



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education
Improvement, Learning and Skills

BY EMAIL

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Date 24 November 2021
Dyddiad:

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 18 November looking at Morriston Comprehensive School.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 18 November 2021

We would like to thank you, Officers, Martin Franklin, the Headteacher and Alyson Crabb the Chair of Governors at Morriston Primary School for attending meeting. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

Schools Scrutiny Sessions – Morriston Comprehensive School

We thanked the Headteacher for his detailed presentation and then we discussed the set of questions that were sent to the school in advance of the meeting.

We welcome the overall progress that has been made at the school since the Estyn Inspection. We were particularly keen to hear about the progress being made in relation to the five Estyn recommendations contained in that report. Especially the strong indication that steady progress has been made in the areas of teaching and learning, the Curriculum for Wales and pupil behaviour. Whilst we were encouraged by this progress, we did recognise that it is still relatively early in the school's improvement journey and hope this progress will be further built upon through steady and consistent improvement going forward.

We were particularly pleased to hear about:

- The clear strategies being put in place, with the progress and impact being monitored

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- The changes that have been made to the Leadership Team so that it can be better reflective of the school's priorities
- The alignment of the New Curriculum for Wales, teaching, learning and skills development to the whole school Vision, to better reflect building on the schools' aspirations of 'Inspire, Engage and Achieve'
- The embedding of positive strategies to improve pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning
- Engaging with families and the wider community to improve pupil wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning
- The use of Education Other Than at School delegated funding to support pupils with social and emotional behavioural difficulties who are at risk of exclusion
- A refreshed governing body who are clearly aware of their role to challenge but also support the school

We were pleased to hear from the Headteacher that the support received from the allocated School Improvement Adviser has been excellent and that he has provided positive challenge to the school. The Headteacher did emphasise the importance of a level of consistency with School Improvement Advisers, which he felt has been necessary and important for the school.

However, concern was expressed about why the issues at the school were not highlighted at an earlier stage, because the Estyn report was quite clear that the school was only 'adequate' in all five of the areas inspected in 2020. If they had been, then why was the level of support from the Education department absent before the Estyn Inspection and if not, how were these indicators missed?

We heard from the Director that the school has come a long way since the Estyn Inspection, and she recognised the importance of having a School Improvement Adviser who is a senior school leader with experience, who can support and challenge the school. She was pleased with the school's progress and how they have managed to progress with improvement even through the huge challenge of Covid.

We agreed with you and the Director that it is impressive that the school has been able to continue to improve through such difficult times. As a Panel, we would wish to ensure that the lessons learned from Morryston are shared with other schools.

We congratulate the Headteacher, the Governing Body and staff at the school for their continued hard work in moving the school forward.

From our discussions with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, the School Improvement Adviser, the Director, and the Cabinet Member we are reassured that all the pieces are in place to address the school's priorities and in turn form the basis for continued improvement.

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter, but can you please provide a written response to the following point by 15 December 2021

- Why was the level of support from the education department absent before the Estyn Inspection and if it was not, how were these indicators at the school missed?

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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