



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 16 March 2022 at 4.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor M Durke (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

J P Curtice  
H Lawson

**Councillor(s)**

F M Gordon  
S Pritchard

**Councillor(s)**

L R Jones  
D W W Thomas

**Also present:**

Councillor R V Smith (Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills)

Emily Marchant (ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow & Child Health and Education Researcher – Swansea University)

Dylan Saer (Headteacher – Crwys Primary)

**Officer(s)**

Gareth Borsden

Helen Morgan-Rees

Melisa Perry

Democratic Services Officer

Director of Education

Solicitor

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): B Hopkins, M A Langstone and M B Lewis

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**36 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**37 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee held on 16 February 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

**38 Outdoor Education.**

Emily Marchant gave a brief overview of her background and experience in the subject area, and then gave a detailed and comprehensive presentation on Outdoor Learning, and the research findings from the HAPPEN Primary School Network in Swansea University.

Included in the presentation were the following areas:

- Investing in a child's learning experience has potential in maximising future achievement, employment prospects and health and well-being during adulthood;
- Impact of COVID-19, and the increasing inequalities in children's health, wellbeing, development and learning;
- Network development in schools, healthy schools advisors, impact of new curriculum going forward;
- HAPPEN network, which is based around primary schools and aims to bring together education, health and research, and develop a better understanding of school's needs and target specific areas of health and well-being;
- 500 schools across Wales involved with 20,000+ pupils having been engaged and involved;
- Access to the SAIL databank which includes a wide range of information across health and education such as birth weights, vaccinations, parenting, family health issues, educational attainment etc;
- Network is also a basis for collection of information on different programs and initiatives undertaken in schools;
- HAPPEN at home pupil survey undertaken during the lockdown and school closure periods which aimed to compare children's health and wellbeing during school closures in 2020 with the same period in 2019 and 2018, it also aimed to examine the impact on the free school meals(FSM) cohort;
- Results of the survey which indicated a positive impact and increase on children's physical activity, but a negative effect on self-reported school competency, particularly those on FSM;
- Widening of inequalities and access to outdoor space has been lessened over the years;
- HAPPEN staff survey which was launched in July 2020 to gather the perspectives of primary school staff about the impact of school closures, the phased reopening of schools and the full time return to education in September 2020. This was completed by over 200 staff from 78 primary schools across 16 local authorities in Wales (headteachers, teachers & support staff);
- The responses and feedback from the staff developed 5 key recommendations – Prioritise the health & well-being of staff and pupils, Focus on engaging parental engagement & support, Enhancing digital competence of pupils, teachers & parents, Adapting the learning environment & teaching practice and the Clear communication of guidance & expectations;
- Growing recognition of the benefits of outdoor learning and the improved engagement of pupils who participate;
- Qualitative evaluation of curriculum-based outdoor learning conducted in three primary schools in Swansea prior to establishment of Swansea Outdoor Schools which included Interviews with teachers and headteachers, focus groups with pupils to explore the barriers and facilitators to effective outdoor learning implementation;
- Benefits to children of being outdoors and its positive impact on learning – freedom from classroom, engagement with nature, improved attendance, engagement, concentration and behaviour;

- Wider benefits of outdoor learning and play;
- Barriers to expansion;
- Estyn report of outdoor learning at Crwys Primary;

Dylan Saer then gave an overview of the provision he has developed over the years in Crwys primary school.

He outlined that the school has no specific green area itself, but benefits from the use of some woodland nearby with the assistance of the local community council.

He indicated that unless the weather is extremely bad, the aim is for all the children to spend half a day a week outdoors. He indicated that the buy in from parents and pupils has been really excellent and the benefits of the outdoor learning initiative can be seen through increased engagement and attendance by pupils and excellent results at key stage 2.

He detailed the excellent result and comments made particularly towards the outdoor education provision from the Estyn inspection which took place prior to the pandemic.

Members asked various questions and made comments regarding the information presented to them during the presentations and discussion to which Emily and Dylan responded accordingly.

The Chair and Members thanked both for their attendance and input.

### **39 Workplan 2021/2022.**

The Chair referred to the workplan as detailed in the report.

He indicated that a report summarising the committee's work and investigations during the year, would be drafted and brought forward to a future meeting

**Resolved** that the workplan be noted

The meeting ended at 5.01 pm

**Chair**