



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY 15TH JANUARY 2013 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chairman
Councillor D.W.R. Preece - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, G. Johnston,
J. Pritchard, J.E. Roberts and Mrs M.E. Sargent.

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: Mrs R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Corporate Director Education and Lifelong Learning), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools, K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), J. Garland (Service Manager Social Inclusion), E. Pryce (EAS), T. Maher (Assistant Director Planning and Strategy), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer) and E. Sullivan (Committee Services Officer).

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC), Mr A. Farina Childs (Parent Governor), Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governor) and Mrs P. Ireland (NUT).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.P. James, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D. Rees and R. Saralis and Mr P. Jones (NAHT) and Mrs J. Havard (NUT).

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

It was with great sadness that the Chairman announced the passing of Councillor S. Jenkins, Members and Officers stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made and the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

2. MINUTES - 6TH NOVEMBER 2012, 29TH NOVEMBER 2012 AND 11TH DECEMBER 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 6th November 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 11, on page nos. 1 - 5), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on the 29th November 2012 (minute nos.1-5, on page nos.1-5), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on the 11th December 2012 (minute nos. 1-2 on page nos. 1-6), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

4. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEISURE

Councillor Mrs R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning circulated a written report and verbally referred to success of the Genesis Project. Particular reference was made to the success of Karen Davey, Karen Dugmore and Kane Austin who had been supported back into either work or training by utilising the projects and gaining confidence and qualifications through the Bridges to Work, PreVent and QWEST projects.

The Cabinet Member confirmed the news that Welsh Government had decided to scrap plans to set up a Local Determination Plan.

The success of Bargoed Hanbury Chapel and Risca Palace Library in increasing visitor numbers over the past 12 months was outlined with the two facilities pooling an impressive 270,000 visit in their first year of opening. Members also noted that construction work on the new Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre had commenced with an anticipated completion date of January 2014.

Members were advised that Trinity Fields School had been identified as having excellent practice by a recent Estyn Inspection and St Gwladys Primary School had achieved the Third Millennium Learning Award for ICT.

5. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports:-

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. STANDARDS OF PUPIL ATTAINMENT IN CAERPHILLY - KEY STAGE 4

The report sought to inform Members of pupil's attainment in external examinations at the end of Key Stage 4.

The key indicator definitions were clarified and members noted that the information presented was the final KS4 data. The links between educational performance and social economic deprivation was emphasised, it was noted that Caerphilly was the 4th most socioeconomically disadvantaged LA in Wales. Using this indicator gave Caerphilly's a performance position of 19th and any ranking above this would mean that performance had been better than expected.

The 7 main indicators used to measure performance were detailed and their abbreviations within the report were confirmed. In terms of the L1 Threshold an improvement of 1.5% had been achieved and Caerphilly's ranking had risen from 16th to 15th place. L2 Threshold showed an improvement of 1.6%, however the ranked position for this indicator had fallen from 18th to 21st. For the L2+ Threshold there was again an improvement of 1.8% and although the ranked position remained the same, Caerphilly was closing the gap on the All Wales figures. CSI saw a 2% improvement on the previous year with the ranked position for this indicator rising from 19th to 17th. The AWPS indicator saw a significant improvement and although the CPS indicator showed smaller levels of growth Caerphilly's ranked position remained at 17th place. The NQ indicator was constant 0.4%, which equated to 9 children leaving school without any qualifications and although the rank position fell to 16th, the percentage matched the All Wales figure.

Achievement trends were presented for Members information and the analysis of the main indicators over the last five years detailed. Members noted the different levels and performance indicators and how they tracked against the Wales average.

The individual schools summary was noted and Members were advised that schools had been ranked according to their level of deprivation. Officers confirmed the position of schools in comparison with 2011 data and highlighted those schools improving and falling in relation to the four main indicators. Consideration was also given to the relative performance of schools when the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM was taken into consideration.

Secondary Schools banding positions for 2012 were confirmed and Members were pleased to note that Risca Community Comprehensive had improved by 2 bands; Blackwood Comprehensive had improved by 2 bands, going from Band 4 to Band 2. Oakdale Comprehensive and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni remained as Band 1 schools. However there were three schools that had fallen 1 or more banding positions with St. Martin's Comprehensive falling from a Band 2 to a Band 5. Officers confirmed that the main factor in each case had been performance in English and Mathematics

The impact of special needs and single sex provision on banding levels was discussed and Members noted that Welsh Government did not take these factors into consideration when setting the band.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and Member's questions were welcomed.

Members expressed concern with regard to St Martin's school and sought clarification as to how this would be addressed. Officer's confirmed that System Leaders had gone into the school and were working with them to look at their performance targets and how best to support the school going forward. An intervention plan would be implemented taking into account the cohort and other contributory factors.

Details of the Education London initiative were given and Members were advised that funding would be made available from this initiative to focus on improving achievement in English and Mathematics.

Fluctuations in the Banding Levels were discussed and Officers confirmed that given the way in which the levels were set there would always be movement between the bands. Officers emphasised that banding was only one indicator and Members should look at all the data available including Estyn Inspection reports in order to have a more rounded view of a schools

performance. Members were concerned that parents would look at banding positions in isolation rather than the quality of teaching achieved.

The different factors that can influence performance were discussed and Members noted that further reports would be brought forward on the barriers to individual pupil performance and the contribution that multi-agency projects had on achievement.

Clarification was sought in relation to the weight given to the different indicators and Officers agreed to forward the statistical proportion assigned to each indicator to the Member.

Having fully considered its content the Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

8. REDUCING EXCLUSIONS

The report provided Members with an update on the progress made in relation to exclusions from Caerphilly schools.

Reducing exclusions was noted to be a priority for the Local Authority and working closely with schools and partners a robust approach had been adopted in order to decrease the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions. The correlation between exclusions and eligibility for free school meals was noted and there was also noted to be a disproportionate number issued to boys when compared with girls.

Exclusions were now monitored on a monthly basis and targeted interventions implemented in collaboration with the EAS. Working closely with schools, behaviour policies and guidance had been revised and this ensured that schools were better equipped to deal with and respond to challenging behaviour. Trends were analysed and data was drilled down to an individual child level in order to give a better perspective of any underlying issues.

Officers confirmed that the targeted support provided to schools had resulted in a substantial decrease in the number of days lost at both primary and secondary levels.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and presentation and full discussion ensued.

Members welcomed the improvements noted and sought clarification as to the target set at primary level. Officers confirmed that they were working closely with schools particularly at a foundation phase to identify issues early and implement focused interventions. The impact of challenging behaviour in the classroom was discussed at length and Members appreciated the work done by teachers on a daily basis and acknowledged that there would be occasions when exclusion would be the only appropriate response.

Having fully considered its content the Scrutiny Committee noted the report and welcomed the reduction in exclusions in both primary and secondary schools.

9. IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The report informed Members of the progress made in improving attendance in schools.

Officers confirmed that there had been an increase in attendance in both primary and secondary schools. It was noted that all Caerphilly secondary schools had matched or exceeded their attendance levels from the previous year and primary school attendance in Caerphilly had improved consistently over the past three years.

Members noted the secondary school data comparisons over the last three years as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report. The improvements in primary school attendance were confirmed and Officers advised that 72% of schools recorded an improvement and 44% had matched or exceeded the target of 93.3% attendance.

Clarification was given with regard to authorised and unauthorised absences and the importance of accurate pupil registration procedures was emphasised. Officers confirmed their commitment to ensuring that all children and young people gain the maximum benefit from their education by regular attendance at school.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her report and presentation and full discussion ensued.

Members welcomed the improvement made in pupil attendance and particular reference was made to the hard work of Linda Perkins (Senior Education Welfare Officer).

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered its content noted the report.

10. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 26TH FEBRUARY 2013

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for the 26th February 2012.

11. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE PLACED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

There were no requests made for future agenda items.

12. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following item for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports, none of which were brought forward for review:

1. Post Inspection Action Plan in Response to Estyn Inspection in July 2012;
2. Budget Monitoring Report 2012-2013;
3. Members Attendance (Quarter 3) - 1st October 2012 - 31st December 2012.

The meeting closed at 18:39 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2013, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN