



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To:
Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Cabinet member for education

Please ask for:
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Date
Dyddiad:

25 September 2014

Dear Cllr Raynor

Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel 18 September 2014

At our panel meeting on the 18 September we spoke to the new Hub Head of Education Improvement along with the Chief Education Officer about consistency and the support for schools from the Education Improvement Service. Helen Morgan-Rees and Arwyn Thomas provided us with a presentation giving some background and addressing some of the questions we had identified prior to the meeting.

Panel members were pleased to hear that the new regional hub, made up of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, is now fully staffed, has a new head of service and is ready to take this service forward.

The Panel found that systems designed to quality assure and provide consistency in support and challenge for schools were currently being put in place. We were particularly interested to hear about training for Challenge Advisors along with the development of a common approach in relation to the agenda for the autumn term meetings, the use of common criteria and the shared aims and consistent messages being used. We were pleased to hear that it is the aim to have quality and consistency at the heart of the Education Improvement Service.

The Panel were informed that the framework for support was in place identifying schools as Green, Yellow, Amber and Red after their autumn visits. We were pleased to see that there is flexibility in this when it comes to other issues being able to trigger extra support. The Panel were keen to ensure that we are working to support both ends of the performance spectrum i.e. moving those Yellow and Amber in Green and not just targeting support to those identified as Red. The panel also thought it would be good practice for more than one governor to attend their schools autumn visit help to communicate a consistent message around improvement across the governing body.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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The Panel however did have some concerns in relation to

- Consistency of teachers assessments and the gap between external judgements and self evaluation in schools needing to be closer
- That support for Science in schools seems to be the poor relation in the drive to improve literacy and numeracy in schools
- Under the radar underperformance in schools (the panel were pleased to hear that the new data sets from Wales Government will highlight this more clearly)
- The Panel are not convinced that Pupil Deprivation Grants are being used across clusters as opposed to in isolation by schools. The Panel will be looking at this data more closely in December

We were interested to hear about schools sharing expertise and particularly the use of experienced senior staff in schools sharing their expertise by assisting schools that need to improve. The Panel did wish to highlight that we must be mindful that this often is done on a goodwill basis. We thought it an excellent development tool both for the staff member and the school. But we must also recognise that there is a risk to the host school of undermining its effectiveness when committing senior staff to working in other schools for long periods of time.

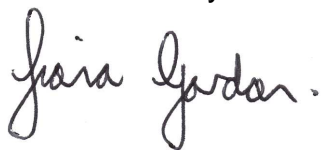
Regular monitoring of progress and the effectiveness of this newly formed service is vital because they are the local authority's path to improving the performance of schools across Swansea.

Resulting from our discussion we would like to recommend:

1. That schools/governing bodies be advised, via available communication channels with schools/governing bodies, that it is considered as good practice to have more than one governor at the time of autumn visits.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fiona Gordon
Convener of Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel
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