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Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.



Ms B Williams MS

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Ein Cyf/Our Ref:
PJM/RG

Eich Cyf/ Your Ref:
250399

Dyddiad/Date:
14th April 2025

Annwyl/Dear Ms Williams

In response to your request dated 19th March 2025 – **School Improvement and Learner Attainment**, please see responses below to your three areas of interest.

1. The future of school improvement arrangements and how the Welsh Government, local authorities and relevant partners work together to deliver the highest possible standards of education. (For example, the School Improvement Partnership programme, which is developing a new approach in place of the regional consortia, as referred to by the Cabinet Secretary for Education's statements of 17 October 2024, 5 November.2024 and 29 January 2025.

The new school improvement arrangements in RCT have been discussed and considered in detail for the last two terms, autumn 24 and spring 25. These discussions have been a collaborative venture with colleagues from Cardiff, Merthyr and Bridgend with support to these discussions being provided by a commissioned consultant that was brokered by all the Directors of the LAs involved.

The main aim of the meetings over this time was to determine what a localised school improvement service would look like and how each LA could work together and support each other to avoid these new services becoming insular and inward looking.

RCT has developed its own documents for its new school improvement service and these are evolving over time.

In spring term 2025, senior officers from the local authority were involved in a joint meeting with colleagues from Welsh Government, Professor Dylan Jones, Simon Day (ISOS) and Alun Jones (Education Improvement Team) and a representative sample of headteachers as part of the School Improvement Partnership Programme to discuss

Paul Mee

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the proposed school improvement approach and how schools across the LA were currently addressing weaknesses in literacy.

The meeting was very productive and Welsh Government were pleased with the on-going work of the local authority on its proposed school improvement model.

2. Educational outcomes of learners and gaps in attainment between groups of pupils.

Current assessment procedures for all schools aligned to curriculum for Wales enables all schools to devise and develop their own approaches to track educational outcomes and identify gaps in learning for the 3-14 year olds. At KS4, educational outcomes are assessed and analysed via GCSE or equivalent qualifications achieved by all learners.

In both the above cases it is challenging for the local authority to have an accurate overview of all pupils' achievement due to the lack of standardised information available. This can impact on improvement planning and the effective prioritisation of resources.

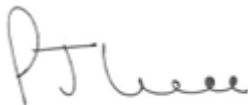
3. Factors impacting on educational progress such as pupil absence, deprivation, funding and workforce capacity.

Obtaining accurate and verified data on learner progress is essential if we are to effectively evaluate the quality of educational provision in our schools across the local authority. The following are potential barriers to achieving positive educational outcomes:

- The absence of national attendance targets across the system
- Stronger national stance, policies and campaigns are needed to support the importance and value of being in school
- The level and complexity of need within our communities and schools is increasing and this presents with funding challenges in schools and at local authority level due to the extensive investment that is required to support ALN provision growth.

- Behavioural and mental health challenges post pandemic continues to persist, and significant and further investment in early intervention and prevention is required to reduce reliance on statutory services and support
- Restricted access to specialist services is a significant barrier (e.g. CAMHS, early years services, health etc). Community focused school developments require increased funding to support the co-location of services on school sites and greater access to specialist services in local communities
- Policies on EHE require strengthening, particularly where there are significant concerns in relation to the quality of education provided in the home context and the reasons for opting to home educate
- Families living in poverty not applying for FSM eligibility has an adverse impact on families and school funding
- Grant funding terms and conditions can still be overly bureaucratic, restrictive and may not reflect local needs and priorities
- The workforce capacity is stretched, particularly in the Welsh sector and key areas in secondary schools. Initial teacher education needs an urgent review to ensure it is meeting current and future needs
- There needs to be a national approach to succession planning to ensure that we have the numbers of staff required coming through the system.
- The number of staff leaving education is concerning and there needs to be a thorough analysis of why this is happening resulting in a clear strategy to stem this flow.

Yn gywir/Yours sincerely,



Paul Mee,
Chief Executive, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council