



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Education**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Thursday, 15 June 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins
F D O'Brien

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
A J O'Connor

Councillor(s)

J D McGettrick
R V Smith

Co-opted Member(s)

Beth Allender

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Robert Smith

Officer(s)

Sarah Hughes
Rhodri Jones
Helen Morgan-Rees
Kate Phillips
Michelle Roberts

Team Manager for Education Strategy
Head of Achievement & Partnership Service
Director of Education
Head of Vulnerable Learner Service
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Davis, A M Day, S M Jones, S Joy and S E Keeton

65 Confirmation of the Convener

Councillor Lyndon Jones was confirmed as convener for the Panel for the municipal year 2023/2024.

66 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Councillor Lyndon Jones declared a personal interest in Item 12.

67 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

68 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on the 11 May 2023 were agreed by the Panel.

69 Letter/s

The letter to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning was noted.

70 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

71 Additional Learning Needs Reform Update (watching brief item)

The Panel thanked the Head of Vulnerable Learners for attending and taking them through the update of Additional Learning Needs Reform.

The Panel heard that the ALNET strategy has been reviewed and finalised, with a new strategy drafted that aligns to the regional strategy with outstanding actions being transferred to the new strategy. It now covers the period 2022 to 2027 and has 4 priority areas:

- Schools
- Post 16
- Collaboration; and
- Early years

The Panel also heard about the successes and the challenges being experienced. The Panel noted that despite the Welsh Government's wish to establish a less adversarial system the council has seen an increase in the number of requests for tribunals and that this has placed pressure on services and has highlighted a need for an internal review into processes and procedures to ensure there is appropriate level of resource.

The Panel were pleased to hear that extensive work is underway to moderate, quality assure and support schools to achieve a consistent, equitable offer to all learners. Also, that collaboration with the local health board is strengthening with a productive partnership developing.

The Panel asked about post-16 education and whether we ensure that the organisations that deliver services are fulfilling their roles effectively. The Panel heard yes, we do work with our key delivery partners to ensure they as strong as they can be to deliver what is required and we are doing this in a joined-up manner.

The Panel agreed that ALN reform is an ongoing process and they will continue to keep a watching brief on progress.

72 New Curriculum for Wales Update - Verbal (watching brief item)

The Panel thanked the Head of the Achievement and Partnership Services for the verbal update on progress with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales.

The Cabinet Member said that this was an evolving piece of work and that he was very pleased with how it was progressing.

The Panel heard that there are so many different things to work on, but that it is a positive story that we have to tell here in Swansea. The Panel was told that the Welsh Government do recognise the curriculum design is an ongoing cyclical process of engagement, design, planning, training and evaluation, and this is something that continues with us here in Swansea. Also, that it is an iterative process, with each school's curriculum continuing to evolve to meet the needs of their learners.

The Panel heard about some of the next steps for implementation, including:

- The School Improvement Team will focus on ensuring the effectiveness of school curriculum plans. Supporting schools to ensure they have been able to define how they will measure pupil progress and provide the graduated approach to professional learning so that schools can access support equitably and when they require it.
- Maximise the available funding to support key areas like on numeracy and digital competency framework.
- Secure additional support to deliver the Welsh in education strategic plan.
- Promote and share effective practice through the head teacher meetings.
- Strengthen our focus with our secondary colleagues to make sure that they have the support they require as they move on that journey for the curriculum for Wales.

The Panel asked whether teaching staff were getting enough support and are we taking all staff on the journey with us. They heard that, yes this is the case and what we are seeing on the ground now is distributive leadership across our schools. So, we are not having head teachers and senior leadership team alone driving this work. What we are seeing are teams within the schools taking it forward. When we visit our schools for updates, we are also looking for best practice to share and we are not just hearing from the head teacher. We are hearing from the staff on the ground about how they have worked collaboratively.

The Panel asked about the workload especially when you include the pressures of working and assisting other schools across clusters. They heard that there has been plenty of national discussion, but that we are also looking at this at a local level. We have been working with our schools to look at what that burden is looking like and seeing what we as a local authority can do to support our schools in that area. The sharing aspect is really important and in the strong clusters we see that. What we see with the cluster working is rather than everybody trying to do everything, they are taking what worked in another area, looking at how that will work in their own schools etc.

73 Education Estyn Inspection - Progress with recommendations

The Panel thanked the Team Manager for Education Strategy for outlining progress with the two recommendations made following the Estyn Inspection of Local Government Education Services in Swansea in June 2022. The Panel heard that progress in the following areas has been made:

Recommendation 1 - Review post-16 provision to ensure that it meets the needs of all learners.

- A three-year post-16 strategy is now in operation for Swansea
- A memorandum of understanding for successful transition of all school leavers has been developed
- Meetings with all headteachers has taken place regarding sixth form pupils accessing most suitable provision for them
- An extensive learner voice survey has been carried out
- Opportunities for online/hybrid models of curriculum delivery at post-16 have been explored
- Joint professional learning activities have taken place with Gower College and schools with sixth forms
- Transition funding has been allocated to schools with sixth forms to ensure collaboration
- Seren Academy continues to deliver sessions and opportunities
- A partnership between several South Wales education institutions called Reaching Wider has been developed with the aim of raising aspirations for young people
- Work to support skills needs as part of Swansea Bay City Deal is ongoing with the next step to undertake a mapping of progression routes through a targeted area of health and wellbeing provision offered at pre-16, post-16 and beyond.

Recommendation 2 – Strengthen Welsh-medium provision across all ages and areas of the local authority.

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was approved by Welsh Government and a delivery plan has been developed outlining the key work streams. Progress with the plan is being closely monitored and first annual progress report will be submitted to Welsh Government in July 2023.
- Discussion on key priorities regularly takes place with Partneriaeth Addysg Gymraeg Abertawe.
- Since adoption of the WESP, options have been explored for increasing the equity of the offer Welsh Medium childcare and primary school provision.
- Pilot taking place for primary latecomers continues until the end of this academic year.
- Swansea schools Siarter Iaith journey continues to move forward with a number of schools receiving bronze, silver and gold accreditations.
- Additional information to be added to the councils website around benefits of Welsh-medium education.
- Welsh-medium clusters have been working together with the council to identify potential models for Welsh-medium specialist provision in the future.
- Staffing through the medium of Welsh was raised as a significant challenge in all key priority areas, including early years, teaching staff, support staff and staff with ALN expertise.

The Panel thanked the Director of Education for her presentation outlining some of the key issues affecting education in Swansea 2023/2024. She covered 8 key issue areas including:

1. Removing barriers to learning
2. Curriculum implementation
3. An inclusive education
4. Resource management
5. School leadership
6. Performance of schools
7. Community based learning
8. Cymraeg belongs to all.

The Panel agreed that aspiration is vital for children and young people and were also pleased to hear that schools were building upon their relationships with employers to help young people understand and be inspired by the world of work.

The Panels work plan has been designed to reflect these key issues where possible.

75 Draft Work Programme for 2023/24 for discussion

The Panel agreed the work plan for the municipal year 2023/2024.

The meeting ended at 5.35 pm

Chair