

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - WEDNESDAY, 30 JANUARY 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
WEDNESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2019 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor CA Webster – Chairperson

TH Beedle	JPD Blundell	NA Burnett	RJ Collins
J Gebbie	B Sedgebeer	RME Stirman	LM Walters
KJ Watts	AJ Williams		

Apologies for Absence

PA Davies and M Jones

Officers:

Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Manager
Tracy Watson	Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

Carmen Beveridge	Head Teacher St Robert's R C Primary School
Hannah Castle	Head Teacher, Cynffig Comprehensive School
Neil Clode	Head Teacher, Llangwydd Primary School
Rhiannon Dixon	Head Teacher Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Y Ferch O'r Sger
Jeremy Evans	Head of Heronsbridge School
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Lisa James-Smith	Deputy Head Teacher Heronsbridge School
Meurig Jones	Head Teacher Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd
Angela Keller	Head Teacher Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School
Andy Rothwell	Senior Challenge Advisor Central South Consortium
Andrew Slade	Head Teacher, Porthcawl Comprehensive School
Councillor Charles Smith	Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Jeremy Thompson	Head Teacher Oldcastle Primary School
Andrew Williams	Assistant Managing Director Central South Consortium

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made:

Councillor N Burnett declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Education Outcomes as her son attends Brynteg Comprehensive School.

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

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

Rev Canon E Evans declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Education Outcomes as he is a governor of Bryntirion Comprehensive School and his wife works for the Inclusion Service.

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

Councillor R Stirman declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Education Outcomes as a governor of Tynyrheol Primary School.

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

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

45. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 of 3 December 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

46. EDUCATION OUTCOMES

The Committee received a report which provided information relating to school categorisation, pupil attainment (including pupils with additional learning needs), challenges faced by schools and the work of the Central South Consortium.

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support clarified an inaccuracy in the report and commented that Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd leads and fully attends the Welsh Medium Hubs connected with Gyda'n Gilydd and Cyfleoedd+, which are which are funded through the Consortium, but also the work the school does with Cydag. The work of YG Llangynwyd had been noted within past Challenge Advisor reports and visits and that engagement happens across Welsh medium schools across the Consortium.

The Senior Challenge Advisor reported on the school categorisation information for 2018-19, which is currently being moderated and verified and due for release in February 2019. He highlighted the support categories of Bridgend schools over the last 3 years. He informed the Committee that most schools have shown an improvement in post-16 outcomes from a comparable baseline in 2011-12 and he illustrated the performance of Bridgend's secondary schools performance for the Level 3 threshold for pupils achieving 2 or more A levels A* to E. The Committee was further provided with information on the ranking of Bridgend schools for key stage 4; outcomes for foundation phase Outcome 5+ and 6+; key stage 2; outcomes for key stage 2 Level 4+ and 5+ and key stage 3; outcomes for key stage 3 Level 5+, 6+ and 7+. He stated that targets and actuals in key stage 2 were closely aligned with all targets being missed or exceeded by a small margin. For key stage 3, at level 5, targets were missed by a slightly wider margin than key stage 2, this is being addressed by Challenge Advisers to ensure that as many pupils as possible reach their targets and narrow the gap. Targets at Level 2+ threshold were missed by 7.8%, which requires further reduction to bring it in line with performance in 2015-16. He stated that the reduction represents a better understanding of the revised exam specification and the work that Challenge Advisers have undertaken in supporting schools.

The Committee asked what steps the Consortium is taking to get schools back to the Green category. The Senior Challenge Advisor informed the Committee that where a school moves from the Green to Yellow categorisation it demonstrates that it is getting

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the required support. Schools in the Yellow category may get 10 days of support per year and schools will change during the year through leadership. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that schools might have moved to the Yellow categorisation as they have identified the support needed. He commented that categorisation will have changed this year.

The Committee requested clarification of the support offered to schools. The Senior Challenge Advisor commented that a range of bespoke packages are offered to schools, with a very strong core support team in place. No schools are ever off the radar of the Consortium and are always kept safe.

The Committee questioned how the Consortium's targets are met. The Assistant Managing Director informed the Committee that the Consortium will produce a report each year for the Director of Education in respect of the performance of Bridgend schools.

The Committee questioned whether there is a correlation between categorisation and Estyn reports and which report will offer the best information. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented that sometimes the two reports bear little resemblance to each other, categorisation is to do with the support provided to support to schools and Estyn reports will measure different things.

The Committee asked for the Head Teachers' perspective on categorisation. The Head Teacher of Cynffig Comprehensive School informed the Committee there had been no change in the leadership of the school, but the school had moved from Yellow to Green to Red, while the Estyn inspection went from Green to Amber. Regular meetings are held with the Challenge Advisor and support to the leadership function had been accelerated. She stated that the experience of the Consortium is both supportive and challenging and other schools are encouraged to work with Cynffig and to learn from others. The Head Teacher of Cynffig informed the Committee that when the school was in the Green categorisation there was not as much input from the Consortium as now. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that the Consortium had changed the way in which it works with schools in the Green categorisation with Challenge Advisors being asked to have more dialogue with those schools.

The Head Teacher of Heronsbridge School commented that it was about having the quality of support and he had received the best support from someone who had been in the same role which he occupies.

The Committee questioned the support available when teachers struggle to meet with new demands. The Head Teacher YG Llangynwyd commented that there is strong support in the Welsh medium sector with the Gyda'n Gilydd programme supporting new teachers. This programme had now been broadened out to support Welsh medium primary schools. He commented that education is constantly changing with different demands being placed on teachers, but he saw this as a positive step. The Committee questioned what happens when performance issues occur. The Head Teacher of YGG y Ferch O'r Sger commented that she had experienced this situation over a 3 year period which were health related, support was forthcoming and all the issues had now been resolved.

The Committee questioned whether there is too much pressure put on schools and if so, how is it managed. The Head Teacher of Heronsbridge School commented that success does breed success and schools and staff are asked to do more. He commented on the pioneer training programme in place, though schools were not forced to take part in this, but there is a need to strike a balance.

The Committee asked what leadership is given from within the Council. The Head Teacher of Heronsbridge School commented that the school would know as soon as it had received a bad report. The Head Teacher of Porthcawl Comprehensive commented there is more pressure to deliver results on the core subjects to meet targets, where there are also 2 tiers. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration thanked the school leaders for their invaluable contribution and with professionalism comes the expectation that people will do more. The Head Teacher of Oldcastle Primary commented that schools are commissioned to do an increasingly diverse amount of projects and there is a culture of accountability.

The Committee questioned what steps are being taken to address subject leadership. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that the Consortium has looked at developing a more strategic approach to schools upskilling their leadership, with schools being paired up. The Head Teacher of Porthcawl Comprehensive informed the Committee that the Head of English at Porthcawl and Cynffig Comprehensives meet regularly to solve issues.

The Committee requested views on the Festival of Learning. The Head Teacher of Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School commented that it had been very innovative and was a celebratory event, which all participants had benefitted hugely from. The Head Teacher of Heronsbridge commented on the range of workshops offered and that special schools were able to work with mainstream schools. He felt that the next Festival of Learning would be better. The Senior Challenge Advisor commented that he was struck by new innovations which had not been seen before. The Head Teacher of Porthcawl Comprehensive was similarly impressed at the innovation and fresh ideas which was also focused on the wellbeing and resilience of staff.

The Committee questioned the performance of Level 2 Science decreasing by -7%. The Senior Challenge Advisor informed the Committee that this was attributed to a change in the performance measure and to the curriculum. The Head Teacher of Porthcawl Comprehensive informed the Committee that the move away from BTEC Science to the WJEC Science had impacted results but he believed there would be an upturn in results next year. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration commented on the importance of BTEC qualifications as benefitting individual students and believed there had been an error made by the Welsh Government in removing BTEC Science qualification from schools. The Committee questioned whether the drop in performance in Science was solely due to the removal of BTEC and why were schools not warned of the change. The Senior Challenge Advisor commented there had been a similar picture across Wales to performance in Bridgend. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration commented that the change made was unwise and incorrect. The Head Teacher of YG Llangynwyd commented that the change had been implemented halfway through the learning pathway, which was a massive shift for any school to accommodate. He stated that the BTEC course is a well-accepted course for a number of different career paths. He also stated that the Welsh Government had introduced a requirement for double GCSE and schools were having to spread themselves too thinly, along with the difficulty in recruiting Science Teachers. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support informed the Committee that a change will be seen in performance and Heads of Science Departments know exactly where they need to be.

The Committee questioned whether the Consortium is experiencing difficulties in recruitment. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that the Consortium benefits from regional working and was not experiencing difficulty in recruiting, with new members of staff being recruited in the area of Science. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented on the impressive

practice of school improvement throughout the schools in the County Borough and there is a lot of good practice to share.

The Committee questioned the roles of the Consortium and the local authority to ensure there is no duplication and equally there are no gaps in provision. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented that the introduction of a Consortium was a very new model, but there are clear roles and responsibility. He informed the Committee that he holds regular meetings with the Consortium where he is able to hold the Consortium to account. The Senior Challenge Advisor confirmed the Consortium is held to account by the local authority and is heavily supported in terms of the support given to the authority. The Head Teacher of Heronsbridge commented that he believed there to be a small gap in responsibilities between the Consortium and local authority.

The Committee questioned whether new Head Teachers are offered a mentoring package. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented that all new Heads are offered mentoring and professional support and there is a very good network of support in Bridgend. The Head of YG Llangynwyd informed the Committee that he had previously received mentoring support and he was now providing that mentoring support to another.

The Committee commented that it did not believe the report reflected the work of the Consortium. The Committee questioned what steps could be taken to encourage schools to become more engaged with the Consortium. The Senior Challenge Advisor commented that networking meetings are held regularly and there could be a host of reasons why schools are not able to attend. He confirmed there is a host of networking taking place and data available to schools. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support also confirmed there is a lot of good work and positive things going on to support schools, with some really high achieving schools and delivering fantastic pastoral care. The Committee commented that this good practice needs to be shared with the public as schools do receive unfair criticism. The Head Teacher of Heronsbridge commented that the 2 special schools within the County Borough should not be included in the Table showing schools' attendance at network meetings as they use different network meetings.

The Committee expressed concern that a number of outcomes at Key Stages 2 and 3 did not meet targets and questioned the steps being taken to rectify that performance. The Committee also expressed concern at the standard of written English of students in Higher Education. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration stated that the standard of written English was due to a lack of nursery education in some cases and that nursery education should be left alone from budget cuts. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented that improving levels of literacy is a challenge and there is good work taking place in Bridgend to improve literacy levels, with wellbeing, safeguarding and literacy being the focus. He stated that the standard of literacy amongst boys is a concern, with Bridgend being below the Wales average at Key Stage 2 and 4 and he stressed the importance of getting things right as far as literacy levels are concerned. The Head Teacher of Cynffig Comprehensive stated there is a push to improve English grammar which would mean changes for the better. The drop in standards of English literacy was not unique to Wales.

The Committee questioned whether good practice was shared in England. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that the Consortium had recently appointed retired Head Teachers to assist schools in ensuring pupils are prepared properly around PISA. He stated that PISA tests took place in the autumn and there needs to be a focus on education outcomes for pupils. The Head of Heronsbridge stated that it was very difficult to pinpoint responsibility but of utmost importance is outcomes for children.

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The Committee requested that any future reports on education outcomes be sent to Head Teachers to give some narrative. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support to do that. The Head Teacher of YGG Y Ferch O'r Sger commented that schools set themselves targets which are designed to be challenging. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented that he was encouraged that aspirational targets are set by schools and that he wanted all schools to be ambitious.

The Committee requested further information on Pupil Referral Units improving education and life outcomes. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that a meeting had taken place yesterday with PRUs in order to signpost support for them. He stated that 3 PRUs had recently been reviewed and there is a need to have shared accountability, facilitate support and funding.

The Committee requested the Cabinet Member's long term vision for education in the County Borough. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration said he would come back with a response.

The Committee commented there needs to be more scrutiny of the work of the Consortium and questioned how that same level of support would be offered when the authority is proposing to reduce its contribution to the Consortium. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that there are a number of layers of scrutiny within the Consortium and that he would meeting the Corporate Director Education and Family Support tomorrow who would be challenging the Consortium. He stated that the Consortium was having to be smarter in its use of resources with authorities reducing their contributions.

The Committee asked whether the Consortium believed educational outcomes are improving. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium commented that a conference was being held on 20 February where it would be looking at what cultural change needs to happen to support school leavers. He stated that poverty has increased and there is a need to support those youngsters. The Committee considered that support to young carers should also be considered. The Assistant Managing Director of the Consortium informed the Committee that further support would need to be considered particularly in light of changes in Additional Learning Needs legislation. He also informed the Committee that despite the Consortium's funding reducing by 19%, educational outcomes had improved year on year and the Consortium had continued to be successful in its delivery.

The Committee asked the Head Teachers what would be the impact of a reduction in budgets to schools. The Head Teachers commented that with austerity measures there was very little that could be done without affecting staff, resulting in larger and split classes, there would be difficulty in offering a full curriculum and attracting staff and Heads felt their positions could become untenable. The Head Teachers also commented that there would be a negative impact on learners.

The Committee thanked the Head Teachers and representatives of the Consortium for their contribution.

Conclusions

Members requested that the report would benefit from additional narrative. It was recommended that next year's report comes back to Scrutiny in 12 months' time.

Members welcomed the input from staff from those schools present, and recommended that it would be useful for next time to have input from schools in the Red Category to understand their journey better, as well as other schools.

Members raised concern that large events organised by the WG, LA's and CSC should be synchronised to avoid diary clashes for head teachers. Members recommended writing to the WG, LA and CSC to ask them to consider allowing greater co-ordination and lead times to avoid clashes with other high profile events and exam periods.

Members asked Cllr Smith if he could set out his long term vision for Education in BCBC and what this would look like.

While it was acknowledged that schools have made use of informal networks, this is not captured in the report. It was therefore recommended that this data is included in future reports.

Members questioned what support CSC was giving to governing bodies in respect of managing their budgets?

It was also noted by Members that training for governors seemed to have moved geographically and is often provided out of the Borough? Members require further clarification on this.

Members asked what the process looked like for those underperforming teachers involved within the capability route, how many had gone through this process in the last 12 months and are currently going through the process?

Members noted that due to budget constraints, some schools are likely to have a higher number of new qualified teachers. What pathway of support is given to these teachers from CSC?

While acknowledging the benefits of school-to-school working, members would like to be assured that the workload of staff at highly effective schools is not being negatively impacted by such arrangements.

47. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Forward Work Programme and informed the Committee that following a meeting of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees Chairs the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 at its meeting would consider a report on the Homelessness Strategy and that members of this Committee would be invited to attend.

48. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 12:00