



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

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Date 23 May 2023
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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 11 May 2023, where the Panel looked at Harassment in Schools, Tackling Racism in Schools and received an update on the QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 11 May 2023

We would like to thank you and Helen Morgan Rees (Director of Education) for attending the meeting and providing information for the Panel. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

Harassment in Schools

We thanked Rhodri Jones (Head of Achievement and Partnership Service) and Lisa Collins (Child Protection and Safeguarding officer) for providing us with this update report. This report followed on from a verbal briefing that you provided to us in June 2021, when there was a national focus on this topic due to the Everyone's Invited website, which provided a space for victims of sexual abuse and harassment to share their stories. We welcome the work that has been done by both the Welsh Government and Swansea Council since that time.

We heard that some parts of the action plan are taking a little longer than anticipated, particularly in relation to the consistency of 'flagging' issues. We did agree that it is vital we ensure the right process for data protection is in place and recognise it is better to take a bit longer to get it right.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TRUSLOW A CHRAFFU

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We felt that it was important that young people were made aware of who they can speak to if they wish to discuss an incident, both inside and outside of school, recognising that this was something that was mentioned in the 2022 Pupil Manifesto. We heard that there are many different ways young people can report incidents, which included people and ways to make contact and that these are posted around schools as suggested by the Panel. Also that there were safe spaces created in schools, a virtual drop box and it also forms part of the new curriculum and school PSE lessons.

We asked about what happens if some schools do not report incidents/data and will there be more direction for them relating to this. We heard that it is a school's responsibility to act at the right time and the Council would be concerned were they not reporting and recording. Schools are kept up to date with all the relevant information. There is also a role for governing bodies to ensure the right processes are in place in their school.

Tackling Racism in Schools

We thanked Jennifer Harding Richards (Religion, Values and Ethics Adviser) and Pam Cole (Lead for Minority Ethnic Learners and Equalities) for attending the meeting and providing a detailed written report.

We were pleased to hear that in the last couple of years there have been significant developments at national level, which is underpinning, giving momentum and explicit focus on tackling racism in schools and wider society. That the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan calls for a zero tolerance of racism in all its guises and in order to achieve this, the education system must broaden learners' understanding and knowledge of the diverse cultures which have built Wales', past and present. We recognise that anti-racism moves beyond equality and diversity and requires systemic change in order to create anti-racist cultures in schools and education establishments, and this takes time and commitment.

We were encouraged to hear that a significant amount of work was in progress across a wide number of areas that are connected to developing and establishing anti-racist cultures within education and our schools across Swansea. We also recognise that we are only at the start of a journey.

We heard that there is now a need to develop a coherent strategy and action plan to help further progress work in this area and we look forward to hearing more about that once it has been developed.

QEd/Sustainable Communities for Learning Update

We thanked Louise Herbert Evans (Team Manager Capital) for providing us with a detailed PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the Quality in Education / Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. We welcomed the extensive work undertaken to improve and develop the school stock and facilities for learning. We heard about the progress that has been made with the long term and other capital investment and structural maintenance programme including Band A and B and how in future funding for this will be in the form of a rolling programme. We also heard about the programme risks and issues, community focussed school grants, Additional Learning Needs grant and the rollout of universal school meals capital requirements.

Both you and the Director said you were proud of the capital teams delivery of the project especially through what has been a turbulent few years.

And finally, we would like to thank you and the officers from the education department for your support for our critical friend role over the past municipal year and we look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Your Response

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

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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