

Ancient ceremony marks new school milestone

Schoolchildren from Hakin Community and Hubberston VC schools have taken part in a ceremony to mark the development of a new primary school currently under construction at Gelliswick Road.

Pupils from both schools visited the site of the £12 million project, which was formally named Gelliswick Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School by Cabinet earlier this week.

It is one of several schools which have been built, or are being built, under the 21st Century Schools Programme - a £120 million initiative between Pembrokeshire County Council and the Welsh Government to build state-of-the-art schools.

The new school will provide:

- a new build primary school for 480 pupils
- an Early Years Unit for around 60 pupils
- a Complex Needs Unit for 24 pupils aged
- some facilities accessible to - and shared by - the community.

A new 3G sports pitch adjacent to the site has already been handed over to the Council.



The youngsters were among guests at a 'topping-out' event marking the structural completion of the building by contractors Willmott Dixon.

The ancient ceremony is said to ward off evil spirits and bestow good fortune on a property.

The pupils contributed by pouring wine, oil, corn and salt on a small yew tree. They will be among those children moving into the new school when it opens at the end of the year.

In Saxon times a yew tree branch was placed in the uppermost part of a new construction as a symbol of completion.

Wine symbolised fertility and wisdom and oil promised liberty and prosperity. Corn would ripen and grow prosperity into abundance and the salt equated to purity and hospitality.

Welcoming guests, Willmott Dixon's Operations Director, Ian Jones, said the event marked the halfway point of the contract which was slightly ahead of schedule, thanks to the team led by Martin Bennett.

"This is an important milestone in the building's construction, both for ourselves and Pembrokeshire County Council," he said.

He revealed that 168 tons of steel had gone into the frame of the new school while 3,000 tons of concrete had been poured into its foundations. Walls had been covered with 65 tons of plasterboard.

Mr Jones went on: "I am pleased to say that 78 per cent of the goods we have used on site have been procured in Wales and that we have given 272 weeks of employment to those who were previously jobless while also offering 81 weeks of work experience."

County Council Leader, Jamie Adams, said the Authority was involved in the second largest 21st Century Schools Programme in Wales and that the money spent in investing in the education of children was worth every penny.

Under the scheme, the County Council has already opened four new schools and are in the process of building five others around Pembrokeshire.

Captions

Pic 5: Councillor Adams and Ian Jones with the four pupils who ‘anointed’ the yew tree - Aiden, George, Holly and Teigan.