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Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee – 15-07-2022

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON FRIDAY, 15 JULY 2022

PRESENT: County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)
County Councillors M Beecham, A W Davies, B Davies, A Kennerley, C Kenyon-Wade, I McIntosh, L Roberts, L Rijnenberg, J Thorp, D Bebb.
Co-Opted Members: K Chedgzoy, S. Davies, M. Evitts.

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: P Roberts (Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys) and D A Thomas (Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation)

Officers: Georgie Bevan (Head of Education), Lynette Lovell (Director of Education and Children), Eurig Towns (Senior Challenge Advisor), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services), Sally Llewellyn (Service Manager for Curriculum for Wales and Professional Learning), Hayley Smith (Service Manager for Inclusion and Youth Services) and Mari Thomas (Finance Manager).

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor D Meredith.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members relating to items for consideration on the agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4. SECONDARY SCHOOL STRATEGY

Documents Considered:

- Secondary School Improvement Strategy – Presentation by the Head of Education

Issues Discussed:

- Priorities
- Success Criteria
- Progress made this year against each priority
- Questions:

Question	Response
Success Criteria – how will they be measured and how smart are they.	The statements are at a very high level and across all of the secondary schools that will be a task to pull the success together. This is not a one year solution either and will take

	<p>some time. The Service is working with schools to measure against their improvement criteria linked to this. A variety of evidence being captured by the Service and by schools which will help develop forward and succession planning and the Service will work alongside schools to evaluate that evidence.</p>
<p>This has been difficult for everyone to implement. Because of the constraints are you happy with where things are now. How does the profession feel about engaging in future developments.</p>	<p>Schools have welcomed collaborative learning. Touchpoint visits have been undertaken with schools during the past year to see where schools are positioned with this. This summer skills visits have been undertaken. In terms of progress made there is confidence in the professional learning. Schools are keen for the Service to be working alongside schools and the potential support models which we are developing with schools. Therefore, there is buy-in from the schools and we need to build on that. The evidence collected over the past six weeks will help evaluate if the strategy is developing as necessary after two years of Covid.</p>
<p>How are we going to find adequate time in the academic year to incorporate this and to be able to hold these meetings and what is the potential impact on staff workload.</p>	<p>The Service has worked closely with headteachers around the professional learning offer so this is not additional with professional support being provided for example through inset sessions. The Service is working with clusters and is also developing the support available. Insets are being staggered next year which will help clusters. This year's visits have been around well-being. Over the summer the school support models are being finalised so that the support provided is bespoke to the schools' need. It is also not an addition but is a coaching and mentoring model working alongside staff with their structures and plans.</p>
<p>There are methods in the strategy to achieve outcomes. Will be there opportunities later to provide real life examples for the Committee of differences this has made.</p>	<p>Yes this can be provided. We need measures to capture progress including case examples. It will also assist in refining the strategy from the evaluation of the strategy. All of the work will be capturing impact that the</p>

	<p>Service is having as this is a self improving system. The Service will be working alongside schools to develop capacity within leaders and practitioners.</p>
<p>The Covid pandemic had caused a delay in learning of around 22 months which is significant. Is this a national or Powys statistic and how did Powys perform against the national picture. Can you say more about the summer term visits.</p>	<p>This research was one element gathered and gathered at various points. The research is alluding that the gap is significantly reducing now. This was an UK piece of research. This has not been compared with the Powys picture. For the summer term visits we have used Estyn guidance to capture a pack to assist schools with data capture to establish a baseline of where schools are. This knowledge will help narrow the gaps.</p> <p>The Head of Education had led on numeracy and had met with the senior leadership team, numeracy leads and the head of mathematics, professionals and learners. Every skills lead will have a recommendations report to inform their development planning for the next year. The Service will return in the Autumn to term to evaluate progress against those recommendations.</p>
<p>Transition is not included generally as the new curriculum is a continuum. This is important from primary to secondary except in digital where it is mentioned. Are we missing something if we're not looking at this.</p>	<p>The insets are clusters and focussed on clusters which is around transition. In the visits transition was considered e.g. if there was the literary strategy is this what primaries did as well, or do children learn in a different way.</p> <p>Although transition is not specifically mentioned, the Service ensured that primary and secondary schools worked as a cluster on the training project so there is understanding and learning across both sectors to ensure there is a progression from primary school to secondary school, using similar approaches. It is important as well for primary and secondary teachers to get together to talk about teaching.</p>
<p>With the demise of ERW new arrangements are in place. In the past ERW used to update scrutiny</p>	<p>A Mid Wales partnership has been established and will be reporting back to the Council on progress as we</p>

<p>annually about its work.</p>	<p>move forward.</p> <p>The business plan for the Mid Wales partnership gone to Welsh Government and there are targets in the plan for school improvement which will align with the Secondary School Improvement Strategy. It would be beneficial to bring the partnership plan and progress to scrutiny in the future.</p>
<p>80% of children after eleven years of education leave Powys schools completely illiterate. This refers to no literacy in the Welsh Language. There are many priorities listed but bilingual education is not included. Can you split literacy statistics by Welsh and English languages as otherwise the statistics do not make sense.</p>	<p>Welsh literacy were included in the visits, particularly in dual streamed schools.</p>
<p>Has this strategy been a long time in development.</p> <p>The concern is about time teachers can be asked to take to do this as opposed to teaching children. There should be a curriculum which is suitable for all schools rather than having to be developed.</p>	<p>This was first developed in 2019 and due to the impact of covid this is the first year where everyone has been back in school full time. This year is about capturing progress at various points and is not as comprehensive as would have been liked as have been conscious of staff well-being.</p> <p>The strategy needs to be evaluated as the world has changed in the past two years to make sure that its relevant and captures what is needed by secondary schools.</p> <p>The Curriculum for Wales does enable a more localised learning which is important. Professional learning and development has changed over time. This work is not in addition to daily work. Leaders get leadership time during the week to do this work and the Service works alongside professionals.</p>
<p>The attainment gap was referred to in the presentation, comparing pupils coming from more affluent backgrounds to those from more vulnerable backgrounds. Are there any projects at secondary level to try and close these gaps.</p>	<p>Both of those elements have been affected by the pandemic. In relation to the attainment gap the RADI approach has been purchased and the Service will be supporting primary and secondary schools for the next two years. That will be developing the</p>

<p>Has there been any thought in the strategy on a priority focussing on developing students competence and well-being. Students are frequently going into further and higher education lacking confidence in their own abilities and are therefore not independent learners.</p>	<p>key pedagogical strategies that support our most disadvantaged learners. An internal development group has also been established to raise the attainment of disadvantaged learners. The visits have identified that there are things which are needed in the strategy which were not required as much previously as well as what intervention strategies are needed.</p>
<p>Covid pandemic and the learning gap. Are there any bespoke plans at a local level to identify any children that have been affected in relation to the attainment gap.</p>	<p>One of the things identified is the need to focus on attendance and inclusion as more often it is vulnerable learners that are affected. One pilot project being undertaken is about a nurture policy looking at a behaviour policy from Year 5 to Year 8 to support more vulnerable learners as they move to secondary school.</p> <p>One of the collaborations around the strategy was in relation to well-being where groups of leaders agreed to carry out survey about the kinds of difficulties learners are facing across Powys.</p> <p>Provision and support for mental health and well-being support is being refined following Welsh Government's one school approach so that it is a whole school approach. Hopefully schools feel well supported and guided and processes are well embedded. Estyn thought we were doing well and leading the way.</p>
<p>The Council has an equalities officer who presumably checks on equalities of opportunities for learners in Powys. Have they looked recently on the equality of experience offered to Welsh Medium pupils by comparison to English medium pupils at secondary school level and have any audits been undertaken.</p> <p>If not could an audit be undertaken.</p>	<p>Welsh medium has been included in the visits and identified as an area of further development. There have been no audits of Welsh Medium by comparison to English Medium provision as yet.</p> <p>The WESP has also been developed and is part of the transformation programme and delivery of national targets in respect of Welsh speakers.</p>

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

5.	WORK PROGRAMME
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Work programme.

Issues Discussed:

- Items for inclusion on the Forward Work Programme:
 - Funding formula and school funding
 - School budgets and support for schools in deficit
 - Transforming Education programme.
 - WESP and the move of dual stream schools to fully bilingual schools. What influence does the Council have to move schools to bilingual schools. The Director of Education advised that with the new categorisation of Welsh Medium schools, information about where schools were currently positioned could be brought to scrutiny.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)