



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:

Michelle Roberts

Scrutiny Office
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:

07983 920286

e-Mail
e-Bost:

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

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Dyddiad:

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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 18 January 2024, where the Panel looked at progress with the Curriculum for Wales, meeting with the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from the North Gower Partnership of schools.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 18 January 2024

We were pleased to meet the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from the North Gower Partnership (NGP) which included Gowerton Comprehensive School, Gowerton Primary, Llanrhidian Primary, Penclawdd Primary, Pen-y-fro Primary and Waunarlwydd Primary schools. The Panel would also like to thank you, the Director, the Partneriaeth Link Officer and the School Improvement Service for your/their input.

We were keen to discuss with the cluster how the Curriculum for Wales was being implemented on the ground and how the work being done within each primary school in the cluster was being brought together, as pupils made the transition to the comprehensive school.

We were encouraged to hear from both the School Improvement Adviser and the Partneriaeth Link officer that the NGP has a strong working relationship which predates the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales and that this has given them a good foundation to build upon. We heard that they have made, and continue to make, good progress in introducing the Curriculum for Wales across the cluster.

The NGP Headteachers gave us some contextual information about the cluster of schools including that approximately 96% of pupils attending the cluster schools go on to the comprehensive, which helps when providing consistency across school years

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and in the pupil's transition from primary to secondary school. We were interested to hear about the development of a strong consistent branding across the partnership of schools. This takes the form of a kangaroo, which is used on key documentation across the cluster. The idea of Kanga the 'can do attitude' Kangaroo' was designed to help pupils understand the new curriculum, is a good one. This helps guide them through their schooling using a number of key principles like for example the four purposes of Ambitious, Ethical, Healthy and Enterprising.

We were keen to hear from the schools about how they are developing a shared understanding of what they mean by progression and we recognise that this must be challenging, because each school will have their own approaches in many aspects.

We were pleased to hear about the support provided to teachers and school staff, the use of a number of researched key principles and the development of shared policies in relation to key areas like safeguarding and attendance. We agreed the development of a NGP website was a particularly useful reference point and resource for pupils, parents and teaching staff and should help in continuing the consistency of approach across the cluster.

We asked how the development and maintenance of the website and shared other resources are funded. We heard that currently they are funded via the comprehensive school budget and that the NGP apply for any relevant grant funding that may be available to help progress this.

We asked about the key factors the NGP felt underpinned their success as a cluster in taking forward the Curriculum for Wales. Some of what they said throughout the meeting included:

- The consistency in the use of key principles for example Kanga and the use of some shared policies.
- Strong well developed working relationships across the cluster.
- Curriculum summary and progression planning (agreeing the approach ahead for the cluster but also importantly recognising each schools individuality).
- Continually evaluating and refining principles and objectives.
- Working to ensure all practitioners across the NGP understand how to best deliver, plan, assess and report on progress.
- Resources are developed to help teachers to achieve progress. Practitioners were/are consulted to find out what they need to develop the curriculum in the classroom.
- The development of the NGP website and the resources it contains.

It was great to hear first-hand about how the cluster are working well together and how they are showing strong progress in the implementation and embedding of the Curriculum for Wales. We are grateful to the team at each school for taking the time to join us and give a big thank you to them for their clear enthusiasm in what they are doing.

We took away some learning points from this session, many of these also mirror those highlighted in our session with the Pontarddulais cluster last year. Although we do recognise that there is no one size fits all for success in taking the Curriculum for Wales forward, we, from our two sessions with schools, have found what we believe are some of the common key success factors including:

- Strong working relationships being developed across the cluster.
- Consistency in approach and developing/researching tools to help achieve that (for example: shared website, kanga idea).
- Progression planning and a shared understanding of what progression means.
- Shared principles.
- Shared policies in areas like for example attendance and safeguarding
- Continuum of learning between primary and secondary schools.
- Buy in, enthusiasm and excitement in what the new curriculum can do for its pupils.
- Positive and constructive challenge across the cluster, but always in partnership and in a supportive way.
- Regular meetings of the six headteachers where they talk about progress and ideas openly and frankly.
- Good development support and brokerage of professional learning.
- Ensuring teaching staff themselves, have the knowledge and the confidence to deliver what is a brand-new curriculum.
- Joint working and sharing of experience.
- Fully involving and including pupils on the journey.
- Fully involving and including school governors on this journey.
- Recognising that everybody in the school is a learner especially in introducing the new curriculum including teachers, pupils and school governors. Also, that this is a process of continuing development.
- Regularly reviewing what they are doing and including stakeholders in this process, particularly teaching staff, pupils and school governors.

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 written response.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk