



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

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Date 22 December 2022
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Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning following the meeting of the Panel on 15 December 2022 where the Panel looked Education performance against priorities, progress with the Estyn Inspection recommendations and Swansea Music.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 15 December 2022

We would like to thank Sarah Hughes (Head of Improvement and Monitoring Unit) and Karin Jenkins (Head of Swansea Music) for attending our meeting. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

Annual Education Performance against identified priorities (RAG) and progress with Estyn Inspection recommendations

The Panel looked at the detailed report providing performance against identified priorities and the progress made with Estyn Inspection recommendations. In relation to Education Performance, we were pleased to hear about the good progress made in the 2021-22 academic year, and then about the further progress made since that time. We pleased to hear about the developments made in areas like the pupil manifesto, universal school meal provision, governors portal and budget/resources.

We discussed progress made against the two recommendations made by the Estyn Inspection of Local Government Education Services in September 2022. We heard that development of the Post 16 strategy had started prior to the Estyn Inspection in September and continues to be developed in conjunction with stakeholders, with the key priorities like strategic planning, pupil voice and skills needed for the future locally included within it.

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We were keen to hear about the vocational learning offer, feeling that this is potentially one of the key growth areas. We asked about how the quieter and/or the more hidden voices of post-16 pupils are being or will be captured. We heard that it is about ensuring that there are lots of different ways for them to share their views. So, it may not be through a verbal forum, it may be something that they might want to submit in a text or writing. They are looking to make sure there are different options for everyone including, for example, smaller focus groups. We understand that this is currently an active piece of work and are pleased to hear that the importance of making sure that everyone's voice is heard is vital. We were informed that more information will be provided to the Panel as this develops.

We were also interested to explore, if, from the consultation, something that is different from what is currently offered is requested. Will there be the facility to adapt to allow it to be studied. We were told that the Post 16 Forum will develop the direction and areas of study in conjunction with the consultation.

We heard that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan had been approved by Cabinet and recently approved by the Welsh Government. It includes a 10-year vision for increasing and improving planning for Welsh-medium educational provision in Swansea. The delivery plan is now in the final stages of development and is expected to be shared with Welsh Partnership, Partneriaeth Addysg Gymraeg Abertawe, for consultation and finalised by mid-December and then again shared with Welsh Government.

Music Provision for/in Swansea Schools

The Panel thanked the Head of Swansea Music for the detailed report provided, which looked at the Swansea Music Service Level Agreement and the National Music Service Wales, including the potential benefits and challenges of both.

We heard about how the service is structured, funded and delivered. We were interested to hear about the different initiatives that the service is providing including, for example: BuzzAlong, PlayAlong, Making Music with Others, Music for Lifelong Learning, Health and Wellbeing. The Panel were also keen to hear about the music support for Additional Learning Needs pupils in Swansea through using the instrument grant.

We had some further questions we would like to put to you that were received by me from a member of the public. Could you please provide a written response to them as part of your reply to this letter.

1. How will the core responsibilities to support and raise standards will be realised for schools who cannot afford to purchase the support.
2. By delegated school budgets in the report, are you suggesting that a percentage of funding (per capita, per school for example) could be directly devolved to a school to buy in the musical teaching they deem most appropriate for their students?
3. How and when is Charanga going to be supplied to schools for use? When will teacher training commence and how much will be provided?

4. Concerns around the funding of progression steps after the First Experiences and PlayAlong programmes are highlighted. How will this progression be funded?
5. The number of schools/pupils eligible for the free initial project and how many schools are taking up the offer? How many pupils are actually engaged in the initiative.
6. What are the projected numbers of Year 3 projects that can be delivered in reality with the actual number of qualified staff. Are there plans to recruit more teachers in future to deliver against the national plan?
7. What are the plans for monitoring the success of the project and data illustrating the ongoing take up of instruments as a result of the initial free period of learning. When/how will concrete data and impact of the project be shared?
8. How will the limited number of brass peripatetic teachers involved with Swansea music actually deliver free pbuzz projects to every Year 3 pupil across the county?
9. What happens to the instruments at the end of the free term and if a small number of children wish to continue learning the instrument, can they keep them - free? Must the instrument loan and tuition then be paid for and by whom - school or parental contribution?
10. If schools wish to deliver a free first access instrumental project themselves (e.g. if they have appropriate music staff), how could they access the funding and instruments to do this or is all funding entirely ringfenced for the Swansea Music Service. Could schools supply a project more cost effectively?
11. How is/will feedback from schools and parents be sought to continue improving the offer and quality of provision?
12. Will all schools be enabled to participate in showcase events?
13. How can we measure that the plan is making a difference?

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter but could we please have your formal written response to the questions raised by 19 January 2023.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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