



**To/
Councillor Jen Raynor
Cabinet Member for Children,
Education and Lifelong Learning**

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BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning following the meeting of the Panel on 16 November 2017. It is about Pioneer Schools and the New Curriculum for Wales.

Dear Councillor Raynor,

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – 16 November 2017

We met at Olchfa Comprehensive School to look at the collaboration that Parklands Primary and Olchfa Comprehensive Schools are doing in helping to map out the future New Curriculum for Wales.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt and to share our views and learning points from this exercise.

Young People and the New Curriculum

We met a group of six young people from the Olchfa School Advisory Board to gain their thoughts about the new curriculum. We asked them to consider:

- ❖ How the school is helping them to prepare for life?
- ❖ What they think the school does well and what it could do better?
- ❖ Whether they feel they have a say in decisions affecting the school and their learning?

The key messages from these pupils about the New Curriculum are:

- It is good because learning is now more linked to pupils day to day life, for example in maths learning about elevation and this being linked to map work or architecture.
- Skills learnt in these types of lessons are the skills needed for life.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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- Respect is important to 'both school life and for life outside...it is very important for pupils to have a voice: every pupil in the school must have a voice. Pupils must feel that their opinions matter'.
- Young people thought that learning about their own culture and identity and that of others was important.
- Lessons are teaching us skills that also help build pupils confidence, so they can then become more involved and willing to give their views.
- Pupil Voice has been the biggest difference at the school. For example: pupils decided on which subjects would be looked at in PSE this year. 'Pupils then see this happening which proves they have the ability and confidence to put their ideas forward this will help them with life.'
- The way things are taught now allows everyone to get involved. Not just about exams but developing ideas and to think about and question them. Reflection time is also good for exploring different ideas and experience.
- More freedom in how things are done so we can learn and develop our own learning styles. Can therefore be more creative and have more ownership of the learning process.
- More respect between teachers and pupils which results in pupils feeling that they can have their say more, which helps pupils to be more engaged and enjoy lessons.
- When asked what the school could do better, pupils said that the needs of every pupil in relation to food/meals could be addressed. That the food available does not have many vegetarian options and does not cater for examples for Halal or vegan etc. The pupils thought that to enable full equality the school meals available should be reflective of pupils needs.

Parklands Primary and Olchfa Comprehensive School collaboration work in relation to Pioneer Schools and the New Curriculum for Wales

Scrutiny Councillors met with Hugh Davies and Anne Lloyd the Headteachers from Olchfa Comprehensive School and Parklands Primary School, the Chair of Governors from Olchfa School Mary Jones and the Challenge Advisors for the two schools Sharon Jones and Mark Thompson. We discussed how the development of the New Curriculum for Wales is progressing from their viewpoints. The Panel took away a number of learning points from this session which they would like to share with you and for use when moving forward in the development of the new curriculum in other schools in Swansea:

- Strong leadership within schools will be key to moving forward, but must recognise that School readiness for the new curriculum will be varied.
- Both the School Governing Body and Leadership Team within a school must be committed to it and be ready to move it forward.
- Collaboration is happening not only because of the new curriculum pilot, some schools were thinking this way and starting to move down that road but this has been an impetus to moving forward. There are some schools that are not pioneer schools but are starting to do this because they recognise that it is the right thing to do.

- There are a minority of individuals within schools that are not convinced and therefore not as supportive of Donaldson and the ethos of the new curriculum. There is still a need to be winning of hearts and minds with some.
- Must recognise schools are at different stages of learning and development, therefore their ability to move forward with the new curriculum will vary and will need different levels of support.
- Ensure everything is grounded in the 4 core purposes, 'they are the fundamental touchstone'. Teachers must understand and be committed to this in order to move forward.
- The pedagogy and type of knowledge is different so teachers need to embrace this as part of their continuous improvement journey. It will be important moving forward for the criterion to fit with the pedagogy that goes with the new curriculum.
- It is vital to use evidence to inform the development of the practice needed. Moving forward must be underpinned by research and evidence based decisions.
- The learning for pupils is much broader within the new curriculum than with the old one, subjects are looked at in more depth and breadth, enabling pupils to question and think, it also frees up time to explore issues more. This enables children to think/question and not just acquire knowledge.
- The new curriculum needs to be about teaching and learning, about what the child needs and not only about results and data.
- Working across clusters will be important moving forward, the primaries and secondary schools working together to ensure smooth transitions and shared practices will be of benefit to all.
- There is an important role for all the pioneer schools in being reflective and looking at the effective pedagogy learned and that is needed, also encouraging and giving confidence to other schools to start down this process.
- The main challenges to moving forward with the new curriculum include:
 - Schools being able to release resources to bring in the new curriculum will be necessary, so any reduction in resources will negatively impact on their ability to move forward.
 - nature of changes in communities, for example the increases in second language and free school meals pupils
- If local authority could do anything to help it would be to create a climate for professional learning that is valued and at the forefront education.

We were extremely impressed with both schools and their commitment and drive in improving the outcomes of their pupils. We recognise that they both have taken this great opportunity to shape new practice and have embraced it fully. We look forward to seeing how it progresses in the future within both schools and across their cluster.

Your response

We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised in our letter and would ask that you respond to the following issues by the 20 December 2017.

1. What is being done across schools in Swansea to ensure that we are reflecting the varied needs of pupils within the school meals that are offered, for example vegetarian, vegan, Halal?
2. How you think we can build upon the positive impact that rights respecting schools have had and how we can further develop the themes of culture and identity?
3. How do you believe the budget situation across schools both now and in the near future will reflect in their ability to take forward the new curriculum?
4. What are we doing as an authority to help create a climate for professional learning that is valued and at the forefront education in Wales?

Yours sincerely,

COUNCILLOR MO SYKES

Convener, Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

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