



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

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

Scrutiny

*Direct Line:
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

01792 637256

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

*Date
Dyddiad:*

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BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills following the meeting of the Panel on 12 March 2020. It is about improving schools approach to preventing those leaving school Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Dear Councillor Raynor,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 12 March 2020

At our meeting on the 12 March 2020, we met with the Headteacher and Senior Staff, along with the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors at Pentrehafod Comprehensive School. We chose to speak to this school because we had heard about their positive practice in relation to pupils becoming NEET when they leave school. We have detailed our thoughts on our visit in this letter.

We heard about the context at the school including that currently there are 1,035 pupils on roll. 29% of these pupils receive free school meals. 34% are on the special educational needs register. Around 40% of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a reading age below their chronological age and around 35% of pupils are risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

We understand the majority of students at Post-16 attend Gower College. A small number attend Neath Port Talbot College. About 10% attend sixth forms in other comprehensive schools. A very small proportion attend apprenticeships placements (less than 1%). About 2% go onto full-time employment directly from school. In 2017/18, only 1.5 percent of students were categorised as NEET (3 students), which means 98.5% attained a placement post 16.

The Panel heard that those at risk of NEET are identified by using, for example, the Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) score and the attendance and

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attainment data. Those students identified as vulnerable are registered with Cynnydd, which then ensures they can access mentoring and enrichment.

We recognised and praised the work carried out through all key stages at the school and looked at how this helps address NEET and also prepare pupils not only for the world of work but for life.

Some of the practice we believe contributes to the success of this work includes:

- A carefully planned and implemented Careers Programme, which is constantly reviewed and refined to meet the needs of students at the school
- The provision of careers education that focuses on the development of personal effectiveness and work-ready skills through the delivery of bespoke lessons at KS3 and KS4. This is delivered alongside support from Careers Wales, the school's career advisor, local business, an extensive KS3-5 Transition Programme and provision for vulnerable students via the Cynnydd Project
- The school maximises its grant provision through Pupil Development Grant (330K), PTS Challenge Cymru (250K over 3 years) and SEG funding (25k shared with primary schools)
- Using a Family Engagement Officer who works closely with Team Around the Family pupils
- Having a Skills Centre at the school
- A co-ordinated approach to eFSM pupils including a 10 point action plan in line with Estyn Guidance
- The use of behaviour strategies like, for example, restorative practice
- After school homework and activities club
- Managing the transition phases including summer camp to support challenging students making transition from KS2 to KS3
- A PACE provision that provides an individual curriculum for each pupil with teaching facilities that are modern and welcoming for PACE pupils
- The school works strategically with others to reduce/prevent NEETs including with ALNCO, Careers Wales, Cynnydd, Evolve, external agencies, local colleges/sixth forms, local business
- Reduction of core NEETs by working with parents
- A pupil progress tracking system. A 'pupil on a page' breakdown of current position of each pupil reviewed regularly
- The school uses an extensive "pathway" for pupils relating to skills, citizenship and wellbeing. This starts upon entry at the school in Year 7 right through to leaving in Year 11. It includes working with a wide variety of organisations and partners to deliver this pathway including for example Virgin Atlantic, role models, mentoring, Young Business Dragons, Gower College and 6th Form promotional assemblies and much more.

We heard that this work has had a huge impact on outcomes. Examples given included: from 2012 to 2015 attendance at the school improved from 88.6% to 93%. Exclusions reduced from 626 to 84. Attainment up at L2+ from 22.9% to 52.7% and Attainment of eFSM L2+ up from 11.9% to 29.4%. However, the

introduction of the new PACE provision brought with it a new and unwanted statistic; an increase in NEETS to the highest in the LA at 13.7% in 2015. To address this the school used Cynnydd Funding and brought in a learning coach who has worked to improving this figure down to 4 students who were considered NEET in 2018/19.

Councillors were impressed with not only the quality and extent of the work happening throughout all Key Stages at the school to prevent pupils becoming NEET at 16 but also the preparation of pupils to become positive contributing life-long citizens. The Skills, Citizenship and Wellbeing Pathway preparing pupils for the world of work was seen as key to this and was praised by the Panel. We felt that the work at the school was proving to be excellent and would like to see this inspirational practice shared with other secondary schools across Swansea and the region.

We thought the work undertaken at the school was inspirational and thanked the school for their time and wished them all the best for the future.

We welcome your thoughts on any of the issues raised in our letter, on this occasion we do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

✉ Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk