



To:  
**Cllr. Darren Price**  
Chair of Partneriath Joint Committee

Please ask for: **Scrutiny**  
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Date: **16 November 2023**

Dear Councillor Price

### **Partneriath Scrutiny Councillor Group – 23 October 2023**

The Scrutiny Councillor Group would like to thank Andrew Owen the Headteacher at Birchgrove Comprehensive School and officers representing Partneriaeth Ian Altman (Lead Officer), Helen Morgan Rees (Lead Director), Dylan Williams (Strategic Lead), Cressy Morgan (Strategic Adviser) for attending our meeting, for presenting the information we requested and answering our questions. I am writing to you to reflect on our views from the meeting.

The Councillor Group agreed as part of their work programme to look at the performance of each of the Partneriaeth priorities, we therefore welcomed the update report on Priority 2: Embedding principles and processes which underpin educational equity in all schools and educational settings.

We heard that the aim of this is to ensure personal or social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving educational potential and that all schools and settings have high aspirations for all learners. We heard that this is being achieved by

- i. Continuing to support schools and educational settings to understand how to mitigate the impact of poverty on engagement, achievement and attainment (including poverty proofing the school day)
- ii. Continuing to support schools and educational settings to understand how to mitigate the impact of trauma on engagement, achievement and attainment (including work around trauma informed schools)
- iii. Working with key partners to embed evidence based universal approaches to promote positive health and well-being.

We heard how schools are working with Partneriath on this and in particular in poverty proofing the school day. We welcomed the Headteacher from Birchgrove Primary School, who outlined some of the work they are doing in relation to mitigating the impacts of poverty on pupils at the school. He told us that the impact of this work on the school has been dramatic. He said that they had always been an inclusive school but the poverty proofing work had helped them look at this in a slightly different way, by looking at the challenges some pupils face on a daily basis. He felt that the Poverty Proofing Audit completed last year had been a beneficial and positive experience for the school. He outlined some of the work that has been happening in relation to poverty

proofing since that audit including, for example, teachers becoming much more in tune with pupil wellbeing and ensuring that school uniform was much less prescriptive and therefore more economical to purchase.

We were interested to hear how this process has helped teachers cope with the impacts of poverty on pupils more effectively. We also discussed how poverty is affecting attendance at the school, how they use their pupil development grant to assist in improving the impacts of poverty and also, more widely, why some families who may be entitled to free school meals do not actually take up the offer.

We were impressed with the work happening at the school and thanked the Headteacher for sharing his journey with the Councillor Group.

The Lead Director outlined the outcomes of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee held on the 6 October. The Lead Officer also updated us on the current risk profile where we heard that the profile had changed slightly in order to align with the new Business Plan.

The Lead Officer provided us with a report giving an overview of current support for schools with regard for the Curriculum for Wales. We heard that all primary settings and half of all secondary settings adopted the Curriculum for Wales in September 2022 and were encouraged to hear that it was adopted by all the remaining schools in September 2023. The report outlined curriculum requirements, progression and assessment challenges, cluster working and the schools support.

We heard from the Strategic Adviser that Partneriaeth are increasing their role, with every cluster having a link officer who will be 'a critical friend with expertise'. We heard that the last few years had been about universal support but this is now moving towards a more targeted model.

We asked whether school governors were fully aware of the services offered by Partneriaeth in relation to the New Curriculum, especially if their school was not taking full advantage of services most appropriate to them. We were told that Partneriaeth would be happy to raise awareness with governors about the services that are available.

We would welcome your thoughts on the contents of this letter, but on this occasion do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

**Cllr Lyndon Jones**  
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