



**To/
Councillor Jen Raynor
Cabinet Member for Children,
Education and Lifelong Learning**

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:
Llinell Uniongyrchol:*

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

*Date
Dyddiad:*

Scrutiny

01792 637256

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

12 October 2017

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning following the meeting of the Panel on 25 September 2017. It is about School Governance.

Dear Councillor Raynor,

Scrutiny Inquiry into School Governance – 25 September 2017

The Panel would like to thank you and Kathryn Thomas for attending the School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel on 25 September 2017. We wanted to explore the improvements being made in relation to School Governance and to look at the impact of this piece of work. Thank you for providing a written paper which has given us some detail about that impact.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response. The main issues discussed are summarised as follows.

You informed us that the Governor Unit have made governors aware of the Governors Wales Self-evaluation tool and have advised them to undertake a self-evaluation exercise. We felt that in addition to this the council should clearly flag up what we can offer in relation to training and development to assist governing bodies.

We were pleased to see the mini booklet for governors and heard that it will be sent out to all new governors and made available on the council's website; we did note that the council website was listed, but thought that the direct link to the School and Governor team was important to include also, and this was agreed.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

www.swansea.gov.uk / www.abertawe.gov.uk

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You told us that ERW have undertaken a review of information provided to school governors, also that Governors Wales have undertaken a review following a consultation by Welsh government on the Reform of School Governance: regulatory framework. The outcome of this consultation is currently delayed due to high levels of response. Swansea is awaiting the outcome and recommendations from this review before this aspect can move forward. We were pleased however that there are links on our website to ERW, Governors Wales and My Local School but felt that the links need a higher profile – in the form of a larger font/ higher visibility and more explanation to help governors understand their purpose.

We understand that education data packs are available and were pleased to hear that ERW has developed a sample Headteacher report. It was felt that access to this sort of information will help empower governors by developing a better understanding of complex information. We would like to see links to this information flagged up on the Council's website.

The flexible package of training was welcomed and particularly that bespoke training can be arranged for schools and across clusters. We welcomed the termly meeting being held with the Challenge Advisor for School Governance and the Head of School Support to identify governing bodies in need of support. We did feel however that many governors may not be aware of the bespoke and targeted training approaches available for specific purposes and that this could also be flagged up on the Council's website.

We understand that the governor database has been revised and is now managed on a different system but further work is required to develop an online learning log for governors so they can self-manage training and development. We were pleased to hear that the new system was now up and running and that it is much more user friendly. We are now keen to see the next stage of development: the online learning log for governors.

We welcomed governor unit plans to deliver governor training in the Autumn to improve governor understanding of the core visit process. We were particularly pleased to hear Challenge Advisors are attending a meeting of the Governing body for all Red and Amber schools.

We discussed the recommendation *writing to the chair of governors and headteachers of each school to promote the good practice points included in this report*. We felt it important that governing bodies share their positive practice and that the Council can help by publicising the good work being done by governors and governing bodies. The Head of Governor Unit said that she will look into a way that positive outcomes from Estyn Inspections that relate to governing bodies can be made available on the Council's website.

We understand the reasons for not targeting a specific group of governors for governor training in isolation but did think that it would be useful to have bespoke training provided for Elected Members who are school governors.

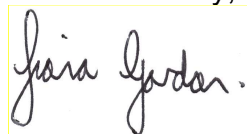
Response

We are interested in hearing any further thoughts you have about the issues raised in our letter but would ask that you particularly consider the following:

1. Flagging up information with governors and signposting more on Council's Website particularly in relation to:
 - What we offer in relation to training and development to assist governing bodies
 - The mini booklet for governors being sent out to all new governors and made available on the Council's website
 - More explanation to go alongside website links to ERW, Governors Wales and My Local School to help governors understand what they are for and what they can do for them.
 - Linking the education data packs and sample Headteacher report on ERW Website to the Council's website
 - More information for governors about bespoke and targeted training approaches available for specific purposes and that this is put on the Council's website.
2. We recommend that 'what every governor should expect' and 'ensuring effective challenge: good practice advice for chairs of governors and headteachers' are circulated to governors on an annual basis and that they form a part of the mini booklet (in Recommendation 2) for new governors. We would also like to see it made available online.
3. Look into a way that positive outcomes from Estyn Inspections that relate to governing bodies can be made available on the Council's website.

Could we please have your response by 2 November 2017.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR FIONA GORDON

Convener, School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

✉ Cllr.fiona.gordon@swansea.gov.uk