

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching purpose of the panel is to: provide ongoing challenge to schools performance to ensure that *pupils in Swansea are receiving high quality education; and the authority is meeting its objectives in relation to improving school standards and pupil attainment.*

2. Key Activities

The Panel is currently meeting on a monthly basis (see attached work timetable) and the work completed since the last update in January includes:

- a) In January the Panel received the Annual Education Performance report. This report includes all the verified performance data for Swansea, included pupil attendance and exclusion data, along with comparisons with other local authorities. The Panel also considered the latest school categorisation matrix resulting from the autumn term school visits.
- b) In February the Panel met twice, to ask questions and give views on:
 - Relevant Education Budget proposals for 2016/17.
 - Proposed changes to the West Glamorgan Music Service, which were being consulted upon by the authority.
- c) In March the Panel met for a Q & A with head teacher (Kathryn Richards) and Chair of Governors (Cllr Mike White) from Brynhyfryd Primary School, as part of its series of challenge sessions with individual schools. The Panel wanted to challenge the performance of the newly merged Brynhyfryd Primary School.
- d) Over this period the Panel has also kept up to date with individual school Estyn Inspections publications and any advisory/practice documents including for example: relevant Estyn Inspection outcomes for Swansea, Estyn and other guidance information.

3. Achievements / Impact

The convener's letters to the Cabinet Member have raised some of the points below, some requiring a response from the Cabinet member which have been received. Key points:

Performance

- We were impressed with improvements in performance of pupils across both the primary and secondary sectors in Swansea, particularly how we compare with others in the region and across Wales.
- We were pleased with improvements in reducing the gap between pupils who are receiving free school meals and those who are not, although we did feel that this gap is still too large and the authority and schools must continue to focus on this issue.
- The majority of schools in Swansea are performing very well but there are a few that still need to recognise that further improvement is required - we were pleased to hear that these are receiving the necessary support from challenge advisors.
- The Panel has found the performance data to be quite difficult to negotiate fully and felt that some things were missing when looking at the analysis of the year across education in Swansea. The Panel has requested that improvements to the information provided in future years, including a précis of the key performance data.

Budget

- The Panel supported the budget priority of *'radically changing the way support for pupils is provided – more flexible earlier intervention and support, as local a possible'*.
- The Panel felt that the consultation with young people on the budget was not representative because it was based on such a small number of pupils.
- The Panel shared the concerns raised by the Schools Budget Forum about the impact of cuts.

School Music Service

- The proposal to end the West Glamorgan Music Service and create a single music service in each authority has attracted a lot of public interest and strong feelings and we provided an opportunity for members of the public to address the Panel to inform our conclusions.
- The Panel was unclear about the rationale for splitting the service. We agreed that the service for Swansea had to be affordable for parents and for schools. We were pleased to hear that funding had been extended to August 2016, and the appointment of a business manager to deliver a sustainable service.
- We encouraged greater communication between Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, particularly in putting the Music Service on a more formal footing, including better clarity about who is responsible for what and music managers given the opportunity to disaggregate the service more effectively. The Cabinet Member for Education agrees with this point. We also recommended exploration of alternative models of delivery and practice elsewhere to inform decision-making. There was concern about proposed staffing allocation for Swansea in comparison with Neath Port Talbot. We recommended that the status quo is kept until the end of the next financial year 31 March 2017, thus giving more opportunity for the managers of the service to meet the challenge to decrease costs and increase income by:
 - Investigating and implementing further efficiencies within the service
 - Investigating further income and funding opportunities including use of the service by Pupil Referral Unit, SEN provisions and Adult Education
 - Potential use of Pupil Deprivation Grant for free school meals pupils

Brynhyfryd Primary School

- The Panel was pleased that its assessment of the performance of the Head Teacher in bringing together the two schools into a new Brynhyfryd Primary School mirrored that of the Challenge Adviser.
- We were pleased to learn that the Head Teacher drew on support and guidance from the challenge adviser and good practice in other schools to identify and improve teaching in Brynhyfryd primary School.
- The Head identified a number of areas for the panel that needed to be improved, namely that when a training need was identified, training should be carried out in a timely manner so that the training remains relevant. The Panel supported this and will be captured in a letter to the Cabinet Member.

4. Future Work Programme

In April the Panel will undertake pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet report on the School Music Service Arrangements with Neath Port Talbot Council. This follows the consultation exercise on proposed changes to the West Glamorgan Music Service. The Panel will also focus on good practice in April. We have invited examples of good practice by schools across Swansea and will be looking at those highlighted when we meet, for example practice in relation to:

- children with behavioural issues and reducing exclusions and/or referrals to EOTAS
- improving school attendance
- Improving outcomes and closing the gap in performance of free school meal (FSM) pupils
- listening to the pupil voice
- Involving families and community

In May the Panel will reflect on and evaluate this year's work, identify learning points, and plan for the year ahead. This will include engagement with more schools, taking into account school categorisation data and advice from the Head of School Improvement, and a focus on key performance issues for the Education service.

5. Action for the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.

TIMETABLE/PLAN OF WORK 2015/2016
Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel

Meeting date and venue	Item to be discussed
Meeting 1 18 May 15 – 4.00pm Room 110, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree Panel work programme for the coming year • Update on current position with EMLAS • Briefing on the Education Improvement Grant • Revisit Elective Home Education letter and Cabinet Response
Meeting 2 18 June 15 – 4.00pm CR6, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERW Business Plan (Betsan O'Connor, Managing Director ERW, Lindsay Harvey, Helen Morgan-Rees) • Home to School Transport – consultation on policy changes
Meeting 3 13 Aug 15 – 4.00pm	SEN/ALN reform – What are we doing around this reform agenda
Meeting 4 10 Sep 15 – 4.00pm CR3b, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after Children Educational - Performance and Gypsy Traveller Children Education - Performance and support
**Extra meeting 5 21 Sep 15 – 4pm 3.4.1, Civic Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of curriculum change including implications for schools • Reviewing the work of the School Improvement Service Helen Morgan Rees (Hub Head of School Improvement)
Meeting 6 8 Oct 15 – 4.00pm CR3b, Guildhall	School 1 Casllwchwr Primary School (Headteacher and Chair of Governors) <i>Pre meeting with Challenge Advisor</i>
**Extra meeting 7 14 Oct 15 – 4.00pm	Pre-decision Scrutiny on the Future of Education Other Than At School Services
Meeting 8 3 Nov 15 – 4.00pm CR3b, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Inspection Action Plan progress report - arising from Estyn Inspection 1 year on (Cabinet report 15 Oct 15 - forward look)
Meeting 10 21 Jan 16 – 4.00pm CR3b, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Education Performance Reporting including pupil attendance and exclusion data (verified data); and Latest School Categorisation
Extra Meeting 11 9 Feb 16 – 5.00pm Room 235, Guildhall	Annual Budget – Education aspects
Meeting 12 23 Feb 16 – 5.00pm CR1 Civic Centre	West Glamorgan Music Service Consultation
Meeting 13 17 Mar 16 – 4.00pm CR3b, Guildhall	School 2 Brynhyfryd Primary School (Headteacher and Chair of Governors) <i>Pre meeting with Challenge Advisor for school</i>
Meeting 12 14 Apr 16 – 4.00pm CR3b, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Practice Event • Pre-decision Scrutiny West Glamorgan Music Service
Meeting 14 - NEW 11 May 16 – 4.00pm CR6, Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate your year • Plan for year ahead
New municipal year	
Meeting 1 16 Jun 16 – 4.00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cefn Hengoed Secondary School (to be contacted)
Meeting 2 14 Jul 16 – 4.00pm	Education through Regional Working (ERW) Business Plan (Confirmed) Betsan O'Conner (Managing Director ERW), Helen Morgan Rees (Head of Hub Education Improvement Service), Lindsay Harvey (Chief Education Officer)

As at: 05/04/2016