



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

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Date 26 September 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 14 September 2023. The Panel discussed looked after children's education and support and then followed up upon 10 education recommendations as referred to them by the previous Education Cabinet Development Committee.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 14 September 2023

We would like to thank you and Helen Morgan Rees (Director of Education), Head of Education Strategy and the Team Manager for Pupil Support for attending the meeting and providing 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.

Looked after Children, support and progress in school

We were pleased to hear that a child's access to appropriate education should not be determined by their personal circumstances and the Council's recently agreed Inclusion Strategy aims to drive equity of experience by removing barriers to education for vulnerable pupils, including those who are looked after.

We heard that children and young people in care have personal education plans and the intention is for the child's voice to be captured in them. Also, that all schools in Swansea have a designated teacher and governor for looked-after children.

We were told that as of July 2023 there were 293 looked after children of statutory school age who received education in Swansea schools, 75 of these are children looked after by other local authorities. A further 91 children are looked after by Swansea and receive their education in other Welsh authorities. 17 children are

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educated and placed in England. Also in 2022/2023, 20 pupils who are looked after, were provided with education via the Education Other Than at School Service or other specialist provision. We asked how many hours of tuition the home educating children receive and we heard that each child would have a bespoke curriculum depending on their individual needs and that may include some external provision.

We were pleased to hear that all looked-after year 11 pupils, who were in mainstream school, educated at home or in a pupil referral unit, went on to further education, employment or training last year. We were interested to explore how the progress post-year 11 was then monitored. We were pleased to hear that the new Swansea Virtual School will help to do this more effectively.

Following up on the 10 Cabinet Development Committee Recommendations

The Head of Education Strategy took us through the progress made with regard to each of the 10 recommendations. We were pleased to hear from the Chair of the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee Cllr Mike Durke, who told us that he felt good progress had been made on many of the recommendations, but there was more work to do on some. You also told us that many of those recommendation that have not yet been advanced are longer term developments and will require more time to progress.

We were pleased to hear about the new language guide that has been developed in conjunction with children and young people. We recognise that language is a powerful tool and would be keen to see the guide once it is available.

We felt that the approval by Cabinet in May 2023 of the Councils Inclusion Strategy is a positive step forward and we recognise this will help schools to promote inclusion and reduce exclusion.

We were also pleased to hear about the good progress being made with the Strategy for Vocational Education and we were interested to hear about how the Swansea Skills Partnership will also be looking to incorporate this into their work in the near future.

The Panel were encouraged by progress being made with regard to a number of the recommendations. We look forward to hearing about progress in relation to those that have not yet been advanced when we receive a further update in 12 months' time.

Your Response

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

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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