



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Tuesday, 15 March 2022 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
L James

Councillor(s)

S J Gallagher
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

D W Helliwell
L J Tyler-Lloyd

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Cllr Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills

Officer/s

Helen Morgan-Rees, Director of Education

Michelle Roberts, Scrutiny Officer

Pam Cole, Senior, Lead for Minority Ethnic Learners and Equalities

Alison Lane, Head of the Additional Learning and Inclusion Team

Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Learner Services

Damien Beech, Head of School Improvement Team

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A M Day, B Hopkins and M A Langstone

Co-opted Member(s): A Roberts

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Minutes

The minutes of the 14 February 2022 were accepted by the Panel.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 Verbal Update - Asylum Seeker and Refugee Pupils

The Panel thanked Pam Cole, Senior Lead for Minority Ethnic Learners and Equalities for giving the Panel a verbal briefing and answering questions. The following was noted.

- The Panel heard that this service is funded by Welsh Government and is part of the wider service for pupils who have a first language other than English/Welsh, as English as an additional language (EAL learners). That EAL learners are a hugely diverse group and include settled families, economic migrants, Roma, asylum seekers and refugees. Also, Swansea is a very diverse city with over 140 languages and dialects spoken amongst our school population. The Panel were told that the key support lies within individual schools and the role of the central service was to guide and advise schools.
- The Panel asked about the provision that was being made for the arrival of families from Ukraine. They were informed that what we have in place currently and how we can best prepare in advance for any arrivals was being considered. Also, that it is difficult to know at this stage how many children will come into the city, which is different of other schemes the council has managed as we are usually informed of numbers in advance. It was recognised that this will be challenging because of the unpredictability of where families may be hosted in the city. This could impact on some schools that are not traditionally used to EAL pupils. The Panel agreed sharing of good practice across schools will be important.
- Swansea has been a Refugee and Asylum Seeker dispersal area for over 20 years and it is a City of Sanctuary. Swansea Council has the experience to and many systems in place for supporting families and their children which should provide a good grounding in this challenging time. The Panel were pleased to hear about the work currently being done across the city.

6 Additional Learning Needs Reform and Implementation

The Panel thank Alison Lane, Head of the Additional Learning and Inclusion Team for attending the meeting and supplying the Panel with a written report. The following was noted.

- The Panel heard that this is a wide-ranging reform and the biggest shake up for many years in ALN. Also, that the Council had been concerned about implications of the pandemic on making progress but that staff need to be congratulated on the huge amount of work that has been completed in the last two years in keeping this on track through such a difficult time. They were told that the biggest challenge will be managing expectations and working together on a shared vision to get the very best model for our ALN pupils.
- The Panel welcomed the overall progress that has been made in relation to ALN reform. They are reassured that although we are in the early stages of this legislative reform, we are well positioned to face the challenges that lie ahead.

7 Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)

The Panel thanked Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Learner Services, for attending the meeting and supplying the panel with a detailed report. The following was noted.

- The Panel heard about how the service is now being reviewed and this has included looking at the following key areas:
 - *A new EOTAS policy* - this is being finalised giving refinement to recommendations made to Cabinet in 2016 which is needed as five years have now passed. During the intervening years, it has been recognised that only referring children and young people with the most severe Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) needs to EOTAS provision may not be sufficient to meet the needs of Swansea. The effectiveness of prevention and early intervention by Swansea schools and central services mean that there are less children and young people requiring Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision. However, there are a greater number of children and young people with long-term SEBD needs and an increase in pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presenting with challenging behaviours. The new EOTAS task and finish group has identified the need to develop provision to meet the needs of this complex cohort above and beyond the current curriculum offer which is tailored to a reintegration model.
 - *Delivering improved outcomes within Maes Derw* - this includes attendance, exclusions and the part time provision at Maes Derw. It has been identified that all these are all areas can be improved. The need to ensure all pupil placements at Maes Derw are appropriate in order for learners' needs to be met has also been highlighted. Now that it has been a whole year since the opening of Maes Derw, it is appropriate to consider how well the changes are in meeting the needs of Swansea children and young people.
 - *EOTAS funding* - there is a continual need to ensure that the funding available for EOTAS provision in Swansea is targeted at need. Currently, the majority of the funding for EOTAS provision is with Maes Derw PRU, however, as needs change and those learners who meet the remit of Maes Derw reduce, there is a need to look at bespoke, multi-agency packages of support, which do not currently have dedicated funding. It would also be beneficial to target resource at earlier intervention and prevention. The effectiveness of the devolved money to secondary schools suggests targeting resource early is effective in reducing the number of learners requiring EOTAS provision.
- The Cabinet Member told the Panel that the 2016 report had provided a firm foundation for this service and we are now starting to build upon that. The Panel did recognise that the needs of pupils in Swansea will change and evolve, so were pleased to see the ability to flex and review our model of delivery.

8 New Curriculum Update including progress with implementation

The Panel thanked Damien Beech, Head of School Improvement Team for attending the Panel, providing a report and discussing progress. The following was noted.

- The Panel welcome the overall progress that has been made in relation to the introduction of the new curriculum for Wales but they were still concerned with regard to the readiness of all schools to introduce the new curriculum. The Panel were told that the Welsh Government do recognise that curriculum design is an ongoing, cyclical process of engagement, design, planning, trialling, and

evaluation. Also, that it is an iterative process with each school's curriculum continuing to evolve to meet the needs of their learners. The Panel agreed and emphasised the importance of the role of School Improvement Advisers and Curriculum Advisers in advising and getting those schools who may be finding it more challenging, up to speed with their curriculum development. They also agreed with officers when they said school to school collaboration will be particularly beneficial in relation to curriculum development.

9 End of Year Report - Education Scrutiny

As this is the final meeting of this municipal year, the Panel was invited to reflect on the year's scrutiny work, experiences and effectiveness. Including any ideas that will improve the effectiveness of the scrutiny of education are welcome.

The Panel agreed that seeing work happening on the ground had been missing this year due to the pandemic and were keen that visiting schools and meeting Headteachers staff and pupils should resume as soon as it is safely possible.

The Panel paid tribute to both schools and the education department in how they have dealt with education through the pandemic agreeing they had done a magnificent job.

The Convener of the Panel thanked Officer and fellow Panel members for their commitment to the Panel feeling that it has made a positive difference this year.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

Chair