



**To:**  
**Councillor Robert Smith**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

**BY EMAIL**

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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 December 2023. The Panel discussed the Annual Education Performance including an Estyn Inspection recommendation progress update.

Dear Cllr Smith,

### **Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 14 December 2023**

We would like to thank you, the Director of Education and the Team Manager Education Strategy 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.

### **Annual Education Performance against identified priorities including Estyn Inspection recommendation progress update**

We were told that good progress has been made with both the recommendations from the Estyn Inspection of the Local Government Education Service in Swansea in 2022, which included recommendations on post-16 education and strengthening Welsh Language provision in Education.

We heard about progress with the pupil voice consultation in relation to post-16 education, hearing that an extensive learner survey took place in 2023 with sixth form learners. We asked whether other post-16 pupils were consulted i.e., those doing vocational education and/or at Gower College. We heard that the survey originally covered just sixth form pupils but was then extended to other post-16 pupils, although we heard that the response from Gower College pupils was not as good as was hoped. The Panel agreed that vocational and other courses can be a very different 'offer' and it is important to understand those young people's views.

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We were pleased to hear that both the Inclusion Strategy and the School Attendance Action Plan had been agreed and are now active.

We were interested to hear about the review of specialist provision and the possibility of a new state of the art special school that would replace Ysgol Pen-yr-Bryn and Ysgol Crug Glas in Swansea (noting that this will not replace our current STF provision). We look forward to hearing more about this in the future as the proposal progresses.

We discussed the Key Stage 4 and advanced level results data and recognised that comparison of 2020, 2021 and 2022 would not be useful but we did suggest that it might be more realistic to compare between 2023 current data and that of 2019 prior to the pandemic. We also felt that it would also be useful to look at pupil destination information like, for example, those pupils getting their 1st and 2nd choice university place.

We were told that seventeen schools had been inspected by Estyn in the last academic year, five of these will be followed up by Estyn, with one school being placed in special measures. We asked how the local authority monitors progress with schools that are placed in follow up or special measures and heard that a School Improvement Adviser is assigned to a range of schools. When schools are in one of these categories the Adviser will work intensely with the school and will have done so both pre and post inspection. We also heard that bespoke training, for example, for new and acting leaders may be offered as well as support for new governance arrangements through the Councils Governor support Unit.

We also heard that there are currently two post inspection action plans for any school that goes into a statutory category: the local authorities plan and the post inspection plan. We were pleased to hear that Estyn recognised the burden of having two plans and they are now going to splice those plans together from January.

We were encouraged to hear that there were also six Estyn case studies indicating that in those six Swansea schools there is exceptional practice.

We were interested to explore the support that is provided to Headteachers both in relation to the pressure of inspections and other serious issues they may experience in their schools. We were told that the Local Authority do provide a range of support mechanisms including counselling and stress management. We noted that there is a self-referral system currently, which means that headteachers do not need to go to their chair of governors to be referred to counseling. The Council is also trying to remedy some things before they become an issue, hearing that there are range of factors that could impinge on wellbeing that are being looked at, for example, most recently ways to reduce the bureaucratic workload burden.

We were pleased to hear that Estyn have changed the way they inspect and have adapted the inspections to support the wellbeing needs of leaders and school staff and judgements have been removed and replaced with a narrative outcome designed to support improvement.

We asked how the Local Authority and schools support armed forces children. We heard that the Local Authority has strong links around this and that there is also financial support for armed forces pupils, as long as we know about them.

We asked about the PISA results and whether we could see the breakdown for Swansea. We heard local authorities are not provided with the outcome data for PISA and that pupils are chosen randomly across schools in Wales so providing a breakdown of data for Swansea specifically is not possible.

The Panel were pleased to hear that good progress had been made with most of the Education identified priorities. We were told that where specific aspects require attention, steps to address these have been identified.

The Panel asked the Cabinet Member and Director to pass their thank you to both the Education Directorate and schools for their excellent work this year.

### **Partneriaeth Scrutiny**

We discussed the most recent Partneriaeth Scrutiny letter to the Chair of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee, where an issue was raised about the training, development and support provided by Partneriaeth and whether this was available to school governors. The Panel asked how this was utilised in Swansea. Helen Morgan Rees agreed to speak to our Governor Support Unit to see how this is and can be linked to our current governor development programme.

### **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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