



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 15 July 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
B Hopkins

Councillor(s)

A M Day
L James

Councillor(s)

D W Helliwell

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Robert Smith

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Brij Madahar
Helen Burgum
Gareth Rees
Rachel Thomas
Helen Morgan-Rees

Scrutiny Team Leader
Headteacher Bishop Gore Secondary School
Headteacher Pontarddulais Secondary School
Assistant Headteacher Pontarddulais Secondary School
Director of Education

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S J Gallagher, S M Jones, M A Langstone and L J Tyler-Lloyd

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting on the 24 June 2021 were accepted.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 Behaviour Strategy, how associated delegated spend to schools is being used

The Panel invited two Headteacher's from different Secondary Schools in different parts of Swansea to discuss how they are using the monies they have been delegated as part of the behaviour strategy. They wanted to find out how schools are using these monies to reduce referrals to Education Other Than At Schools Services, to re-introduce pupils back into schools after attending such services and other behaviour related issues.

Helen Burgum the Headteacher at Bishop Gore Secondary School and Gareth Rees the Headteacher and Rachel Thomas the Assistant Headteacher at Pontarddulais Secondary School attended the Panel meeting. They both made a Powerpoint presentation on key questions sent to them by the Panel prior to the meeting, namely:

1. How are you using your delegated spend, associated with the behaviour strategy, to reduce exclusions and referrals to EOTAS?
2. Can you give us some examples of where this has benefited pupils in your schools?
3. How has the disruption to education caused by the pandemic affected your work in this area and what has been the impact on pupils? And how do you hope that things will change in future?
4. How well is it helping you to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream after being in EOTAS?
5. How do you feel the overall behaviour strategy in working to the benefit pupils currently?
6. In your opinion, could this be improved?

Pontarddulais Secondary School outlined:

- Context of the school including: 846 pupils on role, overall 17.5% eFSM pupils, 23% pupils with Additional Learning Needs
- Team Around the Child team is where much of the work in relation to behaviour issues, and where the delegated funding from the behaviour strategy is used. This more widely includes for example pastoral support, ALN, Careers Wales, school nurse etc.
- Key to this and addressing behaviour and reductions in referral to Education Other Than At School Services is TY Dysgu, at unit that supports pupils who struggle with behaviour in the mainstream provision. Funding from delegated spend goes towards funding 3 teachers and a co-ordinator for this provision.
- Training has been provided for teachers on the Thrive Strategy, this an approach that helps teachers develop pupils social and emotional skills.
- This work has massively reduced exclusions, EOTAS referrals and has increased pupil confidence around the school.
- Some of the initiatives/activities include for example Bulldog Boxing, Transform days, Paw-fact Baxter Project
- The pandemic affected our work in this area as follows: outdoor visits, use of External providers, rise in fixed term exclusions – re-establishing boundaries, over the last half term a marked improvement in behaviour around the school. Pupils have adapted remarkably well, however there are have been pressures on staffing and costs to work around issues faced

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Cont'd

- We are integrating pupils back into mainstream after being in EOTAS using a hybrid approach/bespoke timetables - mix of Ty Dysgu and mainstream provision. Each pupil has a designated key member of staff.
- In our opinion provision could this be improved by continued Cynnydd funding (highlighted at SCCASH meeting), funding of pre 14-16 to prevent EOTAS referrals and to train more staff in the Thrive approach

Bishop Gore Secondary School outlined:

- Context of the school including 11-18 inclusive, with large diverse catchment.
- Using delegated spend, associated with the behaviour strategy, to reduce exclusions and referrals to EOTAS using Our 'Nurture Provision' (B-Hi5) and 'Wrap-around support package' (Pitstop) at KS3 and our 'Transition to Adulthood Provisions' (Mi-Pod and ELEV8) at KS4 strive to provide supportive learning environments that are stimulating and challenging, where pupils are encouraged, praised and nurtured in order to develop self-awareness and discipline.

- The aim of the provision is to enable pupils, to work holistically with partners both inside and outside the school and to provide a curriculum that is appropriate to meet the physical, emotional, developmental, social and spiritual needs of the individual

Impact has been improved attendance, prevention of permanent exclusions, reduction in EOTAS placements, 100% pass in L2 SWEET since introduced and 100% pass in L2 Achieve since introduced

- Just some examples of where this has benefited pupils in your school include: successful reintegration from EOTAS provision, reduced risk/prevention of EOTAS referral, reduced risk/prevention of permanent exclusion, reintegration for school refusers and those experiencing school anxiety
- The disruption to education caused by the pandemic affected the work and pupils:
 - Negative impact on some pupil's mental health and wellbeing and some pupils have experienced additional trauma.
 - Some vulnerable pupils have experienced crisis/bereavement and lost employment/financial worries.
 - Pupils daily routines where disrupted. Lack of tolerance towards others.
 - Vulnerable pupils did not participate in blended learning opportunities (unwilling/reluctant/too anxious to engage in online learning)
 - Pupils identified with additional needs including SEBD were unable to access the support usually received in the school setting.
 - Support services were not able to conduct direct face to face work and so families declined support and refused to engage remotely.
 - Many school refusers/persistent absentees have refused to return to school, we are working with EWO.
 - The current risk assessments and operational guidelines are preventing pupils from accessing support. The current safety measures prevent/restrict many activities that address the needs of those pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The tools that staff use to engage and motivate pupils are far reduced.
- How do you feel the overall behaviour strategy is working to the benefit pupils currently? Without it we would have a significant number of pupils that we would have not engaged with or been able to support in a flexible way to meet their needs given the changing situation.

- Improvement to behaviour strategy could be made by the strategies and approaches need to be flexible to meet the changing needs of the pupils. This means upskilling staff to ensure they have training such as ELSA, CBT etc. This is costly but we need the agility to respond swiftly.
 - We need also need to develop programmes around mental health, tolerance and contextualised safeguarding. Initiatives such as the Cynnydd Learning Coaches help and support our pupils to look at pathways and self-regulation. These roles are grant funded and the money is coming to an end for many of these types of projects.
 - We already subsidise our provision and we need to ensure that roles and provision are sustainable to enable planning to take place to continue to meet the needs of for learners given the very specific tissues that are now emerging as a result of the pandemic.

The Panel:

- wished to thank the schools on behalf of the pupils. They felt it was impressive to hear about the initiatives and good practice in introducing positive behaviours.
- recognise that each school has its own challenges and that the bespoke response to schools to this was the right way to address this but the panel were keen to find out how all the good practice being learnt is being shared. The Panel heard that there are a number of mechanisms by which good practice is being shared formally and these also result in informal sharing between schools and educators. For example SCCASH, depositories of practice on online platforms, regionally and locally, Estyn also highlights areas of excellent practice that can be accessed through its website.

6 Verbal Feedback from ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group 28 June 2021

The Convener of the Panel Cllr Lyndon Jones, updated Members on his recent attendance at the Regional ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group meeting on the 28 June 2021. The informed the Panel of some of what was discussed including:

- ERW will end on 31 August 2021 and the new South West Wales Education Partnership will begin on the 1 September 2021
- It will have a smaller footprint of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Swansea but that it may be possible for other local authorities to buy in services from the new partnership
- Concerns raised about cost of winding down of ERW and about costs of setting up the new partnership and who will contribute to these.
- Also issues like rules of engagement and veto need to be agreed
- A letter has recently been sent to the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee giving the views of the Scrutiny Councillor Group. A response has been requested to that before the end of ERW. This response will be reported to the Swansea's Educations Scrutiny Panel and will also be agendered for the Scrutiny Programme Committee for information.

The Director of Education updated the Panel on progress that had been made since the ERW Councillor Group on the 28 June, including:

- Shadow South West Wales Education Partnership Joint Committee has met, in a closed meeting.

- Concerns raised by the Scrutiny Councillor Group were discussed in this meeting. They agreed that work needed to be done to wind down ERW.
- Powys did not want to leave ERW but agreement has been made in principle that services of the new Partnership will be available to other local authorities.
- New legal agreement will go to each local authorities Cabinet/Council.
- It was recognised that ERW would not wind down fully by 31 August, there will be a period of transition required. The new legal agreement will take us there.
- Before we move on from current partnership we need to understand the contingent liabilities of the ERW existing partners. Current agreement states that leaving local authorities have 100% liabilities in the first and second years and then it's a sliding scale from there. The staffing structure will determine cost for existing parties.
- The staffing structure for the new partnership has been reduce in proportion to new body with a scaling down of approximately 40%.
- The Governance structure will appear in the new legal agreement. This is currently in draft and needs to be finalised but has matured into a decent document. It does include some of the issues raised by the Scrutiny Councillor Group on the 28 June and these have been put into that draft. There is still work to be done and it is planned that the draft legal agreement will go to each Local Authority in the autumn.
- The new Partnership will have a clear business plan that states the priorities moving forward. It is important that this delivery plan is understood as a key part of the partnership and for regional scrutiny to hold that to account.
- Observer status will be offered to a member of the new regional scrutiny body to attend the new partnership Joint Committee as requested by the Scrutiny Group.

7 Work Programme 2021/2022

The work programme was received.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm

Chair



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education
Improvement, Learning and Skills

BY EMAIL

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Date 2 August 2021
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills following the meeting of the Panel on 15 July 2021 looking at the behavior strategy and at changes to the regional education partnership.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 15 July 2021

We would like to thank the Headteacher's from Bishop Gore and Pontarddulais Secondary Schools for attending our meeting, as well as yourself and the Director of Education. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

We invited the two Headteacher's from different Secondary Schools in different parts of Swansea to discuss how they are using the monies they have been delegated as part of the behaviour strategy. We wanted to find out how schools are using these monies to reduce referrals to Education Other Than At Schools Services, to re-introduce pupils back into schools after attending such services and other behaviour related issues.

We were pleased to hear from Helen Burgum the Headteacher at Bishop Gore Secondary School, Gareth Rees the Headteacher and Rachel Thomas the Assistant Headteacher at Pontarddulais Secondary School. Both schools made a presentation addressing the key questions sent to them by the Panel prior to the meeting.

We heard that the context of each school is very different and therefore the way they are using their delegated monies to address behaviour issues is bespoke to each. We felt this was positive and appropriate because schools are then able to tailor the services to their pupils needs. We noted that only a small amount of the work

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completed in both schools in relation to behaviour matters was funded via this delegated pot, with a much larger amount being funded from within school budgets. For example for pastoral support, ALN, school nurses etc.

Both schools have developed a provision where their aim is to enable pupils, which includes working with partners, to provide a curriculum that is appropriate to meet the needs of individual pupils. We understand the importance of wellbeing in schools and were pleased to hear the Headteacher at Bishop Gore say *'they strive to provide supportive learning environments that are both stimulating and challenging, where pupils are encouraged, praised and nurtured in order to develop self-awareness and discipline'*.

We were pleased to hear that both schools integrate pupils back into mainstream after a period in EOTAS using a hybrid approach with bespoke timetables including a mix of mainstream provision.

We heard that training for school staff is a key feature in addressing behaviour and both schools have shown their commitment to this. We were interested to hear about, for example, the Thrive Strategy, an approach that helps teachers develop pupil's social and emotional skills. Also, about the other initiatives and activities that engage pupils and help them manage their behaviour like Bulldog Boxing and the Baxter Project.

We did share both the Headteacher's concerns in relation to how the pandemic has affected pupils and schools including:

- Stopping of outdoor visits and use of external providers
- the negative impact on some pupil's mental health and wellbeing, with some pupils having experienced additional trauma, like crisis/bereavement and lost employment/financial worries
- the pupils daily routines were disrupted. Lack of tolerance towards others
- some vulnerable pupils did not participate in blended learning opportunities (unwilling/reluctant/too anxious to engage in online learning)
- pupils identified with additional needs including SEBD, were unable to access the support usually received in the school setting
- support services were not able to conduct direct face to face work and so some families declined support and refused to engage remotely

We recognise that schools are working to address these issues now that pupils are fully back in school, but we felt it was important it emphasise the importance of continued support to schools on these matters.

We also heard that both schools found it necessary to re-establish boundaries for their pupils after they had spent large amounts of time at home. Pupils were behaving well in the structured classroom environment but issues were arising in those unstructured places like at break time. Both schools have worked to address this. The Headteacher from Pontarddualis School said *'over the last half term there has been a marked improvement in behaviour around the school and pupils have adapted remarkably well, however there are have been pressures on staffing and costs around these issues'*.

We were encouraged to hear that the impact of the work being done at both schools has reduced exclusions, EOTAS referrals, improved educational outcomes and has increased pupil confidence.

We were keen to emphasise the importance of sharing the good practice being shown by both schools including what has been learnt through the pandemic. We asked how this is done and we heard that there are a number of formal and informal mechanisms designed for this purpose, by using online platforms and via meetings like for example SCCASH.

Regional Scrutiny

I updated the Panel on my recent attendance at the Regional ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group meeting on the 28 June 2021, informing them of some of what was discussed. And said I thought things may have moved on since that meeting, which was confirmed by the Director of Education.

- Shadow South West Wales Education Partnership Joint Committee has met twice.
- Concerns raised by the Scrutiny Councillor Group were discussed in this meeting. They agreed that work needed to be done to wind down ERW.
- Agreement has been made in principle for services of the new Partnership would be available to other local authorities.
- It was recognised that ERW would not wind down fully by 31 August and there will be a period of transition required.
- We wanted clarity on the liabilities of the existing partnership and the liabilities until the end of the transition period.
- The staffing structure for the new partnership has been reduced in proportion to new body with a scaling down of approximately 40%.
- The Governance structure will appear in the new legal agreement. This is currently in draft and needs to be finalised. It does include some of the issues raised by the Scrutiny Councillor Group on the 28 June and these have been put into that draft. There is still work to be done and it is planned that the draft legal agreement will go to each Local Authority in the autumn.
- We asked if the new partnership would have a clear business plan by the 1 September and we were told that will be the case.
- We said we would like to see an informal scrutiny model similar to the one currently in place.
- We suggested that the Chair of the Regional Joint Committee attend some of the Scrutiny meetings to discuss performance of the body.
- We would like the chair of the new scrutiny body to attend the Joint Committee in at least an observer capacity. We were informed that this is planned as part of the new agreement.

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised but can you provide a written response to the following points by 23 August 2021.

We would like to hear your views on the points raised by the Headteacher's attending and how, if appropriate, these could be supported more widely. Headteacher's were asked how they believe work in this area could be improved, they said, improvements could be made by:

1. continued Cynnydd funding (highlighted at SCCASH meeting), funding of pre 14-16 to prevent EOTAS referrals and to train more staff in the Thrive approach.
2. improvement to behaviour strategy could be made but the strategies and approaches being flexible to meet the changing needs of the pupils. This means upskilling staff to ensure they have training such as ELSA, CBT etc. This is costly but we need the agility to respond swiftly. We need also need to develop programmes around mental health, tolerance and contextualised safeguarding. Initiatives such as the Cynnydd Learning Coaches help and support our pupils to look at pathways and self-regulation. These roles are grant funded and the money is coming to an end for many of these types of projects.
3. how we subsidise our provisions, the need to ensure that roles and provision are sustainable to enable planning to take place to continue to meet the needs of for learners given the very specific issues that are now emerging as a result of the pandemic.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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