

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 26TH JUNE, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
C. Meredith
J. C. Morgan
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
S. Thomas

Co-Opted Member

A. Williams

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Principal Challenge Advisor EAS
Early Years Childcare and Play Manager
Scrutiny and Democratic Officer/Advisor

WITH:

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

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors: T. Smith and B. Summers.</p> <p>Co-Opted Member - T. Baxter</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 1st April, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 1st April, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>Mandatory Training – A Member commented on the number of governors currently eligible for suspension/disqualification for non-attendance at mandatory training sessions.</p> <p>The Principal Challenge Advisor informed Members that governors who had been suspended/disqualified from one governing body could re-apply to another governing body without any period of delay.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the reasons why some training had been cancelled. The Principal Challenge Advisor said that low attendance meant that it was not viable to hold some training sessions, the Chair of</p>	

	<p>Governors would look at the issue of attendance levels and encourage governors to attend mandatory training sessions.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education commented that letters from schools would be forwarded to governors to enquire if they wanted to remain on the governing body.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee which was presented for Members approval of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Work Programme for 2019/20.</p> <p>The Chair spoke to the report and a Member enquired if literacy and numeracy results from schools across the borough could be added to the work programme. The Corporate Director of Education said that literacy and numeracy results would be included in the School Performance Report which was scheduled in the Forward Work Programme 2019/20.</p> <p>Another Member enquired regarding the inclusion of Key Stage 5 results, the Corporate Director said that these would be included on the Forward Work Programme along with destination data.</p> <p>A Member referred to the recent ESTYN visit and the Corporate Director informed Members that only a verbal statement was received from the Link Inspectors and it was not within the Directorates gift to share this information as it was not in the public domain, however, the meeting had been positive.</p> <p>Reference was also made to the financial position facing the borough's schools. The Committee needed to be made aware of the financial position as a matter of urgency as the next round of budget proposals would begin shortly. The Corporate Director said that an item on</p>	

	<p>the Financial Position of Schools would be added to the Forward Work Programme and advised Members that the Directorate was committed to look at the funding formula and the distribution of funding to various schools as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding Estyn Reporting, the Corporate Director clarified that Estyn reporting was different from Local Authority Monitoring visits. Estyn Reporting would include school inspection report results and the Inspection Report would be submitted to this Committee for consideration.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and Option 2 the Forward Work Programme 2019/20 for the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be approved with the following additional reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Stage 5 results/ Destination Data • Financial Position of Schools 	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION OUTCOMES FOR EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS – AUTUMN TERM 2018 AND SPRING TERM 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education, which was presented to provide Members with important performance monitoring information regarding the inspections undertaken by ESTYN of educational establishments.</p> <p>The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report and highlighted key points contained therein.</p> <p>Members congratulated Acorns Nursery and St Mary’s CIW Primary School on their positive inspections and made particular mention of the innovative development of the intergenerational choir. The Principal Challenge Advisor said that this had been identified by ESTYN as a key strength and should be shared as best practice in supporting pupils in their development as informed and caring citizens.</p> <p>Another Member commented that St. Mary’s had</p>	

	<p>consistently achieved a judgement of ‘good’ but it was important to progress to achieve a judgement of ‘excellent’. The Challenge Advisor mentioned that Blaeny-cwm School had achieved a judgement of ‘excellent’ in one of its inspection areas, however, there was a marginal tipping point to move schools into the ‘excellent’ judgement but this was a strong platform to build on and a good ambition for all schools.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the difference between the reference most and nearly all. The Principal Challenge Advisor said the percentages were marginal and schools had to achieve as near to 100% as possible for example most would be 90%, many 70%, majority 60% and minority would be 40%.</p> <p>The Early Years Childcare and Play Manager commended Acorns nursery on their hard work over the current year and with support from the Local Authority and continual assessment on an annual basis hoped they would continue on their improvement journey.</p> <p>Members requested that congratulation letters be forwarded to both Acorns Nursery and St. Mary’s Primary School and the Chair of Governors. It was also suggested that the Chair of Council present this positive message through her communications to Council. Members also requested that the Communications Team attend Scrutiny meetings to report on good news items.</p> <p>The Principal Challenge Advisor commented that it was a positive report with a balance of support and challenge.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely to accept the report as provided.</p>	Director of Education
No. 8	<p><u>THE WORK OF THE ESTYN LOCAL AUTHORITY LINK INSPECTOR WITH THE EDUCATION DIRECTORATE IN BLAENAU GWENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to gain an understanding of</p>	

the way in which the Education Directorate works with ESTYN.

The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and gave a presentation on the work of the ESTYN Local Authority Link Inspector with the Education Directorate in Blaenau Gwent (September 2018 to July 2019) and responded to questions raised.

In relation to the Virtual Inspection Room (VIR) the Corporate Director of Education explained that it was an ESTYN provision which the Directorate could access, via a password, it contained online evidence of Monitoring visits. Self Evaluations were an Education priority and progress, impact and effectiveness were regularly evaluated through this ongoing process. Corporate Improvement plans were scrutinised to ensure that Corporate Improvement Objectives were reflected in Directorate plans and implemented at team level. A 'golden thread' ran down through the layers and aligned to Corporate priority objectives.

In response to a Member's question regarding staff training to identify safeguarding issues, the Strategic Education Improvement Manager said that information from Gwent Early Action Together Programme (GEAT) and school policies such as whistleblowing, monitoring training of staff and DBS checks would form part of the performance report being presented to a future Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny meeting. Safeguarding in Education adopted a systems check approach to ensure strong processes were in place.

Councillor Julie Holt left the meeting at this juncture.

A Member enquired regarding consistency in early years Flying Start and non-Flying Start, the Corporate Director explained that 2/3rd of Blaenau Gwent was designated as not being of Flying Start status, however, teams were supporting as many settings as possible and analysed data to improve the level of language acquisition when children entered school. A report was being prepared on early years provision.

A Member enquired regarding capacity issues not just in

the Education Directorate but in other organisations such as the Police and the NHS. The Strategic Education Improvement Manager said that administration function was provided by Business Support and the Education Directorate worked with partners e.g. the Police via operation Encompass to ensure that schools received early notification of any domestic situation a child may have viewed.

A Member commented that it was a positive report with the ESTYN monitoring visits and Challenge Advisors working well and felt that this information should be reported back to scrutiny in the future. The Corporate Director of Education said that how feedback was shared with the local authority was being looked at by ESTYN.

A Member raised concerns regarding the number of home educated children. The Corporate Director said that the figures were high across Gwent. A specific Action Plan was in place to identify those on the cusp and an Inclusion Officer would meet with those parents. Legislation limited the activity and level of engagement that the Education Directorate had with parents of elected home educated pupils, but the Directorate needed to ensure that children had suitable home education provision.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely to further scrutinise the opportunities presented through close working with ESTYN and the report and presentation be accepted.

No. 9

HELPING ELECTED MEMBERS GET TO KNOW OUR SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with an overview on the proposed new Member led sub group of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair enquired regarding the title of the report, the Corporate Director clarified that the title would be rephrased to “Supporting Elected Members to Get to Know

Our Schools”.

A Member commented that it was important that Members had the skills to challenge data and requested a defined list of questions be prepared. The Corporate Director said that schools were keen to share a mixture of information on factual data and around how they promoted well-being. A list of relevant questions would be prepared to better equip Members to form a more robust evidence base.

**Corporate
Director of
Education**

Councillor G.A. Davies left the meeting at this juncture.

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein including that the previous SSMG sub group had improved Members understanding of the work of the Local Authority in supporting and developing the quality of education in Blaenau Gwent.

A Member enquired regarding the purpose of the proposed new sub group and how the information gathered could be appraised. The Principal Challenge Advisor EAS said that Blaenau Gwent had developed a robust audit tool for well-being. The sub group would provide an opportunity to expand Members understanding of all elements of school processes and help to develop Members skills.

The Corporate Director of Education gave a presentation on Helping Elected Members get to know our schools and responded to questions raised.

In relation to the proposed new arrangements agreed with Headteachers to establish a Member-led sub group of the Scrutiny Committee, to visit all schools over a two year period to engage with school leaders regarding how the setting is nurturing good well-being, the Committee AGREED that the following Members be nominated to the sub group:

Councillor Haydn Trollope (Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Millard
Councillor Derrick Bevan
Councillor Martin Cook
Councillor Lynn Elias

	<p>Councillor Julie Holt Councillor Clive Meredith Councillor John C. Morgan Councillor Tommy Smith</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding changes within Education and the 6 areas of learning, the Corporate Director said that the curriculum was being changed and it may be too soon to get a sense of well-being for learning as schools were all at different stages.</p> <p>The Principal Challenge Advisor EAS commented that ESTYN had discussed suspending inspections for 2020/21 to enable the Authority to undertake a piece of work to ascertain where schools were with the curriculum.</p> <p>The Chair enquired if feedback from Heads of schools on how the sub group was working would be brought back to Committee. The Principal Challenge Advisor EAS said that scrutiny could monitor engagement with schools around the new framework and mechanism to ensure equity across the system.</p> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the committee further scrutinise the opportunities presented through close working with ESTYN and the report and presentation be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the commencement times of future Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Meetings.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Meetings be held on a Wednesday at 10.00 a.m. in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale.</p>	

The Chair informed the Committee that the time of the next scheduled meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee would need to be changed to 2.00 p.m. due to staff training.

On behalf of the Deputy Head of Cwm Primary School, a Member thanked the Chair and Scrutiny Committee Members for their letter of congratulations on becoming teacher of the year.