



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 15 July 2020 at 2.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

A M Day  
D W Helliwell  
S M Jones

**Councillor(s)**

S J Gallagher  
B Hopkins  
M A Langstone

**Councillor(s)**

L S Gibbard  
L James  
L J Tyler-Lloyd

**Co-opted Member(s)**

D Anderson-Thomas

**Co-opted Member(s)**

A Roberts

**Other Attendees**

Jennifer Raynor

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

**Officer(s)**

Liz Jordan  
Helen Morgan-Rees  
Nick Williams

Scrutiny Officer  
Head of Education Achievement & Partnership  
Director of Education

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): C Anderson and M Durke

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

Cllr Mike Day and Cllr Susan Jones declared a personal interest in item 6.

**2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**

No declarations were made.

**3 Letters and Minutes**

The Panel considered letters and minutes from previous meetings and agreed the minutes of the meeting on 13 February, 18 February and 12 March 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

The Panel had visited Pentrehafod Comprehensive School on 12 March. The Chair stated how impressed the Panel was with everything going on at the school and the performance of staff.

#### **4 Public Question Time**

No questions were submitted by members of the public.

#### **5 Presentation - Service Specific Update on Covid-19 Pandemic**

Cllr Jennifer Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills, Nick Williams, Director of Education and Helen Morgan-Rees, Head of Achievement and Partnership presented an update on the Covid-19 Pandemic in relation to Education and answered the Panel's questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel thanked Head Teachers, teachers and support staff, and Director of Education and his team for work they have done since start of pandemic and also thanked pupils who had risen to the challenge
- Panel noted innovative work done by a number of schools in producing PPE for NHS and local communities
- Department kept in touch with approximately 140 most vulnerable children during lockdown. There will be vulnerable pupils who will need to continue with remote working indefinitely.
- Panel queried if system has been able to cope with remote learning. Informed no problems reported. Accessibility more of an issue. Took time to get devices out to families who did not have IT.
- Panel queried level of engagement through digital learning. Informed engagement was patchy. Schools queried with parents what barriers were and responded to feedback.
- Panel concerned good stuff learnt from new remote digital learning is not lost. One of biggest lessons learnt is need to continue developing digital strategy and putting more training in place.
- Broadband width of all schools increased substantially before lockdown. If expect pupils to continue working digitally will need to look at improving black spots in certain areas of Swansea that have problem with WIFI.
- Panel asked about working relationship with social services, how we get the balance right between social care and education and if there is a need for more integration. Officers confirmed crisis forced them to work in a slightly different way and there has been great deal of integration during crisis that will continue.
- Panel queried preparedness, when schools return to full time in September, to deal with increase in demand from pupils who will have anxiety. Informed difficult to gauge demand. Department will be re-issuing guidance on successful transition back to school. There will be pupils who are more vulnerable and they will be monitored carefully. Staff will be offered more training including bereavement training. There will be a stretch on resources.
- Panel queried if Local Authority employee would visit schools next term to check on health and hygiene. Confirmed 100% of schools in Swansea already contacted about health and safety, 90% of schools visited by Health

and Safety Officer, and telephone conversation had with the remainder. Legionella test procedure also taken place in all schools that needed it.

- Support for disadvantaged pupils who missed out during lockdown was discussed. Some of the check in and catch up time in schools enabled disadvantaged pupils to go in and catch up. Schools have checked all pupils not falling too far behind. In September there will be period of transition to check everyone gets what they need.
- Need to be aware of staff well-being. It will be a difficult period of learning when go back to school and how this is supported will be key. Welsh Government announced funding for additional staff but no clarity yet on how this will be provided or what it means for each school.
- Panel queried if schools that operated as hubs during lockdown would receive financial compensation for doing so.
- Department proactively worked with Home Office to support asylum seeker families to ensure funding via special cards for free school meals and Department was able to work with pupils with additional learning needs
- Panel concerned about return to school and asked for assurance that there will be a structured approach. Director of Education confirmed there will be a staged approach to return for the first two weeks but all schools in Swansea will be fully open from 14 September as instructed by Welsh Government.

Actions:

- Department to provide confirmation about financial position of schools that operated as hubs during lockdown
- Add to future work programme 'Impact of Covid-19 going forward'.

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm.