ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

<u>Scrutiny Report Template</u>

Committee :	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date :	22 October, 2020
Subject:	Schools' Progress Review Panel
Purpose of Report:	An update on the progress of the Schools' Progress Review Panel
Scrutiny Chair:	Cllr Gwilym Owen Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr R Meirion Jones
Head of Service:	Rhys H Hughes, Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Report Author : **Tel :** **E-mail :**	Sioned Rowe, Scrutiny Officer 01248 752039 SionedRowe@ynysmon.gov.uk
Local Members :	Not applicable

1 - Recommendation(s)

The Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee is requested to :

R1 To note:

- The progress made to date in terms of the delivery of the Schools Progress Review Panel's work programme which includes robust challenge of individual school performance
- The work streams in place through the new arrangements and introduced as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

R2 Recommend that the Committee reaches a conclusion on the robustness of the Panel's monitoring to date.

2 - Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

Direct link to the Council Plan / transformation priorities. The Council's Plan includes an ambition to work with the people of Anglesey, their communities and with partners to ensure the provision of the best possible services that will improve the quality of life for everyone throughout the Island. One of the Plan's 3 aims is to "create conditions that will enable everyone to fulfil their full potential." The work of the Panel is crucial in supporting schools and the Council in achieving that objective.

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

To assist Members when scrutinising the topic:-

3.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities **[focus on customer/citizen]**

3.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality **[focus on value]**

3.3 A look at any risks **[focus on risk]**

3.4 Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role **[focus on performance & quality]**

3.5 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- long term
- prevention
- integration
- collaboration
- involvement

[focus on wellbeing]

4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

At the Panel's request:

1. To what extent is the Scrutiny Committee satisfied with the work done by the Panel to date?
2. To what extent are the actions taken by the Panel to date sufficiently robust and is the pace of work appropriate?
3. What suggestions does the Committee have to further strengthen the Panel's work?
4. What other areas does the Panel need to scrutinise?

5 - Background / Context

1. CONTEXT

As reported previously, Members will be aware that scrutiny has developed during the past two years through the work of the 3 scrutiny panels. This report summarizes the progress made to date in relation to **the Schools Progress Review Panel.**

The Panel's Governance Arrangements

The Members will be aware of the robust governance arrangements in place to underpin the work of the Panel[1] and it is intended to continue to hold monthly meetings of the Panel in the future. The Chairman of the Panel, Cllr. Gwilym Owen Jones, has established a process of reporting on progress quarterly.

The membership of the Panel remains as reported to the Committee during the last quarter[2]:

Schools Progress Review Panel : Membership

Councillor	Scrutiny Committee
Gwilym Owen Jones (Chairman)	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Margaret M Roberts	

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[1] Meeting of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 20 April and 27 June 2017

[2] Meeting of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September, 2019.

Kenneth P Hughes	
Vaughan Hughes	
Alun Roberts (Vice-Chair)	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
John Arwel Roberts	
Richard Griffiths	
Co-opted Member of the Scrutiny Committees	
Mr Keith Roberts	Corporate Scrutiny Committee

2. THE FOCUS OF THE WORK OF THE SCHOOLS PROGRESS REVIEW PANEL

Meetings of the Panel were postponed from March as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, and the Panel's work programme has been put on hold for now. It was decided to propose an interim work programme during the pandemic to initially focus on scrutinising the Learning Service's response to Covid 19 and the arrangements that have been put in place during the emergency. This progress report covers the work of the last two meetings of the Schools Progress Review Panel - and thus covers the period **September → October, 2020** :

Monitoring Individual School Standards – The work of monitoring individual school standards has been well established, and continues to develop. Following a discussion held in October 2019 regarding the programme for monitoring standards in individual school, there was strong evidence of acting on the decision in terms of further developing the scrutiny work.

However, this work stream has currently been put on hold as a result of the Pandemic, and the Panel intends to recommence these visits when conditions allow. As a result, the Panel will need to amend the way it works and scrutinises individual schools' performance, and there is scope for the Panel to undertake this work virtually on Teams to the future.

Discussion regarding the Panel's priorities as a result of the Pandemic
At its meeting on 24 September, 2020 the Panel discussed its priorities as a result of the Pandemic, and the following were decided:

- It was noted that the Panel's work programme needed to be put on hold at the moment, until circumstances allow to recommence the visits to individual schools etc.
- It was noted that there is an opportunity for the Panel to choose to concentrate on key areas of the Learning Service's Response to Covid 19 in order to identify any lessons learnt.
- Decision made to invite a Head teacher of a school to one of the Panel's virtual meetings in order to hear about their experiences and the challenges they are facing during the pandemic.
- The Panel recognised the importance of scrutinising the Schools Standards Report (Summer, 2020), and GwE Annual Report 2019/20, as they normally do even though the context and circumstances are very different this year.

Council's Response to Covid-19 (Part 1): Care Centres and Remote Learning

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People gave a verbal presentation at the Panel's meeting on 24 March, and outlined the Learning Service and individual Schools' response to Covid-19 since March. Details were provided on a number of specific themes: Care Centres, Remote Learning, Free School Meals Arrangements, 'Check In, Catch Up, Prepare for summer and September' Scheme, Centre Assessments (GCSE and A Level), September Arrangements, and Positive Covid 19 Cases in Primary Schools.

Care Centres

- An overview of the arrangements that were put in place was provided and it was noted that the function of schools had to change completely at the beginning of the lockdown period, with schools changing to be Care Centres. It was emphasised that none of the schools closed as they continued to educate children and young people remotely through numerous digital platforms, and care for vulnerable children and children of key workers throughout lockdown. A specific definition of vulnerable children was received from Welsh Government, and the definition was revised in collaboration with the Interim Director of Social Services.

- Successful collaborative work between the Learning Service, Headteachers of Anglesey schools, and the Primary and Secondary Schools Headteachers Forum was highlighted. An overview of the various models at work was provided, detailing specific examples.

- It was noted that attendance in Care Centres varied according to the area, with Ysgol Llanfairpwll caring for up to 30 children but only 1 or 2 children in some Care Centres. However, care was provided to all eligible children during the period. At the request of parents to open care centres over the weekend for the last month of term, Care Centres were established in Holyhead, Llangefni, Amlwch and Llanfairpwll, even though there was very low attendance.
- A national decision was made that care centres over the summer holiday were for vulnerable children only, and the responsibility was transferred to the Children's Service, with collaboration between the Youth Service, Urdd and the Learning Service, and an effective plan was put into place.

Remote Learning

- An overview was provided of the remote learning arrangements implemented in order for children to continue to be educated, with teachers virtually setting and marking work, helping children and supporting them emotionally. It was acknowledged that this type of education provision was not 'usual' but that the world had changed significantly, and that this provision was effective considering the situation.
- The Panel learnt about how schools made greater use of technology, which means that the technology agenda has progressed. Effective collaborative work between GwE, the Learning Service and schools in order to create a virtual provision was highlighted, with everyone having adapted effectively.
- It was noted that comprehensive training had been provided to schools centrally by the Council, GwE and schools themselves, taking advantage of the strengths and expertise of some teachers.
- It was noted that the Service had supported families without access to laptops, and that the Service had worked in collaboration with Cynnal and the Council's IT Team in order to identify devices not being used – in order to distribute to children.

- It was noted that a robust plan is now in place in case of another lockdown, and schools having to close. The lessons learnt can be applied during the next phase. It was noted that as a result of this experience, that the Service will be better placed in future, even though effective work has taken place.
- Effective scrutiny work was seen by Members of the Panel, and the Service was asked to ensure that any lessons learnt are incorporated in moving forward.

Check In, Catch Up, Prepare for summer and September Scheme

- The Welsh Government scheme was clarified in order for children to return to school to familiarise with the changes as a result of the pandemic.
- It was noted that the intention was that children were able to do this for a period of a month, but this was changed to a 3 week period.
- Because of the 2 Sisters situation on the Island the Council responded quickly, and decided not to invite the children back for 3 weeks, but for a week at the end of the term.

Centre Assessments (GCSE and A Level)

- It was noted that GCSE and A Level results were determined based on centre assessments in the end following the initial challenge, and it was felt that pupils received grades they deserved. The Panel requested to scrutinise the process that led to the final grades as it is felt important to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the system, and feedback to the relevant body as required to learn from the experience.

September

- The Panel heard of the arrangements put in place in order for children to return to school in a phased manner, as it was felt that this was the correct way to proceed under the circumstances. It was noted that it is at times evident that pupils have not had a formal education for months, for example in terms of their literacy and numeracy skills as there is a general deterioration, and that this could possibly impact on attainment in years to come. It was recognised that this needs to be considered when looking at attainment and results in the future. The Panel asked for assurance that robust arrangements are in place in the event of another similar situation of having to close schools in the near future.

Positive Cases of Covid in Primary Schools

- It was noted that 4 primary schools had seen positive cases among their pupils, and have had to ask a whole year to self isolate as a result. Arrangements and structures implemented by schools with support from the Local Authority, and TTP were outlined, which proved challenging with the first school. Lessons learnt were highlighted, and assurance provided to the Panel that the Learning Service would be better placed in terms of dealing with possible new cases in schools, and to provide the necessary support in order to take urgent action.

- To summarise, the excellent collaborative work which has taken place between the Council's services, Schools and GwE was emphasised in order to ensure a remote provision for the children of Anglesey.

Remote and Blended Learning

At its meeting on the 14.10.20, the Panel received a presentation from the the Director of Education, Skills and Young People, Senior Manager (Primary Sector), the headteacher of Ysgol Gymuned y Fali, and a teacher in the school who is also a Digital Champion, which provided details of how the Learning Service and Schools worked in collaboration in order the provide remote learning.

Anglesey's strategy and close collaboration between the Learning Service, GwE and Schools as a live network which facilitates and fosters collaboration, sharing and communication was outlined. The aim of the Learning Service is to reinforce these networks including a number of other areas such as Newly Qualified Teachers, School Governors, Welsh Language Coordinators and others in one central site.

One example of this work is live-streaming, and the Learning Service has led collaborative work with schools through creating Guidance for Using Teams with Learners. The guidance is a good example of schools innovating with educational practice, and the Learning Service supporting through allowing a pilot project in order to develop structures and guidance to safeguard all of Anglesey schools.

In collaboration with the regional consortium, the Learning Service promotes and facilitates professional learning which is vital in order to support teachers and learners, whilst also supporting discussions and collaboration between schools within the catchment area. The Service also monitors and challenges the standard of provision through GwE, digital champions and catchment area meetings. The Service also demonstrates example of this collaboration through inviting a headteacher of a school to share his experiences during a meeting of the Schools Progress Review Panel.

Experience of a Primary School of Dealing with the Pandemic

The Headteacher of Ysgol Gymuned y Fali provided a presentation, at the request of the Panel in order to hear about the experience of a school of responding to the pandemic. Specific reference was made to the following points:

- Teams technology was used 2 days following the closure of the school building in order to maintain face to face contact with students.
- The technology was used in order to identify any wellbeing concerns, and a record of the pupils' attendance was kept in the face to face sessions, and when they were using the technology to identify any problems. If there were concerns regarding a child, arrangements were put in place for the Headteacher to contact the family.
- Positive feeback was recevied from parents and pupils, with pupils looking forward to the face to face sessions on Teams which were an opportunity to socialise and to voice any concerns.
- It was noted that the technology had provided an insight into children's personal lives and relationships with parents, something not seen previously.
- The challenges were acknowledged, and details provided in terms of how these challenges were addressed: children not attending because a lack of digital equipment but equipment was provided to these families, sustaining the interest of pupils, however quiz sessions etc were arranged to overcome this, and some

- children not wanting to appear on screen as they felt self-conscious, but these pupils were able to join without video or audio until their confidence increased.
- It was noted that the school continues to use Teams, as children have had to self isolate, therefore the digital platform has enabled the education to continue. It was noted that blended learning will be a means of ensuring the continuation of education in the face of any further surges.
- The work of the Digital Champions was outlined which is essential to the success of blended learning, and it was noted that they have invested a considerable amount of time developing resources on Google Classroom for all classes.
- It was noted that the Digital Champion network is a means of sharing good practice, sharing resources which saves planning time, and ensures collaboration across clusters.
- The various digitial platforms used to continue to educate children were outlined, and it was noted that collaboration across clusters and catchment areas is vital in order to develop a bank of resources to support the blended learning strategy.
- It was noted that the Learning Service is supporting catchment areas and schools to adopt the same model which is operational in Cybi Area in order to ensure that the model which is considered good practice is operational across the Island.

  Next steps:
- Continue to develop networks and collaboration across the Island.
- Centralise the above work on one website in order to facilitate and share what is available and happening to support our effort as a learning organisation.

4. **MATTER TO BE ESCALATED TO THE PARENT COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION**

The following matter is referred for consideration by the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee :

4.1 The Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee is requested to reach a conclusion on the robustness of the Panel's monitoring to date.

6 - Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]
N / A

7 - Financial Implications
N / A

8 - Appendices

9 - Background Papers (please contact Report Author for any further information):
Sioned Rowe, Scrutiny Officer, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Council Offices, Llangefni. LL77 7 TW

Cllr. Gwilym Owen Jones

Chair of the Schools Progress Review Panel
Date: 12/10/2020