



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Education**

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 19 November 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
L James
L J Tyler-Lloyd

Councillor(s)

D W Helliwell
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins
M A Langstone

Co-opted Member(s)

A Roberts

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Jennifer Raynor

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Helen Morgan-Rees
Kate Phillips
Michelle Roberts

Interim Director of Education
Interim Head of Achievement & Partnership Service
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A M Day, M Durke and S J Gallagher

Co-opted Member(s): D Anderson-Thomas

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

The Panel received the letter and minutes from the Panel meeting on the 22 October 2020.

4 Public Questions

No public questions have been received.

5 Waun Wen Primary School

The Panel met with the Headteacher, Chair and Vice Chair of Governors at Waun Wen Primary School, as part of their ongoing watching brief on wellbeing in Schools. The School was chosen because of the good practice it is showing in putting wellbeing at the heart of the teaching.

The Headteacher made a presentation, which included the following points:

- Context of the school including 57% Free School Meals, 47% English as Additional Language (27 languages) and 42% Additional Learning Needs (5 statements), a large number of pupils live in areas 1 or 2 of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- Many of the pupils at the school will have suffered from Adverse Childhood Experiences also known as ACES.
- One of the key issues faced at the school is speech, language and communication needs.
- The school endeavours to put the wellbeing of pupils at the heart of all it does.
- The school faced a number of challenges before Covid including: baseline scores very low, lack of vocabulary, difficulty using expressive language, children who have suffered trauma, social services involvement with families, children not able to regulate themselves, children not ready to learn.
- Some of the ways the school addressed these problems included use of training on vocabulary acquisition (introduced specific vocabulary lessons), training on trauma and ACES worked with Gwella Project, Empathy Lab Project (developed vocabulary to express feelings).
- From lockdown and beyond some of the things the school did included telephoning families, deliveries of food for FSM pupils, ran a food bank in staff room for parents, acquired Easter eggs for all pupils, delivered playdough and workbooks to all pupils.
- They wanted to encourage wellbeing as pupils returned to school in the autumn so put together a short film showing how the school will work and look through Covid to ease pupils in before they attended.
- They are trying to ensure physical and mental wellbeing by ensuring regular exercise and appropriate support in the classroom, including for example yoga.
- The Support by Governors was outlined including regular phone calls with chair and vice chair, email support, agreed with changes to policy and curriculum, vice chair meets regularly with ALNCO.
- The support from the local authority during lockdown was outlined, some of this included: courses arranged by local authority, letters to parents from interim director, support from health and safety officer, Headteacher said it felt like a team was supporting the school...that the authority is behind you and will back you, also good support for wellbeing of heads and staff.
- The Headteacher said that Health and Safety Advice and the support from Test, Trace and Protect superb in guiding them through any Covid issues.

Cabinet Member for School Improvement, Learning and Skills said that the school context is very challenging but that the senior management team at the school have

addressed what needs to be done to get pupils in a position to be able to learn. She said it was inspiring to see, when supported, how pupils can become more resilient and able to learn.

The Director of Education said she was proud of Waun Wen Primary School in normal times but in these Covid times, they have gone way beyond that.

The Panel thanked the Headteacher, the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors at the school for attending the Panel and for outlining some of the inspiring work they are doing with pupils at the school in such challenging circumstances.

6 Elective Home Education

The Scrutiny Work Planning Conference in October referred this item to the Education Scrutiny Panel because Councillors understand that the numbers of requests to de-register pupils had increased substantially resulting from the Covid situation. The Panel therefore invited the appropriate Cabinet Member, the Director of Education and Head of Education Support to discuss the issue.

The Panel heard:

- The local authority is not responsible for the provision of elective home education or under any statutory obligation to support it. However, under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, the local authority has a duty to make arrangements to identify children not receiving a suitable education.
- There is no legal framework for the local authority to regularly monitor provision of home education, the Council are mindful of its wider duties of care, and we will contact parents to discuss their ongoing home education provision.
- If a child has a statement of special educational needs the Additional Learning Needs Panel consider the request, amend the statement accordingly and ensure the requirements of the statement can be met.
- Swansea position: We are aware of 234 families who are elective home educating. This figure changes frequently. We accept and respect the right of parents to choose electively home educate and our mindful of our boundaries. We endeavour to work in a supporting manner to foster good relationships with home educators.
- People decide to de-register their children from School and Educate at home for a wide variety of reasons but this has increased since Covid with 88 requests being made.
- Support and safeguards include a focus on building positive relationships with the elective home education community, offer signposting, advice and guidance. If there is a circumstance, which gives rise to concerns education officers will need to consider whether to liaise with other relevant services and agencies. School Attendance Orders can be used as a last resort if there is a concern appropriate education is not being provided. We prefer to work in partnership with home educators
- Any pupil who has received their education at home can apply to be readmitted to a maintained school at any time.
- Some parents have fearful about children returning to school relating to Covid particularly where there are family health concerns. A more flexible approach to

delaying removal from role, not penalising non-attendance and providing reassurance on risk assessments has been offered

- New statutory guidance from Welsh Government was consultation upon in October 2019 but is currently on hold as to COVID 19 responses took priority Swansea is prepared to take on the requirements of the statutory guidance if implemented.
- Will continue to foster good working relationships with the elective home education community
- A small amount of additional funding has been provided by Welsh Government to councils to support elective home education and considerations around how best to allocate this are taking place

The Panel were reassured by the approach that the Council is taking to pupils being electively home educated. They were encouraged to hear that about the safeguards that have been put in place given the current Welsh Government guidelines on this matter. The Panel would like to see a register of pupils that are being electively home educated put in place but recognise that this is in with the reach of the Welsh Government. We look forward to that statutory guidance being published.

7 Work Programme 2020/21

The Work Programme was agreed.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm

Chair