

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – SPC Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching purpose of the Panel is to provide ongoing challenge to school's 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 July 2021 includes:

- a) On the 15 July, the Panel met to discuss the Behaviour Strategy, including how associated delegated spend to schools is being used and as part of this spoke to two secondary schools. They also had feedback from Convener on the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group on the 28 June 2021
- b) On the 1 September, they looked at the New Estyn Regime and thematic reviews, an update on the education Covid recovery moving into new school year and on changes to Regional Scrutiny
- a) On the 30 September, they discussed how schools are improving in Swansea with the School Improvement Advisers, who are supporting, evaluating and monitoring schools in Swansea
- b) On the 21 October, the Panel looked at the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and progress with the New Curriculum for Wales
- c) On the 18 November, the Panel met with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors at Morryston Comprehensive School to discuss education performance and their improvement journey
- d) On the 9 December, they discussed Performance against identified education priorities (RAG) with the Cabinet Member and Director of Education and received updates on the Swansea Skills Partnership and the Regional Education Partnership now called Partneriaeth.

3. Feedback from the Convener on Achievements / Impacts

We have sent six letters to the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills since July 2021, which gave our views, raised concerns and made recommendations. Some of these include, for example:

- When we met with two schools about the Behaviour Strategy, we were encouraged to hear that the impact of the work being done at both schools has reduced exclusions, EOTAS referrals, improved educational outcomes and has increased pupil confidence. We were keen to emphasise the importance of sharing the good practice being shown by both schools including what has been learnt through the pandemic. We asked how this is done and we heard that there are a number of formal and informal mechanisms designed for this purpose, by using online platforms and via meetings.
- We welcomed the overall 10-year vision and strategic plan for the development of Welsh education and were pleased to see definite actions and proposals to move forward. We recognise that resourcing this plan will not come cheaply and emphasised the importance of ensuring that it is financially supported both locally and nationally.
- We heard concerns remain over schools' capacity to engage fully with curriculum reform. Currently, the pandemic is affecting school staff significantly, and the ability of schools to release staff for curriculum-related development is difficult. The Welsh Government has recognised this challenge, somewhat, in its new guidance with a

more sensitive language around readiness, for example, it states: “We do not expect schools to have perfected or completed all aspects of curriculum design reform by roll-out”. We stress the need to get this right including teacher engagement, otherwise those who suffer will be the pupils themselves. We agreed that it is important the School Improvement Advisers and Curriculum Advisers sensitively monitor and support schools in areas related to curriculum development.

- When we spoke to Morrision Comprehensive School we agreed that it was impressive that the school has been able to continue to improve through such difficult times. We wished to ensure that the lessons learned from Morrision are shared with other schools. We congratulated the Headteacher, the Governing Body and staff at the school for their continued hard work in moving the school forward.
- We heard that in the last seven years Swansea Autistic Spectrum Disorder pupils have increased threefold, which indicates a demand for specialist places. We were encouraged to hear that we are creating more places here and bringing pupils back from out of county places into Swansea closer to home. We were pleased to see that making sure there are places for all our learners was a key objective for Swansea.

Actions recommended, questions or views of the Cabinet Member asked:

1. View on continued Cynnydd funding of pre-14-16 to prevent EOTAS referrals and to train more staff in the Thrive approach.
2. Views on the improvements to behaviour strategy that could be made including ensuring strategies and approaches are being flexible to meet the changing needs of the pupils. This means upskilling staff to ensure they have training in such aspects. This is costly but we need the agility to respond swiftly. The need to develop programmes around mental health, tolerance and contextualised safeguarding. Initiatives such as the Cynnydd Learning Coaches help and support our pupils to look at pathways and self-regulation. These roles are grant funded and the money is coming to an end for many of these types of projects.
3. How we subsidise our provisions, the need to ensure that roles and provision are sustainable to enable planning to take place to continue to meet the needs of learners given the very specific issues that are now emerging as a result of the pandemic.
4. Provide us with some more information on the position of strength we are in Swansea in relation to harassment in schools and safeguarding.
5. Why was the level of support from the education department absent at Morrision Comprehensive before the Estyn Inspection and if it was not, how were these indicators at the school missed?

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

Date	Items to be discussed
Meeting 8 20 Jan 22	School Scrutiny Session 2 – Penyrheol Comprehensive School
Meeting 9 14 Feb 22	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. EOTAS Update 3. End of year report - Education Scrutiny