



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Scrutiny Performance Panel – Education

At: Remotely via Teams
On: Tuesday, 16 February 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Convenor: Councillor Lyndon Jones MBE

Membership:

Councillors: C Anderson, A M Day, M Durke, S J Gallagher, D W Helliwell, B Hopkins, L James, S M Jones, M A Langstone and L J Tyler-Lloyd
Co-opted Members: D Anderson-Thomas and A Roberts

Agenda

Page No.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence.**
- 2 **Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**
www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests
- 3 **Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**
- 4 **Letters and Minutes** 1 - 8
- 5 **Public Questions**
Questions must be submitted in writing, no later than noon on the working day prior to the meeting. Questions must relate to items on the agenda.
- 6 **Annual Budget Proposals - as they relate to Education matters**
Invited to attend are Cllr Jen Raynor (Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills) and Education Officers
Link to the 18 February Budget [Cabinet Papers](#) (papers will be available online from 11 Feb 2021)
- 7 **Summarising views for feedback to Cabinet**
- 8 **Work Programme** 9

Next Meeting: Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 4.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans

Head of Democratic Services

Tuesday, 9 February 2021

Contact: Michelle Roberts, Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Lyndon Jones
Convener – Education Scrutiny Performance
Panel

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Jennifer Raynor

Direct Line: 01792 63 7429

E-Mail: cllr.jennifer.raynor@swansea.gov.uk

Our Ref: JR/KH

Your Ref:

Date: 3 February 2021

Dear Councillor Jones

Swansea's Skill Partnership/ Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe (PSA) has a representative from the regional learning and skills partnership where business employers' views are represented and PSA group members also sit on the board, chaired by a TATA steel representative. As officers pointed out there was a common thread in what all employers across a wide range of businesses were looking for, someone who could be on time, dressed for work and definitely not hung over, whatever their qualifications. An increasing number of businesses are working with our schools. You have referred to visits the Scrutiny Panel has made to schools where you have learnt of the involvement of businesses and entrepreneurial skills development. We are in discussion with those businesses to see if they can commit to serving on another body such as the PSA. Currently, PSA has 3 strategic priorities that are relevant to employment, namely:

- building digital capacity where we have linked with Admiral through the sub-group;
- advice and guidance for careers and future occupations where Careers Wales provides linkage with employers; and
- a new NEETS partnership where there is linkage with training and employment.

Yours sincerely



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Aelod Y Cabinet Dros Wella Addysg, Dysgu A Sgiliau
Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills



To:
Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Cabinet Member for Education
Improvement, Learning and Skills

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Michelle Roberts
Gofynnwch am:
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Date 2 February 2021
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills following the meeting of the Panel on 21 January looking at the current Covid situation in Education.

Dear Cllr Raynor,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 21 January 2021

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

We heard that the position we are in is still a volatile one. Schools are open for vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers. That a wide range of critical workers have now been identified, so we must have due regard for this but we have to risk assess our schools to ensure that we can accommodate them safely. We have switched back to remote learning for the majority of pupils and there is an expectation that school years 10, 11, 12 and 13 will receive four hours of synchronous learning a day.

You told us that as a local authority we are not prescribing what schools should be doing, because we believe our Headteacher's know their communities best. They know what kind of blended learning or remote learning offer should be provided for their pupils. We heard that most pupils in Swansea will have a blend of recorded and live lessons, paper packs and work books, with the blend depending on the pupil's age and aptitude. We were pleased to hear about the Swansea Virtual School and how it has been enhanced and reviewed this term.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG 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

We were encouraged to hear that the local authority had invested 5 million pounds using the infrastructure project to provide both kit and connectivity for schools. It was good to hear that to date we have delivered over 8,000 devices in Swansea, that we have 2,000 devices being prepared for distribution, as well as awaiting a delivery of a further 2,000 devices. You told us that you were proud of this but that the situation will continue to be monitored, as we are still becoming aware of families that do not have the most appropriate devices and of children having to share devices.

We asked how many pupils currently did not have devices. We understand that from a recent survey approximately 2000 pupils do not have appropriate devices, for example using gaming devices. Also that this number is likely to be much lower now as things have moved from that survey with more equipment going out to schools. We would like you to update us on the current figure including the number of pupils on Free School Meals who need equipment or connectivity.

We asked whether people who have 'used' devices can donate them to schools. We heard that this is possible provided the device was appropriate, secondary schools with ICT staff could be contacted directly about this. For Primary schools they are asked to please contact education@swansea.gov.uk inbox as Primary Schools do not have ICT staff to do this.

You told us that on the 16 January an announcement had been made by Welsh Government about examinations/assessments in our schools and that these will not take place this summer term but will be in the form of internal assessment by Teachers. We also heard that examination boards will assist by providing an assessment framework which will give first stage standardisation. Thereafter, there will be a degree of moderation across schools and across pupils. The Local Authority is awaiting further information from the Welsh Government on this. You agreed to keep the panel updated as things progress.

We heard that confidence needs to be built back in our school workforce so they can feel they feel able to return to buildings safely, especially after hearing about the new variants being far more contagious. We heard that some staff working to provide close care with our vulnerable pupils including in our Pupil Referral Unit will be prioritised for the Covid vaccine. You told us that the evidence is that schools themselves are not unsafe and that there is a need to use the same control measures as used before. We understand discussions are taking place with Welsh Government about the return of pupils to school including which age groups will return first but all this will depend on the R rate.

We recognise that unless the R rate drops significantly pupils will not return to 'in school' learning until before 22 February. You were currently unsure how this will look, we would be grateful if you could keep us informed.

We asked how the learning offer was taking place in different schools and how we support schools to communicate expectations to parents and pupils. We heard that was a matter of balance about what suits a particular school and a particular age group. You told us that each school has different language and accessibility needs, so we have given schools the tools in the form of clear guidance which they can communicate to parents.

We also heard about the pressures on teaching and education support staff and we asked what resources were in place to ensure appropriate support. We heard that this had also been raised by the Schools Forum. You told us about the resources available and how they can be accessed. Also available is a positive psychology model that can be used in a crisis, opportunities for Headteacher's from National Academy to have Headspace discussions and a helpline available to all education staff.

A question was also raised about the Looked After Children Pupil Development Grant and a recent underspend that had been identified. The Panel heard that not all claims will have come in for the monies spent up to this point but will do so over this quarter of the year. The end figure therefore will be different.

You told us that schools and the Education Department have been most heartened by the recent Estyn report about the education response to the pandemic and how it gives a number of examples of good practice from schools across Swansea. We agreed to schedule this into our future work programme.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank our staff in the education directorate and in Schools through this challenging time.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised but would ask for a response to the following point by 23 February 2021.

1. Can you update us on the current figure for the number of pupils requiring computer equipment and/or connectivity including how many of these are pupils entitled to Free School Meals?
2. What is the current underspend on the Looked After Children Pupil Deprivation Grant. Why is this the case and how would any underspend be used?

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 21 January 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
S J Gallagher
L James

Councillor(s)

A M Day
D W Helliwell
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

M Durke
B Hopkins
M A Langstone

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)

Helen Morgan-Rees
Michelle Roberts

Interim Director of Education
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): L Tyler Lloyd

1 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Cllr Susan Jones declared a personal interest.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

The Panel reviewed the letters and minutes following the Panel meeting on the 17 December 2020.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 Verbal update - Covid Education Recovery Plan

The Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills and the Director of Education gave the Panel a verbal update on the current Covid situation in Education. The following was noted from the update and the discussion had.

- Still hampered with Covid situation but other strategies continue to be developed including, for example, the Additional Learning Needs Reform, New Curriculum, professional development and the behaviour strategy.
- The position we are in is still a volatile one. Schools are open for vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers. A wide range of critical workers have now been identified so we have due regard for this but we have to risk assess our schools to ensure that we can accommodate them safely.
- We have switched back to remote learning for the majority of pupils. There is an expectation for years 10, 11, 12 and 13 for four hours of synchronous learning a day. We as a local authority are not prescribing what schools should be doing. The reason for that is that we have a diverse communities. We believe that our head teachers know their communities best. They know what kind of blended learning or remote learning offer should be provided for their pupils.
- Most of our pupils across Swansea have a blend of recorded lessons, some live lessons, paper packs and work books. The blend will depend on pupil's age and aptitude. The Swansea virtual school has been enhanced and reviewed this term.
- Devices for pupils, digital learning and digital inclusion. We have invested through the infrastructure project more than 5 million pounds in terms of both kit and connectivity. To date we have delivered over 8,000 devices to our schools in Swansea and on top of that we have 2,000 being prepared for distribution, with delivery of a further 2,000 devices awaited. Proud of that achievement. The situation will also continue to be monitored, as we are aware that some of our families do not have the most appropriate devices and there are children that are sharing devices.
- Panel asked whether the people who have previously used devices can donate them to schools. The Director said yes if the device is appropriate they can contact secondary schools directly as they have the ICT staff to prepare them for use by pupils but if someone wants to donate to a Primary School then can they contact education@swansea.gov.uk inbox as Primary Schools do not have ICT staff to do this.
- Announcement made on the 16 January about examinations and assessments in our schools was raised. The assessment for this summer term will be in the form of teacher assessment, no exams but assessment within schools with no external assessment. Pupils would likely therefore to be assessed used mock examinations/past assessments. The examination boards will assist by providing an assessment framework which will give first stage standardisation. Thereafter, there will be a degree of moderation across schools and across pupils but the authority is awaiting further information from the Welsh Government on this. Cabinet Member agreed to keep the panel updated as things progress.
- Panel raised issue of national digital poverty and the need for this to be addressed at a national level in the future. The Panel heard that the Local

Authority is working with Welsh Government on these matters. Definitely a need to look at connectivity in the future.

- The Panel asked how many pupils did not have devices currently. The Panel heard that from recent survey approximately 2000 pupils do not have appropriate devices, for example gaming devices, but are able to access learning to some extent. This number is likely to be much reduced as things have moved on a little from that survey and with more equipment starting to go out to schools. The Panel would like to see the current information when it is available including how many pupils on Free School Meals who need equipment or connectivity.
- Need to build confidence back in our school workforce to return to buildings after hearing about the new variant being far more contagious and more susceptible to children. We have evidence that the workplace itself is not unsafe and there is a need to use the same control measures as before but these need to be enhanced. Discussions are being had with Welsh Government about the return of pupils. Some of what is being discussed includes which age groups will return first but it will depend on the R rate. Welsh Government has pledged to have discussions with the profession to enable this.
- If the R rate does not drop significantly pupils will not return until after the 22 February. What that will look like currently we have no idea but we will keep the Panel informed as we learn more.
- Staff working with vulnerable children who do intermit care will be able to be vaccinated along with those working with vulnerable pupils at the Pupil Referral Unit.
- Key priorities continue to be progressed including:
 1. safeguarding and engaging on wellbeing pastoral care
 2. building programme including handover of new PRU next week
 3. ALN programme implementing Act by Sep 2021
 4. key strategy around blended learning strategy
 5. positive behaviour strategy and implementation plan
 6. curriculum implementation plan locally 2019-2022 3rd phase; and
 7. improving leadership capacity across schools in Swansea (national programme to develop leaders currently ERW).
- LAC PDG spend, why is there an underspend and how will it be used. The Panel would like to find out a little more about that underspend and why, if clusters not drawing down funds and why. The Panel heard that not all claims will have come in for the monies spent but will do so over this quarter of the year, the underspend shown will therefore reduce.
- Thanks to Director and schools based staff for their work through this challenging time.
- How we support schools to communicate expectations to parents and pupils was raised. Panel told that it is a matter of balance and what suits a particular school and particular age group, important to have an acceptable learning offer. LA guidance on blended learning was given to school and they can communicate this to parents. Each school has different language and accessibility needs, so given schools tools with good clear guidance so they can communicate to parents that is supported by local authority.
- Pressures on Teaching and education support staff, what resources needed to ensure appropriate support for teachers who are finding it tough going and also counselling. Are additional resources required? Schools forums raised this also.

We providing a good list of resources and how they are accessed. No just about signposting but do more than that offering session education psychologist offered a positive psychology model that can be used in a crisis and opportunities from national academy to have Headspace discussions and education support helpline (also has welsh medium offer)

- Cabinet Member said that Schools and Education Department most heartened by the Estyn report recently published that gives a number of cameos. Scrutiny may wish to schedule this in to go through in detail. Includes a letter specific to Swansea and the national report on how education has responded to the pandemic. Panel will schedule this into their work programme.

6 Education Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021

The Panel reviewed the work programme.

The meeting ended at 5.20 pm

Chair

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel DRAFT Work Programme 2020/2021

All meetings will be held remotely using Teams for foreseeable future

Date	Items to be discussed	Who
Meeting 1 22 Oct 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Update on implications and the recovery plan resulting from the impact of Covid-19 in Education and Schools (<i>cont'd from meeting in July</i>) Update on the key issues affecting Education more widely Planning the rest of the Council year in Education Scrutiny – Draft Work Programme (for discussion by Panel) 	Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees Panel
Meeting 2 19 Nov 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> School 1 – Waun Wen Primary School (<i>part of panels watching brief on Wellbeing in Schools and was on work programme for March 2020</i>). How the school meets the needs of their most vulnerable pupils, the challenges they face and what they do to meet/mitigate those challenges including through the Covid-19 crisis. Elective Home Education 	Headteacher Ms C Nicklin Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees Kate Phillips
Meeting 3 17 Dec 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Swansea Skills Partnership Update – Education and Schools recovery from Covid Annual Audit of Schools (<i>for information item</i>) 	Members of Partnership Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees
Meeting 4 21 Jan 2021	Update – Education and Schools recovery from Covid	Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees
Meeting 5 16 Feb 2021	Annual Budget as it relates to Educations matters (using Cabinet budget papers) <i>Annual item</i>	Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees
Meeting 6 18 Mar 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Blended and Remote Learning Feedback – pupils from Bishopston Primary School Update – Education and Schools recovery from Covid PDG summary of spend to support vulnerable pupils (<i>Annual item</i>) 	Pupils/Headteacher Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees
Meeting 7 22 Apr 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Learning Needs Reform and implementation (<i>watching brief item</i>) New Curriculum update including progress with implementation (<i>watching brief item</i>) The New Estyn Regime and summary of outcomes of thematic reviews 	Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees
Meeting 9 13 May 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Education Other Than At Schools Update (EOTAS), including progress with new provision (meeting to be added for May 2021) Update 21st Century Schools Programme 	Headteacher PRU Cllr J Raynor H Morgan Rees

To be rescheduled: Penyrheol Comprehensive School (Discuss school performance), Morryston Secondary School (Discuss school improvement following Estyn Monitoring) and Behaviour Strategy and how associated delegated spend to schools has been used.

To be added: Estyn Report on Education's Response to the Pandemic