



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills

To the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – 14 November 2019

### **How are schools addressing actions in *Our National Mission* for education, including a transformational curriculum?**

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| <b>Purpose:</b>                          | To brief the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel on changes to education provision, professional learning and leadership in Swansea schools. |
| <b>Content:</b>                          | A briefing on national actions affecting change in Swansea schools.   |
| <b>Councillors are being asked to:</b>   | Consider the information provided and to forward views to the Cabinet Member via a letter from the Panel Convener                           |
| <b>Lead Councillor:</b>                  | Councillor Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills  |
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#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 *Our National Mission* is a Welsh Government plan for education improvement. The action plan sets out how the school system in Wales, including its sixth forms, will move forward to 2022 to secure the effective implementation of a new curriculum. The plan is supported by policies that are developed in partnership, based upon sound evidence and evaluated effectively at all stages.

#### **2. Briefing/Main body of report**

- 2.1 Swansea's education directorate is clear about its role as an effective planner and provider of intelligence to enable Swansea schools to improve learner outcomes and well-being. The directorate has set out seven priorities for the 2019-2020 academic year:

- further develop specialist provision and placements to meet current and future demand for severe and complex needs;

- manage and mitigate the risks associated with the implementation of the ALNET Act 2018 (through an external and internal review of the ALN strategy and implementation plan and re-structure of the ALN teams);
- improve teaching and learning by developing schools as learning organisations;
- improve leadership of schools by developing partnerships for school improvement;
- implement the behaviour strategy and Education other than at School (EOTAS ) review focusing on prevention and early intervention;
- work in partnership to develop a sustainable education system; and
- ensure all learning opportunities take place in safe environments.

2.2 The education directorate is alert to educational inequities faced by vulnerable learners and understands the requirement to facilitate multi-agency partnerships. Swansea schools work collaboratively across Wales and beyond. Work on a regional scale remains a priority, to build capacity, with schools working together effectively. Swansea's key delivery partner for implementing the actions within *Our National Mission* is ERW (education through regional working). ERW's priorities for 2019-2020 are to:

- developing and deliver a transformational curriculum;
- develop a high-quality education profession;
- develop inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards;
- develop strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence and wellbeing; and
- develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability processes.

2.3 The education directorate considers that the four core purposes of the new transformational curriculum will drive inspirational leadership now and in the future. The education directorate's priorities for 2019-2020 make reference to developing a high quality education profession by developing schools as learning organisation, developing further collaborative working between leaders and developing inclusive schools committed to pupils' and staff well-being. The directorate also recognises that a self-improving school system, coupled with more suitable methods of evaluating schools' performance is key to ensuring the well-being of current and future generations of school children.

2.4 The new national approach to professional learning (NAPL) is made up of eight key components that Swansea schools are immersed in. In Swansea, it is expected that practitioners in schools develop their own professional journey, through the use of new professional standards, to begin with. Support to achieve this aim is driven by a comprehensive induction programme for newly qualified teachers.

2.5 Schools are now recognising themselves as Schools as Learning Organisations (SLOs) where a strong vision for teaching and learning, alongside a willingness to work with partners are key requirements. The SLO model comprises of the following seven dimensions:

- developing and sharing a vision centred on the learning of all students;
- creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff;

- promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff;
- establishing a culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration;
- embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning;
- learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system;  
and
- modelling and growing learning leadership.

In Swansea, nearly all schools understand their position as learning organisations through self-audit. Many schools have adopted approaches for SLOs for many years. In the best examples, schools undertake research through action learning, use external partners to support improvement and improve teaching through internal supportive collaboration.

- 2.6 A blended professional learning approach is developing well in Swansea through use of digital methods, networks, action research and coaching. However, a few schools still expect training to be provided by the local authority. Courses are no longer the preferred method of professional learning as it is often a whole school approaches that is of most benefit to learners. Swansea schools have a long history of collaborative working. Maintaining useful partnerships is now an expected method of professional learning. Officers from Swansea and Education through Regional Working (ERW) currently facilitate networks and partnerships. Use of data and research to inform professional learning in Swansea is a strong feature of schools' activity. In addition, the new National Academy for Education Leadership is endorsing programmes for further professional accreditation.
- 2.7 Swansea has a Seren Network Hub to improve the proportion of top performing learners in sixth forms. This is achieved by allowing students to:
- visit leading university campuses;
  - take subject skills to the next level with expert teaching support;
  - extend knowledge beyond the A-level curriculum to attract the very best universities;
  - meet the leading academics from top universities and receive advice and support;
  - take part in workshops alongside other talented students;
  - get practical tips on applying for university places and preparing for interview;
  - build links with more able learners looking to reach their academic potential;  
and
  - receive expert advice on personal statements and applications.
- 2.8 The school improvement service in Swansea is committed to the national actions to reduce workload and bureaucracy. Examples include endorsing Estyn's guide to reducing workload and supporting effective marking. The three workload strands on planning, marking and accountability are clear. However, schools are sometimes reluctant to move away from fail-safe methods, including over analysis of data. In September 2019, schools and PRUs are no longer required to submit a self-evaluation report to Estyn prior to inspection. The expectation now is that schools can demonstrate that they undertake processes to improve key priority areas. This does not mean that evaluations

should not be documented, it does mean that schools do not need to evaluate everything they do.

2.9 The action to deliver a transformational curriculum is a long term plan. Swansea schools have been closely involved in co-producing new areas of learning and experience for the last four years. It is now expected that all Swansea schools are engaged in new curriculum activities in readiness for a new statutory curriculum in 2022. The education and skills policy development committee (PDC) is currently examining how Swansea schools will prepare to implement the new curriculum and has already heard from pioneer and non-pioneer schools. The school improvement service is supporting schools through signposting, dissemination of good practice, facilitating curriculum networks and developing a strategic three year implementation plan for the new curriculum. Swansea schools and the education directorate have also provided valuable responses to the draft curriculum. The consultation response report (see background papers) is now published and it is anticipated that a final draft will be ready by 2020. In order to prepare for the new curriculum schools have been guided to focus on the core purposes, how best to teach and how to audit their current provision. The new purpose lead Curriculum for Wales is underpinned by the following aims and areas for learning and experience:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Each of the areas of learning and experience has been designed to support learners to realise the four purposes of the curriculum, and provides the starting point and aspiration when developing a school-level curriculum. They encompass existing subjects and disciplines, and are intended to promote collaboration and cross-disciplinary school-level curriculum development and design.

The guidance for each area of learning and experience includes:

- a statement explaining how the area of learning and experience supports the four purposes of the curriculum
- statements of what matters in learning;
- principles of progression, including achievement outcomes developed around progression in the area of learning and experience; and
- planning for learning support.

Decisions as to how these should translate into day-to-day activities should take place in settings and schools. Learning should be coherent and planned across the different areas of learning and experience, building on inherent links, dependencies and interdependencies. These links should be drawn upon during school-level curriculum design and development, with practitioners working creatively and collaboratively to support learners' realisation of the four purposes of the curriculum. Literacy, numeracy and digital competence will be embedded across areas of learning and experience.

2.10 The changes in how school performance is measured now and in future are based on a commitment to formative assessment and supporting personalised progress of pupils. In addition, new GCSEs and A Levels have been developed. A new twelve week consultation on the next generation of qualifications in Wales is launched this month to ensure that the new curriculum is aligned to future qualifications. Secondary schools are concerned about suitable qualifications for all learners and the dilution of subject knowledge that curriculum reform may bring.

2.10.1 School to school working, networks and clusters of professional learning is supported and promoted in Swansea. The self-improving system in Swansea schools is strong and is further supported by specific networks in secondary schools and development of a peer review model in primary schools. A conference on partnerships held during the 2018-2019 academic year promoted further work in this area and by the end of 2019-2020 academic year the education directorate aims to gather intelligence on how these partnerships are working effectively.

2.10.2 Equity in education is a key theme in *Our National Mission*. Swansea's three year strategic implementation plan for additional learning needs supports the theme well. Partnership work in this area is gaining momentum. Schools are supported to develop strategies for behaviour management, pupils' emotional health and wellbeing as well as greater understanding of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a key theme in *Our National Mission* and specific work to develop pupils' wellbeing in Swansea schools is gaining pace. The new wellbeing strategy is developing well and a recent headteacher conference was held to focus on:

- wellbeing is everybody's business and therefore there should be active promotion of well-being for all children, young people and their families;
- services should provide early, timely and preventative interventions, based on a proportionate assessment of need;
- interventions should be evidence-based and have specific outcomes;
- assessment and intervention should include the voice of children, young people and their families and encourage genuine engagement and participation; and
- approaches should be person centred and should take a strength based/resiliency approach whilst recognising risks such as adverse experiences.

The pupil development grant (PDG) to support the breakdown of barriers faced by vulnerable learners has been further developed in Swansea through the work of the education and skills policy

development committee in 2018-2019 who made the following recommendations:

- a senior leader within the school to champion pupils who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM) with responsibility for the strategic implementation of the pupil development grant (PDG);
- regular review of intervention strategies to be evidenced and undertaken by the leadership team. Interventions that are selected to be implemented should be based on sound research and evidence;
- optimise the progress of more able and talented pupils eligible for free school meals through more targeted and effective use of the PDG for this group of pupils. The PDG plan should identify these pupils and demonstrate/evaluate the actions/activities to support them. Where relevant, the provision and evaluation of the activities/resources used to support the learning of looked after FSM pupils should be included. Regular tracking of academic progress of this group of pupils to be developed further;
- standardised reporting for the use of the PDG to be submitted to the challenge adviser as part of autumn monitoring and submitted to the LA by a specific date. Areas to be reported on include budget amounts and a breakdown of the impact from the previous year in the following areas, early years, foundation phase, and key stage 2, 3, and 4. Reporting should also include planned expenditure with the chosen approach/rationale for selecting this implementation strategy stated with lead staff named and a review timescale with desirable outcomes;
- schools to email the local authority finance department by a specific date to confirm that the PDG plans, previous and current year, are live on website; and
- the Swansea schools directory of good practice should include regularly updated examples of the above.

2.10.3 The links between schools and providers of initial teacher training (ITT) in Swansea is strong with involvement in steering groups to help plan initial teacher training. In addition, the new curriculum and professional standards are forming initial training for teachers. There is also a strong induction programme for newly qualified teachers in Swansea once they leave ITT. Teachers are supported through guidance by internal school mentors and evaluation by external verifiers.

2.10.4 The aim of developing a national academy for education leaders in Wales has been realised. In Swansea, there are two associate members of the academy. As a result, Swansea schools are benefitting from leadership programmes, including a national programme for developing new and acting headteachers. The collaborative school to school work of developing aspiring and existing headteachers in Swansea is of high quality.

*Our National Mission* is underpinned by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 (see background papers).

### **3. Conclusions/Key Points Summary**

- 3.1 Swansea schools demonstrate a strong understanding of the complex changes in the education system in Wales and are being supported to manage change through local and regional strategic actions.
- 3.2 The alignment of local and regional priorities to the actions within *Our National Mission* is helpful and clear.
- 3.3 Schools are currently undergoing significant change. The development of schools as learning organisations is key to support navigation through change.
- 3.4 Historic methods of evaluating schools' performance are changing and there is and will be a greater emphasis on pupils' emotional health and well-being.

**4. Legal implications:** none

**5. Finance:** none

**Glossary of terms:** <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/glossary>

**Background papers:**

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/education-in-wales-our-national-mission.pdf>

<https://www.erw.wales/media/2871/business-plan-2019-20.pdf>

<https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

<https://hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022>

<https://curriculumforwales.gov.wales/>

**Appendices:** none