



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 15TH MAY 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry - Chair

Councillors:

E. M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, M.P. James, B. Miles, L. Phipps, M. Powell, J. E. Roberts, J. Winslade and K. Woodland.

Cabinet Member:

Councillor C. Andrews (Education and Communities).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), R. Evans (Head of Provision for Vulnerable Learners), P. O'Neill (Senior Youth Service Manager), L. Kabza (Youth Participation and Curriculum Projects Coordinator), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Member: Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative).

Also in Attendance:

Miss K. Cole (NEU) and Mr B. Mahoney (Vice Chair of the Youth Forum).

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting would be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items - [Click here to view](#). The Committee was advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Broughton-Pettit, A. Gair, and J. Rao (Vice Chair), together with Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative), and Mrs P. Ireland (NEU).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 28TH MARCH 2023

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28th March 2023 be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 11 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28th March 2023 (minute nos 1- 10) 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. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period May 2023 until March 2024 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28th March 2023.

Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved, subject to an additional report on Foreign Languages taught in Schools. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be published on the Councils' website.

6. 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.

7. YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report which informed Members of the issues raised by Children and Young People via the Youth Services Youth Forum. The report sought the views of Members prior to its presentation to Cabinet. Members were advised that following the annual Youth Forum Conference in January 2023, Children and Young People have identified current issues that are important to them and have voted on Priority Issues for 2023.

The Vice Chair of the Youth Forum gave a presentation to Members on the process of identifying the priority issues, which included a consultation process, with 5 key areas (Learning, Prosperous, Greener, Healthier, and Safer) determined at the Annual Youth Forum Conference and a Priority Issue Ballot which took place in February 2023. The priority issue that was chosen as a result of the ballot was 'Learning,' which included life skills of living independently, budgeting, car maintenance and BSL. Members were also informed how the Youth Forum will address the priority issues, which included weekly project group meetings, an agreed timeline of work and a 'life skills' consultation throughout the county borough. A meeting was also planned with Qualifications Wales. The Chair thanked the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum for his presentation and noted that a copy of the presentation would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

A Member queried whether outreach youth workers still worked with the young people and how they would support them in working on their priorities. Members were assured that the youth service outreach workers, along with all other sections of the service, deliver the youth service curriculum, and it will be reviewed to allow the priority identified by the youth forum to be included and delivered upon.

Members discussed the Life Skills priority and whether schools are the place for these to be developed and at what age, or if they should be delivered outside schools. It was suggested that it should be taught between the ages of 14 to 18 both in and outside of schools. Members agreed that those ages would be appropriate as young people are looking forward to the next stages of their lives and being independent, whether it be further education or living independently. Members acknowledged that although there is a role for schools in providing some of the skills/learning it is important to recognise that not everything can be provided by schools and opportunities outside the school environment to engage young people in a community setting is the way forward. Members were informed that there is a lot of work in this area at both secondary and primary schools, particularly on relationships.

Members highlighted the work at schools on substance misuse, and financial management with the new curriculum focussing on authentic learning experiences. A Member sought further information on access to British Sign Language courses. Members were advised that BSL is on the curriculum and has been provided in the past at the request of young people. In view of the current request by the Youth Forum the methods of delivery will be reviewed and informed how it will be delivered going forward.

Members expressed surprise that social media and harmful content was not a Youth Forum priority and queried whether it was discussed by the youth forum. Members were advised that it was mentioned as an issue, but it was not selected by the young people as a priority on this occasion. Bullying was also mentioned but again not voted as a current priority. Members supported the priority of the Youth Forum, and it was suggested that the scrutiny committee could be invited to any future events they have planned to support young people in taking the Life Skills priority forward.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and particularly thanked the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum for the excellent presentation.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

The Education Scrutiny Committee considered how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue and had due regard to issues raised within the report by Children and Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:-

1. That the presentation of Youth Forum issues, by young people, is supported.

8. ALN PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES OF WORKING GROUP.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report which provided Members with an update regarding the progress in implementation of the ALN (Additional Learning Needs) Act for the Local Authority and schools.

The Lead for Inclusion and ALN presented the report, which informed Members of the support provided to schools to support the ALN implementation and the focus on inclusion and ALN working groups with Head Teachers. A Number of working groups have been established to take forward critical areas of work, identify any barriers and agree solutions.

A Member sought clarification of the online matrix regarding the barriers to learning, and queried at what age would children be expected to engage and what support would they have and requested an example of barrier to learning and a solution to that barrier. Members were advised that the RBtL matrix was first developed to aid teachers. Members were informed that this is available to children of all ages, as early as possible, and support would be dependent on the child's age and needs.

A Member noted the absence of financial information in the report and wished to express his concerns and those of Head Teachers within the borough in relation to financial support for ALN. Members were advised that the current report is a general report giving Members an overview of the work being done in Caerphilly schools to implement the ALN Act. Members were also advised that a report on the financial aspect of ALN is due in the Autumn term, following a consultation with Head Teachers.

A Member sought clarification on the nature of the support offered by LA officers, referred to in the report, when schools audit their own progress against key areas of development. Members were advised of the level of work involved in implementing the ALN Act, with officers working with schools to identify the children who needed to be on the ALN registers and how these registers would be monitored. Members were also advised that the local authority provides an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring, which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions for children and young people with additional learning needs outlined within individual development plans.

A Member queried the type of support given to learners up to the age of twenty-five. Members were advised that where a child is identified with an ALN, they can be supported until they are 25 however there is no entitlement to continuous education or training from when a person ceases to be of compulsory school age up to the age of 25.

A Member sought clarification on the 'IT Cubes' referred to in the report, and how these enabled parents of children with ALN to access support by engagement in meetings. Members were advised that it is not always possible to include all relevant parties physically in the meetings, and this allows meetings to include all relevant parties for the benefit of the children.

A Member sought clarification on the ratio of staff to children and whether there is a limit to the number of children in one class. Members were advised that the 'foundation phase' has a statutory requirement and is capped at 30 children in one class, and for older children the limit is not capped but the guidance is still 30. Members were also advised that teachers and head teachers are supported by the LA, determining the specific needs of the children and the number of teaching assistants and support staff that are required for each particular class.

A Member noted that the needs of children were benefited from remaining in mainstream school and queried the funding available for this to remain. Members were advised that funding details were to be disclosed in a future report in the Autumn term.

A Member queried that if 'one to one' teaching were reduced, would the children have to go elsewhere, and where would they be going. Members were advised that since Covid, ALN had increased in different ways and teachers are now given more flexibility to teach children at the 'stage' they are at, and not always their specific age. A Member queried the number of Welsh Medium Educational Psychologists in Caerphilly Borough and Members were advised there is currently one

A Member referred to the information provided in the report on teaching assistants and sought clarification on the training received, the current shortage of TAs, and the recruitment and support for the TA's. Members were advised that Caerphilly provides a professional learning plan for TA's which includes ALN, emotional health and well-being and specific needs. Members were also advised that a recruitment drive is currently ongoing with the employment team and Head teachers, to produce a work experience package which will be piloted through the summer term and into the Autumn term.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to:-

1. Endorse the approach taken in regard to LA's practice in embedding the ALN Act, working with Head Teachers and supporting schools.

9. HOW EFFECTIVE IS OUR WORK TO REDUCE EXCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report which provided an update for Members regarding the work of the Local Authority to reduce exclusions. Members were informed that guidance for schools in relation to exclusions is provided by a Welsh Government document 'Exclusions from schools and pupil referral units. Schools are the responsible body for issuing exclusions, and the Local Authority has developed guidance as part of the Inclusion Compendium that reinforces a supportive partnership approach in meeting emotional, behaviour and wellbeing need and addressing exclusions.

Members were also advised that despite the approaches taken the number of permanent exclusions across secondary schools remains too high and the rates of fixed term exclusions and numbers of days lost are also too high across primary and secondary schools. A Member queried how Caerphilly compares to other local authorities and to what extent the increase in exclusions is due to different challenges post covid. Members were advised that all LA's are experiencing an increase in exclusions and that covid had affected the level of current exclusions.

A Member queried whether it was beneficial for a child to change schools. Members were advised that pupils who have been permanently excluded are given opportunities at a new school and a chance to experience a new environment which might be successful. Members

were also advised that all secondary head teachers believed that all children deserve a 'second chance' and a fresh start at a new school could be beneficial.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to:-

1. Endorse the approach to be taken in regard to reducing exclusions.

10. PROVISION FOR EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS).

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report which provided an update for Members regarding the implementation of the EOTAS strategy and development of provision, information regarding how well services ensure suitable support for EOTAS pupils, and areas for development. Members were advised that EOTAS in Caerphilly offers a range of provisions to meet the needs of young people who are unable to access mainstream education. Pupils who access EOTAS range from year 3 to year 11 and on average represent 1% of the student population across the authority.

A Member queried the recent Estyn report and the Pupil Referral Unit at Glanynant. Members were advised of the schools 'cause for concern' process, and a Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) which is produced with the school. Members were also advised that together with the LA and EAS monthly meetings are ongoing with the school to measure the progress against the recommendations in the Estyn report.

A Member sought clarification on EOTAS, and how pupils are supported in their homes, as home education cannot be monitored in the same way as schools. The Member also raised a concern that home education was not included in the reports. Members were advised that home tuition is where the pupil is taught at home, and not by parents. Home schooling is provided by parents, however the LA do everything possible to keep the child in mainstream school. Members were also advised that the LA need to ensure the child is safe and note the level of education they will receive from parents. Members were informed of Welsh Government grant funding to assist with monitoring home schooling and new guidance that has been released. Members were advised that the LA conduct safeguarding checks for every elected home-schooled child, and all are known the LA, with any concerns followed up. The Member suggested that home schooled children should still be 'assessed' in a similar way to the 'SATS' currently undertaken in schools and requested an update on home schooled children in the next report. Members were informed that a specific report on home schooling is proposed to be produced for Members.

A Member requested that attendance figures for Caerphilly schools be included at the next meeting. Members were advised that a report on attendance figures is due to come before the next meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to: -

1. Endorse the approach to be taken in regard to implementing the EOTAS Strategy and developing provision to meet need.

The meeting closed at 7.43 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR