

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SPECIAL EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1ST OCTOBER, 2018

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR HAYDEN TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: P. Baldwin
D. Bevan
J. Collins
M. Day
G.A. Davies
D. L. Elias
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
L. Parsons
T. Smith

Co-opted Member

Mr A. Williams

**AND: Corporate Director of Education
Head of Education Transformation
Education Transformation Manager**

**WITH: Ed Pryce, EAS Representative
Sarah Davies, EAS Representative**

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| No. 1 | <u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service. | |

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| <p>No. 2</p> | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:</p> <p>M. Cook, P. Edwards, J. Hill and J. Holt. Mr. T. Baxter – Co-opted Member</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Phil Edwards was in hospital and Members requested that a letter of best wishes be forwarded to him.</p> | |
| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor G.A. Davies declared an interest in Item 6 – Summary of Inspection Outcomes Educational Establishments – Summer Term 2018.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd September, 2018 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Capacity Issues to Support Elected Home Educated Pupils</u></p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education noted Members concerns and advised that capacity issues to support elected home educated pupils would be kept under close review.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 3rd September, 2018 be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 5</p> | <p><u>PRESENTATION – NEW ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the presentation by representatives of the EAS regarding the new accountability around Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and 3.</p> | |

Curriculum Reform

In response to a Member's question regarding the £5,882 per school to engage with education reform, the EAS representative explained that this would be supported with a co-ordinator and other grants would still be available for maximum benefit. Schools were aware of the timeframe of the two part programme and would balance lead up times accordingly.

Teacher Assessment for Accountability Purposes

A Member raised concerns that progress of individual schools would not be measured. The EAS representative said that there would be no change to the collection process and schools would still have to report data to Welsh Government. Data would be shared with local authorities and Consortia but comparisons with other local authorities (rank positions) would not be possible.

The Corporate Director of Education said there would be a new cultural shift with significant changes, no individual school level data, no benchmark summaries, no comparisons of families and no consortia information would be available for scrutiny as having this information in the public domain had sometimes not been appropriately used. All this information would be held on the database to be used by EAS and challenge advisors.

The Chair raised concerns regarding the role of scrutiny in relation to school performance data. The Corporate Director of Education emphasised that there could be a range of anonymised cluster data available for effective scrutiny i.e. national categorisation based upon school performance, progress of schools causing concern and Estyn inspection outcomes and progress of schools in categories.

The EAS representative commented that schools were on a journey and school engagement in the curriculum reform programme was critical.

In response to a Member's question regarding continual change for 5 years, the pressure on teachers and pupils

and the future role of scrutiny within the new process. The EAS representative said that transition data would be shared with local authorities. The Corporate Director of Education commented that the Scrutiny Committee would continue to support learning and outcomes for all pupils through greater cluster work. In relation to schools to college transition, a meeting had been arranged with the four College Principals in Wales, which would provide an opportunity to discuss college transition. The Principals were keen to participate in the process and were excited by the forthcoming changes.

A Member commented that the most valuable change would be that progress would become more pupil friendly.

In relation to the Well-being plan which aims to ensure that education provision was able to meet the needs of children and young people, the Corporate Director of Education said that all Heads were articulating their ambition to support pupil learning and targeted resources towards greater need.

Implementations for Target Setting

A Member expressed concern in relation to target setting and enquired if this looked at each year group. The Corporate Director of Education said that target setting was about more than just meeting statutory requirements it helped challenge expectations and develop every individual child to meet their full potential.

GCSE specification changes: Risks 2017/18

A Member enquired regarding GCSE specification changes. The EAS representative said that new qualifications brought increased uncertainty but schools and teachers ability to accurately set targets was fine tuned to individual progress.

Proposed Changes for 2019

In response to a Member's question regarding free school meals with the changes in legislation re Universal credit, the EAS representative said that there would be measures to compare the performance of groups of

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| | <p>learners e.g. boys / girls, and children eligible for FSM and those not eligible FSM. The Corporate Director of Education commented that each school was inclusive of all children.</p> <p><u>Post-16 Developments</u></p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the range of A levels and key skills available in Blaenau Gwent Learning Campus, the EAS representative said vocational skills were available at the Campus but consideration may need to be given to a broader range of courses.</p> <p>A Member commented that the Scrutiny role could be used to widen and develop the scope of knowledge and skills required for employment opportunities and improve self evaluation skills.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the presentation be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION OUTCOMES</u> <u>EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS – SUMMER TERM</u> <u>2018</u></p> <p>Councillor G.A. Davies declared an interest in this item and remained in the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the important performance monitoring information regarding the outcomes of school inspections by ESTYN and an update of inspection outcomes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools inspected during the Summer term 2018; • Coleg Gwent, who is the Council's designated post 16 provider; and • The outcomes of Estyn monitoring visits during this period. <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and informed Members that Estyn's timeframe of written notification of inspection had reduced to 15 days.</p> | |

Blaen-y-Cwm School

A Member commented that Estyn had invited Blaen-y-Cwm school to prepare a case study given the excellence identified within the report and suggested that Scrutiny Members have sight of the study. The EAS representative said that Blaen-y-Cwm school was on the cusp of excellence with Leadership and Governors actively involved.

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community

In response to a Member's question regarding collective worship, the Corporate Director of Education said that strong progress had been made against 5 recommendations and very good progress had been made against recommendation 6 – ensure that the school meet requirements for the daily act of collective worship in the secondary phase.

The EAS representative commented that this was the only revisit that Estyn judged to have made stronger or better progress. Strengthening the quality of leadership had improved key issues and had benefited the school. The Corporate Director said that close links with colleagues in Finland were helping to continue and develop prospects for improvement.

A Member commented that best practice should be shared across the board and success should be celebrated. The EAS representative said that Chair+ meetings were held and also cluster training events and meetings which actively engaged with best practice dialogue.

Members raised concerns regarding Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee reports being included in Executive information packs and further concerns that scrutiny recommendations were not included in Executive reports. A Member added that this issue should be addressed by the Democratic Services Committee so that the correct process of presenting reports to Scrutiny first to make recommendations was followed. The Corporate Director of Education said she had raised the issue that Scrutiny reports for discussion should not be sent out in Executive

Corporate Director of Education

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| | <p>information packs.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer advised that with regards to scrutiny comments and recommendations reports were presented to scrutiny first but due to overlaps of deadlines comments may not be included in Executive reports. It was the Officers responsibility to feedback any scrutiny comments or recommendations verbally to the Executive Committee which would then be recorded in the relevant Executive minutes.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1 to recommend approval of the processes to the Executive Committee to address recommendations.</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with an overview of those schools, over the last 3 years that have presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered or currently underway to continue to support them to improve.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>Members noted that good quality leadership was essential for schools to improve and enquired regarding feedback on how they work as a cluster. The EAS representative said that Willowtown School had benefited from an intervention plan which focused on the need to build leadership capacity. The school worked together with other schools such as Glanhowy and Bro Helyg across the region, was outward facing with sustained improvement and support. With excellent leadership the projection going forward was strong with more schools in the Green category than Amber.</p> <p>A Member commented that it would be beneficial for the Scrutiny Committee to have sight of how schools work as a cluster. The Corporate Director of Education commented that there was clear guidance on what could</p> | |

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| | <p>and could not be discussed at Scrutiny Committee which included individual school cluster data. The vision for Education was schools working together. Education Officers were working with colleagues across Wales to devise a common format that could be developed to include Scrutiny Committee involvement.</p> <p>Another Member requested that a briefing session on school to school working be arranged and the Corporate Director of Education suggested that Headteachers also be invited to speak at the briefing.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely, to recommend approval of the processes to the Executive Committee to address recommendations.</p> | Corporate Director of Education |
| No. 8 | <p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2017/18</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Education Transformation which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2017/18 academic session. The report serves to provide a detailed overview of both the processes and outcomes associated with school place and facilities management.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the Minor Works Programme budget and was informed that any underspend could be carried forward.</p> <p>In relation to 21st Century schools a Member raised concerns regarding maintenance of the 30 educational buildings that the Council managed. The Head of Education Transformation said that the £20.25m Band A investment would require the Council's contribution of 50% i.e. just over £10m. Some capital funding had been secured for Band B, but further requests would need to be made from the Council's capital programme later in the</p> | |

term.

With regard to Welsh provision, the £6m investment in the school estate would be 100% funded by the Welsh Government and a detailed report would be presented to Scrutiny in due course.

In response to a Member's questions regarding the levels of surplus places in Welsh medium education and the increase in pupil numbers for Abertillery Learning Community, the Head of Education Transformation said that the issue of pupil numbers from the lower Ebbw Fach valley attending comprehensive school in Caerphilly had been addressed between the two Councils through working in partnership. There was an upward trajectory of pupil numbers attending Abertillery Learning Community secondary phase. Intake for Ysgol Bro Helyg reception had increased and a capacity review of schools would be undertaken in the Autumn term.

In regard to maintenance a Member commented that there were two Victorian buildings in Blaenau Gwent. The Head of Education Transformation said that eradicating high maintenance buildings categorised as of a poor standard was a priority for Welsh Government within the Band B programme.

In response to a Member's question regarding pupil admissions, the Education Transformation Manager said that all requests for admissions had been met. The only refusals had been in relation to class sizes. The admissions appeals process took account of class sizes, school capacities and admission numbers, all of which were reviewed annually; the Council could not breach the schools admissions code. There had been 8 admissions appeals and 7 had been upheld in favour of the appellants. Appeals were difficult for the Council to consider if schools supported parents in arguing the case regarding their school preferences.

In relation to Welsh medium schools the Head of Education Transformation said that there was a requirement from the Welsh Government to increase the number of Welsh medium places and a report on this issue would be presented to Scrutiny in due course.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Education Transformation said that demand was increasing for Welsh medium provision and Blaenau Gwent was the only local authority in Wales that had one Welsh medium primary school. It was also noted that Blaenau Gwent did not have a Welsh medium secondary school, with pupils accessing provision in Torfaen.

The Education Transformation Manager said the current focus was on undertaking a demand survey over the half term period. Any future proposals for secondary Welsh medium education may form part of the Band C programme.

A Member commented that governors and teachers needed to drive forward good education in Blaenau Gwent and the Welsh language was an important part of that drive. It was noted that Torfaen County Borough Council's Welsh medium secondary Ysgol Gylun Gwynllyw had changed its catchment area to include Blaenau Gwent's learners.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely, to continue to implement the existing procedures for facilities management, which were reviewed annually in line with lessons learned.