

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 5 February 2020

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Clarke, M Spencer, S Marshall, M Linton, J Hughes and K Whitehead

In Attendance: Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer), Andrew Powles (Assistant Head of Education - Engagement and Learning) and Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation)

Apologies: Councillors C Jenkins, R Mogford and T Suller

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Education Achievement Service Business Plan 2020-21**

Invitees:

Sarah Morgan - **Chief Education Officer**

Andrew Powles - **Deputy Chief Education Officer**

Ed Pryce - **Assistant Director Policy and Strategy Education Achievement Service (EAS)**

Hayley Davies-Edwards - **Principal Challenge Adviser, Education Achievement Service (EAS)**

The Chief Education Officer introduced Ed Price and Hayley Davies-Edwards to the committee. Hayley supervises the Challenge Advisors, and Ed manages the Governor Support Team as well. It was also pointed out that the Assistant Head of Education acts as an intelligent client, which ensures that EAS provide the service needed to meet need of children of Newport and the education service plan compliments plans for schools.

EP then gave an overview of the report to the committee; the format is very similar to what had been brought to the committee previously, although there are key aspects that are different in terms of approaches of delivery. Highlights that were given to the committee included:

The EAS is a not for profit limited company that is owned by the five LAs in South East Wales. The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.

The Education Advisory Service (EAS) is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities (LAs). This

Business Plan (2020-21) outlines the programme of work that is required to continue to accelerate outcomes for children and young people across all schools in South East Wales. The plan focuses on the urgent need to raise aspiration and accelerate improvement in pupil outcomes, improve the quality of teaching and leadership and build a self-improving system within and across schools and settings. The priorities for the Business Plan 2020-2021 have been derived from the progress that has been made towards the previous Business Plan and progress made across the region with the areas that have been identified as requiring improvements through self-evaluation processes and feedback from Estyn on the inspection of the EAS.

All schools are provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of support they require. The support levels are informed by the national categorisation process, Estyn inspection outcomes or local intelligence. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances. The progress schools are making towards their priorities within their SDPs and against their local targets are captured on a termly basis are reported to local authorities.

Members asked the following:

- In regards to measuring access, how do we know what success is? Members were advised that it would be measured by pupil outcomes. Key Stages 2 and 3 are not aggregated at Local Authority level. The rationale is that the school is moving toward a new model of curriculum, so there is a requirement to assess. Last year the results dipped slightly so collectively the school outcomes will dip. EP isn't concerned with Primary School performance, the ultimate outcome for parents is Key Stage 4, we care about what learners achieve. With the new measures it will focus on new learners.

HDE was delighted to advise that we are moving into a world looking at the progress of learners. In Wales, we are getting better at baselining children such as how far has the child travelled how much progress has been made. As a Challenge Advisor, they would go into schools and look at children's books. The Assistant Head of Education added that they expect outcome should align with categorisation and attendance. There is a much wider context. There are monthly meetings held. The range of data the Council reviews with EAS is doing well.
- How can you evaluate how the partnership is working? AP advised that this is always being measured, the most powerful meetings are the monthly meetings that both AP and SM and Managing Directors attend. They discuss all schools that are a concern and there are very frank and honest discussions in whether the support in schools are being configured in the right way and whether an impact is being seen. The CEO expects to see a detailed workplan for EAS.
- Members queried the point on page 17 of the report - regional professional learning programme and talent management framework will be implemented to identify and track aspirational leaders. How would this be benchmarked, and how is it quantified? Members were advised that it is not binary. EAS are increasing in secondary schools to focus. The benchmark would be to compare Key Stage 4 data information for all of Wales. An example was given comparing free school meal learners of a school with similar schools as a benchmark.
- Members queried the Pupil Referral Unit and asked how would the partnership mitigate for a negative impact for pupils? Members were advised that it would firstly take into consideration whether it is a Local Authority placement, as it would allow a

more equal comparison. It would track individual learners and look at the most appropriate curriculum. They might also look into alternative qualifications.

SM then gave an example of a change of provision this year in a large secondary school, which the partnership looked into the school development plan. With the new provision, the partnership would look into the leadership, are the right self-evaluation processes taking place? It was also advised that when both AP and SM attend the School Development Plan meetings along with the Headteacher and Principal Challenge Advisor.

- Members queried how the partnership would monitor schools that have gone from Amber to Red measures. Members were advised that with Amber schools if there are concerns then it would trigger a leadership review. As a result of this review it would give the school extra support. It was then advised that this is a new piece of work that is recognised needing to be strengthened. EP added that sometimes there can be a degree of resistance when issues are identified, and it isn't until you overcome these barriers that schools can recognise there is an issue. This is needed so the partners can work effectively with the school. Members advised they would like to see a system in place that issues can be flagged up before they end up critical.
- The Chief Education Officer advised the committee that often management stocktake before an Estyn inspection is due regardless of the categorisation. Officers have a broad understanding in what is going well in the school, which can trigger earned discussions with The Chief Education Officer and AP. It was then advised that early conversations are important. EP added that engagement is a big trigger and gave an example of if a pattern emerges such as a headteacher not attending meetings is usually a sign of a problem.
- Are there any plans for benefits for children in Armed Forces families in future plans? The Chief Education Officer advised that this is being looked into.
- Members noted 1.11 in the report regarding sustained school improvement. With the partnership is there an issue in a culture of change? Members were advised that the overall picture is positive. The partnership started in 2012 and is growing maturely. EP added that the pace of change for schools and finances are their greatest pressure. Also, for the secondary pressures of recruitment. AP advised of the Headteacher Strategy Group which develops the way the partnership work together. Some schools have issues such as not liking the ways that are working. The Chief Education Officer then added that EAS will do their own survey to listen to feedback, asking such questions to schools as "do they understand the vision of the partnership?". The Local Authority also do their own survey. The Principal Challenge Advisor then advised the committee that EAS are careful to record any issues that the Local Authority raise in the quality of service provide. It is important that issues are picked up, closed and resolved.
- Members discussed improving the pupil voice and asked how are we tapping into those pupils who haven't got a voice. The Chief Education Officer gave advice for pupil participation sessions which can improve confidence levels and prepare for them to become citizens and then advised all pupils are truthful with how they feel. EP then advised that H undertook two leadership reviews lately and the feedback was very good, and included what the pupils want from their teachers. This can be written into the leadership report. Members then asked about pupils who don't stay on for A-Levels. The Chief Education Officer advised that this goes back to developing middle leadership. The

partnership ensure that everyone is fully equipped to run pupil voice sessions, this feeds into the self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Members were then advised that a benefit of the partnership is we are able to broker with other schools, for example Caerphilly might be doing well in pupil voice, so officers would visit them to what work is being undertaken.

- When a Headteacher visits another school for best practice, another teacher would need to fill the gap. Is there extra budget for supply teachers? Members were advised that the EIG Group and PI grant can both be used for supply cover. Example was then given that most successful Primary schools have highly capable teachers who know learners that can step in. With Secondary schools, more of a supervisor role is needed.
- In last years report it advised that EAS was more advanced than other consortiums. Where do we now stand? It was advised as a consortium, EAS are following the national school improvement in terms with mature partnerships, so it is believed to be an effective model. It was then advised that EAS have a higher amount of pioneer schools, and also a higher number of lead network schools than the rest of the region, which also fit the national model.
- Members discussed training accessibility for school governors, and then asked do EAS still have a high amount of older school governors that won't take up training sessions? EP advised that for a while EAS had the highest uptake of training, however this has reduced over time. It was recognised that governors are busy people, so a pilot is commencing for developmental training working on a cluster basis. EAS are seeking out a lead member and a governor to look at certain core training modules and then roll out the training on a cluster basis, so more governors would be likely to attend.
It was also advised that online training is being looked into, induction training is currently held online although there are still shortcomings with this. Data training had been removed from online as it had become redundant.
- How different are the Local Authorities strategies across on the consortium? Members were advised that Estyn recommend to provide a strategy and link it up with other services. Example was then given that this Local Authority was inspected first, and conducted a joint development strategy which then shared the practice across the consortium. This strategy is now being merged and continued to be discussed. Other local authorities are at different stages, we may be more advanced but it is still in early stages, we are not seeing the outcomes we want yet but we are seeing improvements.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

The meeting terminated at 6.50 pm