

Response to the Closure of Llanwern LRB from G Foster

Re-establishment of the Provision

In 2014, it was recognised that the provision needed to be reinvented due to the changes in staff and pupils. A review was done by the LA and a new description of the provision was agreed. There were clear entry and exit criteria set out for SEBD pupils to access a 2-year placement with us at Llanwern Resource Base. We have places for 6 statemented pupils and 2 extra places for those needing assessment.

The provision followed the principles of the Nurture Group Network (NGN) and I received the 3-day training course in 2014. One of the TAs completed ELSA (Emotional Literacy) training last year, which is continuing with termly monitoring by the EP service this year.

As part of the re-organisation of the provision, it was felt that the correct staff needed to be employed in order to make the 'nurturing' ethos of the base work. 2 new members of staff were employed in 2015.

Current Situation at Llanwern Resource Base

Last year was our second full year of working as a 'nurture provision'. We had 4 pupils in Year 7 and 2 pupils in Year 8. One of the Year 8 pupils reintegrated successfully into mainstream in January 2017 and we had another pupil in Year 8 to replace him as well as another Year 7 pupil whilst he was going through statutory assessment. TAs did outreach work on a Thursday and supported pupils in their home schools. This support was gradually withdrawn as the pupils' confidence grew.

As part of the ethos we built up in the new provision, we recognised the need to support the parents of our pupils and set up a 'Nurturing Parents Group'. We invited professionals to talk to parents about a given topic for 45 minutes and then held an open forum style coffee morning session so that parents felt they could ask questions or share their situations with others.

We set up new initiatives and established a different way of working with these challenging youngsters. There was a huge reduction in use of restrictive physical intervention (RPI) and the punitive approach to SEBD pupils, which was a concern in the past. We worked towards gaining an understanding of the behaviours, the reasons for the behaviours and to give the youngsters strategies and skills to enable them to succeed in society. These pupils do not have the self-esteem, social skills or emotional understanding to function in a way that mainstream expects of them. Our LRB provided a 'safe haven' for pupils during their journey.

Some Concerns Regarding the Proposed Closure of the LRB

Pupils are placed in an LRB as it has been identified that they are not ready to access mainstream education. If forced to be placed there before they are ready, it is likely that they will not cope. This may not be immediately but the likelihood is that at some point they will start to struggle and the challenging behaviours which they feel comfortable resorting to will begin to resurface.

At present there are a large number of KS2 LRBs across Newport. The 2 new primary schools being built will also have LRBs attached to them. There is already a vast reduction of KS3 LRB places available, which is going to be extended further with the closure of this LRB, and our numbers have already decreased over the past few years. The long term effect of this closure on the pupils already

placed here and those who have been identified to access a place here, has not in my opinion been fully considered. These pupil's lives are going to be greatly affected if they do not receive the specialist intervention that Newport LA has recognised and acknowledged they need.

I feel it is necessary to respond to some of the comments made in the report written after the initial period of consultation. When representatives came in to talk to pupils about their feelings concerning the closure of the LRB, the report gives the impression that pupils didn't care and refused to talk to them about it. The one pupil who said 'he would adapt to any new arrangement that was put in place' was due to finish the placement in the LRB in July anyway and already knew he was moving on as he was at the end of Year 8. He has since been moved on from the placement that he was moved to in September. Another pupil said he was sad about the closure but had friends in mainstream and would be OK – he has done well but would not have coped if he had not had the intervention he did during Year 7. Another pupil refused to speak to them but he has an ASD diagnosis and does not talk to strangers, he had no idea why they were there and had no understanding of what was meant by the closure. He has since, successfully been placed at Ysgol Bryn Derw.

In the section of Estyn's response, it is noted that no staff are facing redundancy. All staff involved were told that we would not be considered for redundancy or redeployment until the final consultation was signed off and the closure was confirmed. As this has not yet happened, it is not possible to say that no staff are facing redundancy. It also states in this section that staff from the LRB are 'continuing to work with the pupils in small mainstream provision'. This is completely not true. None of the staff from the LRB have had any contact with any of the LRB pupils since July. The alternative roles taken on by LRB staff within the school were imposed due to the fact that pupils were removed from the provision and the date for redundancy at the end of August was not met due to the official consultation not starting until July. This meant the school had to find roles for staff despite the fact that the funding had already been removed by the LA. In addition to this, the LA response to Estyn says that 'extensive training to mainstream staff' has been given to 'meet the needs of these pupils'. The staff that are working with some of the pupils who were in the LRB and who would have accessed a place there from Sept 17, have not had specialist training to meet their specific needs. Some of the staff are actually agency staff who are very young and have no experience of catering for children with SEBD.

The whole process has taken nearly a year and communication with staff has been very poor, leaving to staff feeling disillusioned, demoralised and not valued. This has resulted in 1 member of the LRB staff being off long term with work related stress. As a staff, we feel that the closure of the LRB has not been thoroughly thought through and the needs of the pupils and staff have not been considered in an appropriate way.