



## **EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
ON TUESDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 2017 AT 5.30PM.**

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PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair  
Councillor G. Oliver - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

Mrs C. Andrews, J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, S. Cook, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard,  
Mrs B. Miles, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis and R. Whiting

Together with:

P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement), S. Mutch (Early Years  
Manager), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), E. Pryce (Principal Challenge  
Advisor) and E. Sullivan (Interim Scrutiny Officer).

Also Present:

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

And:

Mr R. Pawar (HeadTeacher, Blackwood Comprehensive School)

### **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chair informed Members that both Keri Cole (Chief Education Officer) and Councillor  
Teresa Parry had suffered a bereavement over the weekend and asked that messages of  
condolences be sent to them on behalf of the committee. Members stood for a minutes'  
silence as a mark of respect.

The Chair welcomed Mr Paul Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement) and Mr Ravi  
Pawar (Head Teacher, Blackwood Comprehensive School) to their first scrutiny committee  
meeting.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Collis, D. Havard, Mrs T. Parry and  
Mrs K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), Mrs S. Richards (Interim Head of Service for Education)  
and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

A declaration of interest was received from Councillor A. Farina-Childs in relation to the presentation from Mr. R. Pawar (Headteacher, Blackwood Comprehensive School) (Minute No.9). Details are minuted with the respective item.

## **3. MINUTES – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2017**

Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor) confirmed that although he is noted as present in the minutes he had given his apologies for the meeting. Subject to the above amendment it was moved and seconded that the minutes of the 26th September 2017 be approved as a correct record and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 26th September 2017 (minute nos. 1-12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **4. 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.

## **5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER**

Councillor P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement) referred to the report previously circulated to Members and provided a verbal update on her portfolio activities over the last few months.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged a request received from Councillor R. Saralis for further information on the Bridges to Work initiative. She advised that although she did not have the details with her, they would be sent to him after the meeting.

With regard to the Childcare Offer it was noted that following on from the initial pilot in the Mid Valleys East area the offer would be expanded into the Trinant, Risca and Aber Valley areas covering nearly two thirds of the borough. It is anticipated that the offer would be further increased to the whole of the Caerphilly area from January 2018.

An update was provided on a recent meeting with Debbie Wilcox (WLGA) where discussions had centred on the issues facing all local authorities including budget pressures. The views expressed would be taken back to Welsh Government. The usefulness of such meetings was emphasised as it allowed Executive Members to understand common issues and share good practice. The advancements being made in terms of collaborative working, challenge and intervention planning were explained and how improvement processes were being moved forward.

The Cabinet Member also referenced her attendance at the 'From Poverty to Prosperity' National Conference supported by the Youth Forum and the opening of Islwyn High School. Councillor Marsden commented on the Welsh Governments' monitoring visit to ascertain the extent of Caerphilly's commitment to participation of children and young people. This was judged to be excellent, their subsequent report concluded that there was strong evidence to demonstrate that Caerphilly was meeting the requirements as set out in the statutory guidance.

Finally the Cabinet Member updated the committee on her recent meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

A Member sought clarification as to how the Childcare Offer was being publicised.

Sarah Mutch (Early Years Manager) confirmed that there had been a massive publicity campaign via schools, social media, website and direct mail.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

**6. 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.

**7. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Interim Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from November 2017 to July 2018.

Members were asked to consider the work programme and make any amendments or propose any additional items to be included for future meetings.

Councillor P. Bevan requested that a further report on regional targeting setting come back to this committee for consideration and agreed to email the Interim Scrutiny Officer with the details in order to progress the request.

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 work programme appended to the report be approved.

**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. A PRESENTATION FROM MR RAVI PAWAR, HEAD-TEACHER, BLACKWOOD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Councillor A. Farina-Childs declared a personal interest as a Member of the Governors at Blackwood Comprehensive School, as such there was no requirement for him to leave the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Mr Ravi Pawar (Headteacher Blackwood Comprehensive School) to the meeting.

Mr Pawar introduced his presentation which illustrated how Blackwood Comprehensive School set its targets through the perspective of three pupils who might attend the school. He referred Members to the Key Stage 4 outcomes table and explained the rationale behind the figures and highlighted the need to improve outcomes within the A\*-G category. He confirmed that this indicator features in the school's development plan.

It was noted that the school set global targets at the end of KS3 and KS4 for pupils based on a combination of information including CATs, NNRTs and KS2 teacher assessment. These targets were checked by the partner primary schools and communicated to all pupils and parents at individual meetings held within the first month. The progress made against those targets was then checked 3 times at KS3 and 6 times at KS4 with outcomes fed back to the child and the parents.

Example Pupil 1 – Morgan – was outlined for Members and his expected attainment at KS2 teacher assessment was detailed. It was noted that Morgan's reading scores were close to national average but not secure, reasoning skills again average but basic numeracy would need further support. Having been identified, suitable interventions would be tailored for Morgan's needs to help him achieve the projected targets. At this stage the indications are that Morgan would be aiming mainly for C grades at KS4, however this might change upwards depending on progress.

Example Pupil 2 – Alex – illustrated a different picture. At KS2 teacher assessment reading scores were very strong and well above national standard, numeracy skills were well above average however the application of skills in problem solving would need to be more secure in order to reach the highest levels. At KS4 Alex would be aiming mainly for A\*/A grades but Maths would need to be monitored.

Example Pupil 3 – Jamie – would require very different interventions as an SEN pupil in need of individualised support to improve basic skills. Jamie would make slower progress and at KS4 might need a carefully planned personalised curriculum with a mix of GCSE and non GCSE qualifications.

Mr Pawar summarised the progress check at KS3 for each of the example pupils. Members were advised that lots of assessments would have been undertaken throughout this process. In Morgan's case the KS3 progress check showed areas of strengths and weaknesses, good effort and behaviour grades and level 6 would be within reach and could make B & C grades.

Alex's progress check showed a pupil on target for level 7 but has also identified that art and technology were not a strength and that maths continues to be an issue. Teachers would therefore be monitoring this position carefully.

Jamie's progress check shows his projected attainment as level 4 at the end of KS4 which would see the pupil achieving E grades. Strengths in art and science had been evidenced.

These pupils would then be subject to further data drops to monitor progress and appropriateness of any interventions employed. At this stage targets would be sent to Welsh Government.

The final set of progress checks for pupils FINE grades were then explained and it was noted that each would be broken down into three parts, 1 would mean that this grade would be secure whereas a 3 would highlight a danger that this grade may not be achieved without additional work. Therefore a D3 grade would require planned interventions if the target is to be reached. Members were advised that it is worth bearing in mind that some of the targets set would be aspirational.

Morgan, Alex and Jamie's FINE grade progress check was summarised and possible intervention to secure targets were noted. Members noted the mix of qualifications open to

Jamie which were more suited to his ability range, concentrating on life-skills and vocational choices.

The final predications for each of the example pupils against their final grades was summarised and it was noted that in Alex's case that a secure A in English had seen a B achieved. A result of this nature would trigger a discussion in relation to target setting and evaluation with the subject teacher in order to establish what had happened.

Mr Pawar emphasised the positive impact of targets setting and ongoing assessments. This coupled with the commitment of staff, pupils and parents were securing positive outcomes in terms of education achievement.

In conclusion Members were referred to the mission statement of Blackwood Comprehensive School 'In all that we do we believe that every pupil matters. We value every pupil for what they have tried to achieve, as well as for what they have achieved. We value everybody equally.'

The Chair thanked Mr Pawar for his presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Members queried the level of support provided to the school by the Local Authority and were advised that Blackwood had a very good Challenge Advisor and complimented the implementation of the EASi system for data entry which had made a positive impact.

Clarification was also sought on the level of parental involvement and if this was maintained long term. Mr Pawar emphasised the importance of getting parents involved very early on as they then tend to stay committed. He confirmed that parents seemed to prefer the 1-2-1 contacts rather than the general parent evening sessions.

A Member expressed concern that this very intensive process would have cost implications for the school and were advised that this formed part of the whole school strategic approach and ethos. Mr Pawar confirmed that this approach was replicated in many schools across the borough.

The Chair thanked Mr Pawar for answering Members questions so fully and for an extremely informative and enjoyable presentation.

## **10. SEWC – REGIONAL TARGET SETTING STRATEGY – UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2017**

Mr Ed Pryce (Principal Challenge Advisor), introduced the report which informed Members of the agreed Regional Target Setting Strategy which would ensure a consistent approach to the setting and agreeing of targets across the region.

Members were referred to section 4.1.1 of the report which detailed the purpose and goals of the strategy. In terms of target setting it had been recognised that individual pupil targets were aspirational and it is likely that not all pupils will achieve their targets, particularly when performance is based on external examinations. Schools, therefore, have the ability to override aggregate targets calculated from the individual pupil targets. This is available to all schools at each key stage.

An overview of the EASi target setting system was illustrated in section 4.1.5 and the Officer confirmed that the system had received a lot of positive feedback with regard to its ease of use.

The Welsh Government requirements were outlined and the targets for each of the key stages was summarised in section 4.29 of the report. Members were asked to note the 2017 timescales which began in July 2017 and ended with the targets finalised and agreed with LA Directors in October 2017.

In terms of best practice in target setting it was noted that schools which set goals for each individual pupil in each year group are those most likely to be ambitious and successful in maximising outcomes for all children.

The role of the Challenge Advisor supporting schools in setting challenging but realistic targets was explained. As was the range of information that they would look at including the school's self-evaluation, historical, progression and comparative data, how the school monitors whether pupils are on track to make expected levels of progress would also be reviewed. The Challenge Advisor would then reach a judgement about the targets and the key improvement priorities necessary to achieve them.

Finally Mr Pryce referred to section 4.6 of the report which detailed the Progress Towards Target information which is currently submitted to the EAS on a termly basis via the EASi system.

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

Clarification was sought as to why data on pupils leaving school without qualifications was no longer collated. Mr Pryce confirmed that Welsh Government changed this requirement as less than 1% of pupils left school without any qualifications however the authority would be aware of these children.

Members queried the accuracy of results against predicted targets and were advised that as many of the targets set will be aspirational there would be a certain level of inaccuracy particularly at a secondary school level. Mr Pryce acknowledged that in all likelihood the recent changes to examinations would give rise to an increased level of inaccuracy, possibly between 5-10%, but this would be a national trend.

In relation to target setting, Members queried what would happen if a school refused to amend a target if it is too low or a target is missed. The Officer confirmed that the authority does have the power to impose a target but the Challenge Advisor would work closely with a school around this to try and find a way forward. If a target is missed then this would be managed through the Sudden Unexplained Dips (SUDs) process and work would be done with the schools and its governors to try find the cause and plan accordingly.

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.

## **10. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE)**

Mr Paul Warren (Strategic Lead for Improvement) introduced the report which advised Members of the work that is undertaken to monitor and track pupils whose parents electively home educate.

The Officer confirmed that this was a very challenging area as there is a legal responsibility to ensure the parents right to choose but also a need to secure suitable provision for the child. The difference between EHE and home tuition provided by the Local Authority or education provided by the LA other than in school (EOTAS) was explained. It was noted that the rights of the parent to choose home education was legally guaranteed under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 and also by Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Local Authority must therefore work within the confines of the law.

Local Authorities do however have a duty to ensure that the provision is suitable, the definition of 'suitable provision' being that which provides efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude to any special education needs. There is no mention of curriculum.

Members were assured that Caerphilly has robust processes in place to monitor and challenge EHE decisions where necessary and a clear policy is in place which provides the framework within which the Authority operates.

The varied reasons for electing for home education were summarised and were noted to include medical, behavioural, bullying and for the most part the parents' philosophical beliefs.

On receiving written notifications from parents, schools must immediately notify the Local Authority. This notification is then forwarded to the Service Manager for EOTAS, the Education Welfare Officer, Link Officer, Admissions Team, Information Advice Assistance Services and SEN team to make the relevant checks. The Education Welfare Officer will work with families but families also have the right to say no to Local Authority involvement. If wider safeguarding concerns are identified a direct referral is made and the Service Manager will decide whether the decision for EHE is to be challenged.

If the Local Authority considers that a suitable education is not being provided then a written report on the findings will be made and parents are given a reasonable opportunity to address the identified concerns. Should this fail then a formal notice or School Attendance Order (SAO) can be issued to parents. It was noted that to date Caerphilly have not been required to evoke the use of a SAO. The visit process was explained and the importance of networking the parents was emphasised. Members were advised that there was a possibility that some children may never have been registered into school and in order to try to capture this data work would need to be done comparing the live birth register with school enrolment. This piece of work is being looked at jointly with other Authorities but is at a very early stage.

Members were advised that there were currently 76 EHE pupils of which 2 were SEN. This number has increased over time and this is in line with national figures.

The Officer confirmed that CCBC were part of a stakeholder working group looking at further guidance on Elective Home Education.

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

Members acknowledged the difficulty facing Officers in terms of engaging parents that opted for home education. Clarification was sought on any support provided to parents such as work-packs or teaching aids. The Officer confirmed that the Specialist Teacher meets with families on an annual basis, as a minimum, but they can request more visits, and they would suggest networks and resources available.

A Member asked how the Local Authority assured the safety of children in terms of tutors employed by parents and for that matter for the tutors entering homes. Mr Warren assured Members that parents were recommended to check that any tutor they use is DBS checked and any safeguarding concerns around the family were usually identified early on, well before the Specialist Teacher attends the home.

Clarification was sought as to why the increase in numbers opting to home educate. Mr Warren confirmed that this was currently being looked at with the help of STRIVE system. The profiles of children are being analysed to help unpick why parents are choosing this route but again this is at a very early stage. It was noted that this software was leading the way and had been established as a model of good practice.

Members queried if parents were able to opt in and out of the educational system at will. The Officer confirmed that this could happen and could be very much dependent on circumstances however parental choice would have to be upheld.

Clarification was sought as to whether any children returned to main-stream education and were advised that this was very rare and usually only at a secondary level.

Members thanked the Officer for this report and request that a copy of the policy be circulated to the committee.

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.

## **11. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020**

Ms Sarah Mutch (Early Years Manager) introduced the report which presented the draft Caerphilly Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 and sought Members approval prior to its recommendation to Cabinet.

It was explained that the WESP fulfils the Local Authority's duty to monitor and improve standards of Welsh language, educational attainment and directs the appropriate use of the Welsh Education Grant funding.

The WESP depends on Welsh Government funding to deliver the First Ministers programme working towards one million people speaking the Welsh Language by 2050. Members were advised that Welsh Government raised a number of questions as part of the consultation process and they have been addressed within the draft document.

Reference was made to the pre-school provision and the way in which the WESP looked specifically at early years. Amendments had been made in relation to childcare in order to bring the document in line with the new Childcare Offer being developed across Wales. The need to ensure there is sufficient Welsh medium provision to meet the needs of working families would be challenge going forward.

The links with the 21st Century Band B proposals were summarised and the challenges that this would present in the long term. Part of these proposals would be the identification of demand across the borough and linking future developments holistically with child care funding in order to ensure the retention of facilities.

The need to improve transfer rates from Welsh medium nursery to primary schools also formed part of the revised WESP and is one of the key areas for development by the regional Early Years Task Group. Welsh medium post-16 opportunities was also highlighted by Welsh Government and the Officer explained the collaborative links between Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and Coleg y Cymoedd and that additional information had been added from Coleg y Cymoedd for this academic year to widen the range of modules taught through the medium of Welsh.

In conclusion Ms Mutch confirmed that the regional approach of the WESP integrated Flying Start provision or Clychoedd Meithrin with their local primary schools and clustering primary school provision with the secondary school as well as linking with the voluntary sector through Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith and Urdd Gobaith Cymru which would aid integration of provision and maximise the resources available.

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

Clarification was sought in relation to the Wellbeing Goals specifically how the WESP would contribute to a more prosperous Wales. The Officer confirmed that Welsh medium provision particularly in the childcare environment was a growth area, as was the delivery of support,



translation and understanding of Welsh. Increased job opportunities and better job prospects generated through the provision of the WESP would therefore lead to a more prosperous Wales.

A Member queried the 21st Century Band B proposals and if funds would be available within areas where Welsh medium provision is desperately needed. The Officer confirmed that there was a long list of proposals under the 21st Century Schools programme which Members would be considering shortly and this list would contain a number of priorities including Welsh provision. In terms of additional money there were no specifics at this stage however it was anticipated that this would be around the expansion of already existing places rather than brand new provision.

Concerns were expressed that the vision for the Welsh language needed to be reimagined in order to create a better mind set and must be more focused on practical usage, to ensure the ownership of the language in terms of belonging and value rather than grants and money and must take a more positive step-up.

The Officer agreed and noted that parents who do not speak Welsh often voice reservation about enrolling children in Welsh medium education because of this. These parents were often unaware of the opportunities and assistance available to learn Welsh. The efforts being made to encourage involvement in the language were summarised and it was agreed that the responsibility for the one million speakers cannot just lie with Welsh medium education but with an overall increase in confidence in the language.

Clarification was sought on the nature of the Regional Task Group. Members were advised that the Group shared good practice and worked to link provision on a regional basis. The Group also supported in the delivery of qualifications through Welsh or other education provision in Welsh for example ALN.

The Chair thanked the Officer for answering Members questions so fully and for her report.

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.

RECOMMENDED that: -

- (i) the final draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 be noted:
- (ii) Cabinet approve the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20.

The meeting closed 19:55 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR