

Report to:

Children, Young People and Education Committee National Assembly for Wales

September 2015

Foreword

GwE, the fully bilingual regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales, works alongside and on behalf of the Local Authorities of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Anglesey to develop excellent schools across the region and to improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring effective leadership at all levels and quality teaching and learning in all classrooms. By providing focused and supportive challenge and challenging support, GwE's fundamental objective is to develop a self-improving system which trusts schools and their leaders at every level to guide us on that journey. At best, close collaboration between schools can be extremely challenging and leads us to the realisation that perhaps what we perceived as being excellent practice is not in fact excellent. Schools need to improve themselves for the sake of the learners in their care; it is up to GwE to ensure that this happens.

Governance

The Inter Authority Agreement between the six North Wales Authorities defines the governance arrangements for the GwE Joint Committee, including its Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers. In doing so it also identifies which matters are specifically reserved to the individual partner authorities to determine. The terms of reference and delegated powers of the Joint Committee are:

- i. to promote joint working in the delivery of the Service through;
- ii. facilitating constructive partnership working;
- iii. engaging with key interested bodies and stakeholders when appropriate; and
- iv. carrying out such other activities calculated to facilitate, or which are conducive to the successful delivery of the Service; and
- v. to oversee the management of the Service and ensure that the Service is provided and performs in accordance with the expectations of the Partner Authorities as reflected in the Full Business Case, Inter Authority Agreement and agreed Annual Business Plan;
- vi. to approve the budget for the Service on an annual basis;
- vii. to approve the business plan for the Service on an annual basis;
- viii. to monitor and manage the risks associated with the Service;
- ix. to ratify requests from the Service for additional budget funding from individual Councils;
- x. to approve the staff structure of the Service;
- xi. to appoint the Managing Director of the Service;
- xii. to decide on disciplinary action against the Managing Director; and
- xiii. where required, to determine or arrange for the determination of appeals in relation to Human Resources matters.

The following matters are specifically reserved for individual Cabinet decision:

- i. approval of inter-Council partnership governance arrangements;
- ii. increase of budget over agreed Council contributions;
- iii. procuring the necessary audit and assurance checks; and
- iv. termination of the Partnership.

Vision

Our vision is to develop a world class system of education where every pupil within the region will be able to access consistently high quality teaching in all classrooms and where all schools, wherever their geographical location, will be led by excellent leaders. To achieve our vision, GwE will work with all stakeholders to robustly and effectively support, challenge and monitor performance at all levels and ensure that the categorisation framework is used consistently to target support in proportion to the need that is identified.

The national improvement plan, “Qualified for Life” is an indication of a commitment to the concept of a self-improving education system, and encapsulates the vision of school leaders working together, taking charge of their future and development. Whilst those within our schools must take responsibility for raising standards within their own establishments, GwE is trying to nurture a mentality of mutually celebrating the achievements of an entire system - ***“I want every school to be a good school, but I want my school to be that little bit better”.***

Priority Outcomes

The priority outcomes identified in this document have been agreed by all 6 constituent local authorities and they reflect the region’s commitment to addressing national and local priorities. They will direct the work of GwE and demonstrate how we will implement the expectations of the National Model and the requirements of the North Wales Partnership Agreement. They also reflect the findings of the WAO/Estyn thematic reports, published in June 2015. There is a clear emphasis in our approach and methodology on developing a self-improving system where Challenge Advisors, LA Officers, leaders and schools will robustly support, challenge and share best practice. Rigorous quality assurance procedures will be applied to ensure effective delivery across and within the three geographical hubs.

Delivering on Priority Outcomes

GwE will improve learner outcomes through:

- providing effective support and challenge to schools [through the deployment of Challenge Advisers, seconded Headteachers/SLT members, Associate Partners and expert practitioners]
- facilitating and promoting effective school to school partnership support
- delivering a training programme to promote and develop effective leadership, teaching and learning with particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills and the needs of learners from more deprived backgrounds
- collaborating with and supporting the LAs in triggering formal interventions in schools where performance does not meet the required standards

In order to do this, GwE will work towards a clear set of educational goals whilst also improving its internal organisational structures so that it is better able to offer sustainable support to schools across the region.

Response to Estyn and Welsh Audit Office recommendations

Overview

- GwE's response to the recommendations of both reports are built into GwE's 3 year Business Plan and are identified as priorities for year 1
- It is recognised by Estyn and WAO that both reports present an early view of the progress of the arrangements to achieve school improvement through regional education consortia and that regional consortia have responded well to the feedback received and that some aspects of the findings are already being addressed

Response to specific recommendations

R1 (Estyn): Improve performance management arrangements

R3 (WAO): To develop more collaborative relationships for the school improvement system

R5 (WAO): To improve the effectiveness of governance and management of regional consortia

- GwE has developed a new business plan to include 3 year milestones where detailed action steps, outcomes and costings are identified for each priority.
- The priorities identified in the Business Plan will be fed into a revised formal risk register and monitored by SLT, Management Board, Joint Committee and Advisory Board on a rotational basis.
- A new strategic approach has been agreed with Headteachers which will lead to greater autonomy and collaborative activity for our best schools
- GwE will continue to hone its self-evaluation processes to ensure more effective use of performance data.
- GwE is currently developing a more robust data management system to facilitate more effective management and analysis of data across schools.
- GwE is promoting a more effective tracking system at regional and local level.
- Targets and progress data from all schools will be thoroughly monitored during the school year. Stage 1 will be macro level data. Individual Challenge Advisers will be privy to pupil level data and tracking.
- All Performance Management objectives will be closely aligned with Business Plan priorities.
- Line management and accountability structures have been re-aligned.
- All CA's will have objectives which are aligned with quantitative improvement targets for link schools.
- Clear structures and guidelines for performance management of staff are in place, and a cycle of bespoke training to support improvement and consistency has been developed.

- Paired working/shadowing between Challenge Advisers is now operational.
- Capability procedures have been agreed and training provided for SLT.

R2 (Estyn): Secure greater consistency in the quality of Challenge Advisers' evaluations of schools, particularly in relation to teaching and leadership

- GwE is developing robust structures to ensure consistency.
- Challenge Advisers' reports are scrutinized through hub line management arrangements and SLT and regional team meetings.
- Good practice is shared within and across hubs.
- All reports can be accessed by all Challenge Advisers, with excellent practice tagged.
- Training and development programme is in place for all Challenge Advisers.
- Categorisation: GwE is delivering a training programme to ensure alignment with national expectations and cross-hub consistency of approach
- Expectations that relevant experience of high level management is key to all appointments.
- Identification of 3 key areas as basis for lead portfolio role for Challenge Advisers [Teaching & Learning; Leadership; Assessment and Tracking]

R3 (Estyn): Develop clearer strategies to address the impact of deprivation upon education outcomes and ensure that all actions are coherent in this purpose

- Strategic lead has been identified and regional strategy drafted (copy shared with WG)
- Priorities and key actions have been identified.
- Regional plan for supporting LAC has been developed, approved by WG and implemented by lead officer.
- Initial identification of Co-Leading Schools (CLS) for reducing the impact of poverty is complete.
- National Conference on the Impact of Deprivation has been arranged by GwE for the 9th November. The minister has been invited.
- Challenge Advisors have received training on successful strategies for addressing impact of deprivation on standards.
- Tackling deprivation is included as a standard item for SLT meetings

R4 (Estyn): Improve the quality and range of support to schools (school to school strategies)

R4 (WAO): To build effective leadership and attract top talent

- Agreed overarching strategy is now in place.
- Cross sector and cross authority programmes are being facilitated [including links with HE and local businesses] and shared at regional conference.
- Agreed Co-leading Schools Strategy [rolled out from summer 2015].
- Co-construction with WG to identify Successful Futures Pioneer schools and New Deal Pioneer schools.
- Revised GwE model for supporting/challenging schools will further promote the development of a self-improving school system.
- Leadership Development Programme operational.

R4 (Estyn): Improve the quality and range of support to schools (non-core subjects)

- GwE development programme is being rolled out to improve the leading of teaching and learning which will provide impact in core and non-core subjects.
- School to school working is being developed through these programmes.
- The co-leading schools model will underpin the development of non-core subject support.
- The development of Green and Yellow schools providing mutual support and challenge will assist with underpinning the work needed across non-core subjects.
- GwE is developing an index of effective practice across the region, and will in due course include all subjects. In due course, GwE will secure a quality assurance system and include schools in the index.

R5 (Estyn): Include diocesan authorities effectively in the strategic planning and evaluation of regional services

- Estyn report acknowledges that GwE was the only region already actively engaging the diocesan authorities.
- During the establishment of GwE, diocesan representatives from Wrexham, St Asaph and Bangor were key stakeholders and consulted at various stages.
- Governance Structure includes diocesan representative as co-opted member of Joint Committee [serving for maximum term of 2 years] .

R6 (Estyn): Local authorities should support their regional consortium to develop medium-term business plans and ensure that all plans take account of the needs of their local schools

- GwE Business Plan will include 3 year milestones and each section will include clear references to delivery required in each LA (in addition to any GwE core provision)

R7 (Estyn): Local authorities should develop formal working arrangements between scrutiny committees in their consortium in order to scrutinise the work and impact of their regional consortium.

R1 (WAO): To clarify the nature and operation of consortia

R5 (WAO): To improve the effectiveness of governance and management of regional consortia

- GwE Advisory Board has been established and is operational.
- There is a need to further hone role of the GwE Joint Committee which includes active representation from each of the partner authorities.
- Agree rolling scrutiny programme for LA/Joint Committee.
- Ensure robust challenge for GwE senior staff in scrutiny meetings.
- Ensure User Group provides both support and challenge to GwE senior staff.
- The North Wales local authorities have now clarified that GwE is a jointly provided service and not a commissioned service.

GwE and the six local authorities in North Wales now look forward to implementing in full the recommendations of the two reports and are aware that a further, detailed Estyn inspection on a yet to be published framework is likely during the spring or summer terms of 2016. This inspection will doubtlessly consider GwE's progress towards delivering the recommendation of the two reports referred to in this paper.

Huw Foster Evans

Managing Director GwE
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