

Ysgol Goffa – note of visit

29 June 2023

Attendees:

- Sioned Williams MS
- Sian Hughes, Senior Researcher

1. The School

1. Ysgol Goffa caters for learners aged 3-19 with profound and multiple disabilities. There are 111 pupils on roll, and there is a waiting list for the school.
2. Two pupils provided a tour of the school and discussions were held with staff and pupils in each classroom.
3. The school will be shortly moving to a new site with a new build school. The children at the school have had input into its design. Although there will be greater capacity at the school, the headteacher felt that they would still be oversubscribed due to the extent of the waiting list for the school. Currently, space is an issue at the school with many of the children requiring multiple pieces of equipment (such as wheelchairs).

2. Discussions with parents, staff, governors and pupils

Training

4. Staff spoke of the training that they have undertaken. As well as training for the new curriculum and other general professional development, they require more specialist training,



such as health and medical related training. Staff greatly welcomed the support they received from specialists such as speech and language specialists and community nurses who regularly attend the school.

5. A member of support staff spoke of the qualifications that she was undertaking and her wish to progress for a formal teaching qualification. However, this would mean leaving the school or taking unpaid leave as teacher training placements cannot be wholly undertaken at a special school.

Inclusive education

6. It is not always easy to determine what is in the best interests of the child. The curriculum, staff ratios and the level of staff training in mainstream schools provide a different experience for learners, which may not be the most appropriate for learners with additional needs.

7. There may be positive benefits for other learners in mainstream schools in terms of learning about inclusivity, but it may not always be in the best interests of the learner with additional needs.

8. There are some challenging attitudes about special schools and parents may feel stigmatised. All the parents were very positive about their children's attendance at the school. Some felt that for some, inclusive education was a 'dogma' and not necessarily in the best interests of the learner.

Qualifications

9. If learners wish to study for exams such as GCSEs, the school has arrangements with a local secondary school. The school said that they do not put any limits on the learners.

Childcare

10. Parents suggested that this was a 'massive gap' in accessing childcare. Summer holiday provision was not always well advertised – with social workers advising parents of its existence – and places were filled very quickly.

Funding

11. Funding for special schools is not made in the same way as it is for mainstream schools and the headteacher had managed to ensure formula funding for the school, although funding was an issue.

Information

12. Parents spoke about the 'fight' that they have had to access the right education for their children. Information on choices was not readily available or pro-actively offered to parents. It had to be sought out.

13. The head teacher had been helpful in advising parents of their access to social workers and direct payments. Parents spoke about not being aware of the provision that was available and that they would have to 'know to ask' for support.

Transport

14. The school had good transport arrangements and the pupils enjoyed the social interaction and independence of traveling by bus.

15. However, it was not always clear why decisions to offer free school transport were made. An example was provided of two children living in the same house where one was offered transport and another not. School transport escorts had been told that they were not to knock the door of any family where the child was not ready to attend school and this meant that the child would often miss a day at school.

16. There were issues for post-16 college transport where learners would need to find their own way to their provision.