



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

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Date 9 May 2023
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Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning following the meeting of the Panel on 20 April 2023, where the Panel looked at Education Other Than At School services, the Voices of Children and Young People and the Swansea Skills Partnership.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20 April 2023

We would like to thank you, Helen Morgan Rees and Officers from the Education Department for attending the meeting and provided information for the Panel. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Update and feedback from Site Visit to Maew Derw Pupil Referral Unit

Firstly, we reflected upon our site visit to Maes Derw Pupil Referral Unit on the 16 March 2023. We had, at the end of our visit, said we welcomed the design and layout of the new facility and we were particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication of all the staff. We felt the work at the PRU was inspiring and the Panel appreciated the difference this is making to the lives of some of the most vulnerable pupils in Swansea.

We would like to thank the Head Teacher at Maes Derw PRU and the Head of the Vulnerable Learners Service for their written responses to the questions we asked following our visit, which were appended to the EOTAs report.

We welcomed the report updating us on the wider EOTAS Service recognising that Maes Derw PRU is just one part of the EOTAS service. You told us that the PRU and

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wider EOTAS services are being reviewed, not only because of financial constraints but also the need to make the most of the excellent facilities at the PRU to support a wider group of young people. We heard that the Directorate are currently looking at a revised model for the EOTAS service as a whole, that can be flexible and appropriate as pupil needs evolve.

We asked how involved parents/guardians are in their children's education in EOTAS and whether the approach is holistic. We heard that this is critical, that family involvement is part of the current offer and will also be a key part of development of the new offer to children and their families when the new model is developed. The EOTAS service also works closely with its partners in Social Services, Youth Justice and Evolve to wrap support around the family.

Hearing the Voices of Children and Young People

We wanted to understand and include the views of Children and Young People in the work of the Panel so we asked the Education Department to provide us with regular information on the work that is being done to gather and include those view in the work of the Education Directorate. We thanked the Head of Achievement and Partnership Service and the Team Manager for Education Strategy for providing us with a report outlining work undertaken by the Education Directorate and Partnership and Involvement Team based in the Social Services Department.

We heard about the many different ways children and young people are being consulted and involved, including how the council is working to reach the quieter voices of children and young people. We were particularly pleased to hear how those young people on youth councils in schools are proving to be strong advocates for marginal and smaller voices in school and particularly in relation to diversity.

We heard that there is also currently a survey of post-16 pupils, which has had a good response so far with 300 plus responses. We did agree with you when you said it does also need to include pupils attending Gower College as well as sixth forms. We would be keen to see the analysis of this survey once it is available.

We also agreed with you when you said it is vital to involve children and young people in the development of services not just in education but more widely across the council's services particularly when reviewing and informing council plans and strategies.

Swansea Skills Partnership Update

We welcomed the good progress that has been made across the current five work streams of the partnership and were particularly interested to hear about how it is building upon relationships with wider education providers as detailed in the report provided. We thanked the Strategic Skills Co-ordinator for providing the report and attending our meeting.

We mentioned how one of the drivers to developing this partnership was to ensure that education was also a journey for life and that it, in part, reflected the opportunities that may be available to young people when the leave school. I was particularly keen to hear about how we are involving more business leaders in the partnership because

they are the ones that are creating many of the opportunities that are a will be available. We heard that each of the partners have their own links with people within the local and wider business community which are often brought to the table at partnership meetings. In terms of schools and education, Careers Wales is the body we use to link with the business community. The Panel were interested to hear about the valued partner project where every school is linked with a particular valued business partner. Also, that some local businesses, like Amazon for example, have come along and presented to the skills partnership. We were told that the involvement of the business community was an important area that will be developed further by the Partnership moving forward.

We heard that a set of new work streams will be discussed in the near future and these will reflect current priorities and will continue to see the partnership support young people to gain the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life. We will be interested to hear about these at our next annual update.

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter but on this occasion, we do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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