

**EDUCATION
SCRUTINY REPORT
SCHOOL SCRUTINY PANEL**

County Councillors: D. R. Jones (Lead Member)
On behalf of the Education Scrutiny Group

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF REPORT: May 2016

STATUS OF REPORT: DRAFT

Background

Education falls within the remit of the People Scrutiny Committee and has a working group comprised of members of that Committee which has been in place since June 2012. The Chair of People Scrutiny Committee is Lead Member of the Education Scrutiny Group (ESG).

Since 2014 Powys has been part of the ERW regional consortium of six local authorities which work together to agree a regional business plan and strategy to deliver school improvement services. The Lead Member and one other Member attend twice yearly meetings with the Members from the other five ERW authorities.

It became apparent from speaking with Members from other ERW authorities that in some other areas Scrutiny Members were undertaking direct school scrutiny. The approaches were different in the different authorities with some scrutiny groups visiting schools (where the visits had started when there was concern regarding the school modernisation process) to schools being brought before the full Scrutiny Committee.

The Lead Member also noted that Estyn were keen that scrutiny should start to take a more proactive role in calling schools to account in respect of their standards.

Training was arranged in June 2015 for the Education Scrutiny Group on performance, leadership and provision with a focus on evaluating performance and the characteristics of schools causing concern. Questioning techniques were also covered. The training was provided by a former Estyn Inspector.

Process

- Chair of People Scrutiny Committee, in conjunction with Head of Schools to decide which schools to be scrutinised based on
 - Estyn Inspection outcome
 - Autumn term visit outcome
 - Financial situation
- Scrutiny Officer to write to Head teacher and Chair of Governors on behalf of the Chair of People Scrutiny Committee requesting attendance
- Panel of 5 Members plus reserve to be chosen (School Scrutiny Panel)
- Briefing to Panel from Scrutiny Officer on
 - Core data information
 - Estyn Inspection Report
 - Autumn Term visit report, school action plan and half termly reports on progress against school action plan (Schools Service to provide)
 - School budget (if an issue)
- Pre-meeting of School Scrutiny Panel with Challenge Advisor to provide professional guidance and advice on reports being scrutinised and in particular to hone questions and identify key areas/themes on which to focus.
- Head Teacher and Chair of Governors attend meeting to discuss standards, performance and if appropriate action plan in response to adverse Estyn Inspection – meeting observed by representatives from Schools Service (Head of Schools Service and Senior Challenge Advisor)

- Member scrutiny and support – challenge poor performance and recognise good performance.
 - Outcome reported by way of a letter from the Chair of the Working Group to Head Teacher and Chair of Governors to include:
 - Recommendations
 - Observations
 - Opportunities for shared learning
- Also to be copied to Education Scrutiny Group and Schools Service.

Progress

Since the summer of 2015 the following schools have been brought before the School Scrutiny Panel:

8 th June 2015	Builth County Primary School
3 rd July 2015	Llandrindod High School
11 th November 2015	Llandrindod County Primary School (Cefnlllys)
18 th November 2015	Ysgol Bro Hyddgen
7 th March 2016	Builth High School

A copy of the outcome letters to all of these schools is attached at Appendix A

Review

On 29th February 2016 the Education Scrutiny Group met to review the progress made by those schools which have attended School Scrutiny Panel. The Group also review the progress made by those schools in Powys which are currently assessed by Estyn as requiring Special Measures.

The outcome of this meeting is as follows:

Schools which have attended School Scrutiny Panel

Builth County Primary School

That the half termly monitoring reports of Builth Primary School be reviewed in conjunction with their provisional results in June 2016 when a view will be taken as to whether or not it is necessary to ask the school to attend a further meeting with the School Scrutiny Panel.

Llandrindod County Primary School

The school is working with the local authority to make improvements. ESG will review the half termly monitoring reports of Llandrindod CP School in conjunction with their provisional results in June 2016 when a view will be taken as to whether or not it is necessary to ask the school to attend a further meeting with the School Scrutiny Panel.

Ysgol Bro Hyddgen

That the Head teacher, Chair, Vice-Chair and all the LEA Governors of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen be invited to a meeting of the School Scrutiny Panel in the first half of the summer term 2016. (It has since been agreed to consider the results of the summer 2016 exams before coming to a view as to whether or not it is necessary to ask the school to attend a further meeting with the School Scrutiny Panel)

Schools which have attended School Scrutiny Panel and are in Special Measures

Llandrindod High School

To review the Autumn Core Visit and half termly monitoring visit papers before coming to a view as to whether or not it is necessary to ask the school to attend a further meeting with the School Scrutiny Panel.

Schools in Special Measures

Brecon High School

That Brecon High School remains on the list of potential schools to attend School Scrutiny Panel when the summer programme for the Panel is considered.

Llanbister County Primary School

The outcome letter from a recent inspection is imminent and therefore this school was not discussed. The outcome letter will be considered when School Scrutiny Panel next reviews these schools.

Builth High School

Builth High School were called to School Scrutiny Panel on 7th March 2016 after the review meeting on 29th January 2016.

Summary

Powys has 12 secondary schools of which three are in the Estyn Category of Special Measure (Brecon High School, Builth High School and Llandrindod High School) and two remain in the category of Estyn Monitoring (Newtown High School and Caereinion). Across Wales there are only seven secondary schools in Special Measures. This position raises questions both regarding the level of support and challenge that the schools receive both from the ERW Challenge Advisory service and from the individual school Governing Bodies and regarding school leadership. From the School Scrutiny sessions which have been held the Panel has concluded that a theme of issues regarding Governing Body effectiveness and Challenge Advisory Service capacity is of concern.

The School Scrutiny Panel will continue to ask schools to attend where standards indicate that performance is not at the required level.

Conclusion

A priority in the One Powys Plan is '*All children and young people are supported to achieve their full potential*'.

The position of three Powys Secondary Schools in Special Measures and two in Estyn Monitoring is of extreme concern to scrutiny.

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Education and the Cabinet take the necessary steps to ensure that rapid and sustained improvement in school performance is evidenced in those schools which are underperforming.

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder assures Cabinet that the ERW Challenge Advisory service is providing the appropriate level of support and challenge to Powys Schools and that he is kept continually advised of schools causing concern

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder provides assurance that School Governing Bodies provide the appropriate level of support and challenge to their individual school.

It is apparent that there is far from equal access to the One Powys Plan priority for many pupils. Cabinet are urged to take the appropriate action to ensure that the education provided to all the pupils of Powys is of the highest standard and that where it is apparent that these standards are falling short then appropriate action within the powers available to the LA be taken to address this.

Confidential background papers used to prepare report:

- **Outcomes from following School Scrutiny Panels:**
 - **8th June 2015 Builth Wells CP School**
 - **3rd July 2015 Llandrindod Wells High School**
 - **11th November 2015 Llandrindod CP School**
 - **18th November 2015 Ysgol Bro Hyddgen**
 - **7th March 2016 Builth Wells High School**