



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education
Improvement, Learning 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 Improvement, Learning and Skills following the meeting of the Panel on 20 January 2022 looking at Penyrheol Comprehensive School.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20 January 2022

We would like to thank you, the Officers, Damian Benney the Acting Headteacher and Jeff Bowen the Chair of Governors at Penyrheol Comprehensive School, for attending our meeting. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

Schools Scrutiny Sessions – Penyrheol Comprehensive School

We thanked the Acting Headteacher for his detailed overview and for the answers to our set of questions that were sent to the school in advance of the meeting.

We welcome the overall progress that has been made at the school since the Estyn Inspection. We were particularly keen to hear about the progress being made in relation to some of the Estyn recommendations contained in that report. Especially the progress that has been made in the areas of literacy and numeracy and planning to address teaching and assessment.

We were also particularly pleased to hear about:

- The clear emphasis on improving teaching and learning right across the curriculum
- Getting pupils to think more deeply about the subject content as part of their writing by directly aligning the teaching of writing and the development of writing across the curriculum

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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- The use of positive strategies to improve pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning
- The Interim School Improvement Plan clearly focusing on pupil wellbeing and behaviour
- The recognition of the importance of ongoing professional learning and development for all teaching staff
- Willingness to work with, as well as share knowledge, learning and experience with other schools
- The use of researched and evidence-based initiatives and interventions
- A positive and enthusiastic Acting Headteacher who is clearly happy to work with other schools and the local authority in order to improve outcomes for pupils
- A strong supportive governing body who are clearly aware of their role to challenge but also support the school.

We heard that many of the senior management positions at the school are currently temporary or in an acting capacity. We would encourage the Governing Body to make permanent appointments to those positions that require it, as soon as possible, in order to ensure stability and continuity of improvement moving forward.

We were concerned to hear about the increase in behaviour related issues since the start of the pandemic but were encouraged to hear that the school has been using a number of different strategies to address this and we thanked the Acting Headteacher for his honest assessment of the situation. We heard that the School Improvement Plan is currently an interim one, with the purpose of working through the pandemic with a clear focus on wellbeing and behaviour. We heard from the Director that we also have a positive behaviour strategy in Swansea and the success of this depends very much on how this works in practice and that ongoing input to improve this through experience learned is very welcome.

We were encouraged to hear from the Acting Headteacher, that the support received from the local authority, has been excellent including from Human Resources, Payroll and Finance. He also said that the allocated School Improvement Adviser has been excellent in supporting him, the school and in providing positive challenge. He also felt the support from other Headteachers in Swansea and the development opportunities offered to him, as a new headteacher, have been superb in helping him to develop in his new role. The Chair of Governors said that the collaboration between schools in Swansea was impressive. We were pleased to hear that the school is sharing and using best practice through the use of the many networks and support open to them.

We would like to congratulate the Acting Headteacher, the Governing Body and staff at the school for their continued hard work in moving the school forward, especially given the difficulties and challenges caused by the pandemic. From our discussions with the Acting Headteacher, Chair of Governors, the School Improvement Adviser, the Director and the Cabinet Member, we are reassured that good provision is in place to provide continued ongoing improvement.

Your Response

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

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

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