



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY, 4TH JUNE 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

J. Bevan, D.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, D. Havard, G. Johnston, D.W.R. Preece,
J. Roberts and Mrs M. Sargent.

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: R. Passmore

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), G. Evans (Senior Manager- Planning & Strategy - Library Services), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education), T. Maher (Assistant Director Planning & Strategy), S. Dixon (Disability Access Officer), A. Price (Interim Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Co-opted Members: Mr A. Farina-Childs (Parent Governor), Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governor) Mrs P. Ireland (NUT) and Mrs J. Havard (NUT).

Also Present:

G. Rees (Headteacher – Cwm Ifor), I. Elliott (Headteacher – Trinity Fields), F. Khan (Estyn) and Mrs J. McCarthy (Estyn).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, M.P. James, Mrs G. Oliver, R. Saralis and M. Weston (Cardiff ROC).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 20TH MAY 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th May 2015 (minute no. 1 – 12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. 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.

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

Councillor R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, welcomed Estyn to the Committee and highlighted the encouraging figures within the upcoming report. Members noted that the key challenges for the Authority are raising the levels of attainment within the schools. It was noted that Caerphilly works well within partnerships and are keen to continue improving and changing the culture to meet the challenge.

The Cabinet Member updated the Committee on Urdd Eisteddfod, which was hosted at Llancaiach Fawr. Many of the schools within the Borough took part in the event which welcomed over 88,000 visitors. A special thank you to Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymini for provision of hospitality to many visitors.

Members noted that the Youth Workers in Schools Project has been re-launched and will continue for at least another year. Headteachers are fully engaged in this initiative and have made innovative plans for working with identified pupils and their families, embracing a multiagency approach to overcoming barriers faced.

The Hengoed Parent Forum has been shortlisted for the Welsh Group Learners of the Year Award for the work they have done developing their Petra book and the learning associated with it. They will be presented with the award by Niace Cymru on the 11th June in the SWALEC Stadium in Cardiff. They have also had a video made which was completed in the setting.

Literacy Wales, who made a small contribution to the funding for both Petra book and Gorilla and the Mouse book, have invited 8 parents to a celebration to be held in the Senedd on the 25th June to celebrate 7 years of Literacy Wales projects. David Chamberlain, Arts Development Office, put the books forward as the Caerphilly entry.

Lift/Codi is a Welsh Government funded project which assists NEET young people with health issues, aged 14-24, to gain qualifications, improve confidence, self esteem and identify a suitable employment, training or further education placement. Over the last month the project has helped 35 young people to achieve qualification, 17 young people to secure places in future learning and 3 young people to secure employment.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for the update.

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. THE DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2014/15 AND THE PRIORITIES FOR 2015/16.

The report provided Members with an update on the Directorate performance for the financial year 2014/15 and the Directorate priorities for the financial year 2015/16, consideration for the Council's Outcome Agreements, "Improving Early Years Experiences", for which the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning is responsible and consideration of one of the Council's six Improvement Objectives for 2015/16, "Improve outcomes for all learners, particularly those vulnerable to underachievement".

A review of the Directorate's performance 2014/15 has been undertaken as part of the Council's corporate planning process and also included performance in delivering one of the five key areas in the Council's Outcome Agreement, "Improving Early Years" and Welsh Government have judged the programme "successful" for 2014/15.

K. Cole (Chief Education Office) introduced the report and provided Members with a presentation, which highlighted that the review identified a fourth consecutive year of improvement in all key indicators at each Key Stage of Education. The processes for those Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) has been refined and as a result provision and outcomes for young people has improved. In addition, Members noted that the ALN Review has resulted in a reconfiguration of resources and provision and a further report will be presented to Scrutiny in September, when the process has concluded.

Mr G. Rees (Headteacher Cwm Ifor Primary School) and Mr I. Elliott (Headteacher Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre) were introduced and provided Members with a presentation on the partnership work conducted to introduce a Trinity Fields satellite class at Cwm Ifor Primary School.

Discussions took place in the spring and summer of 2014 with the ALN Manager and headteachers, when the principle to form a satellite class was established, more formal consultation was conducted with governors, teachers and parents. The principle for the base was to improve inclusive opportunities and educational outcomes for identified pupils from Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre.

In January 2015, the satellite class was established, which is underpinned by a signed partnership agreement. A video presentation was delivered to the Scrutiny Committee which demonstrated pupils from both schools, highlighting their opinions of the satellite class, its benefits and successes.

The Chair thanked the Headteachers for the presentation and discussion ensued.

The principle was discussed and Members felt that the initiative is excellent, with a number of benefits to both schools and pupils and all involved. A Member sought further information on monitoring of the outcomes and successes. Mr Elliot explained that the project is subject to continuous self evaluation, with the views of students, parents, governors and the Local Authority taken into consideration. The project has a clear focus on its goals and is making small incremental steps towards the outcomes.

A Member queried whether there had been any issues with the integration process. Mr Rees explained the satellite class does not have any impact on school data and that potential issues were pre-empted and suitable measures put in place to make the transition as seamless as possible. However, it was noted that the project has been positive with no significant issues.

Members discussed the integration process and examples of the successes to date were noted. A Member sought further information on plans to develop the principle further in the future. Mr Elliott explained that there are plans to develop a similar class within a secondary school.

Finally, Members were invited to visit Cwm Ifor Primary School to the Satellite classroom, and it was agreed that Officers would make arrangements to accommodate prior to the end of the School year.

Ms R. Collins (Headteacher St Cenydd Community School) was introduced and provided a presentation on the work conducted within St Cenydd Community School on raising standards.

St Cenydd Community School is an English-medium 11 – 18 mixed comprehensive school and is maintained by Caerphilly County Borough Council. There are 1,093 pupils in attendance, included sixth form students. The school is situated in Caerphilly and approximately 27% of the pupils are entitled to Free School Meals, which is higher than the national average (17.4%) and over a quarter of pupils live in the most deprived areas in Wales.

The school intake includes the full range of ability. Very few pupils receive support to learn English as an additional language come from a minority ethnic background. Just fewer than 7% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs compared with the national average of 2.6%. The school has a unitary authority centre for physical disabled, hearing impairment, and speech, language and communication, known as the specialist resource base.

St Cenydd was subject to an inspection in 2013 by Estyn, the school's performance was noted as adequate and prospects for improvement were good. In January 2015, a further visit was conducted, and although the school had demonstrated significant improvements, the school remains in monitoring.

The school has seen significant changes since the employment of the Headteacher. There is clear direction and a renewed spirit amongst staff. It was noted that there is an excellent support system in place from the Local Authority and Governing body. A 5 year improvement plan is in place as well as a tracking and monitoring system, and an excellent support system from the Local Authority and Governing body.

The chair thanked the Headteacher for the detailed presentation and report and discussion ensued.

A Member, recognising the high Free School Meal entitlement, sought further information on the plans to overcome the education attainment gap. Ms Collins explained that a 2-part plan is in place and work is required to improve levels of attainment and meet the needs of all pupils, not just those in receipt of Free School Meals.

Members discussed community involvement and sought further information on the involvement of parents. Ms Collins explained that there is not currently a PTA, as it was felt that communication was a priority. Significant work has been done to improve links with parents, such as a text service and newsletters. In addition, work has been undertaken to increase the involvement and attendance of parents at school, as well as the esteem of pupils, with the introduction of awards schemes and presentation events.

A member sought further information on the improvement in the number exclusions. Ms Collins explained that there is a consistent and fair behavioural management policy in place, which encourages respect. The school have introduced a back to basics campaign, with clear rules and consequences.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Headteacher for the presentation and the excellent work that has been conducted to improve the school and wished her well for the future.

B. Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education) provided Members with an overview of the Review of 2014/15 and it was noted that there will be further information on the Youth Service brought to the next Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted that there has been a notable improvement in the NEET's figures from the previous year and the number of people achieving Essential Skills (Basic Skills) has increased from 277 (13/14) to 344 (14/15). Caerphilly has achieved 8 out of 9 of the National Library Standards and was commended for its progress. IN addition, it was noted that a successful programme of statutory maintenance (electrical) is being delivered across schools.

S. Mutch (Early Years Manager) provided the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Outcome Agreement and the expansion of the Flying Start Service and it was noted that 13 out of the 18 targets have been met or exceeded in the "what difference have we made" section.

Members noted that the Flying Start Programme is on track and being fully delivered in 19 areas for 2212 children aged 0-3 years. The expansion has faced some challenges however the impact of the programme is still evident in all areas.

A member sought information on barriers to meeting targets. The Officer explained that the primary barrier has been recruitment. Health Boards underestimated the number of Health Visitors that would require additional training and the number of childcare staff that would need to be upskilled in order to make an exceptional service.

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer) provided the Scrutiny Committee with detailed presentation and explanation on the Top 10 Priorities for 2015-16 and requested that a copy of the priorities be brought to subsequent meeting for ease of reference.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued around targets and a Member queried whether KS4 target was achievable and how. The Officer agreed that the target was ambitious, which was welcome, however, after considerable discussion with the EAS Officers and Headteachers, it was felt that the target was achievable and needed to be set at a point that was to be reached in order to maximise potential.

A Member sought further information on the priority on Federation, seeking further information on the process and the schools involved. The Officer highlighted that the process was initially implemented within Fleur-De-Lys and Pengam Primary Schools during the late 1990's, in which the schools worked together and shared a headteacher. The second is Fochriw and Pontllytyn Primary Schools, which is currently under review. Members noted that discussions are under way with another 2 schools to work together to maintain both schools and share best practice.

Surplus places were discussed and Members sought an explanation on the projections. Officers explained that a detailed review was conducted within Primary Schools and a cross check conducted of the classrooms that were in use for teaching purposes, compared to the number of teaching staff. It was concluded that there was an excess in the number of classroom to teachers, as a result the excess was reduced within the Welsh Government proposed formula, however, Members were asked to consider that it would take time before a noticeable reduction could be achieved.

Free School Meals were discussed and the changes in eligibility. Members raised concerns for the families that are no longer eligible for Free School Meals and the impact on deprivation. Officers acknowledged the Members concerns and explained that the changes were implemented by Welsh Government. Further data sharing amongst schools and staff would be required to encourage those that are eligible to take up Free School Meals and mitigate any stigma that can be associated with Free School Meals.

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

There were no requests for items to be placed on the next available agenda, however Members sought information on items previously requested.

1. Councillor Gary Johnston requested information on a Special Scrutiny Committee which was to discuss Free school Meals. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Research Officer would be contacted to follow up the request.
2. Councillor John Roberts requested an update report on Adult Learning and Centres. Members were asked to note that Estyn have made the information available on their website, however a full report will be provided to Members in September.

The meeting closed at 7.54 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 7th July 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR