

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 Dec 2020 includes:

- a) On the 17 Dec 2020, the Panel met to discuss the Swansea Skills Partnership, they invited key members of the Partnership to discuss the key issues.
- b) The Panel agreed to reduce the workload on the Education Department for the January and February 2021 due to the pressures of Covid. In this period they received an update on the Covid situation in Education and looked at the Annual Budget as it relates to Education.
- c) On the 18 March, the Panel discussed the Pupil Development Grant spend across schools in Swansea and how it is benefiting our most vulnerable pupils. They also discussed the Education Covid recovery.
- d) On the 22 April, the Panel looked at progress with Additional Learning Needs reform, an update on position with the New Curriculum for Wales and the Estyn letter and report on the education response to the pandemic.
- e) On the 13 May, the Panel met with the Head of the Pupil Referral and Behaviour Support Unit to discuss progress with Education other than at School Services (EOTAS) including the new Maes Derw facility. They also received an update on 21st Century Schools.
- f) On the 24 June, the Panel discussed the current issues affecting education including effects of Covid with the Cabinet Member and Director, they then agreed their work programme for 2021/2022.

3. Feedback from the Convener on Achievements / Impacts

We have sent six letters to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills since December 2020, which gave our views, raised concerns and made recommendations. Some of these include, for example:

Swansea Skills Partnership:

We were pleased to hear about the positive impact the Partnership is having especially in relation to digital learning and the careers platform My Choice. The Panel look forward to seeing how the Partnership develops in the future by building on these good early foundations. We emphasised the importance of engaging the local business community and the need to look to include them in the partnership moving forward. We agreed that it would be highly beneficial to see a focus on NEET as this is a vital issue that can be influenced by all partners.

21st Century Schools Programme

We heard the Band A part of the programme is £51.5m and has improved 9 schools in Swansea. That the Band B is a much larger with £149.497m spent on schools. We were told there had been a seamless transition from Band A to B and it is hoped that will be the case when Band C is introduced (although what that will be is unknown at the moment). We understand the Band B programme is almost 3 times the size of Band A and is being delivered with less capacity and in spite of impact of Covid. We were pleased to hear about the work to reduce infant class sizes that includes a funding envelope of £1,919m which has included internal remodelling to create new classroom bases and classroom extensions.

Education Other Than At School Services (EOTAS)

We heard that it is important to recognise that the improvements in EOTAS are not just down to the opening of the new Maes Derw Pupil Referral Unit and that this is just one part of a wider EOTAS strategy. We were pleased to hear however that the new bespoke facility is having a beneficial impact both pupils and staff. Hearing that there has been a sense of pupils

feeling settled, with a reduction in acts of aggression towards staff and pupils being able to regulate their anxiety better. We were concerned to hear about some of the emerging themes following Covid, of for example, younger pupils struggling to engage at school with their peers and this is happening to much younger pupils than previously. We agreed it was important to keep these pupils in mainstream school wherever possible. We also heard the biggest impact has been the increase in mental health and anxiety issues and re-engaging with some of our older young people. We were pleased to hear that we are working closely with other partner agencies like social services and the youth offending team to help re-connect with these young people.

Actions recommended and/or questions asked of Cabinet Member:

1. The Panel requested an update on the current figure for the number of pupils requiring computer equipment and/or connectivity including how many of these are pupils entitled to Free School Meals?
2. The Panel asked what the current underspend on the Looked After Children Pupil Development Grant was. Why this was the case and how would any underspend be used?
3. The Panel asked how selecting and including representatives from the business community in the Swansea Skills Partnership was progressing, believing they should form an integral part of the Partnership. They also asked what the timescale for this might be.

4. Education Scrutiny Performance Panel - Future Work Programme 2021/22

Date	Items to be discussed
Meeting 1 24 June 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harassment, school age pupils – item deferred 2. Covid Recovery and key issues affecting Education moving forward 3. Planning 2021/2022 Council year in Education Scrutiny – Draft Work Programme
Meeting 2 15 July 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Behaviour Strategy, how associated delegated spend to schools is being used – speak to two secondary schools Feedback from ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group 28 June 2021
Meeting 3 1 Sept 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The New Estyn Regime and thematic reviews 2. Update – Education Covid Recovery moving into new school year 3. Update – Regional Scrutiny moving forward
Meeting 4 30 Sept 21	How are we improving schools in Swansea? (How are School Improvement Advisers supporting, evaluating and monitoring schools in Swansea). To also include: Sharing good practice, supporting eFSM pupils and readiness for the City Deal.
Meeting 5 21 Oct 21	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (A new 10 year plan is being developed, an overview of requirements and the progress made so far) New Curriculum Update
Meeting 6 18 Nov 21	School Scrutiny Session 1 – Morriston Comprehensive School
Meeting 7 9 Dec 21	Performance against identified education priorities (RAG) (Overview and then Cabinet Member Q&A) Swansea Skills Partnership update
Meeting 8 20 Jan 22	School Scrutiny Session 2 – Penyrheol Comprehensive School
Meeting 9 Feb - tbc	Annual Budget as it relates to Educations matters
Meeting 10 24 Mar 22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional Learning Needs Reform and implementation New Curriculum update including progress with implementation 2. EOTA's Update 3. End of year report - Education Scrutiny