

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 19 February 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors D Williams (Chair), J Cleverly, K Critchley, R Hayat, H Thomas, C Townsend, J Watkins, T Watkins and J Richards

Co-opted Members :

In Attendance: Councillors

D Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser), L Davies (Governance Officer), J Harris (Strategic Director - People), S Morgan (Chief Education Officer), A Powles (Assistant Head of Education - Engagement and Learning) and K Rees (Assistant Head of Education - Inclusion)

Apologies: Councillors S Marshall

Dr A Daly (Diocese Representative)

1 Declarations of Interest

None

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on the 15 January 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3 Estyn Inspection Report

Attendee:

- S Morgan (Chief Education Officer)
- J Harris (Strategic Director – People)
- K Rees (Assistant Head of Education – Inclusion)
- A Powles (Deputy Chief Education Officer)
- Councillor Gail Giles (Cabinet Member for Education)
- C Phillips (Assistant Director of Estyn),

The Cabinet Member for Education presented a brief overview to the Committee and highlighted the key areas for consideration.

'The Newport Education Service Estyn inspection report was published on 31st January 2019. It was the first inspection to be carried out under the new Local Authority inspection framework introduced by Estyn in September 2018. It was also the first inspection of the Local Education Authority since the formation of the Education Achievement Service for

South East Wales (EAS), which now leads on improvement across the five local authorities of South East Wales.

A briefing on the report has been provided to all Elected Members, Head Teachers and has also been issued as press release. The briefing has also been provided to EAS Governor Support to circulate to all Newport school governors.

The report highlights a number of positive features including that during the last three years:

- *The proportion of primary schools in Newport judged to be at least good for standards compares favourably to inspection outcomes nationally;*
- *The number of primary schools receiving excellent judgements for standards in this period is significantly higher than across Wales as a whole;*
- *Improved performance at key stage 4 (GCSE) over the last three years in key indicators including English and mathematics, now compare favourably to local authorities across Wales.*

Other positive features include:

- *Senior Elected Members and Officers have a clear vision and high expectations of outcomes*
- *Officers across a wide range of services ensure that they adapt their provision effectively to meet the changing wellbeing priorities of children and young people;*
- *The percentage of pupils who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has fallen sharply over the last four years and is now below the Wales average;*
- *There is a good range of projects across the local authority supporting this reduction well, due to the valuable services they offer for vulnerable pupils, particularly in secondary schools;*
- *Leaders respond appropriately to key financial pressures and are flexible in their approach to delivering priorities.*
- *Estyn made five recommendations for the Education Service including:*
 - *Improve wider performance within secondary schools and outcomes for learners eligible for Free School Meals (FSM);*
 - *Adjust central education self-evaluation activities to have a greater focus on outcomes and value for money;*
 - *strengthen opportunities at a local authority level for children and young people to influence decisions that affect them;*
 - *Deliver the strategic plans to develop Welsh-medium education further.*

Actions to address the recommendations are already being implemented and will be incorporated into the Education Service Plan for 2019/20

Meanwhile, Estyn has requested that Newport Education Service write a best practice case study, which Estyn will share with other Local Authorities, on the provision, leadership and impact of Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Service (GEMS). Newport Education Service leads and manages GEMS on behalf of the Local Authorities in South East Wales.

I welcome Clive Phillips, Assistant Director of Estyn, who is observing the meeting today and will be able to respond to points within the report that require clarification.'

Members asked the following questions:

- A Member expressed concerns on the length of time some schools had been categorised as Red or had been placed in Special Measures. Members asked for confirmation of what progress had been made to address the issue, and what the timescale would be to bring all schools out of Red and Special Measures. The Chief Education Officer replied to Members confirming that one primary school and three secondary schools were the schools concerned, each school could have an array of individual issues but the main focus was to assist the school getting back on track and a better categorisation. All of those schools identified were making good progress through the schools Progress Plan, other recommendations from Estyn were improvements related to the standard of teaching and learning. Meetings with Newport High Schools were taking place on a half term basis to better assess the situation and progress. The Officer confirmed that the Education Services Report would be available shortly and could be presented to the Committee.
- Members enquired about the recommendations made by Estyn, in particular the recommendation to *'strengthen opportunities at a local authority level for children and young people to influence decisions that affect them'*. Officers replied explaining that the children and young people have participated in areas of decision making, getting involved with school reorganisation plans, asking for their opinion on school uniforms and catchment areas. These consultations have been taken seriously, including when consulting children in corporate decisions. The Officer commented that the Deputy Chief Education Officer had been working with the Heads of Service in conjunction with the Youth Council to ensure that young people are able to engage with decisions that are taken across the Council.
- A Member asked the Officers to confirm what the process was when a school was placed in Special Measures. The Officer explained that usually the issues were centred around leadership, attendance levels, standard of teaching, as well as a range of complex issues, none of which can be improved overnight. The schools would get a visit every term to compare progress against the set requirements, initially quick wins would be achieved and then work towards short term and long term gains would begin. Moral was often low at this time so leadership skills may need to be improved. The authority may have needed to look at the successes of local primary schools and share best practices with secondary schools. Cluster groups worked with a strong connection between the primary and secondary schools, ensuring no overlaps and encouraging all cluster groups to work in the same way.
- A Member expressed concerns regarding pupils' potential transition from a Green categorised primary school into a Red categorised secondary school. The Member asked Officers to explain what identified a school as concerning and did EAS have any involvement in the process. The Officers replied explaining that schools were regularly monitored for poor attendance, leadership and governing bodies. Schools that had been identified entered a series of intervention monitoring meetings held with the Deputy Chief Education Officer and EAS. Performance management was an indicator along with a good school structure, academic results and engagement from the school.
- A Member raised a question regarding whether the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was deemed as a school, or as an alternate provision. The Assistant Director of Estyn replied to Members confirming that the PRU is deemed as Education Other Than A School (EOTAS). There was no head teacher, but there was a school inspection

manual. The Officers confirmed that latest results showed the PRU had made big improvements in a number of areas, including attendance and they were monitoring individual pupils progress. Estyn had revisited the PRU since November and saw an increase in three out of six areas recommended for improvement. Estyn's review came too late to be included in the report.

- Members raised concerns regarding the high expectation put upon school governors from head teachers. The Officers replied to Members explaining that the role of school governor is a voluntary role, it was also a challenging role where certain knowledge and expertise was needed, however there was an expectation for governors to produce outcomes and not to sit on the board in a passive way. Audits in school were looking at what intelligence was available on governing bodies and if this was sufficient.
- A Member enquired about the Estyn recommendation to '*deliver the strategic plans to develop Welsh-medium education further*'. Officers confirmed that there is a small pot of money for a Welsh-medium school but no plans for location, with school transport infrastructure and availability of a suitable plot being an issue. Work was being undertaken to establish the best site for the school.
- Members expressed concerns that some schools are in disrepair, asking if that impacts pupil's progression, given the difficult economic climate, would it be an area that could be addressed. Officers replied to Members explaining that it is a challenging back drop but the biggest impact to the improvement of a schools' performance was excellent teaching and leadership.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Estyn Inspection Report and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet:

- The Committee requested that the Chief Education Officer returns to update the Committee on the progress made towards each of Estyn's recommendations after 6 months and 12 months.
- The Committee requested additional information on how Officers intended to establish a coherent strategy across all relevant services to improve the outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Concerns were raised regarding the requirements to improve the percentage of Welsh language speaking pupils. Members would like more information on how this target would be achieved, given the lack of Welsh speakers within the county compared to an county with Welsh as a first language.

4 ALN Framework and Act - BRIEFING

Attendee:

- T Pead – Additional Learning Needs Transformation Lead – Gwent wide
- K Rees – Assistant Head of Education - Inclusion

The Transformation Lead presented the Committee with an update on the work being undertaken on Additional Learning Needs in Gwent.

The Committee thanked the Transitional Lead and Officer for their time and discussed the importance of the changes in the ALN sector in coming years. The Committee agreed to forward any questions to the Assistant Head of Education – Inclusion.

5 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

Attendees:

- Daniel Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser)

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two committee meetings:

9 April 2019, the agenda items include;

- Transition from Children to Adults Social Services – Verbal update

11 and 25 June 2019, the agenda items include;

- End of Year Service Plan Reviews – Education and Social Services

b) Action Arising

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee on the updated actions one by one. The Committee requested no further information.

c) Information Reports

The Scrutiny Adviser discussed each of the five information reports with the Committee. The Committee made the following requests, comments and recommendations;

- Request for Interim Report
- Members raised concerns around using the initials LAC, feeling that children would become labelled by other children. The Committee would like to use the full title 'looked after children'
- The Committee requested a report on the Primary School Categories 2018/2019 and to include Estyn Report
- The Committee requested Information on the role of the Looked after Child Mentor and if only 4 clusters have a LAC Mentor in place, what do the other clusters have for support.
- The Committee requested the reports or outcomes of the reviews, Barnardos carried out in the Summer of 2017.
- What support is available for Tier One Young people that are not in education, training or Employment

- Members raised concerns for Primary school aged children attending the Pupil Referral Unit. The Members requested more information on what support is available for these young people in particular and if the young people are required to attend the Pupil Referral Unit?

d) Scrutiny Letters

The Committee received a Scrutiny topic referral letter from the Adults and Community Social Services Department. This referral requested that the Committee receive the new Newport Carers Strategy 2019 – 2022.

The Committee requested that the Carers Strategy be presented at the April meeting to allow the Committee to be included in the strategy consultation.

The meeting terminated at 12.30 pm