

cymdeithas  
yr **IAITH** gymraeg

# Llwyddiant Ysgolion Pentre

Model ar gyfer ein  
Trefn Addysg  
yng Nghymru



**Mai 2004**

# LLWYDDIANT YSGOLION PENTRE – *Model ar gyfer ein Trefn Addysg yng Nghymru*

Gydag etholiad cynghorau sir newydd, galwn am bartneriaeth newydd rhwng y Cynulliad ac awdurdodau lleol i ddatblygu ein hysgolion pentre'n ganolfannau addysg ac adfywio cymunedol. Yn lle ymosod ar ein hysgolion pentre, dylid cydnabod eu llwyddiant a'u defnyddio fel model ar gyfer datblygu adnoddau addysgiadol ac adfywio cymunedol ym mhob cymdogaeth yng Nghymru – a hynny am nifer o resymau:

- **mae ysgolion pentre'n llwyddo'n academaidd** oherwydd eu hagwedd holistaidd at addysg y disgyblion, ac oherwydd cefnogaeth eu cymunedau. Y siroedd hynny sydd â'r cyfran uchaf o ysgolion pentrefol sydd hefyd â'r canlyniadau academaidd gorau.
- **mae ysgolion pentre'n fodel o gydweithio rhwng sefydliadau addysgol** – gan rannu adnoddau dynol a materol. Mae angen symud oddi wrth fodel hen-ffasiwn ysgolion canolog mawr tuag at y cysyniad mwy soffistigedig o ysgolion aml-safle sy'n cyfuno strwythur addysgol a gweinyddol integreiddiedig gyda phresenoldeb ym mhob cymuned.
- **mae ysgolion pentre'n fodel effeithiol ar gyfer addysg gymunedol.** Hwb mawr i gynhwysiant cymdeithasol yw bod pobl na fyddent fel arfer yn cofrestru ar gyfer dosbarthiadau academaidd yn dysgu sgiliau newydd oherwydd eu bod yn dysgu gyda'i gilydd yn eu cymdogaeth ac mewn sefydliad y teimlant sy'n perthyn iddynt.
- **mae ysgolion pentre'n fodel effeithiol ar gyfer adfywio cymunedol** – fel canolfan a ffocws i'r gymuned leol gyda chyfle i adnabod anghenion a datblygu sgiliau perthnasol.
- **mae ysgolion pentre'n fodel ar gyfer cynhwysiant cymdeithasol a dysgu'r Gymraeg.** Yn lle datblygu sgiliau ieithyddol fel unigolion, mae'r disgyblion (ac oedolion mewn addysg gymunedol) yn dysgu'r iaith gyda'i gilydd ac yn ei chanfod yn allweddol i'w cymuned leol. Gallant ddysgu am eu cymuned trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg a chysylltu'r iaith gyda'u cymuned yn hytrach na gyda gwaith ysgol yn unig. Maent felly'n llawer fwy tebygol o ddefnyddio'r iaith.
- **mae ysgolion pentre'n fodel o resymoli cadarnhaol** – sef gwneud y defnydd gorau o adnoddau yn lle cwtogi negyddol yn unig. Mae'r un adnoddau a ddefnyddir ar gyfer addysg statudol y disgyblion ar gael yn y cymdogaethau ar gyfer addysg a datblygu cymunedol. Ar hyn o bryd ceir polisi cul o gau ysgolion ac wedyn lliaws o fentrau digyswllt a gwastraffus o annog addysg a datblygu cymunedol mewn **juwngwl cyllido**. Mae angen rheolaeth gydlynus ar y cyllido.

Am y rhesymau hyn oll, galwn nid yn unig am ddiogelu ein hysgolion pentrefol ond hefyd am gydnabod eu llwyddiant a'u defnyddio'n fodel ar gyfer datblygu **unedau addysg a datblygu cymunedol** ym mhob cymdogaeth yng Nghymru. Dyma fydd yr allwedd ar gyfer sicrhau addysg da, adfywiad economaidd a diwylliannol ein cymunedau ac adfer rheolaeth ddemocrataidd a chydlynus ar y cyfundrefnau cyllido tameidiog a gwirion presennol.

## CYFLWYNWN EIN HARGYMHELLION I'R CANLYNOL:

- Llywodraeth y Cynulliad
- cynghorau sir newydd
- Comisiwn Cyfrifon

Bu'r corff anetholedig diwethaf hwn yn allweddol yn y gorffennol yn y broses o gau ysgolion ar sail ystyriaeth gul o gyllideb ysgolion yn unig. Gofynnwn i'r Comisiwn gydnabod yn awr mai defnydd llawer mwy rhesymol o gyllid cyhoeddus yw datblygu adnoddau adfywio cymunedol y mae addysg statudol yn rhan bwysig o'u gwaith – yn hytrach na lliaws o wahanol fentrau cyllido.

**Paham y bu ymosod ar ysgolion pentre'n hytrach na chydabod eu llwyddiant?**

Bu agwedd gul a thameidiog tuag at ysgolion pentre gyda diffyg cydweithio rhwng gwahanol adrannau'r Cynulliad a gwahanol adrannau'r cynghorau sir. Dyna pam y galwn am bolisi corfforaethol o ddatblygu ysgolion pentre'n hollistaidd a datblygu unedau cyffelyb ym mhob cymdogaeth mewn ardaloedd trefol hefyd.

- Edrychwyd ar ysgolion pentrefol yn gul fel cyfryngau cyfleu addysg statudol i oedran arbennig yn unig. Dyma ddibrisio'r addysg a defnydd aneffeithiol o adnoddau mewn cymunedau bychain. Galwn yn hytrach am ddatblygiad rhwydwaith o **unedau addysg a datblygu cymunedol** ym mhob cymdogaeth a fydd yn cynnwys ysgolion cyfleu addysg statudol. Golyga gyfuno addysg statudol, addysg gymunedol, datblygu cymunedol ac economaidd a hybu'r Gymraeg mewn un strategaeth gydlynus – o safbwynt rheoli a chyllido – wedi'i gwreiddio yn y gymuned leol.
- Edrychwyd ar ysgolion pentre fel adeiladau'n unig, lle gwelwn ni hwy fel **cymunedau dysgu**. Ni bu ymholi fod addysg wael mewn ysgolion pentre, ond bod cost cynnal ac uwchraddio'r adeiladau'n ormod i'r gyllideb addysg. Cyfeiriwyd at nifer o ffactorau gosod – fel neuadd ymgynnull, toiledau mewnol a chost cyfalaf gwella adeilad. Tu mewn i gyd-destun cul y gyllideb addysg statudol, dadleuwyd ei bod yn anodd cynnal yr adeiladau. Rhaid fu aberthu'r cymunedau a'r addysg – neu o leiaf geisio cynnig yr un safonau academiaidd mewn man arall am gost llai. **Dyma gyfundrefn sy'n adeilad-ganolog yn hytrach na bod yn ddisgybl-ganolog nac yn gymuned-ganolog**. Mae hefyd yn gyfundrefn aneffeithiol gan nad yw'n ystyried y gwariant cyfan o wahanol gyllidebau fel addysg gymunedol, datblygu cymunedol, gwasanaethau diwylliannol a mentrau iaith, neu drafnidiaeth. Tu mewn i gyd-destun cyllidol integreiddiedig, byddai datblygu Unedau Addysg /Datblygu Cymunedol ym mhob cymdogaeth yn fuddsoddiad da yn hytrach na'r gwariant tameidiog a di-gyswllt presennol.
- Edrychwyd ar **gyfleustra gweinyddol** wrth ganoli darpariaeth addysg, a diraddiwyd yr holl broses ddemocrataidd trwy wthio penderfyniadau biwrocraidd trwodd. Ymddengys nad yw ymgynghori cyhoeddus byth yn newid penderfyniadau cynghorau sir, ac nad yw'r Gweinidog Addysg byth yn newid unrhyw benderfyniad ar apêl. O ganlyniad mae cymunedau lleol yn profi ymddieithriad o'r holl drefn. Credwn mai trwy **rymuso cymunedau** y mae llwyddo i sicrhau addysg a datblygu cymunedol a'r gefnogaeth gymunedol sy'n allweddol i addysg gynradd disgyblion.

**Datganwn mai ysgolion yw arwyddion gobaith cymunedau lleol wrth edrych i'r dyfodol a hwy yw'r adnodd pwysicaf sydd gan y gymuned. Rhan annatod o addysg yw meithrin sgiliau cydweithio mewn disgyblion ac ymwybyddiaeth o gyfrifoldeb cymunedol ac o'u gwerth yn y gymuned.**

Ni honnwn yn simplistaidd fod pob ysgol bentre o'r safon gorau a bod pob ysgol ganolog yn wael, ond mynnwn fod digon o dystiolaeth fod ysgolion pentre'n llwyddo'n academiaidd ac yn foddion i harneisio egnion cymunedol. Yn hytrach na pholisi cul o gau ysgolion pentre, galwn am gydnabod eu llwyddiant, ymchwilio i'w cryfderau a defnyddio hyn yn fodel datblygu unedau addysg a datblygu cymunedol integreiddiedig ym mhob cymdogaeth yng Nghymru a bod ysgolion cynradd yn rhan o'r rhwydwaith hwn. Manylwn ar ein gweledigaeth at y dyfodol:

## **1. LLWYDDIANT ADDYSGOL YSGOLION PENTRE**

Yr allwedd i lwyddiant addysgol ysgolion pentre ac unedau addysgol cymdogaethol y dyfodol fydd eu hymagweddiad hollistaidd at addysg y disgybl. Mae gan y disgybl newydd y sicrwydd o addysg oddi mewn i'w g/cymuned mewn adeilad cyfarwydd y bydd wedi'i ddefnyddio eisoes at bwrpasau eraill – fel cylch chwarae neu meithrin. **Mae cefnogaeth y gymuned a bod yn rhan o gymuned ddysgu yn bwysig** h.y. fod eraill yn ei deulu a'i gydnabod hefyd yn dysgu. Mae'r croesdoriad oedran ymhlith disgyblion yn yr un cylch dysgu yn hybu mentora – er yn eironig iawn dyma ddadl a gynigir gan feirniaid negyddol yn erbyn ysgolion bychain. Caiff pob disgybl gyfle i

gymryd rhan mewn gweithgareddau diwylliannol/chwaraeon, ac mae hyn yn ychwanegu at eu hunan-hyder ac yn cyfoethogi eu profiad addysgol. O dderbyn addysg gynradd seiliedig ar Astudiaethau Cymunedol, bydd y disgyblion yn debycach o ganfod perthnasedd eu haddysg i'w profiad o fywyd ac felly magu agweddau cadarnhaol at ddysgu. Yn rhan o gymuned gref, bydd graddfa absenoli o'r ysgol yn llai o lawer na'r cyfartaledd presennol.

## **2. CYDWEITHIO RHWNG UNEDAU ADDYSGOL CYMDOGAETHOL**

O reidrwydd y mae ysgolion pentrefol yn tueddu i gydweithio gyda'i gilydd, ond y mae hyn yn gosod model ar gyfer ysgolion trefol hefyd. Gellir cael y gorau o'r ddau trwy berthyn i uned fwy ac eto cadw presenoldeb addysgol ym mhob cymuned. Yn lle'r syniad hen-ffasiwn o ysgolion un-safle canolog a monolithaidd mewn trefi, gellid gweithio tuag at ysgolion cynradd aml-safle gyda phresenoldeb ym mhob cymdogaeth a'r adeiladau hyn yn cael eu defnyddio'n adnoddau addysg a datblygu cymunedol er mwyn gwasanaethu'r cymunedau a rhoi ymdeimlad o berthyn i'r disgyblion iau. Gall cydweithio rhwng ysgolion pentrefol hefyd gymryd ffurf ysgol ffedereiddiedig aml-safle gyda strwythur integreiddiedig neu glwstwr annibynnol o ysgolion cyfagos yn cydweithio ar amcanion penodol ac yn rhannu'r un bwrdd llywodraethol. Ymhlith yr enghreifftiau o gydweithio yn ôl arfer da presennol, y mae:

- Ffurio cwricwlwm lleol ar y cyd rhwng athrawon
- Pwrcasu a gweinyddu canolog er mwyn rhyddhau amser dysgu
- Rhannu arbenigedd cronfa athrawon
- Cynnull plant o'r un oedran ynghyd at weithgareddau penodol
- Lleoli datblygiadau cyfalaf penodol ar safle arbennig i wasanaethu'r cyfan
- Cyhoeddusrwydd ar y cyd

Yng Nghymru yr ydym yn symud ymlaen trwy ddiwylliant o gydweithio yn hytrach na chystadleuaeth rhwng sefydliadau addysgol. Trwy estyn model yr ysgolion pentre llwyddiannus, gallwn ni estyn yr egwyddor hon trwy ein trefn addysg.

## **3. ADNODDAU ADDYSG A DATBLYGU CYMUNEDOL**

Er mwyn gwneud y defnydd gorau o'r unedau addysgol ym mhob cymdogaeth, gellid eu defnyddio'n beiriannau i adfywio'r gymuned gyfan. Eto, yn ôl arferion gorau, gellid datblygu ynddynt:

- clybiau gwaith cartre a gwyliau i ddisgyblion uwchradd o'r gymdogaeth gan sicrhau cyswllt electronig gyda'r ysgol uwchradd.
- clybiau dysgu cymunedol lle byddai oedolion o'r gymdogaeth yn gallu defnyddio'r adnoddau i ddysgu sgiliau newydd i'w rhoi ar waith yn y gymuned ac i fod yn ganolbwynt i gyfathrebu cymunedol.
- clybiau ieuencid – gyda chyfranogiad gan fudiadau gwirfoddol ac asiantaethau fel yr Urdd, Mentrau Iaith etc – fel na chanfyddir y canolfannau hyn yn fannau gwaith yn unig.
- gweithgarwch Gwasanaethau Llyfrgell a Diwylliant.
- pwyllgorau cyswllt cymunedol i drefnu gweithgareddau cymdeithasol.
- yn y canolfannau mwyaf (pentrefi canolog neu unedau canol trefi) gellid defnyddio'r cyfleusterau – neuadd, cegin, technoleg etc – ar gyfer gwasanaethau cymdeithasol ehangach neu fwy arbenigol fel clybiau diwaith a henoed.

**Trwy weithgarwch o'r fath y gallwn ni adeiladu ar lwyddiant ysgolion pentre i dorri lawr y rhwystrau rhwng y byd addysg a'r byd go iawn.** Fel hyn y mae gwell defnydd o'r buddsoddiad mewn adnoddau, ac y mae agweddau mwy cadarnhaol gan ddisgyblion tuag at yr addysg gan eu bod yn ei chanfod yn fwy perthnasol i'w profiad o fywyd.

## **4. GWERTH AM ARIAN**

Mae profiad ein hysgolion pentre'n dangos mor aneffeithiol a gwastraffus yw'r drefn gyllido presennol a chyflwynwn y gwastraff hwn at sylw'r Comisiwn Cyfrifon. **Y diffyg sylfaenol yw bod barnu hyfywedd ariannol ysgolion pentre tu mewn i ffiniau cul y gyllideb addysg statudol yn unig.** Oddi mewn i'r cyd-destun cul hwn y bernir y byddai'n ormod o dreth ar y gyllideb addysg i uwchraddio adeilad ysgol, ac felly caeir yr ysgol. Wedi cau'r ysgol, cynigir i'r gymuned leol fod pob math ar grantiau ar gael ar gyfer gwella'r adeilad fel y gellir ei defnyddio'n adnodd i'r gymuned leol !! Ond y mae'r grantiau hyn yn dameidiog ac yn ddi-gyswllt heb fod yn rhan o unrhyw strategaeth ystyrion o ran addysgu na datblygu cymunedol. Hap a damwain yw'r cyfan, ac y mae angen byddin o gydlynwyr a hyrwyddwyr i ffindio eu ffordd trwy'r jwngwl o grantiau, dim ond i ddarganfod yn aml fod y grant newydd ddod i ddiwedd ei gyfnod a bod yn rhaid dechrau chwilio o'r newydd. Mae'n drefniant cyllido sy'n aneffeithiol ac yn wastraffus o ran egni ac arian cyhoeddus. **Hyd yn oed o gael hyd i'r cyllid, mae'r buddsoddiad yn yr adeilad ac offer yn llai cynhyrchiol os na chaiff ei ddefnyddio fel ysgol ac fel canolfan gymunedol.**

Mae angen rheolaeth a chyllideb integreiddiedig ar gyfer addysg a datblygu cymunedol gan roi terfyn ar y gwastraff presennol. Unwaith y cymerwn i ystyriaeth yr holl gyllid a werir o wahanol ffynonellau ar y trefniant aneffeithiol presennol – addysg statudol, addysg ôl-16, addysg gymunedol, hyfforddiant, grantiau di-rif a di-gyswllt, trafndiaeth – y mae'n rhaid casglu mai ein cynnig ni o ddarpariaeth integreiddiedig o **unedau addysg a datblygu cymunedol** ym mhob pentref a chymdogaeth yw'r defnydd mwyaf rhesymol a chynhyrchioladol o gyllid cyhoeddus.

Fel troed-nodyn, dylid cymryd i ystyriaeth hefyd y costau a ddaw i'r gwasanaethau cymdeithasol, iechyd a chyfraith **trwy fod y drefn addysg bresennol yn dieithrio cymaint o'n hieuentid.** Buddsoddiad da iawn fyddai adfer ymdeimlad o berthyn a chyfrifoldeb cymunedol a hunan-werth.

**Ein galwad felly ar Lywodraeth y Cynulliad a chynghorau sir newydd Cymru yw i feithrin strategaeth gadarnhaol newydd ar gyfer ysgolion pentre a'u defnyddio fel model i greu unedau addysg a datblygu cymunedol ym mhob cymdogaeth gyda rheolaeth a chyllid integreiddiedig i sicrhau hyn.**

Grwp Ymgyrch Addysg  
Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg  
Mai 2004

cymdeithas  
yr **IAITH** gymraeg

# The Success Of Village Schools

A model for our  
Education System  
in Wales



**May 2004**

# THE SUCCESS OF VILLAGE SCHOOLS

## *A Model for our Education System in Wales*

As new county councils are elected in Wales, we call for a new partnership between the Assembly and local authorities to develop our village schools as education and community regeneration centres. Instead of attacking our village schools, we should recognise their success. They should be used as a model for developing educational and community regeneration resources within every community in Wales – for a number of reasons:

- **village schools succeed academically** due to their holistic approach to pupils' education and due to support from the community. Those counties which have the highest percentage of village schools also enjoy the best academic results.
- **village schools are a model for co-operation between educational establishments** – sharing human and capital resources. We need to move away from the old-fashioned model of large centralised schools and towards the more sophisticated context of multi-site schools which combine an integrated educational and administrative structure with a presence in every neighbourhood.
- **village schools are an effective model for community education.** People who would not normally sign up to academic courses learn new skills as a result of learning together as a group – within their community and in an establishment that they feel belongs to them. This is an undoubted benefit to social inclusion.
- **village schools are an effective model for community regeneration** – as a centre and focus for the local community with opportunities to identify needs and develop relevant skills.
- **village schools are a model for social inclusion and for learning Welsh.** Instead of developing linguistic skills as individuals, pupils (and adults in community education classes) learn the language together and as a key to their local community. They can learn about their community through the medium of Welsh thereby linking the language with their community, rather than with school work alone. They are therefore far more likely to use the language.
- **village schools are a model of positive rationalisation** – making the best use of available resources instead of only making negative cutbacks. The same resources that are used for the statutory education of pupils are also available within communities for education and community development. At present we have a narrowly-focused policy of closing down schools, hand in hand with a plethora of unco-ordinated and wasteful initiatives designed to encourage education and community development within a **funding jungle**. There is a need for co-ordinated regulation of funds.

For all these reasons, we call not only for the safeguarding of our village schools but also for a recognition of their success. We call for them to be used as a model for developing **education and community development units** in every neighbourhood in Wales. This is the key to ensuring good education, the economic and cultural regeneration of our communities and a return to democratic and co-ordinated regulation of the present nonsensically fragmented funding streams.

### **WE SUBMIT OUR PROPOSALS TO THE FOLLOWING:**

- the Assembly Government
- the newly-formed local authorities
- the Audit Commission

This last unelected body has been instrumental in the past in the process of closing schools on the narrow basis of school funding alone. We ask the Commission to recognise now that the

development of community regeneration resources – within which statutory education will play an integral role – is a far better use of public funding than the present plethora of different funding initiatives.

### **Why have village schools traditionally been attacked instead of their success being applauded?**

Up until now there has been a narrow and fragmented approach towards village schools, with a lack of co-operation between the different Assembly and local authority departments. That is why we call for a corporate policy to develop village schools holistically and to develop similar units in every urban community.

- Village schools have been traditionally viewed as a means of offering statutory education to a specific age range only. This devalues education and leads to an ineffective use of resources in small communities. We call instead for a network of **education and community development units** to be rolled out in every community that has schools that offer statutory education. This means combining statutory education, community education, community and economic development and the promotion of Welsh in one co-ordinated strategy – from a funding and regulatory perspective – that is rooted in the local community.
- Village schools have been viewed as mere buildings, whereas we see them as **educational communities**. Village schools are not accused of offering a poor standard of education, but rather that the costs of maintaining and upgrading buildings are too great for the education budget. Reference has been made to several set criteria, such as an assembly hall, internal toilets and the capital costs of improving a building. Within the narrow context of statutory education funding, it has been argued that it has been difficult to maintain the buildings. If a similar standard of statutory education could be provided at a lower cost, the communities could be sacrificed. **This is a system that is building-centred rather than pupil-centred or community-centred.** It is also an ineffective system as it takes no account of the total costs of the various funding streams involved, such as community education, community development, cultural services and language initiatives, or transport. Within an integrated funding framework, the development of community education and development units for each neighbourhood would be a good investment instead of the present unco-ordinated and fragmented spending.
- Administrative convenience has led the process of centralising educational provision, and the whole democratic process has been undermined by the railroading of bureaucratic decisions. It appears that public consultation never changes local authority decisions, and that the Education Minister never changes any decision on appeal. As a result local communities feel excluded from the whole process. We believe that by **empowering communities** we can ensure the education and community development and the community support that is essential for pupils' primary education.

**We state that schools are beacons of hope for local communities looking towards the future and that they are the most important asset a community has. An integral part of education is to nurture in pupils an ability to co-operate, together with an understanding of community responsibility and of their worth to the community.**

We do not make a simplistic assumption that every village school offers education of the highest standard and that every centralised school offers the reverse. We maintain however that enough evidence exists that village schools succeed academically and that they are a means of harnessing a community's energy. Instead of a narrow policy of closing village schools, we call for a recognition of their success and a review of their strengths. We call for village schools to be used as a model to develop integrated education and community development units for every neighbourhood in Wales, with primary schools a part of this framework. We set out in details below our vision for the future :



## 1. THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF VILLAGE SCHOOLS

The key to the educational success of village schools and the community educational units of the future lies in their holistic approach to pupils' education. The new pupil has the security of education within his/her community, in a familiar building that he/she will already have used for other purposes eg nursery or play group. **The support of the community, and being part of a learning community, is also important** i.e. that other relatives and acquaintances will also be learning. The cross-section of ages amongst pupils within a learning group will encourage mentoring – although it is ironic that this is often used as a negative factor by critics of small schools. Each pupil will have a chance to take part in cultural/sporting activities and this will add to their self-confidence and enrich their learning experience. By receiving primary education based on Community Studies, pupils are more likely to see the relevance of their education to their own experience of life. This in turn will therefore engender a positive approach to education amongst pupils. As part of a strong community, absenteeism rates will be far lower than the present average.

## 2. CO-OPERATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL UNITS

Village schools of necessity tend to work together, but this offers a model for urban schools as well. One can get the best of both worlds by being part of a larger unit yet still keeping an educational presence in every community. Instead of the old-fashioned idea of centralised and monolithic one-site schools in towns, we could work towards multi-site primary schools with a presence in every neighbourhood and with these buildings being used as education and community development resources to serve the community and give younger pupils a sense of belonging. Co-operation between village schools can also take the form of a federal multi-site schools with an integrated structure, or an informal cluster of nearby schools who co-operate on specific topics and who share a governing body. Examples of present good practice in co-operation include:

- teachers coming together to form a local curriculum
- central purchasing and administration to free up teaching time
- pooling and sharing teachers' expertise
- bringing children of a similar age together for certain activities
- situating specific capital developments on a particular site to benefit all
- joint marketing

In Wales we are moving forward through a culture of co-operation – not competition – between educational establishments. By extending the model of successful village schools, we can extend this same principle throughout our education system.

## 3. EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

In order to make the best use of the educational units within each community, they could be used as a means of regenerating the whole community. Again, according to best practice, they could be used to house:

- homework and holiday clubs for secondary-age children of the community, ensuring electronic links to the local secondary school.
- community learning clubs where adults would be able to make use of resources and learn new skills to be put into practice in the community and which would be a focus for community interaction.

- youth clubs – with input from voluntary organisations and agencies such as the Urdd, Mentrau Iaith (language enterprises) etc – so that the units are not seen only as places for work.
- Library and Culture Services activities
- community liaison committees to arrange social activities
- in the largest centres (central villages or town-based units), facilities – hall, kitchen, technology etc – could be used for general and specialised social services such as clubs for the unemployed or the elderly

**Through such activities we can build on the success of village schools in breaking down barriers between the educational world and the real world.** We will see better use of the investment in resources, and pupils will have more positive attitudes towards the education they receive because they see it as more relevant to their experience of life.

#### 4. VALUE FOR MONEY

Past experience with village schools has shown us how inefficient and wasteful the present funding system is, and we draw this waste to the attention of the Audit Commission. **The fundamental flaw is to gauge the financial viability of village schools within the narrow boundaries of statutory education funding alone.** Within this narrow context, it has been deemed too much of a burden on a school's budget to upgrade its' buildings, and so the school is closed. After the closure, the community is informed that all kinds of grants are available to improve the building so that it can be used as a community resource !! These grants however are piecemeal and unco-ordinated, and do not form a part of any coherent strategy for education and community development. Everything is left to chance – one needs an army of co-ordinators and facilitators to find their way through the jungle of grants, often only to find that a grant has been discontinued and that the search must start anew. It is an ineffective funding system, wasting both energy and public funds. **Even if funding is found, the investment in the building and its equipment is less productive than if it were used as a school as well as a community centre.**

We need an integrated funding and management framework for education and community Development to put an end to the present waste. Once we take into account the total spend from the various funding streams of the present ineffective system – statutory education, post-16 education, community education, training, innumerable and unco-ordinated grants, transport – we must conclude that our vision of an integrated provision of **education and community development units** for each village and community is the most reasonable and efficient use of public funds.

As a foot-note, one should also take into account the social, health and legal costs that **result from the way in which the present system alienates young people.** Reviving a sense of belonging and responsibility towards a community would certainly be a worthwhile investment.

**Our demand therefore is for the Assembly Government and all newly-elected local authorities in Wales to adopt a positive new strategy for village schools and use them as a model to establish *education and community development units* in every community and urban neighbourhood, implemented through an integrated funding and management system.**

Education Campaign Group  
Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg  
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