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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held
at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 13th
February, 2018 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor M. Groucutt (Chairman)
County Councillor L. Jones (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: M. Lane, M. Powell, J. Watkins and
S. Woodhouse

Mr. M. Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

Also present: County Councillor R. John (Cabinet Member)

County Councillor V. Smith (observing)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Richard Austin	Principal Officer Inclusion
Paula Harris	Scrutiny Officer
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Helen Power	-	Education Achievement Service
Sarah Davies	-	Education Achievement Service
Sian Fox	-	Education Achievement Service (observing)

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors L. Brown, D. Jones and T. Thomas

1. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor M. Groucutt declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 3 – Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan (2018-2020), as he is a member of an EAS sub-committee.

County Councillor L. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 3 – Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan (2018-2020), as she is a member of an EAS sub-committee.

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2. Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan (2018-2020)

Context:

To scrutinise the draft Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2018-2021 and the Local Authority Annex 2018-2019

Key Issues:

- The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities. This Business Plan (2018-2021) outlines the programme of work that is required to continue to accelerate outcomes for children and young people across all schools in South East Wales. The plan focuses on the urgent need to raise aspiration and accelerate improvement in pupil outcomes, improve the quality of teaching and leadership and build a self-improving system within and across schools and settings. The priorities for the Business Plan 2018-2019 have been derived from the progress that has been made towards the previous Business Plan and progress made across the region with the areas that have been identified as requiring improvements through self-evaluation processes and feedback from Estyn on the inspection of the EAS.
- The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within Monmouthshire are met through bespoke work with each school. The EAS offers a wide range of bespoke support that is based upon best practice.

Member Scrutiny:

- In response to a question raised regarding support for schools in the red category, it was noted that good communication between the local Authority and the EAS is essential at all times and this is the case. The EAS ensures that all partners are involved, keeping the head teacher and staff fully informed and engaged in the process.
- Intervention meetings regarding schools in a red category are owned by the local Authority. Intervention meetings regarding schools in an amber category are owned by the EAS.
- The power to issue statutory notices to schools lies with the local Authority. Therefore, it is essential to have a strong working partnership between the local Authority and the EAS.
- In response to a question regarding risk factors, it was noted that the risks factors identified in the report are common across the entire consortia. However, the risk stating that there is a lack of clarity about respective roles and statutory responsibilities within the Local Authority and the EAS does not apply to Monmouthshire County Council.

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- In terms of federation, future success of Monmouthshire's schools will be predicated on them having excellent leadership. Currently, every school setting in Monmouthshire has a head teacher. In the future, there will be models that the Authority will invest in which will result in shared leadership positions across the schools.
- The Education Improvement Grant (EIG) is a Welsh Government grant that is used by schools and local authorities to provide training. However, this funding has reduced over the previous years and could become a risk in terms of how much training could be provided if this trend continues. Currently, the EAS is looking at other models related to the school improving system whereby, schools are now taking on some of the training to support other schools.
- All training delivered via the EAS from 2018 will be free to all schools. However, EIG funding has not been agreed for this financial year.
- The progress status range of the EAS business plan is as follows – limited, satisfactory, strong, very good.
- The current satisfactory progress is the judgement of the EAS as at October 2017. For the spring term of 2018, the EAS is anticipating to move to a higher level. This reflects the business case for the five local authorities within the EAS.
- With regard to the funding provided to the EAS, the Authority's core funding is predicated on the size of the Authority.
- The categorisation exercise determines the level of support that the EAS deploys to the schools.
- More support is now available for governing bodies which is having a positive effect on the role governing bodies are able to provide to their respective schools.
- Monmouthshire's engagement with governing body training is the best across the Greater Gwent region.
- With regard to the performance of disadvantaged children in Monmouthshire's schools in addition to FSM Children, it was noted that performance varies from school to school. There are improvements being made which stems from schools working in clusters.
- All of the outcomes relating to the disadvantaged groups will be presented to the Select Committee in due course.

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Committee's Conclusion:

- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked the officers from the EAS for presenting the Business Plan.
- The Select Committee noted the very positive outcome of the recent Estyn Inspection of the EAS.

3. Presentation - Chief Officer Self Evaluation Report for Children and Young People

Context:

To inform the Select Committee of the progress that the education system has made in the past twelve months since the last report.

Key Issues:

The report is not limited to analysis of school based outcomes but is intended to offer a broader view of the services offered to Monmouthshire's children and identify areas where there are concerns in school based performance.

Member Scrutiny:

- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked the Chief Officer for Children and Young People for preparing and presenting the report to the Committee despite having had to take on additional work in recent days.
- With regard to exclusions, the total number of days lost is reported as well as the rate of fixed term exclusions per 1000 pupils.
- In terms of FSM children, Monmouthshire's schools are compared to other similar schools to provide a fair comparison in terms of what the children achieve. Monmouthshire has areas of deprivation in the County. However, we do not have the quantum to trigger additional support, which is a challenge for the Authority.
- With regard to Monmouth Comprehensive School, the FSM children that come to the school from England are known to the Authority. However, it does cause an issue for Monmouth in respect of the modelled expectations, as these are undertaken on a matched cohort basis.
- Every pupil in Wales has a unique reference number and is allocated to the correct secondary school. If a child has been through the Welsh system at primary school, the correct information is in the model at that stage.

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- The review of the catchment areas is being undertaken as it is considered that Monmouthshire's children should be attending Monmouthshire schools near to their communities. However, there will always be parental choice.
- We want parents to consider Monmouthshire's schools to be as good as, if not better than any other schools outside of the County that parents might be considering sending their children to.
- With regard to the schools that have received Estyn inspections since the new reporting system had been introduced, of the three schools inspected, two Estyn inspection reports have been published.
- Work has been commissioned from the Benefits team to investigate the issues surrounding FSM provision and the provision of benefits to some families. However, it was noted that there are falling numbers of FSM children across Wales. The Pupil Development Grant (PDG) will be available for children who have been FSM pupils for the previous two years.
- Via an evolutionary process, there will likely be fewer head teachers in Monmouthshire's schools in the future. When the opportunity presents itself, the Authority will look to provide shared leadership across Monmouthshire's schools.
- An update report regarding the process of issuing FSM to pupils to be presented to a future meeting of the Select Committee.
- An update regarding the Donaldson report to be presented to a future Select Committee meeting.

Committee's Conclusion:

- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked the Chief Officer for Children and Young People for presenting his Chief Officer report to the Committee and endorsed it to Full Council.

4. Key Stage 4 and 5 Performance Summary 2016/17

Context:

To scrutinise validated Key Stage 4 and 5 data across Monmouthshire for the academic year 2016/17.

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Key Issues:

Key Stage 4

- Significant revisions to examinations in 2016/17 means that it is not possible to make a meaningful comparison to previous years.
- Performance in 2017 in the Level 2 threshold including English / Welsh and mathematics is consistent with 2016 and the highest in Wales.
- Results across all indicators at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2017 are above the national average.
- The decline in performance in the Level 2 threshold reflects the trend across Wales in 2017. The decline in performance in Monmouthshire for this indicator is smaller than the national average. Monmouthshire is ranked second for this indicator.
- Performance in the Level 1 threshold in 2017 is 1.9 percentage points below 2016 and reflecting the national trend this year. However, the decline in Monmouthshire is greater than the decline across Wales. As a result, Monmouthshire is ranked 14th in Wales.
- Performance in Capped Point 9 is significantly above the national average and places Monmouthshire third in Wales. This is the first year for this indicator.
- Results in English and science (A* - C) are lower than in 2017 and reflect the national trend for these subjects. However, performance in Monmouthshire for both subjects is above the national average.
- Performance in mathematics in Monmouthshire is higher than in 2016 and does not reflect the declining trend across Wales in 2017.
- Overall, in 2017, Monmouthshire is ranked first for English and mathematics and eighth for science.
- Pupil performance at the 5A*/A grades increased significantly in 2017 compared to 2016 and as a result, Monmouthshire is above the Wales average for this indicator for the first time in the last five years.
- The gap in gender performance has narrowed in 2017 to 4.9 percentage points in favour of girls. The gap in Monmouthshire is now narrower than across Wales.
- The gap in performance between Free School Meals (FSM) pupils and non-FSM pupils in Monmouthshire in 2017 has widened for the Level 2 threshold including English / Welsh and mathematics compared to 2016.

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- The majority of Monmouthshire secondary schools are in the bottom FSM benchmark quartile for the Level 1 threshold in 2017, indicating a three-year declining trend.
- Monmouthshire's performance compared to the Welsh Government Modelled Expectations continues a four year improving trend in both the Level 2 Threshold including English / Welsh and mathematics and Capped Average Wider Point Score (replace by Capped 9 in 2017).

Key Stage 5

- Overall performance in the Level 3 threshold, including vocational qualifications, decreased by 1.8 percentage points in Monmouthshire in 2017 compared to the previous year.
- This decrease is greater than across the region and nationally.

Member Scrutiny:

- Research indicates that it is not only free school meals but it is a range of disabilities where the number of these children in Monmouthshire's schools is very small in a large cohort and is difficult to address the needs of these children effectively.
- The Authority is in a position to move forward in addressing these issues.
- Non verified Key Stage 4 results had been received at a previous meeting of the Select Committee. However, it was noted that there was very little difference between the non-verified results and the results presented to the Committee today.
- In response to a question raised regarding BTEC science, it was noted that, statistically, BTEC results will no longer show up on schools' data. Schools are often driven by moral purpose rather than statistical purpose. There are a number of science options available, namely, a) the single science where the three subjects are taken, b) double science and c) applied science which is far more challenging than BTEC science. This has a 30% practical element to it. It was the practical element and the course work that was best suited to most disadvantaged learners. Decisions regarding what is best for learners needs to be taken at school level.

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Committee's Conclusion:

- The Select Committee has focused on the effects of deprivation on outcomes for Monmouthshire's children.
- Moving forward, there is a need to break the cycle of poverty within deprived areas of Monmouthshire. The Select Committee has a key role in supporting this aspect along with other professional partners.

5. Presentation - Inclusion Review progress to date - February 2018

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the content conveyed to the Select Committee by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People in respect this matter, the Select Committee agreed to go into Committee for this agenda item.

We received a presentation by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People in respect of progress to date regarding additional learning needs provision (ALN) in Monmouthshire's schools.

We noted the content of the presentation and the information provided by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People.

The meeting ended at 1.06 pm.