

## FURTHER DEVELOPING PEER ENGAGEMENT MODELS FOR NORTH WALES

This document sets out a potential blueprint for the development of meaningful peer engagement models for the North Wales region through a pilot peer engagement programme.

Welsh Government's vision for an evaluation, improvement and accountability system is one that is fair, coherent, proportionate, transparent, and based on shared values for Welsh education. The National Mission commits us to work with Welsh Government and other key stakeholders to establish new evaluation and improvement arrangements at all levels. These arrangements will need to be robust and strong enough to bring about the required school improvements. There is a clear expectation that within these arrangements schools develop not only the required capacity and skills to effectively challenge themselves, but also the ability to work collaboratively and systemically in a school improvement model founded on professional peer engagement. The adopted regional approach will form part of the wider *National Improvement and Evaluation Framework* and will build upon existing models whilst also developing new innovative models and partnerships.

On the 22 January 2019 at Venue Cymru, Llandudno, GwE and the six regional local authorities undertook the first steps of a consultation process with head teacher representation around the various aspects of the *National Reform Journey*. Over 400 participants were given extended opportunities to discuss how best key stakeholders could support and challenge each other to ensure that we effectively contribute to the national mission. In terms of developing a regional framework for peer-to-peer engagement and support, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions and inquiries. Specifically:

- What should be the underlying principles for an effective model?
- How should peer school groups/clusters be determined? Should we adopt a common approach for all schools, irrespective of their current 'support category'? Or would a differentiated approach offer a more viable option for the short term?
- How do we ensure that the work undertaken within a peer group/cluster engages collaboration throughout the year and is not focussed on an 'annual event'?
- How could GwE most effectively support the process?
- The majority of regional schools are already engaging in cluster and/or peer support models with other schools either within their sector or cross-sector. How do we best align the 'peer engagement and authentication model' with other collaborative ventures currently being undertaken?
- What are the professional learning needs to develop a robust 'peer engagement and authentication model'? What is the most effective way to address these needs?

Further discussions at local levels are planned to validate the synthesis of issues and areas identified. However, numerous common themes and key messages permeated the responses from stakeholders in both primary and secondary sectors. Namely that:

- a peer review approach should be adopted regionally to further drive progress towards a self-improving system
- the peer-review model should not be developed to deliver a *pseudo-inspection* system
- all stakeholders should work effectively together to ensure that we create the right conditions for effective peer review
- we should agree and adopt a regional set of principles and technical language for our model
- we should agree framework parameters' which will allow flexibility for schools to operate a range of models

- schools should have the freedom and flexibility to choose their peers
- the model should involve peer engagement at all levels within a school
- the model should promote trust, honesty, transparency and professional confidence
- engagement should be a supportive and sustainable process and not a one-off imposition event
- the model should support a cultural shift towards collegiate responsibility

GwE and the six regional local authorities want to work with schools to establish a regional peer engagement model which fully reflects the principles and values that have been identified by Head teachers.

**We therefore invite expressions of interest from groups of schools to participate in a peer engagement pilot programme.**

We envisage taking a dual approach to the pilot:

1. encouraging groups of schools to develop models for peer review which fully reflects the principles and values identified above and which will meet the defined criteria set; or by
2. adopting a structured approach to peer review through working with GwE and an external partner to hone and evolve a model which meets our needs locally.

We would be looking **to support and provide funding** for a variety of cluster models such as those working across small rural schools, large urban schools, cross-sector, cross-authority or other innovative models. We will discuss with each group which of the above approaches is their preferred option **after receiving an initial expression of interest to participate** in the pilot programme. Potential funding to support each group will also be discussed following receipt of expressions of interest.

We firmly believe that such a pilot programme could ensure that the North Wales region takes a national lead on shaping and framing an effective peer-engagement framework and model. By taking ownership over developments we can also ensure that our peer engagement model genuinely reflects local need and fully supports the development of a culture based on openness, trust and collegiality across the system.

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