
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.04.14

Present: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn – Chairman
Councillor Peter Read - Vice-chairman

Councillors: Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams and Hefin Williams.

Co-opted Members with a vote on education issues only: Reverend Robert Townsend (Church in Wales)

Teachers' Unions: Siôn Amllyn and Dilwyn Hughes.

Others invited: Councillor Siân Gwenllian (Cabinet Member - Education)
Councillor Gareth Thomas (Prospective Cabinet Member - Education)
Councillor R H Wyn Williams (Cabinet Member for Care)

Also Present: Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Meilys Smith (Senior Business Manager), Dewi Jones (Head of Education), Alwyn Jones (GwE System Leader), Nicola Hughes (Project Officer Promoting Quality in Secondary Schools), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commissioning Service) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Huw Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Linda Ann Wyn Jones and Liz Savile Roberts.

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) Councillor Gareth Thomas, prospective Cabinet Member for Education, was welcomed to the meeting to observe the Committee's activities.
- (b) The Chairman took the opportunity to thank Mr Dewi Jones, Head of Education, for his work and contribution to this committee over the last few years, and at the same time he wished him well on his proposed retirement at the end of August this year.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of a meeting of this Committee that took place on 13 February 2014, subject to adding the name of Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd to the list of Members present.

4. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EDUCATION SERVICE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AUTHORITY'S SCHOOLS 2012/13

A presentation in slide format was given by the Head of Education on the achievements, matters for attention and developmental work based on the evaluations in the context of the performance of the authority's schools in 2012/13.

(a) In terms of the achievements, attention was drawn to the following points:

1. **Foundation Phase** – performance of highest achieving pupils (3-7yrs).
2. **KS2** – 6th position in performance nationally. Robust performance in the principal indicator [*CSI*] for the fifth consecutive year – a consistently good performance.
3. **KS3** - the best performance nationally amongst all Wales authorities in the principal indicator [*CSI*] with the figure significantly exceeding the Welsh Government benchmark (exceeding by 4%). Progress made in the rolling performance.
4. **KS4** – performance as good as, and exceeds the national benchmarks, for the first year ever.
 - Performance of pupils entitled to free school meals significantly higher in Gwynedd than what is observed at a national level for every indicator.
 - Significant progress at the *Level 2+ Threshold* [+2.99%]. Gwynedd's performance is similar to the benchmark set by the Welsh Government and for the first time ever, exceeds the *Capped Points Score*.
 - Significant improvements made in the performance of the five secondary schools that were a cause for concern that were specifically mentioned during Estyn's Inspection of the LEA.
5. **Pupils without a qualification** – percentage of pupils leaving full-time education without gaining a recognised qualification excellent [0%].
6. **Reading Tests Y. 3-9** – robust performance in Welsh.
7. **Attendance at Secondary School** – a significant increase with progress of 1.25% in Gwynedd compared to an increase of 0.49% nationally.
8. **Overall** – a good performance that confirms that we are on the right track.

(b) In terms of the matters for attention, the following were noted:

1. **Foundation Phase** – performance in the principal indicator [*FPI*] below expectation – quality and accuracy of assessments require focus.
2. **KS2** – ensure improvement and challenge under-performance. Further scope for detailed focus on assessments.
3. **KS3** – the need to interpret assessments as regards achievements at KS4 e.g. Mathematics.
4. **KS4** – continue to focus on all the indicators.
 - Further focus on the TL2 indicator when preparing schools for the new BAC in 2015.
 - Focus on Science and appropriate learning pathways.
 - Detailed focus on FSM pupils' performance – Bridge the gap.

- Fluctuation in schools performance – Performance in approximately half the secondary schools at Key Stage 4 below expectation compared to similar schools especially at the *Level 2+ Threshold, Mathematics and English*.
- 5. **Y3-9 Reading Tests** – the need to focus on performance in English. Performance in the National Reading Tests generally lower in *English* compared to *Welsh*.
- 6. **Attendance in the Secondary Sector** – continue to carefully detail and monitor.

(c) Lastly, attention was drawn to the following issues that require developmental work:

1. Bridge the gap in performance – FSM and no FSM and compare with performance at a national level.
2. Target under-performance.
3. Focus on Mathematics and English in KS4 and further focus on the core subjects.
4. Summarise and share good practices.
5. Establish **school to school work**.
6. Develop and strengthen leadership to ensure improvements.
7. Strengthen processes to track pupils progress.
8. Strengthen target setting processes.
9. Implement the procedure linked to categorization of schools and overall improvement in performance. The need to monitor and provide firm or significant support to over a third of the schools due to concerns about outcomes or/and aspects of leadership and scope for improvement.
10. Close collaboration with GwE.

(ch) In response to observations made by members, the following main points were noted:-

- It was necessary to be aware of the national reading tests statistics giving more attention to English. Members' attention was drawn to the following specific scores that indicate that 11.5% of children score under 85 in the English reading tests compared with 6.5% in Welsh; 23.9% scored over 115 in English with 36.3% scoring over 115 in Welsh. That the education policy noted clearly that English is formally introduced to pupils in the last term of Foundation Phase
- In terms of encouraging the standard for qualifications for each pupil, that a number of schools committed and achieved to get 100% on pupils performance to gain 5 GCSE when leaving school (specific reference to TL1). Over the years the finding was that a level 5 result lead to a C Grade in GCSE and it was evident from the results before them that schools had to ensure that pupils attained level 6 standards in Key Stage 3, which meant that the progress tracking system throughout a pupil's educational period had to be dependable in the Foundation Phase, KS2 and KS3.
- Whilst accepting that the reading tests was a tight process, a dependable national system and method had to be ensured for the future, however, the first step would be to see how much progress pupils had made in the tests next year. In terms of developing staff, that the Schools Effectiveness Grant had increased last year and the Deprivation Grant would double next year and was dependent on the number of pupils who receive free school meals. It might be more difficult to identify training opportunities as a result of the removal of CYNNAL, however, it was noted that courses did not always have a direct follow-up on the learners' outcomes in the classroom. It was ensured that there were courses to be offered to Head teachers and recently information had been submitted to them highlighting the providers who had received successful input which interweaved with the use of the above grant. It was confirmed that a day had been earmarked next October for

training where providers both within, and outside the county, would offer guidance to teachers together with promoting the principle of collaboration between schools.

- In terms of school leadership, it was confirmed that GwE had collaborated with five schools recently to develop a Senior Management Teams and middle management. It was proposed to offer guidance on middle management to every school next year if that was the wish of the schools.
 - It was recognised that it was difficult to nationally standardise the Welsh Language as Welsh was dealt with differently to all other core subjects. Information had been submitted to ESTYN during the last inspection that noted that up to 75% of pupils in Gwynedd schools had achieved Grade A-C in Welsh. However, ESTYN could not compare this indicator with any other County in Wales.
 - In terms of the concern highlighted regarding the competition between schools to attract pupils and categorise the schools publicly, it was noted that the information was open and in accordance with the Partnership Agreement between schools and the Authority. It was felt that it was a means to create a challenge to schools rather than a competition bearing in mind that some catchment areas performed better than others.
 - Considering the current climate, they sought to present honest information to schools and it was trusted that the developmental work, where schools were asked to share good practice and collaborate with other schools, was a means to overcome any competition between them.
 - Since the establishment of GwE the main concern of schools was that the type of support received in the past would disappear with the arrival of challenging and monitoring. It was felt that it would be much better to find out what needed to be improved in schools and it was understood that GwE had a budget to commission further work to attract experts to assist. Looking back at the period when CYNNAL was operational, perhaps the system had created too much dependency rather than schools developing expertise internally.
 - Currently, it was noted that GwE commissioned experts to support school work and undertook some elements themselves, however, it was confirmed that it was necessary to purchase in some expertise to find the best practices for schools. It was ensured that GwE had appropriate support and was moving in the right direction to strengthen this element.
 - In terms of creating classes of one educational age in order to give more attention to groups of pupils, it was noted that this was a matter for Head teachers and for Governing Bodies to take ownership of this issue and re-organise the system. The Head of Education noted that there would be far-reaching implications of implementing this within different catchment areas.
- (d) Concern was noted on behalf of the Teaching Union that providing courses through the medium of Welsh would be difficult partly as a result of losing many advisors recently due to retirement etc. There was further concern regarding the position of the Welsh Language in Gwynedd if providers from England offer training when they do not necessarily understand and may not be aware of the importance of literacy and the Welsh Language. There was a recent example with courses for Classroom Assistants where English was a strong element, and an appeal was made for the Education Service to consider this in detail in order to try and ensure that providers are aware of the County's language policy.
- (dd) It was further noted that bilingualism in Wales was different to any other country and therefore it was not possible to make any meaningful comparisons.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the report together with the above observations.

4. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WORK PROGRAMME "MORE THAN JUST WORDS"

A report was submitted by the Cabinet Member - Care outlining the Council's response to the requirements of the Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care – 'More than just words'.

It was added that two employees had been nominated and had reached the shortlist for the award for using Welsh in the care field.

Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the report and they highlighted the following points:

(a) That it was pleasing to note that the matter was receiving attention, however, disappointment was expressed that Welsh Language provision had not been a core issue from the start as a precedent had now been set and the Service faced a battle against this to attract services through the medium of Welsh to service users.

(b) In response to a query regarding the recruitment of bilingual staff in Meirionnydd and if they had the opportunity to follow courses, it was explained that 164 members of Council staff out of approximately 1,800 were non Welsh speakers in the care field. It was assured that further research was in the pipeline to find out where the geographical weaknesses were. It was confirmed further that a Task Group had been established to supervise the progress with 'More than just words' and comprised the following:

- Alwyn Evans Jones – Head of Human Resources (Task Group Chair)
- Geraint Owen - (Senior Human Resources Manager)
- Ian Jones – Senior Developmental Manager (Provider and Leisure)
- Meilys Smith - Senior Business Manager
- Ruth Richards – Equality and Language Policy Officer
- Cllr. Elin Walker Jones
- Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts (Language Committee Chair)

In order to formalise the Task Group the Committee's approval of the above membership was sought and it was suggested that they should be nominated formally and to invite Cllr. Craig ab Iago, Language Champion, to also serve on the Task Group.

(c) In response to a query regarding training, it was noted that there were opportunities for staff in the care field to receive training but the Task Group had further work to achieve regarding processes and monitoring progress in terms of training arrangements, considering different linguistic categories such as technical language and general conversation through the medium of Welsh.

(ch) In addition, it was confirmed that the Task Group was looking at a system of private care providers and it was a challenge to get providers to ensure that services conformed to the linguistic needs of the users.

(d) In response to a query regarding if it was possible to create Welsh courses tailored for the needs of providers and users, it was noted that the Task Group were striving to

achieve this. Reference was made to a very useful 'app' for carers namely 'Gofalu drwy'r Gymraeg'.

(dd) Assurance was given that older people suffering from dementia was one of the Task Group's priorities. It was added that processes had been tightened by using the Brokerage Team in order to match providers with the linguistic needs of the users.

(e) Concern was expressed that some staff were not fluent in Welsh or English. In response, it was recognised that this was a problem in the largest homes and that it was quite difficult for the Council as they do not commission beds in these homes and therefore could not influence which home an individual chose.

(f) The importance that the Welsh Language was a priority and not optional was stressed and this important principle should be adopted.

(ff) In response to the above, it was noted that the audit result of the care system management undertaken recently to find out how many cases had identified linguistic needs, were disappointing. As a first step it was proposed to collaborate with the Care Teams to ensure that linguistic choice was part of the intrinsic culture of the work of the Teams.

(g) The importance of matching bilingual service users with bilingual staff was noted and consequently they could choose the language they desired.

(ng) It was stated that the Council had the power to ensure the need for Welsh Language provision in the contracts.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the report.

(b) To request that the Corporate Director submits a progress report to this Scrutiny Committee next year with the exact date being a matter for the Scrutiny Committee to consider when drafting its programme of work for the year.

(c) To formally approve the establishment of the Task Group as outlined in (b) above adding an invitation for Councillor Craig ab Iago, Language Champion to join and serve on the Group.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 a.m. and a discussion session was conducted between the Members, Cabinet Member – Care and the Corporate Director (AME) on the initial vision for the future of Residential Services.

CHAIRMAN