

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 7TH MARCH, 2016

REFERENCE FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (LIFELONG LEARNING):
8TH FEBRUARY, 2016

“824 NATIONAL CATEGORISATION – OUTCOMES FOR VALE SCHOOLS (DLS) –

The report provided Members with details of the categorisation of Vale schools following the National Categorisation process and also highlighted primary schools that may benefit from a School Progress Panel meeting and schools with excellence to share.

National Categorisation was a three step process that resulted in each school being assigned to a category. The category indicates where the school was on its improvement journey, the level of challenge / support required to ensure further improvement. National Categorisation was in its second year and replaced the former banding of secondary schools and the regional arrangements for categorising schools as A, B, C or D. The categorisation for each of the schools within the Vale of Glamorgan was provided at Appendix 4 to the report.

The position of Vale schools on the grid used within the National Categorisation process was provided within Appendix 5 to the report. The standards group and capacity to improve were plotted along the y and x axes respectively to determine the level of schools' category.

New schools, pupil referral units and nursery schools did not have a standards group as the data needed to determine the group was not available. Their capacity to improve and category was determined by the Challenge Advisor. Of the 51 Vale schools assigned to a standards group, 43.1% were in group 1, 33.3% in group 2, 21.6% in group 3 and 1.96% in group 4. (Where one school represented 1.96%.)

With regards to the schools' capacity to improve, of the 58 schools (each school represented 1.72%) 36.2% were judged to be A, 56.9% B, 6.9% C and no schools judged as D. Within the Vale of Glamorgan 34.5% of 58 schools were Category Green, 55.2% Yellow, 8.6% Amber and 1.7% Red. (Where each school represented 1.72%.)

Appendix 6 to the report illustrated the difference in categorisation of Vale schools when comparing the categorisation in January 2015 and January 2016.

The percentage of schools in standards group 1 had increased to 43.1% from 20.35%, with a decreased percentage of schools in the remaining standards group.

With regard to the capacity to improve, a similar number of schools were judged to be A, an increase in the percentage of schools judged to be B, with a resulting drop in the percentage of schools with a capacity to improve of C.

The report also outlined those primary schools which potentially could benefit from a visit by the Vales School Progress Panel, it being noted that High Street School remained in Amber support category with the capacity to improve changed from a B to a C and that Fairfield Primary School had been identified by Estyn as a primary school in which the Local Authority should have taken a more direct approach in challenging performance.

In referring to excellence in Vale schools, the report also considered that Members may wish to ask some of the schools in which Estyn had identified excellence to present their work at a Scrutiny meeting. Excellence had been recognised in a number of schools in the year 2014/15 as outlined below:

School	Case Study
Evenlode Primary	Partnership working - writing projects involving Stanwell and local business.
Romilly Primary	Embedding Pupil Voice - Child friendly school improvement plan. Cross School Working - Peer observation and learning triads. Nurture provision linked to family learning.
St. Joseph's Primary	The Learning Environment.
Victoria Primary	Nurture provision for children with additional learning needs.
Stanwell Comprehensive	How the development of teaching in the school has led to excellent teaching and outcomes.
Albert Primary	Pupils Shape Their Curriculum.

Committee was reminded that the primary purpose of the National School Categorisation System was to identify schools that were most in need of support, to ensure that, in partnership with the Local Authority and Consortia support, resources were effectively directed to secure improvements necessary in the school system.

A Member raised the issue of how much discretion was used in relation to the determination of schools in the relevant categories. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion responded by advising that although the

information was used by different people for different purposes, it was a school allocation tool that was used in order to ensure support was provided where necessary. The importance the Head of Service stated was the standards that were to be achieved and the capacity to improve.

A Member was concerned at the fact that Barry Comprehensive remained in the Red category and whether there was the confidence in the school improving. The Head of Service in response advised that in the Red category the school would receive the greatest amount of support plus being a Challenge Cymru School and with the use of the Director's intervention powers, including the school working as a Pathfinder School, the support that it was receiving would help it to develop its progress. The school was also currently showing progress and reports were being made to the Accelerated Improvement Board (AIB) on a monthly basis and closely monitored by the Head of Service who also visited the school regularly. With regard to confidence in the school improving, the Head of Service could advise that the school had received its best results ever in 2015 and there were signs of improvement again. Recognising that it was however, a challenge and the school was in a challenging environment with some challenging learners, he reassured Members of the improvements that were being made and the significant support being provided.

To this a Member queried the detail of the actual problems at the school, with the Head of Service stating that the issues were in the first instance that the school was starting from such a low base and Estyn had judged the school to be in significant improvement. There had been a number of previous issues including staffing concerns, cultural issues etc. but that to date much progress had been made. The school was also looking at the quality of teaching and learning and there was evidence of a change in culture all against a backdrop of dealing with some challenging learners.

The Post Inspection Action Plan was developed and the Council and the Consortium were supporting the school through this Action Plan.

Following a query in relation to where schools were identified, for example as 3B and Amber and others 3B and defined as Yellow, the Head of Service informed Committee that a number of issues were taken into account when considering the category e.g. the quality of leadership as evidenced in self-evaluation and school improvement processes. Aware that the majority of people would not know how these aspects were attributed, he confirmed that in his role as Head of Service, the standards group and the capacity to improve were most relevant.

In referring again to Barry Comprehensive in the Red category, Committee was advised that a Progress Panel meeting was to be scheduled to take place before April and details of that Panel meeting would be reported to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

The Chairman also concurred with the suggestion that Progress Panel meetings should be established for the primary schools identified in the report

and that presentations of the work of schools identified by Estyn with excellent aspects should be provided to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

The Chairman also referred to a recent meeting he had attended with Scrutiny Chairs within the Consortium, advising stating that the Vale was doing well and although it was improving, there was also room for further improvement. It was also important that the Council and the Committee looked beyond Wales and England when benchmarking and in particular bench marking with Scotland should be considered.

Following the discussion it was it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the categorisation of Vale schools be noted.
- (2) T H A T Progress Panel meetings at the identified primary schools be conducted.
- (3) T H A T the excellence identified in Vale schools be presented to future Scrutiny Committee meetings.
- (4) T H A T a programme of work in respect of recommendations 2 and 3 above be presented for consideration by the Committee.
- (5) T H A T a copy of the report and the Committee's recommendations be referred to Cabinet advising of the Committee's intentions to continue to monitor Barry Comprehensive School, (recognising that the position at Barry Comprehensive is starting to improve but that further monitoring will be undertaken) and the programme of work to be prepared as outlined in 2 and 3 above.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In recognition of the content contained therein.
- (2&3) To facilitate Members' role in promoting accelerated progress in identified schools and in recognising excellence in Vale schools.
- (4) For Committee consideration.
- (5) To apprise Cabinet."

Attached as Appendix – [Report to Scrutiny Committee \(Lifelong Learning\): 8th February, 2016](#)