



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To:
Cabinet member for education matters

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Date
Dyddiad:

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Dear Cabinet member

Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel 21 August 2014

At our panel meeting on the 21 August we spoke to the Head of Education Inclusion about elective home education. Robin Brown provided us with a background report detailing the current legislation and how the authority supports and assists parents who choose to educate their children at home.

Panel members were pleased to find that good practice was clearly evident in how we manage this service, especially the rigorous system of advice and support for parents. The Panel however did have some concerns particularly in relation to safeguarding matters. We recognise that the legislation is very weak in this matter and that because of this we are not always informed if a child is being home schooled (or in fact whether these children have contact with any professionals or are seen by others on a regular basis). The panel thought it would be a good idea for Social Services to record the basic details of each child that is home schooled on their system, to ensure that should any issues arise they are aware that this child may not be regularly seen by any professionals outside of the family. The panel had concerns that some children could be slipping through the net and thought that this would go some way to address this. This also highlighted the concern more generally of children disappearing from the education system especially tracking those at transition times like moving from primary to secondary. The panel believed that sharing of information with/from other agencies could help address this including the possibility of carrying out the exercise of 'marrying databases' with say Health on a regular basis to ensure we have a record of each and every child within the City and County of Swansea and whether they are in School, home tutored etc.

We were pleased to hear that the authority works to build good relationships with those parents who have informed us that they are home schooling their children by the provision of an annual visit, a written report arising from that visit and by signposting them to networks and services that may help them.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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We were informed that those who home educate are not bound by the same rules and regulations as schools; we found for example they do not have to teach the national curriculum, have a timetable, mark work, have specific qualifications to do it, have specific days or hours of teaching. We did find it somewhat ironic that we penalise parents so heavily in the state system for non attendance and schools for failing when legislation in the area of home schooling is so weak.

We have no record of how well home educated children perform educationally and there is little research into the longer term outcomes of these children in adulthood. We recognise given the current legislation that it is impossible to measure the short or longer term outcomes; the information that is available tends to be anecdotal in nature.

The issue of the UNCRC Rights of the Child was also highlighted and how we can look to ensure that these children and young people's voices are heard. The panel thought that guidance on this could be incorporated into the guidance information given to home educators.

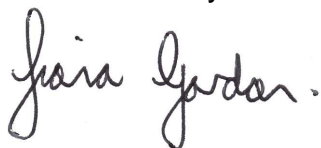
We would encourage you as the Cabinet member and officers within the education department to look to use any opportunity that may arise to make representations to Welsh Government to strengthen the legislation in this area.

Resulting from our discussion we would also like to recommend:

1. Social Services keep a record on their system of children who are home educated.
2. Data matching with other databases including health be used as a tool to ensure we are aware of each and every child currently living within the City and County.
3. UNCRC Rights of the Child information is included in guidance to home educators.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



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