



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Gordon, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D.W.R. Preece,
D. Rees, J.E. Roberts

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Education), J. Williams (Solicitor), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Pryce (Principal Challenge Adviser, Education Achievement Service (EAS)), A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Mr P. Warren (Head Teacher of Bedwas Primary and Acting Head of Rhydri Primary School)

Co-opted Members: Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), Mr M. Barry and Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor Representatives), Mrs J. Havard and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Mr M. Barry and Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor Representatives) to their first Scrutiny meeting and also Ms Lynnette Jones (Director of Education – Blaenau Gwent) who was undertaking a peer review of Mrs K. Cole.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, P. Marsden, Mrs M.E. Sargent, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative)

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 5TH JULY 2016

RESOLVED that subject to the typographical error for the initial in Councillor Huw R. Davies' name on page 1 that should read 'R' and not 'W' the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 5th July 2016 (minute nos 1 - 11) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY 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.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor D. Havard (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning) informed the Scrutiny Committee that Caerphilly County Borough Council has taken part in the Stonewall Education Equality Index. This challenges the Council to ensure that they are moving forward with this work and making a difference to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender young people on a county wide level. He was pleased to announce that this year Caerphilly has won the award for the most improved Local Authority (LA) and was identified as the highest ranking Welsh LA of those who submitted a return.

The Cabinet Member provided an update in terms of Adult Learning and Families First Funding and advised that despite funding reductions from Welsh Government the service has continued to ensure that Essential Skills is prioritised. Details were provided in relation to the new European projects of Bridges into Work 2 and Working Skills for Adults 2.

It was explained that a detailed report on the confirmed performance data for KS4 and 5 will be presented to Scrutiny on 10th January, 2017. Officers are working closely with the EAS and have arranged to meet all secondary Head Teachers to work together on a comprehensive strategy for accelerated improvement at KS3 and 4.

Reference was made to the improved attendance in primary and secondary phases in the last academic year that indicates that Caerphilly has moved from 22nd position to joint 19th in Wales. A full report regarding Attendance will also be presented to Scrutiny on the 10th January 2017.

An update was provided in terms of 21st Century Schools. The contract for construction of the new primary school at Rhymney has now been awarded. The £8 million project will commence shortly with completion by December 2017. Islwyn High School is on target for completion by end of April 2017. Works on the 3G pitch and grass playing field hard surface multi use games areas at Y Gwindy school in Caerphilly is now well underway and the council has also committed to funding a fitness suite within the sports hall which will be installed over the next few months.

Members were informed that the Governors of Cwmcarn High school are seeking permission from Welsh Ministers for closure of the school. Officers from the Education Service have worked with the school, local Secondary Schools, Crosskeys College and with parents, to ensure continuity of education for pupils, either through transfer to other locations or by assisting to protect the standard of teaching for those who have remained within the school. A member queried if the figures referred to at Cwmcarn will impact on the catchment areas for other local schools. Officers confirmed that a decision has not yet been received from Welsh Government (WG). If WG agree then a meeting will be arranged with other Local Authorities and local Schools to find a way forward.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his informative report.

Clarification was sought in relation to the Stonewall Survey and to how many Authorities in Wales took part. Officers confirmed that figures would be ascertained and provided to Members following the meeting. Councillor J. Pritchard placed on record his thanks to those Officers and the Contractor involved with Y Gwindy School which is a first class facility.

7. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE 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.

8. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Democratic Services presented the report which outlined the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from September 2016 to April 2017. Members considered the work programme and made some amendments in relation to future meetings.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that following a request by a Member, a report be added to the meeting on the 8th November in relation to the Welsh Medium Education in Caerphilly Basin, this was agreed by the majority present. For the same meeting it was moved and seconded that Mr Peter Ward (Head Teacher of Bedwas High School) be invited to attend, a report be added regarding the Islwyn High School Site Visit and the Flying Start Programme Plan be moved to the meeting on the 10th January 2017. This was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the foregoing the work programme appended to the report be approved: -

- i) Mr Peter Ward (Head Teacher of Bedwas High School) be invited to the meeting on the 8th November 2016;
- ii) a report be provided in relation to Welsh Medium Education in Caerphilly Basin for the meeting on the 8th November 2016;
- iii) a report be provided in relation to the Islwyn High School Site Visit for the meeting on the 8th November 2016;
- iv) the Flying Start Programme Plan be moved to the meeting scheduled on the 10th January 2017.

9. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet report listed on the agenda had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

10. SCHOOL COLLABORATION – PRESENTATION BY MR PAUL WARREN, HEAD TEACHER OF BEDWAS JUNIOR SCHOOL AND ACTING HEAD OF RHYDRI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr Warren (Head Teacher) introduced the presentation and confirmed that he was appointed as Head Teacher of Bedwas Junior School in March 2011. He set out the collaboration process with Rhydri Primary School and Bedwas Junior School which began 18 months ago. The difficulties encountered at Rhydri School prior to March 2015 were explained along with the positive profile of Bedwas School. In achieving a successful collaboration the following was undertaken:

- Head Teacher took additional responsibility for both schools;
- Extended distributed leadership model;
- Undertook structured self-review;
- Identified key policies to initiate positive change;
- Planned in teams across both schools;
- Monitored pupils' work across both schools - standards;
- Improved assessment procedures;
- Structured self-review model;
- Provided additional opportunities for pupils.

In the short term, Rhydri School received a positive Estyn Inspection in July 2015 that resulted in the school being removed from special measures 5 months after the collaboration of the schools began. In the long term Bedwas School will benefit from the existing non class based role Deputy Head Teacher/Inclusion Manager, will develop knowledge of foundation phase – leadership opportunities and succession planning. Rhydri School will continue to build on initial successes and the shared vision will continue to permeate across all aspects of school life. In terms of both schools, they will continue to improve teacher assessment data/test scores and enjoy being part of a bigger organisation.

The Chair thanked Mr Warren for his informative presentation and the Committee asked that their congratulations on the success achieved be relayed to the schools and all who were and continue to be involved in the collaboration process.

Members queried the benefits and challenges associated with Collaboration and if there has been an impact on workloads and how these have been managed. The Head Teacher explained that during the day to day running of the schools, encouraging stakeholders to come on board with the process required a period of adjustment. Willingness was required as Teachers had lost confidence as they didn't want to be in special measures. He confirmed that in terms of increased workload, having a non-class Deputy Head Teacher available to cover was a huge benefit due to the funding of this role. Another benefit is that staff have the flexibility to work/cover across the 2 schools. In concluding, the Head Teacher confirmed there is a strong Community Support, although people were anxious at first the position is different now with ongoing projects with the Schools working together with the Communities.

11. PUPIL ATTAINMENT AT FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGE 2 AND KEY STAGE 3 - 2016

The Chief Education Officer introduced the report that informed members of pupils' attainment in teacher assessment at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 3 (KS3). All schools are subject to rigorous reporting and monitoring of standards each year, with the principal focus in (KS2) and (KS3) being on English/Welsh first language, mathematics and science, and the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in all three core subjects (core subject indicator – CSI).

It was explained that in the Foundation Phase (formerly key stage 1), following the implementation of a revised curriculum, schools reported for the first time in 2012 on the performance of 7 year olds in language, literacy and communication (English or Welsh language) (LLC), mathematical development (MD), and personal and social development,

wellbeing and cultural development (PSDWCD). The foundation phase indicator (FPI) measures the percentage achieving the expected outcome in all three areas of learning.

Whilst assessment of LLC and MD is broadly comparable to performance in English/Welsh and mathematics at KS2 and KS3, PSDWCD is not the same as science. Instead it provides a holistic assessment of pupils' wellbeing and the extent to which they are able to inter-relate appropriately with those around them. It also reflects a growing awareness of culture and diversity and of the environment in which they live. As such, it is an important measure of their overall 'readiness' for learning. Achievement in each of LLC, MD and PSDWCD is measured in relation to one of six 'outcome' descriptors.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the 'average' pupil is expected to achieve outcome 5 by the end of the foundation phase (formerly national curriculum level 2), with more able pupils achieving outcome 6 (formerly level 3). At the end of KS2 and 3, the 'average' pupil is expected to achieve level 4 and above and level 5 and above respectively and more able pupils are expected to achieve level 5 and 6 respectively.

An overview was provided in terms of the results produced regarding the PF1, KS2, KS3 and provisional figures relating to KS4. Comparisons were provided in each of the areas regarding gender differences and the figures were also compared against other Local Authorities across Wales.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members queried if Challenge Advisors are satisfied with the targets set at Foundation Phase and were advised that although Performance has declined slightly from 89.2% in 2015, to 88.6% pupils achieving the foundation phase indicator (PFI) in 2016, a decrease of 0.6 percentage points, Caerphilly currently ranks 8th in Wales for the FPI when compared with other Local Authorities.

Clarification was sought in terms of the tracking between KS2 and KS3 and it was explained there are variants within the transition and the Authority considers long term strategies to establish areas of good practice. A Member queried if teaching assessments are secure and was informed that EAS has received increased levels of challenge in relation to accuracy and spot checks are undertaken by Welsh Government, the results of which will be published by the end of December 2016.

Reference was made to Welsh (First Language) at KS2. Members were advised that performance has improved the Local Authority's rankings against other LA's in Wales in all subjects except Welsh. Caerphilly is subject to standardised testing and where there are dips in test results, Challenge Advisors will assist.

A Member queried if problems have been encountered with the way data is collected and was informed that there is a variance across the 91 schools within the Caerphilly Borough although the same processes are used to collect data. EAS provide training to schools in relation to data sharing.

Reference was made to the All Wales Data relating to KS3. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that progress has been achieved in Caerphilly in the last 5 years and all other Local Authorities are improving at the same time. The same process will continue to be applied with an increase of monitoring from the Authority and EAS.

Clarification was sought in relation to Key Stage 7 and Wales overall. It was explained that the provisional data within the report is subject to a validation process throughout September and October. The final data is not likely to be available until the end of December 2016. Predicted figures can only be produced in terms of KS3 and KS4.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

12. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) – SEPT 2015 TO JULY 2016

The Chief Education Officer introduced the report that informed Members of the judgements made by Estyn Inspection Teams of Caerphilly Schools for the academic year 2015-2016 (where published) and provided a summary of Caerphilly schools' inspection judgements since the introduction of the new Common Inspection Framework (CIF) since the 1st September 2010.

The schools were inspected during the Autumn and Spring Terms, 2015-16 under the CIF arrangement. Members were advised that the purpose of inspections are to provide accountability to the users of services and other stakeholders through public reporting on providers, to promote improvement in education and training and inform the development of National Policy by Welsh Government.

An overview was provided in terms of the Key Questions and Quality Indicators that the framework asks reporting inspectors when leading teams to provide judgements. The criteria for schools to demonstrate in achieving the different indicators were set out including the follow up activity if a school is judged 'Unsatisfactory' or 'Adequate'. The Welsh Government's target for the New Common Inspection Framework was that from September 2012, no school should be judged as less than "Adequate" and that by 2015 no school should be judged less than "Good". It was explained that if schools in Local Authority or Estyn Monitoring do not make progress in the year following inspection and by the time of an Estyn Monitoring visit, then they are likely to be placed in either 'significant improvement or 'special measures'.

The Chief Education Officer summarised the Inspections undertaken from 2014 – 2016 and confirmed that in total 69% of schools have been judged to be "Good" or better overall, with a further 31% judged to be "Adequate". There has been an increase in the proportion of schools judged excellent to 3% (2 schools), which is now closer to the national proportion. Prospects for improvement are better with 8% judged "Excellent", 64% judged to have "Good" prospects for improvement, 26% of schools judged to have "Adequate" prospects, but with a further 3% (2 schools) judged to have unsatisfactory prospects for improvement. One of these schools has been removed from Special Measures and the Local Authority, in partnership with the EAS, are continuing to support this school. Figures relating to National Comparisons were also set out in the report.

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

During the following debate, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 9, it was agreed by the majority of Members present that the meeting continue to meet beyond 8.00pm.

Clarification was sought in relation to the overall trend in the cycle of inspections. The Officer confirmed that initial results are improving and it is hoped these results will continue. A Member queried what action is taken when progress is slow and was advised that an action plan is put in place by Estyn. The Local Authority provide a statement for the Head Teacher/Governing Body and for the Chair of Scrutiny and Cabinet Member setting out the position. Statutory Powers can also be used by issuing enforcement notices.

Reference was made to the Inspection Framework and it was explained that collaboration is key and details were provided in the success achieved with Cwmfelinfach and Ynysddu Primary Schools. It was expressed that there is a need to build capacity in schools and the importance of team work and strong leadership is essential. Members queried the next inspection cycle and were informed that there will be 5 key areas covered that will replace the 3 key questions used previously.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2016 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR