



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 26 February 2020 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis Councillor J Brencher
Councillor S Powell Councillor G Jones
Councillor G Stacey Councillor J Edwards

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr D Price, Representing UNISON
Mr K Wilhite, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mrs R. Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor S Evans

69 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from the following County Borough Councillors A. Calvert, S. Evans, H. Fychan, M. Griffiths, A. Davies- Jones, M. Powell, M. Diamond and Co-opted Member J. Fish

70 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

71 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22.01.2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

72 CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Committee agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence and as detailed in the minutes set out hereunder.

73 Information Reports

The Chair referenced the information report (as listed below), which was available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website.

- School Admissions Report

A Member commented that the report was a very positive report and congratulated the Service on the excellent work that had been carried out.

74 Consultation Links

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the RCT Scrutiny website. The Chair reminded Members that Information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis by the Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer.

75 ANNUAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2018/19

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing presented Members with the report in respect of the Annual School Attendance performance for the academic year 2018/19, together with a comparison of performance over the last three years.

Members were presented with analysis of the primary school and secondary school attendance rates including the pupils of school age that are in special education provision, in RCT over the last three years and how performance rates compare to the all Wales average. Also provided was details of the attendance gap year on year by identifying the percentage difference between attendance rates for FSM/non FSM pupils.

It was explained that the overall attendance rate for primary school attendance for 2018/19 has seen a decrease of 0.3% compared to 2016/17 and over the past three years the variance in the rate has been in line with the all Wales average which has also declined by 0.3%.

In respect of the gap between FSM and non- FSM pupils of primary school attendance Member were informed that this has increased by 0.4% over the three year period to 2.9% . This figure is 0.3% narrower than the Welsh average, which has widened by 0.5% over the same period.

In relation to Secondary school attendance Member were informed that the overall school attendance for Secondary schools for 2018/19 is 92.8% compared to 93.5% in 2016/17, a decrease of 0.7%. The officer explained that over the past three years the variance in RCT secondary schools attendance is over twice the rate of decline of the All Wales average and for 2018/19 is 1.0% below the average national attendance level.

The officer continued to explain that the gap between FSM and non FSM attendance has significantly increased since 2016/17 and is now 0.8% wider than the Welsh average, which has also increased by 0.3% since 2016/17.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing provided Members with a summary of attendance rates of PRU pupils, attendance rates of vulnerable groups within RCT and an update of the work cared out by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

After consideration of the report, Members put forward their comments and questions. A Member asked if all schools should use FPNs in respect of non-school attendance. Officers explained that the issuing of the FPN is down to the discretion of the Headteacher and 50% of primary schools do not issue the notices however, all secondary schools do but to varying degrees .

In relation to pupils being home schooled a Member questioned how the service monitors the child. A differentiation between electively home educated and pupils on home tuition was made by officers. It was explained that electively home educated pupils are monitored by an EHE officer within the authority, if a child is on home tuition then they receive funded tutors from the authority who visit the home. Emergency placements can also be made for home tuition. . Another Member queried how long before the emergency home schooling could be put in place. Officers explained that the EOTAS panel sits every 3 weeks but for emergency situations, out of panel decisions can be made

A Member asked if there was any evidence of pattern of non-attendance within any particular schools and reasons for this. It was explained that there are a variety of reasons for non-attendance which includes truancy, family situations and mental and physical health issues amongst others. Schools approaches to attendance are supported and challenged by the authority regularly.

The Member asked if austerity has had any impact on the attendance rates. Officers explained that this has made some impact however, Education and Inclusion services is working with resilient families and the YEPS Service to address many of these aspects.

A Member queried what timescales were in place in respect of the implementation of the extra family engagement officers explained that these would be in place in April 2020.

The Chair asked officer if they would be able to bring a report back to Committee drilling down on the reasons why attendance is low in certain areas.

Another Member questioned if the Education department could look at a way of give pupils flexible days for holidays within term time as previously suggested at the meeting in October 2019.

After further consideration of the report, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the content of the report.
- Receive a detailed map showing hot spot areas of concern, which will enable the committee to look more in depth into the reasons behind absenteeism.

76 **Impact of the work of the Central South Consortium in schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in the academic year 2018-2019**

The Chair welcomed the Acting Managing Director and Assistant Managing

Director Central South Consortium to the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and invited them to present their report to Members.

The Acting Managing Director explained that the report before them is to provide Members with an overview of the Central South consortium and to update Members with the contributions of the CSC working in partnership with the local authority to raising standards in schools across RCT.

The Officer continued to explain the background of the consortium along with its current position, CSC Business 2018/19, financial implications and the current performance of schools within Rhondda, Cynon, Taff.

The Acting Managing Director Central South Consortium recapped that joint communication from Welsh Government, the WLGA and Estyn to Chairs of Scrutiny, Cabinet Members, and Directors of Education etc. that was published on the 16th July 2019 stated that:

“It is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures. It is not in the interest of schools improvement and risk undermining the ongoing change in culture that we are working together to achieve. We expect local authorities and regional consortia to support schools to make appropriate decisions about their curriculum to avoid narrowing choice for learners.

Collectively we have agreed that this is the right approach to take and strongly advise you to use a broad range of un-aggregated data and information to enable you to discharge your duties when reporting on school performance. Evaluating the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local level will be more helpful to supporting and challenging individual schools with their improvement.”

In respect RCT schools, Members were informed of the performance data for various Key Stages.

This year's Foundation Phase results reflect a decrease in the percentage of pupils' achieving the expected outcomes across Wales. The main reason for this is the implementation of new outcomes in the Foundation Phase Assessment Framework that have been used in language and mathematics.

Pupil's outcomes in all core areas of learning at both the expected and higher outcomes are below the National averages. The gap between boys and girls has narrowed slightly in the most recent year and the gap in performance between eFSM and non- eFSM pupils has increased in the most recent year due to the performance of eFSM pupils falling at a faster rate than Non- eFSM pupils.

The Officer explained that in Wales at Key Stage 2 the percentage of pupils' achieving CSI at Key Stage 2 was 87.8% in 2019, down from 89.5% in 2018. Members were reminded that teacher assessment data is no longer published at school, local authority and consortia levels. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected and higher levels in the majority of core subjects is below the national average. With regards to the gap for boys and girls, performance for the CSI has increased in the most recent year. The in performance between eFSM and non- eFSM pupils has increased in the most recent year due to the performance of eFSM pupils falling at a faster rate than Non- eFSM pupils.

In respect of Key Stage 3 performance within RCT Members were informed that the CSI had dropped and is below the national average. The gap in performance

between boys and girls has increased due to boys' performance falling at a faster rate than girls. The gap between eFSM and non-eFSM has narrowed for the CSI in the most recent year.

With regards to Key Stage 4 Pupils the officers highlighted that significant changes have been made to the Key Stage 4 performance measures between reporting in 2017-18 and 2018-19. The local Authority performance for the interim measures at KS4 show that all indicators are slightly below the National Average for all measures except Welsh Bacalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate. The gap between boys and girls is similar to that seen nationally for all five interim performance measures. The performance of eFSM – non –eFSM in the LA is below the National average for all interim performance measure except WB SCC.

In relation to Key stage 5, it was explained that Level 3 Threshold has increased in the most recent year to 97.8% and remains slightly below the National average of 97.9%. Performance has fallen for 3A* - A grades in the LA, however is the 2nd highest seen since 2016.

In respect of strengths and areas for development, Members were given an overview. With regards to inspection, outcomes within RCT it was explained eighteen schools were inspected during 2018-19 and of these schools:

- Three were asked to write excellent practice case studies;
- Five schools were placed in a follow up category of Estyn review;
- No schools in the LA were placed in the statutory categories of significant improvement or special measures.

Officers gave a brief overview of the categorisation during 2018-19 and explained that the Director of Education and Inclusion Services will present the report later in the meeting.

The Acting Managing Director presented the priorities for Rhondda Cynon Taf along with case studies of practices that have been carried out within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members thanked officers for a very detailed report and put forward their questions and observation.

Members raised concerns about the drop of pupils achieving expected outcomes at foundation phase and asked what is being done to address this situation.

Officer explained that we are working across the board to raising standards, working collaboratively through challenge and support.

Members asked if poverty had any bearing on the outcomes, Officers replied that poverty is not an excuse and quality teaching is what we aim for. The Officer went on to explain the Oracy Project which is set to improve oracy levels within our schools and clusters.

A Member asked if there what reasons were behind the drop in CSI AT Key Stage 2. Officers explained that there were many different reasons and the Challenge Advisors work with individual schools to meet their needs. We are hoping to address patterns across RCT.

Members commented on the value for money and whether CSC is delivering enough for our children. Officers explained that through the Central South Wales Challenge has been further developed following robust evaluation and schools are being well prepared for the new curriculum.

A Member praised the fact that within the business plan there was a greater emphasis on teaching assistant and felt that they were getting the recognition they deserved.

After robust consideration of the report Members RESOLVED to

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Receive updating reports at future Meetings
- A link be provided to Member to the reports of the Joint Committee
- Agree to consider any topics which may be of interest to Members at appropriate times.

77 Key Stage 4 & 5 Examination Results for 2019 and Final Primary & Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20

The Director of Education and Inclusion Service presented Members with the final confirmation of Key Stage 4(KS4) AND Key Stage 5 (KS5) examination results for 2018-19 and Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20.

The Director highlighted that Welsh Government has been developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to ensure that performance and accountability measures align with new Curriculum for Wales 2022. The Officer continued to explain that the proposals by WG are focusing on implementing the new arrangements in raising standards, reducing the attainment gap and deliver an improved education system in preparation for 2022.

The Director explained that Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes are externally verified through GCSE and GCE Advanced Level examination which are undertaken at the end of the respective Key Stages.

It was explained that the local authority analyses examination outcomes for each school and compares school performance across the County Borough. Comparisons are also made against the all Wales averages. For 2019/20, it is possible to ascertain Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to other local authorities on key measures the Director emphasised that it is likely that this comparative data will not be published in future.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services continued to inform Members that when considering RCT Performance relative to the Welsh average it is important to contextualise information and to take into account the social-economic factors across the 22 Welsh local authorities and whilst poverty and deprivation are not an excuse for educational underperformance they are factors that influence educational outcomes.

The Director of Education and Inclusion provided Members with the Key Stage 4 Performance measures and the process behind the Welsh Governments implementation change.

Members received the LA's performance relative to the other 22 local authorities, based on the new interim measures as follows: Capped 9 (10th); Literacy Points Score (12th); Numeracy Points Score (17th); Science Points Score (17th); Welsh Baccalaureate (6th). In respect of eFSM levels, suggest that performance on the Capped 9 and Welsh Baccalaureate was better than predicted and literacy, numeracy and science outcomes were very marginally below modelled expectations and the all Wales average rate.

With regards to Key Stage 5 outcomes, the data suggests that there has been progress in the percentage of all learners achieving level 3 threshold. Including boys and girls. Officers went on to explain that girls performance at level 3 had demonstrated a significant progress and is stronger than the national average. However the average wider point scoring measurers for all learners has dipped. Girls are significantly out performing boys and this is an area and ongoing focus .

With regards to the percentage of leaners who achieved 3A* and 3A* - C grades in KS5 has decreased slightly.

Finally, Members were given the outcomes of the national categorisation for both primary and secondary schools. School categorisation outcomes suggest overall improvement in the number of primary schools requiring green and red support. With regards to categorisation for secondary schools Members acknowledged that the overall categorisation results has remained relatively stable.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services explained that there will be an continued focus on improving leadership and the quality of teaching and learning in our schools so that standards can continue to improve, and the gap between vulnerable groups narrowed.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the report and opened up the meeting for Members questions.

Members comment on the categorisation process whether it was the same schools requiring intervention over the three year period and what impact on going issues would have on young people when there was evidence of lack of progress. It was highlighted that there would be support for schools and accountability measures to ensure progress. A post inspection action plan is needed in cases where inspection outcomes warrant it, and this ensures that there is monitoring against set targets and support received by schools. Focus is always placed on schools making the most progress possible.

Members commented on recruitment of maths and science teaching staff and acknowledge that this was a wider problem and asked what is being done to try an overcome this situation. Officers explained that CSC has this issue as part of their future priority planning and the Committee will be updated in the future. In addition there are plans afoot at local authority level to address this issue.

Members put forward their views on 21st Schools Programme and asked if all through schools are the best environment for our pupils given the general lack of evidence relating to the success of this model. Officers explained that things are progressing well in Ysgol Llanhari and Ysgol Garth Olwg and two out of three of the newly opened through schools were categorised as yellow schools. Also the officer explained that Estyn and Welsh Government are currently carrying out a piece of research into the effectiveness of all through schools across Wales

given that many local authorities are now establishing new schools of this nature.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED**

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Acknowledge the action taken to date and the future planned intervention of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services in partnership with Local Authority Education Services and Central South Consortium to support schools currently categorised as amber and red.
- Receive updating report at future meetings of the committee.

78 REVIEW OF LEARNING SUPPORT CLASS PROVISION CONSULTATION REPORT.

The Head of Inclusion Services presented Members with a report offering them an opportunity to engage in the formal consultation process in respect of the proposals for the creation of additional mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and Welsh medium LSC provision to support pupils with significant additional learning needs within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

It was explained that consideration of the proposal affords an important opportunity for Scrutiny to contribute to the feedback for Cabinet to consider when determining this proposal in accordance with Welsh Government School Organisation Code.

Members acknowledged that Cabinet agreed to initiate a formal consultation process in respect of proposals on the 17th December 2019 to establish new provisions from September 2020 in the following schools Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Ferndale Comprehensive School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School for pupils with SEBD and Ysgol Garth Olwg for pupils with significant ALN.

A Member requested some clarity on the cost of placement and commented that she hoped the cost wasn't a major factor in not placing a child within a PRU. The officer explained that early intervention with good support would be beneficial for all pupils which in turn would leave the specialist provision for those pupils who need the additional expertise of the PRU thus reducing the pressure.

Another Member asked whether there would be a process for the pupils who attended the units to move back in to the mainstream system. Officers explained that it is a revolving door and that reintegration to mainstream is always considered in line with each pupil's individual needs.

A Member commented that he was pleased to see a positive proposal put forward and would look forward to see more in the future.

After further consideration Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the report and consolation and agreed that their comments would feed in to the Council wide response.

79 Urgent Business

The Chair thanked the Officers for their contributions to this evenings Meeting and requested that the committee receive information regarding what is being done to help the wellbeing of the Children in Rhondda Cynon Taf who have recently been effected by the recent floods that have affect many area in the County Borough.

Officers explained the current provisions which were in place and reassured Members that everything possible was being done to look after their health and wellbeing. A Co-Opted Member in formed the Committee that the Union welfare fund is available to their Member which would also help.

The Chair suggested that a letter be sent to all families affect by the flooding to highlight the sevice that are available now and in the future.

80 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

This meeting closed at 8.00 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**