

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – SPC Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching purpose of the panel is to: provide ongoing challenge to schools performance to ensure that *pupils in Swansea are receiving high quality education; and the authority is meeting its objectives in relation to improving school standards and pupil attainment.*

2. Key Activities

The Panel is currently meeting on a monthly basis and the work completed since June 2017 includes:

- a) In May we received an overview of the key issues facing education this year, after reflecting on this we then discussed our work programme (see more detail below).
- b) In June we held a session looking at Science in Schools inviting two Secondary Head Teachers, Leaders of Learning from ERW and Council Officers.
- c) Two meetings were held in July the first was a visit to Gowerton Primary School Foundation Phase (more detail below) and in our second we completed pre-decision scrutiny on the future structure and delivery of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit.
- d) In September we reviewed performance of the Education Improvement Service and the ERW Business Plan priorities with particular reference to Swansea.
- e) Over this period the Panel has also kept up to date with individual school Estyn Inspections publications and any advisory/practice documents.

3. Achievements / Impact

We have sent four letters to the Cabinet Member since the beginning of this municipal year. A couple of issues covered include, for example

Science in Schools Session

The Panel spoke to the Headteachers of two schools who are performing particularly well in their outcomes in Science subject areas, Bishopston Comprehensive School and Pontarddulais Comprehensive School. Also invited to participate were the Leaders of Learning for Science at ERW and the Head of Education Achievement and Partnership in Swansea. A number of issues were looked at including:

- Data on performance of schools across Swansea in Science, comparative data across ERW region and also the ERW region with other regions across Wales
- How pupils are encouraged and inspired to take up science subjects (particularly encouraging female take up)
- How we ensure that all pupils have high aspirations in science
- How we are learning, sharing and celebrating good practice in science subjects
- How do excellent schools engage and retain the interest of pupils in science
- How we advise young people about next steps in science after school
- How do schools link with 6th forms and colleges to ensure progression in science subjects

Following this session we wrote to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and skills and received a response on the following issues:

1. Schools completing a sampling of exit interviews each year to understand why certain subjects are chosen when continuing in education post 16.
2. Needs to be more cluster working around Science.
3. More Schools using projects that cross the transition between primary and secondary schools at KS3.
4. More secondary schools making their laboratories available to their cluster primaries when they not in use.

5. That activities to inspire pupils into science careers be considered for example by the use of Careers Fayres, an inspiration event and a short 10 minute video for schools to use to inspire their pupils (in collaboration with local industries).
6. We would like to see the profile of science raised in primary schools with science used to develop literacy and numeracy more.

Visit to Gowerton Primary School Foundation Phase

Councillors visited the school and after a tour of the Foundation Phase facility we met with the Headteacher, the Challenge Advisor and the Foundation Phase Advisor to discuss, what is a challenging area for Swansea. Gowerton Primary School has been identified as having an excellent Foundation Phase and the Panel wanted to learn why and to share our findings.

We found that the following key factors heavily contributed to a successful Foundation Phase:

- The importance of school leaders being committed to and having a thorough understanding of child development and the principles that underpin the foundation phase philosophy. An understanding of how children learn and what learning through play means.
- A commitment to funding, as the foundation phase is resource intensive.
- Learning environments that are vibrant and inspire and facilitate learning that promote pupil independence and learning.
- Excellent staff training and development that is shared and personalised for that schools practice.
- Teamwork and a whole school approach involving teaching assistants in planning meetings and when discussing pupil progress, sharing good practice, resources and ideas.
- Good systems and consistency in using them including class toolkits, learning environments, reading, writing and marking consistency across whole school
- Creative and engaging developmentally appropriate curriculum that is well balanced with basic skills.
- Planning for pupil involvement and participation.

We wrote to the Cabinet member asking about what we are currently doing and/or can we do, to address these issues which had been highlighted by through this visit.

1. Promoting the importance of the Foundation Phase Philosophy and ensuring it is a priority for Swansea (and in whole of Wales in light of the many curriculum changes)
2. Training – identifying good practice that exists across the authority and sharing it effectively. Effective communication systems to address the work/life balance agenda and to develop shared resources. Identify and develop Hwbs (groups of expertise to support and work with other schools in a supportive capacity).
3. Funding – well trained staff and adult/pupil ratios need to be funded appropriately. Current Education Improvement Grant does not meet statutory guidance for staff training or resources. If this funding goes the foundation philosophy will go with it.

We were inspired and impressed by the school not only the wonderful new build facility which is truly pupil friendly but the commitment, knowledge and dedication of the senior leadership and staff at the school who clearly go above and beyond for their pupils.

4. Education through Regional Working (ERW) Scrutiny Councillor Group

The bi-annual scrutiny meeting of this group took place on the 10 September 2018. They looked at

- The National Model for Education Consortia in Wales and the ERW reform programme
- The key issues affecting education currently (ERW specific)
- Pupil performance at Key Stage 4 across the ERW region

A letter has been written to the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee outlining the Councillor group's views on these matters and inviting her to an extra meeting of the group later in the year.

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel - Work Programme 2018/2019

Date	Items to be discussed
Meeting 1 17 May 18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key issues for Education/Schools over coming year (Helen Morgan Rees) 2. Panel discuss and agree work programme for coming year
Meeting 2 7 Jun 18	Session around Science in Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance of schools in Science and comparisons with others • Speak to 2 Headteachers of schools who excel in Science • Leaders of Learning for Science (ERW)
Meeting 3 12 July 18	Visit - Gowerton Primary School Green School – Foundation Phase (panel agreed to visit a school that is doing particularly well in this area)
Meeting 4 18 Jul 18	Pre-decision Scrutiny on the Future Structure and Delivery of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit (EMAU) report to Cabinet on 18 July 2018
Meeting 5 27 Sep 18	Briefing on Education in Wales: Our National Mission and an update on progress with introduction of the professional standards for teachers and leaders.
Meeting 6 17 Oct 18	School 1 – Ysgol Crug Glas Special School Amber: visit school and meet with Headteacher and Chair of Governors School include the Challenge Advisor
Meeting 7 15 Nov 18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public Questions 2. Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) - Update on progress with changes to service and accommodation 3. New Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy
Meeting 8 11 Dec 18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefing on Looked After Children Educational Outcomes 2. Briefing on the Pupil Deprivation Grant spend and the availability and quality of after school/homework clubs 3. School Improvement Service Performance update (Annual) and ERW Progress against Business Plan priorities locally and regionally 4. Annual Audit report (for information)
Meeting 9 18 Jan 19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public Questions 2. Annual Education Performance and School Categorisation
Meeting 10 11 Feb 19	Scrutiny of Annual Budget as it relates to education matters
Meeting 10 20 Feb 19	School 2 – Visit to Morryston Primary School Revisit Morryston Primary School progress and following up on the embedding of improvements (<i>as you agreed on 15 Feb</i>)
Meeting 11 21 Mar 19	School 3 – to be agreed Amber: Speak to Head and Chair of Governors of a School including preparation session with the challenge advisor
Meeting 12 2 May 19	Readiness for School, follow up on outstanding issues resulting from a scrutiny inquiry (<i>referred to the panel on 27 Mar 18</i>)

In addition dates to be arranged for:

Date TBA	Items referred from Scrutiny Work Planning Conference on 11 June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SEN (concern about increase in no. of cases going to tribunal) – School Transport ✓ Free School Meals / LAC attainment (already scheduled Dec/Jan) ✓ Pupil Development Grant (already scheduled - Dec)
Date TBA	Items to added at Schools Work Programme discussion from Panel on 17 May: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ERW (Item added to work programme for Sep 18) ✓ After schools and homework clubs (Added to work programme for Dec 18)
Date TBA	Pre-decision Scrutiny Alternative Learning Needs Reform Commissioning Review and/or ALN report legislation and implications/preparations
Date TBA	Post 16 – Pupil performance at sixth form and colleges