

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - MONDAY, 8 JULY 2019

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
MONDAY, 8 JULY 2019 AT 14:30**

Present

Councillor CA Webster – Chairperson

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| TH Beedle | NA Burnett | J Gebbie | M Jones |
| B Sedgebeer | RME Stirman | LM Walters | KJ Watts |
| A Williams | AJ Williams | | |

Apologies for Absence

N Echanis, JPD Blundell, RJ Collins, PA Davies, SK Dendy and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

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| Sarah Daniel | Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny |
| Nicola Echanis | Head of Education & Family Support |
| Lindsay Harvey | Corporate Director Education and Family Support |
| Michelle Hatcher | Group Manager - Inclusion |
| Gail Jewell | Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny |
| Andy Rothwell | Senior Challenge Advisor Central South Consortium |
| Tracy Watson | Scrutiny Officer |
| Andrew Williams | Assistant Managing Director Central South Consortium |

Registered Representative:

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|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Rev Cannon Edward Evans | Roman Catholic Church |
| William Bond | Special School Sector |

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor TH Beedle declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as he is the Chair of the Bridgend Governors Association.

Councillor J-P B Blundell declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Cefn Glas Infants School.

Councillor PA Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Bryntirion Infants and Junior School.

Rev Canon E Evans declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as he is a governor of Bryntirion Comprehensive School.

Councillor J Gebbie declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of both Mynydd Cynffig and Pil Primary Schools.

Councillor M Jones declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Bettws Primary School.

Councillor B Sedgebeer declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Pencoed Comprehensive School and Croesty Primary School.

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Councillor R Stirman declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of both Tynyrheol and Bettws Primary Schools.

Councillor K Watts declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Newton Primary School.

Councillor C Webster declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report she has a child in Secondary education in the County Borough.

Councillor A Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Pencoed Comprehensive.

Councillor AJ Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – LA Estyn Report as a governor of Coety Primary School and she has a child who attends Brynteg Comprehensive School.

69. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 dated 3 June 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

70. ESTYN INSPECTION OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support thanked Scrutiny Members, and explained that he was not going to read through the full report as this had been presented to members in June. He did however report that the inspection was carried out by Estyn in March 2019, under the new Local Government Education Inspection Framework. Inspectors from the Wales Audit Office and Care Inspectorate Wales were part of the inspection team. A wide range of stakeholders were involved in the inspection, which included elected Members, officers, head teachers, learners and members of the public. He further highlighted that he felt comforted that work that we are doing is effective. He then went on to confirm that the authority was due to provide the PIAP by 31st August and acknowledged the input that Scrutiny would have in shaping the PIAP and was keen to answer any questions. The committee noted that there are 4 key recommendations made by Estyn and, along with the Central South Consortium, they had identified 14 within the sub plan.

A member questioned the timeliness of the PIAP, and highlighted that this was an opportunity for scrutiny to be part of that action plan.

A member explained that this was a good report, but highlighted that the report noted that weak teaching was taking too long to improve. The member asked for clarification on what is weak teaching, what was the difference between sub-standard and weak teaching and how long should a weak teacher be given before it affects a class or cohort. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support highlighted that they had been really proactive, having regular visits, but highlighted that this takes some months to do but acknowledged that learners should not be disadvantaged and there needed to be support in place from day one. He explained that where we have criticised teachers, they have taken that criticism on board and that satisfactory progress had been made in these cases, seeing teaching improved but that there was not necessarily a prescribed time for improvement. The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor was mindful of the development of staff, and that there is a duty of care to see progress post inspection but that this was done in a supportive way in partnership between the LA and CSC.

A member enquired at which point CSC go into a school and what work is being done to stop green schools sliding? The Acting Assistant Director CSC explained that green schools were given 4 days support, however that had changed to a more agile approach so that issues can be spotted and dealt with from the outset. The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor advised the importance of conducting a learning walk and highlighted the example within the Estyn report where a learning walk conducted by a challenge adviser identified the need to improve teaching in a foundation phase. As a result, school leaders focused well on this area and brought about improvements in a timely manner. The Cabinet Member for Education informed the committee that he had completed about 50 learning walks and that weak teaching was not a theme in education as a whole. The Chair was appreciative of the work CSC do.

Members observed that Primary school children often copy what they hear, be it from television, teachers or parents and where mistakes are made e.g. grammatical errors, it is fundamental that these need to be corrected. It was further raised that reports from education institutes with grammatical or spelling errors was a cause for concern.

A member noted that on page 18 of the report 20.2% of pupils have special educational needs and asked how that need was identified and where do we sit in the UK? The Corporate Director Education and Family Support explained that he was a strong advocate of high standards of literacy and that it was critical that words were corrected at primary level. The Group Manager Inclusion and School Improvement explained that as supported by Esyt, there was a good graduated response in Bridgend. There were many teams within the inclusion service working closely with schools to look at the ALN registers e.g. basic skills needs, and move forward with individual plans in addition to Learning Resource centres in English and Welsh. She explained that the Access to Education panel works really well at looking at the needs of vulnerable learners. Asked how well are they continued and is there any barriers, the Group Manager Inclusion and School Improvement explained that the process works as a sub panel with key colleagues on that panel and parental involvement. Panels are well attended by Primary and Secondary Heads, who see a real relevance to attend and there is a terms of reference in place.

A member asked what is being done to support governing bodies and provide training locally, given that some are outstanding and some are more complacent. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support explained that regular meetings are held with Bridgend Governors, but that that there wasn't always a huge representation and he had had long conversations to break that cycle. Expert contributions were provided by the Director himself and by CSC. He recognised the feedback through CSC to deliver local training, acknowledging the recent training provided at CCYD, encouraging more governors to be able to attend these events. Where there are emerging issues they will try to delivery training very quickly e.g. GDPR. The Acting Assistant Director CSC recognised the need for ongoing governor training acknowledging that governance of schools was a national issue. He explained about the requirements for new governors to have training, but then often nothing after that. Members discussed the upskilling and training of Governors and ongoing training development including eLearning modules.

The Chair highlighted the issues of ongoing governor vacancies. The Acting Assistant Director CSC acknowledged that this was a difficult issue to resolve.

A member enquired how schools are supported in terms of budget management. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support noted the comment within the Estyn report that highlighted the local authority's allocation of resources to its education services and that financial monitoring is effective. He noted that some areas were an absolute challenge and explained that budget deficit plans could be extended to 3 years in the first

instance and then possibly 5 with the agreement of the S151 officer. He confirmed that 20 schools have deficit budgets, but that only a few had a large deficit. It was important to manage tight budgets whilst improving standards. The member further asked about what additional support could be provided to schools, to maintain standards. The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor explained that every school within the region had access to a comprehensive programme of learning and development. He provided information on accelerated progress leaders which was working well and the resource board was able to offer red/amber schools specific pieces of work e.g. developing teaching and learning.

A member asked whether we are expecting too much in schools having autonomy over their budgets, as there seemed to be a conflict between educators and accountants. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support acknowledged that while some things are better centrally, school budgets were delegated and the authority supported schools with the management of it. He also explained that the authority provided a wide range of service level agreements to schools, to be cost effective and provide value for money. There was additional support from Finance Officers, Senior Officer Support and as a collective. Those schools causing concern should have a plan in place. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration acknowledged the Education Reform Act 1988 and reinforced that even if we wanted to make changes, due to this legislation we cannot. He did not feel there was any correlation between schools in deficit and standards. A member reiterated that those schools that have a deficit budget have competing priorities and have to manage resources very carefully.

A member asked about the availability of Welsh speaking spaces in the borough. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support stated that there was capacity in English medium schools of about 5%, whilst places for Welsh medium schools was 13.5% in primary schools and 20% in secondary. He further confirmed the support for the Welsh Language achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. He highlighted the excellent work in Betws Primary School and Ysgol Calon y Cymoedd who have a shared footprint, work very closely together and share resources.

A member noted that the number of permanent exclusions had increased and asked what we are doing to change that. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support explained that the Estyn report had showed last year's figures showing permanent exclusions increasing and short-term exclusions down. This was contrary to this year's figures that showed permanent exclusions down but short-term exclusions increasing. The Group Manager Inclusion and School Improvement explained about the inclusion restructure and that there was now a stronger consistency across the authority. There was a new lead in place and a collaborative response in line with the ALN response. Team around the school, including integrated family, meet and look at intercepting at an early stage. There are a number of approaches in place e.g. Thrive, ACES, rather than traditional approaches. There is intense support from the Bridge Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Unit.

Members asked what strategy we have to support sixth formers, particularly more able or talented pupils. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support acknowledged the forthcoming review to shape the Post 16 landscape in Bridgend. There is concern that learners do really well at 16, but this is not carried through to A Level. He identified that some schools were doing really well in this area, but that some did less well. There was a need to focus on teaching and learning Post 16. The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Help highlighted the need to capture this concern in the Post 16 review, to feed into the education service. He explained that since we have lost the Schools Advisory Service, there is a hole in our provision. The Acting Assistant Director CSC outlined the need to have specific specialism practitioners that are current. He outlined model lead practitioners identified as key leads to share expertise and ensure practitioners practice together. A member further asked if we are suffering from our lack of Youth Services to

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provide development opportunities for these learners. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support explained that as far as youth work is concerned we run a small group in Bridgend, around 330 including the Duke of Edinburgh awards and Inspire 2 Achieve. Support from schools is by Youth workers, rather than youth clubs.

A member stated that the authority was to be congratulated on the report, but noted that like many reports Estyn had generalised, which takes the shine off the report. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support stated that he was delighted about the report and acknowledged that Estyn had asked the authority to provide a case study in relation to young people's involvement in decision-making processes in schools and the local authority.

A member asked about the progress of young carers, as mentioned in the report. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support explained that there is some really good work going on to support this and noted the young carer's card, but acknowledged the challenge in identifying young carers themselves, as they cannot be forced to do this. There are a number of sessions delivered by SS&W and training in schools to identify them. The Group Manager Inclusion and School Improvement reiterated that once they are aware they are supported very effectively, but acknowledged the issue that lots of them want to go under the radar.

A member stated that we should remind ourselves looking at the Corporate Delivery; this is a very good report, given the financial constraints. What comes across is the energy and intent to deliver further. With this in mind, is there any other external funding to support this plan and recommendations. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support indicated that there was some additional support to contribute to the recommendations acknowledging that support from CSC was way above expectations. In terms of recommendation 1, a member further asked if members could be assured that there is consistent moderation in primary schools. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support acknowledged the work done with CSC and that moderation is multi-layered, working in clusters. Where we see outstanding literacy in schools in Bridgend, this is disseminated. The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor added that there was a long-standing commitment to oracy, mentioning the Voice 21 project, reiterating that excellent practice in schools is shared. He acknowledged that progress in early years is good, but we need to see progress.

A member mentioned a recent meeting that highlighted issues following a staff wellbeing survey and wondered why education staff were not subject to the same survey. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support acknowledged this and added that he had picked this up with the Chief Executive and was happy for the survey to go out to schools.

This concluded debate on the item. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support thanked the committee and acknowledged the input from Scrutiny towards the Post Inspection Action plan. The Chairperson thanked the invitees for attending today, following which they retired from the meeting.

Conclusions:-

Members recommended the following:-

- Whilst discussing Governor Training, members recommended providing eLearning modules with examples of real life problems to be solved that would benefit experienced governors.

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- Members noted that a recent wellbeing staff survey carried out did not include school staff and recommended further surveys should include all staff including school staff.
- Members recommended bringing a presentation of the Youth Mental Health First Aid Programme indicated on page 5 of the LA Estyn Report, before Council.
- Members recommended that an extra meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 be arranged for August 2019, in order to feedback into the Post Inspection Action Plan

Members requested the following further information:-

- Members noted that on page 1 of the LA Estyn Report a figure of 20.2% was indicated for pupils having special educational needs and asked where we sit in the UK?

71. MEMBER AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - PLASNEWYDD PRIMARY - RESPONSES

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report, which provided an update on the above.

The committee noted the responses to the findings and recommendations and acknowledged that this item would come to full scrutiny in October 2019.

72. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report, which provided an update on the feedback from the previous meetings of the SO&SC 1 held on the 29 April and 3 June.

The committee noted the responses and allocated a RAG status to the feedback.

73. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Forward Work Programme and informed the Committee that following a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Committee would consider reports on Post 16 Education and Plasnewydd Primary School at its next two meetings.

74. URGENT ITEMS

Several members raised concerns in regards to the timings of meetings. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to raise this with the Democratic Services Manager. Registered Representatives expressed their disappointment at not being invited to the Scrutiny Pre-meeting. The Scrutiny Officer apologised to the Registered Representatives for not including them in the email to Members and agreed to provide confirmation going forward of timings for the next few meetings of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1.

The meeting closed at 16:43