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RhAG Sir Fynwy (Gogledd)

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4 February 2008

Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas,
The Presiding Officer,
The National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
CF99 1NA.

Dear Mr Elis-Thomas

Please find enclosed a petition from Monmouthshire residents appealing for the improvement of Welsh medium education in the south east of Wales. Principally, the current issue is the lack of any secondary education facility within Monmouthshire. The 157 names represent a small portion of the people frustrated by the poor facilities provided for Welsh students here.

In the past, the local councils appear to have put Welsh medium education at the bottom of their list of priorities and have only just woken up to the fact that Welsh medium education has been bucking the trend and increasing in popularity, even in these 'anglicised' parts of Wales. This has meant that they have only recently provided much needed funding for two new buildings for existing Welsh medium primary schools in the area. Previously, Ysgol y Fenni had been housed in a youth centre and Ysgol y Ffin was housed in a small, outdated sub-standard school in the back of beyond. Ysgol y Fenni's purpose built school opened last year and Ysgol y Ffin's is due in September 2008. These improvements are very welcome but will unfortunately now put additional stress on the only Welsh medium comprehensive.

When parents chose a bilingual education for their children they want it to continue from 4 to 18 and beyond if possible. Unfortunately for students in Monmouthshire there is no comprehensive provision at all. Currently all children in Newport and Monmouthshire are being bused to Gwynllyw in Torfaen. Gwynllyw is a very good school that is at present

oversubscribed and has been described as being 'at crisis point'. The extra children are currently being educated in 'portacabin' type classrooms and more will need to be purchased next year to cope with the ever increasing numbers. This poses a problem with the 'fabric' of the original school which is desperately overcrowded as it far exceeds the numbers that it was originally designed for, causing problems at times like lunch, when getting the children fed is apparently a major exercise. There is also a problem with the distance. Torfaen is some distance from Monmouth and some children are taking up to two hours each way to get to school, which seems a criminal waste of a young person's life.

We, as citizens of Monmouthshire therefore urge you to assist Monmouthshire Authorities in any way possible to resolve this problem. The education of the children in the area is already suffering. We would like the Welsh assembly to assist Monmouthshire Authorities who by their own admission are actively failing Welsh speaking children in their county.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Hill', written in a cursive style.

Emma Hill
Cadeirydd RhAG Sir Fynwy (Gogledd)