

Date: 13 August 2020

My Ref: SS/CYP/AEJ/Aug20



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Councillor Sarah Merry  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills  
County Hall  
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Dear Sarah,

### **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 30 JULY 2020 – EDUCATION RESTART**

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for attending Committee on 30 July 2020. I would also like to thank Mike Tate, Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning and Neil Hardee, Head of Schools Services for attending the meeting, to present the briefing on Education Restart and respond to Members questions.

The Committee welcomed the chance to receive an update and reflect on a number of issues during the Q&A session, including the safe management of schools from September; the mitigation factors the Authority and schools had introduced in relation to PPE and testing; blended learning and new approaches to education; summer provision; school transport; catering; and your efforts in relation to effective communication with schools, pupils and their parents/ carers during these unprecedented times. The Committee wish to commend the hard work by the local authority and schools to date.

There were a number issues that the Committee wish to raise in more detail.

#### **Learning and attainment for all**

Members felt that there appeared to be a number of inconsistencies between how individual schools had approached new ways of working during the period where schools had been closed, and were concerned about the affect this may have had in relation to pupil engagement and take up of home learning. Members were particularly concerned about pupils who had disengaged with learning and the knock-on effect this may have in relation to their individual achievement and attainment. Members recommend that, to enable pupils to be assisted in re-

engaging and catching up with peers, additional support continues to be provided for as long as is judged necessary and is tailored to meet individual needs.

### **Learning from what has happened to date**

During the presentation and Q&A, references were made to working with the Consortium and Challenge Advisers to identify where best practice is within schools and for this to be shared. The Committee stated that they were still unaware of what range of approaches were adopted across schools, what good practice had been identified, and whether this had been shared amongst schools. Members were also aware that different practices had been adopted within individual schools and felt strongly that all classes should be offering the same opportunities to all pupils. Members felt that the local authority agrees with the consortium a process for quality assuring provision to ensure as much consistency as possible between and within schools. Members, therefore, **recommend** that the local authority leads a review/audit with the Consortium and Challenge Advisers to identify best practice and this be shared across schools. This review should also include what additional support mechanisms are in place to support pupils who may be disengaged, as highlighted above.

### **Planning/Preparing**

Members of the Committee considered that whilst much had been achieved by the local authority and schools to date, further planning and preparation is required going forward. This should include the outputs from the review/audit above, and support mechanisms for minimising disengagement in the future, should there be further lockdowns. Ultimately, Members felt that the planning and preparation would result in the learning experience being maximised – raising the bar and setting standards going forward.

Members wish to be kept updated on the additional £28 million Welsh Government funding – how much will be allocated to Cardiff and then onto individual schools; when this will be available; and what will this be spent on. Members also raised the issue of individual schools budgets (and overspends) and would appreciate being kept updated on this, particularly any problems that may arise.

In addition, Members were disappointed to hear about the challenges faced by the authority in relation to the withdrawal of summer provision (SHEP) funding. The Committee again commends the steps taken to introduce a new system at short notice, and shares the frustration that this has resulted in a reduced capacity this year. In light of this, the Committee would like to invite yourself and officers to a future Scrutiny Committee to discuss this, and future plans for summer provision in 2021. We will timetable this into our Calendar of Meetings in due course.

I hope you find our comments and observations useful. In summary, the Committee requires a response on the following issues;

1. Inform the Committee of how the Authority will link with the Consortium and Challenge Advisors. It is **recommended** that this should include;
  - A quality assurance role;
  - Undertaking a review/audit to identify best practice; and
  - The dissemination of best practice approaches within and across schools
2. It is **recommended** that appropriate support is put in place for pupils who have not engaged or had dropped out of education and for this to be available from the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020, to enable pupils to have the opportunity to be assisted in re-engaging and catching up with peers;
3. Update the Committee on details of how much of the £28m Welsh Government funding is made available locally, and what the funding will be earmarked for;
4. To keep the Committee updated on school budgets and any challenges that may be faced by the authority and schools (particularly in relation overspends); and
5. Return to a future scrutiny committee meeting to discuss 2021 Summer Provision.

I look forward to hearing from you, with a response to the above recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Nick Batchelar, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Mike Tate, Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Neil Hardee, Head of Schools Services  
Cabinet Support Office