

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JUNE 2014

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

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COEDPENMAEN PRIMARY SCHOOL – PROPOSED INTERVENTION INTO THE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE SCHOOL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval to use the Council's powers of intervention, in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to appoint additional Local Education Authority governors to the governing body of Coedpenmaen Primary School. The School is considered by Estyn to be in need of Significant Improvement. The purpose of the intervention is to strengthen the Council's voice on the governing body and provide additional expertise to the governors in addressing Estyn's recommendations to support the School's improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Agree to a report being presented to the Local Education Authority Governors (Appointments) Committee to nominate up to four additional LEA governors of Coedpenmaen Primary School for the period to 31 August 2015, in accordance with Section 6 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013;
- 2.2 Agree that the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning will review the effectiveness of the governing body of Coedpenmaen Primary School in the summer term of 2015 and authorise the Director to extend the period of office of the additional LEA governors up to a maximum of a further academic year;
- 2.3 Agree to the Council paying remuneration and allowances to the four additional governors appointed in accordance with Section 6 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, not exceeding £250 per day.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In April 2012, Coedpenmaen Primary School was inspected by Estyn which judged the School's current performance to be adequate and the prospects for improvement also to be adequate. Estyn made the following six recommendations:

R1 – Raise standards in science and Welsh;
R2 – Improve pupils' ability to apply their skills across the curriculum;
R3 – Match learning activities accurately to pupil's abilities;

R4 – Develop governors’ understanding of their responsibilities and their role as a critical friend;
R5 – Strengthen communication and partnerships with parents and carers; and
R6 – Sustain recent improvements in attendance.

3.2 In September 2013, Estyn returned to monitor the School’s progress in addressing these recommendations.

3.3 Estyn concluded that the School:

“is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations...In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement.”

3.4 During the course of the Estyn revisit, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher were absent from the School and have subsequently left the School. Since September 2013, the School has had three interim headteachers, with the existing interim headteacher in post since February 2014. The headteacher position has recently been advertised with a view to securing a good appointment before Estyn return to monitor the progress of the school.

3.5 The interim headteacher is making good progress against the majority of the recommendations however, progress against recommendation 4 is of concern to the Council and Central South Consortium School Improvement Service.

3.6 In any school, the two main determinants of the quality of the provision provided is the leadership of a school and the quality of the teaching. In Coedpenmaen, Estyn has consistently considered the teaching to be good, with the main issues associated with the leadership and governance of the School.

3.7 Estyn has highlighted this in its report of April 2012, and stated:

“Governors’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities is at an early stage of development. The headteacher provides governors with a good range of information about the school’s performance and its priorities for improvement, but governing body meetings do not focus closely enough on this core business. As a result, the governing body does not fulfil its role in supporting and challenging the school well enough”.

3.8 As a result the governing body was given Recommendation 4 - to develop governors’ understanding of their responsibilities and their role as a critical friend.

3.9 Since September 2013 to date there have been 13 meetings of the governing body to deal with the routine business of the School and to address Estyn’s recommendations. However, the attendance of some of the governing body has been poor, with a number of governors attending only 2 of the 13 meetings, and with 5 governors attending for less than 50% of all the meetings. The position is compounded by a further two governors being unable to sit as governors due to other circumstances, which has made some meetings to not be quorate.

3.10 Recognising the difficult position the School has found itself, I sent a letter to all the governors of Coedpenmaen Primary School on 7 December 2013 requesting their commitment and support to attend governing body meetings. However, the position

has not improved and as a result, I have recently written to a number of governors asking them to reconsider their position on the governing body, if they are unable to provide the commitment the headteacher, staff, pupils and parents deserve.

- 3.11 This is unfortunate, as there are governors, who regularly attend and commit the time and effort to the School, and the Council values and appreciates their commitment.

4 WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 To address these concerns, in respect of the governing body of Coedpenmaen Primary School, the Council has a responsibility to intervene to prevent the School potentially becoming a school in need of Special Measures.

- 4.2 As the School is considered by Estyn to be in need of Significant Improvement, the Council has the power under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to increase the number of local authority governors on the School's Governing Body.

- 4.3 Section 6 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 enables a local authority to appoint additional governors where a school is eligible for intervention (as the School is in need of Significant Improvement it is eligible for intervention). The Act allows the Council to appoint as many additional governors as they think fit.

- 4.4 The purpose of the intervention is to strengthen the local authority's voice on the governing body and provide additional expertise to the governors in addressing Estyn's recommendations to support the school's improvement. Furthermore, as the governors' attendance is poor, the additional governors will ensure that the headteacher and senior management team receive further challenge and support.

- 4.5 It is proposed that up to four additional LEA governors are appointed to the School's governing body by the Council's LEA Governors (Appointments) Committee for the period to 31 August 2015, with the possible extension of the arrangement, subject to an annual review, to 31 August 2016. The new governors will either have had significant school improvement experience and or experience as chairs of other Rhondda Cynon Taf primary schools.

- 4.6 The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 allows for the Council to remunerate these additional governors. It is proposed that the four new LEA governors be paid up to £250 per day to undertake this role. The School requires specific experienced quality advice and support and to secure this, we do not propose to look for volunteers but to pay the individuals for their services. This cost will be met from within existing education budgets and has been calculated based on the standard Central South Consortium rate for such professionals. It must be emphasised that the payments to these additional governors are being made in exceptional circumstances in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and that in all other cases, governors will continue to be volunteers and not paid for their contribution to a school.

5 CONCLUSION

The Council has a responsibility to ensure all pupils receive a good education and in doing so will, on occasions, have to exercise its powers of intervention to secure the improvement in education provision. The action proposed in this report seeks to do this for the pupils of Coedpenmaen Primary School.