

## **BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**5 JANUARY 2016**

#### **REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES**

##### **MEMBER AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15**

#### **1. Purpose of Report.**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the work of the Member and School Engagement Panel during 2014-15.

#### **2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities.**

- 2.1 The key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan 2013–2017 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The Corporate Improvement Objectives were adopted by Council on 19 February 2014 and formally set out the improvement objectives that the Council will seek to implement between 2013 and 2017. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

#### **3. Background.**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 11 February 2013, the Committee decided that it would establish a Research and Evaluation Panel in order to engage with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors. The purpose of this would be to explore school performance and improve levels of understanding in support of the Committee's accountability function.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed that the Panel would consider the Estyn report of each secondary school when it is published, alongside school banding figures and school performance data for the relevant year.
- 3.3 The membership of the Panel would be determined on a rota basis, to allow all Members an opportunity to be involved and to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest, given that a significant number of members are also school governors.
- 3.4 Members also agreed that an annual summary report would be produced to ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Panel.

- 3.5 Further to this, following Estyn's inspection of the Local Authority in October 2012, inspectors returned for monitoring visits. Whilst acknowledging the work of the Member and School Engagement Panel, they were of the view that the project should be further developed and expanded; firstly to incorporate primary schools as well as secondary, and also to focus on a broader criteria other than the timing of a school's Estyn inspection.
- 3.6 Having learnt from the pilot project, and following research and discussions with the Corporate Director - Children's Services, it seemed more appropriate to concentrate on where there are issues or concerns and a need for improvement, as well as where there has been significant change and significant improvement in performance. It was therefore proposed to continue with the Research and Evaluation Panel with enhanced focus on schools who come under the following criteria:
- Schools in Category Red in the National Schools Categorisation System
  - Schools where the Director has had to intervene and use her statutory powers
  - Schools where there has been a significant improvement in performance; this could be a school who has moved up from a Category Red to Green in the Categorisation System, or even a school whose performance in a particular area appears to stand out positively against the majority of other schools within the county borough.
  - Schools whose involvement in the Central South Wales Challenge or Challenge Cymru has brought about improvement in standards.

#### **4. Current Situation / Proposal.**

- 4.1 Since the last Annual report in April 2014, the Panel have met with the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors from the following three schools:

|                  |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 20 November 2014 | Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen   |
| 27 November 2014 | Ffaldau Primary School      |
| 9 September 2015 | Héronsbridge Special School |

- 4.2 A range of information and data was provided for each school, such as recent Estyn reports, if available, data packs for the relevant school, Summer Term Visit Report from CSC as well as any relevant action plans or improvement reports.
- 4.3 Each Panel discussed a range of topics specific to the circumstances of each school. Some of the main findings are laid out below:
1. Targets for achievement in the various levels need to be more aspirational –many are currently set below the Free School Meals Median. Whilst understanding that sometimes the figures are an attempt at being relevant to a particular cohort for example, evidence from the Consortium supported the notion that the target levels should be increasing to show recognition of the focus for improvement.

2. Science in secondary schools was improving and was reported to be as a result of pupils undertaking the Btec Science, where 1 Btec equates to 4 GCSEs). The Panel agreed monitoring was necessary on this as the results of a qualifications review meant that the current year 8 had reverted back to the old system which focused on exams rather than 'equivalent' qualifications.
3. There was question/concern over low attainment on entry to Comprehensive from Primary schools.
4. Sometimes possibly too much focus is placed on the L2+ figure which can affect focus and performance in other areas – improvement needs to be balanced across all areas.
5. It was identified that there is still an issue with some teachers/schools sharing information and best practice and being open and transparent about their experience and lessons learnt.
6. There were some suggestions that there was too much focus on data and not enough on overall pupil wellbeing..
7. The Additional Learning Needs pupil figure can skew the data. It was suggested that this figure needs to be separated out.
8. Estyn focus predominantly on data rather than the story behind the data.
9. Pupil's level of progress needs more focus; pupils may make significant progress but may never achieve a higher level. Issue in that attainment is measured and not progress. It was reported, however, that this was finally starting to be looked at by Estyn, who want to gather 3 years of numeracy and literacy tests before bringing in a progress measure.
10. Parental engagement is an issue for some cohorts within some schools.
11. There are more children with Special Educational Needs in Bridgend than anywhere else in Wales, with 45% under-achieving and leaving school with no key qualifications. Teaching and learning would need to improve so that every child would be able to read at a level appropriate to their age.
12. A clear management structure and presence from the Leadership team was paramount for improvement and success.
13. Training and development of staff is key to ensuring all teachers have the right set of skills.

### **Possible Areas of Best Practice**

14. Vertical Tutoring, is a system organised students into tutor groups in order to focus on their academic and pastoral care effectively. It involves mixed

age tutor groups that allow personalised attention for students at critical times during the academic calendar. Different ages have different critical times and the fact that there are no more than 4 of any particular age in a tutor group means the Tutor and Co-tutor can provide high level and high quality support to those who need it. The Panel identified this as an item for sharing best practice.

15. Staff led Committee – representatives from each department, independent from the Headteacher, Deputy Head and Assistant Head. Committee can take complaints forward. If there are, for example, 4 complaints on the same thing from one department – it is an obvious flag raised for the Head teacher
16. Use of IRIS – a video recording system that videos each lesson. Not to be used as a performance management tool unless used as evidence of good performance. Can be used by teachers for self-assessment, also good to use to see reactions from children that you might not otherwise have noticed. Videos are owned by the teacher taking the class and they are able to keep, delete or share them as necessary. If a teacher -is in agreement the videos can also be used to share best practice with other staff.
17. Behaviour Watch – an online system where staff log records of behaviour incidents online. The system enables staff to record, monitor and track pupil behaviour which can then be reviewed and analysed to identify trends in behaviour such as times, locations, surroundings. Measures can then be put in place to prevent repeat occurrences. A Behavioural Support team of professionals is set up to support this process. Key to its success is acknowledging the importance of having one person take the lead in managing behaviour. and . System led to a 60% reduction in behavioural issues for one school in 3 years. Is not necessarily about better behaved children, but about staff gaining a better understand of the 'why' so not having to spend a significant amount of time focusing on the incident as understand it.
18. Working with families – including initiatives such as Parent Engagement Officer, Friends and Families forum.
19. One school reported their success was based upon having a highly trained and skilled team of teachers and support staff and also on being true believers in Investors in People. The school worked in a way that allowed staff to utilise their skills innovatively within a no blame culture. The Headteacher allowed staff to learn from their own mistakes, working things out for themselves and allowing them to implement their own ideas.

### **Views of Central South Consortium (CSC)**

- 20 Schools getting/requiring support from Consortium as a result of categorisation are required to buy a whole package of support from the Consortium despite maybe only really needing some aspects of it.

- 21 CSC not a bespoke service – they offer what they want to offer.
  - 22 There are mixed views on the monitoring processes provided to schools from the Consortium as occasionally a school's own process proved to be more successful.
  - 23 There are mixed views on numeracy and literacy training; one school reported that they had sometimes gone outside of the Consortium for this.
  - 24 Some of the training received has been considered not very effective as there appeared to be confusion as to the actual training required.
  - 25 One school reported that because they were not identified in the previous year as requiring additional support under the school categorisation, it had proved a struggle to get support in areas they felt they did need it, for example in maths. The school had therefore been obliged to use the cluster system instead, and the two schools had worked together to find additional resources themselves. Now the school is categorised as Amber, they were getting good support from the consortium.
  - 26 One school reported that at first the challenge outweighed the support but now see support structure emerging.
  - 27 It has taken time to understand the vision of the Consortium.
  - 28 There is sometimes confusion over where grants are coming from.
  - 29 The Improvement Agenda is good and more formalised and the Consortium are now encouraging schools to be less insular.
  - 30 Communication is vital to make sure schools have a full understanding of who CSC are and what their role is.
  - 31 Still need some of what ESIS used to provide, for example, pointing in the right direction for where best to broker something.
  - 32 It would be useful if Consortium could identify areas of best practice within each school and therefore point others in the right direction.
- 4.4 As a general comment, the Panel agreed that Schools categorised as requiring improvement need to provide more reassurance and evidence as to how exactly change will be achieved.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 The work of the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy

relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental well being in the County Borough of Bridgend.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no equalities impact issues arising from the report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no financial implications.

## **8. Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to:

- a) note the content of the report;
- b) determine whether to make any comments or recommendations based on the findings of the Member and School Engagement Panel meetings.

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### **Background Documents**

Bridgend County Borough Council Constitution

Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Improvement Plan 2013 -17