



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 30 September 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
D W Helliwell
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

A M Day
B Hopkins
M A Langstone

Councillor(s)

S J Gallagher
L James

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

A Roberts

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Robert Smith

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Damien Beech
Michelle Roberts

Head of Primary Phase Unit
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): None

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

Letters and Minutes were reviewed and accepted by the Panel.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 How are we improving schools in Swansea? (How are School Improvement Advisers supporting, evaluating and monitoring schools in Swansea)

The Panel thanked Cllr Robert Smith and Damien Beech for attending the meeting to present the report on School Improvement and answer the Panel's questions.

Some of the issues the report covered included:

- Context and background of the service
- The work of the School Improvement Team and support for schools in Covid period
- How schools are using Pupil Development Grant
- Continuity of learning support including sharing of good practice and development of policies, documents and resources for schools
- Professional learning for teaching and schools staff
- Supporting Governing bodies and continued training session, remotely.
- Readiness for the City Deal

The following points were discussed:

- The Panel asked about the current situation with primary school attainment. The Panel has previously had concerns about levels of attainment for those pupils in receipt of eFSM. They asked, when after Covid, we will be in a position to focus back on this issue and again look at raising the attainment of eFSM? The Panel were pleased to hear that there is an evidence based approach to the spending of the Pupil Development Grant looking at what works. The Panel would be interested to see at some point in the future, information on the correlation between how PDG is spent and increased attainment. The Panel heard that in terms of measuring attainment, the Welsh Government have removed foundation phase teacher assessments and end of key stage two teacher assessments, which is a good thing but a new way to measure attainment needs developed. In future, assessment arrangements will be included in the design of the new curriculum. One good question for the Welsh Government will be how we as a council, or indeed as a country, can measure whether the new Curriculum in Wales is having the desired effect. They heard that this will be an ongoing question that we will need to keep asking as schools develop that new assessment process.
- The Panel also heard that in the discussions with schools, and particularly in the support visits for this autumn term, school improvement advisers will be looking at how well pupils are doing. They found in visits last year, which will likely be the case this year too, that it is the basic skills that some of their pupils need to focus on. But before that it is essential that they focus on pupil wellbeing, if pupils are not happy or comfortable in school it is difficult to learn.
- The Panel asked how things work in terms of commissioning Headteacher's and what sort of impact this has on the school releasing them. We heard that the commissioned Headteacher's log their days out of school and the school is financially remunerated for that time. This then gives an opportunity for say the Deputy to come out of class and have the experience of running the school for a day or series of days. It is good professional development for senior staff in schools. It is also good professional development for the heads as well visiting other schools and seeing different practice. The Cabinet Member said that it is not an easy thing to do, but it does give other people within school the

opportunity to develop professionally. To develop those leadership skills and hopefully building upon the pool of talent and succession. Succession planning is so important.

- We asked what the key challenges over the next 12 months are for the Team when supporting schools. The Panel heard that Covid is still a key issue and the pressures schools are facing with this and then the balance with day to day duties. The other key areas are the introduction of the new Curriculum and the Additional Learning Needs Reform. The Panel heard that it is important for the School Improvement Team to ensure schools are moving forward with all of these. The Panel were keen to see that backfilling and associated budget provision to continue so the financial impact for schools of releasing a commission Headteacher can be protected.

6 Work Programme 2021/2022

The Panel reviewed the Work Programme and have asked for an update on the issue of Harassment in School that was deferred from earlier in the year.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

Chair