

Report of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Cabinet - 1 July 2014

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE ATTAINMENT AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY INQUIRY PANEL

Purpose:	To outline the response of the Cabinet Member to the scrutiny recommendations and to present an action plan to address these.
Policy Framework:	None
Reason for Decision:	To comply with the requirements of the Council Constitution.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Equalities
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The Cabinet Member response as outlined in the report and related action plan be agreed.
Report Author:	Arwyn Thomas & Sarah Crawley
Finance Officer:	Susan Rees
Legal Officer:	Janet Hooper
Access to Services Officer:	Phil Couch

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Attainment and Wellbeing Scrutiny Inquiry report was submitted to Cabinet on the 15 October 2013 after the Wellbeing Inquiry Scrutiny Panel completed a detailed inquiry into attainment and wellbeing in schools across Swansea.
- 1.2 The response and whether Cabinet agree, or not agree, with each recommendation is detailed in this report.

2. Response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

- 2.1 We welcome the work of the Scrutiny Panel and recommendations. There are several actions and recommendations relating to school governors in the Action Plan. We acknowledge these as positive steps, however a wider piece of work is required to explore best practice and the mandatory training requirements for school governors.

Recommendation 1

All schools in Swansea including pupil referral units should sign up to the UNCRC and work towards recognition as rights-respecting.

Cabinet Member Response:

Swansea Council is proud to be the first authority in Wales to commit to UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) programme. Our vision is that by 2017 every school in Swansea, including our PRUs, will have formally started the RRS journey with a vision to eventually becoming a Level 2 RRS. A conference was held last year to launch and celebrate this commitment to children's rights and since then over 30 additional schools have joined the programme.

The commitment made by schools ensures that our children grow up understanding their rights and the rights of all of the children around them. The benefits of entrenching children's rights in our schools are clear and we have every intention of continuing with this commitment.

RRS is not simply an award, an initiative or a bolt on, it marks a total culture and change in ethos within our schools.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: All schools signed up to the UNCRC. All to have rights respecting recognition

Timeframe: 2014-2017

Responsible officer: Lead by the Director of People (Lead Director for UNCRC implementation) with support from implementation group members, as well as the whole Local Authority.

Recommendation 2

Awareness raising is carried out in relation to UNCRC including the provision of information to councillors, school governors, staff and partner organisations.

Cabinet Member Response:

A substantial amount of work around awareness raising has taken place over the past year or so, with very public commitments being made to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including conferences, policy launches and press work. From 2011 – 2014 Governors have been trained in over 40 schools. Work will be done to identify those Governors who haven't attended, and those remaining schools will be targeted.

There is a significant amount of work that is still required in terms of ensuring staff, Councillors and Governors have the required training to fully understand the implications and meaning of the UNCRC, and that we provide clear information also to our partner organisations.

As part of its work to embed the UNCRC, a task and finish group of staff has been developed with the purpose of raising awareness of the UNCRC and the implications for rights-based practice. Training sessions with staff run by UNICEF have taken place, and more are planned. A training and development programme for councillors and

staff will be put in place. This will be included in a roll out of compulsory safeguarding training for Members

Swansea Council has become the first in Europe to fully embed the UNCRC in its policy framework and is now required to publish an annual scheme outlining the work that has been done and that will be done to further realise the rights within the convention. The first scheme will include clear actions that will be taken to increase awareness and further embed the UNCRC.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: Awareness raising and training in relation to the UNCRC is completed with all Councillors, staff, school governors and partner organisations

Timeframe: 2014-2016

Responsible officers: Director of People

Recommendation 3 has been moved to after Recommendation 11 as it is an extension of this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

It investigates different mediums for the wider training of governors including the use and availability of online training tools and involvement in appropriate inset days and be party to wider 'all school' training.

Cabinet Member Response:

The Council currently has a comprehensive governor training programme including all required compulsory elements. However, as part of a wider review of 'What is effective Governance?' and 'Developing Leadership' the skills and knowledge that Governors require will be built into a training programme which will also include the best ways of delivering to ensure easy access to Governors.

UNCRC training has been part of the programme since September 2011. To date governors 37 primary schools and 7 comprehensive schools have attended this training. The remaining schools will be targeted and invited to send a governor/s to future training session.

Moves to online training for governors are being pursued by the Association of Directors of Wales (ADEW) Governors Support Officers (GSO) Group and the Educational Regional School Improvement Board. This has to be an all Wales project. A request will be made to the working party developing the training to include references in training modules on UNCRC.

UNCRC website has online training units which the School and Governor Unit will research and, if appropriate, include in support materials sent to governors in the future.

The Authority is organising a training programme for schools on UNCRC. As part of the invitation to attend it will be suggested that the

school nominate either their teacher governor, staff governor or Headteacher governor to attend to ensure that members of the governing body are included in the training and able to report back to the governing body.

Monitoring governor attendance at training sessions will be undertaken as part of the School and Governor Unit.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: The UNCRC and Wellbeing are an integral part of governor and staff training within schools in Swansea with staff continuously improving their knowledge and application.

Timeframe: May/June/July 2014 UNCRC training in schools

2014/15 quarterly monitoring onwards

Responsible officers: School Governor Unit

Recommendation 5

It encourages schools to find more creative ways to involve parents based on best practice.

Cabinet Member Response:

Estyn has recognised the work of Swansea's schools to share best practice. The importance of this will also be emphasised in the next cross phase meeting and during future governor training.

We are now developing a strategy of school to school support. This will identify where the best practice is located in Swansea schools and how this practice can be adapted and used by other schools. Involving parents can be one of those particular themes.

There are a number of good examples of parental involvement in schools including Seaview in which new parent governors are being supported by other more experienced mentor governors. There are community school projects such as Families in Schools in Blaenymaes with parents and children sessions after school. Family Learning Signature is being used in a number of schools particularly within Penderry with support from the Communities First team.

These projects and initiatives have been shared between headteachers and pastoral workers in schools through joint meetings.

The Save the Children FAST (Families and Schools Together) project is working in Hafod school, with intentions to approach more schools in Swansea.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: Best Practice identified and used by more schools. More parents are involved in their children's learning/education and the benefits of the UNCRC and wellbeing work

Timeframe: 2014/15 many of these initiatives will expand into more schools with support from the Poverty & Prevention Service and head teachers and governors

Recommendation 6

It works to encourage a wider range of people to become governors with a variety of skills and knowledge and that are truly reflective of wider society.

Cabinet Member Response:

As part of a wider review of 'What is effective Governance?' and 'Developing Leadership' the skills, knowledge and representation that Governors of an effective Governing Body require will be explored.

This will include regular briefings and updates to ensure consistency across the City and County of Swansea.

In order to realistically address this recommendation there needs to be clarity over the role of the Local Authority in governor recruitment. Certain categories of governors are elected through their stakeholder groups i.e. staff, teacher and parent governors. It is not appropriate for the Authority to influence this process although advice and guidance is given on process if required. Schools' equality policies should cover governors and governing body membership. The Authority plans to review the Model Equality Policy provided to schools. A focus on equality and diversity in relation to governor recruitment and appointment will be included in the model policy.

Community governors are appointed by the governing body. The Authority recommends all governing bodies undertake a skills audit on an annual basis to identify skills gaps in order to inform their training needs and recruitment priorities. A sample skills audit is provided to all governing bodies.

Cabinet appoints L.A. governors on the recommendations from the Local Authority Governor Appointment Panel. The majority of Local Authority Councillors are governors and most schools have a Councillor as a governor. Councillors will be asked to ensure that their individual governing bodies consider and discuss with their governing bodies how reflective their membership is of their wider community.

Current vacancy levels in Swansea are low. Approximately 100 total vacancies (total number of governors in Swansea in excess of 1,500) of which approximately 15 are Local Authority vacancies. Each individual governors' term of office is four years and so it needs to be recognised that the impact of any actions taken in relation to this recommendation will take time to embed and evidence.

The Authority will request sharing of good practice from other Authorities in relation to governor recruitment via the ADEW Governors Support Group.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: More school Governors who reflect the wider community of

their school, who are trained and have the appropriate skills
Timeframe: 2014/15 – 2017/18
Responsible officers: School Governor Unit

Recommendation 7

It develops 'questions to ask' guidance in relation to wellbeing in schools for governors using the issues identified in section 3.12 and in consultation with headteachers and governing bodies. This should be made available online for schools and governors to access.

Cabinet Member Response:

This will be developed through the regional improvement group and current joint working arrangements.

Guidance needs to be compiled by specialists in respect of "questions to ask" and so it will be suggested by the Local Authority that governing bodies identify a link governor for Wellbeing. The Local Authority will offer training sessions, around the Role of the Link Governor. This role includes accessing specialist knowledge and information in relation to their specific link area and ensuring relevant questions are asked at governing body meetings and that they feedback at meetings, as appropriate, the information they have obtained.

In order to monitor this the School and Governor Unit internal governing body RAG status matrix will include monitoring of Link Governors for Wellbeing and governing body minutes will be monitored to assess if Wellbeing is being considered by governors as a regular agenda item.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: Governing bodies will be encouraged to appoint Wellbeing link governors. Minutes of governing body meetings will be monitored for wellbeing discussions and actions

Timeframe: 2014/15 to be implemented

Responsible officers: School Governor Unit

Recommendation 8

It facilitates the introduction of a system leaders approach within governing bodies. That is new chairs of governors being supported by experienced governors from other schools across the regions and new governors offered a buddy system from within the individual governing body.

Cabinet Member Response:

As part of a wider review of 'What is effective Governance?' and 'Developing Leadership' the support that governing Bodies require will be explored. This will include capacity building within the Governing Body, the potential for mentoring and succession planning into key roles.

This is to be facilitated through the regional improvement group which will facilitate a cross authority Governors network. The Local Authority must commit to the new national model for school improvement. Within

this mandatory requirement for changes to governor training and governor support must be addressed first and capacity issues dictate that it is not possible to implement non mandatory developments until all statutory requirements are in place.

In the interim there are existing, local arrangements in place to support and mentor governors and share good practice. They are as follows:

Swansea Association of Governing Bodies

Bronze Award Mentor Schools

Governor Support Officer

Individual, bespoke training on the Roles and Responsibilities of Governing Bodies either on request or via identification of need for support by Challenge Advisor, ESTYN inspection reports or individual governors / governing bodies

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: Continuing with the existing support arrangements for governors, and influencing the introduction of a system leaders approach ready for 2015/16

Timeframe: on-going work now, and future work in 2015/16

Responsible officers: School Governor Unit

Recommendation 9

To develop more consistency in transition from primary to secondary schools including the development of an advisory document based on 'what works' in conjunction with schools across the authority. This should be made available online for schools and governors to access.

Cabinet Member Response:

This will be a cross phase item for discussion with the schools with the best track record. Communities First are working with a number of schools using Pupil Deprivation Grant to run transition projects prior to and during the summer holiday periods each year.

An assessment and evaluation will need to be carried out looking at the good practice and outcomes for students, then a resource package will need to be developed and then shared.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: more pupils experience smooth transition into secondary schools

Timeframe: developed and implemented by Winter 2014/15 ready for work in Spring/Summer 2015/16.

Responsible officers: Chief Education Officer

Recommendation 10

Performance measures relating to children and young people are revisited to ensure that they do not only measure objective data but ensure that subjective measures such as Children and Young People views are built in.

Cabinet Member Response:

We welcome this recommendation because it strengthens our view that a range of data is needed to capture performance. Also, in improving schools and services the views of our Children and Young People are paramount.

Wider performance measures from outside of education will need to be included at Directorate level and include measurements from Health and Leisure to capture a child's whole development. These will be addressed through our Directorate Plans and measures.

A task and finish group of officers has been established to ensure we expand and develop our work to hear the voices of children and young people, and that they have opportunities to participate fully in our decision making process. This work will be outlined at the launch of the Council's UNCRC scheme in November 2014.

The Super Survey and Big Conversation run by the C&YP Strategy Unit's participation team ensure children and young people's subjective views are fed into services.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: Children's views are measured and taken into account within UNCRC and wellbeing work in schools and across the Local Authority
Timeframe: launch in November 2014. Implementation post November 2014 onwards

Responsible officers: Director of People

Recommendation 11

More opportunities for schools to share good practice be developed (including online options).

Cabinet Member Response:

Analysis of inspection outcomes in Swansea demonstrates that our performance significantly outperforms the rest of Wales. 21 of Wales' secondary schools are deemed to have excellent prospects for improvement – 7 are in Swansea. 15 of Wales' schools have been deemed to have excellent current performance – 4 are in Swansea.

We are developing and implementing an effective, sustainable school to school support model where we are able to accurately identify, profile and share excellent practice across all areas of school performance in order to maximise the life chances of young people. The structure of the work is to be determined but it will be a practitioner led, scalable, logical, collaborative and effective way of capturing and sharing intelligence and learning from leaders in the field.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Outcome: Schools are sharing and implementing more good practice therefore raising standards

Timeframe: 2014/15 onwards

Responsible officers: Chief Education Officer

Recommendation 3
Schools are encouraged to work more widely with the many partners and organisations that could potentially deliver parts of the curriculum for PSE in schools.
<p>Cabinet Member Response: Guidance is issued to Headteachers identifying good practice in respect of matters that should be reported to governors on a termly basis. From September 2014 this guidance will state that Headteachers are encouraged to report on the use of external agencies to support and enhance curriculum work in respect of UNCRC, Wellbeing and PSE. Link Governors for Wellbeing will become a recommendation to governing bodies as part of the annual update on good practice to be issued to Head teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies in the Autumn Terms from 2014</p> <p>The Governors Report to Parents requires governors to report annually to parents on action taken to develop or strengthen links with the community (including links with the police).</p>
<p>Recommendation is AGREED Outcome: Schools are working with partners to develop and deliver wellbeing and UNCRC work as part of the curriculum Timeframe: September 2014 – onwards Responsible officers: Chief Education Officer</p>

3. Addressing the Recommendations

The Action Plan for delivering Wellbeing and the UNCRC in schools is detailed above. It is important to acknowledge that meeting these recommendations will require a team approach and responsibility will be shared by identified officers, headteachers and governors. These recommendations will be delivered through activities within the UNCRC implementation plan and School Governors Unit plans.

The Authority has a number of methods for communicating with governors which will be used to raise awareness of the Action Plan and to request that actions are addressed. UNCRC will be identified as a cross cutting theme throughout communication. These methods include:

- Clerk to Governor Forums
- Information packs sent to new governors on appointment
- Email updates
- Training, training programmes, training packs
- Governors newsletters.

4. Equality and Engagement Implications

The Council's decision to embed the UNCRC duty into policy and practice was agreed on the 24th September 2013, we are now working across Council to look at the detail of how this will work. The existing Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) may be adapted to include a section

on Children's Rights Impacts (CRIA). This is likely to increase the advice and guidance needed during this process.

All schools are required to have a Strategic Equality Plan in place which should be reviewed and approved by the governing body on a three year rolling programme. The Authority will review the model policy which is issued to schools taking into account the Action Plan. A request will be made that all governing bodies consider, review and adopt the revised policy. We will continue to provide advice and guidance to schools as and when requested.

5. Legal Implications

In October 2013 it was agreed that the UNCRC (1989) be embedded within, and become part of the Council's Policy Framework and that a duty be placed on the Executive ('the Cabinet') to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC (1989).

By agreeing to place a 'due regard' duty upon the executive of the Authority, i.e. the Cabinet, Swansea Council shows commitment to children's rights, the UNCRC (1989), and to supporting and respecting the young citizens of this City and County.

Governors are required to attend mandatory training with effect from September 2013. The content is prescribed by Welsh Government, but Swansea can include local priorities.

6. Financial Implications

There is an annual cost of £40,000 to continue with the agreement with UNICEF UK to deliver the Rights Respecting Schools Award in Swansea. There are also financial implications in terms of roll out of training and capacity building in the Access to Service Team to support the EIA and CRIA process and in terms of building capacity within the Children and Young People Strategy Unit Participation Team to deliver and embed Rights Based Practice. These costs will continue to be contained within the existing overall education budget provision.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: None.