

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 1 October 2024

Time: 1.00 pm

Present: Councillors B Davies, S Marshall, D Jenkins, T Watkins, D Mayer and D Harvey

In Attendance: Sarah Davies (Deputy Chief Education Officer), Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer), Samantha Herritty (Scrutiny Advisor) and Simon Richards (Governance Officer)

Cllr D Davies (Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years)

Apologies: Councillors D Fouweather, J Cleverly and C Townsend

The Scrutiny Advisor informed Committee that the Chair had sent their apologies and asked for the Committee to elect a temporary Chair. Councillor Stephen Marshall was nominated and the Committee voted unanimously for this appointment.

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Watkins declared an interest as Governor of Tredegar Park Primary School.

2 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 30th July 2024 were **agreed as a true and accurate record.**

3 **Estyn Inspections Outcomes Report 2023-24**

Attendees:

Councillor Deborah Davies - Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years
Sarah Morgan - Head of Education
Sarah Davies - Deputy Head of Education

The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years (CM) introduced the report to the Committee.

The following was discussed:

- The Committee commended the progress made by schools, especially Pillgwenlly Primary School. The Head of Education (HOE) felt that the progress made was strong. The Deputy Chief Education Officer (DCEO) informed Committee that they have indicated to Estyn that the school was ready for a review.
- The Committee enquired whether Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed was in review because it was new and had limited year groups. The DHOE informed Committee that the school was no longer in review as it entered review in May 2022 but came out in July

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2023.

- The Committee enquired about the need for fluent Welsh teachers and how they could apply. The HOE informed Committee that there was a need and further information could be provided outside of the meeting if required.
- The Committee queried whether deprived areas were compared like-for-like in Wales. The DHOE informed Committee that the framework did not consider this, and schools undertake their own evaluations. The HOE added that if a school had a high number of free school meals (FSM) and disadvantaged learners, Estyn would expect adequate provision for support. The Committee queried whether there were comparisons with England. The DHOE informed Committee that Estyn inspected in Wales only and the HOE added that inspection framework for England was different to Wales.
- The Committee enquired whether Estyn used summative gradings for schools. The HOE informed Committee they were removed to allow for broader feedback to schools and a better future focus. They added that this allowed schools to still cite good practice. The DHOE added that Estyn had created a specific report for parents which was more accessible.
- The Committee enquired what impacts from the pandemic were still evident. The HOE informed Committee that attendance was still recovering, but data was in line with the national average and there were robust processes in place to support this. They added that babies and young children's oracy skills were impacted and that there were delays in identification of additional learning needs (ALN) students. They added that they are working with Flying Start to have an earlier input into children's lives. They noted that young people had missed out on social interaction but teachers were identifying individual children's needs well.
- The Committee enquired what issues had been identified for children returning to school. The HOE informed Committee that the pandemic experience had impacted confidence in socialising and there were some difficulties reintegrating, but a project addressing emotional school-based avoidance was ongoing.
- The Committee were concerned at the extent of the impact of mental health issues on students and teachers. The HOE informed Committee that work had been undertaken to address this, including educational psychologists training teaching assistants and encouraging students to attend school-based counselling. They added that there was a whole school approach to mental and emotional health.
- The Committee enquired how the local authority supported schools with pupils eligible for FSM. The HOE informed Committee that there was a poverty strategy being developed in which every service area would need to have specific mitigations in their service plans. They noted that the approach within Education to support disadvantaged learners included a universal rollout of FSM, RADY (Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters), pupil development grant, music lessons and instruments paid for and supplementary trips and visits. The CM highlighted the importance of schools taking a self-evaluative approach to address any gaps and take appropriate action. The Committee asked whether RADY was localised to Newport. The HOE informed Committee that it was nationwide but had been successful within Newport.
- The Committee enquired what strategies had been developed to strengthen self-evaluation. The DHOE informed Committee that last year the Education Achievement Service (EAS) had been asked to review schools' self-evaluation and planning processes in secondary schools and were looking at a range of schools this year.

They added that desktop exercises were being done and a report would be developed to improve self-evaluation if necessary. They informed Committee that they met with school improvement groups who would create a package of professional learning and they would meet with all secondary schools in October/November to sign off development plans.

- The Committee questioned whether there were issues with school governors understanding self-evaluation and their ability to challenge it as a result. The DHOE informed Committee that each governing body was unique but there was training from EAS to address the role of governors in school planning. They added that as a lay person, it was important for reports to clearly demonstrate the school's goals so that they can be held accountable. They informed Committee that they hoped to present a briefing paper to all governors offering cluster training sessions. The HOE informed Committee that governor chairs were invited to Estyn meetings and engaged in professional discussions as it was important for them to understand the reasoning for priorities and future actions.
- The Committee queried how schools addressed leadership capacity issues. The DHOE highlighted that inspections demonstrated leadership as a clear strength and there had been investment in professional development to grow internally. They added that it was important that middle leaders had access to the right professional learning to develop as leaders.
- The Committee enquired about the role of external partners in supporting schools. The HOE highlighted the One Million Mentors project. They also highlighted work with the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Mini Police. They informed Committee that they work with Coleg Gwent to support young people in Welsh Medium schools to work with playschemes, and Newport Live's Aspire Project.
- The Committee highlighted the good work that the Bridge Achievement Centre was doing in supporting and working with children.
- The Committee asked what was done to monitor schools who had been in special measures to ensure improvement. The HOE informed Committee that once a school came out of a category, they were supported to ensure sustainability, They noted that discussions and evaluations were carried out half termly for approximately 12 months and then an assessment was undertaken to see whether the school was ready for review. They added that needing support was not necessarily a cause for concern and school improvement partners carry out core yearly visits where additional support could be identified. They informed Committee of the importance of providing the right level of support for individual schools. The DHOE added that forming partnerships between schools was key to share best leadership and classroom practice.
- The Committee enquired where and when best practice was shared. The DHOE informed Committee that if a school was coming out of a category, they would be partnered with a compatible school. They added that they were mindful of matching schools on similar trajectories as to not overwhelm schools. They informed Committee that schools were visited in clusters and contact was made with schools regularly.
- The Committee queried whether cluster working would improve school support. The DHOE informed Committee that a broader scope than clusters was needed as the cluster was about progression and learning in a traditional sense but there are other ways to work. The Committee asked how consistency in standards would be achieved between schools. The HOE informed Committee work had been done to ensure that the transition from primary to secondary was as optimal as possible. The DHOE added that there were common approaches being undertaken in teaching and

learning, and discussions were ongoing about challenges to help drive improvement within clusters.

- The Committee queried what plans were in place to help expand and develop Welsh medium provision in schools. The HOE informed Committee that there is a Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and this report would be brought to Scrutiny.
- The Committee queried what support was given to those who required work experience and apprenticeships in Welsh. The HOE informed Committee that the Youth Service and Play Provision developed opportunities for services and clubs in schools in Welsh and encouraged learners to use Welsh throughout the day. They added that there was access to youth support in Welsh during holidays. They highlighted the Welsh Language Learning Provision which ensured access for Welsh speakers. They noted that post-16 funding was learner focused and there was an effort to make sure that resources were not duplicated.
- The Committee queried what priorities and challenges were highlighted. The HOE informed Committee that they kept a spreadsheet with the most common recommendations, but a common theme was development of Welsh language, specifically oracy. They added that they met with headteachers to provide information on access to Welsh language learning and support. They informed Committee that it was essential they were familiar with all schools and not only provide support following inspections. They noted that reviews of recommendations were carried out in summer holidays to see what improvements had been made. The HOE explained to the Committee about the level of support available to school staff on the Welsh language learning offer. The DHOE also noted that they also consulted with schools on other best practice for professional development on Welsh as a second language. They added that they review progress and standards in all schools and early-stage signs of the impact of this are evident in the report.

Comments and recommendations:

- The Committee requested to be apprised of reports where progress with Welsh language in education is highlighted.
- The Committee were pleased with the progress displayed.
- The Committee were content with the report.

4 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

a) Actions Arising

The Scrutiny Advisor informed the Committee that outstanding actions had been chased.

b) Forward Work Programme

The Scrutiny Advisor informed the Committee that the date of the next meetings is incorrect on the agenda, it should be the 26th November and 10th December but confirmed these are correct on the website and in diaries.

The meeting terminated at 2.09 pm