



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To:
Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Cabinet Member for Education

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Date 13 January 2017
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Summary: This is a letter from the Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education following the meeting of the Panel on 3 January 2017. It is about Education Other Than At School Services (EOTAS).

Dear Cllr Raynor

Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Impact/Follow up

Thank you for attending our panel meeting on the 3 January and helping us to follow up on the impact of our scrutiny inquiry into Education Inclusion (EOTAS). Following on from our initial meeting on 29 November, we looked at:

- Cabinet paper from 15 December relating to extensively overhauling the entire education other than at school service in Swansea
- Cabinet paper from 15 December giving details on establishing of specialist teaching facilities for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder
- Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) School Improvement Action Plan

We found your EOTAS Cabinet paper to be very comprehensive and we support its contents. We recognised that a lot of work has been done to move things forward but there is a lot still to do. We were encouraged by the plans that are now in place.

We were pleased to hear about the consultation with pupils that is starting to feed into the process. We heard that they have told us that they want to have a caring, nurturing environment and that they want to continue to have contact with their originating school even when they have been excluded. Schools need to understand this and ensure they have systems in place to make this happen.

We felt it important that financial support goes into Primary Schools as well as the secondary sector around behaviour as we must intervene early where we can. We expressed concern that none of the £700k will go into the primary sector. We were pleased to hear that support will be on two levels firstly the direct financial support to secondary schools but also the new behaviour support unit which will support schools, children and their families at all ages.

We were interested to hear more about the Lead Worker Model being proposed as it develops. We agreed that one point of contact for children, young people and their families was particularly important.

We were informed that a new Head of the PRU has been appointed and will take up the post in the summer term and that she will be involved in the developments over coming months. We were pleased to hear that she has a track record in improving outcomes.

We also discussed your Cabinet paper on the establishment of the Special Teaching Facilities (STF) for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We asked for reassurance that the increased STF provisions will provide adequate places for all those pupils who need it and that it will be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of pupils over coming years. We were told that many children with ASD are actually in mainstream and the STF provisions are for those at the higher end of the spectrum, but this process will give a much thorough assessment of the needs of pupils with ASB and places needed.

We heard that Swansea has a much higher level of Additional Learning Needs pupils and pupils that are statemented, than other local authorities across Wales. We agreed with you that we need to understand better how we compare with those other larger urban authorities like Newport and Cardiff and to look at potentially managing these aspects differently and would welcome further work on this to help review the effectiveness of our practices. We recognise that an ALN Commissioning Review has just started in Swansea and that this will include comparisons with other local authorities as well as looking at aspects like stakeholder engagement. We also note that there will be the new ALN Bill coming in. The Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel will carry out pre-decision scrutiny on ALN Commissioning Review when it reports to Cabinet at the end of the review.

You praised Jack Straw, Swansea's previous Chief Executive for the part he played in helping in the drive to extensively overhaul the entire education other than at school service. Particularly for keeping this issue high on the council agenda of priorities, ensuring a corporate approach to driving this issue and for finding funding from very tight budgets. The Panel has agreed with you and plan to write to him to show their appreciation.

We were pleased to hear of progress in finding a more suitable building and location for EOTAS services, and are encouraged by the pending feasibility study for a potential new facility in Cockett. Although the site has been associated with the youth offending service, the Panel felt that the potential positives of the site do outweigh this, particularly as the whole service will be rebranded. We heard that some of the potential positives of the site include: its green, leafy location close to a comprehensive school and further education college. It is also a large site that will have outside facilities as well as more suitable and up to date buildings. Its location is central enough for young people to travel to and from.

We asked if there was any potential of funding from the Welsh Government. We were told that this will be looked into but depended on how long we would have to wait as we need to move on with this as soon as we can.

We discussed the issue of engagement with CAMHS. The Panel heard that there is currently no direct pathway from EOTAS into CAMHS and we were particularly concerned about the potential for this being a weak link in the new EOTAS overhaul especially in meeting the future needs of many of these vulnerable children. We would like to see a clear link and pathway into CAMHS from EOTAS. We have agreed to write to the Public Services Board asking them to consider this issue in their multi agency capacity.

We felt that good progress is now being made in relation to the recommendations contained within our inquiry report and we can see that these have been incorporated and have helped to inform the decision making and preparation of the options Cabinet paper to extensively overall the entire education other than at school service.

We now look forward with optimism for children using EOTAS services and feel vulnerable children within the education system in Swansea will be much better served moving forward. We were particularly pleased to hear the ambition for this service is not just to be good but to be excellent. This concludes our inquiry into Education Inclusion. Further progress will be monitored via the Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel.

This letter does not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely

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