

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the Old
Council Chamber Shire Hall, Monmouth on Friday
14th February 2014 at 9.15a.m.**

PRESENT: County Councillor R.P. Jordan (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, P.S. Farley, L. Guppy, D.W.H. Jones, P. Jones, M. Powell and A.C. Watts

ADDED MEMBERS:

Voting:

Mrs. S. Morgan-Owen (Parent Governor Representative)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. H. Ilett - Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams - Democratic Services Officer

Mr. W. McLean - Head of Strategic Partnerships (Observing)

INVITED GUESTS:

Mr. V. Davies - Head Teacher, Monmouth Comprehensive School
Mr. T. Bird - Deputy Head Teacher, Monmouth Comprehensive School
Mr. Leicester - Chair of Governors, Monmouth Comprehensive School

Mrs. S. Gwyer-Roberts – Head Teacher, Caldicot Comprehensive School
Mr. G. Whitcombe – Deputy Head Teacher, Caldicot Comprehensive School

Ms. C. Price – Head Teacher, Chepstow Comprehensive School
Mr. A. Price - Deputy Head Teacher, Chepstow Comprehensive School

Ms. Y. Jones – Acting Head Teacher, King Henry VIII Comprehensive School
Mr. M. May – Data & Assessment Assistant Head Teacher, King Henry VIII
Comprehensive School

MONMOUTHSHIRE RECOVERY BOARD

Mr. R. Alcott
Mr. J. Morgan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.- Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P.R. Clarke, S. Jones, Revd. Dr. S. James (Church in Wales) and Mr. G. Murphy (NAHT).

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.- Declarations of interest are identified under the relevant minute.

**MEETING WITH THE HEAD TEACHERS OF MONMOUTHSHIRE'S FOUR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS REGARDING THE SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE**

3.- County Councillors P.S. Farley, L. Guppy, R.P. Jordan and M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as they are school governors.

Mrs. S. Morgan-Owen (Parent Governor Representative) declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as she is a school governor.

We met the Head Teachers and their representatives of the four secondary schools within Monmouthshire to discuss the schools' performance. The Head Teachers had been issued with 10 questions that the Select Committee had compiled relating to the schools' performance, in advance of the meeting, so that they might prepare their answers before attending.

The schools' responses to the 10 questions are as follows:

Monmouth Comprehensive School

1) Could you give an overview of your school's performance over the last few years and the actions you will take to ensure that it improves over the next 2 years?

The school's response:

- Over the last two years there has been an upward trend in performance at Key Stage 4 Level 2 from 76% to 83%. Level 1 performance was currently between 96% and 97%.
- Pupil attendance was 94%.
- A steady increase in maths performance equating to 68%.
- Performance in Science has increased by 10% up to 70%.
- Over the last three years there has been a decrease in overall performance in English.
- Performance at Key Stage 3 has improved over the last three years with good level 5 performance. Progress at Level 6+ has been variable and was becoming the school's focus for improvement.

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- The Head Teacher, with the support of the Education Achievement Service, has prepared a detailed action plan for the school. Various working groups were being established, e.g., a Teaching and Learning Group. Examination preparation and rehearsal was also being provided. Meetings with parents of vulnerable students were being held. The Senior Leadership Team meets regularly to assess pupils' performance.

2) In light of the County's Estyn inspection, could you give us an insight into what is being done differently at your school?

The school's response:

- With the support of the Education Achievement Service positive changes were being made.
- The School now has a Systems Leader.
- Representatives of The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) had visited the school and were pleased with the school's progress.
- Students receive one to one tuition in small groups in maths and English.

3) How would you rate the improvements in your school over the last few years at KS3 and KS4 in core subjects, in relation to the rate of improvement in Wales and also in comparison to your family of schools?

The school's response:

- There has been steady improvement within the school in Key Stage 4 Maths. The Wales average is 59%.
- Within the family of schools Monmouth Comprehensive School has moved from 19th to 20th position.
- At 7.8% free school meal eligibility, the school is below the local authority average.
- A well-developed tracking system regarding maths has been established and the current floor target had been achieved. The school aimed to achieve the 70% target over the next two years.
- In previous years, performance in science ranged between 65% and 76%. Currently, it is 79% and is above the Wales average. The family average is 82%.

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- Results in English have gone down. Changes to the qualification and marking have had a negative impact. Currently, 78% of pupils were achieving A - C grades which were off target by 2%.
- At Key Stage 3 Level 5+, all Core Subjects were performing above the Welsh average and performance was expected to further improve.
- Students were clear in what was required of them with regard to academic achievement. Further improvements in pupils' performance were expected.

4) How does this relate to targets set for the next two years and what impact will this have on outcomes in relation to similar schools?

The school's response:

- The school advised that they are identifying what a school needs to achieve to be ranked in the top 25% of schools in the country and are aiming to achieve Fischer Family Trust D status by focussing on key stage 2 outcomes. The school had indicated that it was close to achieving this status and that it was only a couple of percentage points away from this goal.
- Model 1 and Model 2a are adaptations of the Fischer Family Trust B, but do not involve English students. Free School Meals quartiles are based on free school meals data, whilst the Family of Schools data is based on various available data.

5) Where does your school stand in relation to value added at both key stages and how does this added value compare with similar schools in terms of benchmarking?

The school's response:

- The school advised that they work under the EDG model, which is the only model that is clear and consistent. Model 1 assesses how schools compare at key stage 3 with other students in Wales at that stage, with a capped point score. The school advised that at key stages 3 and 4, they are in quartile 1 or 2 against all schools in Wales and believe their 'value added' to be very positive.
- Model 2a however, takes into account mobility, deprivation, language spoken and other factors, which means that results are not so positive when these factors are contextualised. The school questioned whether contextualisation is right, but advised they have to work within that system.

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- They advised that achievement at Level 2+ and Core Subject Indicators therefore places them in quartile 4 and not quartile 2. The school is however aiming to move to quartile 2 over the next two years.

6) What progress are you making towards improving outcomes for pupils eligible for Free School Meals? How does this compare with non-Free School Meals in your school, in Wales and in similar schools?

The school's response:

- Last year there was a significant improvement regarding the support for students receiving free school meals.
- At Key Stage 4 – Level 2, 83% of pupils receiving free school meals achieved the same level as pupils not receiving free school meals.
- The attendance rates of free school meals pupils, over the last three years, has increased from 84.2% to 92%.
- Interventions being used were grants, smaller class sizes and bespoke timetables for students. Also, the school was ensuring that identification of pupils needs would start earlier.

7) How do you ensure you meet the needs of all pupils in your school?

The school's response:

- Overall attendance has increased over the last three years to 95%.
- There have been no fixed term exclusions over the last eight years. The Welsh average is 2.9%, the school's average is 0.6%.
- Average days lost equates to 19. The Welsh average is 150.
- The school is building a curriculum that is diverse and has the resources to achieve this.
- At Key Stage 4, students make their choices and the timetable is built around them.
- There is flexibility in lessons with a range of learning approaches applied. Every student is valued.
- Young People want to be heard. The School Council is dynamic and involved in school business.

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8) What impact do you think the reduction in funding in real terms will have on pupils, in particular those with Additional Learning Needs?

The school's response:

- Now is the time to do things differently to improve outcomes and provide appropriate resources accordingly. By investing at Key Stage 1, improvements with pupils' performance should be achieved sooner.

9) What are your priorities for improvement for this academic year and how confident are you that your strategies will be successful in raising standards?

The school's response:

- Exam rehearsals.
- Tracking and validity of data.
- Creating the right culture between staff, students and parents.

10) How do you think the LEA can both challenge you and support you?

The school's response:

- Review the current education structure and system.
- The 21st Century Schools Programme is an opportunity in which education provision may be improved.

Having received the school's responses to the questions, the following points were noted:

- The school has meetings with the Education Achievement Service regarding feedback and targets.
- Students receiving one to one tuition in small groups in maths and English aided the pupils in preparing for examinations.
- The school is a part of the pilot scheme receiving I.T. support from the Shared Resource Services (SRS). It has taken some time to 'bed in' but the school's I.T. Provision is in a good position.

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Caldicot Comprehensive School

1) Could you give an overview of your school's performance over the last few years and the actions you will take to ensure that it improves over the next 2 years?

The school's response:

- The school's overall performance has been improving over the last three years.
- Key Stage 3 Core Subject Indicator Level 5+: English - Quartile 1, Maths - Quartile 2 and Science - Quartile 3.
- Value Added: Maths and English are in Quartile 1 with Science in Quartile 2.
- There has been a 21% rise in performance in the Key Stage 4 Core Subject Indicators.
- Since 2011 the school's performance has risen putting it in the top 5th percentile of the Fischer Family Trust.
- Positive improvements are being made at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Strategies are in place to ensure that the upward trend in performance continues.

2) In light of the County's Estyn inspection, could you give us an insight into what is being done differently at your school?

The school's response:

- Leadership roles have been revised which have been adapted since 2011.
- Pupil performance is key, which is at the heart of what the school does.
- Through robust evaluation the school has focussed on Core Subject Indicator performance and in doing so, has moved up an entire quartile.
- Consistent improvement plans containing bespoke strategies have been established.
- Senior leaders are more accountable.
- Robust performance Management in the second year is paying dividends.
- Targets have been set for the Head Teacher and staff to achieve.

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- The school governing body is experienced and meets regularly with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher.

3) How would you rate the improvements in your school over the last few years at KS3 and KS4 in core subjects, in relation to the rate of improvement in Wales and also in comparison to your family of schools?

The school's response:

- Key Stage 3 Level 5+: There has been a 9% rise in performance regarding Maths. Performance in Science has been variable.
- There has been a steady rise in performance regarding the Core Subject Indicators at Key Stage 3.
- Key Stage 4: There has been a steady rise in performance in English. Performance in Maths and Science has also improved.
- Since 2011, performance in maths has risen by 23%, with 72% of pupils achieving Grade C or above.
- In 2011, the school's Core Subject Indicators were performing below its Family of Schools. In 2013, the school's Core Subject Indicators were performing above the Family of Schools, the Local Authority and Wales averages.
- Key Stage 4 Level 2 Threshold – The percentage of pupils achieving this Threshold in 2013 is below the Family average but above the Wales average.
- Key Stage 4 Science – Some schools have moved over to BTEC courses but Caldicot Comprehensive School has continued to provide GCSE courses.

4) How does this relate to targets set for the next two years and what impact will this have on outcomes in relation to similar schools?

The school's response:

- Fischer Family Trust data, as well as the school's performance data, has been used when setting targets. The school is within the top 25% of schools.
- The targets set are realistic.

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5) Where does your school stand in relation to value added at both key stages and how does this added value compare with similar schools in terms of benchmarking?

The school's response:

- All pupils will be sitting the Essential Skills Wales Qualification.
- The school is in the 4th Quartile for Key Stage 4 performance at Level 2.
- The school provides a broad range of subjects, the majority of which are GCSE subjects.
- 5 A – C Grades – 7.5% value added and in benchmark Quartile 1.
- Target Level 2 Fischer Family Trust Data is 85%.
- Targets are realistic.
- The Level 1 Threshold target is difficult to achieve due to some issues arising regarding Special Educational Needs. Therefore, it is located within Quartile 3 and it is unrealistic to be in a higher Quartile. The target of 97% is challenging for the school.
- Value Added Benchmark Quartiles: The Level 2 Threshold for English and Maths in 2013 was 64.71%. This has increased since 2011 and 2012, moving on from the value added.
- The Core Subject Indicator has improved from -9.52 to +5.1 and is now +8.

6) What progress are you making towards improving outcomes for pupils eligible for Free School Meals? How does this compare with non-Free School Meals in your school, in Wales and in similar schools?

The school's response:

- The gap in performance between pupil's receiving free school meals and non-free school meals has reduced by 19% in all subjects.
- There has been a 36% gain in Modern Foreign Languages and a 38% gain in History.
- At Key Stage 4 there has been a reduction in Level 2 performance.
- The gap in performance at Level 1 will be rectified this year.

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7) How do you ensure you meet the needs of all pupils in your school?

The school's response:

- Ensures each child has a bespoke individual Education Plan, introduced in Year 7, for the remainder of the child's time in the school.
- Re-test pupils in basic skills to obtain a clear profile of academic and intellectual ability.
- A strong wellbeing programme focuses on children being safe and secure in school.
- Informed and able staff have developed a bespoke teaching and learning programme to fulfil pupils' potential.

8) What impact do you think the reduction in funding in real terms will have on pupils, in particular those with Additional Learning Needs?

The school's response:

- Diminishing resources has meant that the school staff has had to think in a more focussed way. The reduction in funding will limit but not stifle progress.
- The School will continue to reach Band 1 and use what it has to the best of its abilities.

9) What are your priorities for improvement for this academic year and how confident are you that your strategies will be successful in raising standards?

The school's response:

- Raise standards at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.
- Continuing to address areas where improvements are required.
- Some positive upward movement has occurred in the quartiles.
- Plugging gaps.
- The tracking and monitoring of pupils is on target.
- Creating a bespoke package for all pupils.
- Year 7 is in Quartile 1.

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- Improvements can be sustained with long term programmes being established.

10) How do you think the LEA can both challenge you and support you?

The school's response:

- The new leadership in the Local Education Authority is refreshing with vision and challenge being evident.
- Ambition and challenge, support and guidance – The Education Achievement Service has excellent aspects within its service but further development is required.
- Resource support for young people. Many young people need bespoke packages. Mounton House School and the Pupil Referral Unit can help vulnerable children.
- Not every vulnerable child is a Free School Meal Child. Therefore, the Local Education Authority needs to reconsider how this funding is allocated. The Local Education Authority could expand provision to support these vulnerable children.
- Address the limitations of parents. The school lays on courses for parents.

Having received the school's responses to the questions, the following points were noted:

- It is difficult to obtain a place at Mounton House School.
- Mounton House School currently only accepts boys.

Chepstow Comprehensive School

1) Could you give an overview of your school's performance over the last few years and the actions you will take to ensure that it improves over the next 2 years?

The school's response:

- In previous years outcomes have been adequate but underachieving with regard to the priorities set.
- There has been considerable improvement in performance over the last two years.
- Improvements have been made at Key Stage 4 but still underachieving.

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- In previous years pupil performance has been dependent on cohort performance leading to erratic performances year on year.
- More consistency is now trying to be achieved with pupil performance being tracked.
- In the previous two years there has been a 15% improvement in maths.
- Rigorous action has been taken in Level 2 English resulting in an improvement in pupil attainment.

2) In light of the County's Estyn inspection, could you give us an insight into what is being done differently at your school?

The school's response:

- The school is doing well with regard to 'value added' but could do better.
- Pupils' performance is being tracked.
- The performance of pupils receiving free school meals is being tracked and analysed via intervention groups.
- Able to fine tune data tracking.
- Identifies performance levels of individual pupils and assesses what provision each pupil requires.
- The school is better at supporting young people.

3) How would you rate the improvements in your school over the last few years at KS3 and KS4 in core subjects, in relation to the rate of improvement in Wales and also in comparison to your family of schools?

The school's response:

- Key Stage 3 results have been variable.
- Results in comparison with the family of schools have been lower than they should be.
- A Key Stage 3 review is being undertaken.
- Key Stage 3 Science – good performance.
- Key Stage 3 Maths – performance is not as good as expected.

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- Key Stage 4 Core Subject Indicators – Maths performance is improving, outcomes are variable with regard to Science and the cap has been exceeded regarding English.

4) How does this relate to targets set for the next two years and what impact will this have on outcomes in relation to similar schools?

The school's response:

- The targets are ambitious.
- If all schools within the family continue their current improvement rates then Chepstow School is likely to be on a par with these schools.
- The school doesn't have the same levels of deprivation in comparison to other schools within Wales.
- Currently out of step with targets but targets will be met in the next two to three years.

5) Where does your school stand in relation to value added at both key stages and how does this added value compare with similar schools in terms of benchmarking?

The school's response:

- Fischer Family Trust data indicates that the school is performing well other than in English.
- The school is performing below the median of the family of schools.
- The school is not performing well enough but is improving.

6) What progress are you making towards improving outcomes for pupils eligible for Free School Meals? How does this compare with non-Free School Meals in your school, in Wales and in similar schools?

The school's response:

- Level 2 performance is off target by 20%.
- Current performance is not good enough.

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7) How do you ensure you meet the needs of all pupils in your school?

The school's response:

- Wider outcomes – pupils' wellbeing, attendance and behaviour.
- Pupils have Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE).
- Provides extra curricula activities.
- Student Leadership.
- Tracking of pupils' performance. Track pupils from primary school regarding literacy and numeracy.
- Hold teachers to account.
- Focusing on the performance of pupils receiving free school meals.
- Working with feeder primary schools.
- Build on pupils' performance from primary schools to Chepstow Comprehensive School.
- Training with primary schools and leadership development.
- Reconfigured Teaching Assistant Support. Having an involvement in the planning of lessons.
- Bespoke teaching and learning experiences for pupils in the classroom.
- Key Stage 4 has a bespoke curriculum to best support pupils' needs.

8) What impact do you think the reduction in funding in real terms will have on pupils, in particular those with Additional Learning Needs?

The school's response:

- The reduction in funding has had a detrimental impact on the school due to its size. Therefore, to counter this, the school is doing things differently to support learners in the classroom. Teaching assessments are being undertaken in a different way.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training is held every Monday evening.
- Improvements in leadership across the school is being established.

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- Improve professional practice.

9) What are your priorities for improvement for this academic year and how confident are you that your strategies will be successful in raising standards?

The school's response:

- Improve pupils' outcomes.
- Improve pupils' learning.
- Over the last two years considerable improvements have been made.
- Internally establishing support for science leadership.
- The school has excellent middle managers.
- Each house has two curriculum leaders.
- Whole school improvements are being driven.
- Staff and children within their house monitor their progress.
- The Head Teacher is able to take a back view and orchestrate the improvements.

10) How do you think the LEA can both challenge you and support you?

The school's response:

- The school has welcomed the more challenging conversations.
- Working with the Education Achievement Service is challenging.
- The catchment is currently small. The school would like to be able to fund opportunities for young people.
- Currently, 24% of the catchment comes from outside.
- There is disquiet amongst staff regarding the building of the proposed two new schools.
- The school would like assurances regarding catchment and to be able to work in a cluster of schools.

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Having received the school's responses to the questions, the following points were noted:

- The five English teachers visit the feeder primary schools. Dialogue with teachers from the Foundation Phase upwards is being undertaken. It is anticipated that the momentum will grow from the next term.
- Chepstow Comprehensive School historically loses pupils to four other secondary schools. However, the school has attracted back some children from Wyedean School.
- Partnership working is being developed.
- The Head Teacher is looking to improve relationships with nearby secondary schools.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the school's pupil performance targets, the Head Teacher stated that this is based on Key Stage 2 data.

King Henry VIII School

1) Could you give an overview of your school's performance over the last few years and the actions you will take to ensure that it improves over the next 2 years?

The school's response:

- The school is significantly under performing at all levels at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- In order to improve upon this, the Acting Head Teacher is undertaking a full review of the school's performance as a whole.
- Data assessment reporting has been reviewed.
- Target grades have been re-visited and re-set. These are now challenging to raise standards.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum review has been completed and appropriate interventions have been built into it.
- The School is changing its approach to teaching and learning across the school.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training is being provided to staff to give them the skills that they require.

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- Work on the school's website has been undertaken to improve the school's image.
- A parental satisfaction survey has been undertaken with positive outcomes.
- Safeguarding issues are being addressed. Buildings Maintenance has provided a commitment to erect fencing around the school.

2) In light of the County's Estyn inspection, could you give us an insight into what is being done differently at your school?

The school's response:

- The school is content with the safeguarding assessment.
- Pupils' standards – vastly improved tracking of all students at all levels. Improvement is anticipated throughout the remainder of the year.
- Heads of Departments are displaying a positive attitude.
- There is a focus on learning and teaching and a desire to accommodate new methods.
- Intervention strategies are in place focussing on the pupils' performance.
- Numeracy tests.
- Key Stage 4 Mentor – Efforts are being made to mentor every pupil.
- Support from the Local Authority and the Education Achievement Service has been very good. Support has also been received for part of the week via an executive Head Teacher from a Band 1 school. He has been impressed with the tracking system at King Henry VIII School and is looking to implement a similar system at his school.

3) How would you rate the improvements in your school over the last few years at KS3 and KS4 in core subjects, in relation to the rate of improvement in Wales and also in comparison to your family of schools?

The school's response:

- There have not been improvements at Key Stages 3 and 4.

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4) How does this relate to targets set for the next two years and what impact will this have on outcomes in relation to similar schools?

The school's response:

- Academic targets set by the Local Authority.
- Key Stage 4 targets have been set.
- Fischer Family Trust data - 25% top schools.
- Key Stage 3 – Quartile 1 but Quartile 2 is a more likely target.

5) Where does your school stand in relation to value added at both key stages and how does this added value compare with similar schools in terms of benchmarking?

The school's response:

- The school is under performing at every level.

6) What progress are you making towards improving outcomes for pupils eligible for Free School Meals? How does this compare with non-Free School Meals in your school, in Wales and in similar schools?

The school's response:

- There are 20 children receiving free school meals. All are involved in one or more intervention programmes. Targets have been set and every teacher is aware of this.

7) How do you ensure you meet the needs of all pupils in your school?

The school's response:

- Three key changes:
 - Having the correct curriculum.
 - Having the right intervention and support.
 - Ensure the quality of learning and teaching is improving.

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8) What impact do you think the reduction in funding in real terms will have on pupils, in particular those with Additional Learning Needs?

The school's response:

- Any reduction in funding will have a detrimental impact.
- The school has pupils with Additional learning Needs. There is a need to review the support that is currently in place.
- The school needs a Pupil Referral Unit located within the school for these pupils.

9) What are your priorities for improvement for this academic year and how confident are you that your strategies will be successful in raising standards?

The school's response:

- Raise pupil outcomes. All children should leave school having achieved.
- There will be an uplift in academic results at all levels this year.

10) How do you think the LEA can both challenge you and support you?

The school's response:

- The Local Authority to continue to support the school.
- An increase in funding would be helpful.
- The physical learning environment needs improving, i.e., site security, interior / exterior decoration.

Having received the school's responses to the questions, the following points were noted:

- Confidence in the local community needs to be re-gained in order to reduce the numbers of pupils being lost to Crickhowell and Brynmawr Schools and post 16 students to Hereford.
- Staff morale has improved but is still low.
- Pupils' morale has increased considerably. Attendance last year was 92.3%. This year it is 93.7%. This will have a positive effect on the banding for next year.
- Exclusions last year – 65 days. This year - 21.5 days.

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- The school is embracing learning in different ways.
- The relationship with feeder schools needs to be developed.
- With regard to pupils with additional learning needs, the school works on an inclusive model to integrate them back into the classroom.

Select Committee concluding thoughts:

- Support required for Mounton House School.
- Support required for pupils with additional learning needs.
- Arrange a meeting of the Select Committee to discuss the issues raised by the Head Teachers.

The meeting ended at 12.50p.m.