

Councillor Mo Sykes
Convener, Schools Scrutiny Performance
Panel

BY EMAIL

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Our Ref: JR/KH
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Dear Councillor Sykes

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – 16th November 2017

I am pleased to hear you visited Olchfa Comprehensive school to look at the work the school is developing within Parklands Primary. I am a governor at Olchfa school and I have fully supported the development of iLearn and the New Curriculum.

You asked 4 questions.

- 1. What is being done across schools in Swansea to ensure that we are reflecting the varied needs of pupils within the school meals that are offered, for example vegetarian, vegan, Halal?**

Response

School meals provide a varied nutritionally balanced menu to the children of Swansea. We offer a vegetarian menu option and provide halal food when requested. This statement applies to schools that use the SLA to provide their catering service, schools that have opted out should have their own arrangements in place.

- 2. How you think we can build upon the positive impact that rights respecting schools have had and how we can further develop the themes of culture and identity?**

Response

Our schools in Swansea are committed to the rights respecting schools award to embed the UNCRC into school life. The UNCRC is a framework that sets out the rights for children and young people (0-18 years), which will enable them to participate in society in an equitable way and protect and provide for their vulnerabilities if required. The UNCRC has 42 articles which set out how children should be treated, these rights are the things children need to be safe, healthy and happy.

There are specific articles listed in the UNCRC along the themes of culture and identity; these are promoted and encouraged in schools through the rights respecting schools award and are listed below:

Article 7 - The right to a name and nationality

All children have the right to a legally registered name, the right to a nationality and the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

Article 14 - The right to follow your own religion

Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practice their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide their children on these matters.

Article 15 - The right to meet with friends and join groups and clubs

Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 29 - The right to be the best you can be

Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, and their own and other cultures

Article 30 - The right to use your own language

Children have a right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether these are shared by the majority of people in the country or not.

During 2018 we will be exploring the views of children and young people through our Big Conversation and Pupil Voice Forums looking at cohesion statements and discussing if children and young people agree or disagree with the following three cohesion statements and what actions we can take to promote pride and belonging within our communities:

- That you feel you belong to your local area
- That this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
- People in my local area treat each other with respect and consideration

3. How do you believe the budget situation across schools both now and in the near future will reflect in their ability to take forward the new curriculum?

The authority has continued to prioritise the delegated schools budget over recent years as a key priority area and as such the funding available to schools is significantly higher than it might have been had decision mirrored the local government finance settlements from the Welsh Government. Nevertheless, the scale of cost pressures facing schools which have not been fully funded by UK and Welsh Government settlements has resulted in schools inevitably facing real terms reductions in funding no matter how favourable the prioritisation by the authority. This is exacerbated by continuing cuts in specific grant which are very largely devolved to schools.

Clearly this presents challenges to schools to maintain and indeed enhance delivery of the curriculum. I note the Cabinet Secretary Kirsty Williams had promised extra funding and support to roll out the New Curriculum. The authority will continue to work with schools to further facilitate school to school support and the sharing of good practice and so develop the capacity of schools to meet these challenges and ensure a sustainable quality of education provision for pupils over the coming years.

4. What are we doing as an authority to help create a climate for professional learning that is valued and at the forefront education in Wales?

Response

In the document 'Qualified for Life – A Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life' October 2015 it states: 'Learners in Wales will enjoy teaching and learning that inspires them to succeed, in an education community that works co-operatively and aspires to be great, where the potential of every child and young person is actively developed.' (P.2) 'A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life' sets out, in broad terms, the steps that we will take to achieve Successful Futures'. (P.4) The new curriculum is being developed by teachers with the intention of creating students who are: Ambitious, capable learners; Enterprising, creative contributors; Ethical, informed citizens and Healthy, confident individuals.

Within Swansea Local Authority there is a strategic approach to professional development with the four core purposes for the new curriculum at the forefront of all professional learning. The aim of all professional development is to empower schools to provide high quality teaching and learning experiences in Language, Literacy and Communication, Literacy/ English, Welsh (first language), Welsh second language, Digital Competence, Mathematical Development and Mathematics, in all subject areas across the curriculum for all pupils in all phases.

Pupils need to become independent, resilient and reflective learners who are able to question, solve problems, reason and be curious about the world around them. To achieve this, the curriculum needs to be innovative and offer creative opportunities for learning in a range of contexts through a range of cross curricular subject areas. Teaching approaches need to be selected on the basis of what has been proven to work through demonstrating effective strategies. Pupils need to experience a range of challenging opportunities in order to acquire the necessary skills for future learning. They need to be able to follow a line of enquiry and ask higher order questions, learn new concepts, reflect on prior learning and to be able to self-assess so that they are equipped for the new curriculum and 'qualified for life'.

As an authority our aim is to raise standards of literacy, numeracy, Welsh and Digital Competence for all pupils by supporting teachers on their professional learning journey through the following:

- Developing the role of coordinator;
- Securing the philosophy and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase;
- Implementing and embedding the Literacy Numeracy Framework in all phases;
- The implementation of the Areas of Learning and Programmes of Study in English; Welsh and Mathematics in all phases;
- Effective curriculum mapping so that the teaching and learning of skills in Language, Literacy and Communication, English, Welsh and Mathematics are consolidated and progressed through appropriate application in other areas of learning and across the curriculum;
- The use of the Literacy Numeracy Framework for formative assessment;
- Recording and reporting, securing judgements in the statutory cycle of standardisation, in-school and cluster moderation;

- The delivery, monitoring and evaluation of literacy and numeracy interventions; and
- Equip teachers with the necessary skills to deliver the Digital Competence Framework.

It is the responsibility of the Curriculum Support Team of Performance Specialists in Education Improvement to support teachers and staff in schools with relevant, recent and purposeful, professional development opportunities which includes references to current research methodologies and theory as well as tried and tested strategies. Performance Specialists also coach and mentor teachers and staff in schools to help them to develop their own philosophy on effective practices. Teachers attending courses are asked to carry out action research on their return to the classroom. They are expected to share their findings at a follow up session. Professionals in schools are offered training from a regional menu of support for the following areas of the curriculum: Literacy, Welsh Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Competence and Foundation Phase. Locally, there is also a comprehensive support package of training for Welsh second language and Additional Learning Needs.

The Menu of Curriculum Support for schools is brokered by Challenge Advisers who meet with Head teachers during the Core Visit 1 to identify areas of need. The amount of support that can be offered is dependent on the categorisation of the school and capacity of the central team. However all schools can access termly co-ordinator networks for Literacy, Welsh Literacy, Welsh Second Language, Numeracy, Foundation Phase and Digital Competency. There is also a comprehensive package of training available for Newly Qualified teachers in Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Competence and Additional Learning Needs for primary and secondary practitioners. The Curriculum team also offer bespoke support and training for schools. Teachers that have been identified as lead practitioners are brokered for school to school support which increases capacity and drives the national agenda of school to school support. Schools also have access to 'Dolen' on the ERW website. Case studies can be found on schools that have been recognised as having good practice worthy of sharing. As well as offering continued Professional Development to teachers through training courses another aim is to strengthen leadership capacity and accountability at all levels by offering bespoke support from Challenge Advisers on leadership and self-evaluation.

Two documents which drive the curriculum agenda for Swansea LA include the 'Eastern Hub Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Autumn 2017' and the Curriculum Support Unit's Operational Plan which outlines the delivery of courses and training dates for the academic year 2017-2018. This includes continued professional development for the work of all the Performance Specialists. The 'Eastern Hub Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Autumn 2017' document outlines the aims and objectives of the literacy and numeracy support for schools and it is closely aligned to the objectives and delivery for the regional Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and Business Plan 2017 -18. Two distinct strands for the local approach include:

- Improving teaching and learning in English, Welsh (first language) and Mathematics lessons in order to raise standards;
- Improving the application of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Literacy and Numeracy is at the very heart of the curriculum and therefore the processes, procedures and support mechanisms aim to ensure successful delivery of

the curriculum. Under the over-arching construct of the regional strategy the aims are to: Support teachers and school leaders in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and narrow the gap linked to deprivation (CIF1.2); to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including Assessment for Learning (CIF 3) and to develop effective leadership at all levels (CIF 5.1).

In addition, the following are referenced when supporting teachers in schools and during training: The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework; the requirement of Estyn's Common Inspection Framework to report on pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and the recommendations from Estyn's thematic reports on national progress; the Areas of Learning/Programmes of Study in English, Welsh (first language) and Mathematics; the tracking and assessment system in the Foundation Phase; the revised Qualifications Framework and its new demands at GCSE; the National Model for Regional Working including the facilitation of school to school transformation; the strategic objectives of the education improvement plan for 3-19 year olds in Wales and the developments on Successful Futures and Pioneer Schools.

The focus for local and regional literacy and numeracy training for 2017-18 includes: Developing thinking skills and effective questioning to promote independent learning; Reading for Meaning across the curriculum – increasing challenge Key Stage 2-3; Guided and Reciprocal Reading; Developing writing accuracy across the curriculum; Fun with writing – developing creativity – Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2; Playing with Poetry and Language – Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2; Targeting and challenging More Able and Talented pupils; Developing Numerical Reasoning; Making effective use of digital competencies to support the development of Mathematics and Numeracy Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3; Developing numeracy challenge and mastery within secondary mathematics curriculum Key Stage 3/4.

Developing numeracy within high demand subjects at Key Stage 3; Science and the numeracy framework Key Stage 2; Literacy and Numeracy- reducing the workload and increasing the impact of feedback.

The following examples demonstrate some of the ways that the Curriculum team is supporting staff in schools through the delivery of the Operational Plan to create a climate for professional learning with the four core purposes at the forefront of support and training:

Literacy

- Promote effective practice through the use of lead practitioners at all training events;
- Share creative approaches for the delivery of literacy across the curriculum through the use of books;
- Make effective links with literacy and the outdoors to promote creativity and wellbeing;
- Promote oracy skills through enterprise projects;
- Update teachers on new technology and Applications that can be used to enhance literacy and assessment;

- Promote free resources at training events which develops effective practice e.g. 'Into Film';
- Train teachers on effective strategies such as: modelled, shared and guided reading and writing;
- Support teachers with literacy audit tools to support self- evaluation;
- Link reading materials with areas of the curriculum e.g. Pupil Voice, Rights Respecting Schools, Healthy Eating and Wellbeing;
- Invite speakers/experts/authors to share ideas for effective practice at training events to promote literacy e.g. nature and poetry and published authors;
- Make references to research/Estyn documentation at every training event and during in school support;
- Share assessment tools at training events to record pupil progress;
- Support teachers to utilise Teaching Assistants to support effectively in class;
- Share course resources in shared network area on Hwb.

Welsh

- Offer bespoke support for schools;
- Support teachers in class to enable effective teaching and learning;
- Training for support staff to ensure effective in class support;
- Collaborate with co- coordinators and staff from all Welsh medium schools;
- Work closely with Officers in Education Welsh second language;
- Collaborate and work closely to develop training packages with colleagues across the Eastern Hub and consortium;
- Developing the Siarter Iaith, monitoring and ensuring its success in all schools;
- Attend all schools as part of validation process for bronze award;
- Arrange different activities for all schools to support Siarter Iaith;
- Ensure that all schools receive effective support in order to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential.

Foundation Phase

- Plan and deliver a training package for 'Developing Independence';
- Support teachers to identify how they are already using the twelve pedagogical principles;
- Opportunities for Foundation Phase Co-ordinators to attend training in a school and participate in a learning walk;
- Link teachers to excellent Foundation Phase practice in local schools in order to share good practice;
- Support teachers on effective use of support staff in the classroom;
- Engage the support of Science officers from Education through Regional Working to deliver at training events.

Welsh Second Language

- 65 schools have started the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus scheme that promotes standards of oracy, reading and writing, ESTYN criteria, digital competence and Donaldson initiatives. All schools have been trained and resources produced to support them. New resources are created termly;
- Provide six courses over a term that all staff can access which provides methodology, drilling and bilingualism training and curriculum support;

- Lead practitioners identified to share good practice with other teachers on every course;
- Weekly Adds sessions and Teaching Assistants' training for all schools;
- Termly cluster training and networking groups to create new resources and to share good practice for each school in Swansea;
- Share good practice as a county and service with other local authorities on national sabbatical courses, Education through Regional Working training days and national conferences;
- Provide a strong school to school support service – sharing good practice and new strategies with target schools;
- The Hwb networking site is accessible to all teachers and Teaching Assistants and new courses are added termly;
- Exemplar lessons are delivered in all schools;
- Schools are monitored termly in order to raise standards.

Digital Competence

- Digital Learning courses are offered to all staff within Swansea Local Authority Schools. Teachers that attend courses are provided with specific Digital Competence Framework /Software training. The resources delivered on the courses are ready for use in the classroom and there is an opportunity to collaborate with other teaching professionals during and after the event online;
- Digital Competence Framework strands covered in specific training sessions provide skills and expertise to teachers in readiness to deliver the core purposes to their pupils e.g. Strand 3 – Producing - This gives pupils the opportunity to be creative in the electronic materials that they produce using key features of the software;
- Strand 4 – Data and Computational Thinking – This training, when rolled out in schools provides pupils with the opportunity to learn new skills within a skills shortage area;
- Citizenship Courses are delivered as part of the Digital Competence Framework – Strand 1. These courses provide teachers with the tools to deliver the strand elements to all pupils under the core purposes. These elements are: Identity, Image and Reputation, Health and Wellbeing, Digital rights, Licensing and Ownership, Online behaviour and Cyberbullying.

Additional Learning Needs

- Close liaison with the wider Additional Learning Needs team, external agencies and health board to support and develop a robust Additional Learning Needs' training menu for school practitioners, which is delivered via a tiered approach. This involves an expectation that staff complete the available training to develop universal skills to support Additional Learning Needs' learners before accessing the targeted and specialised training programmes ensuring that basic skill development is robust before requesting more specialised support;
- Development of online training resources to support Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators to deliver support to wider school staff in meeting the needs of Additional Learning Needs' learners;
- Development of online training for Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators to develop their skills and expertise in supporting pupils with Additional Learning Needs;

- Development of supportive forums in conjunction with Hafan y Mor children's centre for both neurodevelopmental difficulties and motor co-ordination. These forums are to support practitioners to identify and provide Continued Professional Development on the correct pathway of support for pupils presenting with difficulties;
- All Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators/ Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators have been advised to engage in the Welsh Government core skills programme to develop skill development of staff in readiness for the Additional Learning Needs reform and links and support has/is being provided to complete this where necessary;
- The development of an Additional Learning Needs provision grid which outlines expectation for provision in key Additional Learning Needs areas. All schools (including the Pupil Referral Unit) are expected to complete this self-evaluation to identify training needs and influence school evaluation reports and development plans to improve provision;
- Regular network meetings for specific groups: Primary, Secondary and Special Training Facility;
- All training is linked to Additional Learning Needs' reform.

Yours sincerely



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