



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
S J Gallagher
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

A M Day
D W Helliwell
M A Langstone

Councillor(s)

M Durke
B Hopkins

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

A Roberts

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Jennifer Raynor

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Damien Beech
Helen Morgan-Rees
Michelle Roberts

Head of Primary Phase Unit
Director of Education
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): L James

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Cllr Lyndon Jones and Parent Governor Co-optee Alexander Roberts declared they are Governors at Bishopston Primary School.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

Minutes, letters and response from Cabinet member were received by the Panel.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 Blended and Remote Learning - the thoughts of four pupils from Bishopston Primary School

The Panel welcomed John Owen the Headteacher and four pupils Max, Iris, Jacob and Esme from Bishopston Primary School. They attended the meeting to discuss their thoughts on remote and blended learning. They gave their thoughts about how to stay healthy during lockdown, the challenges they faced, the home learning highlights and how they made progress and also about their return back at into school. The Panel were keen to hear about their experiences and thanked them for their attendance.

6 Verbal Update - Education and Schools Recovery from Covid

The Panel were pleased to hear about the positive update on pupils returning to school and the ongoing recovery in Education. They heard that:

- Primary pupils had fully returned. That there has been a few Covid cases in the last couple of weeks so approximately 100 pupils have had to self-isolate.
- Secondary schools partially opened to pupils with 11 and 13 years returned already and more returning this week. This week 400 pupils had to self-isolate because of a few cases coming in from the community. Full return will start from 12 April with possible planning day.
- The Cabinet Member said she wanted to pay tribute to schools on their managing of the phased return. Saying it required risk assessments, redesigning of spaces and with the secondary sector introduction of lateral flow testing. She also said that wellbeing will be the first phase of the return...happy children learn better.
- The Panel appreciated the efforts made for a seamless as possible return to school and for the focus on pupil and staff welfare.

7 Pupil Development Grant - Summary of the spend to support vulnerable pupils

The Head of the Primary Team, Achievement and Partnership Services attended the meeting, gave a presentation on the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and discussed the following issues

- Background to the PDG spend including Autumn visits and Policy Development Committee recommendations
- The PDG Spend for Swansea Primary Schools is £5,644,200 with Primary average with 73K (lowest: £3,450 and highest £207K)
- The pupil development Grant Spend for Swansea Secondary & Special Schools is £2,748,500, with Secondary average: £196K (lowest: £52K and highest: £348K). Total for Special Schools £70,150 with average: £35K
- Guidance flowchart for schools
- Examples of spend including a large variety of uses including in supporting families
- Evidencing impact of the spend
- What has proved no so successful
- Welsh Government and Estyn Guidance
- Local Authority receives PDG LAC (looked after children) funding of £292,756 for 20-21 and this was distributed to clusters

- The panel heard that we have not been told of next year's allocation as yet
- School advised not to over complicate their PDG plans and to use guidance on eligible expenditure. Research and evidence should be used when looking at how to spend grant. It is discussed with schools in their autumn school improvement visits.
- Wellbeing is central, it is taking front and centre stage currently both physical and mental wellbeing.
- The Panel asked how success is measured recognising it is difficult to quantify many of the outcomes. They heard that maximising the use of the grant is key and must be based on research about what works. Key also to measure progress and achievement of pupils rather just measuring outcomes at the end.
- The allocation of this grant annually was raised, schools and the local authority not knowing how this will change year on year is an issue.

8 Update - Regional Education Improvement Service (ERW)

The Director of Education updated the Panel on arrangements in Swansea in relation to the Regional School Improvement Service. The following was noted:

- A report went to Swansea's Councils Cabinet asking to defer removal of Swansea from ERW, therefore Swansea continuing to be a member of this regional body until 31 August 2021. This is to enable more time for the region to set up the new arrangements for a new regional body that will start on 1 Sep 2021.
- Currently Carmarthenshire, Powys, Pembrokeshire and Swansea have agreed to remain within the interim partnership until 31 Aug, Neath Port Talbot and Ceredigion will not form part of the body but may buy in services until new body has been set up.
- Some impediments slowed down entering into a new regional agreement including for example Covid and expectations of Welsh Government.
- Implementation of a new agreement from 1 September is planned and discussions on how this will look are ongoing. A lot more work needs to be done and discussions need to be had with all those involved about what each stakeholder wants from the partnership.
- The Panel asked what the governance arrangements will be. How scrutiny will fit into this new model? What will be its key objectives? And, how will success be measured? The Director of Education said that any new arrangement will be taken to each local authorities Cabinet for agreement and that these plans and the governance model can also be shared with scrutiny. All the ERW Joint Committee meetings where these items will be discussed (for the region) can also be accessed via the www.erw.wales website.
- From the new model we will be able to select what Swansea wants and needs the Consortium to deliver, rather than a one size fits all we have had in the past. It is important that there is clarity of roles and responsibilities and avoidance of duplication between what Local Authorities do and what the regional body will do.
- The Chair of the Panel updated members on the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group which took place on the 1 March 2021. The letter to the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee from that meeting will be circulated to the panel, shortly for information.

9 Work Programme 2020/2021

The work programme was accepted. The Panel agreed to schedule an item on what works for vulnerable pupils on the work programme for the new municipal year.

The meeting ended at 5.45 pm

Chair