



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Wednesday, 1 September 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
D W Helliwell

Councillor(s)

A M Day
L James

Councillor(s)

S J Gallagher
S M Jones

Other Attendees

Robert Smith Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Helen Morgan-Rees	Director of Education
Kevin Davies	Estyn
Ceri Davies	Estyn
Michelle Roberts	Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): B Hopkins, M A Langstone and L J Tyler-Lloyd
Co-opted Member(s): D Anderson Thomas and A Roberts

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

The minutes and letter from the Panel meeting on the 15 July 2021 were accepted.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 The New Estyn Regime and Thematic Reviews

Two representative from Estyn, Kevin Davies and Ceri Jones, attended the Panel and made a presentation about the revised arrangements for inspections of schools.

The Panel also asked them to include the following issues sent in advance of the meeting:

1. How will the new inspection regime look at aspects of the new curriculum and Additional Learning Needs Reform?
2. The Panel, given the current times, are particularly interested in how Wellbeing will be looked at?
3. Another area the Panel have followed closely is Education Other Than at School services and also schools behaviour strategies, we would be interested to find out how Estyn will look at this and in particular how schools work with the most challenging pupils?
4. Given the upcoming changes here in relation to regional education activity, do Estyn look at the regional education bodies and how effectively they are supporting local education?

The following was noted (the full presentation was also circulated)

- They started with the caveat that they favour no particular methodology and their philosophy in terms of inspection, they look at how things are done and then judge the impact of these by their outcomes.
- They recognise that the last year and a half as being really difficult and challenging for learners and their families. Estyn have tried to provide information about their plans ahead for the inspection and engagement work during this next academic year. The academic year 2021/22 will focus on supporting renewal and reform and as a result of that they are extending the suspension of the core inspection programme for schools and PRU units to include the autumn term 2021. They not going to be starting to inspect schools until the spring term.
- During the autumn term, they will continue to ask all stakeholders for their feedback on the new inspection arrangements, this can be done anytime via the Estyn website.
- They aim to pilot the new inspection arrangements in a small number of schools. So that they can check to see how the arrangements are working in the new climate. The impact of COVID will have been large on learning so it will give them a good opportunity to get out and look at the details of how learning has been affected during the pandemic. They will ask individual providers for their agreement to be involved in the pilots. They will still carry out inspections of other schools where there are exceptional circumstances.
- At present they do not directly inspect regional consortia. Rather look at their work through inspection of local authorities, but this might change.
- Under the new arrangements there are still 5 inspection areas and they are pretty much the same. The first one has been renamed learning. Well-being, attitudes, learnings, the same teaching and learning experiences is the same. It includes developments that are the new curriculum. Care, support and guidance, and leadership and management are the same.
- And the most recent announcement from the Welsh Government is that it is their expectation that every sector uses the period between September and January to reflect on the guidance and begin preparatory work.
- The inspection guidance that has been produced this year is specific and clearer than ever before.

- They talked about how they will look at progress with pupils with ALN as a whole. They will be evaluating the extent to which pupils developed their physical skills. Their fine motor skills, mobility, independent living skills, their social skills as well as their academic skills. The skills that will provide them with a firm basis for their future life. They will also have a look at different kinds of additional needs and how well schools provide this in general.
- Data around attendance is not going to be useful at all, so they will not be looking at that or averages of attendance and how schools compared with one another. Although they will be having a look at how schools are encouraging pupils to come back to school, stay in school and learn in school. And if they can't do that, how they are provided for virtually.
- When evaluating the provision of learning, support the Inspector should consider how well the school or PRU provides ensure that pupils educated offsite or onsite receive appropriate support and also how well they use partnerships with other schools or agencies to provide effective support.
- They make it clear in the new inspection arrangements, that Inspectors should approach the evaluation of the provider's curriculum in the flexible and positive way. When they begin inspecting again, they will need to look at where schools are with the new curriculum. Schools will be using the Welsh Government document The Journey to 2022 to guide them. They will be interested to see how the school's curriculum aligns with their vision do they know where they are going with it.
- They were pleased to see that the use of the outdoors will be evaluated, that could be visits and how the well the school enriches the curriculum through additional activities.
- They also want to evaluate how well schools promote a safeguarding culture and also effectiveness of leadership, including in actively promoting staff wellbeing. They will also evaluate how effective leaders and managers are in addressing national and local priorities.
- There is an increased importance given to developing pupils Welsh language skills in formal and informal situation. And the local authority will be producing a strategic plan to develop Welsh language which will be presented Welsh Government.
- The overarching changes include their inspection reports being even more useful to schools and people who use them. So changes have included:
 - a rich narrative describing the schools strengths and areas for improvement. They have removed summative judgments, so for any particular section, any particular inspection area, there's no longer a specific judgment for this. Only the key strengths and areas for improvement will be reported.
 - then there is a change to the notice period that schools get.
 - there is no changes to the follow up procedures. Significant improvement as a statutory category and special measures will still be there.
- They said they will have an inspection mind-set which helps them to ensure what is the best for learners. That this should enable inspection officers to speak to leaders, teachers and support staff professionally and constructively when they are out on inspection. They will be reflective and supportive as well as fair and impartial.

- The Panel felt that it was important for them to be updated on the changes and particularly in the current circumstances following what has been experienced over the last 18 months. The Panel found it good and refreshing to hear that Estyn themselves have been reviewing their actions and approach to inspection.

The Panel asked:

- Whether Estyn talk about ways in which that improvement might be achieved? Or do you leave it up to the individual schools and local authorities to determine that themselves? They said they do not suggest the mechanisms by which improvement could be brought. What they do look at are the things that need to be improved and they try and prioritise them so that they are distilled to a small number of key recommendations.
- Are the five inspection areas at all weighted? The Panel heard that these are not weighted they are all equal.
- We have heard more parents wanting to home school, what challenges does that present for you as an inspection body? They Panel heard that once pupils deregister from school they do not fall under the Estyn but that the local authority does work to support home schooled pupils were possible.

6 Update - Education Covid Recovery moving into new school year

The Director of Education updated the Panel on the current situation with Covid recovery as the new school year begins.

- The situation is still quite fluid. Welsh Government guidance came through in August and the most recent guidance appeared last Friday. So the Panel were given a synopsis of the main changes.
- There is a clear imperative that we try and normalise schools as much as possible and return to a state of business as usual. So as we are in alert level 0 our current policy means that any contacts of confirmed Covid cases are exempt from isolation if they do not have symptoms, have been double vaccinated and are under the age of 18. It is potentially good news because we will not have to self-isolate whole groups in secondary schools and bubbles of classes within primary schools in the new academic year. But if anyone has symptoms of COVID and you have a positive test as a people in Swansea they must isolate immediately, so there's a huge responsibility in terms of working with parents and carers in Swansea to ensure that they understand their responsibilities.
- There is no longer a requirement to wear face masks or face coverings. However, if a pupil feels that they would still like to wear a face mask, of course that would be permitted and for secondary schools we propose the wearing of face coverings on school transport.
- Another change is that we have been working under relaxed duties where there was flexibility for schools to stagger the start times and finish times in schools. This will now come to an end so schools will return to their normal times so they will operate the normal start and finish times that they had before COVID.
- We will be maintaining the cleaning high level cleaning regime in school.
- All staff and secondary pupils are encouraged to take LFT tests twice a week and to report those results really to the online portal.

- There will be a change in operational guidance that schools have become used to, which has been produced at a national level and then considered again here in Swansea at a local level, this will come in from 20th September. We will support our school to get grips with the new national framework over the next couple of weeks. We are going to meet with all head teachers in Swansea shortly. We have two weeks lead in time to understand the ramifications of that mean framework and we're still working on it ourselves to distil the main messages out of that.
- As before, the environmental health officers in TTP test trace and protect will be responsible for contacting each positive case. Schools still need to maintain some kind of record if they have a positive case of the pupil.
- The Chief Medical Officer in Wales considers that children, young people are no longer clinically extremely vulnerable and they are going to be removed from the list of shielding patients in Wales. However, there will be a small number of pupils who still receive specialist clinical advice.
- The Panel heard that we are still awaiting more information from Welsh Government about the air quality and ventilation including what is recommended in our classrooms. Our health and safety officer here in Swansea made the recommendation that a trickle of air flowing through a classroom would be sufficient. However, we have different types of buildings for our schools, so we need to take account.
- As far as educational visits are concerned, any type of educational visit will need to be risk assessed, including those international visits in light of the traffic light system. And obviously the risk assessment has to take consideration of any staff members will supervise children abroad and what would happen if they could contracted COVID and how would those children be supervised abroad if that was the case.
- All parents have been written in Swansea in advance of schools opening to convey the expectations we have of them when school commences.

7 Update - Regional Scrutiny moving forward

The Director of Education updated the Panel on the current position with the regional education partnership moving forward.

- The new partnership will be developed during the course of this autumn term. The three councils will take a report to their full Council to approve the new legal agreement. This new legal agreement will allow the formation of a new formal joint committee for the new partnership. In the meantime there is a shadow joint committee in operation. Each constituent council to be within a formal partnership, so that approval for a new legal agreement is pivotal.
- The new draft legal agreement does contain very precise scrutiny arrangements as well as governance arrangements for the new partnership. It will have different layers of governance and interrelationships between the groups. The new legal agreement will allow a new joint committee to be given delegated responsibilities from each constituent Council to be the decision maker in terms of the new partnership. The Joint Committee would meet quarterly. It will include

the Leaders from each of the councils and the three cabinet members for each of those councils. And the Chief Executives will be involved, the Directors of Education as well as the head of the new partnership.

- The next layer will include the Scrutiny Councillor Group. This will operate in the same vein as the current ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group.
- While there is a process of transition into a new legal agreement, there has to be a winding down of the current one. So at the current ERW has a Joint Committee with its current membership. It will need to meet at least once this term to wind matters down so that the new partnership can be formulated and sealed.
- The new education partnership will also have a Strategic Group which will feed into the Joint Committee. This will be made up of the head of the new partnership with the three Directors of Education and also any strategic officers working within the new partnership. There will also be an officer's Operations Group who will feed into the Strategic Group. The final layer will be the Stakeholder Group and that will be made up of 12 Headteacher's covering the primary, secondary, special and pupil referral unit sectors.
- It is anticipated that report will go to Council in November.

8 Work Programme 2021/2022

The Work Programme was noted.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm

Chair