

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 MARCH 2023

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),
Councillors Ahmed, Boes, Davies, Ferguson-Thorne, Hopkins,
Melbourne and Moultrie

Co-opted Members: Bridgid Corr (Parent Governor Representative),
Celeste Lewis (Parent Governor Representative), Carol Cobert
(Church in Wales Representative) and Patricia Arlotte (Roman
Catholic representative)

54 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elaine Simmons and Emily Gao, Cardiff Youth Council representative.

The Chair also welcomed two new members to the Committee, Councillors Saleh Ahmed and Jess Moultrie.

55 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

56 : YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE

Members were updated on progress in relation to the Youth Justice Service.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Ash Lister (Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services), Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) and Angharad Thomas (Operational Manager, Youth Justice Services).

Councillor Lister was invited to make a statement, in which he noted that positive progress had been made in the year since Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) returned to inspect the Youth Justice Service. The board now continued to focus on performance measures and updating the staff and was understanding the cohort of young people supported by the service. It had adopted a new thematic approach focused on girls within the system, key education transition points and understanding court processes. It worked in partnership with other public bodies, particularly education, health and South Wales Police. Recent feedback from the Youth Justice Board described the new strategy as outstanding, and young people's voices needed to be at the heart of it. Suzanne Scarlett had recently joined the board with a focus on the child-friendly city approach. He paid tribute to the staff and board and thanked Graham Robb, who was standing down from his role as independent chair in May, and highlighted the benefits of this model.

The Chair added his thanks to Graham Robb.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments; the discussion is summarised as follows:

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.

Members asked about the progress of the seven recommendations for improvement in the last inspectorate report in August. A full action plan had been written and approved by HMIP, and a full quality assurance framework was in place, monitored monthly. Progress had been made on each of the seven recommendations, three of which related to the board and four to staff. The next full inspection would be in three to four years.

Members queried whether there was sufficient funding to expand the prevention and diversion services when the turnaround grant only lasted for two years. This grant had allowed them to enhance the prevention service, and the positive impact of this should be clear when it came to future waves of funding.

Members queried the rise in reoffending rates in the second quarter. Angharad Thomas clarified that this rise was due to there being fewer children coming through the statutory remit of youth justice, so it only took one or two people to cause a spike. One young person had committed nine low-level offences before they could even start working with him.

Members heard that the service had recently hired a full-time speech and language therapist, in recognition of the importance of communication needs. They were ensuring that staff were trained to observe and respond to the needs of young people.

Members were informed of how the service's KPIs helped to achieve its targets, including addressing disproportionality and diversity. The KPIs were set by the Youth Justice Board, and the new ones took the work of partners into account more than before.

Members heard about the focus on partnership working across the organisation, especially between education and children's services through the locality model. Relationships were getting better, but one of the key challenges was the complexity of issues facing young people, and helping schools to understand the remit of children's services. It was key to reach children who hadn't gone back to school after the pandemic, and joined-up working helped with this.

Members discussed the impact of permanent exclusion on a young person's future, and the work done to avoid this occurring. They needed to be sure that every possible measure had been taken before resorting to exclusion.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward.

57 : CENTRAL SOUTH EDUCATION CONSORTIUM ANNUAL REPORT AND CURRICULUM FOR WALES UPDATE FOR CARDIFF

Members were provided with an overview of the work of the Central South Consortium (CSC) updated on the contribution of the CSC in partnership with the local authority (LA) to raise standards in schools across Cardiff.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education), Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Suzanne Scarlett (Operations Manager, Partnerships & Performance), Clara Seery (Managing Director of the Central South Education Consortium/CSC), Kathryn Lewis (CSC Principal Improvement Partner Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment), Geraint Lewis (CSC Principal Improvement Partner for Cardiff Secondary and Special Schools), Kate Rowlands (CSC Principal Improvement Partner for Cardiff Primary and Special Schools), Gareth Evans (Deputy Head Teacher, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Treganna) and Rhys Corcoran (Assistant Head Teacher, Mary Immaculate High School).

The Chair advised Members that the session would be considered in three parts: the CSC Annual Report 2021/22, the Shared Approach to Curriculum Support and the CSC Curriculum for Wales Report.

Melanie Godfrey was invited to make statement, in which she welcomed the committee's scrutiny of the Central South Consortium. The report updated Members on the scope and nature of its work and outlined the significant work underway to raise standards in schools. The new curriculum would be rolled out in secondary schools from September 2023.

Ahead of the discussion of the CSC Annual Report 2021/22, Clara Seery was invited to make a statement, in which she highlighted changes in the way data was gathered since before the pandemic. During 2021-22, 8 schools in Cardiff received enhanced monitoring support, with 3 of these moving back to core support in the autumn and spring terms. Schools causing concern were well supported so they could make good progress on their recommendations. The report also included case studies of how Cardiff schools had engaged with the support.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments; the discussion is summarised as follows:

Members asked how well-placed Cardiff schools were overall to take the new curriculum forward according to the Welsh government's timetable. Officers were confident that schools would be where they need to be by September. Each school was at a different place on that journey, with primary schools naturally further forward, but they were all aware of what they needed to do to comply.

Members discussed how to use data, evaluation and intelligence effectively to develop a shared understanding in support of curriculum design and planning. The new curriculum was a major challenge for schools, who had to work together and build on prior learning to develop a shared understanding.

Members noted the importance of the broader social, finance and data ecosystem, and the challenges for CSC in providing assurance to the five local authorities on progress in the absence of aggregated pupil-level data. Recruitment partners were working within schools and challenging their monitoring and evaluation processes, gathering first-hand evidence alongside school leaders and helping to set the right priorities.

Members raised the issue of CSC and schools' relationship with Estyn, noting that inspectors might not fully understand the new curriculum yet. Officers acknowledged

that it was not a perfect system, and there were issues with consistency of understanding across Estyn which were likely to carry on being a challenge across the coming year. However, they were able to regularly discuss these matters with the Estyn Senior Leadership Team, and tried to enable schools to articulate their vision for the curriculum and respond to the suggestions put forward to them.

Members queried the frequency of inspections and the delay in resuming them after Covid restrictions were lifted. Officers noted that this was an Estyn decision, but they had given schools time to be in a position to respond to inspections. There had been significantly more inspections this calendar year, and 27 (21% of all the schools in Cardiff) since the resumption. Each school should be inspected every 7 years, but there had been some which had waited more than 10.

Members heard about the different reasons for increased attainment scores, and noted that assessments during the two years of the pandemic were not comparable as students didn't do tests in the same way. Students had dealt with a very disrupted education and it was important to avoid suggesting that their results during those two years were not valid. It might be necessary to reconsider how assessment data was interpreted in light of this.

Members noted that the Pupil Development Grant was calculated according to the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, which all of them would receive under the Welsh government's free school meals policy. Officers clarified that this grant would still be allocated based on eligibility, based on parents demonstrating that they met the criteria. The CSC would keep working with schools to ensure parents were aware of this.

Ahead of the discussion of the Shared Approach to Curriculum Support, Kathryn Lewis was invited to make a statement, in which she noted that one pupil referral unit and ten secondary schools had opted to roll it out this year, constituting around a third of schools. Her unit aimed to offer focused support and provide a platform for the Cardiff commitment team to come in and enrich authentic contexts for learning, broadening pathways for young people.

Suzanne Scarlett was invited to make a statement, in which she recapped the key points of the Cardiff commitment and how the curriculum team put them into practice.

Gareth Evans and Rhys Corcoran provided presentations and responded to points of clarification from Members.

Ahead of the discussion of the CSC Curriculum for Wales Report, Kathryn Lewis was invited to make a statement.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments; the discussion is summarised as follows:

Members heard how schools and the CSC were supporting children who were struggling both with the new curriculum and in terms of social skills due to the effects of the pandemic. Curriculum for Wales was about getting breadth in the curriculum through six layers of learning experience, filling gaps and making sure that everything was considered.

Members noted the drop in attendance figures and the measures taken to address them. The curriculum needed to be accessible for all pupils in order to encourage attendance, while the local authority's educational welfare officers provided support to encourage learners back into school.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations captured during the way forward.

58 : SOP TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT

Members were updated about discussions between the School Organisation Planning (SOP) Task & Finish Group and SOP Team at its meeting on the 14 March 2023 in relation to the School Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Secondary School Admission Arrangements 2024/2025 and the School Organisation Planning: Primary School Places to Serve Cathays and Parts of Gabalfa, Heath, Llandaff North and Plasnewydd. The proposals will be considered by Cabinet on the 23 March 2023.

AGREED: to note the comments and observations made by the Task & finish Group contained in the report; and, that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, submits those comments and observations as a letter to the Cabinet Member ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 23 March 2023.

59 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORT

Members' approval was sought in relation to the proposed Children & Young People Scrutiny pages to be contained within the 2022 – 2023 Scrutiny Annual Report.

Members were also invited to express an interest in sitting on the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

AGREED: To approve the draft Children and Young People Committee pages of the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022 – 2023.

60 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled.

61 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee has been changed, it will be on Monday 15 May 2023 at 5.00 pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm