

## Gwbert Conference September 20<sup>th</sup>. – 23<sup>rd</sup>.

What is important to me in the :-

### Classroom

1. Pupils are interested in what they do.
2. The relationship between the pupils and myself is based on **mutual** respect.
3. Pupils are learning – not just academically but as human beings who need to become good citizens

### School

1. Pupils are having worthwhile experiences.
2. Pupils are achieving success and their achievements are recognised within the school.
3. Pupils are proud of being in “our” school.
4. Parents and “outsiders” respect the school.

### Home

1. My wife and three children.
2. Taking time out to enjoy my family life. Children grow up quickly.
3. Personal interests revolving around playing and watching various sports, reading, walking, singing in a choir and holidays with the family.

### Initial key learnings

1. The Hermann profile was a confirmation of some personal strengths and weaknesses. The results were not surprising but perhaps encouraged me to reflect upon my style of leadership and management and my “blind” spots.
2. I am grateful that I have a strong team surrounding me. We work effectively together, they take responsibility for their areas and together we make decisions about the way ahead.

3. The input reinforced an obvious point namely that it is valuable to take a fresh look at the leadership issues problems that we all face as headteachers. Obvious but easy to avoid and forget under the pressure of dealing with day-to-day “fire fighting” problems. Taking time to step back and analyse things dispassionately can help to relieve stress and pressure in the long run.

### Key learnings

1. I think I’ve begun to think more about the way I act as a Head or leader as a result of some of the inputs, time out of the school and talking to others who do a similar job and are empathetic about the pressure that it creates.
2. We all have the same problems in that we have to deal with children, parents, staff, governors (in some way) and the local region, authority or government. We are all accountable.
3. We are all professional, self-disciplined, well motivated people who want the best for the children in our charge and also want to do our jobs well. Inevitably we are frustrated in trying to achieve this at times.
4. A sense of humour is essential and helps to “oil” the development of personal relationships.
5. Harvey still swims like a dolphin even on reflection!

Further “reflections” since Gwbert and after Jens and Laudomia left. Some of these points crystallised after having time to look at the files and literature accompanying the course.

1. I believe that a sense of proportion is essential. If we need to care for ourselves in order to care for others then we also need to recognise that there are limits. I accept that Heads define the school style in some ways but there are

many other influences on schools as well and it is dangerous to accept total responsibility. That way lies madness!

2. It is relatively easy to find new ideas about leadership and management and “fashions” about. They are international in nature and used in industry/business as well as education. Putting these ideas **into practice** is usually more difficult than textbooks or trainers will allow but I have always found that teachers are more willing to listen when colleagues teach them because they understand the problems faced at the “chalk face”. This opportunity to work with colleagues on an international basis is therefore a unique opportunity for me to develop my understanding of leadership and management. It is very refreshing as long as the “coaches” do understand that their role is to facilitate, listen to what is being said and put emphasis on the process of learning. This is much more important than keeping to a set timetable or curriculum.
3. The style of leadership adopted within a school may also be dictated by the Head’s judgement of where a school is at as well as the external reputation of a school on the arrival of a new Head. Sometimes you may not have the luxury of adopting a style that may bring about positive changes in the long term (“democratic” and “coaching”?) but where short term changes are necessary and expected.
4. We intend to survey staff attitudes fairly soon and have done some work on a questionnaire based on existing research. I’m hoping to incorporate some questions based on “Hay’s six dimensions of climate” in order to provide the senior team with information to reflect on and for me to relate to my leadership style. I’ve made an initial stab at devising such questions for discussion in school.

Agenda agreed by the trio in Llandeilo

1. To contact one another electronically at the beginning of each month – at least in these early stages.

Jens and Laudomia to reflect upon their impressions of Ysgol Y Gwendraeth – and to report back in our learning logs. I'm quite happy that they also do this with regard to how they perceived aspects of my leadership style.

2. That our reflections on this first stage in Wales (and 2.) should be the basis of our first contact in October.
3. We should discuss and feedback information and feelings about the whole week in order to try and get the best learning experience possible in the next stage in Italy
4. That our leadership question should involve various school issues centred on our mutual interest in developing and motivating staff. I am particularly interested on improving the achievements of boys within the middle ability levels.

#### Thoughts on the organisation of the next visit

1. Consult everyone about the plans for the next stage.
2. The group ethos was strong at Gwbert. Pay more attention to the group not just the trios.
3. The week was very pressured. Allow some time between the formal input and the school visits.
4. I'm a great believer in allowing opportunities for people to meet informally together and with advisors to discuss and analyse formal inputs. People need to relax in new surroundings and some of the best discussions and learning activities take place in the bar!
5. Give opportunities to travel together to see an area and relate the school system to the society that it serves.
6. Enquire whether members of the group have shared interests e.g. opera, tennis, architecture, whatever and provide opportunities to choose some planned activities.
7. Respect the experience of the group and their opinions. I felt that people were not listened to at Gwbert and therefore people did not respond when they were asked questions. Some people were ignored when they wanted to

contribute or points made by the audience were not picked up and developed. Valuable discussion was therefore stifled.

8. Avoid clichéd phrases, which strike a patronising note in favour of a more natural approach.

Initial ideas for questions based on Hay's six dimensions of climate

1. Do you find it difficult to introduce your ideas and personal interests into the school system?
2. Do you feel that you are given the responsibility and the personal authority to carry out your work within the school?
3. Does the school set high standards in the following areas?  
Teaching  
Learning  
Behaviour  
Pupil achievement
4. Do you feel valued within the school? Are your personal contributions recognised?
5. Are you clear about the school's expectations of you as a teacher?
6. Are you clear about the school's aims and what it is trying to accomplish with pupils?
7. Do you feel that we generally work together well as a team at Ysgol Y Gwendraeth?

Use 1-5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest?  
good fair satisfactory good very good

I wrote the above immediately after the “Gwbert” weekend and tried to post it on to the leadership message board but obviously didn’t succeed. It has been very frustrating trying to access this programme. However I hope to get this done after typing this now that Tommy has put first class client on to my school computer.

Peter 25/11/02