

Minister opens new Welsh school



Education Minister Kirsty Williams AM has officially opened the new Welsh-medium school for three to 16-year-olds built in Haverfordwest.

The £28 million Ysgol Caer Elen represents the first ever investment in Welsh language secondary education in that particular part of Pembrokeshire.

The only other Welsh medium secondary provision in Pembrokeshire is based in Crymych, with travel times from the mid and south of the county in excess of 45 minutes.

Ysgol Caer Elen – which opened for pupils last September - is one of several schools built, or are being built, under the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme – a £120 million initiative between

Pembrokeshire County Council and the Welsh Government to build state-of-the-art schools.

The development provides a:

- 45-place nursery
- 315-place primary provision
- 600-place secondary school
- 24-place playgroup (Cylch Meithrin)

Also included is an all-weather sports pitch for out-of-school hours community use.

The Minister was welcomed to the school earlier today (Thursday, 14th March) by Aden Brinn, the Chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council, and headteacher Michael Davies.

Mr Davies said it was an exciting time for the Welsh language in Pembrokeshire as the county boasted the greatest increase in the number of Welsh speakers in Wales - up 10 per cent to 30 per cent since 2008.

Before unveiling a plaque, Kirsty Williams told pupils: "I'm so pleased to be here today to open this fantastic new school.

"Through the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme we are investing alongside local authorities to create buildings that are well-designed, safe and energy-efficient, that meet the needs of learners, teachers and the wider community and are truly befitting of the 21st Century.

"Caer Elen is the perfect example of our investment in Welsh Language education to ensure we reach our goal of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

“The new school serves as a Welsh Language hub, offering top class Welsh language education within a community that is traditionally non Welsh speaking.

“It is also great to see how this new school will see children from ages three through to 16 all learning under one roof.

“This will allow the pupils to learn in an environment that has teaching staff and classrooms they are familiar with, and all the benefits this consistency brings to their learning experience.”

She later toured the new school.

The County Council’s Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, David Lloyd, said the new facility addressed the increased demand for Welsh-medium education provision in the south, mid and north-west of Pembrokeshire.

Councillor Lloyd went on: “This is an historic day for the Welsh language in Pembrokeshire.

“The opening of a brand new Welsh-language secondary school in the heart of what was formerly known as ‘Little England beyond Wales’ is a hugely significant step forward for Welsh-medium education in our County. My sincere congratulations to those who worked to make this possible.”

Councillor Cris Tomos, the Authority’s Cabinet Member for the Environment and Welsh Language added: "This is a fantastic facility that we have here in Ysgol Caer Elen and is a tribute to all those who have fought to have a Welsh medium secondary school in Haverfordwest.

"It is a great statement that shows the status of the Welsh language is being fully supported by Pembrokeshire County Council."

The main contractors for the project were Willmott Dixon.

Captions

Plaque: Kirsty Williams AM with pupils Cerys Knight and Summer Othen after unveiling the plaque. With them is headteacher Michael Davies (left) and Councillor Cris Tomos.

Microscope: Kirsty Williams AM in a science lesson with pupil Evan Mackeen. With them, from the left, is teacher Tristan Lewis, headteacher Michael Davies and Councillor Aden Brinn.

