



City and County of Swansea

Notes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Schools**

Olchfa Comprehensive School, Swansea

Thursday, 16 November 2017 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor M Sykes (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

L James
L J Tyler-Lloyd

Councillor(s)

L R Jones

Councillor(s)

M A Langstone

Officer(s)

Hugh Davies
Anne Lloyd
Mary Jones
Mark Thompson
Sharon Jones
Six pupils
Michelle Roberts

Headteacher Olchfa Comprehensive School
Parklands Primary School
Chair of Governors at Olchfa Comprehensive School
Challenge Advisor for Parklands Primary School
Head of Curriculum Support (EIA)
School Advisory Board at Olchfa Comprehensive
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): B Hopkins, S M Jones, Mike Day, Steven Gallagher, Mike Durke, Louise Gibbard, Fiona Gordon and David Helliwell.

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

2 Pioneer Schools, the Future Curriculum in Wales (context to the visit)

Achieving the full benefits of [Successful Futures](#) for our children and young people, together with *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers*¹, and the New Deal for the Education Workforce will require us all to engage fully and work together. It will be a collaborative process that will involve the teaching profession, Estyn, local authorities, academics, parents/carers, businesses and a wide range of other stakeholders, experts and groups. To ensure we get it right, we will need to strike the right balance between proceeding at pace so that the new curriculum is available as soon as possible, with our desire to develop the new curriculum in partnership with schools and other partners to ensure we get it right. As we move forward together the development of the new curriculum will be: evidence-led, based on subsidiarity, ambitious and inclusive, manageable, with pace, passion and professionalism, unified.

Professor Graham Donaldson

Parklands Primary School and Olchfa Comprehensive School are working together in collaboration and are one of a small number of schools who are helping to map out the future of curriculum reform in Wales. This is as a result of the Donaldson

report Successful Futures Independent Review of Curriculum and assessment Arrangements in Wales.

The Panel met the Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and Challenge Advisors for both Parklands Primary and Olchfa Comprehensive School at Olchfa School. Members before meeting with professional spent 30 minutes discussing the new curriculum and their thoughts with a group of 6 pupils from across different years within Olchfa Comprehensive.

3 Session with young people who are pupils at Olchfa Comprehensive School

Scrutiny Councillors met with 6 young people from the Olchfa School Advisory Board asking them to consider

- ❖ How the school is helping them to prepare for life?
- ❖ What they think the school does well and what it could do better?
- ❖ Whether they feel they have a say in decision affecting the school and their learning?

The key messages from pupils about the new curriculum are summarised as follows:

- It is good because learning is now more linked to pupils day to day life, for example in maths learning about elevation and this being linked to map work or architecture.
- Skills learnt in these types of lessons are skills needed for life.
- Respect is important to both school and for life outside...it is very important for pupils to have a voice: every pupil in the school must have a voice. Pupils must feel that their opinions matter.
- Lessons are teaching us skills that also help build pupils confidence, so they can then become more involved and willing to give their views.
- We felt that the pupils having a voice have been the biggest difference to the school for their perspective. For example: pupils decided on which subjects would be looked at in PSE this year. Pupils then see as this is happening that they have the ability and confidence to put their ideas forward, this will help them with life.
- The way things are taught now allows everyone to get involved. Not just about exams but developing ideas and to think about and question them. Reflection time is also good for exploring different ideas and experience.
- More freedom in how things are done so can learn and develop our own learning styles. Can therefore be more creative and have more ownership of the learning process.
- More respect between teachers and pupils which results in pupils feeling that they can have their say more, which helps pupils to be more engaged and enjoy lessons.
- When asked what the school could do better, pupils said that needs of every pupil in relation to food/meals could be address. That the food available does not have many vegetarian options and does not cater for examples for Halal or vegan etc. The pupils thought that to enable full equality meals should be reflected pupils needs.

2 Session with Parklands Primary School and Olchfa Comprehensive School

Scrutiny Councillors met with the Headteachers, Chair of Governors from Olchfa and the Challenge Advisors for both schools to discuss how the development of the new curriculum for Wales is progressing from their viewpoints. The Panel took away the following learning points from the session:

- Leadership within schools will be key to moving forward, but must recognise that School readiness for the new curriculum will be varied.
- Both the School Governing Body and Leadership Team within a school must be behind it and be ready to move it forward.
- The majority of those involved teachers and governors must believe that this is the best way forward and be committed to it.
- Collaboration is happening not only because of the new curriculum pilot, some schools were thinking this way and starting to move down that road but this has been an impetus to moving forward. There are some schools that are not pioneer schools but are starting to do this because they recognise that it is the right thing to do.
- There are a minority of individuals within schools that are not convinced and therefore not as supportive of Donaldson. There therefore needs to be a winning of hearts and minds.
- As a school it is important to assess where you are at in relation to this and to now your capacity to make the change. Important to take staff along with you, school and staff need to be in right place to make the necessary changes.
- Must recognise schools are at different stages of learning and development, therefore their ability to move forward with the new curriculum will vary and need different levels of support.
- Ensure everything is grounded in the 4 core purposes ...they are the fundamental touchstone, schools teachers must understand and be committed to this in order to move forward.
- The pedagogy and type of knowledge is different so teachers need to embrace this as part of their continuous improvement journey. It will be important moving forward for the criterion to fit with the pedagogy that goes with the new curriculum
- It is vital to use evidence to inform the development of the practice needed. Moving forward must be underpinned by research and evidence based decisions
- The learning for pupils is much broader than with the current curriculum, subjects looked at in more depth and breadth, enabling pupils to questions and think and frees up time to explore issues more. This enables children to think and question and not just acquire knowledge.
- Working across clusters will be important moving forward, the primaries and secondary schools working together to ensure smooth transitions and shared practices will be of benefit to all.
- There is an important role for those pioneer schools in being reflective and looking at the effective pedagogy learned and that is needed, also encouraging and giving confidence to other schools to start down this process.
- The new curriculum needs to be about teaching and learning, about what the child needs and not only about results and data.
- The main challenges to moving this forward include:

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- Schools being able to release resource to do this so less resource will negatively impact on this.
- the only nature of change in communities, increase in second language and free school meals pupils
- If local authority could do anything to help it would be to create a climate for professional learning that is valued and at the forefront education.

The Convener of the Panel Cllr Mo Sykes thanked everyone including pupils for their participation in the session and for the useful and informative information given.

The meeting ended at 4.10pm