



Changing Hearts, Minds & Futures

Learning to Live, Living to Learn



**OFFICIAL OPENING**

**by**

**Kirsty Williams AM**

**October 16th 2016**

# OUR NEW SCHOOL



Mrs Armitstead and some of the Senior Leadership Team awaiting our guests

## Items produced for the opening of the new build



Cake made by Bayley Wilkinson and Andrew Bartholomew



Picture produced by Ellis Wilkinson and Jennifer Williams



3D Dragon mounted on Welsh Slate produced by Technology Department



Commemorative Mugs for guests produced by Technology Department

## Our Programme for the Day was :

- 10.00 a.m. Our guests were given a tour of the building
- 10.45 a.m. Cabinet Minister Kirsty Williams arrived and was escorted to the Performance Space by the Student Leadership Team of Rhyl High School
- 11.00 a.m. Introductions were made by:  
Councillor Eryl Williams  
Lead Member for Education - Denbighshire County Council
- The official welcome was made by:  
Councillor Ann Davies - Chairman of Denbighshire County Council
- Addresses were given by Rhyl High School & Ysgol Tir Morfa (5-7 minutes each)  
Claire Armitstead - Headteacher Rhyl High School  
Carole Edwards - Headteacher Ysgol Tir Morfa
- The students of Rhyl High School and Ysgol Tir Morfa also gave an address:
- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Jacob Jones       | Callum Slattery |
| Jennifer Williams | Antonio Turner  |
| Luke Wilmot       | Lewis Williams  |
| Holly Jones       |                 |
- Address given by Managing Director Willmott Dixon (5 minutes):  
Mr Anthony Dillon
- Official opening ceremony and unveiling of plaque was made by:  
Kirsty Williams AM - Cabinet Secretary for Education
- Photographs were taken
- Closing remarks and vote of thanks was given by:  
Councillor Eryl Williams and pupils of Rhyl High School and Ysgol Tir Morfa
- Refreshments
- 11.30 a.m. Kirsty Williams Cabinet Secretary departed the Performance Space for a tour of the building
- 12.00 p.m. Cabinet Secretary Kirsty Williams left the school site



# INFORMATION FROM DENBIGHSHIRE COUNCIL COUNCIL

Education has always been a priority for Denbighshire County Council. Whilst the focus has been on improving attainment and providing support for our school, the need to improve the facilities has always been at the forefront of our consideration.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme was developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with local authorities across Wales. This gave the opportunity for Denbighshire to scope out an outline programme for how it could improve its school buildings.

The Council's overall Investment Plan was approved in principal by the Welsh Government in 2011 which gave the green light for Denbighshire to detail how it could turn this vision into reality.

After the County Council elections in 2012, Denbighshire agreed to back an ambitious Corporate Plan which included a commitment to invest over £90million to improve performance in education and the quality of our school buildings.

This project started in earnest in February 2013 when we started work with Willmott Dixon as contractor to develop the designs for this splendid school and alongside this work the Business Case for over £24m investment was agreed by both Denbighshire and the Welsh Government.

After nearly 10 months of planning the vision began to turn to reality as the contractors moved onto site in September 2014.

The two schools have shared this journey since 2014 and we have all come together to celebrate significant milestones along the way. In November 2014 we held the turf cutting ceremony where finally we could all see that the building would soon be a reality. It was a pleasure to meet pupils from both schools at this event followed by the beam signing ceremony in May 2015 and the topping out ceremony in October 2015. Finally the building



Beam Signing

opened its doors to the pupils in April 2016 - on time and on budget.

The new building is great news for the future generations of pupils, as well as the continued regeneration of Rhyl. The state of the art facilities that are provided demonstrates the Council's continued commitment to providing the best possible start for our children and young people in modern surroundings.

As a lead member it has been a pleasure to share this journey with Rhyl High School and Ysgol Tir Morfa and I wish both schools all the very best for the future



Turf Cutting Ceremony

The new building is great news for the future generations of pupils, as well as the continued regeneration of Rhyl. The state of the art facilities that are provided demonstrates the Council's continued



Topping Off Celebration Cake

*Councillor Eryl Williams*

Lead Member for Education, Denbighshire County Council.

## A message from our Head Boys and Girls :

A new school has been on the cards since we were all in Primary School. It's taken a lot of hard work and commitment and at least, the dream has finally come true.

Whilst discussing this, we decided that our journey with the new school started from the very beginning, when we were in year 7. Jacob and Jennifer were on the planning team. They were in various focus group meetings. The group also went to Oldham to visit some new builds built by Willmott Dixon. They also met Mr Carwyn Jones in what is now the Library. They were also the first ever students to step foot in the new school, even though it was only a shell.

To put it bluntly, the old building was not fit for purpose. It was outdated and ready to be knocked down. The paint was peeling, windows wouldn't shut and the heating ..... well, that was just none existent. There was a Spanish Classroom that made you feel like you were under the



Mediterranean Sun; the heating worked too well!!! It is only when we think back that we realise how much our learning experiences were confined.



The school did not look like a school that was going to be smashing expectations and results, even though it was. Over recent years, RHS has been excelling as a school. The only problem was that the building did not fit the expectations of a school that was performing as well as RHS was and still is. Most importantly, it did not feel like it was our school. This new building really feels like it is ours.

We keep referring to our new school as '*the new school*' but in reality it is not just a new build, it is our new build. The building is going to help us all flourish into the young adults of the future. This building has completely changed our learning experience in a positive way.



Our new Rhyl High has a state of the art performance space and recording studio; a high-tech technology department with its own 3D printer; laptops in every department; two potters wheels; an out standing PE department with its very own dance studio; an all singing and all dancing home-base for Tir-Morfa (for children with learning difficulties) and working heating, just to name a few!!

We are proud to say that this is our school. We are proud to say we go to Rhyl High School. We are also very very proud to boast about our fantastic new school to everyone else!!



Thank you very much and we hope you love our school as much as we do!!

*Diolch yn fawr iawn as rydym yn gobeithio y bydd wrth eich bodd gyda'n hysgol, fel yr ydym ni!!*



# Ysgol Tir Morfa

Ysgol Tir Morfa is a community special school which caters for pupils with a wide range of additional learning needs, aged between 3 and 19 years. In April 2016, our Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils who follow a supported National Curriculum moved into the new premises at Grange Road. There are four classes based at the Grange Road site.

## **Mrs Carol Edwards - Headteacher**

Having achieved a Bachelor of Education at Liverpool College of Further Education specialising in early years education Mrs Edwards went on to achieve an Advanced Diploma in Special Education through Chester College.

Mrs Edwards joined the staff at Ysgol Tir Morfa in January 1979 and has seen the school develop from a school for moderate learning difficulties to the provision it is today, providing for a much wider range of needs including pupils with complex learning and medical needs.

Mrs Edwards became a team leader then Assistant Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. In January 2011 Mrs Edwards was appointed Headteacher but is retiring at the end of this term after 37 years at the school and working as a special educator.

## **Mr Phil Thomas - Assistant Headteacher**

Mr Thomas began his teaching career as a mainstream P.E. teacher in 1987, having trained at Cyncoed, Cardiff. He joined Ysgol Tir Morfa in September 1998.

Mr Thomas is now the Assistant Headteacher with the responsibility for the new provision at the Grange Road site.

Pupil representing Ysgol Tir Morfa at the Opening were:

Lewis Williams	-	Year 7
Antonio Turner	-	Year 8
Callum Slattery	-	Year 9



Mrs C. Edwards  
Cutting the cake after the  
'Topping Off' ceremony



Viewing the shell of the new build  
Mr P. Thomas, Mrs C. Edwards  
and pupils with a member of  
Willmott Dixon Construction



# The start of the journey





**The end of the journey.  
We moved into our new school  
April 2016**



# The Opening Ceremony Unveiling of the Plaque



Address from the students of  
Rhyl High School & Ysgol Tir Morfa to  
honoured guests and dignitaries



Unveiling of the plaque by Kirsty Williams AM  
watched by Heads Mrs Armitstead & Mrs Edwards,  
with Rhyl High School & Ysgol Tir Morfa students



Unveiling of the plaque by Kirsty Williams AM  
watched by Heads Mrs Armitstead & Mrs Edwards,  
with Rhyl High School & Ysgol Tir Morfa students

*Excerpt from a report by Len Threadgold of the Rhyl Grammar School Reunion*

*Organisation who attended the Official Opening*



Those who are products of a school which has had a lasting effect on our lives and to which we owe so much will be delighted to learn that its successor is now in a superb new building, the quality of which is a metaphor for the high standards the school is setting for all of its pupils.

In May 2015 when a group from RGS visited the school prior to the last RGS reunion, the Headteacher, Claire Armitstead showed us around what we all knew as the New Building. Many, if not most of the classrooms were still used for the subjects which were taught in our day and, whilst being equipped with computer technology, they had clearly seen better times (our day!!), which was understandable after some 70 or more years!! Staff and students had worked hard under the leadership of the new head and senior professional team but, although there was evidence of rising educational standards, the built environment was not one to encourage and inspire pupils.



We could see signs of construction of the new school building over to the right hand side of the school fields but at that stage it was impossible for us to know how the new building would turn out. That needed knowledge of the quality, vision, tenacity and commitment to high standards of all those involved. It is to their credit that what has been produced is a beacon to education, not just in the area but throughout the country; they should all be - and we believe are - extremely proud of what has been achieved.



The official opening of the school was scheduled for Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016 and it was blessed with a beautiful autumn day. The numbers attending from the RGS reunion group were limited by the need to accommodate officials from the local and Welsh government, as well as representatives of the design and construction team, school staff and pupils.

We were greeted by the school staff and the head boys and girls at 10am and shown around the new building by the Headteacher and Deputy Head, Juliet Peters (a former pupil) with guests and dignitaries. This happened whilst classes were in full swing and this in itself illustrated the high standards of the new facilities. The building is truly breath-taking. It is on three floors and makes use of natural light wherever possible with windows and atria which throw light on the main staircase and dining halls as well as the library and other communal areas; the effect is very uplifting.





A real sense of a caring environment in the schools came when one of the Ysgol Tir Morfa pupils on stage, who had spoken earlier, found the occasion overwhelming and was comforted by a hug from the High School Head Girl. The situation was resolved and it really brought a lump to the throat. A presentation from Willmott Dixon who built the school, taking the project from design concepts to a completed building and expressed satisfaction at a job well done. The official opening ceremony reached a climax with words from Kirsty Williams, Welsh Assembly Member and Cabinet Secretary for Education,

Throughout the event it was clear that the staff and pupils had a wonderful relationship of mutual trust and respect. The school uniform was worn by all the pupils and this created an atmosphere of quality, coherence and pride in a school which will be the cornerstone of their lives and provide them with the key to their own self-belief and fulfilment of aspiration to be the best version of themselves possible.

High fives were not around in our day but to see the Headteacher, engaged with the pupils in this way at the bottom of the main staircase during the transition between lessons, with smiles and respect all around will live long in my memory. Also her presence outside to wish all the students a happy half term at the end of the day was really moving and a testament to her commitment to doing the best for all those in her care.



The school buildings themselves have been totally demolished leaving an area of playing fields for the future. It is understood, however, that their foundations remain beneath the grass to underlie the new facilities and bear witness to a great past and a developing future. Nothing is left of the building which was constructed in place of our Old Building and the whole area at the front of our school is given

over to car parking, except for the war memorial garden which was at the front of the Old Building. This remains and is the only visible reference to Rhyl Grammar School. This area is in need of some TLC but its preservation and maintenance as an area of tranquillity for reflection and inspiration by pupils and staff is perhaps something to which we can turn our minds and contribute to its future.



Overall the word “impressive” seems to me to understate what has been achieved at the school. It is so good to see that it will be a centre of excellence for the community, to raise local aspiration and encourage the development of the potential of all that attend.

A visit on the Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017, preceding the next RGS reunion on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at The Oriol Hotel in St Asaph, has been arranged so that we can all see what has been created.



*Headteachers and Deputy Heads of Rhyl High School and Ysgol Tir Morfa with the Head girls and boys and the RGS representatives celebrating the school opening*