

Cllr. Lyndon Jones
Convener of the Education Scrutiny
Performance Panel

By Email

Please ask for: Councillor Robert Smith
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Our Ref: RS/JG
Your Ref:
Date: 29 November 2021

Dear Cllr. Jones,

Thank you for your letter dated 18th November 2021.

Re: Response to Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 18 November 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?

The education directorate has worked closely in collaboration with our regional partners to support Morryston Comprehensive School before, during, and after its inspection in February 2020.

For the period between the previous inspection in 2015 to the inspection in 2020, there are over 160 separate records of the school accessing support from both local authority (LA) and regional officers. The nature of this support was wide and varied and as a small example included, supporting the school's newly qualified teachers; working with Heads of Department conducting 'deep dives' into the department's data; and working with the senior leadership team developing a planning cycle and supporting the creation of the school's strategic plan.

In the two academic years immediately prior to the most recent inspection, the following were identified as areas that the school needed to develop:

- improving outcomes (including English and Mathematics);
- reviewing the curriculum offer at both Key Stage 4 and 5;
- build a cohesive and effective leadership team, and improve middle leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning skills;
- reduce in-school variation;
- reduce the level of pupil exclusions; and
- review and redevelop provision for learners with ALN.

Some of the areas of development are clearly reflected in the 2020 inspection recommendations (included below for ease of reference):

- R1 Improve teaching and assessment
- R2 Strengthen provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills
- R3 Embed strategies to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
- R4 Strengthen the quality and impact of leadership at all levels
- R5 Improve pupils' standards and progress in lessons

In the 2020 inspection, each of the inspection areas was judged to 'Adequate and needs improvement'. It is important to note that Estyn further described this judgement to mean 'strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement'. It is through the support of the LA and regional officers and the hard work of the school's staff that progress had been made prior to the inspection and that there were indeed strengths, which Estyn recognised. For example, the inspection report states, "There is a systematic programme of monitoring activities that includes extensive learning walks. Annual departmental reviews and evaluations are informed suitably by thorough analyses of data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. These reviews are contributing beneficially to staff self-reflection. They help provide leaders with an appropriate understanding of particular strengths and relevant areas for improvement. However, lesson observations and reviews do not focus closely enough on standards and pupils' progress and the development of their skills."

In addition to the examples of support and progress given above, the school has been supported well by other teams within the education directorate. Every term, senior leaders within the directorate meet to discuss schools facing challenging circumstances and agree actions to support the school. Since the autumn term of 2017 to date, Morrision Comprehensive School has been discussed no fewer than 15 times. Examples of resulting actions include supporting the governing body to develop and improving the school's understanding of good financial management processes.

Sustained school improvement takes time to develop. Whilst Estyn identified areas for improvement, these were being addressed, just not with sufficient time to embed. As you saw, the school's improvement journey has been positive and the changes lasting and impactful.

I trust this response reassures you that the level of support from the education department was not absent and that the indicators were not missed. Specific details of all of the support accessed by the school can be provided on request.

Yours sincerely



Y Cyngorydd / Councillor Robert Smith
Aelod Y Cabinet Dros Wella Addysg, Dysgu A Sgiliau
Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills