



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

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31 January 2020

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 16 January 2020. It is about the Annual Education Performance Data.

Dear Councillor Raynor,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 16 January 2020

At our meeting on the 16 January 2020, we looked at the Annual Education Performance Data for Swansea for 2018/2019. We would like to thank you and Helen Morgan Rees, Head of Achievement and Partnership for attending and discussing the issues with us. We looked closely at the detailed report you provided which gave us details of performance for all learners in Swansea.

We understand that:

- Foundation phase attainment fell in 2018 and 2019 but the metric for this changed from 2018 so it is difficult to make a comparison with previous data. There is now a different way of judging outcomes although it is not as easy as presenting purely data.
- Key stage 2 and 3 had strong performance overall.
- Key stage 4 outcomes remain strong relative to those across Wales.
- Key stage 5 (post 16) has an overall picture of improvement. However, the Panel would like to see a breakdown of the overall picture by subject type.
- Free School Meal (FSM) learners continue to attain significantly below other pupils, and this is a concern to the Panel and is something we will be monitoring.
- Looked After Children educational outcomes continue to be low but the Panel are aware of the vulnerabilities of this group of children and the volatility of the data used due to the small number in each cohort.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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- Schools in areas of high deprivation continue to experience challenges in improving attainment.
- The gender attainment gap between boys and girls continues to be wide but Estyn has not highlighted this as an area of concern for Swansea.
- Pupil attendance remains consistently strong.
- The numbers of fixed term exclusions have increased over the past 3 years but our data does compare favourably with the all Wales data. The Panel were pleased to hear that the Education Improvement Service do get behind these figures to see if there are areas for improvement or if there is good practice that can be shared. The Panel noted that the figures given do not give the duration of the exclusion. They heard that a fixed term exclusion might be very short, even just one day. The Panel have asked for a breakdown of these figures.
- Pupil Referral numbers have increased. We heard work is continuing across schools to ensure a consistent threshold for behaviour interventions for referral to EOTAS and exclusions. That a complete smoking ban has been introduced at the pupil referral unit and this is having some impact on the exclusion figures. Also, that monies have been devolved to secondary, schools under the behaviour strategy, to develop and improve their graduated response to pupils at risk of EOTAS. The Panel would like to find out more about this so we will schedule it into their future work programme.
- The issue of undeclared exclusions was raised and we heard that Challenge Advisors robustly challenge schools around exclusions, especially those that are permanent. We also understand there has been some controversy across Wales relating to the 'off-rolling of pupils', we were pleased to hear that the practice used in Swansea on this has been highlighted as good practice.

We could clearly see from the data provided the evidence of the challenges that many of our schools face in relation to the deprivation experienced within their catchment areas. We support and emphasise the continued importance of innovative use of the Pupil Development Grant to help improve outcomes for Swansea's most vulnerable pupils.

We recognise the importance of an ongoing focus on improving, what are long-term challenges locally and nationally, of improving the attainment of free school meal pupils and other vulnerable learners like looked after children as well as those attending the Pupil Referral Unit. We do recognise there are constant challenges to improvement with learners including for example FSM pupils have nearly double the level of additional learning needs.

We were pleased to hear about the improvement in the consistency of the teacher assessment that is now helping to show a more realistic picture of pupil outcomes at Key Stage 2 and 3.

We considered how scrutiny might measure pupil outcomes and performance in the future. We heard that this could be done through the categorisation process, which shows how individual schools in Swansea are performing and what support they each require. We also understand associated measures will be developed. We agreed with you when you said, it will be important for the future data to form part of the dialogue had with everyone around pupil outcomes including parents.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our thank you to Headteacher's, teachers and school staff from across Swansea for the great work they have done over the past year, we recognise that it is proving to be truly inspirational.

We welcome your thoughts on any of the issues raised in our letter. However, can you please provide a formal written response to the following issue by 21 February 2020.

1. Can you provide us with the fixed term exclusion data broken down by duration?

Yours sincerely,

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

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