



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Scrutiny Performance Panel – Education

At: Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

On: Thursday, 10 April 2025

Time: 4.30 pm

Convenor: Councillor Lyndon Jones MBE

Membership:

Councillors: A Davis, A M Day, F M Gordon, B Hopkins, Y V Jardine, S M Jones, S Joy, J D McGettrick and A J O'Connor

Co-opted Members: Beth Allender and Elizabeth Lee

Agenda

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6 Public Questions Questions can be submitted in writing to Scrutiny scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk up until noon on the working day prior to the meeting. Written questions take precedence. Public may attend and ask questions in person if time allows. Questions must relate to items on the open part of the agenda and will be dealt with in a 10 minute period.	
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Next Meeting: Thursday, 8 May 2025 at 4.30 pm



Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Thursday, 3 April 2025
Contact: Scrutiny Officer

Agenda Item 4



City and County of Swansea

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

**Bishop Gore Comprehensive School, De-La-Beche Rd,
Sketty, Swansea SA2 9AP**

Thursday, 23 January 2025 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

A M Day
J D McGettrick

Councillor(s)

S M Jones
A J O'Connor

Councillor(s)

S Joy
R V Smith

Other Attendees

Robert Smith	Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Helen Burgum	Headteacher Bishop Gore Comprehensive
Rebecca Matthews	Deputy Head Bishop Gore Comprehensive
Kathryn Lecrass	Headteacher Blaenymaes Primary
Owen Davies	Deputy Head Brynmill Primary
Jamie Taylor	Headteacher Cadle Primary
John Webb	Headteacher Grange Primary
Caroline Morgan	Headteacher Oystermouth Primary
John Jenkins	Deputy Head Portmead Primary
Bethan Peterson	Headteacher Whitestone Primary

Several Chairs of Goveners also attended

Officer(s)

Helen Morgan-Rees	Director of Education
David Thomas	Principal School Improvement Advisor
Michelle Roberts	Scrutiny Officer
Rachel Percival	Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): B Hopkins and Y V Jardine
Co-opted Member(s): Beth Allender

188 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

189 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

190 Curriculum for Wales - Bishop Gore Comprehensive Cluster of Schools

The Panel met with the Bishop Gore cluster of schools to discuss how they are implementing the Curriculum for Wales as a cluster. The following Headteachers and Chairs of governors were invited to attend:

School	Headteacher	Chair of Governors
Bishop Gore Comp	Helen Burgum	Sue Soul
Blaenymaes Primary	Kathryn Lecrass	Dr Anthony Charles
Brynmill Primary	Jo Simons	Louise Beckett
Cadle Primary	Jamie Taylor	Elliot King
Grange Primary	John Webb	Christine May
Oystermouth Primary	Caroline Morgan	Laura Miles
Portmead Primary	Allison Evans	Matthew Davies
Whitestone Primary	Bethan Peterson	Gareth Ford

The headline questions sent to the schools in advance of the meeting included:

- a) How is it going so far?
- b) What are you finding most challenging?
- c) How are you supporting your teachers and school staff to transition to the new curriculum?
- d) How are you working together as a cluster to ensure a consistency of approach?
- e) How do you know how effectively you are implementing the Curriculum for Wales in the Bishop Gore cluster?
- f) How are you taking learners along with you on this journey?
How is information about the curriculum being shared with the learners? How are the learners responding to the curriculum, particularly those who have had experience of both systems?
- g) How do you feel about the support you have received from the local authority and Partneriaeth?
- h) How are your schools developing and implementing its Religion, Values, and Ethics (RVE) curriculum to ensure continuity and progression for learners from ages 3 to 16?

The Panel will detail their thoughts and conclusions from the session in a letter to the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm

Chair



City and County of Swansea

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

MS Teams

Monday, 17 February 2025 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor Lyndon Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

Mike Day
Beverly Hopkins

Councillor(s)

Susan Jones
Sandra Joy

Councillor(s)

James McGettrick
Angela O'Connor

Also Present

Cllr Robert Smith

Cabinet Member for Education & Learning

Officer(s)

Brij Madahar
Helen Morgan-Rees
Kelly Small

Scrutiny Team Leader
Director of Education
Head of Education Planning & Resources

Apologies for Absence

Beth Allender (co-opted member)

188. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

189. Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None.

190. Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

191. Annual Budget Proposals - as they relate to Education matters

The Cabinet Member for Education & Learning and lead Education officers attended the meeting to discuss the Annual Budget as it relates to education matters and take questions.

The Panel had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed budget which was detailed in the report(s) being considered by Cabinet on 20 February, and give

views as part of the overall Budget Scrutiny process led by the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel.

Discussion focussed on the Revenue Budget for 2025/26 which set out:

- Current Budget Monitoring Position
- The Local Government Finance Settlement
- Budget Forecast
- Schools Delegated Budget
- Specific Savings Proposals
- Budget Consultation Response – including the view of the School Budget Forum
- Staffing Implications
- Relevant Issues

The following points were raised by the Panel and would be forwarded to the Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel for inclusion in overall feedback on the budget that will be sent to the Leader / Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 20 February.

- Budget Increase - the Panel welcomed the increase to the Education budget especially when considering that the £11.5m of one-off money granted in 2024/5 has now been base lined. This meant that that true value of the base increase was over £23m, more than double the headline rate at over 12%. The Panel noted that the delegated schools budget for 2025/26 was £213.6m which they were told was the highest it has ever been. However, it was felt that the level of spending on education across Wales and the UK was still not enough in view of the increasing expectations, demands and pressure on education and schools.
- Uncertainty about National Insurance Costs – the Panel was pleased with the commitment to cover increases in teachers' pay and pension costs. However, the Panel was concerned about the impact additional Employer National Insurance costs (estimated at £2.4m for the schools delegated budget) could have on school budgets if this was not fully compensated. The Panel noted that assumptions have been made within the budget but there is material uncertainty over costs which we may not know until June.
- Funding via Grants - the Panel shared the concern that substantial elements of schools funding is now being delivered via specific grant (Local Authority Education Grant) and presented a risk to overall school's funding that was not in the control of the Council.
- School Budget Forum Concerns - although the School Budget Forum recognised a better-than-expected settlement, the Panel felt that their letter contained some concerning statements. The Panel asked for sight of the Leader's / Cabinet response to the School Budget Forum, particularly the concerns raised within that there is 'not enough money to deliver statutory education services' as well the ability to deliver the reform agenda, including ALN. The Forum also highlighted that 'budgeted expenditure per pupil in Swansea has fallen to the lowest ranking of 22nd of the 22 local authorities in 2024-25'; though at the same time it

recognised there may be inconsistency in how Local Authorities report and allocate spending on education and potentially misleading comparisons. The Panel remained concerned about the drop in school reserves highlighted by the Forum, and rate of depletion. Members asked for a summary of the position of current school reserve levels (as of 31 March 2025) from the Education Directorate to see how much further reserves have dropped and the variation between schools. The Panel was told however that the overall relative position regarding reserves in Swansea was better than elsewhere in Wales; nevertheless, Members felt that we needed to address this issue.

- Meeting Additional Learning Needs - whilst recognising there was a strategy in place, the Panel felt that ALN funding remains a challenging area for the Council given the increase in demand and pressures, and impact on schools and education, both in mainstream and specialist settings. The Panel asked about our intelligence on this, how well the Council is able to forecast things and the impact on budgets. The Panel felt that it should look more closely at ALN funding / provision and demand at future Scrutiny meeting(s) to monitor things.
- Staffing Implications – the Panel noted that the ‘headcount’ reduction figure provided (shown as 1 for Education) did not include schools. The Panel was keen to know when we will know the implications for schools’ staff. Members were informed that this will not be known until schools have their indicative budgets for 2025-26.
- Budget for Home to School Transport – the Panel noted that funding for Home to School Transport has been transferred from the Education Directorate to the Place Directorate.

The meeting ended at 10.34 am

Chair



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Thursday, 20 February 2025 at 4.30 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

A Davis
S Joy

Councillor(s)

A M Day
R V Smith

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins

Other Attendees

Robert Smith

Officer(s)

Helen Howells
Rhodri Jones
Helen Morgan-Rees
David Thomas
Liz Jordan

Team Manager for Pupil Support
Head of Achievement & Partnership Service
Director of Education
Principal School Improvement Adviser
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S M Jones, J D McGettrick and A J O'Connor

Co-opted Member(s): B Allender

195 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

196 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

197 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on the 12 December 2024 were approved as a correct record.

198 Letter/s

The letter to the Cabinet Member following the meeting on the 12 December 2025 was noted.

199 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

200 Managing/improving School Attendance and Exclusions

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Member, Director and the Team Manager (Vulnerable Learners) for their detailed report providing information about school attendance and exclusion in Swansea schools.

The report looked at school attendance, including discussing:

- Academic year 2023-2024 attendance, including primary and secondary comparisons.
- Incremental increase in attendance as a result of extensive work of schools and the education welfare service.
- Education Welfare Service action plan written to support attendance in every setting in development.
- Further research undertaken will also support future developments. This includes a scrutiny of fixed penalty notice data and pupil voice identified through the 'Big Conversation' on 28 January 2025
- Attendance figures for this academic year to date shows a few noticeable improvements, compared with the same reporting period last year. Specifically in Secondary schools and special schools, which show an increase of 1.2% and 0.6% respectively. There have been some exceptional increases noted in Bishop Gore, Bishopston, Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr and Penyrheol Comprehensive School
- Future developments include continuation of the attendance project with Swansea University thus allowing greater analysis at both individual and school level; liaison with the partnership and involvement team to support further opportunities to understand parent / carer and learner voice specifically around attendance so these continue to inform policy

The report looked at exclusions including:

- It is reported nationally that behaviour in schools is becoming more challenging and this is reflected in Swansea schools. During the 2023-2024 academic year, school leaders and trades unions identified the changing behaviour landscape in schools as a major priority requiring a new approach and swift action. National data indicates an increasing trend in both fixed term and permanent exclusions from schools. While Swansea data compares favourably in comparison with national data, the increasing trajectory of exclusions is mirrored in Swansea. However, every exclusion is potentially a reduced life change for a learner and we must prioritise reducing exclusions.
- Fixed term exclusions and permanent exclusions data and the work being done to address.
- Wherever possible, inclusion officers have explored creative and alternative solutions to support schools to avoid exclusions. This is in recognition of the negative impact exclusions can have on the future life chances of our most vulnerable learners
- Managed moves can be used when appropriate.

- A new local authority behaviour policy is in development and will be look at by the Education Service Transformation Committee. The next steps will be to develop a school exemplar policy which can be adopted and personalised by schools to suit their individual contexts. This policy will mirror the local authority policy but include additional detail such as links to key documents and practical support (a toolkit) to help implementation of the school policy. A strategic implementation plan will also be developed to ensure that key strategic actions are captured and delivered effectively.

The Panel discussed the update and raised the following issues, these and responses will be detailed in the letter to the Cabinet Member written following this meeting.

- Recognising that each school setting is different, how are we sharing the good examples found in our schools to bring about improvement across all schools.
- When absence becomes a concern what do you do, do you for example contact/visit the home.

201 A look at how schools improve the quality of teaching and learning including cluster and regional work

The Principal School Improvement Adviser briefed the Panel on how schools are improving teaching and learning including in relation to cluster and regional working. The following was noted:

- Improving teaching and learning is underpinned by robust self-evaluation and improvement planning. School improvement plans in Swansea have improved further as a result of LA professional learning and collaboration/support with our regional partners.
- Schools collaborate well within traditional clusters. These are becoming even more focussed through robust transition plans that focus on supporting pupil progress and a better understanding of individual needs.
- Schools are beginning to collaborate in non-traditional 'cluster' groups outside of their traditional secondary feeder group. In the best examples, these have a clear and common purpose, for example, improving pupils' use of vocabulary.
- Schools make good use of regional professional learning to support improvements in their pedagogical approaches. For example, high numbers of Swansea-based practitioners attend the 'teach for purpose' programme. As a result, schools' improvement plans focus more sharply on improving specific outcomes for pupils, for example, questioning skills.
- Practitioners engage well with regional subject-specific collaborative networks to support their professional needs. This includes work to upskill teachers in preparation for new GCSEs.
- Swansea's attendance at regional leadership development programmes, is proportionate. As a result, overall improvement planning is stronger and has a sharper focus on how to improve outcomes for pupils.
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The Panel discussed the update and raised the following issues, these and responses will be detailed in the letter to the Cabinet Member written following this meeting.

- What does success look like and how is it measured for both the local authority and also Partneriaeth.
- The change in emphasis from regional scrutiny to local scrutiny will require greater scrutiny at a Swansea level for Partneriaeth moving forward.

202 Workplan 2024/25

The work plan was accepted.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 5



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Scrutiny
Gofynnwch am:
Scrutiny Office: 01792 636292
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:
e-Mail scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
e-Bost:
Date 13 February 2025
Dyddiad:

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 23 January 2025, where the Panel looked at progress with the Curriculum for Wales, meeting with the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from the Bishop Gore Comprehensive cluster of schools.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – Visit to Bishop Gore School

We were pleased to meet the Head/Deputy Head teachers and Chairs of Governors from the Bishop Gore Comprehensive cluster of schools which included Bishop Gore Comprehensive School, Blaenymaes Primary, Brynmill Primary, Cadle Primary, Grange Primary and Oystermouth Primary, Portmead Primary and Whitestone Primary schools. The Panel would also like to thank you, the Director, and the School Improvement Service for your/their input and our biggest thank you goes to the pupils who shared with us their experiences of transitioning to Bishop Gore.

We were keen to hear from the cluster on how the Curriculum for Wales was being implemented on the ground and how the work being done within each primary school in the cluster was being brought together, as pupils made the transition from primary to comprehensive school.

We heard that so far the cluster has been on a bespoke journey and there is a shared vision and a commitment to regular dialogue, support and unity. We were grateful for the comprehensive presentation and noted the challenges they faced -

- Only 40% of Bishop Gore pupils come from within the cluster.
- The cluster is geographically disparate, although this is also recognised as an opportunity.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TRUSLOW A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

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I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall neu yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r person uchod
To receive this information in alternative format, or in Welsh please contact the above

- Whilst the primary schools have a shared vision, they face very different challenges including differing levels of deprivation and aligning assessment and evaluations across the schools is complex.
- Schools can have competing goals, making consensus on curriculum continuity difficult.
- Time and resources were a concern, particularly in relation to the monitoring and facilitation of transition and bridging projects.
- Systems are needed to interpret Curriculum for Wales guidance which is an ongoing process.

The presentation also highlighted many strengths and areas of success within the cluster.

- The consistency of approach despite the localised cluster challenges with a well managed and coordinated transition.
- The large programme of transition support, transition activities, wellbeing support and a transition template for every child.
- Regular meetings between Heads, assessment leads, AOLE lead groups and ALENCO teams underpinning this work.
- The culture of collaboration, shared learning, support and pedagogy that is demonstrated within the cluster.
- The progress of pupils who have piloted the new curriculum, demonstrating progress in reducing the gap between free and non free school meal pupils on internal and national test scores.
- Strong survey feedback data from pupils and parents to evidence effective implementation.

We were pleased to hear about the support provided to teachers and school staff with wider stakeholder involvement in creating the curriculum, Heads meeting half termly, the AOLE networks, the curriculum impact review to share good practice, quality assurance meetings and progress meetings. We were particularly encouraged to hear about the cluster progression e-journal, a website for uploading experiences and standards and celebrating success, which demonstrates good practice that can be shared with other clusters.

It was clear that the cluster has provided support to the new heads and that there has been an underpinning of support from Partneriaeth and the Local Authority. This is supported by having the same School Improvement Advisor across the cluster and a lead practitioner from Bishop Gore.

We particularly enjoyed hearing from the pupils via video and in person giving their personal experiences of taking part in transition activities and their first experiences of Bishop Gore. We were encouraged by our visit and shared our thanks to all the schools and praised the way the cluster has addressed its unique challenges. You also noted the nurturing environment, team effort and genuine collaboration that was evidenced by the cluster. Overall it was evident to see the work that has gone make this cluster a success and we are grateful to all the schools and pupils for taking the time to join us and share their efforts and experiences with us.

Your Response

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

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Michelle Roberts
Gofynnwch am:
Scrutiny Office 01792 637256
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:
e-Mail scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
e-Bost:
Date 7 March 2025
Dyddiad:

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 20 February 2025. The Panel discussed school attendance and exclusions and how schools improve the quality of teaching and learning in Swansea.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20 February 2025

We would like to thank you and the officers from the Education Directorate 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.

Managing/improving School Attendance and Exclusions

We looked at the comprehensive report provided which included both school attendance and exclusions. We discussed

School attendance

- Academic year 2023-2024 attendance, including primary and secondary comparisons.
- Incremental increase in attendance as a result of extensive work of schools and the education welfare service.
- Education Welfare Service action plan written to support attendance in every setting in development.
- Further research undertaken will also support future developments. This includes a scrutiny of fixed penalty notice data and pupil voice identified through the 'Big Conversation' on 28 January 2025

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TRUSLOW A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

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- That attendance figures for this academic year to date shows a few noticeable improvements, compared with the same reporting period last year. Specifically in Secondary schools and special schools, which show an increase of 1.2% and 0.6% respectively. There have been some exceptional increases noted in Bishop Gore, Bishopston, Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr and Penyrheol Comprehensive School
- Future developments include continuation of the attendance project with Swansea University thus allowing greater analysis at both individual and school level; liaison with the partnership and involvement team to support further opportunities to understand parent/carer and learner voice, specifically around attendance so these can continue to inform policy

Exclusions

- It is reported nationally that behaviour in schools is becoming more challenging and this is reflected in Swansea schools. During the 2023-2024 academic year, school leaders and trades unions identified the changing behaviour landscape in schools as a major priority requiring a new approach and swift action. National data indicates an increasing trend in both fixed term and permanent exclusions from schools. While Swansea data compares favourably in comparison with national data, the increasing trajectory of exclusions is mirrored in Swansea. However, every exclusion is potentially a reduced life change for a learner and we must prioritise reducing exclusions.
- Fixed term exclusions and permanent exclusions data and the work being done to address this.
- Wherever possible, inclusion officers have explored creative and alternative solutions to support schools to avoid exclusions. This is in recognition of the negative impact exclusions can have on the future life chances of our most vulnerable learners
- Managed moves can be used when appropriate.
- A new local authority behaviour policy is in development and will be looked at by the Education Service Transformation Committee. The next steps will be to develop a school exemplar policy which can be adopted and personalised by schools to suit their individual contexts. This policy will mirror the local authority policy but include additional detail such as links to key documents and practical support (a toolkit) to help implementation of the school policy. A strategic implementation plan will also be developed to ensure that key strategic actions are captured and delivered effectively.

We understand that each school setting is different, but were interested to find out how the local authority and schools are sharing the good practice learned from those schools that are managing to improve their pupil attendance. We heard the strategies used are bespoke to schools and actually what would work in one school might not necessarily work in another but given this we do our best to share. All good practice that is happening in schools goes through to the school improvement team through the School Action Plans. There are also meetings every week to discuss what is happening across schools and within certain schools, in terms of specific interventions and how well these are working.

We wished to explore in more detail how we deal with absence when it becomes a concern and how we work with families to make improvements. We were told that the research both locally and nationally is around family engagement and working with the families to encourage a community based approach to try and get the children back

into school, to find out exactly what is wrong and the work outlined today gives a reflection on some of those detailed and researched based interventions.

We were pleased to hear about the detailed work that is being carried out by schools and the local authority in relation to both school attendance and exclusions, with particular reference to the development of the education welfare officers action plan and the new behaviour policy. We agree that the importance of school attendance cannot be underestimated, recognising that if a child is not in school they cannot learn.

A look at how schools improve the quality of teaching and learning including cluster and regional work

The Principal School Improvement Adviser briefed the Panel on how schools are improving teaching and learning including in relation to cluster and regional working. The Panel looked at how

- Improving teaching and learning is underpinned by robust self-evaluation and improvement planning. School improvement plans in Swansea have improved further as a result of LA professional learning and collaboration/support with our regional partners.
- Schools collaborate well within traditional clusters. These are becoming even more focussed through robust transition plans that focus on supporting pupil progress and a better understanding of individual needs.
- Schools are beginning to collaborate in non-traditional 'cluster' groups outside of their traditional secondary feeder group. In the best examples, these have a clear and common purpose, for example, improving pupils' use of vocabulary.
- Schools make good use of regional professional learning to support improvements in their pedagogical approaches. For example, high numbers of Swansea-based practitioners attend the 'teach for purpose' programme. As a result, schools' improvement plans focus more sharply on improving specific outcomes for pupils, for example, questioning skills.
- Practitioners engage well with regional subject-specific collaborative networks to support their professional needs. This includes work to upskill teachers in preparation for new GCSEs.
- Swansea's attendance at regional leadership development programmes, is proportionate. As a result, overall improvement planning is stronger and has a sharper focus on how to improve outcomes for pupils.
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We asked what success looks like and how it is being measured by both the local authority and Partneriaeth. We heard the school improvement team visit schools at least twice a year. The results of the visits to the 94 schools and settings are collated so school improvement advisors have a broad overview, where success can be compared. With regard to progress, there is the national personalised assessment outcomes. These are standardised outcomes that schools use to support them in the evaluation of their combined lesson observations. There is also a sharing of school based quality assurance outcomes. Most of the evaluation is school based and what the school improvement service do is help them assimilate that information to help inform their individual school planning.

We recognise that the change in emphasis from regional scrutiny to local scrutiny will require greater scrutiny at a Swansea level for Partneriaeth moving forward. We will factor this into our work programme for the next municipal year.

Your Response

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

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel - 10 April 2025

Additional Learning Needs Reform Update

Purpose	To update the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027
Content	Update on the progress made towards the ALN Strategy 2022-2027
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided
Lead Councillor	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Report Author	Fraser Newbury, Senior ALN Lead Officer Huw Beynon, Senior ALN Lead Officer

1. Background

- 1.1 The Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion team (ALNIT) currently sits within the Vulnerable Learners Service and provides a statutory service, prescribed by the Education Act 1996, the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018, Additional Learning Needs Code 2021 for Wales and regulations.
- 1.2 The ALNET Act 2018 replaced the SEN Code of Practice 2002 through a phased implementation that began in September 2021. The legal frameworks inform the work of ALNIT and other key stakeholders such as educational settings and the Local Health Board (LHB).
- 1.3 The ALNET Act aims to improve the planning and delivery of support for learners from 0-25 with additional learning needs (ALN) by adopting a more person-centred approach to planning and delivery of support to meet the needs of children and young people.
- 1.4 In 2019, an ALN Strategy was developed for Swansea to outline the transformation programme required to implement the ALNET Act successfully between 2019-2022. This was developed with key strategic partners and overseen by the ALN Strategic Board. The strategic board's membership

includes headteachers, councillors, FEI colleagues, local health board colleagues, DECLO, Social Services and the early years sector.

- 1.5 This strategy is now completed and a new strategy (2022-2027) was developed to support full implementation and embedding of the reform.

2. Current Strategy

- 2.1 The ALN Strategy 2022-2027 covers the following priority areas:

- Schools
- Post 16
- Collaboration
- Early Years

- 2.2 As detailed above, the strategy is overseen by the ALN Strategic Board and in addition key elements are part of Swansea Council's transformational programmes.

These are specifically:

- Transforming Additional Learning Needs - delivering the ALNET Strategy 2022-2027, which builds upon and embeds the transformational work outlined in the ALN Implementation Plan 2019-2022.
- Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places to meet current and future demand as a result of ALN reform and legislation.

Updates are provided quarterly to the Transformational Board and an annual report is presented to the Cabinet.

- 2.3 In order to provide an update to the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel on progress towards Additional Learning Needs reform this report provides updates on the four priority areas of the strategy with reference made to the transformational programmes within these priorities.

3. Schools

3.1 Overview

- The transformational project Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places (SSSP) allows the LA to quality assure provision at all stages of a graduated response model, ensuring consistent offers are available to all learners, whichever school or Speciality Teaching Facility they attend.
- A significant level of work has been undertaken with schools to develop the workforce to be equipped to deliver the ALNET transformation. This includes accredited training modules so that staff in schools have sufficient skills to identify and plan for meeting the needs of ALN learners.
- There is continued focus for schools on quality assurance to ensure that there is a consistent approach to ALN provision across Swansea. This

has included specific focus on universal and enhanced provision with guidance documents produced.

- Moderation exercises have taken place to support staff develop a consistent quality of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) across the LA, as well as the development of provision maps to outline universal, targeted and specialist provision on offer across the LA. Moderation exercises have evidenced there is still further work to be done to ensure consistent approaches but engagement is high and good support is in place.
- Closer links, and training have been established for the School Improvement Team on ALN provision to support school improvement advisors in their evaluation of effective school leadership in relation to ALN provision.

3.2 Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places

- ALNIT with support from the School Funding and Information Team have delivered against expected timelines for a phased implementation of specialist teaching facility (STFs) review between 2025-2028.
- A full statutory consultation (prescribed in the school organisation code) has been completed with a public consultation, post consultation statutory notice and closure of official objection period.
- Consultation meetings were held in the autumn term of 2024. Over 50 consultation meetings took place with 160 total respondents.
- Every school with a significant change received comprehensive suite of on-site consultation meetings with pupils, parents, staff, governors.
- Trade unions were updated in relation to proposals.
- Public meetings held in person and online.
- A report was submitted to Cabinet with findings of consultation and recommendations the future model
- No official objections were submitted and in March 2025 Swansea Cabinet agreed to proceed with the proposals
- Detailed plans for each component have been worked up with priority schools identified for change from 1 September 2025.
- The likelihood of improving quality of provision is also high with new memoranda of understanding planned as new and existing STFs are implemented afresh.

3.3 ALN Capital Grant

- Effective use of ALN capital grant means increasing numbers of schools have future proofed spaces for ALN and the newly proposed STFs will have appropriate learning environments.

3.4 Cluster Enhanced Provision (part of SSSP programme)

- Innovative pilots are under way such as enhanced provision at Townhill Primary School for the Dylan Thomas cluster and at YGG Bryniago. As a result, learners needs have been met well, including through the medium of Welsh.

- Positive feedback from schools involved and parents of the pupils, some noting an improvement in behaviour, attention / concentration levels at home too.
- Pilot to run for a further 12 months (grant funded).

3.5 Welsh medium provision

The proposals for the STF review prioritise Welsh Medium education with proposals for the first primary STF to be opened in Swansea in September 2025.

As detailed above, a Welsh medium Cluster Enhanced Provision (Canolfan Iago) has also been set up for Welsh Medium pupils within the Gŵyr Cluster Primary Schools. This model was set up in anticipation of a Welsh Medium Specialist Teaching Facility (if approved) from September 2025. It has enabled staff to be supported to acquire the require specialism, to assess the need and appropriate responses for children in the sector and to achieve an important milestone in Welsh Medium education.

Welsh medium places will also be extended in the secondary sector, and the next steps are to identify a physical base to offer the same support to primary learners in the Bryn Tawe cluster.

3.6 Tribunals

- In the 2 years from January 2023 there have been 25 appeals to the Education Tribunal for Wales. The number of appeals in Swansea is low compared to the rest of Wales and given the size of the authority.
- Of the appeals, only one claim was upheld. 24 cases were either withdrawn by the claimant or the appeals were dismissed (i.e. favourable to the LA).
- Success of defending ALN tribunals is significant with a good record of recent outcomes favouring the local authority's provision via mainstream schools and specialist settings
- The position of ALNIT is that we want to focus our resource and expertise on providing the very best education offer for local children close to home as possible in our own, quality assured provision. While we recognise this is not always possible, working in partnership with families is a priority to avoid dispute wherever possible.
- We have an effective caseworker team who work in partnership with families.

3.7 Workforce succession planning

- Effective succession planning is supporting recruitment and enabling us to attract skilled professionals in critical areas of the workforce e.g. the Educational Psychology and specialist teacher teams.

4. Post 16

- Welsh Government will devolve funding for Post 16 places in Independent Specialist Post 16 Institutions (ISPIs) in September 2025. To date Swansea is seen as a model of good practice in terms of the breadth of Post 16 offer and so the local authority is likely to benefit from the new arrangements. However, any potential benefit needs to be considered in the context of increasing costs across all independent placements and parental demand, so strengthening our local offer remains a priority.
- Officers are working on a post 16 guidance document which will explain the options available to post 16 ALN learners, as well as providing information and signposting for young people. This will include information about further education (ALN) courses (including independent living skills) as well as opportunities offered by third sector agencies.
- Officers meet with colleagues across Wales to discuss post 16 provision, share experiences / challenges and seek to problem solve.
- There is positive collaborative working between the local authority and Gower college Swansea.

5. Collaboration

- The Local Health Board have invited Heads of Service from both Swansea and Neath Port Talbot to sit on their ALN strategic board and this has provided a helpful approach to navigating the ALNET Act and ALN Code for Wales through collaborative working.
- ALN officers continue to link with the Health Board to review the current Speech and Language Service Level Agreement. There is a history of the local authority funding work in the health board which should now fall within the board's statutory responsibility. However, recognising the significant challenges that the NHS has faced in the last few years it is acknowledged that this needs careful review and consideration to phase out old arrangements and implement new plans.
- Closer links with the Health Boards paediatric occupational health services has resulted in a recent pilot project to support mainstream schools. A similar project was rolled out in Neath Port Talbot some years ago, the success of which has been recognised by Welsh Government.
- Continued discussions with the health board has resulted in a review of the referral process into the Neuro Developmental (ND) Assessment Pathway which should provide benefits in terms of an improved referral mechanism. In Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. The Local Health Board have outsourced an element of their waiting lists (currently 29 months) in order to address the growing demand.
- The Head of Vulnerable Learners Service sits on the regional Autism strategy group and is working in partnership to consider solutions to provide pre diagnosis support. The group has a key focus to prevent both escalation to the ND waiting list and also reduce waiting times. A joint venture between Swansea and Neath Port Talbot (Myth Busting) funded via the Regional Partnership Board has gone some way to achieve this.

5.1 **Myth Busting**

The Myth Busting Project aims to raise awareness and dispel common misconceptions about conditions like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This initiative is a collaborative effort between the Swansea ALN Inclusion Team and the Neath Port Talbot Inclusion Team, funded by the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board.

The project includes digital and printed resources for schools and parents, providing accurate information about neurodevelopmental conditions.

A short animation explains the support available at home, school, and in the community, regardless of whether a formal diagnosis has been received and is available on Swansea Council Website.

Clips from the animation are displayed electronically in central bus stations and car parks and shared via social media channels.

The project intends to raise awareness about neurodevelopmental conditions. The target audience is parents, carers, and the community. It advocates a needs-led approach to supporting neurodiversity in line with national thinking and is also intended to empower Individuals by providing tools and resources to help individuals and families manage neurodevelopmental conditions effectively.

5.2 **Occupational Therapy Projects**

The Additional Learning Needs Inclusion Team have commissioned two key Occupational Therapy projects which have been highly successful and well received by schools. Both projects have been grant funded via ALN Grant during 24-25 and are expected to be extended into the next financial year.

The first project, delivered by Sensory Wellbeing Occupational Therapist has targeted Specialist Teaching Facility staff and helped them to understand sensory processing, sensory dysregulation and importantly how to manage need. This has been delivered by a series of 'in person' training events where staff were supported to understand the need and apply a range of strategies and activities in their settings. This project also supported a small number of STF classes at a school-based level and provide advice and guidance for a small number of individuals.

The second project, commissioned through the Local Health Board (SBUHB) focused on supporting mainstream schools via online training (Zones of regulation and Sensory Circuits), bookable consultation slots to discuss individual learners (online) and a pilot of four schools working at a school-based level to support needs. It has also provided advice and guidance in relation to Developmental Co-ordination Disorder and practical advice on handwriting.

6. Early Years

- There has been significant growth in the demand for ALN support in the Early Years cohort. Originally the ALNIT structure only included the statutory Early Years ALNCO post but it has become clear that due to increasing demand that there is insufficient resource to effectively meet our obligations in relation to this cohort.
- As a consequence, a review of ALN Early Years funding and processes was undertaken and a new model of delivery will be implemented from April 2025 which will enhance the offer and ensure we are better able to meet the increasing need to support children with ALN in their early years settings and as the transition to schools.
- To date there is continued support provided for early years settings, including training, advice, and information. Training needs are identified through liaison with the settings and delivered flexibly to meet the needs of the settings.
- Specialist staff are available for regular question and answer sessions to provide support to practitioners.
- Moderation of Early Years IDPs takes place to ensure that there is a consistency of person-centred practice and IDP development.
- Information sharing between schools and early years providers is developing with a focus on transition in place.
- Early Years process pathways are regularly monitored to ensure they continue to meet demand across the service.
- Early Years staff currently employed by Commissioning & Resources (currently overseen by Jane Whitmore) will transfer to the ALN Early Years team in April 2025. It is anticipated that this will provide a joined-up approach to supporting pre-school children.
- Grant funding in 2025/2026 has been identified will provide opportunities to strengthen to offer and implement more proactive, preventative approaches in line with the current offer.
- This will be an important area for focus and development in the next year.

7. Conclusion

- There is good delivery in better provision to support schools with learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- Improved planning and delivery of support for learners from 0 to 25 with ALN is embedding well.
- Early identification of needs and putting in place timely and effective interventions has progressed well with schools developing more inclusive practice, for example ASD friendly, early and embedded speech, language and communication strategies
- The strategy is progressing well however there are still challenges in relation to demand, funding and capacity.
- While tribunal outcomes in Swansea are favourable, nationally they reflect an interpretation of the legislation which is operationally challenging to deliver. We retain a commitment to child centred approaches and high quality LA maintained offers which best meet the needs of the child and attribute our successful tribunal defence to that ethos alongside a

commitment to working in partnership with parents and carers. However, the tension between policy and practice is increasingly challenging.

- Welsh Government is actively reviewing the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET). Officers are actively contributing to this review to highlight some of the operational challenges. The most significant being the underfunding of the statutory obligations and the tension between policy and practice.

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

9. Finance Implications

9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

10. Integrated Assessment Implications

10.1 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.

10.1.1 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'.

10.1.2 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.

10.2 As this is an information report to Scrutiny an IIA is not required.

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel - 10 April 2025

Education Other Than at School services

Purpose	To update the Scrutiny Panel on EOTAS provision in Swansea
Content	The report sets out progress since April 2024 in relation to issues considered in the previous report to Scrutiny Performance Panel
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Report Author	Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Learner Service

1. Background

- This report outlines progress in relation to the agreed changes to Swansea Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The current PRU model was established in 2016, but changing learner needs prompted a review which was agreed to following a report to Swansea Cabinet in June 2023.
- Following the agreement to undertake a review, an extensive engagement and consultation process was undertaken and the new model which was developed from that engagement activity was approved by Swansea Cabinet in January 2024.
- At the time of the last report to the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel in April 2024 the consultation period in relation to the new model had just concluded with agreement to begin implementation by September 2024.
- This report details the progress and early impact of the agreed changes.

2. New Model – Principles

The consultation period led to the development of a set of agreed principles to underpin the new model. They were as follows:

1. The model has to be one that maximises the current resource available across the Vulnerable Learners Service to meet the needs of all learners requiring EOTAS provision and identifies the PRU's role within that.

2. The model has to be one that will achieve better outcomes for all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending the PRU.
3. The model does not expect the PRU to provide all of the above however, the role of the PRU needs to be identified in the continuum of support and may need to contribute resource (physical, human, financial) to boost other EOTAS providers (home tuition, Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team and Pupil Support Team) with the aim of ensuring access to resources is as equitable as possible for EOTAS learners.
4. Equally, there may be opportunities for other teams in the Vulnerable Learners Service to work differently with the PRU to support learners who are dual registered at PRU better.
5. Achieving the above should in turn lead to the PRU functioning more as intended, namely, reintegration model with earlier intervention.
6. The model needs to work towards addressing the high level of violence and aggression reported by staff at the PRU. It also needs to provide opportunities to improve attendance, reduce exclusions and to ensure that those learners who are on Pastoral Support Plans receive a package of support which increases their time in education (not necessarily increasing time in Maes Derw but offering something alternative).
7. We need to maximise what works well and address challenges to make improvements where needed.
8. It is expected that all areas of the Vulnerable Learners Service will need to contribute and collaborate to achieve the above. There is no additional funding/resource but there is an opportunity to use funding / resource differently.

In order to achieve this operationally the following proposals were made:

- The existing primary phase and halfway house merge to form a single PRU, operating on a reintegration model for learners in primary and lower secondary (up to Y8).
- The provision for learners with Social and Emotional Mental Health needs remains but operate on a more flexible, bespoke, intervention model allowing for earlier and more flexible bespoke package to be developed for learners some of which will be offered on an outreach basis.
- The provisions for secondary learners will be merged to one provision catering for Y8/9 upwards and operate on a flexible, bespoke, intervention basis. There will be full time places available but there will also be bespoke, multi-agency outreach packages too.
- The options available to the EOTAS panel will be expanded and schools will be encouraged to refer earlier for preventative interventions to avoid escalation to longer term or full-time placements. Registration at Maes Derw will not necessarily be needed to access preventative interventions.
- A special school 'spoke' provision will be established in the Maes Derw building to cater for a small number of learners with a long-term additional learning need who require specialist teaching but access to the resources of a PRU.

However, the report noted that there will be learners mid-way through a course of study and there is no intention to disrupt this. The focus of the work to date has been to prepare for the new model and make changes in anticipation while

ensuring current learners will continue as they are while the new model is phased in.

The first task was to review and implement a new staffing structure for implementation by September 2024.

3. Progress to date

Staffing

A new staffing structure is now in place which has a reduced but refocused leadership team which allows for a more effective distribution of leadership responsibilities and staff development opportunities.

There is a new Head of Centre and Manger of EOTAS Services who is leading on the implementation of the new model.

The support worker team has been restructured to provide a term time only model with revised job descriptions to better focus on improving learner outcomes

The business support team has been restructured to better align with the wider Vulnerable Learner Service and provide a more cohesive approach to key business matters such as commissioning, budgeting and effective use of resources.

All job descriptions have been revised across the PRU to ensure that the required flexibility is in place.

The changes have also ensured that the PRU is more likely to be able to operate within the agreed budget.

EOTAS panel

An interim review of the EOTAS panel has been undertaken and new panel chairs have been identified from across the Vulnerable Learners Service to increase capacity, resilience and perspective. Additional panel members have been identified from across a range of agencies and services and attend regularly. The panel are now recommending part time placements to both increase access, retain engagement at school level and increase potential to reintegrate.

The new Head of Centre has initiated a full review of panel processes, including revised terms of reference, which is currently under way. This is a multi agency review and is an important step in revising the current offer and establishing clear expectations around the role of the PRU and expectations of both the setting and from referring organisations.

Improvement Action Plan

The new Head of Centre has produced an Improvement Action Plan to support implementation of the new model. The plan is informed by the 8 principles agreed

during the consultation and engagement period and the senior leadership team and management committee have also contributed to the plan.

The Improvement Action Plan is included as Appendix A to this report and outlines the steps needed, this academic year, to support implementation to the new model but also address some of the issues that necessitated change.

The previous model was not meeting learners' needs sufficiently and there were key challenges in relation to low attendance, high exclusions and high levels of reported violence and aggression.

The new model expects the PRU to be an example of best practice when supporting children with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The PRU should, in time, provide outreach support to schools with the intention that children remain in mainstream schools, wherever possible, but access support from the PRU if needed.

The Improvement Action Plan has four strategic aims. They are:

1. To align the vision and remit to the functions of a PRU.

The rationale for this aim is to provide appropriate and targeted support for learners across the authority with identified needs. Specialised and experienced staff at Maes Derw to be used more effectively across the local authority.

2. To achieve better outcomes for pupils all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending Maes Derw.

The rationale for this aim is to develop a clear vision for progression for all learners receiving support from Maes Derw. Pupil progression to be bespoke and relevant to the individual. Clear links to other EOTAS services to allow access to facilities and specialist staff.

3. To achieve better outcomes for pupils all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending Maes Derw

The rationale for this aim is to develop a clear vision for progression for all learners receiving support from Maes Derw. Pupil progression to be bespoke and relevant to the individual. Clear links to other EOTAS services to allow access to facilities and specialist staff.

4. To review the wellbeing support of learners being supported at Maes Derw

The rationale for this aim is that health and wellbeing is at the centre of the needs of all pupils who require support for Maes Derw. Health and wellbeing is embedded in everything that we do from whole centre culture, class planning and individual interventions that are preventative and reactive. This is done well to meet the needs of the pupils but not clearly assessed, monitored and evaluated to show progress.

5. Progress to date – what has changed

While it is important to note that we are not yet two full academic terms into the transition to a new model there have already been some changes and improvements in the offer for learners and also learners' experiences.

These improvements are detailed in the evaluation section of the improvement plan but some key highlights are as follows:

Improved communication with schools and clarity of expectation has meant that 9.8% more learners have reintegrated to schools now when compared to Autumn 2023

There is improved collaboration between mainstream schools and the PRU in relation to learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) with an increase in the number of pupils having a jointly written Individual Development Plan between mainstream and Maes Derw.

More flexible offers of support, including part time places, mean that 141 pupils have received support from Maes Derw in the Autumn term 24. Compared to 124 in Autumn term 23. Increase of 13.7%.

Grant investment has improved the offer for learners. For example, electronic drums and DJ music studio have been installed and pupils are learning to use new equipment to support learning in music and widen opportunities through music therapy.

In line with the expectation to work more effectively across the Vulnerable Learners Service, meetings have taken place with the Vulnerable Learners Service Commissioning Officer to establish a new EOTAS provider framework

A number of parental and community engagement opportunities have been developed including an enterprise fayre to showcase and develop pupils' creativity, practical and independence skills. Parental engagement was excellent and developed an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of qualifications and curriculum.

Four support workers have been trained by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to enable Maes Derw to refer pupils to CAMHS for specific Mental Health support. This is the first time the PRU has been able to refer pupils themselves.

Strategies to improve engagement and respond to learners in a therapeutic and trauma informed approach are having a positive impact. There is a decrease of 55% in fixed term exclusions this term compared to Autumn 23.

There is a clear focus on planning for learner progression and improving the curriculum and qualification offer to maximise opportunities for learners. One example of this is for Year 5 – Step 2 & 3 Language, Literacy and Communication and Mathematics and Numeracy. Media Academy Cymru

delivered a 6 week course on numeracy, literacy and communication which engaged learners in hands on, practical experiences to support cross-curricular learning. Consequently, learner engagement in Literacy and Numeracy interventions increased, which in turn is having a positive impact on their progress.

Planning and responding to learner's needs is making a positive difference. For example, in Key Stage 4 the offer has changed from a 5-lesson to a 7-lesson model. This adjustment allows for more manageable lessons, better supporting learners' needs by breaking down content into smaller segments. Attendance has risen by 7.6% compared to the summer term.

There is a small cohort of children whose attendance at their mainstream school was 0% prior to referral but who now have attendance of over 90%. This can be attributed to their educational and emotional needs being met within the PRU.

A major concern leading to the need to review the PRU operating model was the reported incidents of violence and aggression. The intention was that the new model should better respond to learner's social, emotional and educational needs. This term there has been a 59% reduction in incidents of violence and aggression. There has been a significant reduction in staff absence compared to Spring 24 and alongside the reduction in exclusions and green shots of improvement in relation to attendance this suggests that progress towards meeting the intended aims of the restructure is good.

4. Legal implications

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5. Finance Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Integrated 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.

6.2 As this is an information report to Scrutiny an IIA is not required.

Appendices:

Appendix A PRU Improvement Action Plan Academic Year 2024/2025

Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Improvement Plan Academic Year 2024-2025

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: To align the vision and remit to the functions of a PRU			
RATIONALE: (why is this a priority - data link/evidence source)			
To provide appropriate and targeted support for learners across the authority with identified needs. Specialised and experienced staff at Maes Derw to be used more effectively across the local authority. (Key principles for restructure – point 5)			
Sub Priorities	Intended Impact / Success Criteria	Key Actions	Evaluation
To increase levels of reintegration Page 32	Pupils to be able to develop their personal and social skills to enable them to manage their emotions and behaviours in mainstream settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remit and admissions presentation to MC, Heads and Stakeholders - ALN identified before EOTAS referral, IDP written by the school - Clear pathway of reintegration, IDP provision to identify role of service and school - Early review agreed and 2-3 term intervention timescale adhered to 	<p>Autumn Term - SW has presented to Primary and Secondary Heads – new remit, admissions and expectations.</p> <p>Part-time places are now being offered at KS3 as part of a standard package with an expectation of pupils to continue to attend their mainstream school.</p> <p>The number of pupils reintegrating across Maes Derw has increased by 9.8% compared to Autumn term 23.</p> <p>Schools have shared reports for those children with identified ALN at admissions, E.G. Educational Psychologist records of consultation and evidence of them being on the ND Pathway.</p> <p>ALP for IDPs of those pupils reintegrating, has been written in collaboration between ALNCo and mainstream ALNCoS.</p>
To increase the number of pupils receiving support from the PRU	Pupils are able access supported immediately when a place is recommended by EOTAS panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity of Maes Derw to be reviewed – places to become more flexible and not all fulltime - EOTAS panel process to 	<p>Autumn Term - 141 pupils have received support from Maes Derw in the Autumn term 24. Compared to 124 in Autumn term 23. Increase of 13.7%.</p> <p>Part-time places are now being offered at KS3 as part of a standard package with an expectation of</p>

		<p>be reviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An increase in number of pupils receiving a part-time place with mainstream 	pupils to continue to attend their mainstream school.
To develop in-reach and outreach support to schools	Pupils to be provided with early interventions before needing a full-time place at Maes Derw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff available to provide 1:1 support, training and guidance to schools via EOTAS panel - To review transition and admissions processes with mainstream schools - IDP to be created with mainstream school and Maes Derw to support reintegration 	Autumn Term - Pupils without IDPs are having them written after a PCR in Maes Derw, attended by mainstream schools, parents and pupils who are contributing to the content.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: To achieve better outcomes for pupils all EOTAS learners across Swansea Council, not just those attending Maes Derw			
RATIONALE: (why is this a priority - data link/evidence source)			
To develop a clear vision for progression for all learners receiving support from Maes Derw. Pupil progression to be bespoke and relevant to the individual. Clear links to other EOTAS services to allow access to facilities and specialist staff.			
Sub Priorities	Intended Impact / Success Criteria	Key Actions	Evaluation
Secure ICT infrastructure for all learners at Maes Derw	All learners to have access to up to date and working ICT equipment to enhance their learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A review of current resources in line with new “Windows 10 end of life” plan. - Order of new equipment to replace - Staff to ensure that current equipment is used to maximise engagement and widen pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning 	<p>Autumn Term - Additional funding has been allocated from ALN Capital grant to secure equipment needed.</p> <p>Electronic drums and DJ music studio have been installed and pupils are learning to use new equipment to support learning in Music and widen opportunities through music therapy.</p>
KS4 Qualifications review to widen the offer	To increase the standard of outcomes for all learners at Maes Derw leaving in year 11. Reduce the number of pupils leaving identified as NEET.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the opportunities for vocational qualifications. Install resources to deliver Hair & Beauty 	Autumn Term - All staff have attended training from qualifications Wales to update their knowledge of the three waves and support with implementation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> qualifications - Review of appropriate pathways of qualifications for individuals - Skills audit of staff to review skills/interests 	KS4 staff audit has been completed to identify opportunities for a more diverse curriculum in KS4 SEBD provision.
Opportunities for more learners to access providers.	To increase the standard and range of offsite providers via the EOTAS framework. Increasing the breadth of qualifications offered, improve engagement and behaviour. Facilitate a sense of aspirations and potential. Opportunities for more learners to access providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of EOTAS panel to make recommendations for pupils to remain in school where the offer of qualifications is more suitable to the needs of the individual. - Widen the variety of qualifications offered at Maes Derw on and offsite. 	Autumn Term - Meeting has taken place with LA procurement officers to establish a new EOTAS provider framework. Maes Derw will work alongside other LA officer to develop this over the coming year. Criteria and requirements have been identified to ensure procurement processes are accurate and successful.
Implement a robust system for tracking pupil progress	Learners to be provided with the correct and appropriate support to ensure that all make progress while being supported by Maes Derw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taith360 to be used by all members of staff, teaching and non to ensure tracking of all areas of the curriculum is planned and assessed - The use of Edukey to track and plan interventions to be used consistently by all members of staff 	Autumn Term - All teaching assistants and the majority of teachers have had training by the ALNCo on how to create and evaluate interventions on Edukey. This has been put into practice for the last 2 terms, producing data to show individual pupil progress in specific interventions. Excel tracking system developed to track pupil progress, attendance and reintegration in the interim until Teacher Centre/Bromcom has been implemented.

Clear individual plans for pupils – targeted support in line with EOTAS referral	All pupils to be referred to EOTAS panel/ Maes Derw with an IDP in place and clear request for specific support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EOTAS panel process review. Schools to clearly identify the needs of the learner to inform planning at Maes Derw - IDP to be developed by schools before a referral is made - IDP to clearly identify a ‘pathway’ of learning and support by Maes Derw and the mainstream school 	<p>Autumn Term - There is a slight increase in the number of pupils starting at the PRU with a school based IDP.</p> <p>Currently 11 pupils on roll at Maes Derw have School based IDPs. This is an increase of 22% compared to Autumn term 23.</p> <p>There are currently 53 pupils on roll with LA maintained IDPs written and issued by Maes Derw.</p> <p>There is an increase in the number of pupils having a jointly written IDP between Mainstream and Maes Derw.</p>
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: To review the wellbeing support of learners being supported at Maes Derw			
<p>RATIONALE: (why is this a priority - data link/evidence source)</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing is at the centre of the needs of all pupils who require support for Maes Derw. Health and Wellbeing is embedded in everything that we do from whole centre culture, class planning and individual interventions that are preventative and reactive. This is done well to meet the needs of the pupils but not clearly assessed, monitored and evaluated to show progress.</p>			
Sub Priorities	Intended Impact / Success Criteria	Key Actions	Evaluation

An in-reach and out-reach programme to be developed and planned for	A programme of in-reach and out-reach that schools and pupils can access as soon as support is needed is planned for. (implementation may be next year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff structure review - Collate information from schools as to what support they require at an early intervention level - Possible staff identified as triage before EOTAS referrals are made 	<p>Autumn Term 24 – Due to staff recruitment/vacancies and the September 24 restructure. Steps towards this priority have not yet taken place.</p> <p>Staff continue to support pupils in mainstream school with reintegration where possible. This is more consistent in Ty Canol where all pupils are 50% Mainstream, making staff available.</p>
Full team of support workers	All pupils in Maes Derw to be allocated a key worker (Support Worker, L4 TA or Teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment to Support Worker team 	<p>Autumn Term 24 - All vacant posts have been recruited to as of 6/1/25. 8 full time support workers are now employed and in place.</p> <p>A new induction programme has been designed and implemented with new starters.</p>
Parenting support programme to be developed	Parenting workshops and signposting mechanisms in place to provide additional support to parents before or after a referral is made to EOTAS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaires to schools and parents to assess desire and need - Support workers identify current agencies and provisions available for parents. Signposting mechanism to be developed. - Support workers to develop a programme of support specific to the needs of our current or prospective parents where there are high level of needs/gaps from other agencies. 	<p>Autumn Term 24 - Existing support workers have excellent knowledge of agencies, good professional working relationships. Ability to signpost and signpost families with care, support and empathy.</p> <p>CAMHS and LA partners have provided parent workshops focused on Child and Adolescent Mental health and adult numeracy skills. Parental attendance and engagement has been good.</p> <p>McMillian coffee morning was organised and hosted at Maes Derw with key partner agencies in attended to build relationships with parents and make them aware of what support is on offer. Engagement particularly from primary parents was very good.</p> <p>An Enterprise fayre was organised to showcase and develop pupils' creativity, practical and independence skills. Parental engagement was excellent and</p>

			<p>developed an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of qualifications and curriculum.</p> <p>Regular communication to parents regarding support that is on offer for pupils with Additional Learning Needs and Mental Health difficulties.</p>
<p>Develop a timetable of specific interventions and wellbeing sessions for all pupils</p>	<p>All learners are able to engage in a bespoke timetable specific to their needs, barriers to learning and progress. Developing a higher number of learners that can maintain time in their mainstream school.</p>	<p>Recruitment to Support Worker team</p> <p>A review of wellbeing, how to assess this and monitor progress</p> <p>Develop a clear breadth of programmes to specifically meet the wellbeing needs of the pupils</p> <p>All interventions to be clearly assessed, monitored and evaluated to show progress. Tracked to meet the H&WB AoLE</p> <p>Develop staff expertise in areas of need/interventions</p> <p>Pupils and parents to have a clear understanding of their own needs and the support that is in place</p> <p>Provide a clear and sustainable budget for interventions and support programmes</p>	<p>Autumn Term 24 - Recruited full support worker team</p> <p>Secured funding and building plans for KS4 intervention rooms to be build July 2025.</p> <p>Increased music intervention rooms/resources and music therapist</p> <p>Primary increase intervention room, utilised existing space – for regulating, well-being sessions and a welcoming quiet space.</p> <p>Four support workers have been trained by CAMHS to enable Maes Derw to refer pupils to CAMHS for specific Mental Health support. This is the first time the PRU has been able to refer pupils themselves.</p> <p>Around half of the pupils currently have a well-designed, targeted plan of interventions aimed at their barriers to learning/ALN. These plans are all tracked on Edukey. The majority of interventions have had a positive impact enabling pupils to make progress. Interventions having a high impact include coding club, cooperative play, ALN 121, ELSA, physical education and Credu.</p>

		Increase intervention spaces specifically for KS4 SEBD and increase use of all spaces onsite.	
Upskill all staff to meet the changing and developing needs of the cohort	All learners who attend Maes Derw are provided with a curriculum and specific support that meets their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff training analysis and skills matrix - Identified areas of demand and need for pupils - Training plan up to 3 years for development of staff - Mechanisms for all individuals to feedback to wider staff 	<p>Autumn Term 24 - Staff training database has been implemented. A clear plan moving forward is in place and staff are booked on to training as soon as is available to ensure they are always up to date.</p> <p>Induction programme for all staff created and implemented to ensure consistent knowledge, training and approached.</p> <p>Maes Derw has become part of a pilot project to implement TrACEs toolkit.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: To reduce the incidents of violence and aggression by pupils to peers and staff

RATIONALE: (why is this a priority - data link/evidence source)

Maes Derw has a high number of exclusions, even though the rate is decreasing in most areas there is still a higher rate of pupils being excluded. Most of the exclusions are for violence and aggression or verbal aggression towards staff and other pupils. The highest number of exclusions have been issued to our primary learners. There is a direct correlation to the increase in violence and aggression from pupils and the increase in pupils identified as experience high level of trauma and the increase in the number of referrals to the service.

“Exclusions from schools are linked with a range of negative outcomes including poorer mental health, wellbeing, and educational outcomes, as well as adverse long-term outcomes such as decreased earnings potential, increased risk of financial difficulties and unemployment, and mental and physical health issues.” (Review of practices used in maintained schools and pupil referral units to prevent exclusions: summary May 2024)

Sub Priorities	Intended Impact / Success Criteria	Key Actions	Evaluation
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Review positive behaviour and exclusion policy at Maes Derw	All pupils and families have a clear understanding of the support and expectations of Maes Derw and that there is zero tolerance on violence and aggression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task and finish group established to review positive behaviour and exclusions policy - Members of group to consist of staff representation and key management committee members from a variety of stakeholders - Parent and pupil voice to be collated and feedback in to policy - Alternative strategies to be explored instead of exclusions - New policies to be approved by the Management Committee - New policies to be shared with all staff members 	<p>Autumn 24 - LA have facilitated a serious of behaviour workshop to collate the views of all educational professionals. This will feed into the creation of a LA behaviour strategy, toolkit and exempla policy for schools. All Maes Derw staff have had the opportunity to contribute. Several staff have attended and participated in workshops. SW has attended and supported with facilitation.</p> <p>Increased attendance by parents at post exclusion meetings, evidence of improved parent engagement and opportunity to share the same expectations and support behaviour at home and in school.</p> <p>Increased use of internal exclusions.</p> <p>A decrease of 55% in fixed term exclusions this term compared to Autumn 23.</p>
Identification of pupil needs	All pupils to receive appropriate and effect support to allow them to manage their feelings and emotions in a safe way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All pupils to have their needs and barriers to learning clearly identified before starting at Maes Derw, so a clear support plan which forms their IDP can be created - Wellbeing assessment to be agreed and completed for all 	<p>Autumn Term 24 – The review of EOTAS panel processes to ensure the clear identification of pupils' needs before starting at Maes Derw has not yet been undertaken. This is due to start in Spring term 25 with implementation of a new referral process as of September 25.</p> <p>Wellbeing assessment tools to be developed with newly appointed Support Worker team from January 25.</p>

		<p>learners to identify their needs and key support needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wellbeing assessment and programme to be developed to track progress of individuals 	
Therapeutic support for primary learners	All pupils identified at EOTAS panel in need of a therapeutic support can access this at Maes Derw or by other services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A review of the needs of learners to identify what are their barriers to learning and experiences - A review of staff training and interventions to target support - An action plan to identify training need, resources and staffing to implement therapeutic services that are identified as needed. 	<p>Autumn Term 24 - A small cohort of pupils are being supported by an ELSA practitioner during targeted intervention sessions.</p> <p>Therapists supporting pupils on site as part of their school day.</p> <p>Reading dog from Burns supports pupils once a week to develop skills to emotionally regulate.</p>
Wellbeing support for staff	All staff feel safe and well supported to be able to fulfil their job roles at Maes Derw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff questionnaire regarding staff wellbeing - All staff to have personal wellbeing targets as part of performance management processes - All staff to be aware of processes to access free and available counselling, stress management and 	<p>SLT are very supportive of staff to access LA services such as OH and stress management. Staff are supported and encouraged to access support.</p> <p>Staff social events have been organised to encourage and foster good working relationships and boost staff morale.</p>

		<p>Occupational Health services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coaching and Mentoring program to be explored - Staff questionnaire to establish what support they would like 	<p>A healthy and nutritious breakfast provided by SLT on INSET days to support staff and encourage healthy eating options.</p> <p>SLT continue to promote good and healthy work life balance, encourage autonomy and trust across all staff.</p> <p>Information has been provided to all staff directing them towards free and confidential emotional support for educational professions from Education Support.</p>
<p>Trauma informed approach by all members of staff</p>	<p>All pupils have access to a fair and supportive service which is underpinned by trauma informed practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TrACE's self-evaluation framework to be completed - Evaluation of current staff – trauma informed practitioners - Identify further staff to be trauma informed practitioners - Whole staff trauma training - Action plan in line with TrACE's outcomes. 	<p>Autumn Term 24 - Maes Derw has become part of a pilot project to implement TrACEs toolkit.</p> <p>Initial meetings have been held with WG, ACE Hub and Traumatic Stress Wales. SLT presented with staff training resources.</p>

Agenda Item 9



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 10 April 2025

Hearing the Voices of Children and Young People

Purpose:	To brief the Panel on work undertaken during 2024-2025 to hear the voices of children and young people in Swansea.
Content:	An overview of work undertaken by the Education Directorate and work undertaken by the Partnership and Involvement Team based in the Social Services Directorate.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views.
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Rhodri Jones, Head of Achievement & Partnership Service Rhodri.Jones@swansea.gov.uk Sarah Tillman, Team Manager for Education Strategy Sarah.Tillman@swansea.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to listen to the voices of children and young people since April 2024. The Education Directorate and the Partnership and Involvement Team in Social Services engage with children and young people, both in educational settings and also in the community to ensure their voices are heard. The Partnership and Involvement Team have also facilitated events linked with Education.
- 1.2 In 2014, Swansea Council launched its Children's Rights Scheme, which sets out the arrangements that Swansea Council will put in place to ensure compliance with its duty to have due regard to the UNCRC. The Council continues to uphold its statutory commitment to facilitating County-wide mechanisms to hear the voice of children and young people, as set out in Section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and Article 12 of the UNCRC.

- 1.3 The importance of hearing the voices of children and young people is reflected in the 2023/2028 Corporate Plan. This is detailed in the plan '*Involving all of our citizens in what we are doing* – Schools' pupils are involved in their education through school councils and through 'Pupil Voice', which is directly aimed at increasing pupil participation as set out in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); Swansea was the first UK council to adopt and embed UNCRC. The council's 'Big Conversation' events give children and young people an opportunity to discuss that matter to them and to influence council policy'.

Under the Education & Skills Objective in the 2023/2028 Corporate Plan, this is detailed under '*Involving people* – Involving learners in their education through a range of engagement mechanisms in order to demonstrate we value these key stakeholders.'

Specific strategies also refer to learner voice, e.g., the Inclusion Strategy will promote learner participation in decision-making.

2. The Children's Rights and Human Rights City Schemes and the Pupil Manifesto

- 2.1 A second version of the Children's Rights Scheme was published in 2021. This was updated from the 2014 scheme following public consultation and ensures the scheme compliments the 'Right Way' principled approach that is being embedded nationally and led by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

- 2.2 As part of the Children's Rights Scheme, children and young people identified seven County-wide priorities to be addressed by Swansea Council and its partners of the Public Service Board in 2021. In February 2024, a Big Conversation event was held with children and young people to revisit the original priorities. Six renewed priorities were set for Swansea Council to address:

- Protecting the Environment – Develop resources and projects aimed at protecting the environment, whilst lowering our own carbon footprint within schools and communities.
- Health and Wellbeing – Improve mental health awareness and support (within and outside of Education), help us to manage our health and wellbeing and teach us how to look after our physical and mental health.
- Equality – Ensure equality for LGBTQIA+ and disabled children and young people. Work to tackle stereotypes of young people and give us opportunities to go to intergenerational events.
- Safety – Ensure Swansea is a safe place for all children and young people. Develop safe spaces for children and young people, tackle domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, and work towards ending violence against women and girls.
- Listening to learners – We want to have a say about what we learn in school. This includes school dinners – we want healthier options, we want sex education to include LGBTQIA+ sex education, we want to learn about politics, and we want you to ensure all children and young people have their voices heard.

- Technology – Technology is a big part of our lives now and we want to make sure we're staying safe. We want you to run sessions around social media, gaming and internet safety.
- 2.3 Targeted training is provided to schools around the rights of children and young people, with several quality checks in place to provide assurance around schools promoting these effectively. Many schools embrace the principles that underpin the work of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- 2.4 As part of the development of the Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, the Strategic Equality and Future Board reviewed engagement and consultation undertaken in relation to equality and diversity issues to inform its objectives. This included engagement undertaken with children and young people in 2022 and 2023. An action plan is in place to deliver the objectives of the plan, with specific areas of focus shared monthly. The first annual review will be published in March 2026.
- 2.5 In 2024, the secondary schools Pupil Voice PLC developed their priorities for their next Swansea Pupil Voice Manifesto. A final draft of the Manifesto has been prepared, with plans to present this to the Cabinet Member in the coming weeks with the hope that it can once again be presented to full Council before the end of the academic year.
- 2.6 The key themes identified in the Manifesto are:
- Feeling Safe in Our Community – Focusing on safety measures, education and resources to ensure pupils feel secure both in school and the wider community.
 - Celebrating Diversity and Anti-Racism – Promoting cultural awareness, inclusivity and celebrating diverse backgrounds.
 - Barriers to our Learning – Addressing issues like poverty, nutrition and educational equity to ensure all pupils have equal opportunities.
 - Protecting the Environment and Minimising Waste – Emphasising sustainability practices such as eco-gardens, recycling and environmental awareness.
 - Mental Health and Emotional Well-being – Supporting mental well-being through counselling, peer mentoring and well-being initiatives.
 - Accessibility – Ensuring all pupils, including those with disabilities, have equal access to education, community activities and safe environments.

Each theme highlights specific school-based actions and broader community initiatives to improve the well-being and opportunities of learners in Swansea.

3. Universal Children's Day

- 3.1 Following the successful events in November 2022 and 2023, the Council held another event to mark Universal Children's Day at the Waterfront Museum on 20 November 2024. The theme for World Children's Day in 2024 was 'Listen to the Future'.

- 3.2 During the 2024 event, the Council celebrated 10 years of the Children's Rights Scheme, highlighting the work done over the last decade and set plans going forward. A podcast was launched that included learners who were invited to take part during a Big Conversation around Health and Wellbeing. Feedback in the form of 'You Said / We Did' was given for the seven priorities set by children and young people.
- 3.3 An interactive marketplace was also held with a number of organisations that work with children and young people across Swansea.

4. School Councils and Beyond

- 4.1 The School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005 sets it out clearly that the governing body of a school must establish a school council, the purpose of which is to enable pupils to discuss matters relating to their school, their education and any other matters of concern or interest and to make representations on these to the governing body and the headteacher.
- 4.2 The headteacher of a school must ensure that meetings of the school council are convened on six occasions during the school year and ensure that all school council meetings are supervised by at least one member of the school staff. Both the governing body and the headteacher of a school must consider any matter communicated to them by the school council and provide a response to the school council.
- 4.3 The membership of the school council must consist solely of registered pupils at the school. The governing body of a school and the headteacher must make arrangements for at least one registered pupil of each year group, from Year 3 and above, to be elected to membership of the school council.
- 4.4 The headteacher of a school must ensure that the school council has the opportunity to nominate up to two pupils from years 11 to 13 (inclusive) from its membership to be associate pupil governors on the school's governing body. The governing body must accept any pupil nominated and appoint him or her as an associate pupil governor on the governing body.
- 4.5 Swansea schools have a long history of ensuring that pupil participation goes way beyond the requirement of having a school council, with the national definition of participation being at the centre of our schools' ethos in that *participation means that it is a learner's right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect them. Having a voice, having a choice.* This has been evident as all our schools plan the development and delivery of the Curriculum for Wales. For example, the way in which schools engage in the long-term planning for the development of concepts within their individual curricula and on a day-to-day basis when consulting pupils over what they want to learn within a given topic or theme.

5. Partnership and Involvement Team

- 5.1 Over the last twelve months, the Partnership and Involvement Team have continued to undertake an extensive variety of activities that have provided opportunities to listen to the voices of children and young people.
- 5.2 Since 2014, there has been a mechanism called 'The Big Conversation' to involve children and young people aged 5-25 years to provide an opportunity for them to engage in accessible and meaningful sessions to shape services and to have a voice on issues that impact their lives. Three Big Conversations have taken place since April 2024, with the themes:
- Health and Wellbeing – this focused on school dinners, breathwork, play, healthy Relationships, mental health, and Swansea Councils Disability Strategy.
 - Intergenerational – this session brought children, young people, and adults together. The event challenged stereotyping and looked at creating spaces that were for everyone.
 - New Chapters – this event looked at transitions in our lives, considering tools and techniques for dealing with change in our lives.
- 5.3 During the summer holidays of 2024, six "City Chill" events were held in the city centre. These events were held in partnership with community organisation and Council teams. The aim of the events was to help signpost the community to partners and organisations. The events also provided a space for young people and families to come and take part in free activities.
- 5.4 Afternoon Teens – a partnership between Evolve and the Partnership & Involvement Team held six afternoon tea sessions where young people from the five youth hubs invited community members into their space for an afternoon tea. There was a big celebration event held at the Waterfront Museum at the end of the project.
- 5.5 During winter 2024-2025, 50 families were supported with holiday food hampers and activity packs funded by the holiday food fund grant.
- 5.6 COAST funding during summer 2024 and winter 202-2025 provided funding for children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) to take part in activities that are usually inaccessible to them. These activities included sessions like surfing, cooking, gardening, beekeeping and train rides. The sessions provided children and young people with ALN and their families safe, inclusive and accessible opportunities to socialise and try new things.

6. Learner Voice in Schools' Quality Assurance and Monitoring

- 6.1 The Education Directorate's School Improvement Team continue to speak to learners during 'listening to learner' activities as part of schools' quality assurance and monitoring.
- 6.2 Of the reports published to 26 March 2025 for schools inspected from April 2024, six primary schools and two secondary school had references to pupil

voice in their Estyn reports. Nearly all reports provide examples of the positive impact of including learner voice. Examples include:

- YGG Bryniago 'Staff provide valuable opportunities for older pupils to influence the wider life of the school by contributing to the 'pupil's voice' and participating in projects that have a direct impact on the school. For example, the school council worked in partnership with the county's catering department to adapt the school lunch menu across the county.'
- Burlais Primary 'The school values pupils' contributions and provides numerous opportunities for them to influence school life. The school's various pupil groups play an active and enthusiastic role in representing their friends. They have been responsible for the introduction of a new school prayer and a wider range of after-school clubs and enrichment opportunities.'
- Llanrhidian Primary - Pupils have a strong voice in their learning, with regular opportunities to make choices and demonstrate their skills. Close engagement with the wider community has a positive impact on teaching, learning, and pupils' well-being.
- Morriston Comprehensive 'Pupils, including those in the STF, are encouraged to take on leadership roles and the school has appropriate arrangements for pupils to develop their leadership skills. The school parliament is open to all pupils and is suitably involved in influencing school life. As a result, many pupils feel that the school listens to their opinions and adapts provision accordingly. The pupil parliament has had a positive influence on improving aspects of school life such as the price of food in the canteen, and changes to school uniform.'
- Gowerton Comprehensive 'There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills through pupil-led groups such as the 'Criw Cymraeg' and sixth form students coaching various sporting teams. Pupils across the school are not always fully aware of the council's activity and do not have enough opportunities to share their views on learning and teaching. The school has made strong progress in implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. It plans appropriate provision for pupils with ALN, taking good account of their views and those of their parents.'

7. Education Directorate

- 7.1 The Education Directorate provides direct support to children and their families. Person centred approaches are central to the work of teams that provide support, where children's views and voices are part of decision-making. Examples of this include the work of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team and support for learners who are excluded. Schools are encouraged to display advocacy information that has been provided to them.
- 7.2 As part of the consultation for future plans for Specialist Teaching Facilities (STFs) in Swansea, the views of learners were captured and carefully considered. This included a bespoke, easy to read pupil consultation paper that was also made available in British Sign Language (BSL). For learners in schools where the proposals were to open or close a STF in their setting, a meeting was held with the pupil council or another pupil representative group. Notes were taken at these sessions and learners were provided with

anonymous feedback form. Where appropriate, learners in STFs had proposals explained to them in a way they could understand. An example of this was in Birchgrove Comprehensive School, where the school's Moderate Learning Difficulties STF learners received a bespoke session with the local authority's child advocacy practitioners. During the consultation period, 100 responses were received from learners.

- 7.3 As part of the development of a new policy for supporting positive behaviour in schools, consultation and engagement was undertaken with learners through participation in a Big Conversation event. Learners gave feedback on topics around respect, rights and responsibilities. Learners shared sensible observations and suggested empathetic and some achievable solutions. Feedback will be given in a Big Conversation event in June 2025.
- 7.4 The three-year post-16 strategy is in its final year of delivery and has made good progress against all of its aims. Progress against each of these aims were reported as part of the Education Annual Report to the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel in December 2024. A survey for post-16 learners was undertaken in the first year of the strategy and its findings were used to inform the development of future provision in Swansea, within the available qualifications offer.
- 7.5 A new Designing Destinations Strategy will succeed the post-16 strategy and will be published in autumn 2025. Learner voice will play an integral role. Feedback will be actively sought through surveys, focus groups and other interactive platforms to ensure that their perspectives are central to decision-making processes. By valuing their input, the aim of the strategy is to meet the evolving needs of learners and empower them to shape their own educational and career pathways. This collaborative approach will ensure the new strategy is both relevant and responsive to the aspirations of our learners.
- 7.6 In March 2025, young people in Swansea played a key role in the 'It's Your Swansea' event at Swansea Arena, where they attended the event to gain valuable insight into the future of the city. Through their involvement and the use of learner voice on career choices, they contributed useful feedback that will guide the direction of the event in the future. Their input will be instrumental in showcasing a vision of a happier, healthier Swansea with a thriving economy, ensuring the event highlights the aspirations and needs of young people. This collaboration will help create a more vibrant and inclusive community, where the next generation's perspectives are central to shaping the city's growth and opportunities.
- 7.7 The Education Directorate is supporting schools to develop as anti-racist learning organisations linked to the vision of anti-racist Wales 2030. The voice of those with lived experience is central to developing anti-racist practice. As an example, ten schools have participated in an in-depth action research project led by a field expert. The schools have and continue to involve learners in different ways to shape their anti-racist action plans. Some schools have undertaken questionnaires with all learners on their experiences of racism.

- 7.8 As part of the recommissioning of the schools counselling service, a series of learner workshops were held to understand views around emotional health and wellbeing. All key stages were represented, and their needs will form the foundation of the procurement framework. A new model of school-based counselling through Platform is now operational, with the aim of providing learners with an offer more in line with emotional health and psychological wellbeing approaches to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. Platform undertakes regular learner voice, which informs the direction of travel and evolves the service to suit learners' needs.
- 7.9 A new Accessibility Strategy 2024-2027 was approved by Cabinet in October 2024. As part of the Strategy's development, disabled learners shared their views via completion of a Microsoft Word or Microsoft Forms questionnaire, either independently or with support, for example, from an Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) to ensure that the draft strategy reflected what was important to them. A further wider consultation took place prior to the approval of the Strategy. The Strategy has provided a strong foundation for schools to build their own accessibility plans.
- 7.10 A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is written and developed in schools for all children who are looked after (CLA). This forms part of their wider care and support plan and focuses on their view of education and how they would like to be supported and is discussed in their wider reviews.

8. Future workstreams for learner voice / next steps

- 8.1 Continue working in partnership with the Partnership & Involvement Team to identify and deliver opportunities to hear the voices of children and young people, including those who are marginalised, those with protected characteristics and those with quiet voices. This will include Education representatives in attendance at all Big Conversation events.
- 8.2 Ensure the six priorities of children and young people and the new Swansea Pupil Voice Manifesto are considered when planning and delivering services.
- 8.3 Deliver opportunities for learner voice as part of the development of the new Designing Destinations Strategy.
- 8.4 Review and respond to feedback from children and young people through Big Conversation and other learner engagement opportunities.
- 8.5 The School Improvement Team will continue to listen to learners as part of schools' quality assurance and monitoring.
- 8.6 Develop further opportunities using digital mechanisms.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications within this report.

10. Finance Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications within this report.

11. Equality and Engagement Implications

11.1 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.

11.1.1 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'.

11.1.2 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.

11.2 As this is an information report to Scrutiny an IIA is not required.

Agenda Item 10

Education Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/2025

Date	Items to be discussed
Meeting 1 20 Jun 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum for Wales update Overview of key issues in education 2024/2025 Work Planning – discussing and agreeing the work programme for 2024/2025 – <i>discussion by Panel members</i>
*Meeting 2 19 Sep 24	Schools Session and Visit (1) – Bishopston Comprehensive School To discuss School Development Plan (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor 2 Sep)
*Meeting 3 17 Oct 24	Schools Session and possible Visit (2) – Gwrosydd Primary School (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor)
Meeting 4 14 Nov 24 4.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategy for Poverty Proofing the school day given the cost-of-living crisis Briefing on School Admissions Policy. Briefing on Career Advice in Swansea Schools
Meeting 5 12 Dec 24 4.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Progress with the Inclusion Strategy approved by Cabinet in 2023 (Including progress with regard to the Behaviour Strategy) Annual Education Performance against identified priorities RAG include Estyn progress against recommendations and Cabinet Member Q&A. (To include an update on Post 16 education and Welsh in Education Strategy progress and an update on elective home schooling).
*Meeting 6 23 Jan 25 4.00pm	Curriculum for Wales: Bishop Gore Comprehensive cluster of schools (Hosted at Bishop Gore School) Pre-meeting with School Improvement Adviser on 16 Jan at 4.30pm
Meeting 7 17 Feb 25 9.30am	Annual Budget as it relates to education matters (1 hour slot to coincide with other Panels and Budget Cabinet meeting)
Meeting 8 20 Feb 25 4.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Managing/improving school attendance and exclusions How schools improve the quality of teaching and learning – cluster and regional work.
*Meeting 9 26 Mar 25 4.00pm	Schools Session and possible Visit (3) Dylan Thomas Community Secondary School (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor 11 Mar)
Meeting 10 10 Apr 25 4.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Learning Needs Reform Update Education Other Than at School services Pupil Voice Manifesto and the pupil voice in education
Meeting 11 8 May 25 4.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Swansea Skills Partnership Annual update Quality in Education (QEd) / Sustainable Communities for Learning End of Year review in Education Scrutiny
New municipal year 2025/2026	
Meeting 1 26 June 25 4.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of key issues in education 2025/2026 and Work Planning – Panel discussing/agreeing the work programme for 2025/2026 – Curriculum for Wales update Religion, Values and Ethics Education progress update Curriculum for Wales progress update

*Meeting 2 10 July 25 4.00pm TBC	Schools Session and possible Visit (1) Morriston Secondary School (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor tba) – TBA
Meeting 3 25 Sep 25 TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partneriaeth Business Plan and progress (tbc) • **Pupil Development Grant spend analysis • .
*Meeting 4 23 Oct 25 TBC	Schools Session and possible Visit (2) Gowerton Secondary School (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor tba) – TBA

* Informal Panel meeting at a school – not public

*Due to the number of issues suggested for scrutiny this year we have a reserve list which will need to be slotted in during the year or alternatively they could be included in an extra meeting:

- **Pupil Development Grant Spend analysis
- Schools Meals Service
- Cookery in Schools Follow up

The Panel will also receive relevant individual school Estyn reports as they are published, along with any other reports or information relevant to Education Scrutiny.

Background

Cllr Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Helen Morgan Rees, Director of Education

The Officers listed in above timetable and their roles:

Sarah Tillman (Team Manager Education Strategy)
Rhodri Jones (Head of Achievement and Partnership Service)
Kate Phillips (Head of Vulnerable Learners Service)
Kelly Small (Head of Education Planning and Resources Service)
David Thomas (Principal School Improvement Adviser)
Jennifer Harding-Richards (Religion, Values and Ethics Adviser)
Louise Herbert-Evans (Team Manager Capital)
Lisa Collins (Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer)
Helen Howells (Team Manager Pupil Support)