

Education Department Summary (July 2016)

Context

1. The 2015 annual self-evaluation of local authority education services for children and young people (LAESCYP) has been published.
2. The new Education Department Service Plan for 2016-2017 has been finalised and approved. There is a strong focus on corporate priorities, local targets and regional objectives.
3. The development of the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 is underway and is due for publication during autumn term 2016.
4. An internal departmental risk register is now in place. Operational risks are managed by Heads of Unit and are scrutinised through formal governance methodology using the Education Department's Strategic Leads Board (SLB) and Senior Leadership Team (EDSLT).
5. A revised structure for the Education Department has been implemented and, having now been in place for six months, it continues to provide a stable and consistent service. The table below illustrates the current Education Department team/management structure.

Chief Education Officer						
Strategic Planning and Improvement Group	Education Improvement Service		Education Planning and Resources Service		Learner Support Service	
Strategic Planning and Improvement Group						
Stakeholder Engagement Unit		Monitoring and Improvement Unit		Management Systems Unit		
Education Improvement Service						
Primary Phase Unit		Secondary Phase Unit		Curriculum Support Unit		
Education Planning and Resources Service						
Capital Funding and Delivery Unit			Funding and Information Unit			
Learner Support Service						
School Support Unit	Catering and Cleaning Unit	Swansea Music Unit	Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit	Lifelong Learning Unit	Additional Learning Needs Unit	Behaviour Support Unit

6. The recently-appointed Head of Learner Support Service has now been in post for five months. Along with the Chief Education Officer, the Head of Education Improvement Service, the Head of Education Planning and Resources and the Head of Strategic Planning and Improvement Group, the Education Department's top-level team is now fully populated and is functioning well.

Pupil attainment

7. While it is too early to provide a definitive update in respect of this year's national numeracy and reading tests, early information provides evidence to suggest that Swansea's overall performance will remain in the top quartile.
8. Teacher assessment of pupil attainment at Foundation Phase and at key stage 2 suggests that performance is slightly down on last year although this year's results are the second best ever and the upward trend over five years remains.
9. Teacher assessment of pupil attainment at key stage 3 suggests that performance is up on the previous year and is currently the highest ever.
10. It is too early to determine this year's key stage 4 results although early indications suggest that Swansea might improve further on last year's best-ever Level 2 inclusive performance (up from around 64% to over 65%).

School improvement

11. School inspections have been generally positive throughout the academic year 2015-2016 (especially in the secondary sector). Currently, only two Swansea schools have been identified in the RED support category.
12. The consistent challenge to schools has shown strong progress since the local authority inspection in 2013. There are now effective standardised processes in place to ensure rigorous challenge (i.e. deep data analysis, tighter reporting mechanisms and quality assurance procedures).
13. While the involvement of Education Improvement Service staff has been welcomed in the vast majority of schools, following a trade union directive, teaching staff at one primary school refused to provide books for scrutiny or participate in lesson observations.
14. While the current configuration of Education Improvement Service personnel provides a high-quality service, staff recruitment and retention continues to be challenging (most notably in the secondary sector).

Attendance

15. Attendance in our secondary schools hit an all-time high in 2014-2015 at 94.0% and Swansea's ranking improved to 10th in Wales after five years where ranking was 15th or 16th. In 2015-2016, it has risen again to 94.1% (a new all-time high).
16. Attendance in our primary schools hit an all-time high in 2014-2015 at 94.9% and Swansea's ranking improved to 11th in Wales up from 18th in 2013-2014. Attendance rates for 2015-2016 will be confirmed shortly although we are expecting a further improvement on last year's results.
17. By the end of the summer term 2016, fifteen primary schools had attendance exceeding 96% and six secondary schools at or exceeding 94%, with one achieving 96%. Two secondary schools have achieved over 95% attendance for the same period from September 2015 to the end of the summer term 2016.
18. The Education Department has appointed an Incentivising Attendance Officer who has launched the incentivising attendance scheme with schools. An official launch is being arranged for early in the autumn term 2016.

19. Although there has been good improvement in absolute terms, the comparative position of too many primary schools remains an area for improvement. Schools and the local authority will continue to work together to embed and share the strategies and actions that lead to higher levels of attendance.

Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)

20. Estyn conducted a monitoring visit to Swansea Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) on 14-16 March 2016 and removed the PRU from being 'in need of significant improvement'.
21. The designated challenge adviser continues to work closely with the centres that comprise the Swansea PRU. The Additional Learning Needs Unit and the Education Improvement Service are also working to support the PRU.
22. The Intervention Board continues to work with the Swansea PRU Management Committee in the short term to ensure robust monitoring of the effectiveness the new PRU Improvement Plan that builds on the work of the Accelerated Implementation Plan.

Notable other issues

23. The transfer of Work-Based Learning from Employment Training to Gower College Swansea was finalised in April 2016. That said, the final closing down of Employment Training still remains challenging including final financial reconciliation and archiving extensive learner records.
24. Significant work has been undertaken in respect of migrating all schools to Hwb Office 365. This is on track for a September 2016 launch.
25. Due in the main to the recently introduced Welsh Language Measure, there is significant pressure on the Welsh Translation Service. We are currently advertising for a new translator which is hoped will alleviate the current heavy workload of the team.
26. Budget pressures continue to be challenging; most notably involving EOTAS and out-of-county charges for pupils with additional learning needs.
27. The reorganisation of the Music Service is continuing. The latest update suggests that 77 schools have bought into the Swansea Music Unit service level agreement for the forthcoming academic year. We predict that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the restructuring of the service.
28. As of July 2016, the Welsh Government has still not finalised the terms and conditions for the FY2016-2017 Education Improvement Grant (EIG). Similarly, Pupil Deprivation Grant LAC allocations are still not known.