



**To/
Councillor Jen Raynor
Cabinet Member for Education
Improvement, Learning and Skills**

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Dyddiad:* 28 November 2019

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills following the meeting of the Panel on 14 November 2019. It is about the Healthy Schools Initiative and the National Mission for Education

Dear Councillor Raynor,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 14 November 2019

At our meeting on the 14 November 2019, we looked at two important issues in Education, Healthy Schools and our National Mission for Education, including a transformational curriculum. We would like to thank you and Helen Morgan Rees and also Catie Parry, Emma Griffiths and Catrin Ford from Public Health Wales for attending and discussing the issues with us.

Healthy Schools Initiative

We heard from the representatives from Public Health Wales about the Healthy Schools Initiative in Swansea including why it is so important, including the Healthy Schools Scheme itself and how it all fits with the Curriculum for Wales.

We were pleased to hear that all Swansea schools have engaged with the Swansea Schools Initiative to different levels, with 12 schools in Swansea achieving the National Quality Award (NQA), which equates 13% of Swansea Schools, with 99% of schools achieving phase 3 and above. We note that 20% of schools are currently working towards the NQA.

These figures all exceed the Welsh Government national targets for this initiative. We also heard that the majority of schools achieving the NQA are from the primary sector but this does not mean that work is not taking place in secondary schools, because they are engaged in the initiative but are not in a position to go for the award at present.

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We were assured the Public Health Team are giving support to any schools that may not have engaged fully or who may have stalled in this process. We asked how much emphasis is being put on mental health as part of this initiative and were pleased to hear that mental health and wellbeing is at the heart of and underpins the scheme itself.

We heard about the stark HAPPEN data (Collected from Health and Wellbeing data by Swansea University). This outlined some of the challenges Wales faces in relation to the health and well-being of our children. For example:

- 74.8% of children under 5 years old in Swansea are a healthy weight but 25.2% are an unhealthy weight.
- Only 28% of children taking part in the survey reported eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- On average, a 5-year-old child living in Swansea will have at least one missing, filled or decayed tooth.
- Also from the data collected by Cardiff University (call the SHRN data) showed that 44% of pupils in school years 7 to 11 reported eating 1 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. It also showed 44% of pupils report drinking alcohol.

We recognised this does show that our children and young people are eating the wrong foods and many have bad dental hygiene. We heard that this is preventable and clearly evidences why the work of Public Health Wales and Schools in addressing this is so important. We did agree that working with parents to encourage better eating habits is also very important.

We were told about some of the excellent health improvement work underway in Swansea schools and we agreed with the Public Health Team when they said that this issue must be kept high, if not top of, the agenda.

We were encouraged to hear that the new Curriculum for Wales 2022 was exciting because it will introduce a new way of learning for our children and young people, teaching them skills they can grow up with. We were particularly pleased that Health and Wellbeing will be one of the six areas of learning and experience and will have equal status on the curriculum to the other five areas.

We thanked Public Health Wales for attending and we look forward to hearing how the new curriculum will help this important agenda issue progress.

Our National Mission for Education

We were interested to hear how schools in Swansea are addressing the actions in *Our National Mission* for education, including how they are preparing for the transformational curriculum. We felt that this was an opportune moment to look at how Swansea schools are responding to this challenge and we agreed with Helen when she said that it is important for us to take stock of where we are and what the capacity is in our schools to do this.

We recognise that this is a difficult period for local authorities, schools, governors and for scrutiny when looking to make judgements on the quality of local education, particularly through the change to more focus on progress of individual

learners rather than data. We felt that it was important to ensure that all school governors understand Our National Mission, the new curriculum and the greater emphasis on pupil emotional health and wellbeing. It will be important that both scrutiny and governing bodies ask the right questions of schools and the local education authority. We as a panel have therefore agreed to include a question when we speak with individual schools about how they are addressing the implementation of the new curriculum.

We heard about how Estyn is changing its inspection processes in line with the new curriculum, hearing that inspections will be more focused on conversations with schools rather than on judgements. Next year, there will be a series of non-judgemental visits that will be about dialogue with schools. This will be followed by a gap of a year to give breathing space and time to assess how this is working. Following this, the inspection regime will be different and more about an integrated partnership approach although they will still inspect schools where there are concerns. We felt that this was a positive move forward.

We were pleased to hear about the deeper self-evaluation in specific areas concentrating on where schools need to improve, rather than reams of reports on wider performance. We heard that this should be a more powerful improvement tool. We were told that moving to this new way of working might be a challenge for some schools, as they are still committed to the older system, where accountability reporting is firmly embedded.

We understand the New Curriculum is much less prescriptive and that some teachers will thrive in this new environment, although we do recognise that some will find this more challenging and will need more support to progress with this successfully.

We asked what there is available for those pupils who would like to follow a more non-academic route and heard that there are partnerships with a wide range of partners locally designed to ensure we are offering experience in the world of work including a number of apprenticeships. We agreed that this relationship building and the opportunities to develop apprenticeships in a variety of roles to be important and could be developed further. We believe that digital and construction industry opportunities, that do not necessarily have an academic route attached to them, could be particularly important for Swansea.

We were pleased with the progress being made in the development of *Our National Mission* here in Swansea along with the work that happening to prepare for the implementation of the new curriculum.

We welcome your thoughts on any of the issues raised in our letter but on this occasion do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

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