

Education 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 March 2019 includes:

- a) In March, we met with the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher from Burlais Primary School to discuss their improvement journey.
- b) On 2nd May, we had a joint meeting with the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Panel to look at the support for and education outcomes of Looked After Children in Swansea.
- c) In June, we looked at the current issues effecting education and then discussed and agreed our work programme for the coming 12 months.
- d) On 11 July, we visited and met with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and other staff and pupils at Dylan Thomas Community Comprehensive School to see and discuss their good practice in improving pupil wellbeing at the school.
- e) In September, we discussed looked at Elective Home Education and improving the performance of children receiving free school meals.
- f) 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 four letters to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills since March 2019, which gave our views, raised concerns and made recommendations. Some of these include, for example:

Positives:

- At our meeting in March with Burlais Primary School, we congratulated the Headteacher, the Challenge Advisor and the governing body at the school for their hard work and commitment to their improvement journey that is clearly showing to be successful. We felt that the improvements were mainly due to:
 - The school having a supportive, engaged and challenging governing body that has the necessary skills to help to drive improvement.
 - The Headteacher and Senior Management Team at the school are driving that improvement fully.
 - The schools willingness to work with, and receive support from, the local authority and the Education Improvement Service.
 - The milestones for improvement that were put in place after the inspection have/are been adhered to.
 - The school learning from and sharing their good practice with other schools.
 - The school having strong support from parents and the local community with the school working taking its role in the community seriously.
- At our Joint meeting looking at educational performance of Looked After Children in May, we heard that there is a real commitment in Swansea to developing a more systematic approach to improving the outcomes of vulnerable pupils. We agreed with Officers that we need to be able to see what difference we are making to pupils and need to support them to be as good as they can be. We were interested to hear about the intention to develop an Action Plan to deliver an 'integrated and outcome focussed approach' and would welcome more information on this as it develops.
- We complimented Dylan Thomas Community School Headteacher and Staff for their achievement in developing a culture where pupils feel valued when we visited the school in

July. From our visit, we put together, and shared with the Cabinet Member, a number of learning points. Some of these included for example to improve wellbeing schools need to ensure that it is at the heart of what they do, that they constantly remind pupils of expectations and raise their aspirations, they focus on positivity rather than punitive sanctions, staff are trained in how to improve behaviour and avoid exclusions including pivotal behaviour approaches.

Concerns:

- At our Joint meeting about Looked After Children Educational Outcomes, we understood that the education of LAC has proved an incredibly challenging area for Swansea for decades. Hearing from officers was helpful but were keen to see what can be done to actually improve educational attainment is key. The Panel felt the Council must seek and learn what works from children and young people who succeed despite the challenges they face.
- On our visit to Dylan Thomas School, we heard from the Chair of Governors that finance is a great source of worry to the governing body, he expressed his concerns about future finances and how uncertainty makes it difficult for the school to forward plan.

Action Recommended / questions asked:

- After our Joint session about LAC we asked the Cabinet Member
 1. How will the new facility in Cockett improve the education of our most vulnerable children including LAC?
 2. How we are using cutting-edge best practice in relation to LAC?
- After our visit to Dylan Thomas Community School we asked the Cabinet Member:
 1. To let us know her thoughts about how best schools can plan for the medium term future when budgets are so uncertain moving forward.

We received a detailed response from the Cabinet Member to all three points raised.

4. Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel - Future Work Programme 2019/20

Date	Items to be discussed
Meeting 4 21 Oct 19	School 2 – Penclawdd Primary School Red: Speak to Head and Chair of Governors of a School including preparation session with the challenge advisor
Meeting 5 14 Nov 19	- Healthy Schools Initiative - The National Mission and developing a transformational curriculum for all pupils.
Meeting 6 19 Dec 19	- 21 st Century Schools update - School Transport – Briefing - Annual Audit Report – for information
Meeting 7 16 Jan 20	- Annual Education Performance Data (incl. school categorisation) - Looked After Children Educational Outcomes - Supporting vulnerable pupils – pupil development grand spend summary
Meeting 8 Date TBA	Annual Budget as it relates to Education matters
Meeting 9 13 Feb 20	- Additional Learning Needs Reform and progress in Swansea - Education Improvement Service performance update and ERW progress against business plan priorities
Meeting 10 12 Mar 20	School 3 – Pentrehafod Comprehensive School Visit to school, meeting Headteacher to specifically see/discuss the approach to NEETs prevention at the school
Meeting 11 Date TBA – Apr	- Swansea Skills Partnership - Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) progress with improvements
Meeting 12 30 Apr 20	Session on Post 16 education and pupil performance at 6 th Form and colleges