



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Schools**

Committee Room 3A - Guildhall, Swansea

Tuesday, 11 December 2018 at 4.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor L James (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

C Anderson  
D W Helliwell

**Councillor(s)**

M Durke  
B Hopkins

**Councillor(s)**

L S Gibbard  
M A Langstone

**Co-opted Member(s)**

D Anderson-Thomas

**Co-opted Member(s)**

**Co-opted Member(s)**

**Officer(s)**

Helen Morgan - Rees  
Michelle Roberts

Head of Education Achievement & Partnership  
Scrutiny Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): A M Day, S J Gallagher, F M Gordon, S M Jones, L R Jones, M Sykes and L J Tyler-Lloyd

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

None

**2 School Improvement Service Annual performance update including ERW Business Plan and Pupil Development Grant spend/availability/quality of Homework Clubs**

Helen Morgan Rees, Head of Achievement and Partnership Service was invited to attend the panel and provide a report discussing the following issues:

**Annual Update on Education Improvement Service**

- The Education Improvement Service now sits within the Achievement and Partnership Service to help deliver regional strategies for school improvement that takes account of local priorities.
- School improvement officers have clear priorities for supporting and challenging schools to improve and seek out qualitative feedback from teachers and school leaders in order to meet needs and improve the service.
- During the academic year 2017-2018, engagement with the Education through Regional Working (ERW) central team had reach a hiatus. The planned service review and reform of ERW has not taken place and as a result the collaboration and service delivery has fragmented in comparison to previous years.

- The capacity of the School Improvement Service has improved during the latter part of 2017/18. There are three units within the education improvement service: Primary Phase, Secondary Phase and Curriculum Phase. All units aim to work with ERW to deliver a regional service on behalf of Swansea council and each Head of Unit takes responsibility for working in alliance with the ERW central team, where possible. However, communication and clarity have decline during this reporting period.
- The new professional standards for teaching and leadership came into force in September 2018. These are ambitious and link closely with curriculum reform. Performance management within schools is aligned with the new leadership standards. The current and future work of the Education Improvement Service is underpinned by these standards, curriculum reform and the Education Directorates five top priorities for the coming year
  - Improve teaching and learning with particular focus on reducing inequalities for the most vulnerable
  - Improve leadership and school governance
  - Work in partnership to develop a sustainable education system
  - Embed the new additional learning needs, wellbeing and behaviour strategies
  - Ensure all learning opportunities take place in safe environments
- Progress during the year has been strong with an overall RAYG rating based on team evaluation. Work across units is evaluated.
- Local performance is considered to be Yellow as far as the RAYG evaluation although the details given were a high level overview and there is a range of statuses within the detailed data. The Panel would be interested to see this if possible.
- The school improvement service locally provides good support to a range of schools
- The panel asked about use of the Welsh language in English speaking schools. They heard that there is now higher expectations for all pupils to be able to hold a conversation in Welsh and have equity of opportunity for that. It is important that pupils get the opportunity to enjoy the language.
- Councillors where pleased to hear about the new aspect in the new curriculum around Health and Wellbeing feeling that that has been missing formally from the curriculum until now.
- The panel mentioned the recent press about Digital Competence in Wales and heard that it was a relatively positive picture across schools in Swansea. There are areas for improvement including getting consistency across the authority and ensuring with have the right technologies and kit.
- Councillors asked about self-evaluation and heard that it is part of operational plans and is reported to Senior Management Team on a regular basis. There are clear milestones in planning and work is challenged by other officers and senior leaders.
- The panel also heard about the support for Governors and that this is well received.

### **Education through Regional Working Business Plan and priorities locally and regionally**

- Off the five regional priorities for ERW three are currently Amber with two Yellow.

- The School Improvement function is divided between local and regional officers and this can create duplication.
- The Panel heard about the review and reform programme and how it has created uncertainty and disengagement at a local level.
- The Panel were pleased to hear that a plan to move ERW forward and resolve issues will be discussed at the next ERW Joint Committee in February.
- The Panel questioned whether ERW diluted valuable resources from going to the front line, with an extra layer of bureaucracy. The idea of a 360 degree view of ERW was raised where stakeholders could give full feedback from all angles. It was also felt that the voice of the child must be included in any reviewing of education related activity.

### **Pupil Development Grant spend and provision of homework clubs**

- Pupil development grant spend is monitored by challenge advisors. The main areas of expenditure for the financial year 2016/2017 was outlined to the panel.
- The panel heard that the use of the pupil development grant is most effective where schools have following the Welsh Government's Practitioner Guidance and research evidence to support the provision for pupils for pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The panel asked if we monitor when outcomes have not be successful. They heard that some schools may not be following the guidance or using the toolkit. The Education Improvement Service have been working with schools around this and signposting them to advice on how best to spend the grant.
- The grant spend across the authority is also monitored and unpicked to see what has been most effective etc. We must identify and build on strengths. Working with parents has been identified as particularly beneficial. A lot of school have spent on Tracking using MyConcern, which is a common toolkit which helps identify and issues of concern early.
- The panel felt that the PDG was a lifeline for some schools and would have concerns if it was discontinued any time in the near future.
- Homework clubs and looked at by Poverty and Prevention Team, Helen report what they said:
  - The quality of homework clubs are monitored and inspected via CSSIW (that is those that run for more than 2 hours a day).
  - If they are run for less than 2 hours they are not monitored formally.
  - It was reported from Pupil Voices sessions that they are valued by pupils, who appreciate a safe and quiet place to study that has access to the ICT equipment they might need.

### **3 Workplan 2018/2019.**

The panel agreed to add Wales Audit Office Youth Services Review to the work programme.

### **4 For Information**

This item was noted.