gwynedd.
- **Increase the average size of the County's primary schools so as to create sustainable and viable units for the future.** As a consequence of the Plan's implementation, average school size will increase from 94 to 206, and the average number of children per site will increase from 94 to 116. Under the new arrangement, the County's schools will be much more viable units. This is key when bearing in mind future population projections. The implications are that Gwynedd schools average size will be consistent with the average for Rural Authorities in Wales. In addition, there will be increased levels of use at the schools – implying that they will work closely to the “capacity” margins. This would imply, once again, that resources will be put to better use to teach pupils within the County.
- **Develop the County's primary schools as a focal-point for community based activities within their catchment areas.** Implementing the Plan will lead to full use of the school's resource by the community, mostly after school hours. There will be an opportunity to provide a suitable location for a broad range of additional activities and services for the community through developing the “community school” – activities such as after-school clubs, community based learning clubs, youth clubs, play groups etc. Evidence shows that schools who are involved with the local community have a direct impact on the pupils' achievement, raising their aspirations. Parents also benefit from greater participation in their children's education. There will also be an additional resource – through the Lead Headteachers – to develop the schools as a community resource.

8.1.8 The above information indicates that Plan's Strategy and the action programme fully comply with the aim and objectives. The Plan will aim to ensure equal opportunities for all the County's primary school age children, and establish schools, especially in rural communities, which are much stronger and viable. Additional resources will also be directed towards educating the County's primary school children – which will certainly promote the quality and standards of the educational provision.

8.1.9 This is without doubt a ground-breaking Plan and provides an exciting opportunity to ensure that primary education within the County has much firmer foundations for the future. Implementing the Plan will create an educational system in Gwynedd which will provide the best education for our children, whilst maintaining close contact with our communities, which will be sufficiently robust to survive for many years. It is imperative that we ensure that all the County's resources are used as effectively as possible, whilst enabling our teachers, including the Site Headteachers, to focus on teaching the children. This exciting plan will encourage and facilitate more co-operation between schools, and

secure a wholly new resource, namely Lead Headteachers, to serve the schools and their communities.

## **8.2 Recommendations**

### **8.2.1 Council Members will be required to support the following recommendations:**

- **Approve the aim, objectives and main strategy of the Plan;**
- **Approve the Category A list in the Plan for consultation;**
- **Present a final report on the Category A list in June/July 2008 following a consultation period;**
- **For the purpose of planning, approve Category B and C list in the Comprehensive Plan and arrange consultation periods in accordance with the time-table in the report.**

Iwan T. Jones, Strategic Director Development  
Cllr. Richard Parry Hughes, Lead Member Children and Young People  
Cllr. Dafydd Iwan, Senior Leader Development Portfolio  
Cllr. Dyfed Edwards, Portfolio Leader Schools and Language