



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To:
Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Cabinet member for Education

Please ask for: Scrutiny
Gofynnwch am:
Scrutiny Office 01792 637256
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:
e-Mail scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
e-Bost:
Date 13 October 2015
Dyddiad:

This is a letter from the Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education following the meeting of the Panel on 10 September 2015. It highlights the Panel's discussion and any outcomes arising from the meeting are also contained.

Dear Cllr Raynor

Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel

We met on the 10 September 2015 to look at educational performance of, and support for, gypsy and traveller children and also looked after children. We were very impressed with the work being done in relation to both these pupil groups in respect of improving their wellbeing which is resulting in improved educational outcomes.

We met with Sue Hollister who is the Headteacher from Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive School, along with others who are involved in this important work with the gypsy and traveller communities in Swansea. The Panel was pleased to hear about the skills and specialisms being developed in working with gypsy and traveller children communities, in particular:

- The programme/tailoring of the curriculum so that children and young people and the families of gypsy traveller children can feel able to engage in education.
- Gaining understanding of the culture of and developing a good rapport with the gypsy traveller community which is also helping to break down the barriers to education.
- Using a holistic approach that will result in improved academic outcomes.
- Working with three other schools around the education of their gypsy traveller pupils and the trust engendered with those schools that Cefn Hengoed School do their best to deliver for these pupils.
- The whole council approach to both these groups of children and young people and their families/carers.

We heard about the difficulties associated with year on year funding and the uncertainty that ensues in planning for future provision. We were encouraged to hear that the aim was in the longer term to share the skills learnt and practice developed across school so that this service can be built into mainstream education. The Panel

were keen to see these skills being shared and used by other parts of the education service, for example in Education Other Than At School services.

The issue of dual registration was discussed and it was highlighted that some local authorities in Wales dual register their gypsy traveller pupils so that when figures for schools are collated the performance and attendance of this group of children do not count against individual school performance. When we are comparing figures with these authorities it is not a level playing field. The Panel were informed that dual registration was being discussed in Swansea but there is nowhere to be dual registered with at the moment. The Panel felt that it was important that this is considered because the benefits of dual registration would not only potentially be more accurate in terms of outcomes across schools, but it would also encourage schools to be inclusive.

We met with Sue Phillips the Education LAC Co-ordinator and Kathryn Thomas from the Schools and Governor Unit. We were interested to hear about the support for and educational outcomes of looked after children (LAC) in Swansea. We were particularly impressed with the knowledge, experience and commitment by these services. We were interested to hear that:

- Over the last two years no looked after learner left a Swansea school without an approved external qualification and there was a continued focus on learners achieving approved external qualifications. Swansea has maintained top performance in comparison with Cardiff, Newport and Rhondda Cynon Taff.
- LAC learners are below those of all learners in education outcomes but they are demonstrating an upward trend in achievement at each key stage.
- A Vulnerability Assessment Profile has been developed for LAC Learners for schools. The Panel hope that all schools are using this to highlight areas of concern and for targeting appropriate interventions.

The issue of children and young people who have Special Guardianship Orders was discussed, particularly how we work with these learners that are no longer LAC but have many of the same issues in relation to their education. What do we do to support these pupils? Are they monitored as a group for their performance?

We were concerned to hear that the local authority is often not informed when a child comes into the area and placed in an independent children's home. On many occasions it is not until the homes receive their regular visit by council officers that these children are identified and registered with schools etc. Other local authorities should be informing Swansea when a child moves into and out of the county.

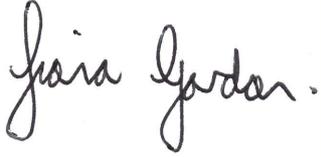
In summary we would like to ask you to look at the following issues:

1. Children and young people on Special Guardianship Orders: What do we do to support these pupils? Are they monitored as a group of children for their performance in comparison with all pupils, as we do with LAC?
2. Why is there such a variation between authorities in grant funding from the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to Gypsy and traveller learners?
3. Look into the possibility of dual registration for some pupils.

We would also like to suggest that the skills and good practice learnt in developing gypsy and traveller education at Cefn Hengoed School be shared with others in particular with the Council's EOTAS services, especially in working to engage children and their families and in tailoring the curriculum to the needs of the pupils.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fiona Gordon", enclosed in a thin yellow rectangular border.

Fiona Gordon
Convener Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel
Fiona.gordon@swansea.gov.uk