

## **Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – SPC Update**

### **1. Remit of the Panel**

The overarching purpose of the Panel is to provide ongoing challenge to school's performance to ensure that *pupils in Swansea are receiving high quality education and the authority is meeting its objectives in relation to improving school standards and pupil attainment.*

### **2. Key Activities**

The Panel is currently meeting on a monthly basis and the work completed since April 2024 includes:

<b>Meeting 11</b> 18 Apr 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Religion, Values and Ethics Education</li> <li>2. Hearing the Voices of Children and Young People Education Other Than At School services (EOTAS) Annual Update</li> </ol>
<b>Meeting 12</b> 9 May 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quality in Education (QEd) / Sustainable Communities for Learning Update</li> <li>2. Swansea Skills Partnership Annual Update</li> <li>3. End of year review in Education Scrutiny</li> </ol>
New municipal year	
<b>Meeting 1</b> 20 Jun 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Curriculum for Wales update</li> <li>2. Overview of key issues in education 2024/2025</li> <li>3. Work Planning – discussing and agreeing the work programme for 2024/2025</li> </ol>
<b>Meeting 2</b> 19 Sep 24	<p><b>Schools Session and Visit (1) – Bishopston Comprehensive School</b></p> <p>To discuss School Development Plan (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor 2 Sep)</p>

### **3. Achievements / Impacts**

Four letters to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning have been sent since the last update in March. Find below some of the views and issues raised following on from the previous update in March 2024.

#### **Religion, Values and Ethics Education**

The Panel were pleased to hear that Swansea Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) has secured funding to improve the resources available to schools on the subject and that in Swansea we are further ahead than many other local authorities. Although this may be the case, the Panel felt there is a lot more to do to improve RVE in Swansea schools. This is evident from the declining number of pupils who are entered for examinations or taking the subject at GCSE and A 'Level. They understand that SACRE are continuing to investigate this decline. The Panel felt that it was important that they look at this again and will therefore put it into our work programme for next year, especially as it is a statutory requirement.

### **Hearing the Voices of Children and Young People**

The Panel were encouraged to hear about the amount of activity that is taking place not only in education settings but also more widely in the community to engage with and gain the views of young people. They heard that this is completed by both the education directorate and the Partnership and Involvement Team from Social Services. They were pleased to see the different ways in which young people's voices are gathered and then included in decision making here in Swansea. The Panel were particularly interested in how those quiet voices are gained and how they are fed into departments across the council.

### **Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme**

The Panel were interested to hear about the progress being made in relation to the provision for universal free school meals, community focused schools and additional learning needs. Hearing that 74 of the 80 schools works have been completed or have no works required, there are 2 remaining schools plus 5 where major projects are due to be completed by March 2025.

They were pleased to hear about the continued delivery of the capital maintenance programme including under both the Band A and B period and the continued maintenance on 68+ schools but did note that Welsh Government funding for education assets has been reduced from £3.6m to £0.83m. They were also interested to hear about the Local Development Plan Strategic Sites including potential new builds included in the strategic masterplans for Swansea and they look forward to seeing how these progress.

### **Curriculum for Wales**

The Panel heard about the progress and the challenges that have arisen in relation to the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales and how they are being addressed or mitigated. Councillors were also interested to hear about what is planned to continue to move this important agenda forward.

The Panel asked how schools across Swansea are working together to take forward the Curriculum for Wales across their clusters. They heard that nearly all schools in Swansea have a good grasp of the high-level statements that exist within the curriculum for Wales. Schools have used those themes to provide a really clear view of linear progression and what that looks like from 3 years old to 16 years old. Nearly all of our schools and settings provide practitioners with a clear shared understanding of progression. There are plans in place to deepen that work, so not just linear progression but vertically as well.

The Panel asked about the minority of schools in Wales where Estyn have identified that the Curriculum for Wales has not yet had a positive impact. They were told that one school in Swansea, when inspected, included a recommendation along those lines, but that is one out of all the inspections that took place and that five out of the overall fifty inspections across Wales. We heard that in reality it is a small number and those recommendations are pointing at the area of inclusion and/or the integration of the primary school in to the secondary school. The Panel were told it is about looking at how do we make those links even more explicit, it may also be that particular schools have some challenges in terms of, for example geography.

The Panel asked how we are ensuring a focus on pupils learning basic skills in this process of change to introduce the new curriculum. Councillors were told that more and more schools are going back to those basic skills and are making those explicit in

their school improvement plans but that is not happening everywhere. They heard that the curriculum needs to be implemented in a way that plans for all pupils and that previously we were governed by an accountability system that made us get to a measure. The Panel were encouraged to hear that now they are able look at the individual pupil and provide a much more bespoke curriculum and offer for each individual child.

Councillors also asked whether we are taking teachers with us on the journey to develop the Curriculum for Wales in Swansea schools. Hearing that in the daily conversations that the School Improvement Officers have with practitioners they are finding that teachers are still excited by curriculum for Wales, that they enjoy seeing and giving responsibility and ownership to the pupils.

#### **4. Education Scrutiny Performance Panel - Future Work Programme 2023/24**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Items to be discussed</b>
<b>Meeting 3</b> 17 Oct 24	<b>Schools Session and possible Visit (2) – Gwrosydd Primary School</b> (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor)
<b>Meeting 4</b> 14 Nov 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Strategy for Poverty Proofing the school day given the cost-of-living crisis and progress with the Inclusion Strategy approved by Cabinet in 2023 including progress with regard to the Behaviour Strategy.</li> <li>2. Briefing on School Admissions Policy.</li> <li>3. Briefing on Career Advice in Swansea Schools</li> </ol>
<b>Meeting 5</b> 12 Dec 24	Annual Education Performance against identified priorities RAG include Estyn progress against recommendations and Cabinet Member Q&A. Include an update on Post 16, Welsh in Education Strategy progress and an update on Home Schooling
<b>Meeting 6</b> 23 Jan 25	<b>Curriculum for Wales: Bishop Gore Comprehensive</b> cluster of schools - tbc
<b>Meeting 7</b> Feb 2025	Annual Budget as it relates to education matters (1 hour slot to coincide with other Panels and Budget Cabinet meeting) - <i>Date tbc</i>
<b>Meeting 8</b> 20 Feb 25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Managing/improving school attendance and exclusions</li> <li>2. How schools improve the quality of teaching and learning – cluster and regional work.</li> </ol>
<b>Meeting 9</b> 20 Mar 25	<b>Schools Session and possible Visit (3) – Dylan Thomas Community Secondary School - tbc</b> (Pre-meeting with School Improvement Advisor tba)
<b>Meeting 10</b> 10 Apr 25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Additional Learning Needs Reform Update</li> <li>2. Education Other Than at School services</li> <li>3. Pupil Voice Manifesto and the pupil voice in education</li> </ol>
<b>Meeting 11</b> 8 May 25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Swansea Skills Partnership Annual update</li> <li>2. Quality in Education (QEd) / Sustainable Communities for Learning</li> <li>3. Religion, Values and Ethics education update</li> <li>4. End of Year review in Education Scrutiny</li> </ol>