

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2022

PRESENT: Councillor A.C. Jones (Chair) (In Person)

Councillors (In Person):

L. Davies P. Hughes-Griffiths

Co-opted Members (In Person):

A. Enoch

Councillors (Virtually):

S.M. Allen	L.R. Bowen	K.V. Broom	L.M. Davies
B.W. Jones	D. Jones	M.J.A. Lewis	S.L. Rees
E. Skinner	M. Thomas (substitute)		

School Representative for Ysgol Bryn Teg (In Person):

Mr G. Jones, Headteacher

Also in attendance:

Councillor G. Davies - Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language

The following Officers were in attendance (In Person):

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
A Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer

The following Officers were in attendance (Virtually):

S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
A. Rees, Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer
A. Eynon, Principal Translator

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 - 11.21 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from F. Healy-Benson, Councillor S. Godfrey-Coles and V. Kenny.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of personal interest including any party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

A report was presented to Committee which explained that that an alternative structure, in the form of online school engagement sessions, had been introduced to temporarily replace school visits during the Covid-19 pandemic, and which would enable the Committee to continue with its school evaluation and improvement function. In this regard, the Committee hoped that site visits would be resumed during 2023.

The Committee thereupon received a presentation from the Headteacher of Ysgol Bryn Teg which focussed upon the way in which Ysgol Bryn Teg had supported the well-being of pupils, families and staff since the Covid-19 pandemic. The presentation detailed the journey of significant improvement made within the school, against a backdrop of financial challenges, to become highly effective in terms of its learning and organisation and had embraced change in order to achieve a culture of excellence.

Key points covered within the presentation included the findings of the Estyn inspection undertaken in June 2022 within the following areas:

Leadership

- Effective Leadership and Management was exhibited throughout the school, facilitated through open and transparent communication to support the needs of pupils.
- An atmosphere of kindness, inclusion and nurture was enshrined within the school and had contributed to the significant improvement in pupil well-being and standards.
- Clear and well-defined roles and responsibilities were in place and were formulated upon a strength-based approach and appropriate investment in the development of staff.
- Forward-thinking and proactive decision-making was supported by the School Governors. Grant funding had been allocated to enhance the nurture provision within the school, the appointment of a Mental Health Practitioner and Family Inclusion Officer and the purchase of electric bikes and electric minibuses to support and enhance school trips.

Care, Support and Guidance

- An inclusive ethos existed within the school, with a team around the family approach based upon mutual respect between staff, pupils and parents/guardians.
- The core values of the school were centred upon the areas of well-being, independence and respect.
- Effective networks had been established with other agencies, including other schools and social services, which had led to the introduction of a safeguarding platform .
- A robust provision was in place for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) which was facilitated by an ALN Coordinator.
- An array of interventions and assessments had been embedded within the school to add value and demonstrate measurable progress.

Teaching and Learning Experiences

- A broad and balanced curriculum had been introduced with an array of initiatives and pupil groups across the school.
- Appropriate investment had been made in terms of the development of staff, with added value through shared staff training and collaboration with other agencies and schools to share best practice, coaching and mentoring.

Well-being and Attitudes to Learning

- A Well-being Lead Officer, with responsibility for the health and well-being had proved instrumental to the school community during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The implementation of scheme of work entitled 'jigsaw', which was aligned to the new curriculum, aimed to offer a forward thinking, holistic approach to meet the needs of pupils within the school.
- Relationships had been enhanced through policy, action-based research and a celebration of achievements, which was further strengthened by supportive School Governors.
- Informal and formal support structures were in place for staff, including the recent introduction of well-being days.
- Representation on local and national forums assisted the school in addressing the needs of the school community to improve the mental health of children; these included the Local Authority's Well-being Forum and the Place2Be Forum.

Learning

- The school was able to demonstrate the progress made by the majority of pupils, despite below-average starting points for most children.
- Staff and pupils were at the forefront of the learning programme and fully engaged in the process.
- An excellent internal and external learning environment was in place, and an innovative, solution focussed approach and monitoring mechanism had been adopted to ensure that the curriculum met the needs of the school community.
- The skilled and passionate staff within the school had outstanding knowledge of their pupils.
- The school had links with local, national and international programmes and initiatives including the Formula 1 primary schools challenge, Pie Corbett reading programme, White Rose Maths scheme and the 'Heads Up' outstanding schools leadership programme.

The main challenges and pressures identified by the school centred upon an increased influx of children with additional needs, cost of living crisis, reduced budgets and the over reliance on grant funding. Furthermore, access to quality services, individually and collectively was deemed to be more difficult following the Covid-19 pandemic.

A member referred to the difficulties in the ability of schools to forward plan within the context of a variable budgets due to the number of grant funding and suggested that further correspondence could be submitted to Welsh Government

to emphasise the opportunity to streamline the funding provided to enable schools to meet the varied needs across communities.

Reference was made to the recent introduction of free school meals in Wales and concerns were highlighted by the Headteacher that parents/guardians would no longer apply for free school meals which would have an impact on the level of Pupil Development Grant (PDG) funding which the school would access. An officer provided assurances that this issue had been considered by the Committee and representations had been made to Welsh Government in this regard.

A member highlighted a survey undertaken by the Children's Commissioner during 2021 which identified that more pupils felt less confident about their learning and Ysgol Bryn Teg was commended on the provision of early intervention support for its pupils. In response to a query regarding the scope for additional learning to take place in outdoor environment to build up resilience and confidence of learners, the Headteacher referred to the introduction of a forest school at Ysgol Bryn Teg to enable pupils to reap the additional health benefits of learning in an environment of nature and wildlife.

Reference was also made to the PASS survey undertaken within Ysgol Bryn Teg to assess the perceived learning abilities of pupils and enable appropriate interventions to be mapped out. The Director of Education and Children's Services provided a synopsis of the services available to support and improve the well-being of children at an earlier age, including the Area 43 programme and counselling services.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Committee received an Annual Report which detailed the work undertaken by the Committee during the 2020/21 municipal year. The report had been prepared in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution and provided an overview of the work programme and key issues addressed, whilst also incorporating any issues referred to, or from, the Cabinet, Task and Finish reviews, development sessions and member attendance.

Reference was made to a typographical correction to section 6.2.3 of the report which would be updated to reflect that the committee had considered its report in 2021.

RESOLVED that the report be received, subject to the typographical amendment to be made to section 6.2.3 of the report.

6. EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN FOR 2022/23

The Committee reviewed its draft Forward Work Plan for 2022/23 which had been compiled following the Committee's informal development session held on the 1st September 2022.

A number of observations and queries were addressed, as follows:

- It was emphasised that the Forward Work Plan was a flexible document that could be updated as required throughout the year as new information emerges. In particular, it was reported that the Forward Work Plan would be reviewed and updated, as required, following publication of the Cabinet Forward Work Plan.
- A request was made for an update on the recommendations from the School Organisation Consultation Process Task and Finish Group report to be incorporated into the Forward Work Plan.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan 2022/23 be approved, subject to the inclusion of a report providing an update on the recommendations from the School Organisation Consultation Process Task and Finish Group.

7. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the Council Annual Report on Wellbeing Objectives.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the explanations for the non-submission be noted.

8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 1st December 2022. It was clarified to the Committee that following the realignment of Cabinet portfolios, the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Services would be invited to the meeting to present a report on the Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Plan.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 1st December 2022 be noted.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 16TH MARCH 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th March, 2022 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE