

Meeting	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date	19 April 2018
Title	Principles of an Education System which are Fit for Purpose
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Cabinet Member	Councillor Gareth Thomas
Purpose	The purpose of this report is to seek the opinion of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on the proposed education principles which will be a basis for realizing the Education Departments vision and develop a system to ensure high quality education for children and young people in Gwynedd.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A report was presented to the Cabinet on 12 July 2016 seeking consent to consult with Governors and schools about the suitability of the agreed principles to underpin an education system which is fit for purpose.
- 1.2 Due to the increasing and deep concerns of the Cabinet and the Services Scrutiny Committee (at the time) following a report by the Primary Federation and consultations with schools, several issues in the report to Cabinet were noted regarding the situation relating to Leadership; namely:
- a large number of our secondary and primary schools are too small to be able to provide time for headteachers, senior managers and middle managers to lead effectively;
  - the conflicting requirements of many primary headteachers where they also have a significant commitment to teaching classes alongside their management and leadership functions;
  - difficulties in recruiting senior management leaders and middle managers in secondary schools;
  - difficulties in recruiting headteachers for primary schools;
  - a lack of applicants from outside the local authority area.
- 1.3 A series of 18 drop-in sessions were held across Gwynedd between 7 November and 14 December 2016 to engage with parents, staff, governors and the wider community on the process of developing new principles for Gwynedd schools.
- 1.4 The drop-in session held across Gwynedd were successful, with 335 questionnaires completed during the consultation process.
- 1.5 The discussion relating to the development of principles for an education system which are fit for purpose is taking place within the context of the 21st Century Schools Programme and the School Effectiveness Framework. The vision for education and training is based on six main objectives:
- Provide the best possible learning experiences for all learners within the County, ensuring an exciting and broad curriculum, as well as the extra-curricular curriculum, that motivates them

to learn and comprehend, which leads to improved standards, making the best possible use of Information Technology;

- Promote and support the physical health and emotional well-being of children and young people, ensuring that the principal education and training establishments in the County are key players when planning and introducing integrated services for children, young people and their families;
- Prepare young people for the workplace, ensuring that they are equipped with the correct kind of skills for employment, especially within the local economy;
- Create an excellent learning environment for children, young people and teachers within the County, principally through improving facilities and buildings, and ensuring that schools are structured to respond to the change in contemporary teaching and learning process practices, especially when using Information Technology;
- Develop educational establishments of the correct type (primary and secondary) so that they provide a focal point for public and community-based services where appropriate;
- Strengthen the Welsh Language as an educational and social medium, and to enable children and young people to gain access to bilingual education and training.

## **2. PROPOSED PRINCIPLES**

### **2.1 Secondary**

In considering sustainable models for secondary education, planning will be based on a structure which includes options (e.g. multi-site options) which facilitate partnership working by more secondary schools.

It is essential that the structure for secondary schools enables the provision of a broad curriculum and promotes consistency in high quality teaching and learning across all the County's schools.

The non-contact time of senior management and middle managers is very infrequent and increasingly teachers have to teach a second and third subject which may be outside of their area of expertise.

To address the requirements, the following characteristics will be adopted:

- leadership arrangements with headteachers responsible ideally for an increasing number of learners;
- appropriate consideration of the options for post 16 education provision;
- ensure sufficient time for staff to lead at all levels;
- departments and directorates which are viable and durable;
- a broad and rich curriculum;
- a collaborative self-improvement system established across schools;
- a strategic system and effective governance;
- leadership based on the number of learners.

## 2.2 Primary

The proposed education system for primary schools has been assessed on general principles, namely leadership arrangements providing 80% non-contact time for the headteacher and attempting to ensure that schools provide classes of no more than two year groups.

These goals would address the biggest challenge facing the primary sector, headteachers with insufficient time to lead and teachers in very small schools who have to teach a wide range of children of different ages and abilities in the same class.

In some cases, teachers in small primary schools teach three or four year groups in one class and it is difficult to ensure that the work meets the needs of all pupils due to the wide range of ability which may exist across four learning years.

## 2.3 Sessions associated with Principles of an Education System which are Fit for Purpose

A series of drop-in sessions were held (18 in total) across Gwynedd between 7 November and 14 December to engage with parents, staff, governors and the wider community as part of a process to develop new principles for Gwynedd schools.

Detailed analysis of the principles that were consulted upon, and the results of the consultation can be seen in the Appendix.

Below, gives details of three principles that were consulted upon:

- (i) Non-contact time for head teachers: 98% of respondents agreed that enough time needed to be found to enable headteachers to deliver their management responsibilities. A high number of responses noted the importance of reducing the administrative burden to enable teachers to concentrate on the delivery of education and the need to consider joint working to improve education in the County. Many comments related to the need to collaborate to reduce the duplication of activities, lower work pressures and provide opportunities to share expertise and good practice.
- (ii) The age range in a class: In addition, around 70% agreed with the principle that no more than two age ranges should be taught in one class. There were many comments noting the difficulties associated with the necessity of educating children of more than two age ranges although it was also important to consider the practical context.
- (iii) Secondary school management: When considering whether secondary heads should be responsible for around 900 pupils, most respondents disagreed with the principle, although it may be the case that this reflected a perception that the principle refers to one school of 900 pupils instead of considering different management options. In addition, many responses were received expressing strong support for children being educated by subject specialists. It is necessary therefore, to consider collaborative working models which would offer opportunities to strengthen the system, including horizontal leadership models.

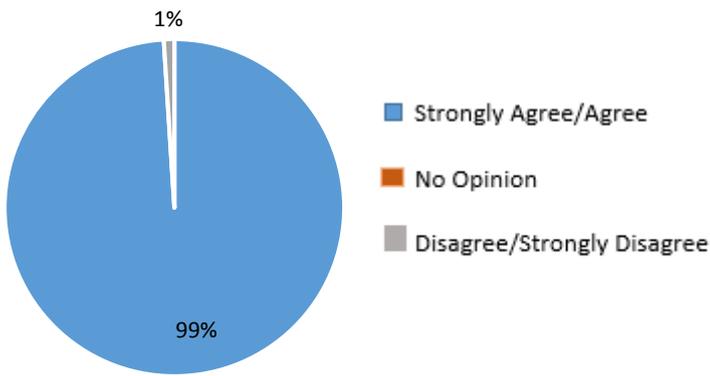
2.4 Based on the results of the consultation, and the Education Departments vision, the opinion of the members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is sought on the following principles which are considered a foundation for the education system in Gwynedd in the future:

- A viable system of **secondary schools**
- Two age groups within the same classroom **in the primary sector**
- About **80% non-contact time for** head teachers to enable them to concentrate on management issues in the **primary sector**

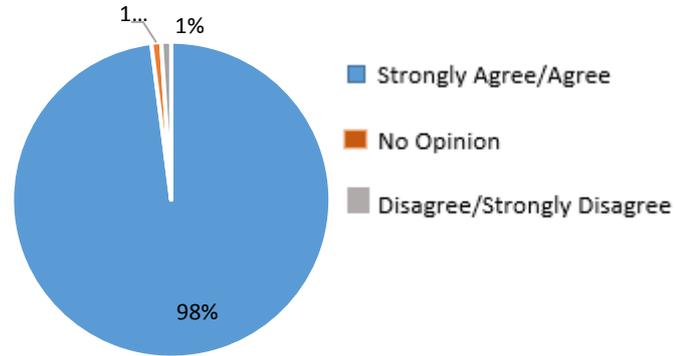
**APPENDIX 1:**

The results of the Consultation on the Principles of an Education System which are Fit for Purpose

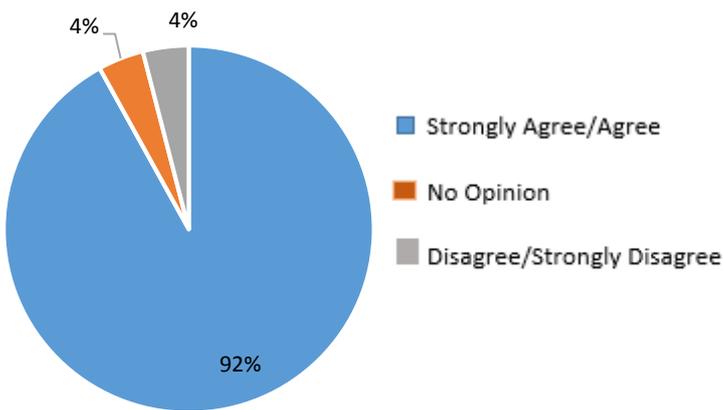
i. It's important to plan for the future of education in Gwynedd



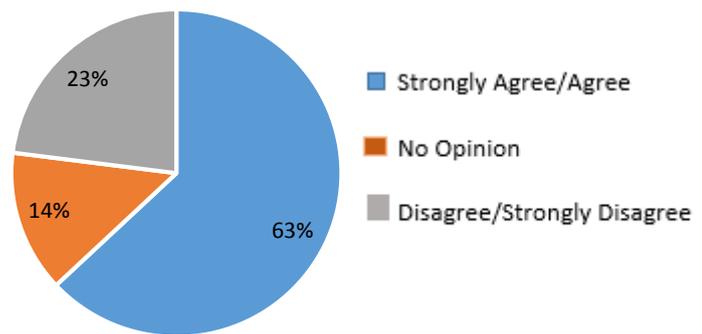
ii. It's important to allow sufficient time for Head teachers to manage and lead to ensure the best education for pupils



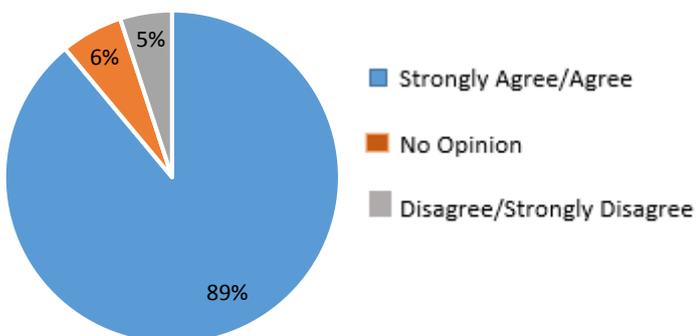
iii. Leaders of individual schools should work together to improve education across the county



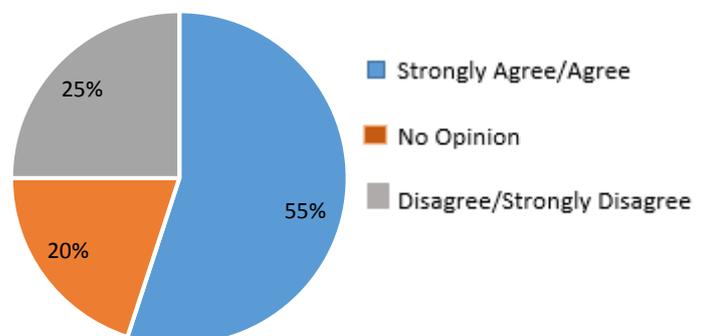
iv. When numbers in neighbouring schools are small, management teams (e.g. head teachers and deputies) should be shared to ensure survival of both schools



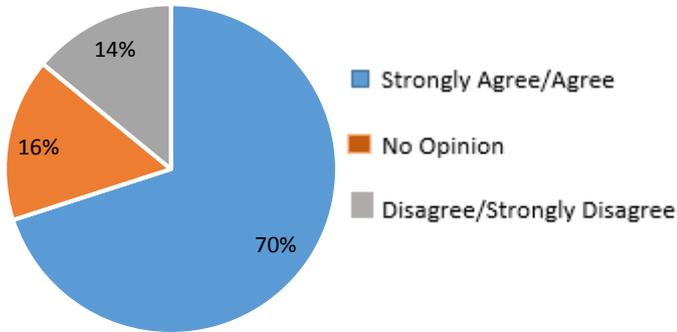
v. Head teachers should focus on children's education not on administrative work



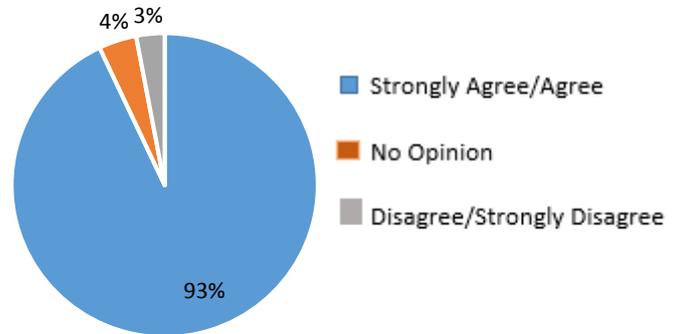
vi. Class sizes should be consistent across the county



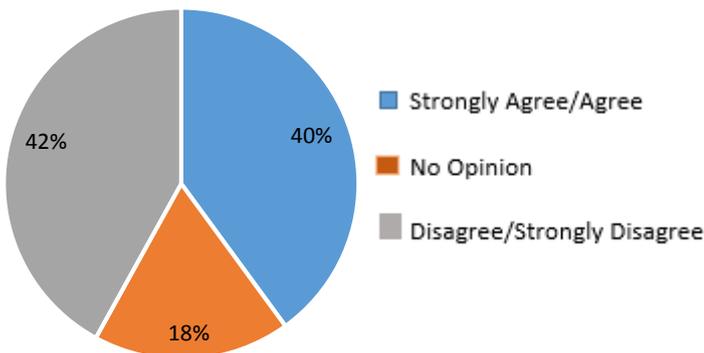
vii. No more than two age groups should be taught together in one class



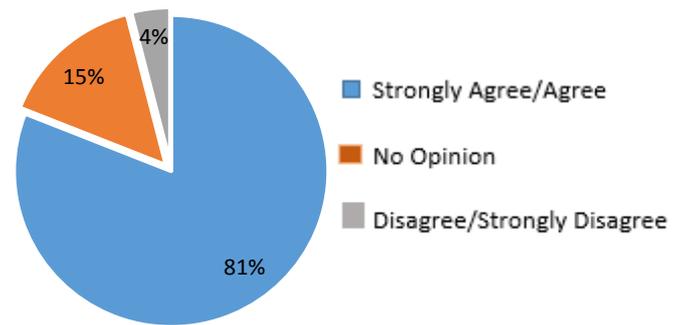
viii. It's important that pupils in our secondary schools are taught by subject specialists



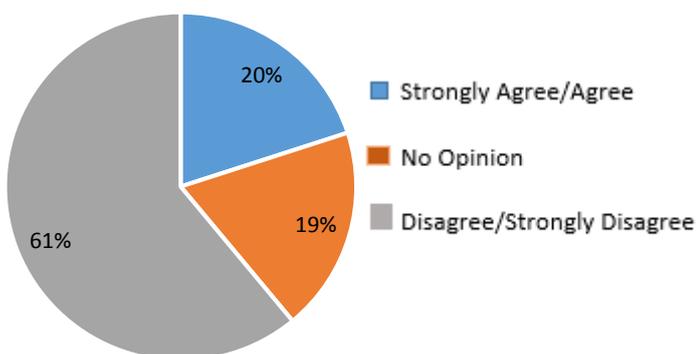
ix. Two neighbouring small schools should be amalgamated to create one larger school



x. Governors need local support to assist them to lead schools



xi. Gwynedd head teachers should be in charge of more than one school



xii. Secondary head teachers should be in charge of approx. 900 pupils

