

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

20 July 2015



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 14th July 2015 to help introduce the **Youth Guarantee – Implementation Report** and the **Estyn recommendations 2 and 4 - update**. I would also like to thank Carol Jones, and her officers for their presentations and contribution to the two agenda items. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations detailed below.

Youth Guarantee – Implementation Report

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework key elements, which includes the Youth Guarantee offer. Members also noted progress being made in implementing the scheme so that the Guarantee will be introduced to Year 11 pupils in September 2015 with the expectation that young people will sign on in September 2016.

The Committee discussed at length Cardiff's approach to the implementation and requested a further update this time next year. Members were however surprised to hear that Careers Wales were not now providing one to one careers advice to pupils, but were expecting schools to provide the advice. Members agreed with the officers that this was a detrimental step and requested that you monitor the situation, to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged.

The Committee were also informed that Careers Wales were not now vetting businesses for work placements but expecting Schools to ensure that businesses undertook the vetting. In addition Careers Wales had also withdrawn its work placement data base. Members considered that both these tasks were fundamental to the work of Career Wales and helped ensure that pupils are able to identify the most appropriate career. The Committee recommended that as Cabinet Member you make representation to Careers Wales to continue both tasks or investigate alternative provision to ensure pupils are not disadvantaged.

Estyn Recommendations 2 & 4

Members welcomed the report on the progress being made to address these two recommendations together with the honest and open answers to the Members

questions. As the Committee had scrutinised Neets at its last meeting the Members focused of the Exclusions element of Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 2 - Exclusions

Members noted the progress being made in addressing the level of fixed term exclusions across Cardiff's schools, however, following the Committee's consideration of the report, officer advice, and answers to member's questions, the Committee asked me to write with the following comments, advice and recommendations.

The Committee questioned at some length the level of exclusions in schools, particular those which were causing concern. Members requested that future reports must include the data for each school. Members also commented on the responsibility of the Governing Body on managing the level of exclusions in their school. The Committee recommended that the Governors of schools with high levels of fixed term exclusions must have specific advice on managing exclusions and on alternatives to exclusion.

The Committee was informed that the Challenge Advisors were directed to help support schools in reducing exclusions however members felt that Challenge Advisors do not necessarily have the correct skill set to have a positive impact. The Committee recommended that the joint support with education officers should be reviewed to ensure that effective support is provided.

Given the figures presented to the Committee Members expressed grave concern, that this element of the Estyn recommendation 2 may not be adequately achieved. The Committee therefore recommended that urgent action is taken to ensure that the Council satisfies Estyn in respect of this recommendation.

Finally the Committee noted that fixed term exclusions are not always the most appropriate action and alternative actions would be more appropriate. Member requested that a report be provide to Members via the Scrutiny Officer, explaining what alternatives could be used by schools.

Recommendation 4

The Committee welcomed this update and noted the detailed partnership work being undertaken. Member did however request a more detailed report on the "Prevent Strategy" to be presented to Committee later in the year.

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 together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

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

- To receive a further update on the Youth Guarantee this time next year;
- Recommends that the Cabinet makes representation to Careers Wales to continue to undertake the vetting process and data base for work placements, as well as the careers advice to pupils or investigate alternative provision to ensure pupils are not disadvantaged;
- Future exclusion reports must include the data for each school.
- Recommends that the Governors of schools with high levels of fixed term exclusions, must have specific training on alternatives to exclusions;
- Recommends that the joint support provided by Challenge Advisors and Education Officers in schools with high exclusions, should be reviewed to ensure that effective support is provided;
- Recommends that urgent action is taken to ensure that the Council satisfies Estyn in reducing exclusions across all Cardiff's schools.
- Members requested a more detailed report on the "Prevent Strategy" to be presented to Committee later in the year.

Yours sincerely

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

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

CC: Nick Batchelar – Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: Carol Jones– Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: John Fabes, Achievement Leader 14 – 19
CC. Phillip Norton, Achievement Leader Targeted Support
CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger