



City and County of Swansea

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

Committee Room 3A, Guildhall, Swansea

Thursday, 16 January 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
S J Gallagher
B Hopkins
M A Langstone

Councillor(s)

A M Day
L S Gibbard
L James
J A Raynor

Councillor(s)

M Durke
D W Helliwell
S M Jones
L J Tyler-Lloyd

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

A Roberts

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Jennifer Raynor

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Mike Jones
Helen Morgan - Rees
Michelle Roberts
Nick Williams

Information Officer
Head of Education Achievement & Partnership
Scrutiny Officer
Director of Education

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Cllr Susan Jones and Co-optees Alexander Roberts and Dave Anderson Thomas declared personal interests in Item 4.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

Minutes were received by the Panel.

4 Annual Education Performance (incl. verified data) and School Categorisation

The Panel thanked Cllr Jennifer Raynor, Nick Williams, Helen Morgan Rees and Mike Jones for providing a detailed report and attending and discussing the issues.

The Panel considered closely the detailed report provided which gave details of performance for all learners in Swansea.

The Panel noted that when looking at the data, the way of monitoring outcomes and performance is changing, as directed by Welsh Government, so this is currently in a state of flux. They heard that this was due to the introduction of the new curriculum and changes to measures, making it impossible to make effective comparisons with previous years. Moving forward performance will focus much more individual pupil outcomes.

The following points were noted from the discussion:

- Foundation phase attainment fell in 2018 and 2019. It is difficult to make a comparison on previous data. There is now a different way of measuring outcomes. Key stage 2 and 3 has strong performance overall.
- Key stage 4 outcomes remain strong relative to those across Wales.
- Key stage 5 (post 16) overall picture of improvement. Panel would like to see a breakdown of the overall picture by subject.
- Free School Meal (FSM) learners continue to attain significantly below other pupils which is of concern to the panel.
- Looked After Children educational outcomes are low but the Panel were aware of the vulnerabilities of this group of children and the volatility of the data used due to the small number in each cohort.
- Schools in areas of high deprivation continue to experience challenges in improving attainment
- The gender attainment gap between boys and girls continues to be wide but Estyn has not highlighted this an issue of concern for Swansea.
- Pupil attendance remain consistently strong
- The numbers of fixed term exclusions have increased over the past 3 years but does compare favourably with the all Wales data. The Panel were pleased to hear that the Education Improvement Service do get behind these figures to see if there are areas for improvement or practice that can be shared. The Panel noted that the figures given do not give duration. They heard that a fixed term exclusion can often be very short, even just one day. The Panel asked for a breakdown of duration.
- Pupil Referral numbers have increased. It was explained that work is continuing across schools to ensure a consistent threshold for behaviour intervention, like referral to EOTAS and exclusions. They heard that a complete smoking ban had been introduced at the school and this has had some impact on the figures. The Panel also heard that monies have been devolved to secondary, schools under the behaviour strategy, to develop and improve their graduated response to pupils at risk of EOTAS. The Panel would like to find out more about this so have agree to schedule it into the future work programme.
- Undeclared exclusions was raised and they Panel heard that Challenge Advisors robustly challenge schools around exclusions especially those that are permanent. The Panel also heard that there has been some controversy across Wales relating to the 'off-rolling of pupils'. The Panel were pleased to hear that Swansea is seen as a good practice example on this issue.

- The Panel were interested in the role of philosophy to inspire learning and encourage positive behaviour. They heard that philosophy was one of a suite of tools in the behaviour strategy by schools.
- The Panel could clearly see from the data provided, evidence of the challenges that the many of our schools face relating to deprivation within their catchment areas. They would like to support and emphasise the continued importance of innovative use of the Pupil Development Grant to help improve outcomes for Swansea's most vulnerable pupils. A visit to Waunwen Primary School to see how they work with their most vulnerable pupils and their families was suggested by a Panel member.
- The Panel recognise and emphasise the importance of an ongoing focus on improving, what are long-term challenges locally and nationally. Some of these are the attainment gap between boys and girls, improving attainment of Free School Meal pupils and other vulnerable learners like Looked After Children and those attending the Pupil Referral Unit. We recognise there are constant challenges to improvement including for example FSM pupils have nearly double level of additional learning needs.
- The Panel are pleased to see more consistency and improved teacher assessment which is helping to show a far more realistic picture at Key Stage 2 and 3 and also the continued improvement of pupil outcomes at KS5 (Post 16).
- How all the different partners who might influence the outcomes of pupils join-up and work together, including for example health, was raised and whether the scrutiny Panel needs to consider this further by speaking to those partners.
- A question was asked about how scrutiny can measure outcomes and performance in the future ...Councillors heard that through categorisation they will be able to see how schools in Swansea are performing and what support they each require. Also with the introduction of the new curriculum there will be associated measures developed. Cllr Raynor said 'how we assess fairly what measures different people require and put these together to present a comprehensive picture for everyone including parents will be key importance'. This will form part of the dialogue being had around the new curriculum. The Panel agreed that challenge advisors throughout this transition will be an even more important ear on the ground for the Authority.
- The Panel wished to thank Headteacher's, teachers and school staff across Swansea for the great work they have done over the past year. We have some inspirational staff out in our schools.

5 Work Programme 2019/2020

The panel were informed of changes to the Work Programme. On the 30 April the Panel will now look at:

- Education Other than at School (progress update)
- Supporting vulnerable pupils (Pupil Deprivation Grant spend)
- Education Improvement Service Annual Performance Update

A number of possible topics for scrutiny were highlighted at this meeting for inclusion in the new work programme starting in June 2020, including

- Partnership working around education matters (including speaking to Health)

- How secondary schools are using the monies devolved to them as part of the Behaviour Strategy to improve their support for pupils at risk of EOTAS.
- Visit to Waunwen Primary School to look at how they work with their most vulnerable pupils and families.
- How individual schools across Swansea are preparing for the new Curriculum
- Use of case studies to evidence some work being done

6 For Information - Individual School Estyn Reports published since Oct 2019

The Panel received the Estyn Inspections for St Josephs Catholic Primary School and Birchgrove Comprehensive. The Panel wish to congratulate these and all those schools who have had inspections over the past year. Their outcomes evidence the hard work and improvements being made by Headteachers, school staff, school governors and the education improvement service.

The meeting ended at 5.35 pm