



Report of the Education & Skills Corporate Delivery Committee

Cabinet – 20 July 2023

Leadership, Inclusion and Governance: Building Excellence in Swansea Schools

Purpose:	To seek Cabinet approval of the handbook, policy and strategy developed following the work of the Education & Skills Corporate Delivery Committee in 2022-2023.
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan 2022-2028, Education & Skills
Consultation:	Education & Skills Corporate Delivery Committee, Access to Services, Finance and Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that Cabinet: 1) Approves the new Headteacher and Senior Leader Handbook attached in Appendix A 2) Approves a new Swansea Attendance Policy to underpin the work of the attendance objective of the Inclusion Strategy, attached in Appendix B 3) Approves a Governing Body Support Strategy and School Governance Development Action Plan to support the recruitment and retention of school governors attached in Appendix C and Appendix D
Report Author:	Sarah Hughes
Finance Officer:	Aimee Dyer
Legal Officer:	Stephanie Williams
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Education Corporate Delivery Committee (CDC) is to develop policies or policy direction for consideration and adoption by Cabinet and / or Council as appropriate.
- 1.2 A comprehensive overview of key education contextual information was presented to the Education CDC in July 2022. Following this, a work programme was agreed to consider to the end of the municipal year.
- 1.3 Three areas of policy development were identified for this work plan:
 - Strengthening School Leaders
 - Attendance and Inclusion
 - Strengthened and Effective School Governance

2. Strengthening School Leaders

- 2.1 The first meeting for this work plan item was to provide the context and the leadership development offer provided locally, regionally and nationally. This included that the whole offer was based upon a foundation of an excellent working relationship and links with both Partneriaeth and Welsh Government.
- 2.2 The work of the School Improvement Team was outlined and how they, alongside the Education Directorate communication channels, promote development opportunities to all school staff.

The Team's work is centred around both individual and County-wide school development requirements understood from information gained from termly school support visits offered to all schools and supporting the knowledge required to deliver national, regional and local policy.

The Team also links with headteacher networks including YCA (Ysgolion Cynradd Abertawe) and SCCASH (Swansea County Council Association of Secondary Headteachers)

The team also supports assistance to governing bodies when recruiting senior leaders.

- 2.3 The focus of the school support visits by School Improvement Advisers (SIAs) are based upon Welsh Government School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability, which covers leadership, teaching and wellbeing.

The leadership element of school support visit is not limited to senior leaders only. Distributed leadership focuses on opportunities to develop and encourage middle leader development across each school for them to gain knowledge and expertise.

There has been a good local take-up of both middle and senior leadership programmes utilising excellent links with Partneriaeth, through a job share colleague located within the team. There is also a good take-up of the national aspiring headteacher (NAHT) qualification. However, there is a general issue around the number of teachers who are interested in progression to middle and senior leadership roles, a situation reflected nationally.

The University of Wales Trinity St David and the Open University are also developing a broader offer for teachers.

In February 2023, sixteen practitioners were assessed against the standards for the National Professional Qualification for Head teachers (NPQH). Fourteen out of Sixteen were successful. Two practitioners were unsuccessful and will be provided bespoke support from Swansea-based mentors for revaluation in 2024.

- 2.4 A local secondment opportunity is in development to enable middle leaders and aspiring headteachers to undertake a temporary 'swap' with staff in other schools. The benefits of the secondment include sharing of good practice and ideas, backfill opportunities for staff and staff learning and development.
- 2.5 A mentoring scheme and a consultative pool are in place in Swansea, which invites expressions of interest from experienced leaders to provide assistance and guidance to other schools. A mentoring scheme for governors in the form of a governor panel is being considered for development.
- 2.6 The pandemic has impacted upon staff audits and reviews. The restarting of these audits in schools is welcomed, in order to identify the skills and knowledge available and the gaps that need to be addressed.
- 2.7 The second meeting for this work plan item was to give an overview of current strengths in school leadership work, including peer reviews, support and induction for new headteachers and support for new teachers through Partneriaeth. An overview was also given around support for newly qualified teachers.
- 2.8 Peer review guidance had been initially developed following the previous Estyn inspection framework and is now being developed in conjunction with Welsh Government's 'Schools as Learning Organisations' (SLO) scheme. An overview of Welsh Government promoting the scheme was shared using a video from the Welsh Government Hwb site, that outlined that it is pupils, staff, parents, local communities and business are all 'in it together'.

- 2.9 Welsh Government has developed an SLO survey that outlines seven key areas in which every practitioner in a school setting can evaluate themselves against. The results are demonstrated on a scale in the form of a web diagram.

The survey is not limited to peer reviews, with a broad range of engagement activity, including self-evaluation and school vision covered. It links well to the professional standards for teaching and leadership.

Following a review of survey results, school leaders can utilise the national resource for evaluation improvement, to ask questions of themselves relating to the areas identified in the results. The results are also shared with the School Improvement Team as part of their visits to support schools.

- 2.10 Induction support for new senior leaders was discussed. Support offered includes:
- Departmental guidance from a School Improvement Adviser
 - 'Informal' mentor assigned to new headteachers, using a bank of experienced headteacher volunteers. This is a local initiative that is separate to the national programme and is aimed to provide a regular point of contact for practical guidance in running a school and supporting wellbeing.
 - New headteachers added to the new and acting headteacher programme in Swansea, which includes more formal sessions facilitated by experienced headteachers and groups where they can reach out for support.
 - New teachers are enrolled on the national new and acting headteacher programme.
 - A suite of seven mandatory courses for all headteachers, which must be undertaken in the first two years.
 - School improvement visits offered to all schools, which includes engagement with the governing body
 - Signposting to effective practice, training and networks
- 2.11 A handbook for new and acting headteachers had been drafted. This handbook contains a range of useful information and local processes for Swansea headteachers including finance, premises management, HR, signposting online links to other advice e.g. procurement. It was agreed that further work would be done on the handbook following the input of the CDC.
- 2.12 Following the second meeting of 'Strengthening School Leaders' with the Committee, further work has been undertaken to complete the development of the Headteacher and Senior Leaders Handbook which has been shared with headteachers for feedback and is now ready for final publication. The document will remain a live copy that can be updated at any time by a small number of officers to maintain quality control.

Two Swansea headteacher and senior leader development sessions have been organised for May and June 2023.

The development and promotion of a new 'Leadership Support Strategy' has been outlined as part of the Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

3. Attendance & Inclusion

- 3.1 The first meeting for this work plan item was to provide an overview of the draft Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027, which is based around the corporate priorities for Education & Skills. This strategy will be considered by Cabinet in May 2023.
- 3.2 The Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027 has five key priority areas:
 - Promoting attendance
 - Promoting inclusion
 - Embedding effective universal provision, whilst support sufficient specialist places
 - Embedding a shared inclusion ethos
 - Emotional health and psychological wellbeing (EHPW) whole school approach
- 3.3 Following an overview of the overall strategy, a specific focus followed on attendance. Significant changes in context that have resulted in large impacts across attendance levels both locally and nationally. These changes include the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in a loss of routine; bereavement; increased anxiety and mental health issues; and a rise in challenging behaviours. Rising poverty levels and the cost of living crisis also have an impact on attendance.
- 3.4 Potential ideas to support attendance moving forward were discussed, including reviewing Education Welfare Service (EWS) processes; monthly attendance strategy meetings; a change in approach from traditional attendance strategies; and a joint production of an updated attendance policy.
- 3.5 Within a new strategy, potential ideas were discussed including basing support around current school clusters, involving governing bodies and young people to promote the initiative, and expanding external funding opportunities to employ additional staff in schools who could share good practice currently in schools.
- 3.6 The budgetary pressures facing all local authorities was discussed, with the importance of exploring revised smarter ways of working within budget availability.
- 3.7 It was agreed following discussion with the CDC a further report would be brought back to the second work plan session on inclusion and attendance.

- 3.8 The second meeting for this work plan item was led by a presentation outlining a draft action plan for attendance, which aims to lead to better outcomes for learners in Swansea. The action plan included progress to date on some items.
- 3.9 The action plan, delivered in association with stakeholders, would support the introduction of smarter ways of working and improvements to processes within the Education Welfare Service (EWS).
- 3.10 Key actions highlighted within the plan included:
- Development of a co-produced attendance policy that reflects the holistic approach to behaviour, attendance, wellbeing and welfare. The policy would set clear expectations in relation to attendance and monitoring for all stakeholders, including parents, teachers and local authority staff and support a more consistent approach across all settings.
 - Ensuring the attendance response flowchart is fully embedded across schools.
 - Review and distribution of updated letters, including those that accompany fixed penalty notices.
 - Production of a clear and concise guide to the work of the EWS and embed the recommendations of the 2019-2020 EWS consultation process to support a consistent and targeted response from the EWS.
 - Ensure prevention and early intervention strategies linked to other priority areas are joined up to support families and ensure children actually want to attend school.
 - Consideration of the increase of emotional based school avoidance and to ensure training for the EWS is in place to engage with parents and carers on attendance strategies.
 - A review of the whole school approach to emotional health and wellbeing funding and closer engagement with the strategic group to ensure a targeted response to increased attendance and engagement.
 - Further develop analysis of attendance data to be used proactively to identify need and set realistic targets.
 - A review of the effectiveness of fixed penalty notices.
 - Ensure holistic and effective approaches across the whole Education Directorate and wider Council services.
 - Ensure support for learners who are electively home educated.
 - Communication strategy including the use of social media for a new attendance policy.
- 3.11 Co-production and involvement of stakeholders was discussed as an important part of the delivery of the action plan. Stakeholder work as part of policy development work will include:
- Task and finish workshop with headteachers to discuss the work of the EWS and identify how best to engage with learner voice.

- Working with the Swansea Parent Carer Forum.
- Feedback from the Education Welfare Service.

- 3.12 An update was given on the Pupil Support Team which has been reviewed. A new officer had been appointed to start in February 2023 to increase capacity within the team and allow for greater strategic oversight of attendance and exclusions.
- 3.13 Attendance progress over the autumn term was discussed. Following a positive start to the term with an increase of 2% compared to the previous year, the second half of the term was affected by a number of illnesses that affected primary schools in particular. NHS guidance had promoted keeping children at home if they were concerned that they may have scarlet fever, strep etc. An update on attendance figures was to be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.
- 3.14 The Committee discussed how to further support attendance including support for governing bodies; better engagement of parents; cross-departmental working and performance indicators.

4. Strengthened and Effective School Governance

- 4.1 The first meeting for this work plan item was to provide an overview of governance in Swansea, particularly around progress made against the 2016 School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel report. The importance of successful school leadership in schools, with a leading role played by school governors was stressed, with the aim to build upon a good system in place going forward. The impact of leadership upon learners is something that remains a priority to focus on, as it affects the development, skills and progress of learners.
- 4.2 The significant changes to the national educational background were discussed, including the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales; the commencement of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act; the removal of school categorisation, and the regional educational partnership ERW ceasing and being replaced by a new partnership, Partneriaeth.
- 4.3 A report outlining the progress against the recommendations from the 2016 School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel report was discussed, following a background to the original Inquiry, with a focus on how to best support school governance in future, in alignment with Corporate priorities for Education.
- 4.4 A number of Committee members responded to the report, sharing their own experiences as experienced governors. The Team Manager for School Support outlined their own experience as a chair of governors and their strategic regional role in South East Wales.

It was acknowledged that the role of the governor has expanded in recent years. The availability of support from experienced governors and relevant professionals to new starters was detailed. It was outlined as an area to grow, develop and expand, towards a 'self-help' and mentoring programme.

- 4.5 The training offer for governors and implementation of the effective recruitment and skills matrix were discussed. Attendance has increased following an improved online training offer but a blended approach may be needed to better support some governors moving forward, including an 'in school' induction session for new governors.
- 4.6 There was acknowledgement of the huge amount of time, work and commitment governors put into these voluntary roles.
- 4.7 The report presented options that Members may wish to consider. These included:
- Which of the original recommendations remain appropriate and fit for purpose and if there are any new areas of focus.
 - Reinforce and refresh the challenge and support role for governors remains a focus for governors but align this to the Council's priority to ensure that leadership delivers learner progress.
 - Develop and promote the new democratic accountability responsibility for governors within the new school improvement guidance framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability.
 - Consider how governing body resilience can be improved upon and therein share good practice.
- 4.8 Following discussion around consideration of the scrutiny report recommendations against the current context, it was agreed to focus on a list of key areas that require further development and provide more detail around this at the second meeting.
- 4.9 The second meeting for this work plan item was to consider a draft action plan developed by the Team Manager for School Support following the discussions in the previous meeting. The Chair thanked the officer for the report which had built on the one presented at the last meeting and had included areas identified during the comments and feedback that committee members gave during the session.
- 4.10 The main areas covered by the draft action plan included:
- Recruitment and retention of governors, including a focus on under represented communities.
 - New mechanisms of sharing of best practice.
 - Supporting governors with the default method of communication becoming Hwbmail.
 - Development of an 'excellence' pool of experienced governors to support, coach and mentor new and existing governors.

- Increasing opportunities for governor networking.
- More frequent and bespoke communications with governors in a timely manner.
- Enhancement of Arweinwyr, the new governor support database to support users.
- Working with key stakeholders, including Partneriaeth and the Swansea Association of Governing Bodies, with a renewed focus.

4.11 Discussion took place around the action plan points. The importance of support for new governors on appointment, which can be a daunting experience. The need to make new governors feel welcome, and part of the governor 'family' was agreed. The possibilities around introducing a 'buddy system and a short video guide was discussed.

4.12 The challenges around managing multiple email accounts was discussed, with the need for support around Hwb email accounts.

4.13 It was agreed that there is a need to expand training to include face to face opportunities also, which could further help with integration of new governors.

4.14 The committee observed that additional support for Chairs of governors is needed.

5. Recommendations of the Education Corporate Delivery Committee

5.1 Following a broad range of evidence, the input, questions and discussion by members of the Education Corporate Delivery Committee around the work plan topics have supported clarity of the direction of future policy.

It is recommended that the following actions are approved so that they may be developed and shared with stakeholders by the end of the academic year:

- The new Headteacher and Senior Leader Handbook is published.
- A new Swansea attendance policy to underpin the work of the attendance objective of the Inclusion Strategy.
- A strategy to support the recruitment and retention of school governors.

6. Integrated Impact Assessment Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.

6.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

6.1.3 An IIA screening has been undertaken on the proposed documents, included in Appendix E. The outcome of this screening is that a full IIA is not required and that all documents should have a positive impact when implemented. The screening refers to a previous IIA screening undertaken on the Inclusion Strategy, which is included in Appendix F.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Leadership Handbook

Appendix B – Attendance Policy

Appendix C – Governing Body Support Strategy

Appendix D – School Governance Development Action Plan

Appendix E – IIA Screening – Leadership, Inclusion and Governance

Appendix F – IIA Screening – Inclusion Strategy