



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY 2016 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair
Councillor J. Pritchard - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

Mrs A. Blackman, P.J. Bevan, H. Davies C. Gordon, D. Havard, G. Johnston, R. Saralis and J. Simmonds.

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: R. Passmore.

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), A. West (Schools Admissions and Exclusions Manager), E. Pryce (EAS), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager) S. Richards (Principal Finance Officer) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr A. Farina-Childs (Parent Governor), A. Gross (Parent Governor) and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT), Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education) and Mr L. Jarvis (Head Teacher), Ms J. Underwood (Project Manager) and Ms R. Owen (Family Support Officer) – St Martins Comprehensive School.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Roberts, J. Bevan, M.P. James, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D.W.R. Preece and Mrs M.E. Sargent, Mrs J. Havard (NUT) and C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 15TH DECEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 15th December 2015 (minute nos. 1 – 6) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

As a point of clarification in relation to minute no. 6 (pages 7-8) regarding the introduction of a charge to schools for the provision of sandwich places. The Chair, sought reassurance that the proposed charge would be the responsibility of the school and not parents and that the option for pupils to bring a packed lunch into schools would still be made available. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that all Head Teachers had been consulted on this matter and reassured Members that there was no intention to withdraw this facility. The Officer reiterated that the re-charge for the catering service would be the responsibility of the school not the parents with the level of the charge costed against their individual requirements.

5. MINUTES - 12TH JANUARY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 12th January 2016 (minute nos. 1 – 12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

6. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THIS COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL - IN PROCEDURE

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

7. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Councillor R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning provided details of the Collaborative Partnership between Newbridge School and Cwmcarn High School.

Members were advised that an exciting new opportunity had emerged which would allow two local schools to work together in order to raise standards and improve educational provision for local children. The current Head Teacher of Newbridge School, Mrs Lesley Perry, will assume the executive Headship at both schools from Monday 15th February. The Local Authority and the Education Achievement Service will work closely with the Leadership Teams at both schools over the coming months to ensure that appropriate support and guidance is provided as the operational details of this new arrangement are progressed.

Ysgol Cwm Rhywni launched its Confucius Classroom on Wednesday 10 February 2016, the event was compered by two students – Joshua Richards and Menna Clarke, both from Year 12, they impressed visitors with their ability to deliver their introductions in English, Welsh and Mandarin. Rachel Williams, Confucius Institute Wales China Schools Project welcomed Ysgol Cwm Rhywni to the network of Confucius Classrooms.

The Cabinet Member updated Members on the Family Learning Signature (FLS) which is a systemic approach to family engagement and education. The FLS improves the capacity of schools to engage with families and learners helping them to consider their own learning and how to plan to enhance their ability to support learning in the home. The EAS are conducting a Family Learning Signature pilot programme in Newport and Caerphilly and have invited the Rhywny cluster to participate.

In conclusion the Cabinet Member updated the Scrutiny Committee on the 5th Annual Pride of Place Awards. The event showcased the efforts of community groups, individual volunteers and schools in looking after their local environment. 15 primary schools attended the event with St. James' Primary school awarded Overall Champion.

8. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet Reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. COMMUNITIES FIRST PUPIL DEPRIVATION GRANT MATCH FUND PROJECTS – YOUTH WORKERS IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECT (JOINT WORKING BETWEEN COMMUNITIES FIRST AND SCHOOLS.

The report and presentation provided Members with an overview of the Communities First Deprivation Grant Match Fund projects which have been developed jointly between schools, Communities First and Caerphilly Youth Services.

Mr L. Jarvis (Head Teacher), Ms J. Underwood (Project Manager) and Ms R. Owen (Family Support Officer) presented an overview of the St Martin's School, Family Project which formed one the Deprivation Grant Match Fund projects.

Ms Underwood explained that the first priority for the project was to bring together the different elements already working within the school into a single cohesive team that provided pupils with an all round academic and wellbeing support package tailored to their individual needs. This enabled the team to identify and remove barriers to learning, enhance the links between home and school and as a result increase levels of academic achievement.

Case studies were detailed that illustrated the journey of two pupils through the project and the outcomes they achieved. In the case of 'Jane', a highly intelligent 16 year old girl who struggled with self esteem issues and was primary carer for her parents. The project linked Jane's family with the appropriate support services at home, enabling her to attend breakfast club, getting a proper start to the day, she become more engaged in her school work and her attendance levels increased by 20%.

'Jon's' case study illustrated a student who's aggressive and unpredictable behaviours had resulted in him grossly underachieving. However he was also a full time carer for his mother who has severe mental health issues and his own mental health problems, lack of a positive male influence and trust issues had left him isolated at school and as a consequence his attendance has suffered. By breaking down the barriers to his individual learning needs, signposting his family to the right support, making curriculum changes and providing him with access to the schools family room for study, Jon's attendance increased from 29.1% to 63% and he is now projected to achieve a Level 2+ at GCSE.

Members were advised that attendance for all FSM pupils has improved from 85.3% to 90.8% as the project has been able to pin point key students and work closely with them making a real difference to their academic achievement and wellbeing.

The different projects being pioneered at the school included Breakfast Club, which all FSM students are encouraged to attend and has become a peer support. The 'My Education Project' in conjunction with the University of Glamorgan gave Year 11 students a taste of

university life raising their aspirations to higher education. Extra Curricular Provision provided students with support during half terms and Easter holidays in order to secure revision and qualification support and an After Schools Club which provides a place for students to complete work or discuss any barriers. A Residential Weekend was organised for EFSM girls during the Autumn Half Term, where their hard work was rewarded by a visit to a restaurant and cinema. For many pupils this was the first time for them to stay in a hotel and eat in a restaurant and had a huge impact their aspirations.

The work the project has done to engage parents was detailed and included a Christmas Dinner event and a Dads and Lads tour of Cardiff City Football Club. Both events helped to development communication between parents and children and forge links between parents and school. The Family Team have provided support services for parents including counselling sessions and signposting parents to essential agencies.

The future plans for the project were explained which included multi generational engagement, improved physical literacy and health and wellbeing initiatives. The improvements at Level 2+ were detailed and what this meant for the school in terms of achievement was presented. Members noted an increase of 3% in Year 11 FSM achievement from September 2015 to January 2016 with the potential to achieve (with extra interventions) of between 34.6% - 53.84% against a school target of 34% and WG stipulated figure of 32%. This clearly illustrates the benefits of the project to the school in terms of target achievement and pupil wellbeing as well as the positive impact for the individual, the family and the school as an integral part of the community.

The Chair thanked Mr L. Jarvis, Ms J. Underwood and Ms R. Owen for their presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought as to the biggest difference for pupils and the school and Ms Underwood advised Members that providing a single cohesive team that drives the wellbeing and performance of pupils forward has made the biggest difference. She emphasised the importance of discovering what lies beneath behaviours and lack of achievement and unpick the barriers to learning through targeted support. By having the time, resources and determination successful outcomes are secured.

Members queried the reaction of staff to the project and were advised that teaching staff were grateful for the support provided and welcomed the improvements as a result of the different interventions. Mr Jarvis confirmed that they were working to become a community focused school and were beginning to see previously hard to engage parents become more involved in the school.

Members expressed concern with regard to any negative reactions from other parents to the level of support being provided to these targeted pupils. Ms Underwood confirmed that there was a level of curiosity from other parents but no animosity; for the most part parents would like to see the project rolled out to a wider selection of pupils, who may also be in a vulnerable position but not fall within the FSM criteria.

Clarification was then sought as to the future sustainability of the project and Officers confirmed that the links being forged by the project into different key initiatives like Communities First had the potential to sustain the project going forward.

The Education for Life Scrutiny Committee congratulated Mr L. Jarvis (Head Teacher), Ms J. Underwood (Project Manager) and Ms R. Owen (Family Support Officer) for their passion and commitment and noted the presentation.

10. CONSULTATION – PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2017/2018

The report presented the proposed changes to the Schools Admission Arrangements for the academic year 2017/18 and sought the views of Scrutiny Members as part of the consultation process before it being considered by Cabinet.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed the Admission Arrangements for 2017/18 and noted that there were no proposed changes. The extent of the documents consultation process was outlined and included Headteachers, all Chairs of Governors, neighbouring local authorities and CCBC's Admission Forum.

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

Members expressed concern with regard to the impact of future residential building developments on school places and how this could be mitigated going forward. Officers confirmed that they worked closely with Planning Officers over three time bands on the short, medium and long term implications of new developments on schools to estimate the effect and identify any necessary capital funding required from developers in order to meet this need.

Members also expressed concern that capacity was estimated on a whole school rather than individual year group basis which could potentially equate to overprescribed year group places within a school that has overall capacity. Officers confirmed that capacity had been increased in certain schools for this reason and advised that this was an issue throughout the borough. However in terms of new developments, educational needs were considered as part of the planning process and funding for additional accommodation or if necessary a new school agreed with developers at the application stage.

Having fully considered the report and the proposed Admission Arrangements for 2017/18 it was moved and seconded that they be noted and that Cabinet be advised of the comments of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Admission Arrangements for 2017/18 be noted and that Cabinet be advised of the comments of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process.

11. EDUCATION CAPITAL 2016/17

The Assistant Director Our Schools Our Future introduced the report that outlined proposals for the allocation of the Education Capital Budgets for the 2016/17 financial year in the context of the 3 year Capital Programme 2016/17 – 2018/19. Members were advised that a sum of £2m toward electrical rewiring works in schools had been allocated from the agreed programme amount and the detailed proposals from the available residual capital budget were noted.

The Officer referred to section 4.1 and 4.4 of the report which detailed the 3 year indicative forward capital programme. The additional accommodation allocation identified Trinity Fields School as the priority for 2016/17. In terms of Asset Management it was noted that a sum of £300,000 had been allocated to the identified highest priority schemes base on the school condition surveys as tabled in section 4.8 of the report.

The Revenue/Capital allocation was confirmed at £807,000 and the schemes supported through 50/50 funding with schools were listed. It was noted that the proposal in their entirety would commit £50,000 over the available budget however it was usual for a small number of schemes not to proceed due to affordability and in the event that the budget is overspent the LMS contingency budget could be used to supplement the budget.

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

Members sought clarification with regard to the progress of electrical testing programme and were advised that all secondary schools had been tested, 15 primary schools had initially

been tested and all remaining schools were being tested this academic year. Officers confirmed that partial rewiring works had been identified in some secondary schools but no whole school rewiring works had been identified.

Clarification was also sought in relation to the date of the most recent schools condition survey and the Officer advised that this had last taken place in 2014. It was noted that despite challenges the stock was in reasonably good condition.

Members referenced the revenue/capital 50/50 budget and whether all bids received under this allocation could be accommodated. Officers confirmed that the budget could sustain all the bids received (assuming the £50,000 is allocated from LMS contingency) and if approved by Cabinet, works would commence within the first few months of the new financial year, subject to consultation with the schools and their individual works plan.

Having fully considered the report and the proposals to utilise the Education Capital Budget for 2016/17, including £50,000 of LMS contingency funds to support 50/50 schemes, if required, as referenced in paragraph 4.12 of the report it was moved and seconded that Cabinet be advised of the endorsement of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised of the endorsement of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee for the Education Capital Programme 2016/17.

12. KEY STAGE 4/KEY STAGE 5 PERFORMANCE 2015

E. Pryce of the Education Achievement Service (EAS) introduced the report which detailed the final published Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 performance data for Caerphilly schools 2015.

It was noted that final results indicated continued progress in all high level indicators and subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold inclusive of English/Welsh first language and mathematics had improved from 50% in 2014 to 52.6% in 2015. There was also a small increase to the Level 1 threshold and a more significant increase to the L2 threshold, although Level 2 remains slightly below the national average. Level 1 is now above the Wales average and the capped point score had increase but is still below the Wales average.

In terms of gender performance the Officer confirmed that the gap between boys and girls achievement had closed some what with both boys and girls improving in all areas since 2014. With regard to performance of eFSM and non e FSM pupils the gap had increased in 2015 for the Level 2 threshold from a 28.9 points gap in 2013 to a 33.4 points gap in 2015. Members noted in comparison with other local authority rankings, Caerphilly's improvement was at a faster rate than the national average in the majority of indicators and had remained the same or improved in all levels.

Individual school performance across the Caerphilly County Borough was outlined with Newbridge, Blackwood, Lewis School and St Cenydd improved in all indicators and subjects. Performance in St Martin's and Heolddu improved in all indicators and subjects other than Level L1 and L2 respectively and Pontllanfraith and Rhymney in every indicator other than CSI. However Cwm Rhymni performance had declined in all areas apart from L1 and science.

The FSM benchmark summary and Welsh Government modelled expectation data was outlined and Members were referred to section 5 of the report which detailed the A-Level only performance data. The Officers confirmed that the percentage of A Levels achieved at A*-E grade had fallen from 99.5% to 96.5% with 34 entries graded as a fail compared to only 5 in 2014. The Officer suggested that there may have been instances where an alternative vocational qualification may have been a more appropriate choice for some pupils.

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

Clarification was sought in relation to strategies to improve performance in FSM attainment and Members were advised that works were on going with schools and support provided from Challenge Advisors to review target setting with FSM as a priority.

A Member queried the increase in fail grades at A Level and what was being done to support pupils. The Officer confirmed that there were no statutory targets attached to A Level achievement and the data provided reflected school attainment only and did not allow for A Level colleges. The Member expressed concern that more should be done to support our prospective university candidates and was advised that Welsh Government was looking at 6th Form provision going forward.

The support for school leadership teams was discussed and Officers highlighted the role of the Challenge Advisors, realistic target setting and advised Members that schools were becoming much more confident with regard to in-depth data collation. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that schools had the ability to drill down to an individual pupil level and establish the 'why' behind every statistic quoted.

The different pockets of deprivation throughout the County Borough were discussed and its impact on individual pupil attainment, the Officer confirmed that the longer the exposure to deprivation the bigger the gap in achievement, therefore Key Stage 4 would always illustrate the biggest gap.

Clarification was sought in relation to the ambitions targets set by St Cenydd School last year and whether they had been achieved. The Officer confirmed that they had been and emphasised the work and time required to make the necessary cultural changes and have those conversations on the barriers to success, implement new systems and secure improvement. Where performance has dipped Challenge Advisors would support literacy and numeracy teams and the schools' all-round approach to target setting.

Having fully considered its content the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

13. FLYING START PROGRAMME IMPACT REPORT AND PRESENTATION

The Early Years Manager introduced report and gave a presentation which updated Members on the initial impact of the Flying Start programme as linked to one of the Local Authority's Outcome Agreements 2013-16.

Initially delivered in 10 areas reaching 1150 children aged 0-3 years, the Flying Start programme has since expended to 26 areas, reaching 2533 children and their families per year. Members advised that the cohort currently entering Foundation Phase would be first who had accessed the full programme in its original areas and so trend data would not be available until summer 2016.

Members were advised that the programme is now well embedded, with increased collaboration between Communities First and Families First preventing duplication and maximising the use of funding. Targeted, timely interventions and a consistent and coordinated approach have achieved positive outcomes for children and their families. ALN children are identified at an earlier stage leading to a smoother transition into main stream education. Delays associated with complex speech and language needs have been reduced and often eliminated because of the coordinated approach of the Flying Start Leaders in identify issues early on and making the appropriate specialist referrals. Flying Start outreach has reduced the need for babies to be taken into care or placed on the Child Protection Register through its work with single mothers at risk.

The Officer confirmed that going forward Flying Start will be able to track programme children through every education stage including their outcomes at GCSE. The programme would continue to focus on improving attendance, working collaboratively in partnership to maximise resources for families. It was also noted that Officers were currently working with Welsh Government to develop the Early Years PLASC return to further develop the shared database.

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

Clarification was sought on the biggest challenge for the programme and the Officer confirmed this as the recruitment and training of staff, 347 staff have accessed specialist training in every childcare setting. The Member then queried staff retention levels and was advised that staffing levels were maintained at a good level with the majority of vacancies arising from the promotion of staff to more responsible roles requiring recruitment at a lower level.

A Member queried the response from communities and schools in relation to Flying Start and was advised that the biggest issue was stemming the flow of interest and managing the expectations of the community. In terms of schools, most relished the prospect of having the programme near by and Head Teachers were very supportive of the programme and the positive impact it has on a child's transition into main stream education. The future development of the programme was questioned and the Officer confirmed that this was very much dependent on post election decision making with regard to funding. However the programme is proven to work and achieve real and measurable outcomes for children and parents.

The Chief Education Officer congratulated the Early Years Manager on handling the expansion so competently and establishing such excellent working relationships with other agencies and initiatives to secure positive outcomes for our most disadvantaged children and families.

Clarification was sought in relation to the different Parent/Toddler Play Groups supported by the programme and these were outlined for Members information. The Super Shelby initiative was detailed and it was noted that this provided highly skilled and specialist language and play in conjunction with a therapist.

Reference was made to the PLASC and the work being done with Welsh Government the Officers confirmed that further meetings were being held to establish how the PLASC can be adapted to add children in the early pilot phase.

Having fully considered its content the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee noted the report, the completion of the Outcome Agreement 2013-16 and the plan to bid for capital maintenance funding for 2016-17.

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

There were no requests received.

15. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following item, full details of which were included within the Officers Report. It was not brought forward for review.

- Lansbury Project – Education Focus Group Report.

The meeting closed at 20.11 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 24th May 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR