



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held
on Wednesday, 18 November 2020 at 5.00 pm.

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

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)

Councillor S Evans	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor H Fychan	Councillor A Calvert
Councillor S Powell	Councillor M Powell
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor L De Vet
Mr J Fish	Councillor L Walker

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms C Edwards, Head of Service Transformation And Data Systems

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

24 Apologies

Apologies were received from County Borough Councillors S. Rees- Owen, L De-Vet, J.Brencher and Voting Co-opted Member R Nicholls .

25 Declaration of Interest

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

26 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22nd October 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

27 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

28 Movement of Pupils within Welsh & English medium Schools Data Report

The Head of Service Transformation and Data provided Members with a summary of the movement of pupils in Welsh medium schools as requested in a previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

It was explained that in January 2020 the Pupil Level Annual Census suggested that 4220 primary aged pupils and 3141 secondary aged pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf received their education through the medium of Welsh.

Officers continued and highlighted that in 2019/20, 873 primary aged children moved school within RCT. Members were informed that of this cohort 83 pupils moved into a Welsh medium school (35 moved due to house moves) and 72 pupils left Welsh medium school (24 moved due to house moves), which equated to a net increase of 11 pupils. In relation to Secondary school aged pupils, it was explained that 213 moved school, 6 pupils moved into a Welsh medium school (4 due to house moves) and 15 pupils left (4 due to house moves) which equated to a net reduction of 9 pupils.

Members were also provided with data for the first half of the autumn term for both primary and secondary school movement. Officer also explained that the local authority will continue to monitor the number of learners attending Welsh medium schools and ensure that there are effective plans in place to promote the growth of Welsh medium education across the County Borough.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and opened up the meeting for Members' questions and observations.

A Member thanked the officers for the report however raised concerns that the report did not highlight reasons why pupils were moving to English medium schools. The Member felt there needed to be greater understanding why pupils were leaving Welsh medium schools. Members asked if this was due to a confidence issue as some parents were unable to help with home learning due to the lack of Welsh speakers within the household especially due to home learning through this difficult time. Officers explained that the data shows that on balance that the net number of learners leaving Welsh medium education was very small in the secondary sector and that this trend was not evident at primary. This will be closely monitored over the coming months.

The Director went on to explain that the Council was committed to investing in Welsh Medium education and this will be reflected in the WESP Report which will be presented in the New Year.

Members raised questions in relation to transport and asked whether the authority had been able to draw any conclusion in respect of parents deciding which schools to send their children to and if Covid had influenced these decisions. Members asked if this could be monitored going forward.

The Director of Education and Inclusion continued to explain that as an authority we try and discourage parents from moving schools and maintain continuity where possible. Parents/carers are not required to provide a reasons for a change in school.

It was also explained that initially at the beginning of the pandemic there were issues with transport as there was a need to minimise the numbers of learners on school transport so as to minimise transmission risks. Purchase of seats on school transport was temporarily put on hold for a period.

Another Member asked if more work could be done to encourage parents to attend Welsh medium schools in early years' settings. The importance of marketing Welsh medium schools to parenting networks and anti-natal class attendants was also mooted to hopefully encourage parents to enrol their children before it is too late.

Officers explained that marketing is important as is working with health visitors, playgroups to ensure that decision making is informed.

Other Members questioned the issue of transport highlighted that there are areas where families have found catchment areas for Welsh medium schools have differed which caused difficulties in remaining in Welsh Medium education. All parents are notified of catchment areas at key intervals and are advised if they are not eligible for schools transport from the outset if they choose to attend an out of catchment school. Council policy is clear on this.

Further questions were put forward and after a long debate Members RESOLVED:

- Acknowledge the context of the report;
- Receive the WESP report at the Education in January 2021.

29 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM BLENDED AND DISTANCE LEARNING OFFER

The Managing Director Central South Consortium thanked Members for the opportunity to present an overview on the procedures the Consortium has put in place to improve and support professional learning along with guidance developed to support blended and distance learning throughout the Pandemic and beyond.

The Managing Director Central South Consortium introduced Officers from the Consortium that were present and continued with her presentation.

It was explained that Covid -19 has dramatically changed education in Wales and the lockdown measures have impacted significantly on the capacity to deliver face to face learning. The Managing Director presented Members with some of the changes that have been provided to schools and the new procedure put in place.

Members were informed of the work carried out by the Improvement

Partners which include:

- Work with Headteachers to offer timely bespoke support in line with the needs and capacity of each school;
- School support visits and meetings have had as part of their focus monitoring standards through book looks, learning walks and identifying developmental needs across schools;
- Some IP's have taken part in Headteacher and other senior leadership appointments; and
- Regular wellbeing checks have been made with schools and support provided for schools that have had to manage Covid cases.

The Managing Director also informed the Committee of work carried out by the Strategic Team, it was explained that staff have been developing guidance and supporting schools in a number of ways some of which are detailed as follows:

- Guidance on distance, blended and hybrid learning which has evolved as practices and research has developed initially focusing on distance learning, moving into blended learning and then on to supporting schools to ensure continuity of learning. It was explained that the team provides a range of digital support for teachers and schools to ensure that staff and learners can access and use online learning systems.
- The Strategy for Equity and Excellence has now been published and is guiding school improvement and teaching and learning in schools.
- Our regional PL offer has been revised and adapted to ensure it is relevant and accessible for schools. This includes e-learning for all areas of PL. The programme is available on the CSC's website and attendance has been excellent. The team have also ensured that colleagues in the service and LAs have a common understanding of blended learning. This has been supported by our blended learning road map and the variety of webinars held.
- A repository of direct teaching resources in specific curriculum areas is being constructed and collated where schools and CSC officers can share their resources with practitioners across the region.
- We have ensured that there is a focus on well-being both in terms of staff and pupil well-being. This has included re-evaluating and reshaping and refocus of the professional learning (PL) offer related to vulnerable learners and well-being. We are also working with on directly with external providers to meet the evolving needs of schools in these high priority areas.
- The team is also continuing to work on national and cross-regional programmes to ensure that our schools have access to national programmes delivered locally. These include PDG, PL, leadership, CFW, ITE, TALP and induction.
- Our website is continually updated to ensure the most up-to-date information and guidance. This includes a wealth of collated and quality assured resources that are matched to the curriculum to support teachers and parents to support learning across all of the key stages.
- The Welsh in Education Officers have recommenced their direct support in schools. Support for the work in cluster and individual schools on the Welsh Charter, and assessments for Siarter Iaith and Cymraeg Campus

have been reinstated. The PL for Welsh Language development have been revised as e-learning.

- Guidance, PL and support for Curriculum for Wales has been further developed across the region. This has included: the cross regional programme developed as e-learning, AoLE network meetings, new resources and bespoke support for individual schools and clusters.
- The team continue to support specific local and national projects including the national Post 16 resource programme.
- School Improvement Groups (SIGs) and cluster collaborative school to school working has been restarted with schools. SLAs have been issued to release funding to support schools to have meaningful networks focussed on developing pedagogy and other shared improvement priorities.
- The CSC school's bulletin, social media platforms and the specific strategic area social media twitter feeds provide ongoing targeted information and guidance to leaders and practitioners across the region.
- National leadership programmes have been restarted in our region to continue to provide high quality professional learning and support for our middle leaders, senior leaders, aspiring headteachers, new and acting head teachers and experienced head teachers. A new assessment only NPQH is also ensuring our leaders are equipped for headships in the near future.
- CSC team members are now part of the National Head Teacher wellbeing group. CSC is providing a wide range of support for head teachers in the short and long term. Immediate emergency support has been provided to our headteachers through professional support and coaching sessions.
- The National Coaching and Mentoring Programme has started in the region, training supervisor coaches from both the CSC team and school leaders and practitioners to facilitate future training and support in the region.
- Guidance, PL and support for NQTs has been significantly revised to meet the present needs, this includes the increased numbers of supply teachers working in the region.
- Guidance, PL and support for Teaching Assistants has been revised including the creation of a Google classroom specifically to enable the PL and networking of TAs.
- Strong partnership working continues with the ALN Regional Transformation Lead and LA officers in ensuring schools have the knowledge, skills, school environment, PL and support. This has included guidance documents related to inclusion and ALN, and joint PL for schools and CSC staff.
- Bespoke guidance, advice and support offered to clusters and individual schools in relation to vulnerable learners, PDG CLA and PDG.
- Chairing of attendance, exclusion and EOTAS leads meetings from across the 5 local authorities.
- Ongoing partnership working with external organisations including the Service Children in Education, Young carers and the Child Poverty Action group. This has resulted in a Pilot project in RCT linked to poverty proofing commencing this term.
- Members of the strategic team are also working with colleagues in schools to develop the quality of teaching and learning working with leaders and class teachers.

The Managing Director Central South Consortium invited the Senior Lead Ms N Gould to take Members through a presentation and she informed the Committee of guidance that had been provided through the Hwb firstly. Guidance on distance learning for both schools and parents is continually updated. The officer continued to enlighten Members that as schools moved on to blended learning the consortium provided schools with various tools and procedures to enable them to deliver continuity of learning.

It was also highlighted to Members the partnership working that was happening across the region through focus groups and the sharing of best practice.

The Managing Director Central South Consortium explained the next steps and concluded her report by saying that early data shows that barriers are being overcome by schools which is a positive outcome.

The Chair thanked Officers for the information provided and open up the floor for Members questions.

A Member request clarity in relation to the aspect of blended learning and if it was mandatory for schools to provide this form of learning and if so where there any plan in place to provide training for governing bodies to deal with the new way of learning.

The Officer explained that all schools have to provide appropriate learning for pupils who are not in a school setting. With regards to training Governors, it was indicated that this will be added to CSC's our service if it has not already been done.

A Member put forward a number of questions firstly it was asked what measures are put in place by the CSC to evaluate the digital poverty within RCT. Welsh Government funding and resources have been made available to enable LA's to have access to digital learning and blended learning for all pupils as there was no evidence within the presentation.

The Member continued and asked about the impact of uptake levels on standards, how they are being monitored and maintained, and how this links to inspection arrangements.

Performance management of Head teachers how are they being supported as there is a great deal of pressures put on the headteacher and we could have a retention issue in the future if this isn't addressed.

In response to the questions officers explained regarding digital poverty there are still some issues around devices and feedback from schools shows that some families didn't identify as being in digital poverty as they had a device however the device may not be fit for purpose . There is still work to do to meet the expectations of Welsh Government, it was explained that lots of schools had given out kit pupils however there is still more work to do to replenish the schools supplies.

In respect of raising standards, the Managing Director Central South Consortium explained that all schools are monitoring the engagement that children have with online learning. It was also explained that we need to work on what the standards look like, more schools are moving to putting systems in place and the

consortium are working with school leaders to further develop this practice.

In response to the inspection arrangements, Officers explained that Estyn has paused inspection this year due to the curriculum reform arrangements and changes. It was highlighted that a thematic review into learning which should be published soon we are hoping Estyn will have to share the model for what they are going to do with schools that are a monitoring category.

Members raised concerns in relation to the reduction of teacher and pupil interest in transitioning to higher education and felt strongly that this should be monitored especially as RCT are championing the Gatsby project. The commitment to the SEREN Project is clear so that the gap doesn't become wider for more disadvantaged able learners.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services highlighted the good work that had been done with schools and recommended that a report in respect of the GATSBY Project be brought to a future committee to inform Members of the great work carried out by the project.

Further questions were put forward and after a lengthy discussion Members REOLVED to:

- Acknowledge the content of the report ;
- Receive a Report at a future Meeting regarding the service provided by the GATSBY Project
- Continue to monitor the work of the Consortium at a future meeting.

(It was agreed that officer would discuss with the Chair outside of the meeting the request from Cllr Powell in respect of a report regarding Blended Learning)

30 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their contribution and explained that the next meeting would take place on the 2nd December 2020 at 5:00pm

This meeting closed at 6.40 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**