



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

BY EMAIL

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Date 13 February 2025
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Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning following the meeting of the Panel on 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

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- 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

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