



City and County of Swansea

**Minutes of the Education & Skills Policy
Development Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 10 February 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor R V Smith (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

J P Curtice
L R Jones
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins
M B Lewis

Councillor(s)

O G James
S Pritchard

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden
Alison Lane

Helen Morgan-Rees
Helen Osbourne

Amanda Taylor

Stephanie Williams

Democratic Services Officer

Head of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team,
Achievement and Partnership Services

Director of Education

Principal Education Psychologist, Achievement and
Partnership Services

Head of Pupil Referral Unit and Behaviour Support Unit,
Achievement and Partnership Services

Principal Lawyer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): M A Langstone & J A Raynor

11 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.

12 Minutes.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 be approved and signed as correct record.

13 Congratulations

The Chair and committee members warmly congratulated Helen Morgan-Rees on her recent appointment as the Director of Education for Swansea Council, and wished her all the best in her role.

14 Well-Being Issues - Vulnerable Children.

Helen Morgan-Rees outlined that there was a broad spectrum and range of vulnerable learners in Swansea including additional learning needs, disabilities, emotional health & well-being, behaviour, involvement with social services & child protection and looked after children.

Alison Lane then reported and focused on the issues around additional learning needs and emotional health & well-being. She indicated that staff have worked extremely closely with colleagues in social services, health and the 3rd sector. Appropriate age related guidance, information and advice has been provided to parents, carers and young people via the Swansea virtual school format.

Information included in this has included managing the Covid crisis for parents, bereavement and loss in conjunction with Cruise bereavement service, and specific advice for pupils with neurodiversity.

Enhanced online leadership training sessions and opportunities have also been provided for school leaders and staff, schools have been provided with webinars, online training, guidance documents and given links and access to centrally based specialist staff.

Pupils also receive regular 'check ins' from school staff, and where necessary education welfare and social services colleagues. Any issues that are picked up and brought to light from within the school are quickly escalated to the relevant areas and support staff networks.

Specialist equipment has also been given out to pupils, particularly those with sight and hearing issues and are given the opportunity to access online support and use the necessary learning tools they require.

Centrally based staff and services have continued in a business as usual approach throughout the pandemic with their online consultations and assessments and have undertaken face to face visits when necessary.

On occasions where existing concerns have been raised or new issues identified and developed, the school initially can provide support and guidance and where necessary can escalate the matter to specialist centrally based to assist.

Regular meetings with social services were established at the beginning of the pandemic to try and identify the most vulnerable children, which has enabled a targeted support package to be put in place where needed. The majority of young people who are known to social services would already have contacts and support in place via social workers etc.

It was outlined that the original RAG rating of children undertaken in the first lockdown has now been updated and revised by schools, with a large expansion of pupil numbers who can now be targeted for added and additional support measures. The excellent links developed with South Wales Police relating to incidents of domestic violence involving young people was also detailed and outlined.

The emotional health & psychological well-being group has developed into a very effective body which brings together all relevant professionals in one place.

It was indicated that the Covid crisis although providing huge challenges and issues for staff, it has actually improved and strengthened the joint working between the departments and partner agencies. This can only be welcomed and hopefully continue.

Amanda Taylor outlined that the new PRU building at Maes Derw would opening after half term to welcome back year 11 learners for face to face learning in school, with primary and key stage 3 following in the weeks after. The current key stage 4 provision at Brondeg will continue going forward to maintain teaching and avoid any potential disruption, although young people at KS4 will be given the opportunity to attend the new facility if they wish. The ongoing face to face provision provided at Brondeg was outlined.

She indicated that although there had been some issues, attendance had been generally good, with live lesson continuing throughout the various lockdowns. Family circumstances and situations have of course affected and impacted on particular individual cases.

She outlined that due to the emotional and mental health conditions that some of the young people have, online learning has actually supported them, but indicated that reliance on online learning could prove problematic going forward when face to face learning is reintroduced.

It was detailed that following on from the experiences and lessons learned from the first lockdown, the RAG rating all the children had received initially had also been reviewed and updated to support their learning needs.

Paper packs had also been distributed where online learning hadn't been undertaken or wasn't possible due to family circumstances.

Every single child has been assigned a key worker and ongoing contact with young people has been maintained and developed with regular contacts with their key workers, form teachers and subject teachers for older children, and liaison with Social Services and Child and Mental Health Services continues, with home visits undertaken if deemed necessary. Young people in the red and amber RAG rating have had a well-being plan developed for them.

Some young people due to the extreme vulnerability are not allowed access to devices, so support and guidance has been provided to parents/carers to try and keep them engaged in learning and to keep them safe, and where necessary devices have been provided to the family support network to use.

She indicated that three family network champions have been established to support family members who have young people with mental health needs and challenging behaviour and to give advice and have discussions about the needs of the children.

She indicated that as in other areas, the pandemic has on the whole actually improved the contact and relationships the PRU has with the parents of its pupils due to the more regular contact and support given.

Members of the committee discussed the issues and matters raised above and both made comments relating to them and asked a series questions of the Officers who responded accordingly.

They again commended the staff in the education department for the work and efforts during the pandemic, and asked their thanks be passed on

The Chair thanked the Officers for the presentation and update.

15 Workplan 2020/2021.

The Chair indicated that due to the ongoing and continuing pressures on the Department, he proposed that the next meeting of the Committee should utilise that meeting to review, discuss and evaluate the information, issues and evidence presented at the last few meetings, with a view to formulating potential topics/ areas for consideration at meetings going forward.

Resolved that the next meeting's agenda reflect the points raised above.

The meeting ended at 4.55 pm

Chair