

Councillor Mo Sykes
Convener
Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

Please ask for: Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Direct Line: 01792 63 7429
E-Mail: cllr.jennifer.raynor@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: JR/HS
Your Ref: ref
Date: 26 July 2018

Dear Panel Members

Visit to Foundation Phase at Gowerton Primary School – 12 July 2018

I am glad you enjoyed your visit to Gowerton Primary and saw the new building and the inspiring teaching taking place there. With reference to the questions you asked, please see the response below.

- 1. What are we or can we do to address the three key points in the above section regarding promoting, training and funding of the foundation phase in Swansea?**
- 2. How the funding to schools is distributed via ERW and what are the costs of this to Swansea?**
- 3. Given the focus on improving the foundation phase across Swansea, what is being put into place to ensure ongoing support to schools while the Foundation Phase Advisor is not in situ?**

Promoting the importance of the foundation phase (FP) philosophy is a priority for Swansea Council and is a clear focus within challenge adviser core visits. The local authority (LA) promotes the foundation phase philosophy and its developments. This resulted in the seconded appointment of a strategic lead for foundation phase in September 2017. Her contract was extended for the academic year 2018-2019. Her maternity leave will commence around November 2018. The LA is unable to access maternity cover through insurance, as might be the case in a school. However, the Senior Leadership Board (SLB) has agreed that the LA will invest further finance from the overall education budget by employing an additional teacher as the strategic lead during the absence of the post holder. On the appointment of a replacement, a hand over period has been agreed to ensure smooth transition.

Identified good and excellent practice is shared and celebrated through school to school collaboration, headteachers' meetings, FP co-ordinator networks and the 'Dolen' Hwb site. Collaboration is facilitated through various avenues, including challenge advisers, the FP leader, the curriculum support team and various school networking groups.

Swansea receives a share of Education Improvement Grant, from April 2018 known as the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG) from ERW. This grant can be used to support the FP amongst other areas, as per the terms and conditions of the grant.

In the financial year 2018-2019 the grant was cut by around 11% but Swansea increased our level of delegation to schools to 95% so that they have protection and the flexibility to spend on the requirements of the grant, including the cost of training and related supply cover.

The RCSIG allocated to all schools via ERW, provides funding to support appropriate adult/pupil ratios. The ratios of staffing are not statutory although the Welsh Government suggests that schools should “work towards” recommended adult ratios to pupils of 1:8 for 3-5 year olds and 1:15 for 5-7 year olds.

The RCSIG does not usually provide enough funding for staff training or resources. In most schools the grant is used primarily to support the foundation phase staffing ratios.

School self-evaluation processes should identify potential priorities relating to the school development, such as FP development, including staff training needs. These priorities would then form part of the school improvement plan, alongside identified costs.

Training for all FP co-ordinators in the autumn and spring terms have been supported by the strategic lead for FP in the academic year 2017–2018. Teachers have been released for cluster moderation training on baseline assessment. Supply costs have been funded to cover this training from the Primary Phase Unit (PPU) budget, approximately £25,000.

During this academic year, the FP strategic lead has supported nearly all schools with a number of training sessions and in-school support, including:

- Foundation Phase - Help me do it by myself (independence and engagement for FP pupils)
- Let's Go Outdoors
- Baseline training for new reception teachers and teaching assistants
- In school support for whole staff and individual teachers to develop their classroom provision
- Whole staff training on the outdoors
- Whole school support for standardisation
- Support on FP data, book scrutiny, developing indoor provision and developing challenges and timetables in line with FP philosophy
- Support on planning
- Learning walks with feedback to staff
- Visits for teachers to exemplar schools
- In-school support for FP Leaders to review challenges
- Support for NQTs

Schools in need of greater support have received bespoke demonstration lessons, training sessions on developing independence, action planning, support for guided reading activities and explanation writing.

Please get back to me if you require further information.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Raynor', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Jennifer Raynor
CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT, LEARNING & SKILLS