

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Wednesday 3rd September 2014 at 5pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) C Leyshon – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

M Adams	(Mrs) J Bunnage	J Elliott	S Evans-Fear
M Griffiths	(Mrs) S Jones	R Lewis	B Morgan
G Smith	B Stephens	G Thomas	

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr J Horton – Parent Governor
Mr J Fish – Parent Governor
Ms S Sevany – Parent Governor
Mrs C Jones – National Union of Teachers & Teachers panel
Mr M Cleverley – NASUWT and Teachers Panel
Mr D Price - unison

Officers in Attendance:

Mr C Bradshaw - Director, Education & Lifelong Learning
Ms G Davies - Acting Service Director for Access, Engagement and Inclusion
Ms S Walker – Head of Achievement, Primary
Mr B Whittingham – Head of Achievement, Secondary
Mr P Nicholls – Principal Solicitor, Litigation

18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A L Davies MBE, (Mrs) A Calvert, P Jarman, C Williams and L Walker and co-opted member Mr C Jones – GMB

19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of personal interest declared at this juncture of the meeting.

20 MINUTES

RESOLVED: - to approve as accurate records the minutes of the Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committees on the 9th July 2014 and the 15th July, 2014.

21 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15.

The Principal Solicitor, Litigation provided the Committee with a brief overview of the work programme going forward for the Committee, following the discussions at the July Committee meeting. The Officer advised that with the agreement of the Committee an addition would be made to the October scheduled meeting, with the committee's consideration of the Councils Literacy Strategy. Members of the Committee were also asked to note the scheduled date of the Committee meeting in November.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the work programme for the Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee for 2014/15 as set out in the report, subject to the inclusion of the Council's literacy strategy.

22 SUPPORTING MORE ABLE AND TALENTED PUPILS IN RCT SECONDARY SCHOOL.

With the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation and a briefing report the Head of Achievement, Secondary provided an overview of the support provided to the more able and talented pupils within RCT secondary schools.

Members were advised that in the context of 'More Able and Talented' (MAT) the term included learners who were more able across subjects within the curriculum as well as those who showed talent in one or more specific areas, which could include practical, creative, sporting and social fields of human activity. The Officer continued by advising that the term was used in a school context, regardless of pupil comparison against other school MAT's.

The presentation continued with the Head of Achievement, Secondary outlining the current Local Authorities actions, including the excellent results witnessed by pupils within Rhondda Cynon Taf in respect of the Mission Discovery Competition at Kings College London, with a team of RCT pupils winning the competition in both 2013 and 2014, resulting in the recent teams experiment being launched into space. In conclusion the Committee were informed of the position of MAT within secondary schools and the future steps in this area.

Members commented on the great programmes within schools and queried how the pupils were identified within schools. The Head of Achievement, Secondary advised that the 'more able and talented' pupils were often identified at an early stage at primary school and spoke of the importance of nurturing the talent from such a young age and the importance of the transition from primary to secondary school.

Members of the Committee commented on the successful 'Discovery' programme and it was requested that a letter congratulating the pupils be sent

on behalf of the Committee. Members also enquired whether the pupils involved in the programme could be brought before the Committee to talk about the programme and the experiences involved. The Chairman advised the Committee that discussions with officers would take place to see if the pupils could attend committee or alternatively Committee members could attend the school to visit the pupils.

The Officer was further queried on which schools within the County Borough had achieved the NACE Cymru (National Association for Able Children in Education) standards and it was confirmed that Bryncelynnog, Treorchy and Y Pant had achieved the standards and that St John Baptist High School was currently being assessed.

Members queried the number of pupils within the County Borough applying for 'Oxbridge' and the Head of Achievement, Secondary advised that he would be able to circulate this information to the members.

Members of the Committee queried the training provided to teachers and it was confirmed that teacher training was provided and the officer also spoke of the sharing of best practices and transferring of knowledge skills, to ensure that 'best practice' becomes standard practice.

One member of the Committee queried whether there was any comparative data available for members to consider and also commented on the differing pressures on schools, commenting on the potential for some pupils to be 'lost of sight of'. The Head of Achievement, Secondary advised that in respect of measuring data the Authority used the NACE standards as a comparative measure and commented on the work of the MAT co-ordinators to support schools and pupils.

Following discussions on the report the Committee **RESOLVED:-**

- a) To note the report.
- b) To send letters of congratulations to the Discovery award winners

23 ADDITIONAL NEEDS FUNDING: LEARNER OUTCOMES AND AUDIT FINDINGS

The Acting Service Director Access, Engagement & Inclusion referred members to the report before them which provided information in relation to the impact of Additional Needs Funding (ANF) delegation on outcomes for learners and also included information in relation to schools' compliance with Local Authority SEN Guidance for Allocating ANF.

Members were reminded of the background to the delegation of Additional Needs Funding via the Councils central Special Support Assistance and following a pilot in 2011 of delegation of the Additional Needs Funding to a specific cluster area, the pilot was then rolled out to a further 16 clusters. It was confirmed that ANF funding is now delegated to 17 school cluster areas

on an annual basis and monitoring of the funds is the responsibility of the Local Cluster Group Panels. It was advised that the decision making and allocation of the funding by the panels was monitored and reviewed through an annual auditing process, with the report before members providing the review outcomes from the annual audit undertaken in the Summer and Autumn Term 2013.

The Acting Service Director Access, Engagement & Inclusion continued to provide in depth detail on the findings of the audit review and the impact of Additional Needs funding on both school perceptions and data and pupil outcomes. In summary it was advised that the cluster panels were complying with the Local Authority guidelines for allocating Additional Needs funding in the majority of cases, although there was still room for improvement. The review highlighted that the Panels were allocating funds equitably between primary and secondary schools. The Committee were also advised that in respect of the pupil outcome data it was noted that the foundation phase pupils are broadly attaining in line with their School Action Plus co-hort peers, which suggested that support was effective in providing early intervention. However, it was also highlighted that there were discrepancies between KS2 and KS3, although it was commented by the officer that such outcomes were expected as severe needs and evidence of a lack of progress over time are necessary to access ANF in the first place.

In conclusion, the officer advised the Committee that the delegation of ANF had been successful with 93% of schools identify the positive impact the funding had on pupils. In respect of procedural matters, workshops were being organised with the Chairs of the Panels and LA representatives to discuss the process and share good practice opportunities. The officer advised the Committee of further work to be undertaken in the area in respect of the development of wellbeing and behavioural strategy.

Members of the Committee queried the process when clusters over allocate the funds and therefore overspend, querying how this money was pulled back. The Acting Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion advised that discussions were taken forward with the Chairs of the Panel and spoke of the importance of the Head Teachers attending the cluster meetings to be aware if such scenarios occurring. The officer also confirmed that there was guidance criteria implemented, but commented that the number of hours awarded needed to be reviewed as sometimes the Clusters were over generous. The Acting Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion commented that all the clusters needed to become familiar with the criteria and processes.

One member queried the external agencies that were referred to within the report and it was explained that referrals were made to external agencies following consideration of the Code of Practice within SEN school action plans, although it was added that often the Local Authority were able to provide the required service through the Access and Inclusion service such as learning support of education psychology. The officer also added that before

a referral was made a school would get advice from professionals and interventions would be made.

It was highlighted by one member of the committee that the report stated that 92% of the returns from schools identified that ANF had a positive impact on pupils. The member continued by querying whether this was an opinion that was supported by audit following their review. The Acting Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion commented on the audit process and the lessons learnt from the initial audit pilot and advised that a further audit would be conducted in the Autumn to provide a more consistent and robust approach. The officer continued by advising that the positive impact outcome was the feedback received from schools, although comparisons would need to be made on an annual basis to determine its real impact in attainment. The officer commented on the difficulties of however evidencing the correlation of attainment through to the ANF support.

Members of the Committee also queried the appointment of the designated Chairs on the Local Cluster Group Panels, the allocation of ANF on medical grounds and the Wellbeing strategy referred to within the report. The officer advised that Chairs were nominated and voted upon, and it was confirmed that the medical needs assessment was not used as a barrier or delay to a pupil receiving support. The officer also commented that in respect of the strategy it may be more beneficial for the Committee to receive the resulting Action Plan once produced.

One member advised of his disappointment that the report did not include information post 16 years and KS 4-5 and the Acting Service Director, Access and Inclusion commented that data for referrals for pupils within years 12 & 13 was very low, with the officer commenting that generally, if pupils were able to complete post 16 education within comprehensive school then it would be unlikely that they would have SLA support.

The Director, Education & Lifelong Learning commented on the report and spoke of the positive information that it contained and also added that the review was a 'snap shot in time', and was completed before the GCSE and KS5 results were available, He added that although it was a constructive piece of work it could further be developed to provide a consistent picture across each cluster.

Members commented on exclusion rates within schools and queried how a positive impact could be demonstrated if pupils were excluded. Officers commented on the general practice within schools of exclusion being a 'last resort' measure and it was added that the Authority do provided support to schools with high exclusion rates. The Committee were advised that trend data illustrated that improvements were being made in this area.

The Committee **RESOLVED:-**

- a) To note the report.

- b) To receive the Wellbeing & Behavioural Strategy Action Plan following a further review into the outcomes of the audit.

24 ESTYN INSPECTION REPORT – OUTCOMES IN RCT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN 2013/14.

The Head of Achievement, Primary provided the Committee with a detailed analysis of the Estyn Inspection report outcomes during the academic year 2013/14 and also provided information in respect of the challenge and support needed for schools.

Members were advised that during 2013/14, 17 primary schools and 1 nursery school had received full inspections, with 7 primary schools having monitoring visits and the 3 Pupil Referral units also having full inspections. It was added that 3 primary schools also had clarification of LA monitoring outcomes with further 2 positive reports being submitted to Estyn during July. The Head of Achievement, Primary advised that since publication of the report 1 school had been removed from monitoring inspection. The officer proceeded by providing the outcomes for each of the schools, advising that Ynysboeth, Ysgol yr Eos and Cilfynydd had all been judged to be in need of Esyn monitoring these judgements had been omitted from the report.

The report continued by advising the Committee of the change to the inspection cycle from September 2014, following new regulations by the Welsh Government. The officer advised that the scheduling of inspections would become more flexible, although there would be no time link in between inspections, meaning schools would not be able to predict when they are due to be inspected.

The Committee were advised that the Council continues to have a high number of schools placed in a follow up activity following an Estyn inspection, adding that one of the main reasons attributable to this was the fact that a number of schools did not compare favourably, historically with similar schools across Wales. The officer concluded her report by outlining steps that needed to be addressed to improve the current levels of performance.

One member of the Committee commented on the recent Local Authority inspection and the comments made by Estyn inspectors in respect of scrutiny in this area and the Head of Achievement, primary advised that categorisation of schools was essential, and this information would be reflected in future reports to assist the Committee in their scrutiny role.

The officer was further queried on the 3 schools within Category A and the Committee were advised that the schools were Brynnau Primary, Penygawsii and SS Gabriel and Raphael R.C.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report.

(N.B. At this juncture in the meeting the following declarations of interest were made pertaining to the agenda item-

County Borough Councillor B Morgan – “I am a governor at one of the schools within the report (Cilfynydd)”

County Borough Councillor G Smith – “I am a governor on a school mentioned within the report.”

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) S Jones – “Governors (vice chair) Ynyscynon Early Years and Nursery) “

County Borough Councillor R Lewis – “I am a governor of school listed within the report (YGG Abercynon)”

County Borough Councillor T Leyshon – “I am a governor on a school mentioned within the report”)

25 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PRE-MEETINGS.**

The Principal Solicitor, Litigation updated the Committee on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Working Group, set up to consider the findings and recommendations of the Wales Audit Office report “Good Scrutiny? Good Question!” and their initial recommendation in relation to scrutiny pre-meetings.

The Committee were advised that the working group considered the issue of ‘pre-meetings’ at its inaugural meeting and its recommendation into the introduction of pre-meetings at future scrutiny committees along with recommendations for best practice were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members considered the introduction of pre-meetings before the commencement of future committee meetings and following discussions the Committee **RESOLVED** not to take forward the practice of pre-meetings.

(Mrs) C Leyshon
Chairman

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

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