

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - MONDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2020

**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, 3 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 14:30**

Present

Councillor T Giffard – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
M Jones
KJ Watts

PA Davies
KL Rowlands
A Williams

SK Dendy
B Sedgebeer
AJ Williams

J Gebbie
RME Stirman

Apologies for Absence

TH Beedle, NA Burnett, RJ Collins and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Michelle Hatcher	Group Manager - Inclusion
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny
Rachel Pick	Scrutiny Officer

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of personal interest were received in respect of Agenda Item 3:

Councillor Amanda Williams – As a Parent Governor at Coety Primary School;
Councillor JP Blundell – As a School Governor at Cefn Glas Infants School;
Reverend Canon E Evans – As a School Governor at Bryntirion Comprehensive School.

96. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The Central South consortium (CSC) Senior Challenge Advisor presented a report, the purpose of which, was to present the Committee with the educational outcomes for 2018–2019 for the foundation phase, key stages 2, 3 and 4, and post-16 in Bridgend schools.

The report evaluated the educational performance in Bridgend schools for 2018-2019.

He explained that the content of the report was different to previous years, due to Welsh Government introducing significant changes as to how schools and local authorities report performance measures and how they should be used. Further details in relation to this were expanded upon in the background information to the report (paragraph 3).

Appendix A of the report contained tables with headline data for key stage 4 and post-16.

The report also needed to be considered within the context of Estyn’s inspection of Bridgend’s local government education services in March 2019, which highlighted many of the performance strengths of the local authority as well as identifying areas for further development. The full Estyn inspection report can be found at Appendix B (to the report).

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To support Members in understanding the changes to performance measures, Central South Consortium (CSC) and the local authority ran an update session for all elected members in September 2019. A copy of this presentation was attached at Appendix C of the report.

The next section of the report, included outcomes in the form of performance details including results of school/pupil performance in the following school year age groups:-

- Foundation Phase
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 3
- Key Stage 4
- Post-16

In terms of Education outcome data strengths, the report also highlighted that Foundation Phase outcomes remain well above the all-Wales average.

Improved performance of Key Stage 2 outcomes, when compared to regional and the all-Wales average.

Under the new interim performance measure at Key Stage 4, the local authority has performed well, generally in line with regional averages and above the all-Wales average. With regards to this, the gap in performance between eFSM and nFSM was smaller than the national average.

Also, under the new interim performance measures, boys' performance at Key Stage 4, was better than the all-Wales average.

In respect of Education outcome data, areas for development, there was evidence of continued improvement in literacy performance at Key Stage 2.

Improvement had also been seen in Post-16 at A* - C measure, which was as good as, or better than the all-Wales average.

The report advised that the gap in performance between eFSM and nFSM pupils, needed to be closed at all phases and stages. The pace of progress in schools was also causing some concern and required some improvement.

Paragraphs 4.52 to 4.76 inclusive of the report, outlined information with regard to the challenge and support provided by the CSC, together with other statistical information and associated data in relation to BCBC schools, including inspections and/or reviews of certain schools by Estyn. This also included details of the ongoing relationship CSC has with the Council, and the proposed relationship going forward.

The report also reflected that CSC continued to take a lead role in the development of the Curriculum for Wales; working with pioneer schools, Welsh Government and in partnership with the other regional consortia across Wales. Examples of the type of work this included, was shown in paragraph 4.75 of the report.

Finally, the report highlighted that in 2018-19, additional funding was provided to support Bridgend specific priorities via the Local Authority Annex. The funding allocated was £19,449.

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In 2018-19, the funding was used to fund activities as part of the Bridgend Festival of Learning. Stakeholders commented on the success of the Festival of Learning during the local authority Estyn inspection in March 2019.

Members asked the following questions:

A Member reiterated a previous request for reports to include a clear concise Executive Summary - the report was available to the public and needed to be understood. The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised that he would take the request forward.

A Member referred to the structure of the reports supporting information contained as part of its Appendix and felt that more explanation could have been provided, in respect of both the new changes and points system.

The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor advised that this was to a degree still work in progress, and that a presentation had been provided to Members upon the new changes to performance measures in September 2019 and the training slides were appended to the report before Members. He added that, Key Stage 4 had now moved away from 'percentage threshold measures', to point scores. This had been introduced as a result of a narrative from Welsh Government and the WLGA, that the new points system provided a better understanding of how schools were performing in wider areas of the curriculum.

A Member commented upon the overall gap in education performance between boys and girls on core subjects, compared to the national average and Bridgend, on a year by year basis.

The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor advised that the Progression Pathway would address improvements and that it was also hard to draw comparison between Key Stage 4 for this year and the year before.

A Member referred to page 9 of the report and the section on Education outcomes data and noted, that there was no reference to Key Stage 3, where performance in Bridgend had dropped for that year to just below the national average. She felt that further information was required here.

The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor advised that 4.47 to 4.51 of the report was concentrating on areas for development only at the various Key Stage phases within schools. He acknowledged there had been a dip in performance in Key Stage 3 this year, but overall the trend was positive.

The Chairperson asked teacher representatives present at the meeting, how the significant changes introduced by Welsh Government, in terms of how schools (and local authorities) report performance measures including how these should be used, had affected their schools.

Secondary School Headteachers advised that measuring Science performance had changed, 3 times in 3 years, with some mixed messages from WG. There had been confusion for young people, and the need to explain the changes to staff and Governing Bodies, regarding the average point score and the language use changes.

Primary School Headteachers welcomed some of the changes, were pleased to move away from big data approach and reiterated that the tracking process was a robust measure to track an individual's progress.

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The Head Teacher of YG Llangynwyd commented that there would also be a reduction in qualifications available through the medium of Welsh.

The Head teacher of Heronsbridge Special School, advised that the new proposals in place, had resulted in better progress in-school, but did not assist those who wanted to compare school performance.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.6 of the report, where it referenced that it was now inappropriate to publish school-level data for Foundation phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in a public report.

The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor advised that one of the changes introduced had seen a move away from data being shared and compared between schools, towards a more collaborative system. Data previously collated still existed he added, however, it was no longer aggregated by local authorities externally on a school by school basis for comparable purposes between schools. The way forward was leading more to the deriving of collaborative, rather than competitive data, he concluded. However, there was recognition of a need to look at awareness raising about the changes in performance and the reporting of categorisation, as it was not understood.

A Member informed the Invitees, that she was aware that a child in Year 6 at a local school took a mathematics test on-line for which they paid a fee to complete. She was aware that there were similar tests in other subjects that could similarly be carried out by pupils on-line. She asked the representatives of CSC if they felt this was a positive move forward.

The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor confirmed that there was a national reading test, as well as reasoning and a numeracy test, all available on-line. These tests were adapted tests whereby pupils could take tests at different difficulty levels. The tests gauged where pupils had strengths and weaknesses. Pupils could take the tests again to obtain a better result later in the term year. In terms of the tests improving pupil attainment since they had been introduced, he stated that he had received mixed messages on this.

The Head teacher of Heronsbridge School advised that he was in support of the above on-line assessments/tests, as they were easily accessible and allowed teachers and pupils to gauge progression in terms of children obtaining different levels of attainment. Added to this, the results of these were also immediate.

The above was echoed by the Head teacher of Llangewydd Primary School. These type of tests were advantageous to take at the beginning and end of year terms, to look at pupils outcomes and assess if they have improved in key subject areas.

The Head teacher from Brackla Primary School advised that the on-line assessments were available for children in school Years 2 - 9, but she felt the tests were not suitable for the younger age pupils, as they could place significant stress and pressure at an early age. The tests were also not suitable for vulnerable children and those with ALN.

A Member asked whether when issues were identified, they were reported to Welsh Government.

The Chair of the Bridgend Primary Federation advised that they fed back to WG at each meeting.

The Member suggested that if feedback had been provided, given the pressure putting younger children under, the feedback needs to be made strongly.

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A Member asked whether children in a class knew levels their cohort are on.

The Headteacher of Llangewydd Primary advised it was a personal assessment, compared with previous tests and shared with parents.

The Headteacher of Heronsbridge School advised that the tests were specific to the child. SEN and ALN pupils could be significantly older children than their mainstream peers.

A Member asked whether there had been any feedback from the children on the online tests.

School advised that there hadn't been an evaluation yet, but children liked IT and don't like tests.

A Member referred to the positive performance of pupils eligible for Free School Meals compared with the national performance, but highlighted the gap with the performance of nFSM pupils.

The CSC Senior Challenge Advisor explained that this was narrower for Bridgend than across Wales, and that there was quality teaching in classrooms so all gained but the differential remains.

A Member referred to the statement on page 27 of the Estyn report: "In general, across the Local Authority, very few schools share what works well in improving provision for more able and talented pupils", and the Key Stage 4 top quartile and Post 16 dip.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised that there was work in progress, but that embedding best practice for more able and talented pupils in policy, was a priority for developing.

The Member requested that in future the report includes an update upon progress on this.

The Headteacher of Llangewydd Primary School advised that the policy needed to be geared to schools, and have a particular focus upon FSM.

A Member asked about school collaboration and how best practice is currently shared.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised that there is a focus on sharing best practice through workshops, although they didn't focus on more able and talented and there was a need to have a policy in place. The Central South Consortium were developing a policy, but there was significant guidance for schools.

A Member referred to the number of permanent exclusions increasing over the last three years and requested that the number of pupils moved to other schools and the Pupil Referral Unit following exclusion, be provided to Members of the Committee.

A Member asked whether BCBC had claimed the Period Poverty money and whether Welsh Government would be funding the School Holiday Enrichment Programme this year.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support confirmed both of the above.

Members wished to make the following comments and conclusions:

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- A Member reiterated a previous request that an executive summary be provided for long reports, highlighting any concerns and the recommendations.
- A Member queried the structure of the changes to performance measures for 2019 and requested an explanation of the points scoring. Members' attention was drawn to the Training Presentation appended to the report which had been presented to Members in September and a further session could be provided if required.
- A Member questioned why Key Stage 3 was not included in the Areas for Development in the report, despite the reported decrease in performance in the most recent year.
- A Member referred to the statement on page 27 of the Estyn report: "In general, across the Local Authority, very few schools share what works well in improving provision for more able and talented pupils", and requested that in future the report includes an update upon progress on this.
- A Member referred to school collaboration and asked how best practice is currently shared.

A Member referred to the number of permanent exclusions increasing over the last three years and requested that the number of pupils moved to other schools and the Pupil Referral Unit following exclusion, be provided to Members of the Committee.

97. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny presented the Committee with the FWP which included in Table A, the topic prioritised and agreed for the next Committee meeting, as follows:

- 9 March 2020 - Learner Travel;

The Committee requested:

- That pupil representatives affected by Learner Travel Proposals be invited to the meeting.
- That the topic of Post 16 Education be scheduled for scrutiny at the same Scrutiny Committee meeting as Learner Travel, and pupil representatives from some schools directly affected by the Post 16 Education proposals be invited to the meeting.
- That consideration be given to changing the time of the meeting to accommodate the pupil invitees to after school if necessary.
- That meetings be held in term-time.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny drew Members' attention to the list of proposed future topics in Table B.

The Committee requested:

- That the topics of Homelessness, Emergency Accommodation and Supporting People Grant be considered together in a future meeting.
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98. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS

The Chief Officer, Legal, HR and Regulatory Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to present the feedback from the previous meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 for discussion, approval and actioning.

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RESOLVED: That Committee approved the feedback and responses to the comments and recommendations prepared by Members at the previous meetings (Attached as Appendix A, B & C to the report.)

99. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 16:30