

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 October 2018 includes:

- a) In October we made a visit to Ysgol Crug Glas Special School (see more detail below)
- b) In November we followed up on progress with the Education Other Than at School changes to service and accommodation and also discussed the new wellbeing and behaviour strategy.
- c) In December we looked at the Annual updates on the School Improvement Services the ERW Business Plan and the pupil development grant spend.
- d) We also had an extra meeting in December to carry out pre-decision on the Small Schools Review and the School Organisation linked to the Welsh Education Plan.
- e) In January we discussed the Annual Education Performance Data including the verified data and school categorisation.
- f) In February we met twice, firstly to look at the education aspects of the Annual Budget proposal and secondly we took a visit to Morryston Primary School to see progress previously identified further embedded
- g) Over this period the Panel has also kept up to date with individual school Estyn Inspections published and any advisory/practice documents.

3. Achievements / Impact

We have sent 5 letters to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills since October 2018 Which give our views, raise concerns and make recommendations. These include for example:

Positives:

- When we visited Ysgol Crug Glas Special School we were pleased to hear about the positive comments from Estyn when they revisited in April 18, especially that *the current leadership team is very effective in driving forward school improvement. Also that since the core inspections, senior leaders have placed appropriate emphasis on improving the way that teachers plan to develop pupil skills progressively. Teaching has a strong focus on developing pupil skills at a pace and level that is adapted well to their individual needs and abilities.*
- We looked at Education Other than at School Services progress and heard that a key factor in the success of the overhaul of the current provision is the support provided to schools to enable earlier identification of needs in relation to pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), and importantly the greater capacity and support to manage the needs within the schools setting. We were particularly pleased to hear that the Halfway House has resulted in the highest number of pupils being re-integrated back to mainstream provision in many years. With 19 pupils being supported back into their mainstream school.
- We understand that the new professional standards for teaching and leadership came into force in September 2018. We were pleased to hear these are ambitious and link closely with curriculum reform and that performance management within schools is aligned with the new leadership standards. We agreed that the current and future work of the Education Improvement Service must be underpinned by these standards, curriculum reform and the Education Directorates five top priorities.

Issues / Concerns:

- At Ysgol Crug Glas Special School we heard that the school is doing its best to be creative in its activities but is restricted by a number of barriers including: the premises, finance, staffing level and resource. It was explained that some of these may be addressed by the possible Federation with Penybryn School which is being considered. Also that this, in the longer term, may include seeking Band B funding for new build facility.
- When we discussed the ERW Business Plan, we heard that during the academic year 2017-2018, engagement with the Education through Regional Working (ERW) central team had reached a hiatus. The planned service review and reform of ERW has not taken place and as a result the collaboration and service delivery has fragmented in comparison to previous years. We are pleased to hear that a plan will be discussed, to move ERW forward and resolve a number of important issues, at ERW Joint Committee in February.
- When we looked at the Pupil Development Grant spend we were concerned to hear that some schools may not be following the guidance or using the toolkit available. We were pleased to hear that the Education Improvement Service has been working with schools around this and signposting them to advice about how best to spend the grant. We were also encouraged to hear that the PDG grant spend is monitored and unpicked to see what has been most effective. We agreed that it is important to identify and build on strengths.
- When we looked at the annual budget, as it relates to education matters, we were particularly concerned about the impact of the cost of the increase in teachers pensions not being covered (at present) by the UK Government. The panel wanted to emphasise the importance of Cabinet doing everything possible to ensure that schools are not disadvantaged by this substantial amount.

Action Recommended / Agreed:

- After our visit to Ysgol Crug Glas Special School the Cabinet Member was asked in the convener's letter to look at utilising expertise at the school, in particular in meeting the educational needs of children with ADHD/Autistic spectrum, to inform practice in mainstream schools. The Cabinet Member response included: *We are happy to work with the school to identify how they can contribute to course development and delivery to support children with ADHD and ASD accessing mainstream and specialist teaching facility placements.*
- The idea of a 360 degree review of ERW was suggested where stakeholders could give full feedback from all angles. It was also felt that the voice of the child must be included in any reviewing of education related activity. The Cabinet Member response said: *The opportunity for stakeholder opinion to be formally captured will be fed back to the interim Managing Director of ERW. Useful surveys have been conducted in the past and I am aware of a current survey to capture the views of headteachers on the value for money provided by the funding stream for curriculum reform.*
- We carried out pre-decision scrutiny on the school closures at Felindre Welsh Primary School and Craig Cefn Parc Primary School, we concluded that: *We reluctantly accept the proposals to Cabinet that were contained in the report, agreeing that the proper process has been followed, the Equalities Impact Assessment has assessed the impact of the proposals, that there has been a high level of consultation and all alternatives to closure have been explored.*

4. Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel Future Work Programme 2018/2019

Date	Items to be discussed
Meeting 13 21 Mar 19	School 3 – Burlais Primary School Amber: Speak to Head and Chair of Governors of a School including preparation session with the challenge advisor
Meeting 14 2 May 19	Joint meeting with Child and Family Services Scrutiny Panel to look at support for and outcomes/performance of Looked After Children