

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – SPC 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 and the work completed since October 2019 includes:

- a) In October 2019, we met with the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher from Penclawdd Primary School to discuss their improvement journey.
- b) On 14 November, we spoke to health about the Healthy Schools Initiative and looked at the 'Our National Mission and the Transformation Curriculum'. We considered how Swansea schools are responding to the draft new curriculum for Wales.
- c) In December, we looked at Additional Learning Needs Reform and progress being made in Swansea.
- d) On 16 January 2020, we met with the Cabinet Member to discuss the Annual Education Performance data.
- e) In February, we discussed School Transport and we had an update on the 21st Century Schools programme.
- f) Over this period, the Panel has also kept up to date with individual school Estyn Inspections published and any advisory/practice documents.

3. Achievements / Impact

We have sent four letters to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills since October 2019, which gave our views, raised concerns and made recommendations. Some of these include, for example:

Positives:

- When we met with the Headteacher, chair of governors and challenge advisor for Penclawdd Primary School we were pleased to hear about the much-improved picture at the school from the time of their Estyn Inspection and how the school has come a long way in a short amount of time. We felt this was due to the commitment of the Headteacher and staff at the school, the governors and the Education Improvement Service driving forward the improvements needed. We concluded that improvements made at the school were mainly due to:
 - The school having a supportive, engaged and challenging governing body that understands its own skills base making it resilient and in a good position to help to drive improvement. We were particularly interested to hear about the work the governing body has done using a matrix to assess its skills base. We were pleased to hear that governors are now active, visible, knowledgeable and not afraid to challenge.
 - A stronger leadership team is in place with a capable and enthusiastic Headteacher and newly appointed experienced Deputy Head Teacher.
 - The school has a clear improvement plan and is working with and receiving support from the Local Authority and the Education Improvement Service.
 - School leaders are using self-improvement processes effectively to identify what pupils do well and what needs to improve.
 - The school are carefully considering which improvement tools are best for them, for example, Building Blocks and Seesaw.
 - The school is enthusiastically learning from and sharing their good practice with other schools.
 - The school has strong support from parents and the local community with the school taking its role in the community seriously.

- We were pleased with the progress being made in the development of *Our National Mission* here in Swansea, including with the work to prepare for the implementation of the new curriculum.
- We were told about some of the excellent health improvement work underway in Swansea schools and we agreed with the Public Health Team when they said that this issue must be kept high, if not top of, the agenda.
- We recognise the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act and the implementation of the associated Code will be a huge challenge not only for our education team but also for schools, health, adult social services and a raft of other partners. We are pleased to hear that Swansea had made good initial progress in raising awareness and starting to work with other agencies to develop an integrated local offer that will meet the needs of learners 0-25. The Panel believe two things will be central to making successful progress, the first being the necessary funding to enable these projects and, secondly good partnership/integrated working.

Concerns:

- We did express our concern that the Welsh Government expect the Additional Educational Needs Reform implementation to be cost neutral.
- Free School Meal (FSM) learners continue to attain significantly below other pupils, and this is a concern to the Panel and is something we will be monitoring.
- How the education scrutiny committee might analyse how well Swansea schools are doing in future without the current comprehensive data, as we move to a different way of analysing performance.

Action Recommended / questions asked:

- After our session looking at the Additional Learning Needs Reform we asked how the Cabinet member feels that other internal council departments are engaging and progressing with what is a clearly cross cutting agenda.
We received a detailed response from the Cabinet Member to address this point.

4. Education Scrutiny Performance Panel - Future Work Programme 2019/20

| Date | Items to be discussed |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Meeting 10 12 Mar 20 2pm | School 3 – Visit to Pentrehafod Comprehensive School To look at Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) prevention - a school visit to see the approach at school level |
| Meeting 11 30 Apr 20 4pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Other Than At School - progress with improving outcomes • Education Improvement Service Performance update and ERW progress against priorities locally and regionally (Annual) • Supporting Vulnerable Learners - Pupil Development Grant spend (Annual) |
| Meeting 12 21 May 20 TBC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable with PISA (formally the Swansea Skills Partnership) • Planning year ahead in Scrutiny |
| Work Programme 2020/21 | |
| Meeting 1 June TBA | Session on Post 16 – Pupil performance at sixth form and colleges – TBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for and performance of post 16 pupils in sixth form and colleges • Speak to sixth form Headteacher's, Education Improvement Service and Cabinet Member • ERW Leader of Learning for this aspect (ERW) |
| Meeting 2 July TBA | School 1 - Waunwen Primary School , visit to discuss how they work with their most vulnerable pupils |