



**To/  
Councillor Jen Raynor  
Cabinet Member for Education  
Improvement, Learning and Skills**

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**BY EMAIL**

Summary: This is a letter from the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills following the meeting of the Panel on 17 October 2018. It is about a meeting with Ysgol Crug Glas Special School.

Dear Councillor Raynor,

### **Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – 17 October 2018**

We thanked the Headteacher, senior management team and governors at the school, the Consultative Headteacher and the challenge advisor for attending the meeting to discuss the key issues and to answer our questions about how the school is progressing with its improvement journey.

We met firstly with the Challenge Advisor and Consultative Headteacher where we heard that leadership staffing issues around the time of the inspection in 2016, and for a while afterwards, had put the school in a vulnerable position. So to address this three key decisions were made by the governing body in conjunction with the Local Authority. These were to (1) Appoint acting Headteacher Claire Hobson, (2) Involve Consultative Head Gethin Sutton and (3) Establish a Team around the School network. We heard that these three key decisions have been instrumental to improvements at the school. We were pleased to hear that Estyn, who revisited the school in April 2018, were very pleased with the progress made and agreed that the school could come out of Estyn Monitoring.

We had a tour of the school and then met with the Headteacher, her Senior Management Team along with two Governors at the school. We heard from them that:

The school is doing its best to be creative in its activities but is restricted by a number of barriers including: the premises, finance, staffing level and resource. It was explained that some of these may be addressed by the possible Federation

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with Penybryn School which is being considered. Also that this, in the longer term, may include seeking Band B funding for new build facility.

Governors told us about the reduction in funding to the school which was mainly due to the re-grading of Teaching Assistants from scale 4 to scale 6 (which they supported) but the key issue being that the school still only receives funding for the scale 4 posts. Also the delegation of centrally funded Teaching Assistants posts back to schools. The amount delegated was the budget amount rather than the actual spend which has resulted in shortfall of £88,700. The reduction in funding has resulted in the school having to lose 2 teachers, 17 mid-day supervisors and use of school reserves. We also heard that this reduction is still a work in progress. The School was awarded £70,000 from the restructuring fund this year but this is one off payment. With the new budget round on the horizon, the governors are gravely concerned about how this will be funded and that it is likely to be a barrier to ongoing school improvement.

We were pleased to hear about the positive comments from Estyn when they revisited in April 18, especially that *the current leadership team is very effective in driving forward school improvement. Also that since the core inspections, senior leaders have placed appropriate emphasis on improving the way that teachers plan to develop pupil skills progressively. Teaching has a strong focus on developing pupil skills at a pace and level that is adapted well to their individual needs and abilities.*

We also agreed with the statement that *senior leaders have implemented a strategic approach to improve standards and provision at the school by providing all staff with valuable opportunities to observe and share good practice. We felt this will be key to the school continue to improve.*

We were keen to hear all the good practice at the school and would like to see more utilisation of this expertise to inform practice in mainstream schools. In particular in meeting the educational needs of children with ADHD/ Autistic spectrum.

The Governors and Headteacher said they were very pleased with the support that they have received from the local authority, school improvement service and the Consultative Headteacher and that there has been a massive shift in progress at the school since the original inspection.

The Governing bodies priorities moving forward includes a strong commitment to continuous improvement and ongoing support and challenge. Also the possible Federation. Governors said that with so much change over last few years they have asked for a period of stability until Sept 2019 and that in time they and they will be looking in detail at the Federation option.

In conclusion, we were very pleased to hear about the positive outcome of the Estyn re-inspection and the speed of which improvement had been made. We congratulate the school staff and governors for their commitment to the improvement journey, which we believe has been key to their success in moving

forward so quickly. We also felt that the assistance of the Consultative Headteacher, the School Improvement Service and the Team around the School had been a resounding success and is an excellent model for the future when school are facing challenging situations. We thanked all those who attended and wish the School the very best for the future.

We would welcome your thoughts on any issue within this letter but could you please respond in writing to the following points by 22 November 2018.

1. We heard that the reduction in spending at the school is still a work in progress. That the School was awarded £70,000 from the restructuring fund this year but this is one off payment. With the new budget round on the horizon, the governors are gravely concerned about funding and that the considerable impacts are likely to be a barrier to ongoing school improvement. Could you look into this situation and give us your thoughts and whether the Local Authority can assist the school with this funding situation.
2. Look at utilising expertise at the school, in particular in meeting the educational needs of children with ADHD/Autistic spectrum, to inform practice in mainstream schools.

Yours sincerely,

**COUNCILLOR MO SYKES**

Convener, Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

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