

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 9TH MAY, 2016

REFERENCE FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (LIFELONG LEARNING): 18TH APRIL, 2016

“ INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PROGRESS PANEL MEETING (DLS) –

The Chairman presented the report and commenced by advising Committee that the Panel had determined that progress at Barry Comprehensive School continued to be made. The Panel had acknowledged that the school had achieved improved results in 2015 and that the school had an effective system for pupil tracking and the Panel had been reasonably confident that most targets would be met in 2016.

The School Progress Panel meeting for Barry Comprehensive School comprised Councillors N.P. Hodges (Chairman of the Panel), Councillor R.A. Penrose and Dr. C. Brown (Co-Opted Member of the Scrutiny Committee) with Councillor C.P.J. Elmore (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools), Mr. G. McNamara (Headteacher), Mrs. K. Beaudette (Chairman of Governors), Mr. A. Thompson (Deputy Headteacher), Mrs. A. Forte (Vice-Chairman of the School Governing Body), Ms. J. Hill (Director of Learning and Skills), Mr. M. Glavin (Head of School Improvement and Inclusion) and Mr. G. Davies (Scrutiny Support Officer) in attendance.

The report highlighted that following the 2013 external examination results in each of the core subjects, the proportion of students achieving higher grades A* - C had fallen materially since the previous year including a fall from 59% to 42% in English and 52% to 43% in Mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five A* - C grades including Maths and English fell from 45% to 30%. A Panel meeting had therefore been convened on 31st January, 2014, in order to review the school's plans for improvement. The Panel determined at that time that it was uncertain as to whether improvements in 2014 would be sufficient to meet the agreed targets and recommended that a standards committee of the Governing Body be established to assist with the challenges facing the school and to monitor and evaluate school performance.

In August 2014 an improved set of results was reported. However, as the school had not been able to achieve all of the agreed performance targets a further Panel was convened on 28th April, 2015. The Chairman advised that at this meeting, the panel considered that the school had an improved level of confidence that it was working towards its targets and that the Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team had a clear view of the improvements needed and had put in place an effective plan of action. Furthermore, the Panel considered that the appointment of a new Deputy Headteacher and senior leaders had made a positive impact and was confident that the school was using tracker systems to effectively target interventions. The Panel

recognised the improvements made to strengthen the governance arrangements on the working of the Senior Leadership Team and was pleased with the Governing Body's decision to appoint a School Improvement Working Group.

On 12th October, 2015, the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) received a report which outlined school performance at Key Stage 4, following the publication of the GCSE results in August 2015. The Committee subsequently agreed that a Progress Panel should be reconvened. This took place on 24th February, 2016, and offered further opportunity for the school to demonstrate through the democratic process its ambition and commitment to rapid and sustained progress and to identify any barriers that the school may be facing which could be resolved by the actions of the Council.

The report highlighted that as part of the commitment to ensuring improvements at Barry Comprehensive School, the school had been supported by the Schools Challenge Cymru Pathways to Success programme. This involved the following:

- a Challenge Cymru Advisor working with the school in partnership with the local authority and the Central South Consortium
- partnership working with Treorchy Comprehensive School on key improvement activities linked to priority areas
- additional funding provided to support key initiatives to bring about rapid and sustained improvement
- the appointment of an Accelerated Improvement Board (AIB) that meets on a monthly basis to monitor the progress being made in respect of the key issues for improvement recommended by Estyn. Board Membership has included representation from the local authority, the primary sector and Governors.

In 2015 the school had also achieved a 93.7% attendance rate which was a 1.7% increase on the previous year's attendance. However, for the current academic year, attendance was projected to reach 94.1% which was set against a target of 94.2%.

In terms of initiatives to improve the teaching and learning at the school, this had included the development of a new coaching programme for teachers. The school's plan had also been produced to specifically support classroom practice and leadership of departments. The school had brought in a teaching and learning consultant who had been trained by Estyn which, along with peer observations and learning walks, had been used to assess teaching within the school. An important element around teacher self-evaluation was the introduction of IRIS Connect. This was a system that allowed teachers to review their lessons so that they could observe and reflect on their teaching methods. The school was working to improve and ensure senior leaders impacted on key performance indicators.

In referring to governance arrangements, the Chairman of Governors had advised the Panel of the improvements that had been made and that a review of the makeup and structure of the Governing Body had taken place. A number of committees had been formed with delegated responsibilities that separated out areas such as finance, school buildings and pupil attainment. The School Improvement Working Group was seen as an important development and had been established as a result

of a recommendation following a previous Panel visit. The school had also appointed a wellbeing sub-group that offered a lot of support to staff and pupils and was tasked with looking at safeguarding issues within the school.

A number of new Governors had also been appointed which included two new Parent Governors, two additional Local Authority appointed Governors and one new Teacher Representative.

In terms of the challenges around finances, the school had used voluntary redundancies to reduce the school's budget deficits and in 2014/15 the school had also made some compulsory redundancies.

In referring to the school's Challenge Cymru funding, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that approximately £140,000 had been provided for improvement priorities together with a focus on sustainability.

Estyn had also indicated that they would not return to the school until the results of the teacher assessments and the external examinations had taken place. In response to a query the Director further advised that good progress was currently being made in the area of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals.

In referring to staff turnover and changes, a query was raised as to how the school would cope with these changes, and in particular referred to the recent appointment of the Head of School Inclusion to the Consortium in June. The Director stated that the department was currently going through a handover process and a management review was also being undertaken. She however confirmed that she would ensure that close input was maintained with the school during this period and that regular contact between internal officers from the Vale and the Consortium continued.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools, with permission to speak, stated that although there was a considerable way to go with the school the school had never the less been robustly challenged and that there had been rapid improvement which could be evidenced. Both the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher had steered the new changes and there were improved outcomes for pupils. In his view, the school had certainly felt a very different place today than it had been three years previous and the Welsh Government programme for the school had also worked in their favour.

In summing up, the Chairman stated that there had been a number of changes at the school and the Panel was keen to ensure that the useful links with Treorchy Comprehensive and Cardiff High Schools continued to be maintained. The Panel also recognised the input and support provided by Schools Challenge Cymru and again was keen for this to be maintained.

Finally, it was noted that a follow up visit would be considered some time during the Autumn term 2016 following the publication of the GCSE results in August. These results would be the subject of further reports to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee following which it would be determined whether a follow up visit would be required. It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Scrutiny School Progress Panel findings as detailed in paragraphs 34 to 39 of the report be accepted.
- (2) T H A T an update report be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the Autumn following the GCSE results in August 2016.
- (3) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet for consideration and / or approval.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To apprise Committee of the findings of the Progress Panel.
- (2) To monitor progress.
- (3) For Cabinet’s consideration.”

Attached - [Report to Scrutiny Committee \(Lifelong Learning\) - 18th April, 2016](#)