

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

11 January 2017

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
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Dear Sarah

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 10 January 2017 to provide an opening statement and answer questions on the agenda item **Cardiff Schools Annual Report 2015/16**. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar and Angela Kent for their presentation of the report and answers to Members questions. Members were also pleased to welcome Nic Naish, Head Teacher of Greenway Primary School and Lorraine Felstead, Head Teacher Meadowbank Special School, and wished to thank them for their contribution to the scrutiny of this item.

The Committee welcomed the report and that it showed a steady and sustained improvement of performance in Cardiff. In particular, Members wished to congratulate the Schools, Consortium and Education Staff for their hard work over the past academic year. During the way forward section of the meeting the Members raised a number of comments, concerns and recommendations which they asked me to write to you on.

The Committee noted, with some concern, that secondary schools have still not been performing as well as primary schools. Members therefore requested details of the actions, being undertaken, to improve and monitor the performance of secondary schools, and in particular the two secondary schools, which are performing poorly.

The Committee reflected on the poor performance of eFSM pupils, (as a measure of deprivation). Members saw that the scatter graphs indicated that the difference between eFSM and nFSM was getting wider through the key stages. Members expressed concern that this could indicate that teaching was entrenching deprivation. The Council should not accept this situation and Members recommended that a specific action plan be put in place to address this situation and create more equal pupil outcomes.

The Members also expressed concern around the development and implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Programme and New Curriculum for Wales,

as they heard mixed messages from the Head Teachers about what plans were in place and that only the Pioneer schools seemed to be “on top of it”. Members considered that the programme needed sufficient capacity to ensure its effective implementation and requested an update on the development and implementation of the New Curriculum, as part of the response to this letter.

In respect to the contents of the report, Members requested that future reports should identify schools by name and provide a list, as in previous years, of the Primary Schools by FSM Group including Benchmark Quartiles and the number/percentage of schools in each benchmarking quarter for the Key Stage 3 CSI.

In addition, the Committee expressed concern that the report did not contain judgements on the performance of school leadership in the report. Members are aware that improved leadership is key to raising performance across all schools and recommended that it should be included in future reports.

Finally, the Members wished to inform you that they will include a request for briefing paper on the commissioning programme for 6th form courses, to be included in the Committee’s future work programme.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff’s pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above and response to its recommendations; as such the Members require a formal response to this letter prior to the cabinet report being considered at Cabinet on 19 January, as requested by the Cabinet Office.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires:

- Details of the actions being undertaken to improve secondary school performance and in particular the two lowest performing schools.;
- That an update on the 21st Century School programme be provided to identify improvement plans for special schools;
- The action plans to address the expanding gap between nFSM and eFSM throughout the key stages;
- An update on the implementation of the New Curriculum and capacity to ensure its effective implementation;
- Future report must include the names of schools wherever relevant, together with a list of Primary Schools by FSM Group including Benchmark Quartiles and the Number/percentage of schools in each benchmarking quarter for the Key Stage 3 CSI.
- Future reports must include judgements on the performance of school leadership;

- The future work programme of the committee to include a briefing paper on the Commissioning of 6th Form courses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a long horizontal line underneath.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Angela Kent, OM Schools Performance
Nic Naish, Head Teacher of Greenway Primary School
Lorraine Felstead, Head Teacher Meadowbank Special School