

Complete Agenda



Tuag at Ragoriaeth
Towards Excellence



Meeting

GWE JOINT COMMITTEE

Date and Time

1.30 pm, WEDNESDAY, 15TH JULY, 2020

Location

Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Contact Point

Eirian Roberts

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(DISTRIBUTED 09/07/20)

GWE JOINT COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Voting Members

Councillors

Councillor Julie Fallon	Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Meirion Jones	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts	Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Ian Roberts	Flintshire County Council
Councillor Phil Wynn	Wrexham County Borough Council
Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams	Gwynedd Council

Co-opted Non-voting Members

Rosalind Williams	Church of Wales
Haf Williams	Primary Schools Representative
Claire Armitstead	Secondary School Representative
Jonathan Morgan	Special Schools Representative
Alison Fisher	Governor Representative

Non-voting Officers

Rhys Howard Hughes	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Dr Lowri Brown	Conwy County Borough Council
Karen Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Claire Homard	Flintshire County Council
Ian Roberts	Wrexham County Borough Council
Garem Jackson	Gwynedd Council

Officers in Attendance

Arwyn Thomas	GwE Managing Director
Dafydd L. Edwards	Host Authority
Sion Huws	Host Authority
Susan Owen Jones	GwE Business Manager
Annwen Morgan	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Alwyn Jones	GwE Assistant Director
Gareth Williams	GwE Advisory Board Chairman

Observer

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - 20 MAY, 2020 5 - 8

(attached)

5. THE JOINT COMMITTEE'S FINAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020 9 - 46

To consider the report of the Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council (attached)

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE GWE JOINT-COMMITTEE 47 - 64

To consider the report of the GwE Managing Director (attached)

7. GWE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 65 - 116

To consider the report of the GwE Managing Director (attached)

8. GWE WORK PROGRAMME 117 - 127

To consider the report of the GwE Assistant Director (attached)

9. BLENDED LEARNING 128 - 153

To consider the report of the GwE Assistant Director (attached)

10. RE-STARTING LEARNING MODEL FOR NORTH WALES 154 - 163

To consider the report of the GwE Managing Director and Chair of the GwE Management Board (attached)

GWE JOINT COMMITTEE 20/05/20

Present:

Councillors: Phil Wynn (Chair - Wrexham County Borough Council), Meirion Jones (Anglesey County Council), Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council) and Cemlyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

Co-opted non-voting Members: Haf Williams (Primary Schools' Representative), Claire Armitstead (Secondary Schools' Representative), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative).

Non-voting Officers: Rhys Howard Hughes (Anglesey County Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Ian Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), Vicky Barlow (Flintshire County Council) and Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council).

Officers present: Arwyn Thomas (Managing Director, GwE), Sion Huws (on behalf of Gwynedd Council Monitoring Officer, Host Authority), Dafydd Edwards (Gwynedd Council Head of Finance, Host Authority), Hywyn Jones (Group Accountant, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Susan Owen Jones (Business Manager, GwE), Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive, Anglesey Council), Alwyn Jones (Assistant Director, GwE), Gareth Williams (Chair of GwE Advisory Board), Annes Sion (Gwynedd Council Democracy Team Leader, Host Authority) and Bethan Roberts (Performance Management Manager, GwE).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Coun. Huw Hilditch-Roberts and Claire Homard.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received by any member present.

3. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was confirmed that the record presented appropriately reflected the meeting on 26 February 2020.

5. GWE'S FINAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20 - REVENUE OUTTURN

DECISION

The Income Account and Revenue Expenditure for 2019/20 was noted and accepted as noted in Appendix 1, along with a commentary on the main differences between the budget and true expenditure presented for information, in accordance with the 'usual' arrangement in the form of an out-turn report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and the decision noted. The main differences were highlighted between the report in February and that presented to the meeting. It was noted that there was a change of (£217,253) to what was reported in quarter 3, namely an estimated overspend of £27,635. The main reasons for this were outlined namely that grant funded staff secondments and time contributions of core staff to new initiatives and projects had led to an underspend. Because of Covid-19, it was stated that a large number of meetings had not taken place in March, resulting in less income. It was noted that the impact of this change is that the net underspend increases the reserves to £480,204 at the end of 2019/20. It was added that a report will be made at a subsequent meeting to consider possible use of the reserves following the current crisis.

GwE's Managing Director thanked the finance team for their work.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 : CUTS TO THE REGIONAL GRANTS

DECISION

The report was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented for information purposes. As a result of the Welsh Government's response to Covid-19, it was noted that GwE has been asked to find 3% savings from the total School Improvement Grant allocations for 2020/21.

It was noted that realising these savings would be challenging, however that GwE and local authority officers are working closely to manage these savings.

Comments arising from the discussion

- GwE was thanked for their work and a question was raised regarding GwE's recovery arrangements. It was noted that GwE needs to adapt during this period.
- It was noted that GwE had kept in daily contact with schools during the initial period. It was added that remote learning would have a prominent role in this period and that the provision will need to be reviewed to see how it can be used in future.
- It was emphasised that the 3% savings would come from GwE itself and from the local authorities in an attempt to minimise impact on schools.
- It was added that GwE would send information once a confirmation letter arrived from the Government. The Host Authority's Head of Finance added that the 3% would need to come from somewhere, and that this crisis would have a knock-on effect on other grants, therefore to prepare for more cuts before long. It was added that there would be a budget announcement next week that could provide a better indication of the cuts facing us in moving forwards.

7. QUALIFICATIONS

DECISION

The report was accepted and it was agreed to organise a meeting with WJEC to further discuss the matter.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and the proposed process was outlined. It was noted that the Joint Committee needed to consider the implications of the Minister's decision to close schools and the subsequent decision not to go ahead with the 2020 examination series for awarding grades for GCSE, A Level, Skills Challenge Certificate and other vocational qualifications; and to consider implications for 2021 summer examinations.

It was expressed that the process outlined was unfair for pupils, particularly if the school is on an improvement journey. It was noted that consultation will take place however will not be released until mid-June.

It was added that schools want to know whether there is a change in the syllabus in order to start preparations for next year.

Comments arising from the discussion

- It was emphasised that the statistics model was utterly unfair on pupils, as well as schools. It was added that there were concerns for next year too as this year's situation will have an impact on pupils and will therefore affect their results next year.
- It was noted that this period had been very difficult for pupils and it had become evident that pupils need fairness and support.
- Concern was expressed about year 10 and 12 in particular.
- The need to organise a meeting with WJEC to discuss the matter further was noted.
- In terms of examination costs, it was asked whether schools could obtain a portion of the money back. It was noted that this needs to be discussed at the meeting with WJEC.

8. TRANSITION BACK INTO SCHOOL

DECISION

It was decided to approve a regional approach, whereby GwE, local authorities and schools work in partnership for the next step in adapting education in Wales.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that the intention is to seek approval for the Local Authorities, GwE and schools to work together to create a framework of risk assessments and policies/draft guidance, focusing on various areas which schools need to consider and develop, once schools are instructed by the Government to reopen to more pupils.

It was noted that the British Prime Minister had noted that many English schools were reopening early June however that Wales had not set a date yet. It was emphasised that GwE's Management Board had discussed the matter and had noted the need for schools, GwE and the local authorities to be collaborating and supporting one another in moving forwards.

Remote learning, it was stressed, will continue for a long time therefore forward planning is needed for this difficult period. The framework would look at issues such as human resources, remote learning etc. Although the framework is at a regional level, it was added that it would be adapted locally. The information would be kept in one place; however, schools could add and edit documents due to the ever-changing nature of the situation.

Comments arising from the discussion

- It was emphasised that communication is crucial, and with the next period bound to pose enormous challenges, it is vital that everybody works together.
- It was noted that this would be a partnership. The need to work together and achieve one voice and consistency across the region was noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.15 pm

CHAIRMAN

Agenda Item 5

GwE: Joint Committee 15/07/20



MEETING	GwE Joint Committee
DATE	15 July 2020
TITLE	The Joint Committee's Final Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020
PURPOSE	To submit the Statement of Accounts, in the 'statutory' format, duly certified, but subject to audit
RECOMMENDATION	To receive and note the information
AUTHOR	Dafydd L Edwards, Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council

1. STATUTORY FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 There are specific accounting and audit reporting requirements for Joint Committees.
- 1.2 Section 12 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 states that a joint committee of two or more (local) authorities is a local government body, and Section 13 of the Act requires such bodies to maintain accounts subject to audit by an external auditor approved by the Auditor General for Wales.
- 1.3 Although they are not independent legal entities, for the purposes of keeping accounts and being audited, a joint committee is separately subject to the same regulations as other local councils.
- 1.4 Gwynedd Council is the host Council responsible for meeting the accounting responsibilities and reporting on the financial matters of GwE's Joint Committee.

- 1.5 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 require all Joint Committees to prepare year-end accounts. Where the turnover exceeds £2.5million, a statement of accounts must be prepared in accordance with the CIPFA code for the Joint Committee.

2. ACCOUNTS FOR 2019/20

- 2.1 Simple summary “outturn” report regarding the 2019/20 accounts were presented to the Joint Committee on 20 May 2020. That report was more useful for internal / management purposes, while the Statement of Accounts is more suited for external / governance purposes.
- 2.2 The final net underspend for 2019/20 is (£189,618). The “outturn” report presented to the Joint Committee on 20 May 2020 detailed the reasons for the net underspend and outlined the intended use of the balance.
- 2.3 **The Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 (subject to audit) is submitted herewith as Appendix A, duly certified** by Dafydd L Edwards, the Statutory Finance Officer for the Joint Committee. This statement is in a standard statutory format and is essential from a “governance” perspective.
- 2.4 The Statement of Accounts is already subject to an audit by Deloitte, Gwynedd Council’s external auditors appointed by the Auditor General for Wales. Due to the crisis, Welsh Local Government audits will not be finalised until September this year. The Auditors will then produce an “ISA 260” report, detailing Deloitte’s main findings, and issued by the Wales Audit Office in the Auditor General’s name, to be presented to the GwE Joint Committee on 15 September 2020.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Joint Committee is asked to receive and note GwE’s Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 (subject to audit).

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Author of the report.

GwE Joint Committee
(Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd,
Anglesey and Wrexham Councils)

STATEMENT OF
ACCOUNTS
2019/20
(Subject to Audit)

Finance Department
Gwynedd Council
www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru

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NARRATIVE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) has been established in partnership between the six North Wales authorities, being Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council, to be accountable to the Councils and undertake the statutory function of the Councils in respect of school improvement and effectiveness. This includes the duty to monitor, challenge, provide support services for curriculum continued professional development and management of schools, and in addition provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities.

Gwynedd Council has been appointed as host authority in implementing and maintaining the service, and the Joint Committee of all the partners oversees the management of the service.

The GwE Joint Committee accounts for the year 2019/20 are presented here on pages 7 to 35. The Statements of Accounts are prepared in accordance with CIPFA's *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20*.

The Statement of Accounts consist of:-

- **Expenditure and Funding Analysis** – Whilst this is not a statutory statement, it shows how annual expenditure is used and funded in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.
- **Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement** - This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. The income and expenditure has been split between the six councils as follows for 2019/20 :

Conwy	15.30%
Denbighshire	15.26%
Flintshire	22.71%
Gwynedd	17.64%
Anglesey	10.20%
Wrexham	18.89%
Total	100%

- **Movement in Reserves Statement** – This statement shows the movement in year on the different reserves held by the Joint Committee, analysed into 'usable reserves' and 'unusable reserves'.
- **The Balance Sheet** - Sets out the financial position of the Joint Committee on 31 March 2020.
- **The Cash Flow Statement** - This statement summarises the flow of cash to and from the Joint Committee during 2019/20 for revenue and capital purposes.

These accounts are supported by this Narrative Report, the Accounting Policies and various notes to the accounts.

GwE's Vision and Priorities

GwE's vision states that they we will have:

“Outstanding schools naturally collaborating and jointly identifying direction for improvement which will deliver excellent standards and wellbeing for their pupils”.

GwE's Business plan identifies objectives set to meet its priorities, and is available at:

<https://www.gwegogledd.cymru/about-us/key-documents/?lang=en>

Financial Strategy

The annual budget is established within the context of the medium-term financial strategy, in order to ensure that the budget is preparing for the future position, rather than addressing the requirements of one year only. This medium-term planning has proven to be very beneficial to the GwE, enabling it to plan necessary savings rationally, without having to take rushed/inappropriate decisions, and establishing a regime to identify budgetary savings and cuts. GwE's Medium Term Financial plan sets out the foundation for its priorities, and is available at:

<https://democracy.cyngor.gwynedd.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?cid=243&mid=2494&ver=4>

The changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will also affect the medium term financial position of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee like other councils in Wales has worked with Welsh Government to respond to the situation in the best way possible.

2019/20 Performance

GwE reports quarterly on the performance of the service in delivering the service functions and key aims. The Annual Performance Report is available at:

<https://www.gwegogledd.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200520-GwE-Agenda.pdf>

2019/20 Financial Performance

- The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on page 8 shows that the Joint Committee's gross revenue expenditure on 'cost of services' level was £15,159k during 2019/20, with a net position of £608k.
- The financial out-turn position for 2019/20 was reported to the Joint Committee at its meeting on 20 May 2020. Joint Committee Members' approval was sought to transfer the (£190k) underspend to an earmarked reserve.
- The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the Movement in Reserves Statement on pages 8 and 9 detail the analysis in movements for the year.

TABLE I - Budget and Actual Comparison Summary (Net)

Table I provides a budgetary performance comparison at a summary level, which is detailed further in Table 2.

	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure on Operations	14,541	14,361	(180)
Income			
Council Contributions for the core service:			
Conwy	(625)	(625)	0
Denbighshire	(623)	(623)	0
Flintshire	(927)	(927)	0
Gwynedd	(720)	(720)	0
Anglesey	(417)	(417)	0
Wrexham	(772)	(772)	0
Other Income	(10,457)	(10,467)	(10)
Net (Underspend)/Overspend	0	(190)	(190)

TABLE 2 –Transposition movement between ‘Budget and Actual Comparison Summary (Net)’ (Table 1) to the Income and Expenditure format

	Performance Report (Out-turn) £'000	*Transposition Adjustment £'000	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Income & Expenditure Statement £'000
Expenditure	14,361	(180)	14,181	978	15,159
Income	(14,551)	0	(14,551)	0	(14,551)
Net Cost of Services	(190)	(180)	(370)	978	608

* The adjustments in the transposition column relate to contributions to and from reserves, and the Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis column relate to the required technical adjustments for pensions and accumulated absences.

- **Material Items of Income and Expenditure**

Related Items include :-

- (£1,800k) on pensions, being the annual remeasurement of the net defined benefit assets relating to pensions, in line with Gwynedd Pension Fund’s Actuary’s assessment (Note 16).
- £14,551k in grants and contributions and equivalent expenditure (Note 21). A decrease of £1,514k compared to 2018/19.

- **Other Issues**

- There are financial risks with the global situation. Because of this general situation, it has been necessary for the Joint Committee to take the circumstances into consideration in its financial plans, whilst maintaining a prudent level of reserves.
- Since the referendum on the UK’s membership of the European Union, there has been a degree of economic uncertainty. This is expected to last for some time and may affect some factors and financial decisions made by the Joint Committee.
- The arrival of the COVID-19 crisis presents a further financial challenge for the Joint Committee in the short and medium term.

Provisions and Reserves

The Joint Committee has provisions of £3k and earmarked reserves of £711k. These are detailed in the Balance Sheet, Movement in Reserves Statement and in Notes 9 and 14.

Pension Fund

The Joint Committee (as an employer) has a net liability from its share of the assets and liabilities of the Gwynedd Pension Fund, which has been calculated in accordance with International Accounting Standard 19. The Balance Sheet contains an assessment by the Fund’s Actuary, Hymans Robertson, of the Joint Committee’s share of the Pension Fund liability. This net liability has decreased by £600k to £8,304k in 2019/20. Refer to Note 25 for further information.

The net pension liability is a position at one point in time. Market prices can move substantially up or down in the short term and it is therefore not possible to quantify the long-term effect such movements in market prices will have on the Pension Fund. The last valuation was at 31 March 2019, with the next taking place at 31 March 2022.

Governance

GwE is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk. Further information is included within the Annual Governance Statement.

Accounting Policies

The accounting policies adopted on behalf of the Joint Committee comply with all relevant recommended accounting practices and are fully explained in the Accounting Policies set out in Note 1 of the Accounts commencing on page 12.

Changes in Accounting Policies and to the Accounts

The Joint Committee's existing accounting policies are amended only insofar as to reflect the guidance in the 2019/20 CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Statement of Accounts is available on Gwynedd Council's website www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru.

Further information relating to the accounts is available from:

Ffion Madog Evans
Senior Finance Manager
01286 679133

or

Hywyn Lewis Jones
Group Accountant
01286 679145

Finance Department
Gwynedd Council
Council Offices
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

This is part of the Council's policy of providing full information relating to the Council and the Joint Committees' affairs. In addition, interested members of the public have a statutory right to inspect the accounts before the audit is completed. The availability of the accounts for inspection is advertised on the Council's website at the appropriate time.

GwE JOINT COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

THE JOINT COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Gwynedd Council as host authority bears the responsibility for the arrangements and administration of the Joint Committee's financial affairs.

Gwynedd Council is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In Gwynedd Council, that "Section 151 Officer" is the Head of Finance. It is the Joint Committee's responsibility to manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of its resources, to safeguard its assets, and to approve the Statement of Accounts.

THE HEAD OF FINANCE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the GwE Joint Committee Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom* ("the Code").

In preparing the statement of accounts, the Head of Finance has selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently; has made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent and complied with the Code.

The Head of Finance has also kept proper accounting records which were up to date, and has taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that the Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with the arrangements set out above, and presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the GwE Joint Committee at 31 March 2020 and the Joint Committee's income and expenditure for the year then ended.



Dafydd L. Edwards B.A., C.P.F.A., I.R.R.V.
Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council

3 June 2020

EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2018/19				2019/20		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (see Note 7)	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (see Note 7)	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
4,264	662	4,926	Employees	4,364	907	5,271
297	0	297	Property	288	0	288
193	0	193	Transport	197	0	197
2,558	0	2,558	Supplies and Services	1,611	0	1,611
8,560	0	8,560	Third Parties	7,721	0	7,721
0	0	0	Non-distributed Costs	0	71	71
(16,065)	0	(16,065)	Income	(14,551)	0	(14,551)
(193)	662	469	Cost of Services	(370)	978	608
0	191	191	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	0	225	225
(193)	853	660	(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	(370)	1,203	833
(148)			Opening General Fund Balance	(341)		
(193)			(Surplus)/Deficit on General Fund in Year	(370)		
(341)			Closing General Fund Balance	(711)		

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing the Joint Committee service in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.

2018/19				2019/20		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
£'000	£'000	£'000	Note	£'000	£'000	£'000
4,926	0	4,926	Employees	5,271	0	5,271
297	0	297	Property	288	0	288
193	0	193	Transport	197	0	197
2,558	0	2,558	Supplies and Services	1,611	0	1,611
8,560	0	8,560	Third Parties	7,721	0	7,721
0	0	0	Non-distributed Costs	71	0	71
0	(16,605)	(16,065)	Income	0	(14,551)	(14,551)
16,534	(16,605)	469	Cost of Services	15,159	(14,551)	608
183	0	191	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	225	0	225
16,725	(16,605)	660	(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	15,384	(14,551)	833
		1,313	Remeasurement of the net pension defined benefit liability/(asset)			(1,800)
		1,313	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(1,800)
		1,973	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(967)

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

The Movement in Reserves Statement shows the movement from the start of the year to the end on the different reserves held by the Joint Committee, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and other 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the Joint Committee's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax (via the Councils' contributions). The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

		Movement in Reserves Statement		
	Note	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Joint Committee's Reserves
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance 31 March 2018 carried forward		(148)	6,827	6,679
<u>Movement in reserves during 2018/19</u>				
(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services		660	0	660
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		0	1,313	1,313
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		660	1,313	1,973
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	8	(853)	853	0
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves		(193)	2,166	1,973
<i>(Increase)/Decrease in 2018/19</i>		<i>(193)</i>	<i>(2,166)</i>	<i>1,973</i>
Balance 31 March 2019 carried forward	9	(341)	8,993	8,652
<u>Movement in reserves during 2019/20</u>				
(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services		833	0	833
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		0	(1,800)	(1,800)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		833	(1,800)	(967)
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	8	(1,203)	1,203	0
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	9	(370)	(597)	(967)
<i>(Increase)/Decrease in 2019/20</i>		<i>(370)</i>	<i>(597)</i>	<i>(967)</i>
Balance 31 March 2020 carried forward		(711)	8,396	7,685

BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Joint Committee. The net assets of the Joint Committee (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Joint Committee. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves is usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Joint Committee may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

31 March 2019 £'000		Note	31 March 2020 £'000
0	Long-term Debtors		0
0	Long-term Assets		0
265	Short-term Debtors	11	476
2,872	Cash and Cash Equivalents	12	2,557
3,137	Current Assets		3,033
(2,421)	Short-term Creditors	13	(1,909)
(3)	Short-term Provisions	14	(3)
(461)	Grants Receipts in Advance	21	(502)
(2,885)	Current Liabilities		(2,414)
(8,904)	Pension Liability	25	(8,304)
(8,904)	Long-term Liabilities		(8,304)
(8,652)	Net Assets		(7,685)
(341)	Usable Reserves	15	(711)
8,993	Unusable Reserves	16	8,396
8,652	Total Reserves		7,685

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Joint Committee during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Joint Committee generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating and investing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Joint Committee are funded by way of grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Joint Committee. Investing Activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Joint Committee's future service delivery.

2018/19 £'000		Note	2019/20 £'000
660	Net (Surplus) / Deficit on the Provision of Services		833
(3,260)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	17	(518)
(2,600)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities		315
(1)	Investing Activities		0
(2,601)	Net (Increase)/Decrease in cash and cash equivalents		315
(271)	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		(2,872)
(2,872)	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		(2,557)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES

I.1 General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Joint Committee's transactions for the 2019/20 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2020. The Joint Committee is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018, in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20*, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The Joint Committee's practice is to operate on the basis that all items of expenditure are treated as revenue in the first instance. Should any items of a capital nature (e.g. IT equipment, furniture) prove to have a material significance on the true and fair presentation of the financial position then the items would be treated according to proper practices.

The nature of the Joint Committee's transactions is limited and only the relevant policies can be seen below.

I.2 Accruals of Expenditure and Income

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received.

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

I.3 Cash and Cash Equivalents

The Joint Committee does not have its own bank account and cash is administered by Gwynedd Council within its own accounts.

I.4 Employee Benefits

I.4.1 Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Joint Committee. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end that employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

1.4.2 Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Joint Committee to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept redundancy voluntarily and are charged on an accruals basis to the service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the Joint Committee can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Joint Committee recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the Joint Committee fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Joint Committee to the Pension Fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the Pension Fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

1.4.3 Post-employment Benefits

Employees of the Joint Committee are members of two separate pension schemes:

- The Teachers' Pension Scheme, administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Westminster Government's Department for Education.
- The Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by the Gwynedd Pension Fund at Gwynedd Council.

Both schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees when they worked for the Joint Committee and their previous employers.

However, the arrangements for the teachers' scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot be identified to the Joint Committee. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contributions scheme and no liability for future payment of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the employer's contributions payable to the Teachers' Pension Scheme in the year.

1.4.4 The Local Government Pension Scheme

All other staff, subject to certain qualifying criteria, are entitled to become members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The pension costs charged to the Joint Committee's accounts in respect of this group of employees is determined by the fund administrators and represent a fixed proportion of employees' contributions to this funded pension scheme.

The Local Government Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefit scheme.

The liabilities of the Gwynedd Pension Fund attributable to the Joint Committee are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method - i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions such as mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc., and projections of earnings for current employees.

Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.3% calculated as a weighted average of 'spot yields' on AA rated corporate bonds.

The assets of the Gwynedd Pension Fund attributable to the Joint Committee are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value as determined by the Fund's Actuary.

The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into the following components:

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Service cost comprising:

- Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the service for which the employees worked.
- Past service cost – the increase in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-distributed Costs.
- Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset), i.e. the net interest expense for the Joint Committee – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability/(asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability/(asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability/(asset) during the period as a result of contributions and benefit payments.

Remeasurements comprising:

- The return on Plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Contributions paid to the Gwynedd Pension Fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the Pension Fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Joint Committee to the Pension Fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the Pension Fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the Joint Committee of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

International Accounting Standard (IAS) 19 governs how the long-term liabilities which exist in relation to pension costs should be reported. Local Councils (including Joint Committees) in Wales and England are required to produce their financial statements in accordance with IAS 19.

1.4.5 Discretionary Benefits

The Joint Committee also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff (including teachers) are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

1.5 Events after the Reporting Period

Events after the balance sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events; and
- those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

1.6 Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies, Estimates and Errors

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Joint Committee's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

1.7 Government Grants and Other Contributions

Grants and contributions relating to capital and revenue expenditure are accounted for on an accruals basis, and recognised immediately in the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as income, except to the extent that the grant or contribution has a condition that the Joint Committee has not satisfied.

1.8 Overheads and Support Services

Charges for services provided by the Central Support Departments within Gwynedd Council are derived from a combination of pre-determined fixed charges, actual recorded staff time, transaction logging and pre-determined formulae.

1.9 Provisions

The Joint Committee sets aside provisions for specific obligations which are likely or certain to be incurred but the amount of which cannot yet be determined accurately. Known uncollectable debts are written off against the Joint Committee. These provisions are classified as long-term or short-term liabilities as appropriate according to the nature of each provision.

1.10 Reserves

Specific reserves are created to set aside amounts for future spending schemes. This is done through transfers out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Certain reserves, namely "unusable reserves", are kept for the technical purpose of managing the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments and employee benefits. These do not represent the usable resources of the Joint Committee.

NOTE 1 – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

1.11 Value Added Tax

Only in a situation when VAT is irrecoverable will VAT be included or charged as 'irrecoverable VAT'. Since the Joint Committee has not registered for VAT, the VAT is recovered through Gwynedd Council's VAT registration.

1.12 Debtors and Creditors

The Joint Committee's Accounts are maintained on an accruals basis in accordance with the Code of Accounting Practice. The accounts reflect actual expenditure and income relating to the year in question irrespective of whether the payments or receipts have actually been paid or received in the year.

An exception to this principle relates to electricity and similar quarterly payments which are charged at the date of meter reading rather than being apportioned between financial years, and certain annual payments such as insurance. This policy is consistently applied each year and therefore does not have a material effect on the year's accounts.

1.13 Long-Term Contracts

Long-term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the consideration allocated to the performance obligations satisfied based on the goods or services transferred to the service recipient during the financial year.

1.14 Joint Operations

Jointly controlled operations are activities undertaken in conjunction with other venturers that involve the use of the assets and resources of the venturers rather than the establishment of a separate entity. The GwE Joint Committee has been categorised as a Joint Operation.

Joint operations are arrangements where the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities relating to the arrangements. The activities undertaken by the Joint Committee in conjunction with other joint operators involve the use of the assets and resources of those joint operators. In relation to its interest in a joint operation, the Joint Committee as a joint operator recognises its share of assets, liabilities, revenue and expenses.

NOTE 2 – CHANGE IN ACCOUNTING POLICY

The Joint Committee's existing accounting policies are amended only insofar as to reflect the guidance in the 2019/20 CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

NOTE 3 – ACCOUNTING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom requires the expected impact of any accounting standards that have been issued but not yet adopted to be disclosed. This applies to the following new or amended standards within the 2020/21 Code:-

Amendments to IAS 28 Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures: Long-term Interests in Associates and Joint Ventures

Annual Improvements to IFRS Standards 2015-2017 Cycle

Amendments to IAS 19 Employee Benefits: Plan Amendment, Curtailment or Settlement.

The Code requires implementation from 1 April 2020 and therefore there is no impact on the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts, and none of the new or amended standards within the 2020/21 Code are expected to have a material impact on the information provided in the financial statements.

NOTE 4 – CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Joint Committee has had to make judgements, estimates and assumptions relating to complex transactions, those involving uncertainty about future events and also the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources.

The judgements, estimates and associated assumptions applied are based on current proper practices, historical experience and other factors that include historical and current assumptions and projections, and actual future projections, professional assessment, current trends, and local factors that are considered to be relevant.

In recent years there has been some uncertainty about future levels of funding from Welsh Government relating to grants. This issue forms an important part of the Joint Committee's continually revised financial strategy, and where all known and forecasted factors are given due consideration. The impact of the decision for Britain to leave the European Union also remains unclear. The effects of COVID-19 at the end of March 2020 has been another factor to consider.

All available and related information is sourced and applied in assessing and determining the position, which is particularly critical when considering such matters as actuarial valuation of pension fund assets and liabilities, earmarked reserves, provisions and contingent liability. However, because these issues cannot be determined with certainty, actual results may subsequently differ from those estimates. The estimates and underlying assumptions are continually reviewed.

NOTE 5 – ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Joint Committee about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because certain balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be different from the assumptions and estimates.

The following item in the Joint Committee's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020 may be considered to be a significant risk (in terms of certainty in estimation of value), with the possibility of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year:

- **Pension Liability** – The Pension Liability position as contained within the accounts is based on a number of complex assessments and judgements and varying profiles such as discount rate used, projected salary levels, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on Pension Fund assets, as provided by Actuaries engaged by the Pension Fund. Further details are contained in Notes 24 and 25.

NOTE 6 – MATERIAL ITEMS OF INCOME AND EXPENSE

Related items include:-

- (£1,800k) on pensions, being the remeasurements of the net pension defined benefit assets relating to pensions, in line with Gwynedd Pension Fund's Actuary's assessment (Note 16).
- £14,551k in grants and contributions and equivalent expenditure (Note 21). A decrease of £1,514k compared to 2018/19.

NOTE 7 – NOTE TO THE EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN FUNDING AND ACCOUNTING BASIS				
2019/20				
Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments (i) £'000	Other Differences (ii) £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Employees	0	904	3	907
Property	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0
Supplies and Services	0	0	0	0
Third Party	0	0	0	0
Unallocated Costs	0	71	0	71
Income	0	0	0	0
Cost of Services	0	975	3	978
Other Operating Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	0	225	0	225
Taxation and non-specific grant income	0	0	0	0
(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	0	1,200	3	1,203

ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN FUNDING AND ACCOUNTING BASIS				
2018/19				
Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments (i) £'000	Other Differences (ii) £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Employees	0	652	10	662
Property	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0
Supplies and Services	0	0	0	0
Third Party	0	0	0	0
Income	0	0	0	0
Cost of Services	0	652	10	662
Other Operating Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	0	191	0	191
Taxation and non-specific grant income	0	0	0	0
(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	0	843	10	853

NOTE 7 – NOTE TO THE EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS (continued)

(i) Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 *Employee Benefits* pension-related expenditure and income:

- For **Services**, this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Joint Committee as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.
- For **Financing and investment income and expenditure**, the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

(ii) Other Differences

Other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- For **Services**, this represents an adjustment for accumulated absences earned but not taken during the year.
- For **Financing and investment income and expenditure**, the other differences column recognises adjustments to the General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.

NOTE 8 – ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Joint Committee in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Joint Committee to meet future expenditure.

2019/20		
ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS	Usable Reserve General Fund Balance	Movement in Unusable Reserves
	£'000	£'000
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve:		
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Note 25)	(1,796)	1,796
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	596	(596)
Adjustment primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account		
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(3)	3
Total Adjustments	(1,203)	1,203

2018/19		
ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS	Usable Reserve General Fund Balance	Movement in Unusable Reserves
	£'000	£'000
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve:		
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Note 25)	(1,437)	1,437
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	594	(594)
Adjustment primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account		
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(10)	10
Total Adjustments	(853)	853

NOTE 9 – TRANSFERS TO/FROM EARMARKED RESERVES

The note below sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund in earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans, with a net increase of £370k.

Earmarked Reserves

	GwE Joint Committee Reserves £'000
Balance 31 March 2019	341
<u>Transfers: In</u>	<u>370</u>
Balance 31 March 2020	711

NOTE 10 – FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2018/19	2019/20
£'000	£'000
191	225
Net interest on the net pension defined benefit liability/(asset)	
191 Total	225

NOTE 11 – SHORT-TERM DEBTORS

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Trade Receivables	142	91
Prepayments	49	70
Other Receivable Amounts	74	315
Total	265	476

NOTE 12 – CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The Joint Committee does not have its own bank account and cash is administered by Gwynedd Council within its own accounts. The figure shown in the table each year is the net cash sum held on behalf of the Joint Committee within the Gwynedd Council amounts.

	31 March	31 March
	2019	2020
	£'000	£'000
Cash in Hand	2,872	2,557
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,872	2,557
Bank Overdraft	0	0
Total	2,872	2,557

NOTE 13 – SHORT-TERM CREDITORS

	31 March	31 March
	2019	2020
	£'000	£'000
Trade Payables	417	430
Other Payables	2,004	1,479
Total	2,421	1,909

NOTE 14 – PROVISIONS

The Joint Committee sets aside provisions for specific obligations, the amount or timing of which cannot be determined accurately. It is not permitted, under accounting conventions, to make provisions for uneven patterns of expenditure. However, earmarked reserves may be established and are included in Note 9.

	Balance at	(Addition) /	Used	Balance at
	31 March	Reduction /	during the	31 March
	2019	Transfer	year	2020
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Short-term Provisions				
Green Car Scheme Provision	(3)	0	0	(3)
	(3)	0	0	(3)

Green Car Scheme Provision – provision relating to staff leased car scheme requirements.

NOTE 15 – USABLE RESERVES

The Movement in Reserves Statement details the movements in the Joint Committee's usable reserves.

NOTE 16 – UNUSABLE RESERVES

31 March 2019		31 March 2020
£'000		£'000
(8,904)	Pensions Reserve	(8,304)
(89)	Accumulated Absences Account	(92)
(8,993)	Total Unusable Reserves	(8,396)

Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Joint Committee accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Joint Committee makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. A debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore would show a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Joint Committee has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
(6,748)	Balance 1 April	(8,904)
(1,313)	Re-measurements of the net pension defined benefit (liabilities) / assets (Note 25)	1,800
(1,437)	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(1,796)
594	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	596
(8,904)	Balance 31 March	(8,304)

NOTE 16 – UNUSABLE RESERVES (continued)

Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance neutralised by transfers to or from the the Account

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
(79)	Balance 1 April	(89)
(10)	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(3)
(89)	Balance 31 March	(92)

NOTE 17 – CASH FLOW STATEMENT: ADJUSTMENTS TO NET SURPLUS OR DEFICIT ON THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR NON-CASH MOVEMENTS

2018/19		2019/20
£'000		£'000
1,825	(Increase)/Decrease in Creditors	512
(4,045)	Increase/(Decrease) in Debtors	211
(843)	Pension Liability	(1,200)
(197)	Other non-cash items charged to net surplus/deficit on the provision of services	(41)
(3,260)		(518)

NOTE 18 – EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

The Head of Finance authorised the Statement of Accounts on 3 June 2020. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2020, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

NOTE 19 – OFFICERS’ REMUNERATION

19a. The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 require the Joint Committee to disclose the following information relating to employees appointed as Senior Officers, and whose salary is between £60,000 and £150,000. In compliance with the defined requirements, the pensionable pay, employer’s pension contributions and other employer costs are included below (including termination benefits), but the employer’s national insurance contributions are excluded. The remuneration paid to the Joint Committee’s senior officers directly employed by GwE is as follows:

2018/19				Chief Officers	2019/20		
Employer’s		Other			Employer’s		
Salary	Pension	Employer	Total		Salary	Pension	Total
£	£	Costs	£		£	£	£
100,333	22,675	0	123,008	Chief Officer	100,896	22,803	123,699

19b. Other Joint Committee employees receiving more than £60,000 remuneration for the year (excluding employer’s pension and national insurance contributions) were paid the following amounts. Termination benefits are to be included in the figures; however, there were no cases in 2019/20 or 2018/19.

Number of other employees who received more than £60,000 and includes remuneration and termination benefits:			
Number in 2018-19		Number in 2019-20	
Total		Total	
10	£60,000 - 64,999	8	
4	£65,000 - 69,999	3	
0	£70,000 – 74,999	1	

NOTE 20 – EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

The Joint Committee has incurred the following costs relating to external audit.

2018/19		2019/20
£'000		£'000
11	Fees payable to the auditor appointed by the Auditor General for Wales with regard to external audit services	11
11	Net Fees	11

Deloitte have been appointed by the Auditor General for Wales as Gwynedd Council’s, and subsequently GwE’s, external auditors.

NOTE 21 – GRANT INCOME

21a. The Joint Committee credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	2018/19		2019/20	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grants and Contributions Credited to Services				
Welsh Government -				
Pupil Development Grant - Looked After Children	874		970	
Pupil Development Grant - Strategic Adviser	0		100	
Other	263		153	
		1,137		1,223
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant - Welsh Government (excluding the EIG)		7,077		5,824
Education Improvement Grant (EIG)				
Welsh Government	2,002		1,836	
Match funding from Councils	1,232		1,165	
		3,234		3,001
Other Government Grants and Contributions -				
Sports Council for Wales	10		1	
Education Workforce Council	309		251	
Arts Council for Wales	0		5	
		319		257
Other Grants and Contributions				
Councils' Contributions towards the Core Service				
Conwy	633		625	
Denbighshire	626		623	
Flintshire	932		927	
Gwynedd	725		720	
Anglesey	420		417	
Wrexham	778		772	
		4,114		4,084
Other Grants and Contribution		184		162
Total Grants and Contributions Credited to Services		16,065		14,551

NOTE 21 – GRANT INCOME (continued)

21b. The Joint Committee has received grants, contributions or donations that have yet to be recognised as income as they have conditions attached that could require the monies to be returned to the provider. The balance at the year-end is as follows:

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Grants and Contributions Received in Advance		
<u>Short-term</u>		
Newly Qualified Teachers Programme	344	493
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant	117	0
Other	0	9
Total	461	502

NOTE 22 – RELATED PARTIES

The Joint Committee is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Joint Committee or to be controlled or influenced by the Joint Committee. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Joint Committee might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party’s ability to bargain freely with the Joint Committee. To conform to the requirements, this is done by Members and Senior Officers completing a personal declaration, as defined in the CIPFA Code of Practice.

Members

Members of the Joint Committee have an influence over the Joint Committee’s financial and operating policies.

Members have declared an interest or relationship (as defined) in companies or businesses which may have dealings with the Joint Committee. A breakdown of the payments made to these companies under this heading during 2019/20 and balances as at 31 March 2020 is as follows:

Payments made	Amounts owed by the Joint Committee	Amounts owed to the Joint Committee
£'000	£'000	£'000
183	2	0

The figures are based on information received in respect of Councillors’ returns.

Officers

The Joint Committee’s Senior Officer has declared as required and where appropriate an interest or relationship (as defubed) in companies, voluntary, charitable, or public bodies which receive payments from the Joint Committee. During 2019/20 no payments were made or owed by the Joint Committee for the related bodies.

NOTE 23 – EXIT PACKAGES

There were no exit packages in 2019/20 or 2018/19.

NOTE 24 – PENSION SCHEMES ACCOUNTED FOR AS DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEMES

Teachers employed by the Joint Committee are members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, administered by the Government's Department for Education. The scheme provides teachers with specified benefits upon their retirement, and the Joint Committee contributes towards the costs by making contributions based on a percentage of members' pensionable salaries.

The scheme is technically a defined benefit scheme. However, the scheme is unfunded and the Department for Education uses a notional fund as the basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate paid by local authorities. The Joint Committee is not able to identify its share of the underlying financial position and performance of the scheme with sufficient reliability for accounting purposes. For the purposes of this Financial Statement, it is therefore accounted for on the same basis as a defined contribution scheme.

No members of staff employed by the Joint Committee were part of the Teachers' Pension Scheme during 2019/20, and therefore no contributions were made, (In 2018/19 the Joint Committee paid £10k in respect of teachers' pension costs, which represented 16.48%, of teachers' pensionable pay). In addition the Joint Committee is responsible for the costs of any additional benefits awarded upon early retirement outside of the terms for the teachers' scheme. There were no such costs in 2019/20 or 2018/19. These costs are accounted for on a defined benefits basis and are included in Note 25.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Joint Committee makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Joint Committee has a commitment to make the payments. These need to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

GwE participates in two post-employment schemes:

- a) **The Local Government Pension Scheme** administered locally by Gwynedd Council. This is a funded defined benefit scheme based on final salary for service up to 31 March 2014 and based on a career average salary from 1 April 2014. The Joint Committee and the employees pay contributions into the fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets.
- b) **Arrangements for the award of discretionary post-retirement benefits upon early retirement.** This is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement, under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pension liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pensions payments as they eventually fall due.

The Gwynedd Pension Fund is operated under the regulatory framework for the Local Government Pension Scheme and the governance of the scheme is the responsibility of the Pensions Committee of Gwynedd Council. Policy is determined in accordance with the Local Government Pensions Scheme Regulations. In the past the investment managers of the fund have been appointed by the Gwynedd Pension Fund Committee. As the investments are transferred to the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) the managers will be appointed by the partnership.

The principal risks to the Joint Committee from the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, structural changes to the scheme (such as large-scale withdrawals from the scheme), changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of equity investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge the amounts required by statute as described in the accounting policies note to the Joint Committee.

Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

The Joint Committee recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge it is required to make against Council Tax (via the Councils' contributions) is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the Joint Committee's General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

Change in the Fair Value of Plan Assets, Defined Benefit Obligation and Net Liability	Period ended 31 March 2018			Period ended 31 March 2019		
	Assets	Liabilities	Net (liability) /asset	Assets	Liabilities	Net (liability) /asset
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fair Value of Plan Assets	15,969	0	15,969	17,783	0	17,783
Present Value of Funded Liabilities	0	(22,717)	(22,717)	0	(26,687)	(26,687)
Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opening Position at 1 April	15,969	(22,717)	(6,748)	17,783	(26,687)	(8,904)
Service Cost						
Current Service Cost*	0	(1,246)	(1,246)	0	(1,500)	(1,500)
Past Service Costs (including curtailments)	0	0	0	0	(71)	(71)
Total Service Cost	0	(1,246)	(1,246)	0	(1,571)	(1,571)
Net interest						
Interest Income on Plan Assets	437	0	437	433	0	433
Interest Cost on Defined Benefit Obligation	0	(628)	(628)	0	(658)	(658)
Total Net Interest	437	(628)	(191)	433	(658)	(225)
Total Defined Benefit Cost Recognised in Profit/(Loss)	437	(1,874)	(1,437)	433	(2,229)	(1,796)
Cash flows						
Plan participants' contributions	260	(260)	0	273	(273)	0
Employer contributions	568	0	568	599	0	599
Contributions in respect of unfunded benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Paid	(345)	345	0	(433)	433	0
Unfunded Benefits Paid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expected Closing Position	16,889	(24,506)	(7,617)	18,655	(28,756)	(10,101)
Remeasurements						
Change in demographic assumptions	0	0	0	0	1,036	1,036
Change in financial assumptions	0	(2,181)	(2,181)	0	2,480	2,480
Other experience	0	0	0	0	(686)	(686)
Return on Assets excluding amounts included in net interest	894	0	894	(1,033)	0	(1,033)
Total remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income (OCI)	894	(2,181)	(1,287)	(1,033)	2,830	1,797
Fair Value of Employer Assets	17,783	0	17,783	17,622	0	17,622
Present Value of Funded Liabilities	0	(26,687)	(26,687)	0	(25,926)	(25,926)
Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities**	0	0	0	0	0	0
Closing Position at 31 March	17,783	(26,687)	(8,904)	17,622	(25,926)	(8,304)

* The current service cost includes an allowance for administration expenses of 0.5% of payroll

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

The Major Categories of Plan Assets as a Percentage of Total Plan Assets

The Actuary has provided a detailed breakdown of Fund assets in accordance with the requirements of IAS19. This analysis distinguishes between the nature and risk of those assets, and to further break them down between those with a quoted price in an active market, and those that are not quoted. The asset split for GwE is assumed to be in the same proportion to the Fund's asset allocation as at 31 December 2019. The split is shown in the table below. The Actuary estimates the bid value of the Fund's assets as at 31 March 2020 to be £1,947m, based on information provided by the Administering Authority and allowing for index returns where necessary. Only a portion of the Fund is relevant to the GwE.

Fair Value of Employer Assets

The asset values below are at bid value as required under IAS19.

Asset Category	At 31 March 2019				At 31 March 2020			
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Prices not quoted in Active Markets	Total		Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Prices not quoted in Active Markets	Total	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Equity Securities								
Consumer	443	0	443	2	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	532	0	532	3	0	0	0	0
Energy and Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Financial Institutions	208	0	208	1	0	0	0	0
Health and Care	1,137	0	1,137	6	0	0	0	0
Information Technology	311	0	311	2	0	0	0	0
Other	604	0	604	3	0	0	0	0
Debt Securities								
Other	0	2,584	2,584	15	0	0	0	0
Private Equity								
All	0	965	965	5	0	1,103	1,103	6
Real Estate								
UK Property	565	1,061	1,626	9	0	1,729	1,729	10
Overseas Property	0	9	9	0	0	2	2	0
Investment Funds and Unit Trusts								
Equities	3,460	5,097	8,557	48	0	11,760	11,760	67
Infrastructure	0	350	350	2	0	400	400	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0	2,536	2,536	14
Cash and Cash Equivalents								
All	457	0	457	3	92	0	92	1
Total	7,717	10,066	17,783	100	92	17,530	17,622	100

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, life expectancy and salary levels. Life expectancy is based on fund-specific projections called VitaCurves with long-term improvement assumed to have already peaked and converging to 1.25% per annum.

Both the Gwynedd Pension Scheme and Discretionary Benefits liabilities have been estimated by Hymans Robertson, an independent firm of actuaries. Estimates for the Gwynedd Pension Fund were based on the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2019. The significant assumptions used by the actuary in the following table have had a significant impact on the values of the assets and liabilities as follows:-

	31 March 2019	31 March 2020
Financial Assumptions	% p.a.	% p.a.
Pensions Increase Rate	2.5	1.9
Salary Increase Rate*	2.5	2.2
Inflation Rate	2.5	1.9
Discount Rate	2.4	2.3
Long-term expected rate of return on all categories of assets	2.4	2.3
Take-up option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum		
for pre-April 2008 service	50	50
for post-April 2008 service	75	75
Mortality assumptions	Years	Years
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners		
Men	22.0	21.3
Women	24.2	23.4
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners		
Men	24.0	22.2
Women	26.4	25.1

*For unfunded liabilities as at 31 March 2020, it is assumed that all unfunded pensions are payable for the remainder of the member's life. It is further assumed that 90% of pensioners are married (or cohabiting) at death and that their spouse (cohabitee) will receive a pension of 50% of the member's pension at the date of the member's death.

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. In order to quantify the impact of a change in the financial assumptions used, the actuary has calculated and compared the value of the scheme liabilities as at 31 March 2020 on varying bases. The approach taken is consistent with that adopted to derive the IAS19 figures provided in this note.

To quantify the uncertainty around life expectancy, the actuary has calculated the difference in cost to the Joint Committee of a one-year increase in life expectancy. For sensitivity purposes this is assumed to be an increase in the cost of benefits of broadly 3-5%. In practice the actual cost of a one-year increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival rates predominantly apply at younger or older ages).

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

The figures in the table below have been derived based on the membership profile of the Joint Committee as at 31 March 2019, the date of the most recent actuarial valuation. The approach taken in preparing the sensitivity analysis shown is consistent with that adopted in the previous year.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Scheme Change in assumption	Approximate increase to Defined Benefit Obligation	Approximate monetary amount
	31 March 2020	31 March 2020
	%	£'000
0.5% decrease in real discount rate	11	2,737
0.5% increase in the salary increase rate	2	401
0.5% increase in the pension increase rate	9	2,305

The principal demographic assumption is the longevity assumption (i.e. member life expectancy). For sensitivity purposes, we estimate that a one-year increase in life expectancy would approximately increase the Employer's Defined Benefit Obligation by around 3-5%. In practice the actual cost of a one-year increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival rates predominantly apply at younger or older ages).

Impact on the Joint Committee's Cash Flows

One of the objectives of the scheme is that employer contributions should be kept at as constant a rate as possible. Gwynedd Council has agreed a strategy with the fund's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over the next 17 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis.

The contributions paid by the Joint Committee are set by the Fund Actuary at each triennial valuation (the most recent being as at 31 March 2019), or at any other time as instructed to do so by the Administering Authority. The contributions payable over the period to 31 March 2021 are set out in the Rates and Adjustments certificate. For further details on the approach adopted to set contribution rates for the Joint Committee, please refer to the 2019 actuarial report dated 31 March 2020.

Information about the Defined Benefit Obligation

	Liability Split 31 March 2020		Weighted Average Duration
	£'000	%	
Active Members	14,213	54.8	26.0
Deferred Members	2,893	11.2	27.0
Pensioner Members	8,820	34.0	15.0
Total	25,926	100.0	22.0

The above figures are for funded obligations only and do not include unfunded pensioner liabilities. The durations are effective at the previous formal valuation as at 31 March 2019.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

Impact in Future Years

The total contribution expected to be made to the Local Government Pensions Scheme by the Joint Committee in the year to 31 March 2021 is £780k.

In April 2017, the Joint Committee made a payment of £394k to the Gwynedd Pension Fund to cover the fixed element of the employer contributions for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20. By making this payment, the Joint Committee benefited from a lower contribution rate than would have otherwise been calculated.

As the Actuary's report is based on estimates and due to timing issues, an adjustment of £3,067 has been made in 2019/20 (£25,800 in 2018/19) to bring the deficit in the Scheme based on the Actuarial figures in line with the liability related to the defined benefit pension schemes in the Balance Sheet. This variance has been treated as Actuarial Gains and Losses on Pension Assets and Liabilities and therefore has been included in the Liability related to the defined benefit Pension Schemes in the Balance Sheet.

McCloud and Sargeant Legal Judgements

The Gwynedd Fund's salary growth assumption at the 2016 valuation were equal to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and therefore, in 2018/19, no allowance was made for the McCloud/Sargeant judgements. But at the 2019 valuation, the salary increase assumption was increased above CPI, therefore Gwynedd Council have now recognised a liability for the McCloud/Sargeant judgements for the first time in their 2019/20 accounts. The approximate impact of this judgement has been included within the past service cost figure that is reported within the surplus/deficit on the provision of services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2020

Report by: GwE Managing Director

Subject: Annual Governance Statement for the Joint Committee

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 sets fixed requirements on public bodies that operate partnership management arrangements through formal joint committees.

2.2 Section 5 requires the Joint Committee to review and approve annually a statement of internal control. To comply with this requirement the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared. The document has been produced to offer a framework to the Joint Committee's operation.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 The Joint Committee is asked to accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 Equalities Impact

5.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

6.0 Personnel Implications

6.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

7.0 Appendices

7.1 Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

I am satisfied that the Statement provides an appropriate description of GwE's governance arrangements.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I am satisfied that this statement is a fair reflection of GwE governance arrangements for the year 2019/20, and that arrangements for accountability are appropriate. I note in part 5.3.16 of the governance statement, and in the action plan under 7.1 that the governance review is to be formalized by March 2021, and I will look to contribute to that.

Of course, there is a key role and continuing challenge for members of the Joint Committee (Councillors and Chief Education Officers of the 6 local authorities in north Wales, together with the Managing Director of the Service) to work together to ensure that GwE continues to fulfil the responsibilities effectively, and positively develops for the benefit of the schools and pupils of the region, despite the restrictions in the Covid-19 crisis.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

This statement meets the requirement to produce a Statement of Internal Control pursuant to Section 5 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018).

Part 1: SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1.1 GwE was established as a Joint Committee to be a regional school effectiveness and improvement service by the 6 North Wales local authorities in 2013 by undertaking the functions that are detailed in an agreement between the Joint Committee and the authorities. In the agreement, the Councils have agreed to work together in a partnering relationship to establish a Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service to be accountable to, and undertake the statutory functions of the Councils in respect of school improvement and effectiveness.

1.2 The Councils' vision was to establish a Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement service to be accountable to, and undertake the statutory responsibilities of, the six local North Wales Authorities in respect of the duties to monitor; challenge; provide support services for curriculum continued professional development and management of schools, and in addition provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities.

1.3 GwE is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

1.4 In discharging this overall responsibility, GwE is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.

Part 2: THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which GwE is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authorities that are part of GwE to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

2.3 The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of GwE's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

2.4 The governance framework described above has been in place at GwE for the year ended 31 March 2020 and up to the date of approval of the 2019/20 statement of accounts.

Part 3: THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

3.1 GwE has used the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016) in compiling its Annual Governance Statement. The Framework comprises two Core Principles and five Supporting Principles:

Core principles

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of the law; and
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Supporting principles

- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;
- Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control, and strong public financial management; and
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.2 GwE has applied these principles to structure its Annual Governance Statement for financial year ending 31 March 2020 and to assess the arrangements in place.

3.3 GwE has a range of governance arrangements in place, many of which are set out in the Inter Authority Agreement and / or are part of the governance arrangements of Gwynedd Council (as host authority).

Table 1 – Examples of key systems, processes and documents in place within GwE

Good Governance Principles	Examples of key systems, processes and documents in place within GwE
Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of the law.	<p>By signing the Inter Authority Agreement, the Councils have agreed that they would maintain their relationship in accordance with the following principles of good governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness and Trust • Commitment and Drive • Skills and Creativity • Effective Relationships • Developing and Adaptive • Reputation and Standing • Reasonableness of Decision Making • Necessary Consents • Members and Officers' Commitments
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	<p>Forward plans for committee meetings together with the matters to be considered, where appropriate.</p> <p>Full stakeholder engagement via various forums both within & outside the formal governance structure, e.g. Headteacher</p>

	Forums & the User Groups.
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;	Performance Management Framework 3 year business plan & annual business plans Quarterly business plan monitoring reports to the Joint Committee
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;	Regular risk management updates to the Joint Committee Medium Term Financial Plan Annual budgetary plan Scrutiny Committees Challenge & Review sessions with Welsh Government. Children And Young People's Committee LA Estyn Inspections / Improvement Conferences Estyn Local Authority / Link Visits Categorisation Process / Moderation County Quality Board's
Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	3 Year Business Plan Annual Business Plan Self-evaluation process & annual report preparation Annual Report
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control, and strong public financial management	Risk Register updates Annual Report Internal audit Host authority financial regulations Medium Term Financial Plan
Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.	Statement of accounts Annual Governance Statement Production of reports on key areas of business Internal & external audit Independent external evaluations throughout the year, e.g. Steve Munby Local Authority Scrutiny Committees

3.4 Functions

3.4.1 The Councils have signed an agreement on 13 February 2013 to formalise each of their roles and responsibilities in respect of the Service, and have appointed Gwynedd Council the Host Authority for operating and maintaining the Service in accordance with the terms of the agreed Final Business Case.

3.4.2 The agreement is comprehensive, and includes information on governance and administrative aspects of the Joint Committee. The agreement is the foundation of GwE's governance framework within which GwE operates and allocates responsibility and accountability, as follows:

- The GwE Joint Committee;
- The GwE Management Board;
- The GwE User Group(s);
- The Host Authority.

3.5 Membership

3.5.1 The Councils have entered into an Agreement to establish and implement GwE pursuant to the powers conferred on them by Section 9 of the Local Government Wales Measure 2009, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and associated Regulations.

3.5.2 Membership of the Joint Committee includes one member each from Isle of Anglesey County Council, Gwynedd Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, and Wrexham County Borough Council with voting rights.

3.5.3 The Statutory Chief Education Officers, one from each local authority in North Wales, are currently officer members without voting rights.

3.5.4 One Diocese Representative, one Primary Schools Representative, one Secondary Schools Representative, one Special Schools Representative and one Governor Representative are co-opted non-voting members.

3.6 Principles

By signing the agreement, the Councils have agreed that they would maintain their relationship in accordance with the following principles of good governance:

- **Openness and Trust**
In relation to the Agreement the Councils will be open and trusting in their dealings with each other, make information and analysis available to each other, discuss and develop ideas openly and contribute fully to all aspects of making the joint working successful;
- **Commitment and Drive**
The Councils will be fully committed to working jointly, will seek to fully motivate employees and will address the challenges of the Service with drive, enthusiasm and a determination to succeed;
- **Skills and Creativity**
The Councils recognise that each brings complementary skills and knowledge which they will apply creatively to achieving the Councils' objectives, continuity, resolution of difficulties and the development of the joint working relationship and the personnel working within it;
- **Effective Relationships**
The roles and responsibilities of each Council will be clear with relationships developed at the appropriate levels within each organisation with direct and easy access to each other's representatives;
- **Developing and Adaptive**
The Councils recognise that they are engaged in what could be a long term relationship which needs to develop and adapt and will use reasonable endeavours to develop and maintain an effective joint process to ensure that the relationship develops appropriately and in line with these principles and objectives;

- Reputation and Standing

The Councils agree that, in relation to this Agreement and the Service generally, they shall pay the utmost regard to the standing and reputation of one another and shall not do or fail to do anything which may bring the standing or reputation of any other Council into disrepute or attract adverse publicity to any other Council;

- Reasonableness of Decision Making

The Councils agree that all decisions made in relation to this Agreement and the Service generally shall be made by them acting reasonably and in good faith;

- Necessary Consents

Each Council hereby represents to the other Councils that it has obtained all necessary consents sufficient to ensure the delegation of functions and responsibilities provided for by this Agreement; and

- Members and Officers' Commitments

Each Council shall use its reasonable endeavours to procure that their respective members and officers who are involved in the Service shall at all times act in the best interests of the Service, and respond in a timely manner to all relevant requests from the other Councils.

3.7 The Host Authority

3.7.1 The Inter Authority Agreement states that the Councils have agreed, with effect from the Commencement Date of the service, that Gwynedd Council will be the Host Council for the Service which shall be carried out for and on behalf of itself and the Councils and Gwynedd Council agrees to act in that capacity subject to and in accordance with and to the extent provided for by the terms of this Agreement. For the avoidance of doubt the role of Host Council includes:

- subject to the indemnities and warranties act as the employing authority for any staff engaged in the discharge of the Service's functions (appointing, employing or accepting the secondment of staff) in accordance with this Agreement;
- being the legal point of contact for the purposes of managing the Service;
- providing such administrative resources and facilities that may be necessary for the purpose of discharging the Service and hold all central funds;
- providing such Human Resources Services that may be necessary for the purpose of discharging the Service and hold all central funds;
- provide senior officers who will act as Secretary, Monitoring Officer, and Treasurer (who will also be the Section 151 Officer) for the Service and who will therefore act as the primary legal and financial advisers to the Service;
- power to enter into contracts for supplies and services as required for the purposes of the Service.

3.7.2 For the avoidance of doubt the duties and responsibilities of the Host Authority pursuant to this agreement shall only bind the Host Authority to the extent that they have been resourced by the Councils through this Agreement.

3.7.3 Save and except where otherwise required by law all staff employed by the Host Authority pursuant to this agreement shall be employed on the Host Authority's relevant terms and conditions of employment and related staff policies including salary structures.

3.7.4 If the Host Council defaults and the Agreement is terminated in respect of it pursuant to Clause 2 (Termination) or the Host Council withdraws pursuant to Clauses 21 or 22 (Withdrawal), then a replacement Host Council will be appointed by the Councils and the withdrawing/defaulting Host Council will not have the right to vote in regard to any such appointment.

3.7.5 For the duration of this Agreement, the Host Council shall act diligently and in good faith in all its dealings with the other Councils and

3.7.6 For the duration of this Agreement, the other Councils shall act diligently and in good faith in all their dealings with the Host Council and shall use their reasonable endeavours to assist the Host Council to support the Service.

3.8 Officer Conduct

To ensure a consistent approach to working practices & processes, all officers are subject to the terms & conditions of employment (which are based on Gwynedd Council's operating terms and conditions).

Part 4: ASSESSING THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

4.1 GwE has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control.

4.2 In line with the Core and Supporting Principles of the Framework, the approach taken to assess GwE's arrangements has been:

- Provide a brief description of the arrangements and procedures in place;
- Examine and document the main activities that have taken place around these areas, taking account of supporting evidence from GwE's internal processes and audit reports.
- Form a view on the extent to which the activities comply with the procedures in place; and
- Make proposals for improvement.

4.3 Gwynedd Council is the Host Authority of the Joint Committee. As a result, therefore, reviews of the effectiveness of the Local Code of Governance, the Constitution and the system of internal control of that authority will also incorporate the basis of the Joint Committee's governance.

4.4 The effectiveness of GwE's governance arrangements is set out in section 5.

Part 5: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Progress made to implement recommendations reported in the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement

5.1.1 The 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement identified areas where improvements were deemed necessary to further reinforce the effectiveness of GwE's current arrangements.

5.1.2 These were detailed in the GwE Business Plan for 2019/20 & Risk Register and in particularly Strategic Objective 6, i.e. ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.

5.1.3 During the year plans were reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact; the Joint Committee received reports on progress at their meetings.

5.1.4 As at 31 March 2020, progress had been made against all of the improvements & will be further developed during 2020/21.

5.1.5 Based on the above, it is considered that overall, sufficient progress has been made during 2019/20 in the delivery of the proposals for improvement with the requirement for further work to be completed in 2020/21. Details of which are included in Part 7 of this statement.

5.2 Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of the law.

5.2.1 GwE follows Gwynedd Council operating rules, which details how decisions need to be made and the procedures to be followed to ensure they are efficient, transparent and available to local people.

5.2.2 GwE, supported by the host authority, has procedures in place to ensure the Joint Committee meetings are conducted effectively and decision making is effective. This includes, ensuring minutes of meetings are accurate; publishing online meeting programmes & reports in advance of meetings; making decisions based on evidence based reports; and publishing the minutes of meetings. A review

of a sample of GwE Joint Committee meetings during the year confirmed that the procedures had been followed.

5.2.3 GwE adopts the employment policies of the host authority. All officers starting with GwE are provided with an induction & staff handbook. In addition, a Professional Review process is in place for all staff & is reviewed on a termly basis.

5.2.4 Staff quality assurance processes continue to develop and evolve in line with national developments and principles. Messages and information are communicated clearly and on a regular basis to all employees. Generic, purposeful and effective support programmes are offered. Full and sector team meetings offer regular opportunities for collaboration, consultation and contributing to discussions and decisions regarding GwE's direction of work during a period of considerable change.

5.2.5 In the event that an officer decides to operate outside the intended terms and conditions of employment, arrangements were in place for officers to 'blow the whistle' through the host authority's Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure. In addition to the Whistleblowing policy, there were arrangements in place to tackle potential fraud, bribery & corruption.

5.2.6 GwE follows the host authority's gifts & hospitality policy and arrangements were in place, via registers, to record gifts and hospitality in line with the Policy.

5.2.7 GwE has adopted the following personal and service values:

- Impartiality
- Fairness
- Respect for diversity
- Being supportive and cooperative
- Bilingualism
- Objectivity
- Insistent on high standards
- Honesty.

These personal and service values are included within all job descriptions; & are used to inform discussions as part of the Professional Review process.

5.2.8 The Managing Director leads the GwE officers & chairs the Senior Leadership Team.

5.2.9 During the 2019/20 financial year, one senior post holder left their position. Following an internal review of the Senior Leadership Team, it was agreed by the Joint Committee that the position not be filled. This reduction of one senior role contributed towards GwE meeting its requirements in terms of permanent savings.

5.3 Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

5.3.1 Members of the GwE Joint Committee are governed by the Code of Conduct of their relevant Council. The Codes of Conduct for Councillors and employees within the Constitution of the Host Authority are built on the principles of openness, transparency and honesty.

5.3.2 General Data Protection Regulation

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on the 25th May 2018.

GwE follows the guidance from the host authority; formally records the lawful basis upon which data / information is processed within suites of documents called Data Protection Registers; and has 'Privacy Notices' that are available on the website setting out how it intends to use information and how it will deliver its services and statutory responsibilities. The Business Senior Leadership Team within GwE ensures GDPR compliance, working closely with the host authority statutory information management officer. It is considered that this approach continues to support GwE in complying with the GDPR and demonstrates openness and transparency when dealing with its customers.

5.3.3 GwE, supported by the host authority, operates a Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 publication scheme in accordance with legislative requirements. During 2019/20, 2 FOI requests were received and were responded to within 20 working days.

5.3.4 A Full Business Case has been provided for the Service, dated March 2012, with the business case showing evidence that clear objectives have been established and are SMART and that an appropriate work programme is in place.

5.3.5 The clear and robust accountability framework in a key strength in GwE. Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE, and clearly note the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda. Plans are fully costed, with clear success criteria and milestones for delivering objectives. A 3 Year Business Plan, 2017-2020 is in place for the service which has been approved by the Joint Committee (03/10/17) & Welsh Government. The Business Plan ensures an appropriate work programme (annual business plan) is in place & monitoring reports are presented to the Joint Committee at their meetings. GwE consulted on its vision and priorities for 2019/20 and the Annual Business Plan 2019/20 was approved by the Joint Committee on 20 February 2019.

5.3.6 There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability. During 2019/20, the Joint Committee has received quarterly business plan updates. Based on the updates provided, it is considered that appropriate and regular information is made available to the Joint Committee to review and challenge performance and hold management to account.

5.3.7 Looking ahead, uncertainty is expected on future year resources levels provided by the UK Government to Welsh Government due, primarily to the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit. GwE has a medium term financial plan which is updated as required. It will be imperative to revisit the medium term financial plan at the appropriate time in order to re-model options & help frame medium term service planning.

5.3.8 GwE has a forward work plan of committee meetings and the Joint Committee meeting of 20 February 2019 agreed the annual meetings calendar for 2019/20.

5.3.9 The GwE Joint Committee is the main decision body & has appropriate membership. The terms of reference of the Joint Committee set out some of its responsibilities together with a list of members of the Joint Committee and voting rights. The role of the Authorities has been identified in the Agreement.

5.3.10 During 2019/20 the Joint Committee met on the following dates:

- 22/05/19
- 08/07/19
- 11/09/19
- 17/11/19
- 26/02/20

During these meetings, the Joint Committee received 31 reports, all of which were published on the host authority & GwE's website prior to the meetings. Key decisions were also taken by the GwE Management Board. A sample of the GwE Joint Committee reports was reviewed & confirmed that a consistent format was used.

5.3.11 Based on the above information, it is considered that the decision making arrangements operated during 2019/20 were open & transparent, & compliant with the Inter Authority Agreement.

5.3.12 As a result of the adoption of the National Model for Regional Joint Working the governance structure of GwE was reviewed. This involved creating an Advisory Board and a Management Board and a review of the structure of the Joint Committee. The review of the agreement is in the process of being formalised.

5.3.13 The Service follows Gwynedd Council complaints procedure. During 2019/20 no complaints have been received.

5.3.14 Schools provide feedback via the User Group that has been established to provide support to the Joint Committee as well as challenge. Appropriate representatives from secondary and primary schools of the 6 authorities belong to the user group.

The User Group is operating effectively because:

- It has the right to report and make recommendations to the Joint Committee on any matter within the scope of functions of the Service.
- The group met on the following dates:
 - 03/04/19 (primary)
 - 21/06/19 (secondary)
 - 20/09/19(primary)
 - 20/09/19 (secondary)
 - 09/12/19 (primary)
 - 28/01/20 (primary)
- The group includes:
 - 6 Secondary representatives, one from each Authority
 - 6 Primary representatives, one from each Authority
 - 1 representatives of Special Schools
 - School Governors - 1 representative per Council.

5.3.15 GwE encourage stakeholder engagement & feedback via a broad range of communication & engagement methods. Examples include: attendance at Headteacher federation meetings; focus group discussions on specific areas; weekly bulletin; social media etc.

5.3.16 It is proposed that the formalisation of the governance review is finalised.

5.4 Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

5.4.1 The draft regional priorities for 2019/20 were approved by the Joint Committee at their meeting on the 20th of February 2019. The regional business plan (level 1) sets out the priority areas for improvement across the region, these were defined as:

- Developing a high-quality education profession
- Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
- Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being
- Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system
- Transformational Curriculum
- Business

5.4.2 GwE's base budget for the 2019/20 financial year was approved by the Joint Committee at their meeting on the 20th of February 2019.

5.4.3 In addition to the level 1 business plan, each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core lead. Progress towards agreed outcomes on a local authority level is reviewed regularly in meetings between the core lead and Local Authority. Ongoing issues are referred to GwE Senior leaders in a timely manner.

5.4.4 The regional business plan set out the priorities across the region. These priorities are those at Level 1 and are the responsibility of the Managing Director and Chair of the Management Board to deliver as the accountable officers. The Joint Committee are ultimately accountable for the delivery against the priorities.

5.4.5 Annual Level 2 and 3 plans sit below the Level 1 plan and give more detailed information with regard to national, regional and local priorities. The Level 2 and 3 plans provide detail with regard to the actions to be delivered and the outputs and success criteria to be achieved. The 3 level business planning framework developed ensures accountability for delivery and provides the structure for monitoring progress effectively.

5.4.6 During 2019/20, the Joint Committee has received quarterly business plan updates. Based on the updates provided, it is considered that appropriate and regular information is made available to the Joint Committee to review and challenge performance and hold management to account. The information is also made public.

5.5 Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

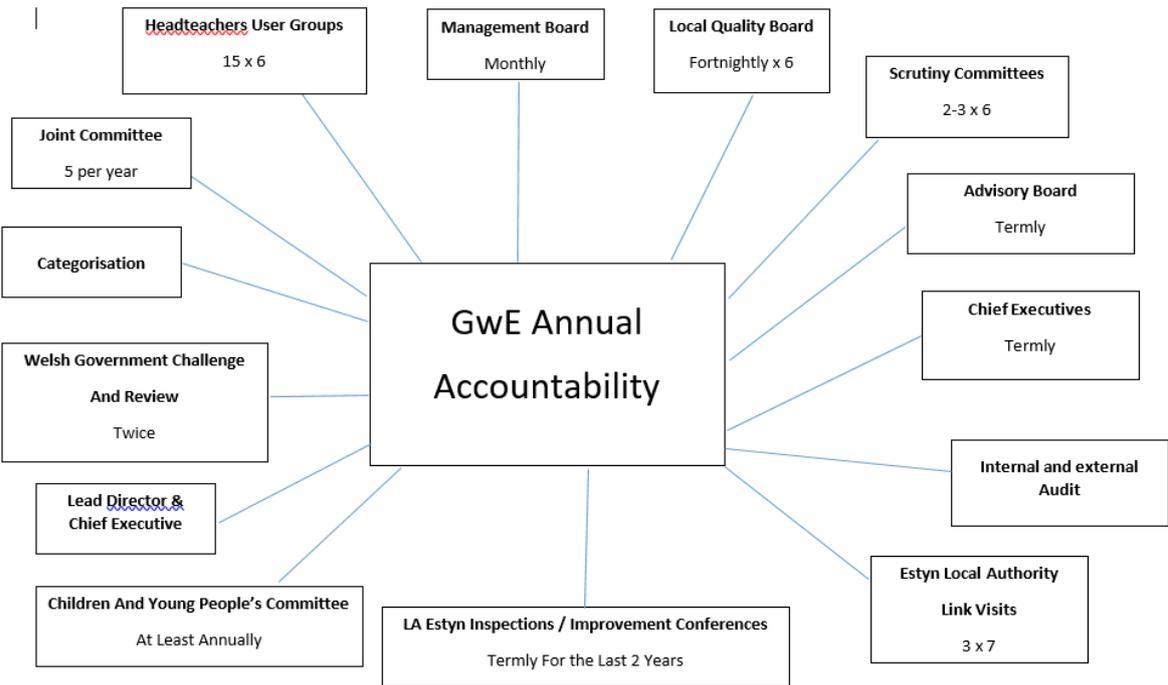
5.5.1 The clear and robust accountability framework in a key strength in GwE. Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE, and clearly note the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda. Plans are fully costed, with clear success criteria and milestones for delivering objectives.

5.5.2 There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability.

5.5.3 Each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser. Progress towards agreed outcomes on a local authority level is reviewed regularly in meetings between the lead adviser and Local Authority. Ongoing issues are referred to GwE Senior leaders in a timely manner.

5.5.4 Performance reports were presented to the Joint Committee & LA Scrutiny Committees during 2019/20, with reports also presented to Welsh Government as part of the Challenge & Review meetings. The Welsh Government annual autumn Challenge and Review meetings are chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education focusing on performance, progress, planning and budgets in the context of national priorities. The last meeting was very positive and it was expressed that it had set a high bar, demonstrating the political maturity of the Joint Committee.

5.5.5 The diagram below illustrates the annual accountability reporting completed by GwE during 2019/20.



5.5.6 Based on the above, it is considered that the information published during 2019/20 would provide opportunity for stakeholders to understand GwE's performance & hold it to account.

5.5.7 At the Joint Committee meeting held on the 11th of September 2019, the Joint Committee approved the efficiency savings target implementation plan. The cumulative total savings of £206,485 was therefore applied to the core budget in 2019/20. With this context in mind, GwE allocated resources & put in place arrangements to maximise its impact.

5.6 Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within

5.6.1 The consistency and quality of challenge and support to schools is good. Regular training, support and discussions ensure that Supporting Improvement Advisers' knowledge and understanding of national and local developments, and the implications of this on their roles, is good.

5.6.2 Quality Assurance processes continue to develop and evolve in line with national developments and principles. Messages and information are communicated clearly and on a regular basis to all employees. Generic, purposeful and effective support programmes are offered. Full and sector team meetings offer regular opportunities for collaboration, consultation and contributing to discussions and decisions regarding GwE's direction of work during a period of considerable change.

5.6.3 There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability.

5.6.4 A Professional Review process is in place for all staff & is reviewed on a termly basis. Staff are encouraged to participate in various professional development activities during the year.

5.6.5 During 2019/20, specific training was provided to members & Scrutiny members by GwE & also by Welsh Government.

5.6.6 It is proposed that staff development continues & is built upon during the next year ensuring that staff receive any new support requirements / developments as a result of Covid-19.

5.7 Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

5.7.1 There are rigorous and comprehensive arrangements in place to accurately identify and manage risks on a local, regional and national level. The risk register is a live document, which is updated on a regular basis in order to identify increasing risks or risks which are no longer deemed as high level. It is reviewed every month in a senior leadership meeting and the Management Board and the Joint Committee review the register on a quarterly basis. Through effective management of risks to the region, GwE is able to support the region's objectives, make effective use of resources and meet the outcomes as intended.

5.7.2 Under the agreement, the Service's Managing Director will report annually to the Joint Committee and to each individual Council on the performance of the Service in undertaking Functions and achieving Key Service Objectives.

5.7.3 The Annual Report for 2018/19 was presented to the Joint Committee at their meeting on 22/05/2019.

5.7.4 The membership & meeting frequency of the GwE Joint Committee during 2019/20 was in line with the Inter Authority Agreement.

5.7.5 GwE function under the corporate policies of the host authority, including information management. GwE also have in place specific documentation relating to their work, e.g. WASPI Data Disclosure agreement relating to the disclosure of personal pupil information contained within the School Statutory returns, Local Authority and Schools Management information systems and other educational data systems including tracking systems (e.g. FFT, Incerts).

5.7.6 At the balance sheet date, GwE function under the corporate policies of the host authority, including financial procedure rules.

5.7.7 The Wales Audit Office audits GwE’s annual statement of accounts and the outcome from the audit reported to the Joint Committee.

5.7.8 GwE’s financial & operational performance is monitored and scrutinised by the GwE Joint Committee.

5.7.9 The latest audited statement of accounts (i.e. for the 2018/19 financial year) received an unqualified audit report and were approved at the meeting of the Joint Committee on the 11th of September 2019, this being in advance of the statutory deadline of the 15th of September.

5.7.10 The latest Wales Audit Office report ‘Audit of Financial Statements Report and Management Letter’ reported to the Joint Committee on the 11th of September 2019 concluded that the accounting statements and related notes:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of GwE Joint Committee as at 31 March 2019 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018-19.

5.7.11 The 11th of September 2019 Wales Audit Office report make one recommendation to be addressed by GwE and the host authority.

Matter arising 1 – Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant - Education Improvement Grant element	
Findings	<p>GwE are the administering body for the new Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant, an element of which is be distributed by Gwynedd Council (acting as host authority) amongst the other North Wales Councils (GwE’s constituent local authorities). The 2018-19 award amount was £35,844k of which £26,638k relating to the Education Improvement Grant is redistributed. £24,636k was redistributed to the other local authorities in North Wales and £2,002k was retained by GwE. The basis of redistribution is agreed annually by the GwE Management Committee adjusting the prior years allocation by any cuts to the grant income from the Welsh Government. The figures are then confirmed as accurate by the finance department of each authority (we have evidenced this via review of email returns to GwE)</p> <p>Formal grant offer letters are not sent out to each authority confirming the EIG amount, however we have evidenced that annual EIG grant compliance returns are certified by each authority.</p> <p>We have agreed the fund transfers to bank statements and remittance advice and we are satisfied that the distribution is scrutinised by the GwE Management Committee, which includes representatives from each local authority, who would identify a material misstatement were there to be one. However, we have not been able to evidence the specific Management Meeting Committee meeting agenda item or meeting minutes explicitly confirming the approval of this allocation.</p>
Recommendation	It is recommended that the GwE Management Board meetings include an agenda item to explicitly agree the annual EIG distribution.
Priority	Low.
Benefit of Implementing Recommendation	To ensure that EIG redistribution is formally approved by the GwE Management Committee confirming the allocation is appropriate and in accordance with the GwE and the EIG priorities.

Accepted in full by management	Yes.
Management response	Agreed.
Implementation date	During 2019-20

The recommendation was agreed by Management & was implemented on 11 October 2019.

5.7.12 The consortium has effective financial management processes in place. Communication and consultation on financial arrangements is effective, and GwE staff, the host local authority and Joint Committee all review the core funding and grant expenditure on a regular basis.

5.7.13 A robust financial analysis supports the work of delivering the business plan. A medium term financial plan and workforce plan are both aligned with the business plan. Through increasingly effective use of data to identify key priorities, the link between the business planning process and decisions regarding financial planning is strengthened as the work streams that underpin the business plan clearly note the resources to be used.

5.7.14 A formal framework was produced to assess the wider value for money provided by GwE. The judgement is now consistent across all stakeholders on how to measure the value for money of GwE activities within the structure and objectives of the business plan.

5.7.15 It is proposed that the value for money framework is enhanced during the year in order to demonstrate further the prioritisation of resources.

5.8 Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

5.8.1 GwE has implemented an open and consistent approach to reporting its business, as set out in sections 5.4 & 5.5 of the Annual Governance Statement, with the aim of helping to ensure information is understandable to stakeholders and that they have the opportunity to challenge GwE's performance, plans and decisions.

5.8.2 A review of a sample of information reported to the Joint Committee has revealed that:

- Annual Reports and Plans are reported publicly, providing an overview of performance, for example;
- Performance management reports are reported quarterly & all information is made available publicly;
- The minutes of meetings confirm that designated officers attend each meeting to orally present reports and answer questions, and a number of occasions were noted where updates were delivered via presentations.

Part 6: SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

6.1 The processes outlined in previous sections of this statement describe the methods used by GwE to identify the most significant governance issues that need to be addressed.

6.2 Based on the assessment undertaken, it is considered that GwE's governance arrangements were fit for purpose and publicly demonstrated how they contributed to the delivery of improved school performance outcomes as set out in the Business Plan.

6.3 The overall conclusion has been based upon:

- An open approach to engaging with stakeholders, planning and delivering services, and reporting and scrutiny of GwE's performance;
- Clear arrangements for decision making that were supported by robust service management and financial management arrangements;

- The reporting of understandable priorities and ambition, as set out in GwE’s Business Plan, with progress reports demonstrating improvement in outcomes and performance at the same time as maintaining financial stability;
- Sound arrangements to support elected Members and Officers in the effective discharge of their responsibilities and also in maintaining high standards of conduct when undertaking business on behalf of GwE;
- A medium term approach to financial planning that helped inform strategic decision making and prioritisation of resources.

6.4 Notwithstanding this overall position, the assessment has identified areas where improvements are deemed necessary to further reinforce the effectiveness of GwE’s current arrangements. These are detailed in section 7.

6.5 The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. On 23 March 2020, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners. School leaders have worked tirelessly to adapt to new arrangements and develop processes to support the learners and families within their homes and communities. GwE staff have also adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for all our school communities.

The main priorities and work streams for GwE during this period have been as follows:

- Phase 1: Pre-lockdown
- Phase 2: Supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown
- Phase 3: Distance Learning
- Phase 4: Supporting schools to re-open
- Phase 5: Blended Learning

A report was shared with the Joint Committee at their meeting on 15 July 2020, detailing the activities, outcomes and impact of our work since the lockdown begun, covering the period 23 March 2020 to 22 May 2020 (Phase 1 – 4 above).

We see that Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) will have an evolving role over the coming months in supporting schools with the following aspects:

- Supporting distance learning and developing a blended approach to encompass distance learning and face to face learning
- Supporting the repurposing of schools
- Supporting Professional Learning (PL)

A further report will be presented to the Joint Committee in September 2020.

6.6 Governance arrangements in GwE have continued during COVID-19 with all meetings continuing via online platforms. No disruption to arrangements have been experienced.

6.7 Looking ahead the robust governance arrangements in place in GwE, together with implementing the proposals for improvement set out in section 7 below, will be critical in supporting the organisation to re-purpose and realign regional support and also continue to provide an effective school improvement service during the Covid-19 and recovery period.

Part 7: PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

7.1 Further to completing the assessment of GwE's governance arrangements, below are the proposals for improvement:

Core Principle	Ref no.	Proposal for improvement	Timescale for implementation	Responsible Officer
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	5.3.16	Ensure the governance review is finalised.	March 2021	Host authority / Managing Director
Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within	5.6.6	That staff development continues & is built upon during the next year ensuring that staff receive any new support requirements / developments as a result of Covid-19.	Mach 2021	Managing Director
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	5.7.15	That the value for money framework is enhanced during the year in order to demonstrate further the prioritisation of resources.	March 2021	Managing Director

7.2 The GwE Senior Leadership Team has accepted the proposals for improvement and is committed to their implementation during 2020/21. An update on progress will be reported to the Joint Committee (during the year) to enable members to review and scrutinise the extend of progress being made.

GwE Lead Officer

Date : _____

ARWYN LLOYD THOMAS

GwE MANAGING DIRECTOR

GwE Chairman

Date: _____

COUNCILLOR PHIL WYNN



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2020

Report by: Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director

Subject: GwE Annual Report 2019-20

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present the GwE Annual Report for the 2019-20 financial year.

2.0 Background

2.1 As is stated in the GwE Inter Authority Agreement, GwE will report annually on the performance of the Service in delivering the Service Functions and Key Aims.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 Enclosed is the annual report which provides an overview of the following areas: standards, the priorities and regional provision, contribution of the service to the transformation agenda, partnership working and business matters.

3.2 The main areas for development were identified through the service's self-evaluation process, and these are included in our Business Plan. The Business Plan and the regional priorities for 2020-2023 were approved at the meeting of the Joint Committee on 26 February 2020.

3.3 In response to COVID-19, on 23 March 2020, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners. GwE have also adapted and reviewed the regional priorities and work streams in order to continue to provide services and support for all our school communities. Our main priorities and work streams during this period have been as follows:

- Phase 1: Pre-lockdown
- Phase 2: Supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown
- Phase 3: Distance Learning
- Phase 4: Supporting schools to re-open
- Phase 5: Blended Learning

A summary of the activities, outcomes and impact are outlined in the 'GwE Work Programme' report.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to recommend and accept the report.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within the current financial resources.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Consultation with GwE User Groups, County Quality Boards, Headteachers Strategic Forums, GwE Management Board and Joint Committee

9.0 Appendices

9.1 GwE Annual Report 2019-20.

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Section 5 of the report clarifies that “there are no financial implications arising from this report” as “GwE will operate within their current financial resources”. Consequently, I have no observations to add from a financial propriety perspective.

GwE ANNUAL REPORT

2019 – 2020



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 - Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being
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1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Welsh Government alongside several partners and experts has undertaken a fundamental review of the accountability system for schools in Wales.

Findings highlighted that the existing system and its use of performance measures has many negative unintended consequences, such as:

- narrowing curriculum choice;
- disproportionate focus on particular groups of learners;
- the way in which benchmarking is used driving competition between schools rather than encouraging collaboration;
- an increased and unnecessary workload for teachers and others in the system, without the necessary impact or benefit for learners; and
- an aggregation of data for *accountability* purposes where it was designed for *improvement* purposes.

As a result, schools have heard conflicting messages from the various parts of the system about what matters. This has often diverted effort from learning and teaching and moved us towards a culture of compliance and bureaucracy.

A joint communication from **Welsh Government, the WLGA and Estyn** to Chairs of Scrutiny, Cabinet Members, Directors of Education, Chief Executive Officers, and Managing Directors of Regional Education Consortia, published on **16 July 2019** stated that:

“It is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures. It is not in the interest of school improvement and risks undermining the ongoing change in culture that we are working together to achieve. We expect local authorities and regional consortia to support schools to make appropriate decisions about their curriculum to avoid narrowing choice for learners.

Collectively, we have agreed that this is the right approach to take and strongly advise you to use a broad range of un-aggregated data and information to enable you to discharge your duties when reporting on school performance. Evaluating the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level will be more helpful to supporting and challenging individual schools with their improvement.”

The section on performance across North Wales in this report will adhere to this guidance.

Reporting on Teacher Assessments (Foundation Phase to Key Stage 3)

National changes in the reporting of teacher assessments has been introduced over the past two years. It supports the key objectives of the Welsh Government document: ‘Our National Mission,’ in delivering robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements to support a self-improving system.

International evidence suggests that for all learners to achieve their full potential, there should be a coherent assessment and accountability system. The primary purpose of assessment is to provide information that guides decisions about how best to progress pupils’ learning.

There is now a greater focus on the use of data in school self-evaluation. In the reformed system, schools are evaluated according to the difference they make to the progress of every child.

Data and information that is available to schools to measure this progress includes: end of key stage data, baseline entry data, pupil progress data over time, value added data between baseline and key stages, reading and numeracy diagnostic test data, action research and specific testing data as well as ESTYN inspection outcomes.

Data that has traditionally been aggregated upwards for comparison has been removed. All benchmarking, comparisons with other establishments, reading and numeracy test data, placing schools and Local Authorities in rank order is no longer acceptable or possible. As of last year, the only comparative data available to Local Authorities in these key stages are the National averages for end of these key stages.

In addition, the Minister for Education published a statement on school performance targets in June 2019. She stated:

'....., I want to be absolutely clear that school targets should only be used to support self-evaluation and should not be aggregated up to a local authority measure of performance to hold schools to account.'

These recent changes in assessment reporting requirements will strengthen the accuracy of assessment. It will reduce inflated levels and gaming and will ensure that every school looks closely at every learner and not just borderline learners who influence whether a school achieves a narrow measure or not.

National arrangements will have a renewed emphasis on Assessment for Learning as an essential and integral feature of learning and teaching; it is a significant move away from gathering information about young people's performance on a school-by-school basis for accountability purposes.

Teacher assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Test data at a school, local authority and consortia level will no longer be published. This applies to the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in all maintained primary and secondary schools.

Arrangements that will remain:

- National Reading and Numeracy Tests and Teacher Assessments for individual learners, however no national school level benchmark information will be published.
- Headteachers are required to report school performance to parents and adult learners each school year.
- Governing bodies are required to produce annual reports to parents, school prospectuses, school development plans, and set performance and absence targets.
- Schools, governing bodies and local authorities still have access to their own data (alongside national level data) for self-evaluation purposes.
- The Welsh Government continue to collect individual learner level data to ensure transparency at a national performance level and to inform policy.

Arrangements that will change:

- No comparative information about teacher assessments and tests, in relation to other schools within a local authority or 'family of schools', will be published.
- The Welsh Government no longer produce or publish School Comparative Reports and All Wales Core Data Sets for schools and local authorities in respect of teacher assessment data.

- The My Local School website no longer includes teacher assessment data below the national level (from 2018).

Changes to Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase

In October 2014 the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning (AoL) for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development were revised to align them with the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) as well as make them more demanding. In line with this the Foundation Phase outcomes were recalibrated to align with the increased expectations of the revised Areas of Learning.

The revised AoLE were introduced on a statutory basis from September 2015. This means that the cohort of children that started Reception in September 2015 were the first children to be formally assessed against the revised outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase in the summer of 2018. Comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with previous years at school level should, therefore, be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis.

Reporting on KS4 results

New interim KS4 measures have been introduced for 2019 as part of the significant education reform programme in Wales.

National data capture for individual schools will be based on first entry results. The data provided regionally for individual school and LAs will also be based on first entry results.

JCQ/WJEC have published their data and press release based on the ‘best outcome’ obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series. There will be differences between first entry and best outcome data.

As a result, across several indicators, it will not be possible to compare 2019 figures with previous performance.

The table below shows the new interim measures and the methodology used for calculating. It also demonstrates the key differences with previous years.

Interim Measure	How it is calculated	Differences from previous years, and why comparisons cannot be made
Capped 9	<p>The Capped 9 Points Score is a performance measure calculating the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual pupils in the cohort, capped at a specified volume of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.</p> <p>Three of the nine slots require the awards of specific subjects and qualifications in order to contribute any points towards the measure. These slots are each one GCSE in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Only a pupil's first entry will count ✓ WJEC Science GCSE only

	<p>size, specifying requirements in literacy, numeracy and science GCSEs only.</p> <p>The best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs can contribute towards the literacy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs can contribute towards the numeracy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from a science GCSE can contribute towards the science slot (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications currently available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award).</p> <p>The remaining six qualifications will include the pupil's best performance in either GCSE and/or vocational equivalent.</p>	
Literacy measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a pupil.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count, with Literature also accepted within this measure
Numeracy measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a pupil	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count
Science measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from a science GCSE awarded to a learner (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award) - these are identified as being able to contribute towards science measures.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count
The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure	Calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.	Reported separately as a main indicator for the first time in 2019

In this context, the data should be analysed on a local level and as a starting point to question local priorities.

Although 2019 data is currently available on historical performance measures (L1, L2, L2+ and 5A*-A), comparison with previous years is not valid because of the first entry counting rather than best outcome.

Scrutinising Individual School Performance

Regular Local Quality Board meetings are held between the GwE Core Lead and each LA. Any schools causing concern are discussed and any strengths and areas for improvement are noted. This links to the regular meetings held by the core lead with Supporting Improvement Advisers to discuss school progress. The regular communication between LA and GwE officers ensures shared intelligence about the capacity to improve of schools, and where concerns are identified that all parties work in partnership to review the standards and provision in the school and to set and monitor clear targets for improvement.

Each LA has its own monitoring processes to scrutinise the performance of individual schools. This includes the use of 'Accelerated Improvement Boards' for school's causing concern.

Schools Causing Concern

All schools are on an improvement journey and thus require differentiated and appropriate support and challenge to varying degrees. A few schools will require more intense targeted intervention.

The label 'schools causing concern' is very wide ranging and in its broader term has not been clearly defined in national guidance. For our own purpose within GwE, we have come up with the following definitions:

- Schools that need support to maintain or improve upon standards [i.e. moving from 'good' to 'excellent' or 'coasting schools'];
- Schools that are improving but need further support to sustain their improvement trajectory and/or further reduce within school variability;
- Schools that need more specific targeted support and intervention to prevent them being a cause of significant concern;
- Schools that have been identified as causing significant concerns and/or are in a statutory category.

GwE and the local authorities have an overall good track record in effectively supporting schools and specifically those causing concern. All secondary schools have a bespoke 'Support Plan' which ensures that GwE support is closely aligned with their SDP priorities. This allows for more effective deployment of resource, regional expertise and best practice.

High challenge and support is targeted in a timely and effective approach leading, in most instances, to an acceleration of the improvement journey in the identified schools, and, where relevant, their removal from Estyn follow-up category.

Local Quality Standards Board meetings are held on a regular basis between LA and GwE senior officer and used to share information around school performance and progress and to agree on any required adaptations to support plans. Interim Accelerated Improvement Boards provide challenge and

intervention to those schools in serious categories of concern. Where concerns remain, escalated action is taken which could include the use of powers of intervention as defined by national guidance.

Current regional situation

The primary and special school inspection profile has been continuously strong and compares well with the Estyn profile for schools across Wales. All primary schools placed in a category over the past three years have been removed promptly as a result of the targeted high challenge and support.

Standards in the secondary sector remains a cause for concern. Over the past 18 months, GwE has:

- re-profiled its service to ensure that additional resource is targeted towards the secondary sector;
- strengthened its team of link secondary SIAs to ensure relevant experience and expertise;
- ensured all secondary schools have access to a generic and bespoke programme of support;
- facilitated access to curriculum, MAT, post 16 and subject networks to disseminate good practice;
- adopted a targeted 'wave' support for ensuring continued improvements in core subjects;
- enhanced the GwE offer of professional development opportunities [and especially for experienced, new and potential leaders of the future];
- led the *Assessment for Learning* regional initiative to improve teaching and learning with Shirley Clarke;
- ensured further support for head teachers via strategic forum meetings and for participating schools through the *Excellence and Innovation* forum;
- supported 12 regional schools to research and address in-school variance by improving data tracking and intervention. Lessons extracted from the pilot will be transferable to all schools across the LA;
- provided financial support for a more diagnostic approach to securing improvements at KS4 English and Mathematics via PIXL;
- provided specific training at behest of schools for curriculum middle leaders and pastoral leaders;
- supported bespoke training for targeted schools and departments to improve aspects of the teaching and learning, e.g., with Tom Sherrington, Olevi ITP and OTP.
- Intensify the support and guidance to secondary sector schools in a specific authority as part of post-inspection implementation

In addition to the bespoke support delivered for secondary schools in the core subjects, generic regional and local guidance has also been available via subject networks and forums. Some of the key areas addressed include:

- English: A Level study support, Accelerated Reader training, developing literacy across the curriculum, improving oracy to support writing, improving tracking and intervention at KS4, improving standards of writing at KS4, guidance on MAT provision in English, development of resources e.g. *'Fix-it' resource to support the repair work required to address identified weak skills, Mastery Packs for KS4, Gothic SOW with grammar focus for Y7*
- Mathematics: leadership guidance and up-dates for new curriculum, sharing of best practice from Whiterose Maths Academies on the development of pedagogy within their cluster of schools, developing departmental pedagogy by 'deepening thinking', developing pedagogy at A level, supporting collaboration between numeracy co-ordinators to identify best practice in developing skills across the curriculum, develop leadership of numeracy co-ordinators who are within the first two years of being in post, developing understanding of the changes to the Numeracy Procedural tests.
- Science: excelling at GCSE Science – sharing best practice, sharing successful intervention strategies at KS4, developing scientific literacy – evidence based Research from Bangor University, developing strategies to engage learners in Science, working with schools to build scientific knowledge and supporting pupils in learning scientific concepts, developing reading skills in

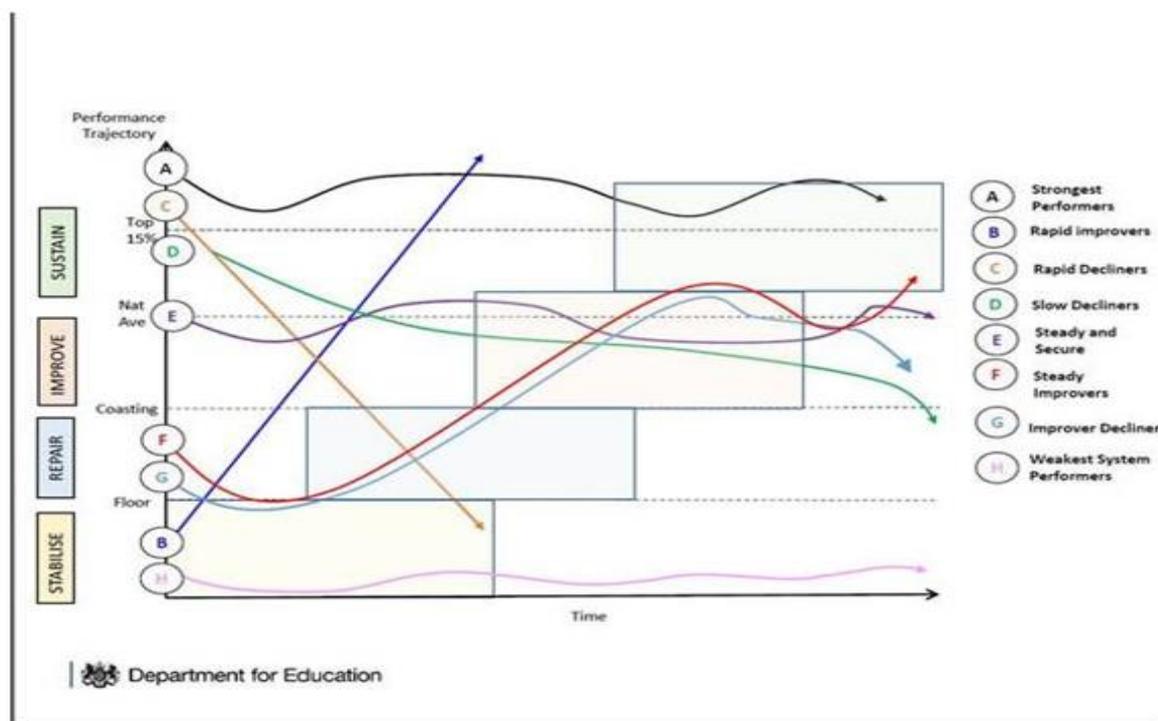
Science, sharing 'how to learn strategies' and retrieval practice, developing reading skills and the understanding of command and tier two words, developing deeper understanding of the GCSE specifications.

Moving Forward

We recognise that all schools are on a continuum of improvement. Some are emerging and developing, others developing and strengthening whilst our strongest schools are more autonomous and empowered.

As a service we are often asked to synthesise a myriad of school improvement metrics into a single definition. However, it is just as important to capture the journey and not just the 'snap shot' of a school's position on that journey.

The following diagram, developed by the DfE in England, looks to define the stages of a school's journey and begins to define the trajectory of school improvement:



We feel that this type of diagrammatic trajectory representation is a more useful tool when discussing with schools the required level and nature of support required. Its application can also be an effective strategy to capture schools at the beginning of any 'downward' trajectory thus mitigating any need for them to be identified as 'causing concern'.

We also believe that peer engagement and support should be an integral part of school improvement. 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 improvements and especially so within the secondary sector. 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 review.

GwE and the six regional local authorities has undertaken a consultation process with head teacher representation around the various aspects of the *National Reform Journey*. In terms of developing a regional framework for peer-to-peer engagement and support, head teachers suggested the following principles:

- 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

Steve Munby and Michael Fullen (2016) in their paper '*Inside-out and downside-up*' outline the critical success factors for an effective system-wide school collaboration as follows:

- the purpose of collaboration must be to improve outcomes;
- the partnership must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose;
- transparency, trust and honesty are crucial;
- a commitment to and capacity for effective peer review form the engine that drives improvement;
- peer review needs to be carried out within a long-term relationship and a commitment to continuously improving practice and systems through cycles of collaborative enquiry;
- the partnership must have a plan to move from collaboration to co-responsibility to a position of shared professional accountability;
- the partnership should go beyond school leaders and engage with students, teachers, families and communities;
- partnerships welcome scrutiny and support from other partnerships as their contribution to a connected local, regional and national system.

We firmly believe that peer engagement should underpin a rigorous cycle of continuous improvement and include:

- **Self-review:** effective peer review should start with how well the school knows itself and be led by the school being reviewed. The national self-evaluation toolkit developed by Estyn/OECD and the profession should play a key role in this aspect. Self-evaluation should focus on the learner, their achievements, progress and experiences in school and focus on learning and teaching, leadership, the development of a learning organisation culture, well-being of pupils and staff, equity and inclusion. In moving forward, the self-evaluation should also focus on the four purposes of the new curriculum and evaluate the progress the school is making towards realising the new curriculum. The self-evaluation processes should allow the school to identify areas of strengths and priorities for improvement. It should also identify aspects of their improvement journey that require peer support to aid improvement.

- **Peer-review:** the most effective peer reviews have an agreed focus. The purpose of the collaboration must be to improve outcomes and any agreed focus should be based on strong evidence of what's needed to improve and what outcomes would be most benefit to the school. Peer reviewers working as a team or trio work best where they can triangulate evidence and jointly analyse their findings. They are not there to pass judgement but to seek evidence and agree findings to be shared with the school. It is imperative that the peer review process does not become a *pseudo-inspection* system. The partnership must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose with transparency, trust and honesty crucial and integral to the process. The peer review should also provide professional development opportunities and include leaders at all levels.
- **School-to-school support:** if peer review is going to be a vehicle for ongoing improvement in school systems, then it must go further than the review itself and involve school to school or cluster support. Where the outcomes are owned by the staff, the long-term and sustainable impact will be greater. This helps to further build capacity and increased resilience within a self-improving system. The partnerships built should therefore go beyond school leaders and engage with students, teachers, families and communities.

GwE and the six regional local authorities are currently working with schools to establish a regional peer engagement model which fully reflects the principles and values that have been identified by head teachers and which also harvests from best practice nationally and beyond. Supporting Improvement Advisers are central to the facilitation and the development of this model.

This articulates our approach within the 'accountability' aspect of the reform journey. It details how peer engagement can be used to underpin a rigorous cycle of continuous development and improvement. We believe that peer engagement and support should be an integral part of school improvement in moving to a self-improving system whilst also supporting those schools that are causing concern.

2. STANDARDS

ESTYN SCHOOL INSPECTION PROFILE

Historically, the overall inspection profile across the region has been generally strong.

Combined School inspections September 2017- February 2020.

Year	Region	No Inspected	No Follow Up		Estyn Review		Significant Improvement		Special Measures	
			%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
17/18	GwE	69	82.6	57	14.5	10	1.4	1	1.4	1
17/18	Wales	237	75.1	178	17.3	41	4.6	11	3.0	7
18/19	GwE	64	79.7	51	17.2	11	1.6	1	1.6	1
18/19	Wales	227	75.8	172	19.8	45	1.8	4	2.6	6
19/20*	GwE	36	63.9	23	25.0	9	2.8	1	8.3	3

*Inspections up to February 2020

Judgements all schools 2018-19

	Standards		Wellbeing		Teaching		Support		Leadership	
	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales

Excellent	18.8	11.5	25.0	19.8	17.2	11.9	23.4	18.9	28.1	17.2
Good	62.5	65.2	67.2	67.4	62.5	62.1	71.9	70.9	51.6	58.6
Adequate	15.6	21.1	7.8	12.3	20.3	24.2	4.7	8.4	18.8	20.7
Unsatisfactory	3.1	2.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	1.8	0.0	1.8	1.6	3.6

Judgements all schools inspected in 2019-20 up to end of February 2019-20

	Standards		Wellbeing		Teaching		Support		Leadership	
	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE
Excellent	5.6	-	25.0	-	5.6	-	19.4	-	16.7	-
Good	75.0	-	63.9	-	66.7	-	66.7	-	47.2	-
Adequate	8.3	-	11.1	-	22.2	-	13.9	-	27.8	-
Unsatisfactory	11.1	-	0.0	-	5.6	-	0.0	-	8.3	-

Primary School inspections Sept 2017- February 2020

Year	Region	No Inspected	No Follow Up		Estyn Review		Significant Improvement		Special Measures	
			%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
17/18	GwE	59	86.4	51	11.9	7	1.7	1	0.0	0
17/18	Wales	200	80.5	161	14.5	29	3.5	7	1.5	3
18/19	GwE	54	88.9	48	11.1	6	0.0	0	0.0	0
18/19	Wales	188	80.9	152	16.5	31	0.5	1	2.1	4
19/20	GwE	29	65.5	19	27.6	8	0.0	0	6.9	2

*Inspections up to February 2020 / Including all-through schools

Secondary / All Age School inspections Sept 2017- February 2020

Year	Region	No Inspected	No Follow Up		Estyn Review		Significant Improvement		Special Measures	
			%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
17/18	GwE	7	57.1	4	28.6	2	0.0	0	14.3	1
17/18	Wales	30	50.0	15	33.3	10	10.0	3	6.7	2
18/19	GwE	8	12.5	1	62.5	5	12.5	1	12.5	1
18/19	Wales	32	43.8	14	40.6	13	9.4	3	6.3	2
19/20	GwE	8	50.0	4	25.0	2	12.5	1	12.5	1

*Inspections up to February 2020 / Including all-through schools

Primary Judgements 2018-19 & 2019-20

	Standards		Wellbeing		Teaching		Support		Leadership	
	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales	GwE	Wales
Excellent	20.4	6.9	27.8	17.2	18.5	6.9	25.9	13.8	31.5	17.2
Good	70.4	79.3	68.5	75.9	72.2	69.0	72.2	75.9	57.4	48.3
Adequate	9.3	6.9	3.7	6.9	9.3	20.7	1.9	10.3	11.1	27.6
Unsatisfactory	0.0	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9

*Inspections up to February 2020 / Including all-through schools

Secondary Judgements 2018-19 & 2019-20

	Standards		Wellbeing		Teaching		Support		Leadership	
	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20	18/19	19/20
Excellent	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	37.5	0.0	12.5
Good	12.5	50.0	62.5	25.0	0.0	50.0	75.0	25.0	12.5	37.5
Adequate	62.5	25.0	37.5	25.0	100.0	37.5	25.0	37.5	75.0	37.5
Unsatisfactory	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.5	0.0	0.0	12.5	12.5

*Inspections up to February 2020 / Including all-through schools

Primary - Of the 29 primary schools and the one lifelong learning school inspected in 2019/20 up until the end of February, 19 of those were judged as not requiring follow-up (65.5%) in comparison to 88.9% in 2018/19. Ten schools (34.5%) required follow-up in comparison to 11.1% in 2018/19. Eight of the ten schools were put in the least intensive follow-up category of Estyn Review, with two in special measures. At present, there are 14 schools in the follow-up category and 2 schools in the Statutory Category (special measures).

Secondary - Of the eight schools inspected thus far in 2019/20, it was judged that four did not require any follow-up (50% in comparison to 12.5% in 2018/19.) It was judged that two required Estyn review (25% in comparison with 62.5% in 2018/19) and two were placed in the statutory follow-up category [one in special measures and one requiring significant improvement]. These two schools had already been identified as 'high risk' in our profile.

Given the inspection areas, it was judged that standards were good or better in 4 of the 8 schools (i.e. 50% in comparison to 12.5% in 2018/19), and good or better in 6 schools as regards wellbeing and attitudes towards learning (i.e. 75% in comparison to 62.5% in 2018/19). In inspection area 3, it was judged that teaching was good or better in four schools (i.e. 50% in comparison to 0% in 18/19). It was judged that 5 schools were good or better in terms of care, guidance and support (i.e. 62.5% in comparison to 75%), and 4 schools were judged as being good as regards leadership (i.e. 50% in comparison with 12.5% in 2018/19). An increase was seen in the excellent judgements with wellbeing and attitudes towards learning being excellent in four schools, care and support being excellent in three schools, and leadership being excellent in one school. No schools were awarded an 'excellent' judgement against any inspection area in 2018/19.

The region's current profile shows that seven secondary schools are in a statutory category. All schools have a comprehensive PIAP and Estyn have signed off the LA's support plan. These schools are at different stages along the improvement continuum, and progress that is more apparent is being made in two schools. All schools receive regular monitoring visits, the relevant local authority officers are informed of the progress made, and any concerns arising are highlighted. Another seven are under Estyn review and there is a clear expectation for all schools to demonstrate the necessary improvements within the timescale set.

Special Schools/PRUs - No special schools or Pupil Referral Units have been inspected thus far in 2019-20.

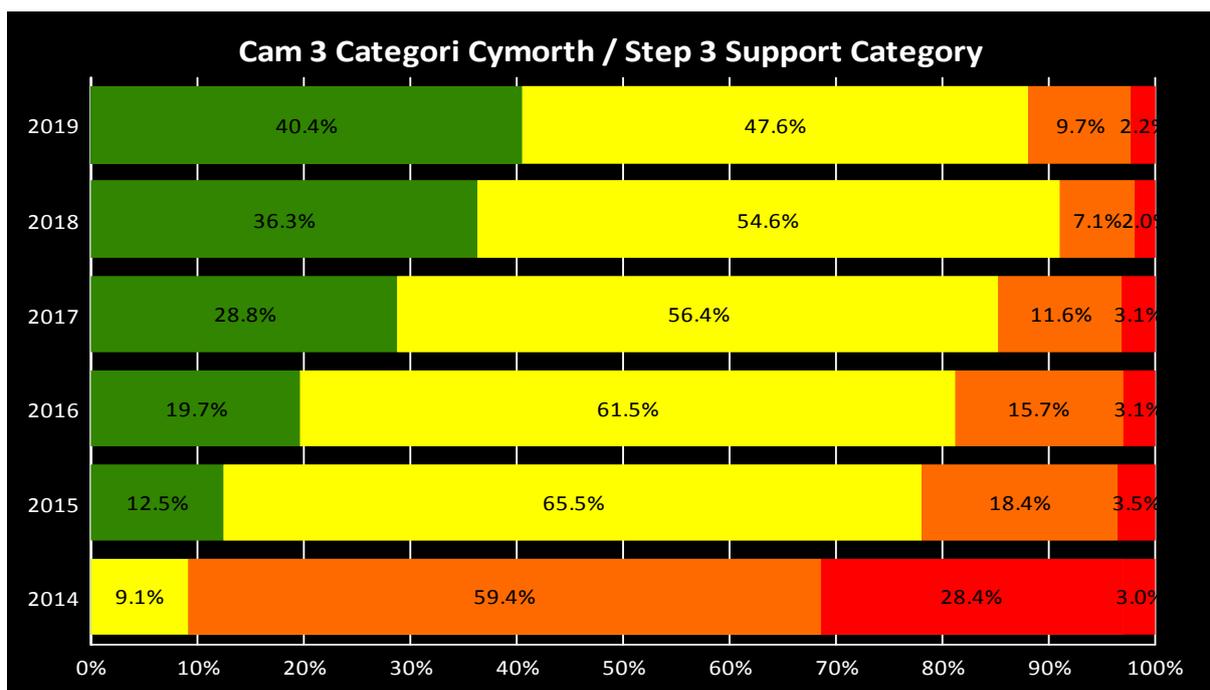
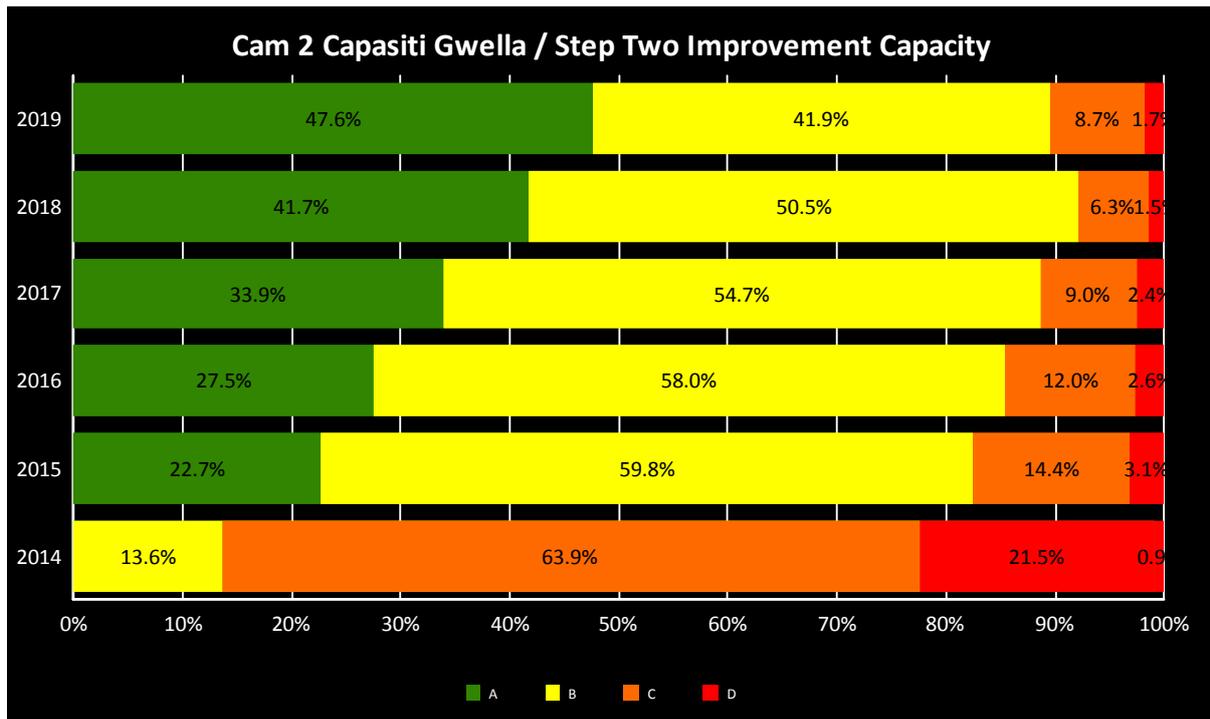
NATIONAL CATEGORISATION

All schools

Across all sectors the percentage of schools categorised as Grade A and B for Step 2 has decreased slightly from 92.2% in 2018 to 89.6% (361 schools) in 2019 due to the number of schools awarded a grade C increasing by 9 to 35 (8.7%) and the number of schools awarded a D grade increasing by 1 to

7 (1.7%) . The percentage categorised as Grade A continues to increase with 47.6% (192 schools) awarded an A grade.

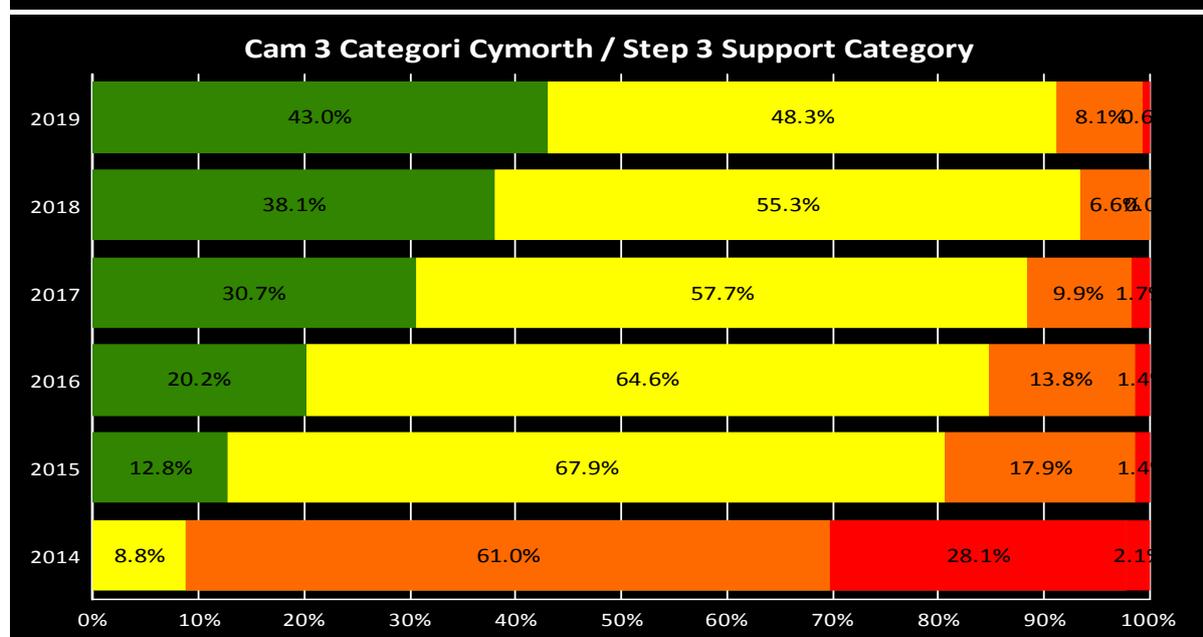
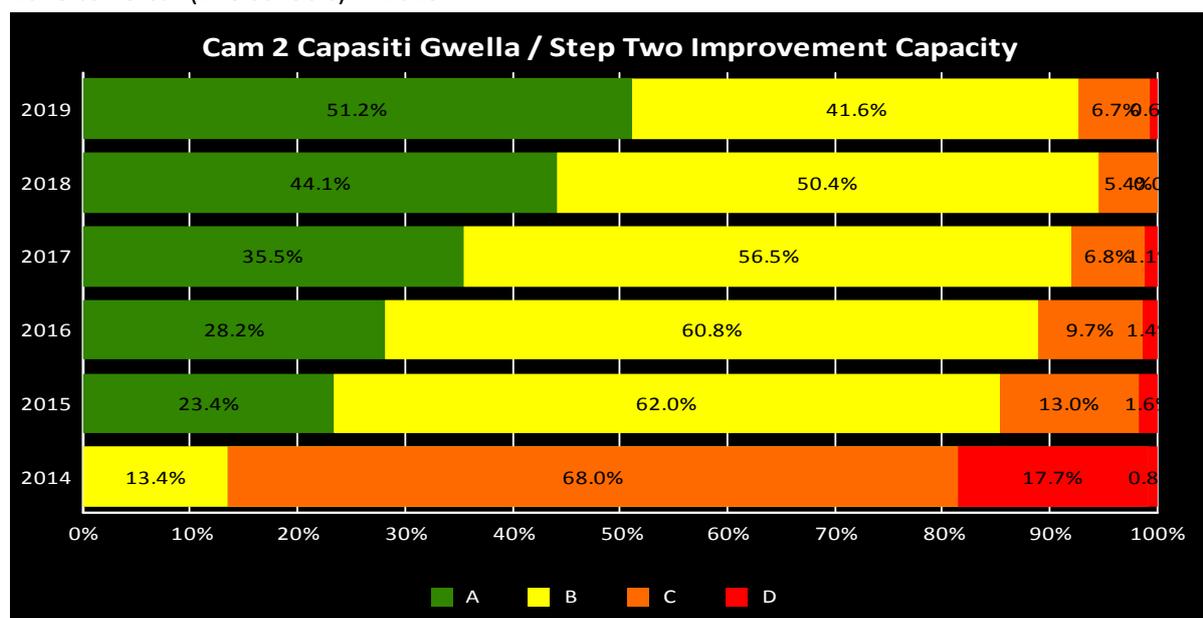
The percentage of schools categorised as Green or Yellow for Step 3 decreased from 91.0% in 2018 to 88.1% (355 schools) in 2019 with the percentage of Amber or Red school increasing by 2.9% due to an additional 10 schools classed as Amber and 1 additional classed as Red. The percentage categorised Red increased by 0.2% to 2.2% (9 Schools) and the percentage categorised as Green increased yet again to 40.4% (163 schools).



Primary

The percentage of schools categorised as Grade A or B for step 2 decreased from 94.6% in 2018 to 92.7% (319 schools) with the number schools awarded a C grade increasing by 4 to 23 and the number of schools awarded a D grade increasing from 0 to 2. The percentage categorised as Grade A has increased significantly from 35.5% in 2017, 44.1% in 2018 to 51.2% (176 schools) in 2019.

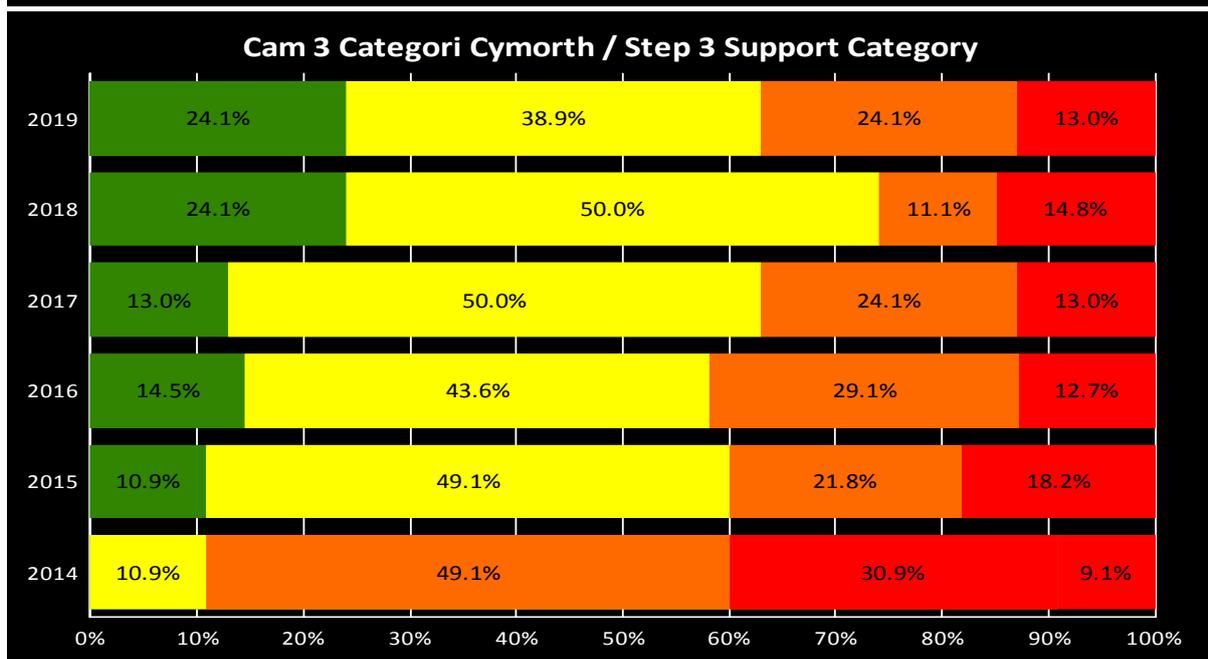
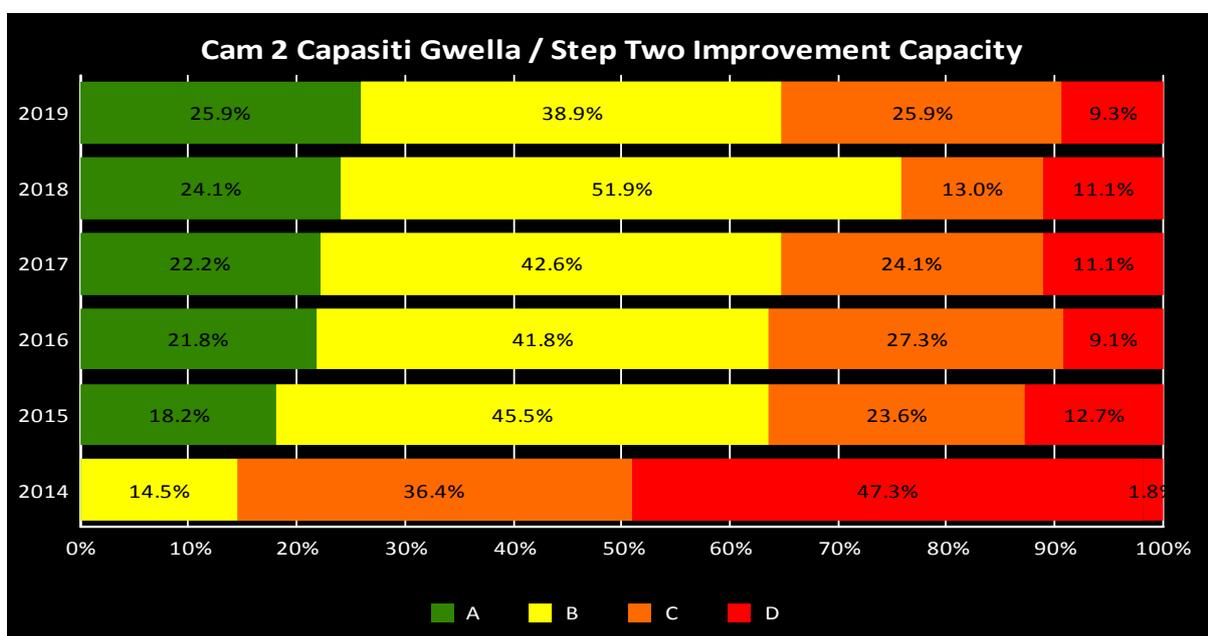
The percentage of schools categorised as Red or Amber for Step 3 increased from 6.6% in 2018 to 8.7% (30 schools) with an additional 7 schools categorised as Amber or Red. The percentage categorised as a red increased from 0% in 2018 to 0.6 % in 2019 due to the Red categorisation of 2 schools. The percentage categorised as green has increased significantly from 30.7% in 2017, 38.1% in 2018 to 43.0% (148 schools) in 2019.



Secondary

The percentage of schools categorised as Grade A and B for Step 2 decreased from 75.9% (41 schools) in 2018 to 64.8% (35 schools) in 2019. The percentage categorised as a D fell from 11.1% (6 schools) to 9.3% (5 schools). The percentage categorised as Grade A continues to increase from 22.2% in 2017 to 25.9% (14 schools) in 2019.

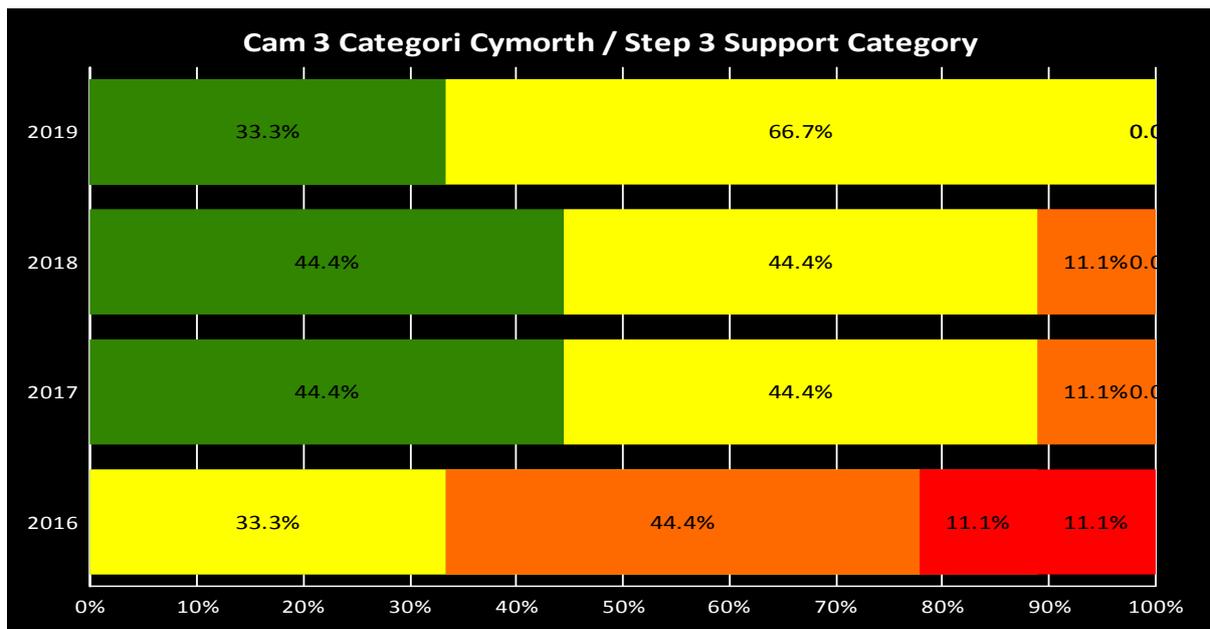
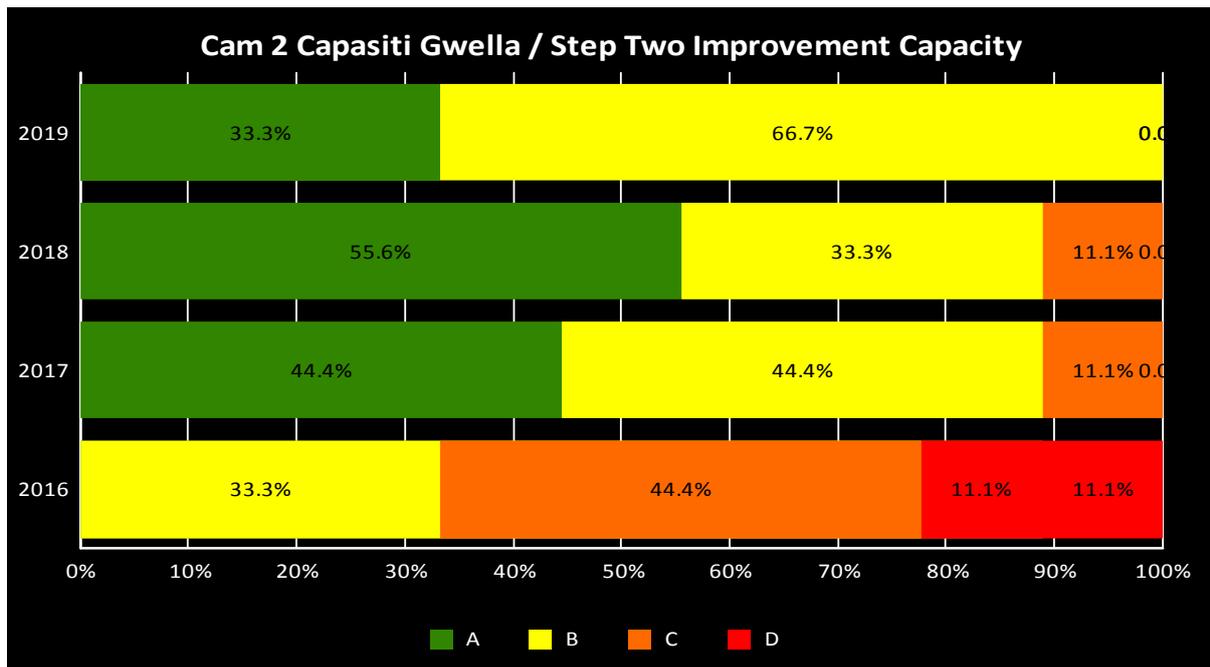
The percentage of schools categorised as red and amber for Step 3 increased from 25.9% (14 schools) in 2018 to 37.0% (20 schools) in 2019. The percentage categorised as Red fell from 14.8% (8 schools) in 2018 to 13.0% (7 schools) in 2019. The percentage categorised Green remained constant at 24.1% (13 schools) with the percentage categorised Yellow decreasing from 50% in 2018 to 38.9% and subsequently the percentage categorised as Amber increasing from 11.1% in 2018 to 24.1% with the number of Amber schools increasing by 7 to 13.



Special

The percentage of schools categorised as Grade C and D for Step 2 has fallen to 0. No special school has been categorised as a D since 2016. The percentage categorised as Grade A has decreased from 55.6% (5 schools) in 2018 to 33.3% (3 schools) in 2019. 6 of the 9 schools are categorised as Grade B, up from 3 in 2018.

The percentage of schools categorised as red and amber for Step 3 has fallen to 0.0% and no special school has been categorised red since 2016. The percentage categorised as green decreased from 44.4% (4 schools) to 33.3% (3 schools). 6 of the 9 schools are categorised as Yellow, up from 4 in 2018.



3. EMERGING QUESTIONS TO HELP THE JOINT COMMITTEE, LA OFFICERS AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES TO EVALUATE PUPIL PROGRESS, STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE

Teacher assessments

- Why do Foundation Phase, KS2 and KS3 outcomes appear to be lower over the past two years?
- Why does the regional ESTYN profile and GwE intelligence gathering contradict falling outcomes at Foundation Phase?
- How effectively is progress and value added data analysed and reported so as to strengthen performance and improve standards?
- To what extent are schools adopting rigorous assessment tracking for all learners of all ages?
- How do schools use baseline assessment data to target and plan intervention needs?
- Are individual learners and groups of learners correctly identified and effectively supported?
- Have schools developed effective self-evaluation arrangements which go beyond end of key stage performance data to identify what they are doing well and what needs to change?
- What actions are leaders undertaking with classes that consistently underperform?
- How robust are in-school standardisation and cluster moderation procedures in schools?
- What monitoring processes are in place to ensure that schools set appropriate targets?
- Are schools ensuring that there is a broad and balanced curriculum and not fixated on a narrow set of subjects and areas of learning?
- What school data can be used for Local Authority self-evaluation purposes and how can this be presented?

Key Stage 4

- To what extent are all schools embracing the national change in direction and behaviour to maximise the performance of individual pupils across the ability range? Do school leaders have a clear vision for what to change and why?
- Have all schools developed effective self-evaluation arrangements which go beyond examination performance data to identify what they are doing well and what needs to change?
- How appropriate is the schools' curriculum across the region? Have all schools robustly evaluated the impact and contribution of individual non-core subjects into the revised C9 measure? Is this supported by leaders making effective and timely use of Welsh Government bulletin up-dates?
- Are current internal accountability and QA processes robust enough to ensure consistent performance by individual pupils across their option choices i.e. are leaders effectively addressing In School Variance?
- What actions are leaders undertaking with departments that are outperforming the school average and with those that are underperforming?
- To what extent do individual departments forensically analyse the data shared by WJEC on subject performance?
- To what extent do all departmental staff, across the range of subjects, understand the assessment weighting for each specification? How does this effectively impact on their planning and delivery and, where relevant, the understanding of grading, awarding and reporting?
- To what extent are departments making effective use of the Chief Examiner's annual report which highlights strengths and weaknesses of performance?
- Many schools have members who are WJEC examination markers. To what extent are their expertise fully utilised within and across schools?
- Why has the performance in English dropped significantly in a number of historically strong performing departments?

- Why is there a variance in a number of regional schools between the performance of Mathematics and Maths-Numeracy?
- How well do current 14-19 local strategies ensure that funding is effectively used to deliver appropriate experiences and qualifications for targeted groups of pupils and to what extent do they contribute to the revised interim measures in each local authority?
- Are we confident that the national change in direction has sufficiently impacted on the local provision for EOTAS? To what extent has their performance in 2019 impacted on local authority outcomes?
- Are we confident that the national change in direction has sufficiently impacted on the local provision for Special Schools (145 pupils in Year 11) and Units? To what extent has their performance in 2019 impacted on local authority outcomes?
- Within the region there are 247 EOTAS pupils in year 11 – by grouping them together this is a larger cohort than what we have in any school. To what extent are leaders and staff within PRUs supported and skilled to clearly identify how best to maximise the performance of individual pupils across the revised performance measures?

4. GWE REGIONAL PRIORITIES AND PROVISION

DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION PROFESSION

Foundation Phase

Workshops and Foundation Phase Networks for Senior Leadership Teams, Teachers and Teaching Assistants (TA's) have been delivered bilingually across the region where national, regional and local messages have been disseminated, and good practice shared. As a result, the majority of schools inspected during last financial year have been judged as good or excellent for Foundation Phase provision and standards.

High numbers of staff from mainstream and special schools have attended regional workshops, and termly network meetings (1,746), impacting positively upon pedagogy, teaching and learning. The workshops and network meetings are aligned with the new Curriculum for Wales, focusing on the four purposes, 12 pedagogical principles and based on a creative, holistic and cross-curricular approach, promoting problem solving through experiential learning.

Generally, the quality of outdoor learning is improving in response to the network meetings and outdoor learning training for teachers and TA's. Pupil voice is a consistent message delivered through training and meetings which is beginning to influence classroom practice. Overall, there is greater understanding of Foundation Phase pedagogy and provision, experiential learning and application of key skills with Key Stage 2 Year 3 teachers and teaching assistants.

Schools supported by the Foundation Phase Team have been removed from category and nearly all schools identified as high risk have made expected or better progress against areas of improvement. There has been reduction in the variance in the teaching and learning in Foundation Phase.

Bespoke training has been delivered to individual schools and to clusters who have similar priorities identified by Supporting Improvement Advisers. (102 individual schools and 19 clusters).

Good practice is disseminated regionally and nationally through the networks and workshops with presentations and resources shared on GwEs Foundation Phase Hwb. This enables schools to have access to resources and regional good practice.

Literacy and Numeracy

There has been strong engagement from schools from every Local Authority across the region. Nearly all schools engaged in development programmes have reported:

- significant positive impact on attitudes to learning from learners;
- attitudes to subject pedagogy and increased knowledge in staff;
- positive impact on standards of progress and attainment of learners in numerical reasoning, numeracy, mathematics, oracy, reading and writing in KS2 and FPh.

There is now a body of evidence held centrally, produced by delegates of these programmes, showing pupil progress in terms of learner outcomes/progress data, pupil work, schemes of work and effective practice teaching strategies has been shared this year with new cohort delegates, with several schools practitioners from across the region co-delivering in meetings and training events and thus cascading their effective practice, experience of implementation and future strategic plans.

Throughout every area of development, the 12 pedagogical principles, Four Purposes and cross curricular requirements of literacy, numeracy and Digital Competence Framework (DCF) feature centrally. Many schools have reported that the underlying development of oracy in their schools, is not only allowing children to more successfully access other areas of the curriculum, but has impacted positively on well-being, engagement and attitudes to learning. Oracy, specifically through Science and STEM and Outdoor Learning, has been a central factor in nearly all of the above development programmes, for both literacy and numeracy.

Practitioners from regional schools have supported through their own evidence and experience, the development of inquiry based practice within new cohort schools. As a result, the schools involved have gained greater ownership of findings, learning and outcomes. This has dramatically enhanced the progress in subject knowledge and efficacy based practice within these schools. This has all been in line with the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and the new Professional Standards.

Teachers involved are now much more knowledgeable about the development of literacy and numeracy across a wider curriculum, how to influence and advance learning for all groups of learners, lead the subject effectively in school and offer support to other schools, with regard to their own development journey. Quality Assurance visits to schools show that nearly all have made sustainable change and that new pedagogies are being cascaded and embedded across the school and often intertwined further with a wider range of development activities.

Some clusters have independently developed working links with each other and further developed Outdoor Learning, STEM and Oracy into collaborative plans, transition into KS3 and CfW developments. This has been facilitated further by the Literacy and Numeracy SIA and a wider network of independently sourced agencies, to further develop a culture of collaboration and make improvements more sustainable into the future.

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) - Global Futures (GF)

The Global Futures (GF) Team and the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) departments across the region have continued to work collaboratively and effectively with various partners such as Routes Into Languages, Student Mentoring, British Council, Goethe Institute, Confucius Institute, Institut français, Bangor University etc. to promote languages in both, primary and secondary sector, across the region.

Through close monitoring from GF team and effective promotion of initiatives available, we have seen a consistent participation of MFL departments in the various activities aiming at promoting languages. This year, almost all schools have taken part in one or more of the available activities, which shows that schools value and welcome these opportunities.

The GF team works successfully to bring coherence, clarity and a shared commitment to realising the vision for pedagogy, learners, colleagues and the wider community. The GF team have continued to develop a strong network amongst MFL practitioners across the region through regular meetings, training opportunities and teach-meets. This network of mutual support and collaboration is widely used by all schools and, as a result, effective pedagogy is spread across the region

The GF Team has a very good knowledge of MFL departments across the region and is able to target individual teachers and departments effectively to improve or develop professional standards for teachers and heads of departments. Feedback from schools is very positive and show impact on professional growth. Various training sessions during meetings, conferences, teach-meets and collaborative work were also organised by the team in response to teachers' needs and requests. This has created a positive climate for innovation and the development of techniques and approaches to improve pedagogical outcomes across the consortium.

Primary Sector: The GF team has successfully promoted the teaching and learning of International languages in the primary sector for a second year; 40 primary schools across the region are now taking part in the GF pilot to deliver languages in the primary sector.

The team has continued to provide opportunities for professional development for primary school teachers. The Learning to teach languages in primary Course: YEAR 2 (Open University/Welsh Government Initiative) gives the opportunity to learn a new foreign language as well as acquire the pedagogy to teach languages, and is a unique opportunity for innovative professional development. This project has been helpful in developing skilled primary practitioners in preparation for the New Curriculum.

Four conferences were held to support the introduction and the teaching of languages in the primary sector. Expert primary MFL speakers presented practical ideas and resources especially designed for non-specialists and to enable them to integrate languages across the curriculum. Teachers had the opportunity to share good practice with focus on planning and were given time to continue planning to embed languages in the curriculum. Schools have been provided funding to continue planning to embed language learning within the curriculum and using the resources bought by GF. By now, all teachers understand better how to plan their provision for languages and embed it in their thematic work or other part of the curriculum. There was excellent feedback and all teachers are eager to put into practice the various ideas presented during the conferences.

Teachers understand the direct link between the international language learning skills and the literacy agenda. They are better aware that international languages can be embedded in the curriculum rather than being taught as an add-on and contribute to the development of literacy skills. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to respond to the demands of the New Curriculum and specifically LLC.

Secondary sector: The GF team has provided regular opportunities for teachers to extend their knowledge, skill and understanding as regard to teaching, learning and effective planning of MFL. The training provided has been carefully planned to respond to Estyn's recommendation for MFL and to provide high quality inset. These sessions have enthused and motivated MFL practitioners across the

Consortium and contributed to their professional development and their competence in teaching MFL.

To ensure follow-up and implementation of the ideas and techniques presented by MFL experts, the GF Team has enabled teachers to work collaboratively to create practical, effective and creative resources. These have all been quality-assured and have been shared through meetings and through the Hwb platform. By now, there is an extensive range of resources for French, German and Spanish for KS3, KS4 and KS5 as well as MFL toolkit and guidance for SoW.

Individual teachers continue to make regular use of the resources on Hwb MFL GwE which is updated and populated regularly by the GF Team with quality assured resources. This is ensuring better quality of teaching and learning. As a result, learners of all abilities are fully challenged and engaged in creative language activities that develop their mastery of the language.

Core subjects

Secondary schools have access to specialist support in all core subjects across the region. A comprehensive strategy is in place for improving standards in English, mathematics, science and Welsh across the region.

The Core Subject Supporting Improvement Advisers work in close collaboration with link School Improvement Advisers and the secondary Core Lead to challenge and support underperforming secondary school departments. In addition to the bespoke support delivered for secondary schools in the core subjects, generic regional and local guidance has also been available via subject networks and forums. The main priorities for 2019-20 are outlined below.

Science

The main priorities for 2019-20 were:

- Science support programme
- Hub school programme.
- Network meetings, subject specific support networks and collaboration
- GCSE online resources (www.tanio.cymru)
- Supporting lower ability learners at GCSE

Science support programme – All 54 schools were provided with a link Science SIA and all were visited at least once this year. The support has been bespoke for each individual school and the level of support has been directly linked to level of need. Support has included developing leadership, improving the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum planning, assessment and tracking etc. and will have a positive impact on pupil outcomes.

Hub school programme – The three Hub schools have supported a significant number (over 50%) of schools and individual teachers from across the region. This has included hosting teachers and sharing best practice, sharing resources, supporting individual subjects within schools and mentoring teachers and leaders. Schools have been able to request specific support from the hub schools and have benefitted from the support and collaboration.

Network meetings, subject specific support networks and collaboration – The network meetings have improved schools understanding of the changes to the KS4 performance measures in Science/school, the progress of the new curriculum for Wales, standards at KS2 (presentations from KS2 practitioners) and provision for STEM. This increased collaboration across school/LA/region and developed teacher knowledge and understanding of the KS4 and KS5 specifications.

GCSE online resources (www.tanio.cymru) – The website has continually evolved and almost all the presentation/revision resources for all units in years 10 and 11 (DA Science) are now on the website. There is now a teacher zone which includes a variety of resources to support teaching and learning. The website continues to be updated on a regular basis, and the site is receiving daily hits of approximately 500 visits per day. Feedback received from parents, teachers and pupils has been extremely positive, and as well as being a revision resource for home learning, it is being widely used across the region within schools.

Supporting lower ability learners at GCSE – Work booklets and assessment materials differentiated for the lower ability learners have been produced bilingually. Schools are using these widely and have seen an increase in engagement from these groups of learners since their introduction.

Welsh

The priorities for 2019-20 were to:

- Develop and sustain the Welsh Language and Literature provision in the region's secondary schools
- Support middle leaders to create strong and inclusive departments with teachers who foster the potential of all learners.
- Develop an effective assessment system with middle leaders to track learner progress and to raise standards.
- Develop the knowledge of Welsh teachers across the region regarding the new curriculum and pedagogical principles.

Meetings with Heads of Welsh captured a clear picture of the provision across North Wales, and served as an opportunity to build a close relationship with them in order to support their work as successful middle leaders. Those meetings focused on the four aforementioned priorities and tailoring support to meet departmental needs and sharing support materials.

These visits set an additional direction for work during the year as good practice could be shared in regional meetings/INSET/GwE Offer courses/in the 'Cymraeg GwE' Network within Hwb, and in further support visits with individual schools.

More specific support was provided for some departments following these initial meetings and also at the request of the school's SIA over the year. Support was provided for the HoD facing an Estyn inspection via scrutiny visits and support with producing strategic documents and lesson planning to demonstrate progress.

Good quality expert-led courses have been delivered. These were research and pedagogy-based and motivated teachers to return to school to share and trial different teaching and learning approaches. Leadership and planning approaches were shared as models for others and which stimulated course attendees to trial new leadership and management approaches.

Maths

The main priorities for 2019-20 were:

- Develop knowledge of practitioners with regard to impactful teaching and learning
- Develop leadership roles to support the development of learning within their departments
- Develop individuals in need of support to improve their pedagogy
- Support individual teachers to develop their pedagogy
- Develop tracking system that gives the opportunity for middle leaders to identify learners that are underachieving for on-going and suitable interventions.

- Develop resources for supporting revision and learning outside the classroom – intermediate phase complete.
- Develop middle leadership understanding of ‘suitable assessment’ and how this could be used to inform tracking and intervention.

Successful practice has been shared with departments across the region. Individual support for new Heads of Department has been provided across the region through a combination of school visits and inviting individuals to schools where different members of departments have contributed to a day of showcasing.

GwE has been working with individual teachers within schools to develop the pedagogy within their classrooms by:

- working with teachers and acting HOM to develop deeper understanding through thoughtful questioning and careful planning
- modelling of revision techniques to support learners' resilience when faced with examination questions that may seem unfamiliar
- working with individual teachers on the impact of careful planning during lessons with challenging learners
- working with individual teachers on planning and the impact of consideration of questions on learner engagement;
- working with individual teachers on preparation of learners' for examination
- differentiation with mixed ability teaching and feedback
- planning and modelling effective teaching and learning in the Numeracy spec
- improvement planning and engaging lower ability pupils
- developing teaching and learning

Phase 1 for developing a tracking system that gives the opportunity for middle leaders to identify learners that are underachieving for on-going and suitable interventions has been completed. Heads of department (HoD) have received a presentation on using the system. Further developments of this model and the thorough trialling of this resource before launching further versions is being implemented by HOM.

Resources have been developed for supporting revision and learning outside the classroom and the Maths.Cymru website has been launched at intermediate tier to Heads of Maths in the region.

Individual schools have collaborated with GwE in creating and trialling new assessment and marking systems, which have enabled teachers to identify key areas for intervention and inform students clearly on what they need to improve and how. Individual schools have given training and support to implement tracking and feedback strategies that target specific weaknesses.

English

The main priorities for 2019-20 were:

- Improving standards of teaching and learning specifically in target schools
- Improvements in planning and delivery of writing and oracy
- Increased level of challenge and improved provision for more able students
- Effective Literacy Intervention Programme introduced in 25 schools
- Improved tracking and repair systems in most English departments
- Improved skills and expertise of middle leaders
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales

Development and implementation of Literacy Intervention programme – a second wave of Literacy Intervention toolkit has been developed and shared with schools. Two days training sessions delivered and individual / bespoke support to set up intervention programme provided to schools.

Heads of English and Science have been working collaboratively to develop approaches to teaching reading and vocabulary - bespoke support and mentoring provided to 7 Heads of English. This has led to strengthened leadership. Peer support programme has been put in place and buddy visits planned. This has improved capacity of middle leaders.

Development and implementation of English tracking system and 'Fix It' resources – the English tracking system has been further developed and shared with schools. Most schools utilise the tracking system or have adapted principles. 'Fix It' materials have been developed and these have been shared and are used successfully in schools. Standardisation material has been developed and shared. Walking talking mocks have been developed to further support students and teachers. Literature tracking system and 'Fix It' material developed to support schools.

Improvements in classroom practice can be seen. The focus has been on developing oracy and links with feeder primaries. Training has been delivered to classroom teachers and Heads of English on improving provision for more able students. A range of resources has been developed and shared regionally. A website has been developed to support students and teachers in revising for English Language and Literature with a focus on stretch and challenge. Teaching of writing at KS4 has been strengthened as evidenced in book scrutiny documentation and notes of visit.

Post 16

The support post-16 for schools has strengthened. Work is continuing to develop across the region to look at provision in all areas to ensure continuing strength and breadth at post-16.

The skills of heads of Sixth Form continue to be augmented by consortia planning. Good cross-consortia work is continuing, particularly around the development of the Sixth Form Leadership development programme to ensure that all leaders and potential leaders have the skills, understanding of national and local contexts and tools to support pupils to the best outcomes. Feedback has been strong and presentations on various aspects of pastoral leadership have been of a high standard.

The Regional Conference (February 2020) was well attended again – over 40 delegates. The focus was on wellbeing at request of heads of Sixth Form. Sessions were excellent and very well received by delegates who appreciate the opportunity for Professional learning of this kind.

The Subject Networks which have been established across the seven most popular A level subjects are becoming a useful forum for ideas and sharing of practice. The meetings focus on the needs of schools and their departments.

The use of ALPs Connect has increased again this year. More training has been delivered to six schools and most schools are using or at least accessing Connect regionally. In other schools different tools are being used.

To ensure that schools are equipped to support students in independent learning, VESPA North Wales programme (led by A level Mindset team) has been delivered to eleven schools. The programme has been very well received by schools and their students to date and hopefully will continue next year and expand to include other schools.

Teaching Assistants Learning Pathway (TALP)

The number of induction and experienced assistants attending TALP training increased following promotional work with head teachers.

The cluster model has proved to be an effective way of training experienced assistants. A total of 11 new cluster training courses were successfully delivered over the year, with 240 assistants trained. By now, we have managed to raise heads' awareness of the cluster model and have been approached by schools requesting cluster training, with another 5 clusters having now committed to deliver training for 2020-21 also.

National collaboration on the new Aspiring Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) programme is particularly good, with all consortia contributing well to discussions and to preparation work and resource creation. The collaboration days proved extremely successful, resulting in high-quality training, assessment and recruitment materials.

The new Aspiring HLTA Programme is developing very well. GwE was solely responsible for preparing the digital training materials.

A total of 818 teaching assistants have attended HLTA training from March 2019 - April 2020, with 66 having attended HLTA information sessions and 41 attending the Aspiring HLTA session.

Eight new coaches have been trained across the region.

Number of Teaching Assistant Learning Pathway Courses 2019-20	
Induction	51
Experienced (2-days)	135
Experienced (cluster model)	241
HLTA 17 and 18	66 (31+35)
HLTA Information Sessions Round 18	66
Aspiring HLTA Information Sessions	41
Aspiring HLTA	29
Development Day	180
Conwy INSET (taster session)	9
Total	818

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO RAISE STANDARDS

Leadership

GwE provides consistent, equitable and high-quality development programmes at each stage of the national leadership professional learning development pathway, from middle leadership through to experienced Headteachers. These programmes enable practitioners to develop their schools as learning organisations so they are able to “react more quickly to changing environments, embrace innovations in internal organisation, and ultimately improve student outcomes”. The programmes secure professional leadership development at each career stage of educational leadership to ensure sustained highly effective practice set against the formal leadership standards. The development programmes promote collaborative leadership aspects with effective practitioners from schools and Local Authorities co-delivering sessions with GwE staff. This further develops the notion of developing a self-improving system and developing peer-to-peer engagement across North Wales. The

establishment of the Regional Leadership Group, which includes representatives from GwE and the six local authorities, ensures that needs are identified and that programmes meet the needs of the profession.

Through the programmes, GwE has ensured that senior leaders have been kept updated on key developments regarding the reform journey. There is a clear leadership development pathway for future senior leaders, and as a result, the region is developing competent, skilled school leaders and an increase can be seen in the number of quality applications for leadership positions received across sectors in the region.

School leaders have been encouraged to engage in school-to-school collaboration and inquiry based projects. Middle and Senior leaders have been upskilled to lead more effectively on the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales in their schools. All School leaders have raised awareness of the new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.

GwE plays a key role in communicating, promoting and co-ordinating a variety of programmes, which meet the needs of staff at various levels. The programmes offered are as follows:

- **Middle Leadership Development Programme (MLDP)** – The MLDP has continued as planned. Since 2017-18, over 300 middle leaders across North Wales have benefited from attending this cross sector programme. Module 3 of Programme (February 2020) - 135 participants from across the region have enrolled on the Middle Leadership Development Programme (2 English medium cohorts and 1 Welsh medium cohort). SIAs have been proactive in encouraging their link schools to identify potential candidates for the MLDP. The GwE Leadership Group monitored uptake for the programme by link SIAs. Feedback from the participants is extremely positive. The evaluations will be shared with LAs in the regional leadership group meetings. The facilitator will also provide feedback on the programme. By following the middle leaders programme, most individuals feel they have gained knowledge, skills and understanding of leadership, identifying their strengths and areas for development in their school. Every individual on the programme has been given opportunities to put leadership skills into practice, developing strategies to raise standards in their school.
- **Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme (AHDP)** – Since 2017-18, 192 aspiring headteachers across North Wales have benefited from attending this cross sector programme. Four awareness-raising sessions were held in December across the region, to explain how the programme is combining with the NPQH as a national programme in 2020. Three of the five Development Days have been written nationally for regional delivery. 34 applicants were approved in January 2020 following an application process.
- **National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)** – Over the past three years, 181 individuals have been accepted on to the programme. 58 practitioners were accepted this year (compared to 54 in 2017–2018 and 69 in 2018-19) from primary, secondary, special and GwE staff. The criteria for NPQH candidates have been thoroughly discussed with members of the Regional Leadership Group. Applicants attended two Development Days during the autumn term - a National Day and a Regional Day. Assessment Centres were held during the first two weeks of February. Nearly all the formal feedback on the Development Days was positive, with nearly all candidates confirming that they had a deeper understanding of the need to adopt differing leadership styles in different contexts and situations. The rigour of the Assessment Centre ensured that only candidates who have proved to be ready for headship have gained the qualification. Moderation of assessments ensured greater consistency. A high number of

candidates from across the region have evidenced their readiness for Headship against the Professional Standards for Leadership.

- **New and Acting Headteacher Development Programme** - A new National Development Programme, endorsed by the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) commenced in November 2019 with 30 individuals taking part in the programme. All local authorities in the region provided GwE with details of newly appointed and acting headteachers. There is now a central database of all newly appointed and acting Headteachers. Day 2 of the programme was held on 16 January 2020 at Venue Cymru with a delivery team of facilitators from North and South Wales. The focus of the day was 'Managing Change' and included sessions on Schools as Learning Organisations, managing change and developing individual, team and whole-school resilience. Cohort 2 (Heads in their first year of office) have completed two successful and well-received training days. All Heads were part of coaching groups led by experienced headteachers from the region.
- **Experienced Headteacher Development Programme** – The application date for the Experienced Headteacher Development Programme was extended during the autumn term. 20 places have been allocated to each consortium and a total of 17 headteachers from across the GwE region have applied successfully. Cohort 1 attended a 2-day residential course in mid Wales in March 2020, which was very well received.

Governor Support

In line with GwE protocol, and at the request of Local Authorities, support is available for schools when appointing members of SLT, with SIAs available to contribute to discussions during shortlists and also available to interview. All governing bodies benefit from the experience and advice offered by the SIAs during appointments so that they are able to make an informed decision as to the most suitable candidate.

There is a commonly agreed menu of Professional Learning (PL) offered by GwE SIAs on a LA basis upon request. This ensures that the LAs can choose the most most appropriate PL for their region. Professional Learning opportunities is offered to Governors in with regards to the Transformational Reform to ensure that all governors who attend have a better understanding of the aspects delivered, have increased confidence when supporting their schools and are able to contribute more strategically to governing body discussions.

GwE ensures bespoke pre inspection support for schools in all sectors of the LAs. All schools have access to this support prior to an Estyn inspection ensuring that they are much more aware of the inspection process and the expectations on the School. The governors attending the Estyn interview are more confident whilst responding to questions on their role as a critical friend.

A good relationship between the Governors Support Officers and the GwE portfolio lead has ensured clear lines of communication and a common understanding of training needs. Effective lines of communication between GwE and all LAs during termly meetings ensures that support for Governors is agreed on a regional basis.

STRONG AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND WELL-BEING

Wellbeing

A clear and robust PDG Support Plan for both FSM and Looked After Children (LAC) has been implemented across the region with clear communication plans and lines of accountability.

There is a stronger focus on the monitoring and evaluating the overall performance of e FSM learners across key portfolio areas both in the secondary and primary sector. Updated guidance has been shared with all SIA's and Schools in regard to monitoring of grants. SIAs now challenge schools on their use of grant funding with a clear set of criteria to assess the use of this funding and this has reduced the inconsistencies between schools about identifying the impact of the use of grant funding on pupil outcomes.

The LAC PDG has been utilised effectively by schools / Local Authorities to further develop an inclusive and supportive ethos that has a beneficial impact on pupils' wellbeing and personal development. The revised framework includes a set of core purposes for the regional PDG-LAC lead coordinators role and will enable national consistency to ensure the best educational outcomes for looked after children across Wales.

Monitoring systems are in place in relation to children who are looked after, both through the SIAs and the Looked After Children – Education Coordinators (LACE) and LA's. Stronger communication strategies are in place to inform LACE coordinators, school staff and wider stakeholders of regional plans, REC level provision, and processes for accessing funding which is delegated or open for bids.

The regional LAC PDG guidance model is fully implemented across the region. Most clusters are accessing the PDG and schools are also accessing individual bursary for LAC. 42 cluster projects have implemented evidence based support / interventions during 2019-20.

During 2019 / 20 around half of LAC have accessed additional tuition in year 10/11 to support with exam practice, study skills and revision that has impacted on their overall achievement.

The majority of secondary and primary schools have accessed trauma / attachment training for looked after children which has resulted in teaching staff being more confident in dealing with learners and identifying suitable support and provision. Effective models of implementing the Trauma Informed Schools into daily practise and delivery within teaching and learning can be seen. Regional groups have been set up by schools who are further developing resources and how to advice for schools.

There is an increase in the number of schools/settings who are trauma informed/ACE aware - 650 attended bespoke Profesional Learning during the year. In addition over 300 have attended bespoke session delivered by GwE during INSET days that is focused on trauma informed practises within teaching and learning. This has resulted in teaching staff being more confident in dealing with learners and identifying suitable support and provision and more schools who have an inclusive approach in relation to the teaching and learning.

Authorities have made good use of the LAC PDG to support schools to identify the additional learning needs of LAC and vulnerable learners via the roll out of the Boxall Online Profile. This has been implemented effectively in some schools / LA staff to assess, track and monitor progress of LAC. Nearly all LAC have a Boxall Profile to measure the developmental needs and distance travelled. The LAC PDG has been utilised to offer training and mentoring for schools to implement the tool

successfully. In addition we have increased the focus on supporting schools to measure wellbeing via a range of evidence based measures.

There is also an increase in the number of school accessing the LAC PDG to support adopted children. GwE has shared an Adopted Learner Plan for schools to share with adoptive parents and to identify key areas of support. Initial feedback is positive as it's ensuring a person centred approach.

Pupil Referral Units

Positive relationships have been established across the region with more meaningful collaboration and sharing of best practice.

All PRU leaders have received relevant information and access to training opportunities and support within GwE.

The PRU Network has been further developed with regular update meetings and contact. They are also an effective method of sharing good practice, for example:

- Use of Trauma Informed approaches
- Successful joint bid for Circle Time training for 15 PRU staff.
- Alignment of INSET days to allow more joint working
- Effective wellbeing tracker

All settings are open to change and are exploring different ways of working.

ROBUST ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS SUPPORTING A SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM

Tracking and assessment

The impact of the data summary and tracking can be seen in many schools. This includes:

- Schools focusing on individual pupil progress from baseline to end of primary education, by both teachers and school leaders.
- Schools focusing on progress of groups of learners.
- Better consistency throughout schools in teacher assessment and target setting which leads to a more robust self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- Using a variety of ways to interrogate pupil data and present the findings e.g. through graphs and charts

In primary schools, there is clear focus on tracking pupil progress.

- Whole School Tracker: An increasing number of schools reporting that Estyn recognised the tracker as a comprehensive tool to use to track the progress of all pupils, groups of learners and cohorts. All SIAs received update training on the tracker and were able to better support more schools to use it more effectively
- Data Summary Spreadsheet: Year 2 and Year 6 pupil data summary provided for all primary schools – Headteachers have praised this for the information provided and reducing workload. All schools received the revised updated version to include progress of e-FSM and Boys/Girls progress data, charts and a narrative report. Many schools have expressed their thanks and stated that reduced schools' workload further.
- KS2 and 3 moderation: Clear messages about accuracy of baseline and the impact it can have on showing pupil progress resulted in an increase in the number of Foundation Phase teachers

across the region attending the Foundation Phase data training sessions. SIA attendance at and the reporting on the quality of the cluster moderation process identified schools and clusters who needed support with their teacher assessments.

Training has been offered to all schools across the region. By request this training is still ongoing.

Fifty five percent of all regional secondary schools have been successfully enrolled into the In-school variance (ISV) programme for this academic year. As in-school variance is four times more significant than school-to-school variance, effectively addressing this issue is central to improving performance across the region. This has heightened regional schools' awareness on the the importance of ISV in developing their strategy towards enhanced Capped 9 performance. 4Matrix clinics have been well attended and on-line support facilities have been well used.

GwE is working closely with experts from Warwick and Bangor Universities to develop an individual child attainment model (iCAM) to predict attainment and inform child-driven priorities for secondary schools in Wales. The model will be based on historical data from across Wales and, if successful, would dispense with need for arbitrary between-school comparisons for cohorts of children and instead model expectations about individual children's attainment at KS4.

Support for regional schools to confidently operate in an 'earned autonomy' climate has focussed on developing their ability to manage data against an increasingly diverse, defuse and rapidly changing set of parameters . Within the evolving climate, schools are expected to operate more effectively across three levels: projections based on personal, socio and economic profiling; reduction of in-school variance and question level analysis at a peer-to-peer and a regional level to generate appropriate challenge.

Small schools

A conference was held for Headteachers of small schools with 56 schools attending. There was good feedback with 85% judging good or better for the day. Headteachers of smaller schools welcomed the opportunity to meet and discuss the reform journey and its challenges in a situation where the Headteacher is also teaching.

Meetings have been held for headteachers and/or teachers in the region who teach four different age groups in Foundation Phase or Key Stage 2 in order to offer guidance and ideas on designing Curriculum for Wales (cFW) for mixed age classes. They were given the opportunity to attend regional sessions on guidance on designing CfW in their mixed age classes.

There was also an opportunity for the first time for the headteachers of smaller schools to come together to receive relevant information, but more importantly, to share practice and barriers and create informal networks.

TRANSFORMATIONAL CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning

Many exciting and far-reaching projects have been implemented during the last year, and it is hoped that these will have a significant influence on the quality of teaching in regional schools. These projects offer teachers the opportunity to collaborate, share their expertise and passion for teaching and to get to know new professional colleagues. They also enable all teachers in the region to develop and deepen their teaching skills and their understanding of the principles of formative assessment and

excellent pedagogy. Ultimately, our pupils will become the independent and confident learners they deserve to be.

Formative Assessment Action Research Project

The Formative Assessment Action Research project (GwE and Shirley Clarke) has been operational in the region since October 2017. The project is developing effectively and is implemented in a pattern of tiers, putting pedagogical principles in action in classrooms on the basis of robust evidence.

The aim of the programme is to develop individuals to be able to lead on developing teaching in their schools, leading to:

- a positive impact, not only on the quality of teaching in classes, but also on pupils' wellbeing, attitudes to learning and development as independent learners.
- deepening teachers' understanding of effective pedagogy on the basis of wide and current research, both on a local and international level.
- teachers undertaking active research in their schools, and taking part in professional collaboration and becoming confident pioneers. Consequently, schools that are a part of the project are developing well as learning organisations.
- an increased focus on effective pedagogy in the work of the region's collaborative clusters.
- a significant contribution to schools' readiness and preparations for the Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales; specifically so by ensuring good attention to the four purposes, the 12 pedagogical principles, schools as learning organisations, the professional standards for teaching and leadership and the agenda for reducing teachers' workload.

The commitment of schools across the region to the project over the 3 tiers is as follows:

• Tier 1	27 schools	54 teachers
• Tier 2	193 schools	386 teachers
• Tier 3	141 schools	261 teachers
Total	361 schools	701 teachers

The impact of the project reaches at least 17,500 pupils across the region (based on an average class size of 25 pupils). The project is developing effectively and the commitment of Tier 1, 2 and 3 schools to the work is very positive. Since September, Tier 1, 2 and 3 schools are collaborating at cluster level to support action research and to experiment with teaching in their classes, developing and sharing good practice.

Teachers' feedback is very positive, with the project demonstrating a positive impact, not only on the quality of teaching in classrooms but on standards in wellbeing and pupils' attitudes to learning.

Tier 2 Implementation and impact report was published in December with very positive findings on the commitment of schools and impact of work across the region.

Implementation of the 'Outstanding Teacher Programme – Olevi' (OTP)

There was positive feedback to the training and its impact on teaching in schools. The programme develops individuals to be able to lead on developing teaching in their schools, thus:

- Olevi messages and principles continue to extend beyond the initial counties
- further developing individuals to be able to lead on developing teaching in their schools
- positive feedback to the training and its impact on teaching in schools
- increasing capacity across the region in terms of school to school support and collaboration
- increasing schools'/classrooms' ability and capacity to further improve the quality of teaching and sustain progress

- teachers and leaders have a deepened understanding and expertise in order to be able to lead and develop effective pedagogy across schools.

Mantle of the Expert (Primary)

Ysgol Cae'r Nant is an accredited school, which has received practitioner status and supported and led other schools in this area.

Schools' commitment across the region to experiment with and implement Mantle of the Expert principles in classrooms has developed well during the year, with more schools expressing an interest in further training.

Development of provision for More Able and Talented pupils (MAT) - (Secondary)

There have been successful developments in this area. These are the main activities:

- schools collaborating in triads to improve opportunities for MAT pupils and working with the Seren network (for Sixth Form MAT pupils)
- a variety of support from GwE core teams, for example training across the region by the GwE English Advisory Team on attaining A/A* in English, discussions with groups of Heads of English on methods to support MAT pupils, training on practical strategies to use in the classroom to develop higher order thinking skills in English, support with science, training and support across the region to improve pedagogy in KS4 and KS5 in order to raise standards and prepare Year 11 MAT pupils for studying mathematics in the Sixth Form, modelling some MAT lessons in some schools
- MAT coordinators' groups have been set up to share and disseminate good practice
- collaboration within a cross-consortia working group on guidance and resources to identify and support MAT pupils' attainment and wellbeing
- co-ordinator has contributed to Module 3 of the Professional Offer for middle leaders, focusing on Teaching and Learning
- a range of resources created and shared with schools in order to raise the level of challenge in Key Stage 4. In addition, curriculum planning resources have been created
- Mike Gershon, Education Adviser has held training on Differentiation and challenging thinking for Heads of English and Heads of Welsh.

Good practice is shared within authorities and across the region. There has been positive feedback from teachers and MAT co-ordinators, with a number of schools across the region noting they are making good use of the resources and training in their classes. All this is enriching experiences and opportunities for MAT pupils in schools and beyond.

National Project led by Lynn Sharratt - Clarity (Secondary)

Led by Dr Lynn Sharratt, schools across the 4 consortia are collaborating on a 2-year active research project on Leadership, Pedagogy and the New Curriculum. The project utilises Dr Sharratt's 14 parameters to encourage reflecting on and improving schools' approach to the new curriculum, and its place in supporting other schools.

Five Wrexham secondary schools are a part of this project, and Dr Lynn Sharratt has delivered two training sessions to more than 20 leaders. The main focus of the initial two days' training was assessing literacy. There are two more sessions.

The project is progressing well and is effectively driven internally in the schools, with best practice shared in a north Wales Headteachers' conference. There is interest in the project in many authorities and beyond, and several schools have visited the project schools and started piloting strategies.

Leaders are extremely positive about the initial impact of the project, which has deepened their understanding and expertise in order to be able to lead and develop effective pedagogy across schools.

Schools are developing their practice and leadership based on the ideas and research of Dr Lynn Sharrat, with active research leading to improving schools' understanding and capacity to lead on further improvements and identifying common strategies for improving teaching/learning.

Support is tailored to Secondary Schools by means of Individual Plans.

There are Plans in place for all schools in the region. The focus on improving teaching and learning is a priority in all schools where this has been identified as post-inspection courses of action, and is targeted for specific departments/aspects in other schools, in line with School Development Plan and Departmental Development Plan priorities. In addition, there is focus on specific aspects of pedagogy via subject forums.

Evidence from monitoring visits, discussions with leaders and scrutiny/observation exercises shows a positive impact on pedagogy in the majority of schools and circumstances where support has been targeted.

The region's schools are developing effectively in their readiness for the New Curriculum and its implementation in the classroom. Plans have been completed to refine and strengthen processes for identifying support needs for the next academic year.

Provision via the above projects has made a significant contribution to schools' readiness and preparations for the Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales - the four purposes, the 12 pedagogical principles, schools as learning organisations, the professional standards for teaching and leadership and the agenda for reducing teachers' workload. They have also deepened teachers' and leaders' understanding and expertise in order to be able to lead and develop effective pedagogy within and across schools.

An increasing number of teachers and school leaders are leading and supporting each other, disseminating good practice and demonstrating a strong understanding of effective pedagogy and sharing consistent messages as regards pedagogy.

The majority of the regions' schools have benefited from working with international experts and from their guidance, experts such as Shirley Clarke, Dr Lynn Sharrat and Mike Gershon, and also from being part of high calibre programmes such as Mantle of the Expert and Olevi.

They have also deepened their understanding of effective pedagogy, based on wide and current research, both on a local and international level. Teachers are undertaking active research in their schools, collaborating professionally and developing well in terms of confidence and innovation.

5. THE REFORM JOURNEY

GwE is working with all local authority schools to ensure a clear and systematic approach to support and reflect on their engagement with all aspects of the reform journey. Each school cluster has two designated leads to facilitate the change management process and planning that schools have undertaken when developing the new curriculum and implementing new professional standards. SIAs effectively disseminate consistent key messages, including examples of successful practice regarding the national reform agenda with all schools. The national reform journey is embedded in regional and

local authority priorities where SIAs provide thorough and informed support to all clusters on key aspect of the reform journey.

Accountability - the new evaluation and improvement arrangements

Welsh Government has developed new evaluation and improvement arrangements to replace parts of the current accountability system.

This will require significant changes to culture and behaviours across the whole system. At the heart of the evaluation and improvement arrangements is robust and continuous self-evaluation. This, along with peer engagement, will support learning and improvement, embed collaboration, drive self-improvement and raise standards for all our learners.

The arrangements are based on the following four key principles.

They will be:

- **fair** - they will promote equity, inclusion, choice, individual pathways to learning and never lose sight of the learner
- **coherent** - allowing each part of the system to work together without overlapping, with clear roles and responsibilities
- **proportionate** - ensuring that the implementation of the new system and process is manageable and makes a difference. They will be underpinned by the principle of subsidiarity, allowing responsibility for accountability for schools to be local, led by self-aware schools.
- **transparent**- recognising the breadth of learning experience across schools and the value added by teachers in class.

Data driven self-evaluation will be a strong feature of future arrangements. This will be supported through the National Resource for Evaluation and Improvement developed by Estyn, Welsh Government, the regional consortia and the profession (see below). The outcome of the self-evaluation process will be the identification of priorities for improvement. Schools will still be required to publish their priorities for improvement, in line with regulations on school development plans. It is expected that schools will include peers to support their self-evaluation arrangements.

National school categorisation, which indicates the level of support schools need from the system to improve, will evolve into a more sophisticated process that looks at a broader range of indicators, such as learner well-being. It is expected that this will evolve into an ongoing process of authentication of a school's self-evaluation and priorities for development.

It is regional consortia that will implement this authentication process for schools. Regional consortia will continue to provide support to schools in proportion to need, and in line with the improvement priorities identified.

School level target setting expectations will remain as will the need for local authorities to approve the process of target setting.

It will evolve however, to give schools flexibility to identify local targets for improvement appropriate to the school's context, and so reflecting their priorities as a school.

Welsh Government will develop system-wide measures to help nationally judge progress in policy implementation. Aggregation of school level data will be avoided.

Rigorous inspection will continue to provide clear evidence of the quality and standards of education and training in Wales. There will be a partial suspension of inspection from September 2020 to August 2021 to enable the inspectorate to work more closely with schools and consortia on the curriculum reform.

Schools that continue to give cause for concern will be monitored by Estyn during this time and will continue to receive support from their regional consortia and local authorities.

Moving forward Estyn will change the way they undertake their inspections. This will involve the validation of the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes and will take place more regularly than in the current cycle. Estyn will shortly begin a process of consulting with stakeholders on the new arrangements from 2021. This will include inspecting schools more than once within a seven year cycle

National Evaluation and Improvement Resource

As part of national arrangements to develop revised evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements, Estyn and Welsh Government have been working with key stakeholders to develop a national resource so as to increase rigour and consistency in self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, whilst promoting and fostering the culture and behaviours required to support the implementation of the new curriculum and the wider agenda of the reform journey.

Key stakeholders, including representation from GwE, have been contributing to the discussions and to the work programmes of the stakeholder group and the working group. This national resource will be based on 4 themes [Leadership, Teaching and Learning Experiences, Well-being and Inclusion and the 4 Purposes of the curriculum], with the principles of Schools as Learning Organisations underpinning these themes. The resource will be a combination of evaluation stimuli, exemplary material and reference to successful practice. Since September 2019, a pilot group of cross-sector schools (one from each authority) have started work on piloting the stimuli in this resource, prioritising those that pertain to preparing for the new curriculum. A representation from GwE along with Estyn, Welsh Government and the other regional consortia are part of the group that is steering the work of the pilot schools, together with developing the resource digitally on Hwb and ensuring the quality of the finished product.

Updates on the development of the resource have been shared with Headteachers in various events. The aim is that the section in the resource pertaining specifically to the four purposes of the curriculum will be available to schools during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum for Wales reform work continues with pace across the region, using the structures of cluster networks. All 53 cluster networks continue to meet and Curriculum for Wales reform is a regular agenda item for updates. Supporting Improvement Advisers are in regular attendance in these meetings and are key in allowing clear channels of two-way communication to share and feedback consistent messages.

Our approach to the reform journey has been integrated in all aspects of our work from the beginning. Our priorities are a combination of improving school provision, leadership and outcomes, as well as delivering the reform journey. A range of effective communication channels has been established to include headteacher forums to discuss the approach and develop appropriate content to meet local needs.

All 53 clusters proposals for next steps to develop the curriculum awareness have been agreed in principle and success criteria include:

- Transparent shared objectives to improve learner outcomes
- Increased number of staff aware of the new curriculum developments
- Increased number of all schools staff working collaboratively
- Increased number of opportunities to plan and prepare for the continuum of learning from 3-16
- Provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and to be innovative with pedagogical approaches

In partnership with stakeholders, GwE has developed a long-term supportive and sustainable strategy which is successfully building capacity across the region to meet the challenges of the wider reform. The integrated approach has focused on developing collaborative opportunities across clusters of schools.

GwE has encouraged schools to collaborate through sharing practice and co-constructing areas that need improving and the challenges of the reform journey. We have invested in various cluster models and encouraged schools to find a range of appropriate partners to deliver improvement and changes.

The development of G6 has helped support schools to reflect on their preparation for the ongoing transformation agenda. It also gives clear direction on how GwE will implement a clear and systematic approach to support all schools across the LA in reflecting on their readiness for a new curriculum and supporting schools with their preparation for reform journey.

Termly G6 milestones continue to guide schools and offer expectations under specific headings. Region wide figures for engagement are as follows:

Schools engaging with G6:	<u>Knowledge and awareness</u> - partly on track or better:	<u>Engagement and participation</u> - partly on track or better:
74% (Nov 2018)	77% (Nov 2018)	69% (Nov 2018)
82% (June 2019)	82% (June 2019)	76% (June 2019)
96% (Nov 2019)	91% (Nov 2019)	96% (Nov 2019)

Engagement is strong across the region. Feedback is clear that at this point, schools feel they are on track with their staff awareness of the information currently available on the curriculum developments, in particular 4 purposes and 12 pedagogical principles.

Monthly Professional Learning opportunities for regional staff continues to provide important opportunities for the full team to share updates and develop consistent messaging on an integrated platform across the wider education reform. All resources developed commonly by Pioneers and delivered as part of the engagement events are shared through our G6 system available to all schools in the region. GwE actively contributes to the development of the national Curriculum for Wales framework through regional staff and networks of pioneer schools.

Professional Learning

GwE's professional offer is broad and comprehensive, offering professional learning opportunities for all school staff. It also includes various other Professional Learning opportunities, for example, Literacy and Numeracy in the primary sector, core subjects in the secondary sector, curriculum planning and wellbeing. It has been planned with the development of individuals on the classroom

floor in mind; whilst also accommodating whole school aspects; supporting clusters of schools, and responding to LA needs.

GwE priorities are at the heart of the Professional Offer. Curriculum for Wales principles are embedded in the offer. They are the golden thread, linking together everything that it offered. The 4 purposes are a priority for presenters as they plan relevant, current and exciting training.

Each GwE professional learning offer has a Logic Model that underpins it, which identifies the need for training along with inputs and outputs, including any external threats that could impact professional learning.

It is an ambition in Wales that every school develops as a learning organisation, in line with OECD principles. The service has evolved to offer training on the basis of these principles and works to ensure that all professional learning offered promotes the dimensions of a learning organisation, providing opportunities for schools to explore new approaches and adapt to the changing environment. The focus is on professional learning that provides support in various forms, including off-site specific professional learning programmes, remote learning, mentoring and effective school-to-school collaboration. This all promotes self-improvement and pedagogy with the aim of disseminating good practice.

The offer is designed to develop individuals in classrooms and whole school aspects, support clusters of schools and respond to LA needs. Provision is based on Supporting Improvement Advisers' robust knowledge and understanding of their individual schools, on the needs of specific clusters, the aspirations of LAs and national priorities.

The professional standards for teaching and leadership focus on the essential elements of the work of every teacher – pedagogy, collaboration, leadership, innovation and professional learning. GwE's professional offer supports the development of the professional standards

Professional learning will be central to ensuring that all school staff have the professional knowledge and skills to deliver on the education reforms that are well underway in Wales. A clear framework for themes for professional learning has been identified for practitioners within schools. The programme of professional learning for Headteachers and Senior Leaders commenced in February 2020, based on the following themes:

- Leading change
- Developing shared vision
- Creating time and space for Professional Learning
- Planning for curriculum change / curriculum design
- Leading pedagogy

Through the curriculum work, a growing number of clusters have identified and requested bespoke professional learning to meet their needs. Feedback shows that this collaborative local approach to professional learning is well received and has early signs of positive impact on common language for teaching and learning

Sharing rationale and approaches to Professional Learning in small cluster groups has been valued by headteachers as an effective opportunity to engage with peers and have professional discussions with over 230 leaders registering within the first 24 hours.

An increasing number of clusters are developing local approaches between primary and secondary to collaborate on many school priorities e.g. developing teaching and learning strategies; developing logic model to identify joint Professional Learning.

Digital

An essential part of the national mission is ensuring that all learners have high level digital skills so that they are digitally competent to be critical, creative and enterprising thinkers.

GwE has produced a digital professional learning programme to support teachers and leaders to develop effective and sustainable digital learning experiences for learners so as to ensure that our young people have high level digital skills.

In order to ensure that pupils develop their digital skills, GwE offers professional advice, guidance, training and support in the following key areas:

Improving schools' digital learning provision

- A regional digital learning strategy has been produced and is currently being delivered. The strategy outlines the main steps taken by the service to raise standards of digital learning in schools over the next three years.
- A resource enabling schools to produce a vision for digital learning and convert into a plan has been created and released. This resource was introduced to all cluster digital facilitators to be used as a tool for clusters to collaborate to form their vision.
- Over 200 registered to attend the Regional Digital Learning Event in March 2020.
- 96% of schools engage with Hwb (Hwb Data - March 2020).

Improving programming skills region-wide.

- Twelve lead schools have been identified with one teacher from every school upskilled.
- GwE's on-line coding challenge was launched.
- A strategy has been prepared for 2020-21 to provide resources to support coding clubs and ensure that learners across the FP, KS2 and KS3 get to experience programming as part of the preparations for the computer element of the curriculum prior to September 2022.
- A total of 45 schools have received training and a classroom toolkit from Microbits.

Adopt GwE's cluster model to enable and promote collaboration in order to improve the quality of digital leadership and professional learning opportunities.

- A total of 45 clusters have appointed a digital facilitator for the cluster - initial training held in January 2020.
- A total of 172 schools in the region have been partaking in cluster level activity between January and March 2020.
- 16 clusters applied for additional funding to support a further project to raise standards of digital learning.
- A virtual network was established to facilitate the sharing of documents and key messages.

Ensure that schools' understanding of e-safety issues is up-to-date and increase their engagement with the '360 Degree Safe Cymru' self-evaluation tool.

- 7 sessions for head teachers have been held across the region - over 200 attending.
- 65 schools engaged with the '360 Degree Safe Cymru' tool following these sessions
- GwE SIA have received on-line safety training.

Develop and establish a digital and national self-evaluation tool and ensure that schools use it effectively to plan for improvement.

- The 4 regions were responsible for the content and structure of the tool.

Improve secondary sector engagement as schools prepare to implement the Digital Competence Framework.

- Consultation took place with some secondary heads' forums within the region, and there is a strong desire to obtain support on how to develop digital learning in schools.
- Intention to bring school senior leaders together region-by-region to receive training and facilitate collaboration to develop and deliver a vision.

Welsh Language

The education system in Wales is in a period of transformation, and the Welsh language is an integral part of these reforms. The education system has a key contribution to make and the region has committed to respond to, and to deliver the Welsh Government's policy and vision. The main developments over the year are outlined below:

- The Joint Committee approved the strategic plan, 'Developing Welsh in Education in the North Wales Region 2019-22' (November 2019).
- A concise handbook was developed for SIA to assist them with their joint planning for the Welsh language's journey within the reform journey.
- A Welsh Language Training Directory was developed for the region, with details of initial training, ranging from apps/basic websites, courses held by Welsh Advisory Teachers/Welsh Tutors in the Authorities, to Sabbatical Courses.
- GwE and LA bulletins continue to promote the sabbatical courses. Forty-three attended sabbatical courses during 2019-20 - i.e. Welsh in a Year course, Advanced Course for Assistants, Foundation Course for Teachers, and 12 have committed to a Follow-up course for the Welsh in a Year Course.
- The cluster model is operational. A Welsh Language Cluster Coordinator was identified for all 54 clusters across the region. Funding is secured by providing a Cluster Action Plan to promote informal use of the Welsh language and to develop the Welsh skills of the workforce.
- Work to support the Language Charter and the three Coordinators is ongoing which increases collaboration between the Charter and Cymraeg Campus.
- Eight members of GwE staff attended the Learning Welsh Course (Work Welsh) during 2019-20 and passed the Entry examination in June 2019.
- Collaboration continues with other regions on the Welsh Language Strategic Leaders' Project.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

ALN transformation cluster work has been established across North Wales, providing a consistent approach to supporting school readiness to implement the ALN reform. As a result, all schools have an awareness of the reform, have worked with their cluster to identify joint priorities and submitted a cluster action plan. The model ensures that all schools across the region receive accurate, timely and consistent advice and support as we move towards the end of the transformation journey to implementation.

In addition, all senior leaders and clusters have identified their own professional learning needs to support the implementation which have fed into the 2019-2020 professional learning offer for ALN transformation.

Innovative work at cluster level has been successful including defining universal provision, defining high quality teaching and implementing strategies to communicate with parents and carers.

Clusters have been encouraged to develop their work on the transformation of ALN collaboratively and in a cohesive way, where possible, supporting learners as they move between phases of their education.

Work will continue to support to ensure that all clusters are pro-active in working together, identifying priorities and developing an action plan.

G6

The development of G6 (the regional management information system) has helped support schools to reflect on their preparation for the ongoing transformation agenda. It also gives clear direction on how GwE will implement a clear and systematic approach to support all schools across the LA in reflecting on their readiness for a new curriculum and supporting schools with their preparation for reform journey.

The system provides a structure to capture school improvement processes and priorities and collates quantitative evidence of a school's improvement journey. Schools make effective use of the milestones provided in the Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning needs modules. This allows schools to reflect on their current position with regards to the reform journey and provides clear next steps for their consideration. The system also captures and shares best practice within and between schools. Cluster work is enhanced through sharing of priorities on G6 and dialogue helps capture the level of support required by schools and collaborations of schools. Schools access LA Professional Learning through the system and can identify links between whole school priorities and professional learning needs.

Through regular concise communication between schools and GwE, the system focuses on the transfer of live data to support the progress of current pupils. With increased professional dialogue between the SIA and School, it allows for a quicker response from SIAs to assist Schools with areas that need support.

Following a successful regional and cross sector rollout of the system, an effective programme of region wide training and support was offered for all School based leaders and GwE users to ensure further embedding of the system.

A system wide update in February 2020 ensured that nearly all aspects of phase 4 development have now been completed. These include the development of a GwE staff area to ensure consistency of messaging for the whole GwE staff and an Action Research area to ensure that all schools have access to information regarding the regional action research project.

As a direct response to feedback from user groups the system update also improved the G6 user interface to allow for quick access to latest developments as well as allowing schools the ability to edit and print reports from the commentary held in the system on their priorities.

Bespoke training packages of training have also been provided for a range of users across the region according to identified needs by SIAs these include new head teachers and SLT members.

The number of Quality Assured & published case studies in the Successful practice module has almost doubled. Further work is needed to develop the range and sector wide balance of case studies shared. This responsibility has been included in the minimum requirements set out for SIA's.

Region wide figures for engagement with G6 in 2019-20 showed that:

- 99% of all Primary Schools had set their priorities in G6 during the Autumn term 2019.

- 92% of all Secondary Schools had set their priorities in G6 during the Autumn term 2019.

Region wide figures for the ALN Wales module in January 2020 showed that:

- 96% of Schools stated that they were either partly on track or on track for the Awareness & engagement milestone. An increase of 32% on the figures for March 2019.
- 95% of Schools stated that they were either partly on track or on track for the Person Centred Approach milestone. A 29% increase on the figures for March 2019.

Increased engagement by schools (see figures above) has led to greater confidence. Latest training for schools has included presentations of effective practice by a range of schools

6. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Peer Review

GwE and the six regional local authorities are working in partnership with schools to establish a regional peer engagement model which fully reflects the principles and values that have been identified by Head teachers, and also learn from good practice nationally and beyond.

Developing multi-level and multi-tiered peer-engagement, forged and owned by the schools themselves, will also allow establishments to adopt an integrated approach to the national reform journey. The integrated approach will be effectively supported by the local authorities and GwE.

The model will be used to underpin a rigorous cycle of continuous development and improvement, and will be an integral part of school improvement in moving to a self-improving system, whilst also supporting those schools that are causing concern.

Schools were invited to present expressions of interest to participate in a regional peer engagement project which fully reflected the principles and values that had been identified by regional Head teachers.

A two-pronged approach was undertaken to develop peer review across the region:

1. Clusters of schools committed to a more structured approach to peer review to hone and evolve the '*Schools Partnership Programme*' model adapted to meet needs locally from an established model that had been identified following research into good practice; and
2. Clusters of schools developed their own models for peer review which fully reflected those principles and values that had been identified locally.

There were applications from 290 schools to participate in the peer review pilot. Ten clusters (60 schools) were selected and trained to participate in the *School Partnership Programme*. In addition, 28 clusters (171 schools) were selected to participate in locally developed models of peer review that were fully supported by Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs).

Continuous training and support was provided to all GwE SIAs on peer review, facilitation and coaching.

Training, advice and support in peer review and school to school support was delivered to school senior leaders involved in the project.

As part of the School Partnership Programme, a comprehensive 'Peer Reviewer' and 'Improvement Facilitator' training events were delivered. Impact and Support Workshops were also delivered throughout the year.

For the local peer review model, clear schedules for implementation were planned which were facilitated and supported by GwE SIAs.

An evaluation and assessment of impact programme was also developed and a baseline established for the project.

Up until March 2020:

- all GwE staff had received initial training on peer review, facilitation and coaching
- 6 GwE staff received comprehensive training to enable them to be 'Peer Reviewer' and 'Improvement Facilitator' trainers
- 72 senior leaders were trained as peer reviewers
- 49 senior/middle leaders were trained as Improvement Facilitators
- 300+ senior leaders were successfully participating in peer review
- At least 500 staff were engaged and involved in peer review
- All clusters were successfully implementing their peer review programmes

The following improved practice have been identified:

- Improved collaboration across the region with effective practice for self-evaluation and improvement planning being shared within catchment areas and beyond.
- Peer review model successfully embedding across the region and beginning to be seen as an integral part of school improvement.
- Talented leaders and teachers identified and trained to facilitate improvement, building leadership capacity across the region.
- Improved professional dialogue between head teachers with a greater willingness to receive feedback from peers which has resulted in honing and sharpening self-evaluation procedures.
- Peer reviews on the whole have been very well-constructed, intuitive, fit for purpose and strongly structured.
- Clear signs beginning to emerge that peer review is impacting on outcomes and pupil progress in many participating schools.

Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO)

GwE has worked with the OECD to develop the Consortia and LAs as learning organisations. Findings from this work were shared with other regions, and internationally, as we further strived to develop a vivacious and healthy organisation.

During 2018-19, 50 regional schools were randomly selected by Welsh Government to respond to a survey focusing on the seven dimensions of Schools as Learning Organisations (SLOs). Schools received a snapshot of their results. This was a quick overview of aspects for further development.

These schools have received support from GwE to develop these aspects through regular meetings, visiting effective practice in a national conference, along with looking at specific aspects of action research by attending a presentation on 'Spiral of Enquiry'.

Several GwE schools have been working on developing a resource to convey Schools as Learning Organisations to our pupils. Seven schools collaborated to develop an animation with pupils and young

people, which is now to be seen on Welsh Government's website. Regional schools have also developed a community version of the presentation, which is to be included in a national resource jointly developed with the other regions.

All schools who took part in the survey have held various activities to further develop SLO in their schools, and have produced case studies to this purpose.

The region was requested by Welsh Government to produce a resource to raise the awareness of schools in Wales of what it means to be a SLO. This resource was jointly developed with the other regions in Wales, and is now used by 20 GwE schools to raise awareness of SLOs in their catchment areas and beyond across all schools in the North.

A national plan has been jointly developed with the other regions on how we will develop each school in Wales to be a learning organisation. Even though it is a national plan, there will be a local flavour when presented regionally.

The SLO survey was sent to all schools in Wales before the end of the summer term, enabling schools to recognise which of the 7 dimensions they need to develop further through drawing up their own action plan.

A number of schools from the region have delivered local raising awareness sessions with all schools in the region for SLO.

A cross regional playlist, which included numerous case studies, has been developed to help schools have a deeper understanding of what being an effective SLO entails.

The region has also worked closely with Bangor University recently in order to develop a LO survey for the middle tier. All regions have now agreed the contents and the survey will be ready in the new year for all regions to complete.

A member of staff from our original SLO survey schools has been appointed by Welsh Government to further develop SLO across all schools in Wales. Welsh Government have asked GwE to support and advise this new appointee during the early days of her new job.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Closer working between GwE and CaBan has led to more cohesive and collaborative approach. GwE has supported the successful Accreditation of BA / PGCE programmes and has worked with CaBan and regional schools to co-construct modules.

The main priorities for 2019-20 were;

- Improved the quality of ITE and professional learning for student teachers - Programmes are fully in place and developed with close to practice research, pedagogy, Welsh language and curriculum for Wales, evidenced in programme content.
- Extended role of mentor in partner schools having positive impact on quality of teaching across partner schools - mentor training and regular updates have been delivered and all mentors have undergone positive QA process, impacting on improved provision for students as evidenced in QA reports.
- Develop the confidence of NQTs in delivering the curriculum - highly effective training sessions have been delivered to NQTs.

- Recruit and select candidates for GTP to meet regional needs - GTP candidates were selected and supported and all will achieve QTS through extended provision by schools. GTP will no longer run from July 2020 onwards.
- Work with OU to select regional schools to co-construct part-time and employment based routes has been planned and in place - accreditation by EWC for 5 years.
- Work with OU to recruit schools and suitable candidates for employment based science PGCE pilot - 4 lead partner schools recruited, 7 employer schools and 8 associated schools, recruitment is taking place nationally currently (regional figures not yet available).

GwE ITE lead continues to attend meetings to begin to evaluate programme and develop reaccreditation. Relevant SIAs provide specialist input in to module delivery.

Research and Evaluation

GwE is working closely with Bangor University on the 'Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact' (CIEREI) Project to ensure robust evaluation systems for their development programmes and to measure their impact in schools as part of a regional approach. The various projects are:

- North Wales Online Reading Trial Study: Trans Regional Implementation Project (NorthWORTS-TRIP): To improve provision of evidence-based teaching strategies for primary schools across all LAs (Foundation Phase and key stage 2). NorthWORTS-TRIP Improves reading standards with Headsprout Early Reading (HER) and Comprehension programmes (HRC). Initial outcomes from this project have been disseminated during GwE conferences and cluster meetings, as well as several research conferences.
- North Wales Repeated Reading (NWRRP) project: To evaluate the effectiveness of a Repeated Reading intervention to improve reading fluency of children in primary school. To compare the effectiveness of Repeated Reading (RR) with high-frequency word (HFW) fluency approach. Twenty eight schools joined the project in September 2019.
- The Denbigh Cluster Reading Project is designed to help support primary schools to improve the standard of reading fluency for children through training staff in the implementation of Headsprout, Repeated Reading, High Frequency Words and the administration of DIBELS.
- Improving Wellbeing and Behaviour in a Learning Community (iWaB-RLC) project to evaluate the impact of behavioural strategies and wellbeing programmes: To improve provision of evidence-based strategies for primary and secondary schools (2017-2020). Initial outcomes from this project have been disseminated during during GwE conferences and cluster meetings, as well as several research conferences.
- Positive Readiness for Learning (PR4L) Project: To improve standards of attainment, behaviour and pupil engagement. To increase provision of evidence-based strategies in partner primary schools (2017-2020) To enable pupils to be independent, ambitious and capable learners. To develop all stakeholders as leaders in improving a whole school approach to readiness for learning. To implement the core purposes in line with the New Curriculum Successful Futures. Initial outcomes from this project have been disseminated during GwE conferences and cluster meetings. Findings were also presented to Welsh Government during November 2019. This work is also being collated for inclusion into a new academic book focussing on the use of whole-school behavioural systems.
- Improving Standards through Effective Revision (iStER) project: A collaborative three-year PhD research project seeks to explore the impact of evidence-based learning strategies in KS4 science subjects, to help improve the scientific attainment of pupils in school now and in the future. The primary aims of iStER are: (1) to disseminate accurate information about effective learning strategies amongst secondary school pupils; (2) to encourage pupils to invest time

for independent study and revision; and to provide a system to help organise pupil independent study/revision time and learning.

The collective outcomes from the studies here have been described in a recent paper in the Wales Journal of Education: Nearly all of the projects above focus on the use of research-informed ideas and strategies to improve outcomes. All of the projects involve research students working with schools to train, deliver and assess the impact of effective strategies and ideas. They are also providing schools with practical ideas and strategies to improve behaviour and wellbeing through the use of evidence-informed ideas. This work will inform schools as they look towards curriculum reform and the health and wellbeing AoLE.

7. BUSINESS

Staff Development

The consistency and quality of challenge and support to schools is good. Regular training, support and discussions ensure that Supporting Improvement Advisers' knowledge and understanding of national and local developments, and the implications of this on their roles, is good.

Quality Assurance processes continue to develop and evolve in line with national developments and principles. Messages and information are communicated clearly and on a regular basis to all employees. Generic, purposeful and effective support programmes are offered. Full and sector team meetings offer regular opportunities for collaboration, consultation and contributing to discussions and decisions regarding GwE's direction of work during a period of considerable change.

Performance Management and Accountability

The clear and robust accountability framework is a key strength in GwE. Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE, and clearly note the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda. Plans are fully costed, with clear success criteria and milestones for delivering objectives.

There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability.

Each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser. Progress towards agreed outcomes on a local authority level is reviewed regularly in meetings between the lead adviser and Local Authority. Ongoing issues are referred to GwE Senior leaders in a timely manner.

Self-evaluation is a strong feature in GwE and the self-evaluation process is cyclical and ongoing. Great emphasis is placed on accountability and continuous review, and there is consistent emphasis on progress in line with priorities. Consequently, GwE leaders accurately identify areas of good performance and areas for development, or areas where there is an element of risk in terms of improving experiences and educational outcomes for learners.

Value for Money

The consortium has effective financial management processes in place. Communication and consultation on financial arrangements is effective, and GwE staff, the host local authority and Joint Committee all review the core funding and grant expenditure on a regular basis.

A robust financial analysis supports the work of delivering the business plan. A medium term financial plan and workforce plan are both aligned with the business plan. Through increasingly effective use of data to identify key priorities, the link between the business planning process and decisions regarding financial planning is strengthened as the work streams that underpin the business plan clearly note the resources to be used.

A formal framework was produced to assess the wider value for money provided by GwE. The judgement is now consistent across all stakeholders on how to measure the value for money of GwE activities within the structure and objectives of the business plan.

Risk Register

There are rigorous and comprehensive arrangements in place to accurately identify and manage risks on a local, regional and national level. The risk register is a live document, which is updated on a regular basis in order to identify increasing risks or risks which are no longer deemed as high level. It is reviewed every month in a senior leadership meeting and the Management Board and the Joint Committee review the register on a quarterly basis.

Through effective management of risks to the region, GwE is able to support the region's objectives, make effective use of resources and meet the outcomes as intended.

8. 2020-2021 BUSINESS PLAN PRIORITIES

The priorities and areas for improvement are based firmly on the findings of our internal self-evaluation processes, external reviews on our current practice and direction of travel, and through consultation with headteachers and the Local Authorities. The Business Plan also addresses Welsh Government and the Local Authorities strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE. Additionally, GwE will work in partnership with Local Authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate. It also takes into consideration the views and priorities of other middle tier partners such as Estyn, Qualifications Wales, WJEC, National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL), Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Education Workforce Council (EWC).

The Business Plan links with more detailed service plans, with measurable targets for improvement and clear success criteria in order to accurately measure the region's progress. Progress against the Business Plan is reported on a quarterly basis, in line with the Accountability Framework.

Each Local Authority has a detailed business plan which has been agreed upon by the head of service and the lead Core Advisers. In each plan, there are details about key issues pertaining to the local authority along with a unique improvement plan to address specific challenges. Progress towards meeting agreed outcomes on a local authority level is reviewed on a regular basis.

The Management Board and the GwE Joint Committee have approved our strategic objectives and priorities for improvement for 2020-2021. The Business Plan is in 6 sections and is aligned with '*Education in Wales: Our national mission*', clearly noting the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda.

Our strategic objectives are:

1. Developing a high-quality education profession
2. Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
3. Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being

4. Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system
5. Transformational Curriculum
6. Business

Our regional priorities for improvement for 2020-2021 are:

1: DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION PROFESSION
Priorities for improvement:
1.1 Support secondary schools in statutory category, and those causing concern, to improve performance
1.2 Cymraeg 2050 – deliver a regional strategy to support delivering ‘A million Welsh speakers’.
1.3 Support CaBan to develop high quality ITE provision.

2: INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO RAISE STANDARDS
Priorities for improvement:
2.1 Work with other regions to provide development programmes across the work force to ensure high quality leadership
2.2 Support secondary schools to improve middle leadership performance
2.3 Develop peer engagement model and processes with schools to ensure robust self-evaluation and improvement planning at all levels

3: STRONG AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND WELL-BEING
Priorities for improvement:
3.1 Further develop the implementation of the regional Pupil Development Grant (PDG) framework model
3.2 Further develop LAC strategy
3.3 Work with LA and Schools to best prepare for Additional Learning Needs transformation

4: ROBUST ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS SUPPORTING A SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM
Priorities for improvement:
Support schools to improve performance in the secondary sector:
4.1 Develop tracking and assessment systems
4.2 Develop accountability and management systems
4.3 Further develop accountability arrangements and processes for robust self-evaluation and improvement planning

5: TRANSFORMATIONAL CURRICULUM
Priorities for improvement:

- 5.1 Support schools and clusters as they make themselves ready to offer a Transformational Curriculum through a programme of professional learning based on the following themes:
- Leading change
 - Developing shared vision
 - Creating time and space for Professional Learning
 - Planning for curriculum change / curriculum design
 - Leading pedagogy

6: BUSINESS

Priorities for improvement:

- 6.1 Undertake a budget and workforce review

Agenda Item 8

GwE: Joint Committee 15/07/2020



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2020

Report by: Alwyn Jones - GwE Assistant Director

Subject: GwE Work Programme

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present a report to the Joint Committee members on GwE Work Programme covering the period of 23 March 2020 to 22 May 2020.

2.0 Background

2.1 The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. On 23 March 2020, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners. School leaders have worked tirelessly to adapt to new arrangements and develop processes to support the learners and families within their homes and communities.

2.2 GwE staff have also adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for all our school communities.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 We believe that the most important thing for each school in this time of unprecedented change and disruption is the safety and well-being of our children and our workforce, and doing all we can to support the physical and mental well-being of our children and young people throughout this period.

3.2 Our main priorities and work streams during this period have been as follows:

- Phase 1: Pre-lockdown
- Phase 2: Supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown
- Phase 3: Distance Learning
- Phase 4: Supporting schools to re-open
- Phase 5: Blended Learning

- 3.3 The attached report (Appendix 1) details the activities, outcomes and impact of our work since the lockdown began, covering the period 23 March 2020 to 22 May 2020 (Phase 1 – 4).

The activities are divided into the following categories:

- Supporting and working with schools
- Regional and Local Authority work
- Support for Professional Learning
- National Continuity of Learning
- Other

- 3.4 We see that Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) will have an evolving role over the coming months in supporting schools with the following aspects:

- Supporting distance learning and developing a blended approach to encompass distance learning and face to face learning
- Supporting the repurposing of schools
- Supporting Professional Learning (PL)

A further report will be presented to the Joint Committee in September 2020.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to approve the content of the report.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

- 6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

- 7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

- 8.1 Consultation with the GwE Management Board and Joint Committee.

9.0 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - GwE Work Programme report

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

In the challenging context of Covid-19 and restrictions, GwE must adapt, evolve and prioritise support from within existing resources.

REPORT ON GWE WORK PROGRAMME

Context and summary

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. On 23rd March, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners. School leaders have worked tirelessly to adapt to new arrangements and develop processes to support the learners and families within their homes and communities.

GwE staff have also adapted their work in order to continue to provide services and support for all our school communities. We believe that the most important thing for each school in this time of unprecedented change and disruption is the safety and well-being of our children and our workforce and doing all we can to support the physical and mental well-being of our children and young people throughout this period so when the time comes for them to return to school they will return with motivation and enthusiasm to learn. All Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) have ensured regular contact with the head teacher of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they receive the required support. Numerous GwE staff have also offered 'hands on' support over the past few months by providing cover in schools that are short staffed.

Provision and learning does not mirror what schools would offer during normal times. Regulations around National Curriculum have been relaxed. As a result, schools have the opportunity to consider what learning is appropriate to their learners in these very challenging circumstances based on:

- time for maintaining and developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills;
- building resilience and reflection on personal well-being;
- offering opportunities to maintain connections with teaching and support staff and peers during this period of potential social isolation.

Schools and GwE have collaborated to ensure that learners can access a range of learning materials via a digital platform. GwE have established a Google Classroom for each key stage and uploaded an initial bank of practical resources and links for schools to adapt and use with their own learners. We have also produced audio and video guidance for teachers to show how digital tools can be used effectively to create effective resources for distance learning.

GwE have also collated information on the capacity of our schools to use learning platforms and whether they have experienced any difficulties accessing or using them. This was to identify which schools needed additional support in developing their on-line distance learning resource base and which members of staff required further training in using the technology. We have also looked at ways to support our more vulnerable learners including how their parents or carers can best support their children's learning.

At a national level, we have implemented very close working arrangements between the four consortia to ensure immediate benefits from a collegiate response to these very challenging conditions. We have been in regular discussions and collaboration with Welsh Government colleagues on delivering a Continuity for Learning Plan and have been involved in supporting most of the key deliverables.

We have produced a guidance in support of effective distance learning and have also been very proactive in helping all schools to produce their own Distance Learning models. We have produced exemplar models to share with schools building on the good practice that was already been demonstrated. These have been based on sound international research and a

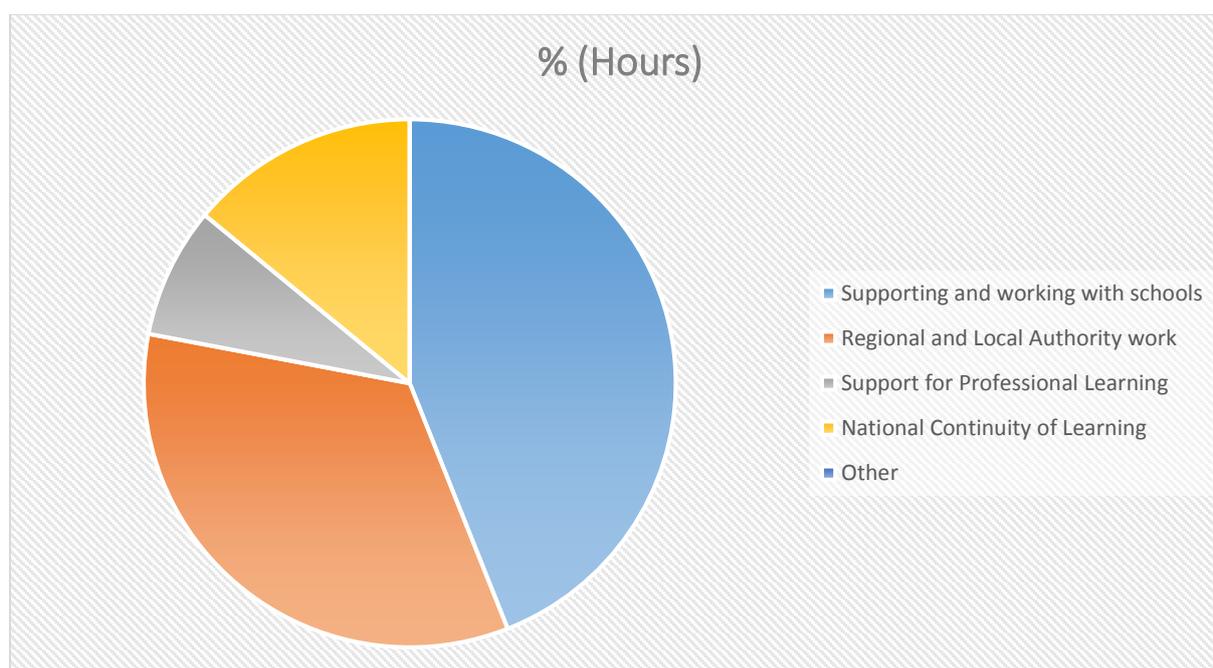
deeper understanding of distance learning definitions and principles. These have also been shared on a national level.

We are therefore prioritising support for all learners to keep learning and are supporting planning of transition effectively back into school when the time comes. Our advice and support will focus on the work of schools in considering how all learners can be supported to return to education in a positive frame of mind, and to continue as seamlessly as possible with their learning.

Documented activities and time spent

All Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) ‘check-in’ with their line manager each morning and a list of their daily tasks is documented in their calendars. Below is a summary, of the activities that have been undertaken by GwE staff since the lockdown begun covering the period between March 23rd and May 22nd, 2020.

Category	Hours	%
Supporting and working with schools	9049	44%
Regional and Local Authority work	6992	34%
Support for Professional Learning	1645	8%
National Continuity of Learning	2879	14%
Other	45	<1%



Summary of activities, outcomes and impact

ACTIVITIES
<p>Supporting and working with schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting individual schools or Hubs when there has been a shortage of staff to attend.

- Keeping regular contact with schools in order to ensure health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils.
- Developing guidance, support and resources for schools to support effective distance learning in schools
- Referencing effective practice internationally when it comes to distance learning.
- Providing a suite of Websites and reference points for Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4 teachers.
- Modelling examples of effective distance learning and also sharing nationally.
- Supporting schools on how to best deliver this Distance Learning through a blended method which includes recorded video, effective use of HwB, populating Google Classrooms, using paper copies when there's no access to internet etc.
- Arrange regular 'Teams' contact meetings with 100% of clusters (primary, secondary, special schools and PRUs) to share regular updates and ensure heads have regular contact and time to share any problems that may arise.
- Support schools with Digital Learning and produce useful 'How To' videos so that teachers can further develop and vary their distance learning.
- Individual support to subject specific teachers in the secondary.
- Regular meetings with groups of subject teachers in secondary.
- Ensuring guidance and support on relevant issues for HT forums across all 6 LAs. Present updates at meetings and answering questions that arise.
- Provide support to schools in relation to Qualifications – summer 2020 and 2021 examination series.
- Support for schools in their preparation for the repurposing of learners back into school at various stages of lockdown easing.
- To identify good practice, need for support and pupil/parent engagement with schools.

Regional and Local Authority work

- Sharing of information, key messages and work streams with LA Officers.
- Updating LA officers on schools and various GwE matters
- Attend County Quality Board meetings, addressing subsequent actions.
- Discuss initial strategies, engagement and obstacles.
- Supporting Headteacher interviews - meetings with the appointment panel to support their discussion shortlisting, interview arrangements and questions.
- Attend and contribute to Head teachers' conference calls.
- Support with distance learning and engagement/ supporting vulnerable learners.
- Developing checklist on universal wellbeing.
- Ensuring support and guidance to Core Leads.
- Feeding back on schools and cluster work.
- Disseminating regional information and ensuring consistency of message.
- Supporting schools to re-open - GwE's SIAs have teamed up with local authority representatives to formulate a robust return to school plan which will support all schools in the region to ensure they have the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment which they can tailor to their own particular school.
- Transition of learners back into schools - developing risk assessment and guidance.
- Developing regional guidance, support and resources for schools.
- Development of resources and approaches to implement a skills based approach to distance learning and ensuring quality assurance of developed materials.
- Ensuring consistency of national and regional information

- Ensuring effective communication to all team members through weekly Full Team meetings, Local team meetings etc.
- Performance Management reviews.
- Collating information regarding distance learning and learner engagement.
- Identifying and sharing good practice, need for support and pupil/parent engagement with schools
- Preparation and attending regional meetings – Management Board and Joint Committee
- Reviewing business plan, annual reports.
- Co-ordinate regional and local response to national consultation.
- Liaise with key stakeholders, e.g., Estyn LALI visits, FE Colleges, HEI, etc

Support for Professional Learning

GwE staff have also developed or are in the process of developing the following for schools:

- A comprehensive catalogue of PL that has been identified for Teaching Assistants (TAs) to follow. A dedicated Google Classroom has been set up for these TAs which has already oversubscribed with well over a 1,500 members.
- A walk through guide with raising awareness activities for teachers on the Curriculum for Wales
- Webinars tailor made for head teachers around Change Management, developing a school vision, creating time and space for PL, Planning for Curriculum Change and Leading Pedagogy which will include some face to face interaction, group discussions, think pieces and video clips for reflection.
- Reflecting on pedagogy – for current practice and for the new curriculum.
- Contribute to the national strategy of supporting NQTs during this period where their focus will be on pedagogy and research due to not being able to have class access.

SIAAs have undertaken various Professional Development activities to ensure up to date knowledge and understanding:

- Understanding of effective Distance Learning to provide guidance and create models.
- Increasing knowledge base for effective teaching and learning in literacy from research/writings across the world.
- Use of ICT for Distance Learning/working.

National Continuity of Learning

- National Continuity of Learning Strategy - Regional contribution to WG national workstreams.
- Guidance and strategy for distance learning: Development of national strategy and guidelines related to the Continuity of Learning deliverables with regions
- Develop guidance, support and resources for teachers, schools and stakeholders
- Providing models and resources to be issued to regional/national schools. Consider local approach to include models, planning, assessment and monitoring progress
- Ensuring quality assurance of developed materials.
- Develop digital learning.
- Attend meetings with Estyn, WG and the other Consortia
- Contribute to ongoing projects, e.g., MAT, Post-16
- Supporting the follow up to the Wales PISA Project 2020.
- Preparing a new HLTA programme

- Support Welsh Government with information to inform the Bill on the new Curriculum

Other

- Support for Newly Qualified Teachers and ensuring clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

- Effective communication provided via single point of contact (SIA) for school leaders and ease of access to support.
- Schools have been able to remain open to key workers in the event of staff shortages.
- Schools are well informed and confident that support is available should any needs arise. School leaders' wellbeing is supported through regular communication.
- Shared understanding of the importance of the welfare of pupils, parents and staff
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure Distance Learning.
- Schools having access to a wealth of quality resources for reference as they plan for and deliver distance learning.
- Comprehensive models available for schools to adopt, adapt or refer to. This has in turn ensured strengthened leadership and improved balance of work that can be completed at home.
- Co-ordinated approach to supporting schools which has led to greater consistency and quality of distance learning across the region.
- Best practice being shared across schools i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems etc.
- Strengthened use of ICT to enable effective communication between schools, within schools and with school stakeholders.
- School staff being upskilled through the use of a digital platform for professional development.
- Information shared with the LA is up to date and timely support is given to any School.
- In conjunction with the LA, ensured that the process of appointing school leadership candidates is appropriate and fair.
- Consistent messages disseminated to schools by GwE / LA officers.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster level through digital means ensuring co-constructed strategic thinking.
- Strengthened collaboration between local authority officers and GwE.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for the repurposing of schools.
- Effective cascading of key messages to school staff to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Increased collaboration between regions and other stakeholders.
- Increased understanding of key messages and work streams.
- Stronger awareness amongst school leaders of effective strategies to ensure continuation of school business.
- Quality Professional Learning developed in readiness for future needs.
- Newly Qualified Teachers having clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

Next steps

We see that Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) will have a crucial role over the coming months to:

- Continue to make regular contact with schools to support the wellbeing of Headteachers and staff;
- Support schools with developing models for distance and blended learning including sharing effective practice;
- Support schools to ensure effective teaching and learning within these distance and blended models;
- Support local authorities and schools with repurposing of learners back into schools;
- Work with local authorities and schools to ensure that all schools have a comprehensive support plan to help them address the significant challenges ahead;
- Deliver or broker the support needed based on each individual school's need;
- Support and facilitate cluster meetings and networks to ensure effective school to school support and joint working;
- Support schools to develop effective processes and strategic documents that are appropriate for the current and evolving circumstances;
- Provide support and advice for governors;
- Support schools with recruitment and appointments;
- Support schools with professional learning when it is appropriate and timely to do so;
- Support schools and clusters with guidance and support on the national reform journey when it is appropriate and timely to do so.

The finer details of the work of the region and the evolving role of the GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser are outlined below.

1. Supporting distance learning and developing a blended approach to encompass distance learning and face to face learning

So far a large portion of SIAs work has been supporting effective distance learning in schools before and following the publication Welsh Government Guidance Document on effective Distance Learning (see details of activities above).

This work will need to continue in the short term and as discussions develop around phased return to schools for some learners, SIAs will need to:

- Support schools with effective blended learning where some pupils will be supported at home and others taught in schools.
- Ensure that there is no gap in the equity of provision as some pupils return to some form of education.
- Continue to support the health and wellbeing of teachers (who may be teaching several age groups) when they need to teach some learners in schools and continue to support others at home.
- Continue to ensure the health and wellbeing of learners who will be returning to a very different classroom during the phased return.
- Provide further Professional Learning to teachers and classroom assistants on how to best model this 'mixed economy' of provision.
- As lockdown for most continues, support teachers in the transition from consolidating previous learning to teaching of new aspects.
- Support schools when moving to monitoring and giving constructive feedback on work presented.

2. Supporting the repurposing of schools

The logistics of further opening schools to not only the children of key workers and vulnerable children, but also to specific year groups are complicated and pose numerous problems. GwE's Management Board have committed to working in strong partnership across the region to adopt a consistent approach in developing a supportive framework to help all school settings during this next phase of preparing and working in the new normal. As part of this, GwE's SIAs have teamed up with local authority representatives to formulate a robust return to school plan which will support all schools in the region to ensure they have the right policies in place and a comprehensive risk assessment which they can tailor to their own particular school. The resource will include:

- A key responsibilities document with actions for consideration.
- Generic policies agreed with LAs which schools can adopt and adapt with their Governors to respond to the numerous health and safety complications caused by COVID-19.
- A detailed generic risk assessment for schools to use and adapt for their own settings.
- A one stop dashboard developed by GwE SIAs which will include all the above as well as links to important websites and key documents.
- Cover the important aspects of safety, site and premises, teaching and learning, staff support, pupil support, other key management tasks,
- Ensure there are clear and established communication channels to include headteacher forums where updates can be shared regularly and offer models of good practice of communication with governors, learners and parents/carers
- Working in partnership with the wider team of LA colleagues for example, inclusion, HR, transport, GwE will consider practical, well-being and training needs of school staff and ensure these are appropriately supported, to include professional learning where appropriate
- As part of the teaching and learning aspect, GwE will work in partnership to consider learners' needs and appropriate learning experiences for them on return, in particular, supporting health and wellbeing.
- Within working with the new normal, GwE's team of SIAs will work with schools to ensure remote learning and how this contributes to learning 'in school'. As part of this, GwE will continue to work with LA partners to monitor and update assessments within risks and capacity as necessary.
- GwE SIAs and LA reps will also be working closely with schools as they strive to adapt their settings to be as safe as possible for their learners.

3. Supporting Professional Learning (PL)

Our PL support in GwE over the last 2 months has been focused on effective distance learning. All schools have been on a journey to find out what model of distance learning works best for them, their cluster and their pupils. There will inevitably be continued support from GwE for effective distance learning as we move to a phased return to schools, but we also recognise that further down the line that some teachers and classroom assistants' may be looking for further PL. Current focus is on the following areas:

- Sharing national and international models on how to best develop effective distance learning.
- Providing models for effective distance and blended learning for the schools to adopt and adjust as they seem fit.
- Providing guidance and advice from Local Authorities and GwE for the repurposing of learners back into schools.
- Reflecting on pedagogy – for current practice and for the new curriculum.

- Providing professional learning for Teaching Assistants.
- Contributing to the national strategy of supporting NQTs during this period where their focus will be on pedagogy and research due to not being able to have class access.
- A walk through guide with raising awareness activities for teachers on the Curriculum for Wales.
- Developing and delivering webinars tailor made for head teachers around Change Management, developing a school vision, creating time and space for PL, Planning for Curriculum Change and Leading Pedagogy which will include some face to face interaction, group discussions, think pieces and video clips for reflection.



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2020

Report by: Alwyn Jones - GwE Assistant Director

Subject: Blended Learning

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present information to the Joint Committee members on the 'Developing integrated approaches to support blended learning for the phased opening of schools' document (Appendix 1).

2.0 Background

2.1 On June 3 the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29th June, 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to "check in, catch up and prepare." Welsh Government have published their Learning Guidance to provide advice on learning and teaching taking place in schools and settings for the remainder of the summer term and to support practitioners as they prepare for the autumn term.

2.2 The WG guidance provided gives schools considerable flexibility to exercise their professional judgement in how they will plan their offer to their pupils. Schools now have an outline framework for planning teaching and learning for the remainder of the summer term and autumn term 2020. The guidance support schools as they reevaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges.

2.3 Building on the learning guidance published by Welsh Government, this guidance, a document developed jointly by the Regional School Improvement Consortia and Estyn, sets out best practice and approaches to blended learning to support practitioners.

2.4 Settings and schools should build upon their distance learning strategies, and they will have access to support from regional consortia and local authorities as they further develop their approaches to blended learning.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1 Settings and schools will be at different stages in developing their support for blending in school and distance learning and their approach will vary according to their context and capacity. Every setting and school will respond to the requirements on the basis of its risk assessment, site capacity, staff availability and number of learners and frequency that they can safely attend the establishment Planning should be based on research informed guidance on what works best within blended learning.
- 3.2 The basic principles and advice do not try to replace the effective practice that exists, but can help to refine and further develop.
- 3.3 This document provides practical suggestions to support schools with their integrated approach to blended learning and covers the following areas:
- Supporting health and wellbeing
 - Supporting learning fitness
 - Blended learning approach
 - Organising the learning
 - Establishing routines and protocols
 - Engagement with learners
 - Supporting parents and carers
 - Supporting equity for Welsh-medium learners
 - Supporting the learning through collaboration
 - Professional learning

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note and accept the content of the report.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

- 6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

- 7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

- 8.1 Consultation with the GwE Management Board and Headteachers Strategic Forums.

9.0 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – ‘Developing integrated approaches to support blended learning for the phased opening of schools’.
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OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I note again that Section 5 of the report clarifies that “there are no financial implications arising from this report”. In the challenging context of Covid-19 and restrictions, I appreciate that GwE are adding value within existing resources.



Developing integrated approaches to support blended learning for the phased opening of schools

June 2020

Introduction

On June 3 the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29th June, 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” Welsh Government have published their Learning Guidance [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>] to provide advice on learning and teaching taking place in schools and settings for the remainder of the summer term and to support practitioners as they prepare for the autumn term.

The WG guidance provided gives schools considerable flexibility to exercise their professional judgement in how they will plan their offer to their pupils. Schools now have an outline framework for planning teaching and learning for the autumn term 2020. Welsh Government will be publishing more detailed guidance and expectations for learning in the autumn term in due course.

The guidance support schools as they re-evaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges:

- Supporting learners to return to ‘learning fitness’.
- Developing learning which allows learners to continue to progress.
- Ensuring coherence for learners between in school and remote learning.
- Develop appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements have been *disapplied.
- Use the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales as support to the current challenges, rather than this being an additional burden.
- To encourage practitioners to use and develop their professional judgment to best benefit learners.

**Welsh Government has confirmed that the Basic Curriculum has been temporarily disapplied [<https://gov.wales/written-statement-creating-flexibility-schools-settings-disapplication-basic-curriculum>]. This notice will initially apply for a period of one month from 22 June to 21 July. The Minister for Education will keep this under review, in light of the public health advice and the operating arrangements for schools and settings, during the remainder of the summer term. Welsh Government will clarify expectations for the autumn term in due course.*

Phased opening of schools

The overall effect of WG guidance is to require schools to plan to reopen in three stages:

1. Summer Term 2020

Schools will have reopened from 29th June to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” The basis for planning was clear and focused on:

- Supporting the health and wellbeing of learners and staff
- Check in with learners and ensure their learning fitness and preparedness for next step. Ensuring smooth transition will be key
- Establishing and testing arrangements for partial reopening
- Building the confidence of families
- Preparing for autumn term, partial reopening arrangements and teaching and learning

2. Autumn Term 2020

- An effective blended learning approach as part of the new normal.

3 At some stage during the next academic year, schools may return to being fully open to all pupils.

Aim

Building on the learning guidance published by Welsh Government [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>], this guidance sets out best practice and approaches to blended learning to support practitioners. Settings and schools should build upon their distance learning strategies, and they will have access to support from regional consortia and local authorities as they further develop their approaches to blended learning.

Underlying principles

Settings and schools will be at different stages in developing their support for blending in-school and distance learning and their approach will vary according to their context and capacity. Every setting and school will respond to the requirements on the basis of its risk assessment, site capacity, staff availability and number of learners and frequency that they can safely attend the establishment. Planning should be based on research informed guidance on what works best within blended learning.

The following underlying principles and advice does not seek to replace existing effective practice but may help to refine and develop it further:

- Promoting learner and staff well-being to remain as a key priority.
- There should be a focus on learners becoming 'learning fit' and on supporting their progression and next steps not on level attainment or catch-up activity.
- All experiences should be planned on the basis of learners' needs rather than attempting to carry on with business as usual. This flexible approach is enabled by the disapplication of the National Curriculum.
- Provision for KS4 and KS5 learners will need to be planned and delivered around subject specific input. Arrangements for learners in Year 10 to Year 13 may be different to those for other pupils at the school to respond to the challenges of preparing them for examinations in 2020-2021. The key advice from Qualifications Wales on any changes to award GCSEs and A levels to inform planning for the summer 2021 examination series is not yet available and schools will need to respond accordingly when this is made available.
- The blend of in-school and distance learning should be driven by a single curriculum, i.e., the two elements need to be mutually supportive rather than work in parallel.
- The purposes and principles of the new Curriculum for Wales should be used to support learning. The greater flexibility currently available to schools in allowing them to determine the learning priorities for the cohorts of learners offers a real opportunity. School leaders and teachers may wish to consider the Four Purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales and the guidance '*Designing your Curriculum*' could be a useful starting point.
- To support teachers collaborating within teams and departments to consider the holistic offer to learners including the wider learning experiences. There may be opportunity to build on the learning of new skills that staff have developed over the past two months, including working more creatively and developing digital skills.
- The aim should be a high level of equity and equality of access to across the range of year groups. However, it should be considered how best to prioritise supporting pupils who have not engaged on a regular basis to date and those learners with ALN, so as to ensure that the gap does not widen further. Schools should also be mindful of how they support learners with transition between key stages.

- It is at the discretion of the Head teacher and school staff whether to use 'live streaming' within blended provision. Should a school include live streaming within its blended learning model, it should be ensured that provision conforms to national guidance and any other local requirements.
- The current distance learning model should evolve to ensure that face to face contact [and any live streaming, if appropriate] reinforces and enriches the work learners complete at home, so that seamless provision is available.
- Settings and schools should take the opportunity to reflect on the distance learning to date, noting what was worked well, what learning has taken place and what the future role of parents/carers have in supporting.
- Communication with parents and carers is vital. There should be regular and effective communication with parents and governors so as to ensure expectations are clear to school partners, and specifically, that the curriculum has been *disapplied.
- Settings and schools should be sensitive in situations whereby parents/carers choose not to send their children back to school, and it should be ensured that the blended learning model takes this into account.

This document provides practical suggestions to support schools with their integrated approach to blended learning and covers the following areas:

- Supporting health and wellbeing
- Supporting learning fitness
- Blended learning approach
- Organising the learning
- Establishing routines and protocols
- Engagement with learners
- Supporting parents and carers
- Supporting equity for Welsh-medium learners
- Supporting the learning through collaboration
- Professional learning

Supporting health and wellbeing

Supporting the health and wellbeing of learners and staff remains a key priority. It is a key enabler of learning and the experiences of lockdown, social distancing, phased return and potential bereavement will have raised significant challenges. Designing provision for all with access to specialist support is crucial. Beyond general planning for how wellbeing can be supported and embedded in learning there is the opportunity to provide early specific interventions for learners with pre-existing issues or new needs and to raise safeguarding concerns.

In making the transition back to school some groups of learners are likely to require more support than others such as those who have spent lockdown in challenging circumstances or who have found it hard to manage. Mental and emotional wellbeing is a key focus. Learners will need opportunities to talk with a trusted adult, encouragement to communicate their feelings and the opportunity to spend time with friends.

Relationships and social wellbeing will require peer relationships and those between staff and learners to be nurtured. This will help to develop a sense of community and ensure learners feel valued and listened to. Opportunities to work collaboratively will be valuable.

Physical wellbeing requires a range of physical activities. This forms part of the need to maximise the time learners spend outdoors.

Well-being is an integrated approach to teaching and learning. It is not seen as a separate area, but rather built into everyday practical experience, e.g., building positive relationships between children and children, children and adults to address well-being through natural play based/experiential learning.

Some areas to be considered:

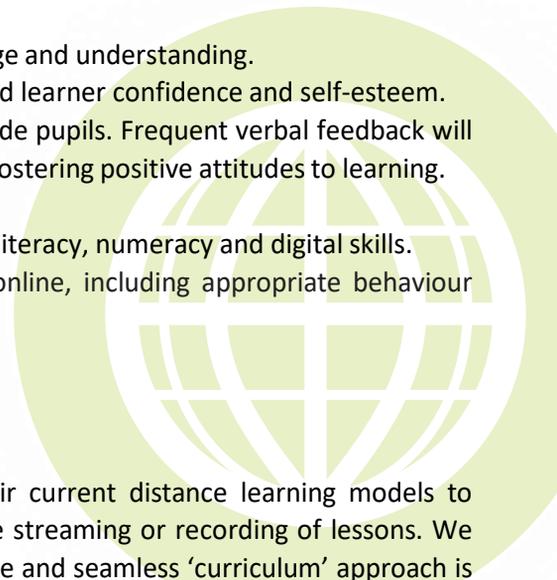
- Set the emotional climate – the adults set the emotional climate within the learning environment, with a previously agreed consistent approach.
- Provide learners with plenty of opportunity to safely share experiences, talk and interact during play, formal learning sessions and break/lunchtimes.
- Empathise and validate feelings of pupils. Recognise pupils' experiences are unique to them.
- Place quality and reliable relationships front and centre. Form positive relationships, especially with those who struggle to form an emotional bond. Allow time for the emotional connection. Adults to be present and respond with simple connections, e.g. smile, nod, eye contact, positive body language, *etc.*
- Some pupils will have developed emotional vocabulary already and be able to regulate their emotions, others will not. Some will have had help to develop their emotional resilience, whilst some may have absorbed negative/stressful messages/thoughts. Teach pupils to name the emotions they felt and feel. Pupils who can name and describe their emotions well are less likely to be verbally or physically upset.
- Practitioners to practise active listening. Give pupils time and opportunities to express and explore their emotions, verbally and nonverbally.
- Make time to talk in natural play, as part of learning and as part of everyday routines, especially for younger learners.
- Provide plenty of reassurance from a wellbeing and learning aspect praising resilience and effort.
- Provide routine and structure for all learners especially those with specific needs.
- Review behaviour policy and adapt as required.
- Some schools may feel that consideration of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) may be appropriate as a fundamental principle which recognises that good health and well-being are important to enable successful learning

Supporting learning fitness

Settings and schools will need to support learners in developing their motivation and readiness to learn. There is initial evidence that the period of lockdown has increased the disadvantaged gap.

In the autumn term when learners come back into school, there needs to be a clear focus on preparing them for the next steps in their educational experience. The following should be considered:

- Plan engaging assessment opportunities to enable teachers to assess key skills and respond accordingly.
- Develop effective questioning to ascertain pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Revisit key topics as a foundation for progress and to rebuild learner confidence and self-esteem.
- Focus on verbal feedback and dialogue to reassure and guide pupils. Frequent verbal feedback will be particularly effective in building pupils' confidence and fostering positive attitudes to learning.
- Adapt the provision to meet the pupils' needs.
- Identify and address any immediate additional support for literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Reinforce pupils knowledge regarding how to stay safe online, including appropriate behaviour whilst online and communicating with staff and peers



Blended learning approach

Settings and schools will need to consider how to evolve their current distance learning models to include in-school face to face contact and where applicable, live streaming or recording of lessons. We will refer to this approach as '*Blended Learning*'. Adopting a single and seamless 'curriculum' approach is essential where practitioners can develop a more integrated approach to learning and learners can build connections across learning as per the principles of the Curriculum for Wales.

Schools should use aspects of the new curriculum guidance to support them in developing their blended learning approaches.

They may consider:

- Using the 4 purposes as the basis to support them to plan their learning activities.
- As teachers get more comfortable with developing blended learning encourage them to plan creatively and experiment with designing blended learning and their own curriculum.
- Use important language from the curriculum guidance with staff for example progression, descriptions of learning.

The basics of good teaching and learning still apply. However, in the practical task of planning blended learning there are a number of factors for teachers to consider. It is also worth considering that some pupils will particularly benefit from more face to face support such as disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have so far not been engaging well in distance learning.

Settings and schools should consider the '*12 Pedagogical Principles*' that underpin the new curriculum. They may also want to consider the following, especially for foundation phase through to key stage 3:

- Plan to maximise interaction/safe socialising whilst learners are at school, e.g., review learning, distanced talk partner discussion, verbal feedback - class and peer.
- Set engaging enjoyable challenges.
- Provide regular outdoor learning experiences to develop a range of skills e.g. literacy, numeracy, creative, physical, personal and social/well-being.
- Provide learning packs for individual learners based on their learning and developmental needs, e.g., multi-use resources, craft and malleable materials, paper, exercise books, writing materials, chrome books, *etc.* In addition, personal whiteboards and felt pen to share ideas practice skills, show and share their work with the teacher or teaching assistant (formative assessment purposes). Teacher or teaching assistant should address any misconceptions.

- Plan practical opportunities for children to practise and consolidate those skills taught at school as part of the 'home element' of blended learning. This will ensure that over a period of time, children will have had direct and independent learning opportunities through a practical, play based/real life experiences. Consider activities that can be completed with resources that can easily found in most homes.
- Use classroom walls to facilitate / share learning / promote wellbeing, e.g., photos of learners at work/play, messages from friends, develop a working wall for learners to refer to whilst working on a piece of writing or maths or numeracy work. All pupils need to see them clearly from their seats.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for activities to promote wellbeing and address pupil's needs as appropriate.
- Provide regular outdoor learning experiences to develop a range of skills, e.g., literacy, numeracy, creative, physical, personal and social/well-being.
- Provide effective lesson starts to ensure engagement and review prior knowledge. Ensure effective questioning to provide plenty of learner to teacher feedback.
- Discuss models of work/modelling of a skill as a class to produce Success Criteria and discuss 'What Makes good' in preparation for carrying out tasks. This is also a basis for peer and self-assessment.
- Revisiting prior learning, review and re-teach - provide time and support to do this according to learner needs.
- Provide regular practice and recall opportunities to reaffirm prior learning and to consolidate new learning.
- Teach any new learning in small manageable steps; refrain from introducing too much content at once.
- Model good feedback/self-assessment/peer assessment, scaffolding where necessary when learners need reminding.
- Provide opportunities for independent practice and application of skills learnt - both in school and at home.
- Consider the opportunities and challenges for specific groups of learners.

Time in school should be used to support the activities that learners can complete at home at their own pace. These include guided investigations and extended opportunities to apply new skills, knowledge and concepts. In a 'flipped' learning approach, planning could include opportunities for learners to research, prepare and think before using contact time with teachers in school to explore and consolidate.

Blended learning will consist of a range of approaches that can be broadly categorised as:

1. Face-to-face time with learners
2. Online learning
 - Activities delivered online, e.g., through HWB
 - Recorded lessons
 - 'Flipped learning' (pupils work on tasks at home before discussions in class)
 - Live-streaming
3. Use of textbooks and other physical resources to work at home

Within a blended learning model, face to face classroom time in school is best used to:

- Maximise the use of direct teaching time;

- Introduce new ideas and skills including independent learning skills.
- Guide learners through new content and skills linking to previous learning where possible.
- Assess and continue to ensure pupil progress in skills and knowledge.
- Provide real time, particularly verbal, feedback to address initial misunderstandings.
- Use a range of models to show the learning destination.
- Closely guide and teach the new route through the learning.
- Within social distancing guidelines, enable pupils to engage with each other – collaborative tasks, discuss and plan learning, see each other’s work.
- Improve engagement and ensure task completion through celebration and rewards as well as sanctions.
- Maintain positive relationships with teachers and staff.

To facilitate the ‘online’ aspect of Blended Learning, ensure all learners have access to their online learning platform (Hwb) and have a clear understanding of the following:

- How to access material provided by the teacher
- How to use the most appropriate online tools to complete any task set, including providing evidence of work completed away from a device, e.g. photograph or video of physical and practical activities, where appropriate
- How to submit any digital material to their teacher
- How to access and respond to any feedback provided by their teacher

Settings and schools will need to consider whether live-streaming can be used hand in hand with face-to-face contact to reinforce and enrich the work learners complete at home. Settings and schools must conform to the WG guidance ‘*Live-streaming safeguarding principles and practice for education practitioners*’.

<https://hwb.gov.wales/zones/online-safety/live-streaming-safeguarding-principles-and-practice-for-education-practitioners>

Within a blended learning model, live-streaming is best used to:

- Support learner engagement and their wellbeing.
- Allow access to teacher guidance and support on specific aspects or areas of set tasks.
- Allow access to subject specific lessons, especially in KS4 and KS5.
- Provide instant and interactive feedback and assessment for learning.

Schools may want to consider how live-streaming could be used to share lessons with those attending ‘face to face’ in the classroom and those studying at home. Schools may also consider how to make best use of the technology for using recorded teaching materials.

Schools and settings should keep things simple regarding the tasks, assessments and feedback shared with learners. It is important to balance the need to ensure the continuation of their education and their health and wellbeing.

Within a blended learning model, effective assessment and feedback should:

- Focus on the formative element so that learners are supported to move forward in an unfamiliar context;
- Focus on helping to identify next steps and building confidence both to enable them to be ready to learn and to make progress in their learning;
- Not be about testing learners at this stage. It is not appropriate at this time for schools to use summative assessment for the tracking of individual pupil progress against targets.

The purpose of feedback within the context of blended learning:

- Keep in touch during the 'home' element of blended learning and maintain positivity;
- Acknowledge and appreciate learners' efforts, to celebrate their work and offer encouragement;
- Support the learners to ensure that they understand the tasks and respond to any misconceptions or misunderstanding that they may have;
- Provide the teacher with as much information as possible of the learners' current knowledge and understanding and the ways in which they can be supported in the next steps of their learning; and
- Help parents to support their children's learning.

The nature of the feedback given:

- Clearly present and explain the tasks set for the day or week giving clear expectations;
- Be guided by the teacher's professional judgement following their evaluation of the learning needs of pupils and the nature of the activity being undertaken, how any feedback, including marking, is given;
- Communicate clearly, simply and concisely when providing individual or whole group verbal or written feedback;
- Correct common misconceptions and misunderstandings; and
- Provide learners with opportunities to keep in touch and communicate with their peers, and to see and celebrate each other's work so that they learn from one another.

Organising the learning

In deciding the organisation and content of the learning for the autumn term there are crucial factors to consider:

- The capacity of the site – classrooms, dining spaces etc. – in light of Welsh Government guidance on social distancing. Schools can bring in up to a third of pupils on any day under current social distancing guidance. However, this may change over the coming months and schools should be prepared to adapt accordingly.
- The availability of staff. Schools need to be clear on this whilst being aware of some key HR issues, e.g., child care, *etc.*
- The number of pupils in school. This will depend on the social distancing guidance that is in place during the autumn and to some extent on shielding and transport. Another crucial factor will also be parental support. Attendance of vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers is an additional factor.

In deciding the curriculum offer and in constructing revised individual staff and pupil time tables a number of other decisions need to be made based on the current available guidance regarding staff and learner safety:

- Are learners to return in year groups? Groups of pupils could have this time as a single block but blended learning will work better with regular weekly contact. Learners could come in for two half rather than full days but this may work less well where transport is an issue.
- Decide the school day – stagger start and finish, break and lunchtimes?
- In which parts of the school will learners be based? Hygiene, cleaning and toilets will be factors here.
- How will learners be grouped? At this stage the requirements of social distancing point to bubbles with a single class base and staff moving. Use of large indoor and outdoor spaces?
- What will learners be taught? The guidance is clear that wellbeing is the focus but there is clearly a need to develop the independent learning skills and resilience needed to support distance learning. Opportunities to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills will be valuable.
- The balance of in-school and distance learning commitments in terms of teacher workload. Collaborative planning and team teaching approaches are worth emphasising. Building upon this theme of collaboration, there is an opportunity for teams within and across schools to develop confidence in creative approaches in designing learning experiences as per the principles and Four Purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Decide the allocation of support staff.
- Agree with LA arrangements to discuss options if there are staff or space shortages.

Establishing routines and protocols

Settings and schools will need to establish clear routines and protocols:

- Communication with parents/carers is vital. Schools will need to clearly communicate their adopted approaches to blended learning.
- To ensure a consistent approach make sure that staff have time to discuss new guidance and procedures including interactions with pupils before learners return to school
- Establish / re-establish learner / teacher relationship especially if the class is taught by a different teacher.
- Create a calm ethos within the school both in terms of environment the interactions between everyone.
- Spend time introducing and reviewing safety measures (in a practical manner with younger pupils) - rules, routines and boundaries, ensuring that learners feel safe and comfortable. This should be done regularly. Many will be aware of the importance of handwashing but it may be necessary to re-teach the routine several times to ensure everyone's safety.
- Communicate rules positively and clearly checking that everybody has understood.
- Consider the best use of teaching assistants.

Engagement with learners

Schools and settings will need to reflect on their approaches to engaging with learners during the phased opening of schools and evaluate its impact and identify actions to address key barriers to effective engagement within their blended learning approach and strategy.

Ongoing focus should be on:

- Identification of learners– which learners / groups of learners have not engaged in distance learning? What are the main barriers?
- Accountability and leadership - Is there a whole school approach to keeping in touch with learners? Is there regular contact with parents / families? Are there clear guidance for staff?
- Is there sufficient resources to target learner engagement?
- Is there an effective systems to monitor and evaluate impact of level of engagement?
- What is working well with learners who engage and can this be adapted for learners who not engaging?
- Is the school working with LA staff to offer a tiered approach to contacting learners who are not engaging?

Evidence suggest that regular contact opportunities with learners and their families, regular discussions by teaching staff around learners' engagement and clear guidance on expectations from teachers by school leadership impacted positively on engagement by the learner and their families.

Supporting parents and carers

As we move towards a blended learning approach a new dialogue with parents/carers is needed to reassure and manage expectations. Schools will need to ensure that parents/carers gain an understanding of the rationale behind the approaches and what is the role of parents/carers in supporting a blended approach to learning.

Setting and schools will need to consider the following:

- Communication with parents/carers is vital to reassure, e.g., showing them changes to their classroom via photos or videos, a guide on the expectations on pupils when in school.
- When learners are completing work at home it is vital that schools continue to reinforce the message that parents/carers are not expected to be their children's school teacher.
- Provide guidance to parents/carers to support their children's learning, e.g., suggest possible structure to the day and week that offers flexibility to families.
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of their point of contact in school for well-being, subject specific issues, ALN, digital issues, *etc.*
- Practitioners to model the learning and share clear step by step guidance for learners and parents/carers, to ensure skill development and progression of learning, e.g., through the use of video recordings, voice over explanations, live-streaming, signpost to the parents/carers' support that is available on [Hwb](#).
- When schools are offering contact and learning opportunities via live-streaming, schools will need to share expectations and protocols with parents/carers and learners. It is good practice to ensure that there is a home-school agreement signed by learners, parents/carers and school.

Supporting equity for Welsh-medium learners

Schools and settings should ensure equity and fairness for all Welsh-medium learners in the provision offered through blended learning models and especially for those from non-Welsh-speaking backgrounds.

Whilst mindful of the fact that Welsh-medium and bilingual schools/settings have well-established and effective processes for providing support for non-Welsh speaking parents and carers under 'normal' circumstances, additional guidance and assistance might be required by these families so that they can be more productive in supporting their child within a 'blended learning' model.

Schools and settings should also consider how best to maximise face to face contact to reinforce and develop the Welsh language skills of those learners whose main contact with the language is through their experiences at school. They should also consider how best to plan practical opportunities for learners to continue to develop and use their Welsh language skills within the 'home element' of the blended learning model.

For schools with specific linguistic immersion programmes, further consideration will be required by school leaders as how best to support these learners.

For Welsh medium settings where parents/carers do not speak Welsh, schools should:

- Prioritise development of pupils' listening and speaking skills.
- Focus on developing important vocabulary and provide key terms in written form to support asynchronous learning.
- Immerse pupils in Welsh at every opportunity.
- Provide clear guidance and support for parents/carers.
- Signpost useful resources for developing Welsh at home at an appropriate level to the learner.
- Deliver Welsh language activities in the classroom that focus on the skills that families can consolidate and discuss at home.
- Create contexts for learning where learners can apply and expand their use/understanding of existing skills and knowledge in meaningful contexts/activities at home through the medium of Welsh.
- Schools could place an emphasis on introducing and reinforcing dialogue and vocabulary. There could be a clear link between the classroom and home-based learning. For example, teachers may reinforce a specific sentence pattern through a discreet teaching session. Then pupils may work in pairs to act out those sentence patterns (taking into account social distancing measures). Then, the pupils could practise the dialogue at home with family.
- In order to facilitate participation in speaking and listening activities at home, staff could consider sending prompt sheets with translations, or providing access to video clips that model the correct pronunciation.
- Make use of [e-books](#) and [e-magazines](#), for example by providing digital presentations based on a class book.
- Provide safe methods for real life communication between pupils and others, for example via digital video means or by writing letters.

Supporting the learning through collaboration

During this period, the importance of collaboration and co-working cannot be underestimated. Collaboration has taken many different forms. These include:

- Formation of 'Hub schools' during the initial period of lockdown
- Cluster meetings for school leaders
- Peer to peer collaboration
- Professional Learning opportunities

Opportunities for collaboration between schools and peers can lead to a number of positive aspects. These include:

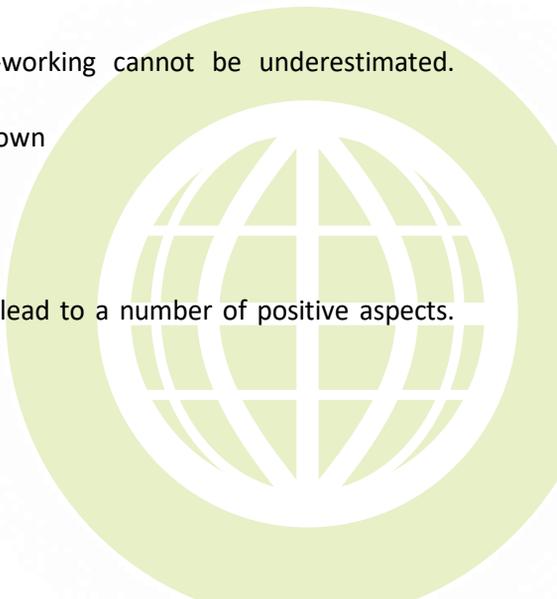
- Staff wellbeing
- Support and sharing of good practice
- Consistency of approach
- Dissemination of information and a common understanding
- Professional Learning

New opportunities to collaborate through digital means have developed over the pandemic period, with schools using virtual methods such as Skype, Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This will be the means of communication and collaboration for the foreseeable future. The opportunity to screen share, take turns, record and note written responses provide an effective means to collaborate. The four transversal themes of Schools as Learning Organisations identify technology, time, thinking together and trust; during this time of Covid-19, schools' new use of technology has enabled the time, thinking together and trust to develop further.

Moving forward, it is extremely important that these opportunities to come together continue, both within school and across schools.

Cluster meetings: As we prepare for a 'new normal', regular opportunities to discuss with our peers will become an important aspect in the planning of how this looks. Each school and setting will have their own context, however many aspects will have common themes and approaches. These could be organisational matters or teaching and learning methods and approaches. This in turn benefits the learners and can lead to a positive impact on outcomes and experiences. Regular cluster meetings to discuss these matters will strengthen the work happening back in the individual schools and settings. These meetings can also be attended by individuals from the regional consortia and LA so as to inform, support and listen.

Peer to peer collaboration: Every opportunity should be taken to allow peers to collaborate, both within schools and across schools. Planning opportunities, establishing teaching and learning methods and providing feedback opportunities for learners are all aspects that can be strengthened through regular discussions between teaching staff. Peer to peer discussions around establishing effective distance and blended learning opportunities are vital in providing support for each other, developing and sharing practice and ensuring a consistent approach within a school and between schools.



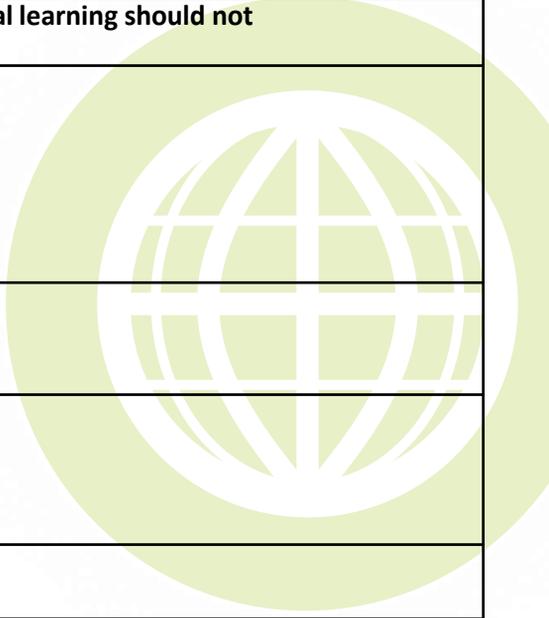
Professional Learning opportunities: The profession has undergone rapid professional learning during the lockdown period. This has included crisis management, Information and Communication Technology and Distance Learning methodology. The pace of professional learning will continue to increase as we move to the new normal of working with live streaming needs, blended learning approaches and wellbeing strategies (see section below on '*Professional Learning*'). Regular collaboration opportunities will provide opportunity for professional learning at all levels within a school and across schools. These can be arranged through live discussions, recorded material sharing practice or through webinars. All are effective ways to collaborate and learn from one another.

Professional Learning

During this challenging time, it is important that all staff are supported through professional learning. Professional Learning should be provided to support schools to develop skills in planning and delivering blended learning and effective pedagogical practice, as well as integrating elements of the new Curriculum for Wales.

The blended learning approach may mean that the focus for professional learning will change. Such as prioritising the development of digital skills for preparing distance learning. Below is guidance that may support leaders and staff to maximise the impact of professional learning.

Professional learning should	Professional learning should not
Be tailored to both whole school and individual needs: for example, though auditing staff digital skills and online pedagogical skills to identify areas for development	Be just a list of mandatory courses with which staff engage.
Develop teachers' pedagogical knowledge to support the blended approach and encourage them, as the expert, to make decisions about how to plan and balance direct teaching with online activities to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding effectively.	Prevent staff from having enough time to focus on developing high quality blended learning.
Develop teachers' knowledge of meta-cognition to support them to plan opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Including self-motivation, self-questioning and their ability to develop and express their thoughts.	

Professional learning should	Professional learning should not
Establish what effective blended learning looks like and support staff to know how face-to-face and distance teaching and learning work together to support pupil progress and achievement	
Encourage collaboration and plan time for staff to work together to develop and evaluate effective blended learning for pupils	
Develop and share principles, for example, online synchronous and safe engagement with pupils online	
Where appropriate, be informed by research	

Appendix 1 – Blended learning considerations

The following table is by no means an exhaustive list but should begin to scaffold thinking and school level discussions around which mode for learning is best suited to each approach or strategy according to learner age and subject and the unique context of each school.

Classroom	Socially distant classroom	Distance online or digital	Distance offline
Sharing information, e.g., board/smartboard/TV	Sharing information on the board ensuring that learners are well spaced. <i>Need to consider need to repeat lessons as learners in small groups in classroom</i>	Sharing information through a website or blog. Recording of a teacher sharing information on the board or a voiced over presentation	Printed materials shared with learners. <i>Need to consider whether all learners have access to the materials</i>
Discussion through whole group and small group real time conversations	Discussions through real time conversations ensuring that learners can maintain social distancing	Asynchronous or synchronous written discussion in a class or group space. Video sharing of discussion contributions (e.g., flipgrid)	Discussions with family members. <i>Need to consider if this is a viable option for all learners and ensure that it is inclusive of all learners.</i>
Collaboration through small group work at tables	Collaboration through group work. <i>Need to consider how materials are not shared and how learners can maintain social distancing.</i>	Collaboration in google apps or office 365 <i>Need to consider groupings of learners for collaborative activities and set clear expectations for levels of participation.</i>	Collaboration with family members. <i>Need to consider if this is a viable option for all learners and ensure that it is inclusive of all learners.</i>
Creation using supplies available in the classroom (pens/paper/glue etc)	Creation using supplies available in the classroom <i>Need to consider how materials are not shared and how learners can maintain social distancing.</i>	Online applications and web tools to create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentations • videos • artwork • storybooks • infographics • websites 	Creation using supplies available from home and/or school <i>Need to consider what supplies will be available to learners and how effectively they can engage with them independently.</i>
Teacher direct teaching to explain concepts	Teacher direct teaching to explain concepts <i>Need to consider that a teacher would need to repeat this to each small group of learners</i>	Video and audio explanations from teachers or external sources <i>Can be accessed and worked through at own pace. Can also allow teachers to share expertise across classrooms and potentially schools.</i>	Instructions are written. Parent or carer explains concept. <i>Need to consider if learner can access the written instructions. Need to consider availability and willingness of parent to do this and time along with expertise needed.</i>

Use of shared texts or textbooks in the classroom	Use of texts or textbooks in the classroom <i>Need to consider how materials are safely used by learners in line with operational guidance</i>	Online book or multimedia resource either made by teacher or from a range of sites	Use of texts or textbooks at home <i>Need to ensure equity of access to texts for learners</i>
Use of workbooks in the classroom	Use of workbooks in the classroom <i>Need to consider how materials are safely used by learners in line with operational guidance</i>	Online space or website for skill building	Use of workbooks at home <i>Need to consider equity of access to workbooks for all learners</i>
Meeting, sharing and discussing learning – oral feedback	Meeting, sharing and discussing learning – oral feedback. Can be feedback to work completed in the classroom or at home. <i>Need to maintain social distancing but presents a real opportunity for quality dialogue with small groups of learners or individuals</i>	Oral feedback through voice/video recordings on pieces of work submitted	Oral feedback from parents/carers <i>Need to consider availability and willingness of parent to do this and time along with expertise needed.</i>
Teacher marking as written feedback to work	Teacher marking as written feedback to work <i>Need to maintain social distancing</i>	Online polls to check understanding Online tests or interactive quizzes to check understanding	Opportunity to reflect on and respond to any marking comments received from teacher
Self-assessment of work	Self-assessment of work <i>Need to consider whether this offers best use of limited classroom time for learners.</i>	Online self-assessment in learning spaces using comments or rubrics.	Offline self-assessment of work using set criteria <i>Need to consider how shared back to teacher to complete feedback loop</i>
Peer assessment of work	Peer assessment of work <i>More challenging to maintain operational guidance on sharing of resources and social distancing but can be completed orally</i>	Use of online spaces for peer assessment and feedback <i>Need to consider how learners are supported to make relevant comments and also needs to be monitored.</i>	More challenging to come up with offline solutions of how this can be completed meaningfully

<p>Building relationships and a sense of community</p>	<p>Building relationships and a sense of community whilst adhering to social distancing measures. <i>Consideration needs to be given to learner well-being as maintaining relationships has been a significant challenge for many learners and this provides an opportunity.</i></p>	<p>Blogging and discussions online Visible teacher/school presence online Class media accounts Team competitions Videoed assemblies</p>	<p>Opportunities to work independently for something that supports a group goal or experience could be beneficial <i>Clear communication to parents and carers about how the school is working to support this is needed</i></p>
<p>Engaging and motivating learners</p>	<p>Regular contact opportunities in a safe and supportive environment providing feedback and dialogue about learning</p>	<p>Regular contact opportunities in a safe and supportive online environment providing feedback and dialogue about learning</p>	<p>Engagement of learners along with parents/carers <i>Need to consider availability and willingness of parent to do this and time along with expertise needed.</i></p>

Appendix 2 – Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning approaches

Distance learning approaches bring advantages and disadvantages, including the following:

		Distance learning experience		
	Face to face teaching	Synchronous learning	Asynchronous learning	Distance learning work / tasks
Advantages	<p>Face to face interaction with teachers</p> <p>Face to face interaction with peers</p> <p>Access to the teacher as the 'expert'</p> <p>Social contact</p> <p>Easier for teachers to guide the first steps of learning and provide more direct instruction</p> <p>Easier for teachers to check understanding</p> <p>Easier for teachers to gauge progress and engagement of individual learners</p> <p>Access to a variety of resources e.g. textbooks and reading books, musical instruments, laboratories, specialist equipment such as communication aids</p> <p>Teachers able to respond 'in the moment' to pupils' learning and provide support</p>	<p>Can provide opportunities for interaction with peers</p> <p>Access to the teacher as the 'expert'</p> <p>Teachers able to respond to pupils' questions and provide support</p> <p>More pupils could be resented than in face-to-face teaching</p> <p>More staff may be available to plan and provide this</p>	<p>Can be run at a pupils own pace</p> <p>Pupils can revisit work they do not understand</p> <p>Pupils can develop independent learning skills</p> <p>More staff may be available to plan and provide this</p>	<p>Pupils can be more flexible in how they learn and when</p> <p>Can valuably reinforce the learning in school</p> <p>Support from parents/carers can be valuable and helpful</p> <p>An opportunity for pupils to develop important independent learning skills that they have been taught in school</p> <p>An opportunity for pupils and staff to develop skills in a new way of working and learning, using digital platforms</p> <p>An opportunity to develop a more creative and less prescriptive curriculum model</p>

Appendix 2 – Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning approaches

Distance learning approaches bring advantages and disadvantages, including the following:

Disadvantages	<p>Only a minority of pupils will be present at any one time</p> <p>Pupils' time in school will not be the same as they have been used to</p> <p>Pupils will only have a limited amount of time in school</p> <p>Not all staff may be able to attend the school.</p> <p>In secondary schools planning coverage of subjects may be an issue</p> <p>The challenge of cleaning resources and equipment when used by multiple users</p> <p>There will be limitations on the extent to which pupils can interact and work collaboratively due to the necessary spacing arrangements.</p>	<p>Too many pupils will limit interaction</p> <p>Pupils may find it more difficult to engage in discussion</p> <p>Management of sessions and behaviour could be more difficult</p>	<p>Teachers can't instantly assess learning and provide feedback</p> <p>Aspects of good quality face-to-face teaching, such as, questioning are lost</p>	<p>Difficult to gauge progress of all learners and for teachers to provide timely support</p> <p>Difficult to address issues of pupil disengagement and reluctance to work</p> <p>Problems with access to equipment and connectivity</p> <p>Wide variation in the nature and quality of support with work from parents/carers</p> <p>Many teachers lack experience of distance learning teaching</p> <p>Teachers' ability to use digital platforms and deliver online learning varies widely</p> <p>Less social interaction, which can be important to support learning</p> <p>Online safety</p> <p>Pupils spending too much time in front of a screen</p>
Considerations when designing blended learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit staff and pupils access to hardware and software and their ability to use it. • Audit staff skills in developing and delivering blended learning • Auditing pupils' independent learning skills to support them to engage effectively in distance learning • Providing support for staff to develop pupils' independent learning skills • Ensure staff are supported to improve their knowledge of distance and blended learning techniques and in using digital learning platforms. • Ensure all pupils and staff have access to equipment and resources required • Make use of online systems, such as Hwb, to share work and support blended approaches • Provide clear guidance and support to parents/carers on what is meant by a blended learning approach and how they can help at home • Ensure the practical aspects, for example in subjects such as DT, music and science, are planned into the school based provision • Consider how support staff and youth workers can support pupil engagement • Gather feedback from pupils and parents and use this to inform planning and adapt or change provision • Pay due regard to the government guidance on live-streaming 			

Appendix 3 – Further reading and reflection

- WG distance learning support:
<https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/>
- EEF Distance Learning Rapid Evidence Assessment:
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/evidence-reviews/distance-learning-rapid-evidence-assessment/>
- Distance learning blog post:
<https://blogbjmock.wordpress.com/2020/06/11/see-it-from-their-perspective/>
- Distance learning article:
<https://corwin-connect.com/2020/04/visible-learning-effect-sizes-when-schools-are-closed-what-matters-and-what-does-not/>
- EEF On attainment gap:
[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/EEF_\(2020\)_-_Impact_of_School_Closures_on_the_Attainment_Gap.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/EEF_(2020)_-_Impact_of_School_Closures_on_the_Attainment_Gap.pdf)
- Remote Learning:
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/Remote_learning_evidence_review/Remote_Learning_Rapid_Evidence_Assessment.pdf
- OECD:
https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133390-1rtuknc0hi&title=Schooling-disrupted-schooling-rethought-How-the-Covid-19-pandemic-is-changing-education
- UNESCO:
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/at_tach_import_03f2b76b-8263-4c20-8e5f-89a3f14027da?_=373322eng.pdf&to=17&from=1#pdfjs.action=download
- UNICEF:
<https://www.unicef.org/documents/framework-reopening-schools>
- Blended learning website:
<https://www.blendedlearning.org/>
- Types of blended learning:
<https://elearningindustry.com/6-blended-learning-models-blended-learning-successful-students>



- Blended learning different models: <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/12-types-of-blended-learning/>
- Blended learning in general: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-52412171>
- BBC article on blended learning in Scotland: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/enriquedans/2020/04/13/the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-unleashed-a-revolution-in-education-from-now-on-blended-learning-will-be-the-benchmark/#56594e62536f>
- Rationale behind blended learning: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/about/research/blendedlearning.pdf>
- Clear definitions of Blended Learning and interesting case studies from New Zealand including collaboration and sharing: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11528-019-00375-5>
- Flipped learning (could be a useful approach to blended learning): <https://www.tes.com/news/pedagogy-focus-flipped-learning>
<http://rtalbert.org/re-thinking-blooms-taxonomy-for-flipped-learning-design/>
<https://www.onlineuniversities.com/blog/2012/06/flipping-expanding-blooms-taxonomy/>
<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/mar/30/flipped-learning-benefits-challenges-best-practice-live-chat>
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00313831.2016.1258662>
- OU course: Take your teaching online: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/education/take-your-teaching-online/content-section-overview?active-tab=content-tab>
- The Learning Partnership 'Back to School': <https://bb-live-bucket.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/resourceFiles/9121592210926.pdf>
- ResearchEd Home, videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3uPEgDH3pAhQe06533Zebw/videos>
- Child development overview: <https://www.firstdiscoverers.co.uk/the-science-of-childcare-5-senses-to-stimulate/>
- Great Teaching toolkit: <https://www.greatteaching.com>
- Teachers vs tech: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Teachers-Tech-case-tech-revolution/dp/1382004125>



- Book: Blended Learning in Action: A Practical Guide Toward Sustainable Change, Caitlin Rice Tucker
- Book: Rosenshein's Principles in Action, Tom Sherrington
- Book: Understanding how we learn, Yana Weinstein





REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2020

Report by: Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director & Claire Homard, Chair of GwE Management Board

Subject: Re-starting learning model for North Wales

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present a discussion paper to the Joint Committee members in relation to a re-starting learning model for North Wales.

2.0 Background

2.1 On 3 June 2020, the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29 June 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.”

2.2 Welsh Government have published a Learning Guidance, which gives schools considerable flexibility to exercise their professional judgement in how they will plan their offer to their pupils. Welsh Government will be publishing more detailed guidance and expectations for learning in the autumn term in due course.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 Enclosed is a discussion paper in relation to a re-starting learning model for North Wales. The document has been co-authored by Warwick and Bangor Universities and the North Wales Region.

3.2 All learners will ‘restart’ their learning during the autumn academic term 2020 following an offer of check in and catch up period in the last three/four weeks of the 2019-2020 academic year. Schools need to assess the fitness of learning of their pupils before introducing new learning.

3.3 As outlined in the paper, the school's preparedness or approach to ensure learning for all pupils, would need to initially focus on three inter-related components that would assess pupils' fitness for learning:

- Emotional and mental well-being;
- Health and physical fitness; and
- Core skills of numeracy and literacy, independence skills, and readiness for new learning

3.4 Schools need to ensure that they can offer provision for their learners against each area to ensure equity and equality. Responsibility for supporting schools to deliver each element would be agreed between LAs, GwE and other agencies to collectively plan appropriate provision to meet all learners needs as they are identified, understanding that is both a short and longer term approach.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to support the regional approach and model, with GwE, Local Authorities and schools working in partnership to ensure that the individual needs of learners are met in an individualised local context.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Consultation undertaken with the GwE Management Board

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Re-starting learning model for North Wales.

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from the propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Nothing to add to the report from a financial propriety perspective.

Re-starting learning model for North Wales

Introduction

On June 3 the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29th June, 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” Welsh Government have published their Learning Guidance [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>] to provide advice on learning and teaching taking place in schools and settings for the remainder of the summer term and to support practitioners as they prepare for the autumn term.

The WG guidance provided gives schools considerable flexibility to exercise their professional judgement in how they will plan their offer to their pupils. Schools now have an outline framework for planning teaching and learning for the autumn term 2020. Welsh Government will be publishing more detailed guidance and expectations for learning in the autumn term in due course.

The guidance support schools as they re-evaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges:

- Supporting learners to return to ‘learning fitness’.
- Developing learning which allows learners to continue to progress.
- Ensuring coherence for learners between in school and remote learning.
- Develop appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements have been disapplied.
- Use the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales as support to the current challenges, rather than this being an additional burden.
- To encourage practitioners to use and develop their professional judgment to best benefit learners.

Context

- All learners will therefore ‘restart’ their learning during the autumn academic term 2020 following an offer of check in and catch up period in the last three/four weeks of the 2019-2020 academic year;
- Not all learners chose to take part in the three or four week check in;
- 54% of 12-18 year olds were worried about falling behind in their learning;
- Welsh Government have shared an early discussion power-point with ADEW; and
- On June 29th Estyn and the 4 Regional Consortia jointly published a guidance on ‘Developing integrated approaches to blended learning’.

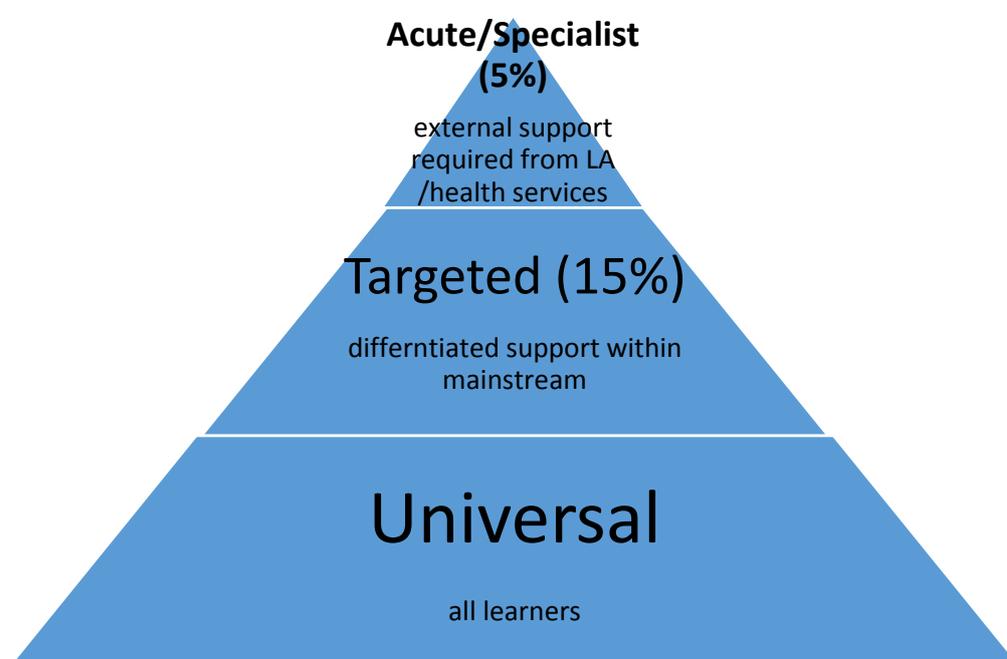
Issues to address

Schools need to assess the fitness of learning of their pupils before introducing new learning.

The school's preparedness or approach to ensure learning for all pupils would initially focus on three inter-related components that would assess pupils' fitness for learning:

- Emotional and mental well-being;
- Health and physical fitness; and
- Core skills of numeracy and literacy, learning to learn, independence skills.

The three components could be divided into the three categories of need in the triangle below:



The model would be made up of the following areas of learning. Schools need to ensure that they can offer provision for their learners against each area to ensure equity and equality. Responsibility for supporting schools to deliver each element would be agreed between LAs, GwE and other agencies such as health. The triangle of need approach raises clear questions for school leaders: What is our universal provision for Emotional wellbeing, physical, literacy, *etc.*; then for those children / staff who need more, what is our targeted provision? (Appendix 1).

Table 1: Areas of learning and categories of need

	Physical fitness	Wellbeing fitness	Core skills fitness
Universal			

Targeted			
Acute/specialist			

Each learner's needs and personalised support required can be identified using the table above. This would be the basis for schools to plan the provision to support 'learning fitness' in the short (September), medium (autumn to July) and for the long term for some learners. However, one of the dangers of this categorising system is children then start to be labelled a 'targeted child' 'he's specialist, acute etc. So there is need for clarity on the triangle that it is not a labelling system and a child's individual profile will be unique to them and based on their support needs within that area – e.g., – might need specialist support for numeracy, but universal for fitness. It's about categorising the support needs not the child. It also avoids schools being able to say "this child has needs that are too complex for us" since the idea is more about how do schools ensure that they can provide a suitable learning environment for ALL pupils. In North Wales a collaborative service of LAs, Consortia and wider agencies could collectively plan appropriate provision to meet all needs of learners. Schools will need to develop clear procedures and require some flexibility within resources to be able to respond to learners' needs as they are identified, understanding that is both a short and longer term approach.

Managing expectations

Expectation of what can be achieved in the short term will need to be managed and schools and setting should consider the following:

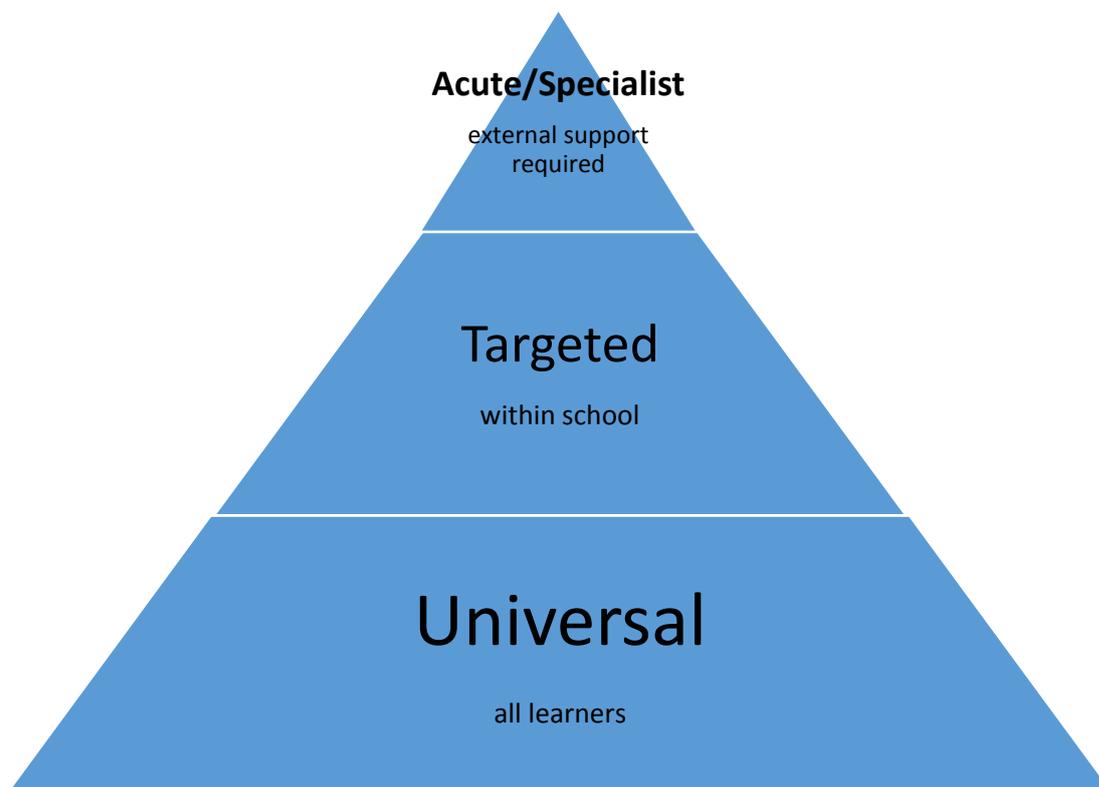
- Time lost is time lost and this cannot be made up without losing energy and time in other areas of learning. There is a likelihood that schools probably won't have the resources to bring in wide ranging catch-up programmes when they reopen. It's reasonable to assume that a -0.1 effect size for a typical summer holiday is likely now to be a cumulatively huge loss in learning, i.e., 3 summer holidays' worth is -0.3, which is approaching a year's worth of typical teaching;
- From Research, there are specific programmes that are proven to be more successful in improving core skills; and
- Current attendance data may be used as a starting point to analyse the extent of the problem.

Further issues to consider

- Every learner needs to restart;
- Time should be taken to evaluate how much engagement with learning each individual undertook in the Summer term of 2020 and their general emotional wellbeing and attitude towards being back in school;

- How do we prioritise resources and support;
- Identifying priority groups also creates non priority groups;
- Extend the School day for targeted and acute support but not necessarily led by school staff;
- Leadership needs to be compassionate, listens and is clear where support will be most effective in developing blended learning models;
- Define the role of parents in blended learning and the support they will need; How will this be achieved?
- Invest in developing community connections to help schools meet learner needs rather than employ extra staff; (voluntary, university, leisure, focussed child care)
- Work with university to ensure a clear baseline is established and progress is captured accurately to inform future planning.
- Is attendance now compulsory or is it still optional?

Identifying Professional Development needs of staff or School capacity to meet learner's needs



A school could use the triangle above as a heuristic for their own self-reflection / professional learning and as a guidance on how they progress. Once they have a clear vision of what the blended learning should be, they could decide what their staff universal professional learning needs are:

- what support do all staff need

- staff that might need targeted support to develop, and
- a small number that will require specialist support to deliver effective learning.

This could include:

- developing a collaborative approach within their clusters to share expertise;
- temporary employment of teachers/extra staff e.g. New Zealand government investing in Health and Wellbeing curriculum leads in their schools for the next phase;
- link in with longer term CfW work and the Health and Wellbeing AoLE as schools consider the development of whole school approach and allow teachers and learners to reconnect positive relationships.

Appendix 1

	Getting ready to learn		
	Physical fitness	Emotional/wellbeing fitness	Core skills of literacy and numeracy
UNIVERSAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overarching 'Be-Active' guidance on high level principles and links to practical resources for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blended Learning models and exemplars for each Key Stage wellbeing as part of an integrated approach. Documentation on dashboard includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspects for Considerations - Pupil Support & Wellbeing Practical considerations for Wellbeing Wellbeing questionnaire for learners – return to school Reflective activities to support your classroom practice - Welcoming Year 7 students Back to School Social Story resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary and Secondary Teaching and Learning guidance Blended Learning models and exemplars for each Key Stage with focus on Key Skills as part of an integrated approach. Accelerated Learning models and exemplars focusing on boosting literacy and numeracy skills.
TARGETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	Documentation on dashboard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing the Preconditions for Trauma Anna Freud Centre for Mental Health – Helping Children manage anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading and numeracy teaching and fluency materials Remote Instruction of Language and Literacy project EAL Resources for home learning KS3 literacy intervention programme KS3 numeracy fluency materials
MORE ACUTE			
The role of the parent/carer to further support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slimmed down overview of simple activities that can be carried out at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Tips - Preparing your child for school CAMHS Resources Supporting Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading and numeracy teaching and fluency materials for parents

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible development of series of guides using instructional/skill cards (Sports Wales) – shared through social media? Through series of webinars? Leaflets? Short videos? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional CAMHS Resources – How do I explain Coronavirus to my child • Work with agencies to write tips – written by parents for parents? • Series of short video clips of how to support shared on social media? • Access to bulletin/newsletters with links to resources? • Use of wider community to support where possible and in harder to reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with parents to support the learning of pupils who use EAL document • Overarching letter from 6 LAs/GwE to parents explaining approach to blended learning? • Series of short training sessions with practical tips on how to support? • Creation of support loan boxes for home (games/dice to help)
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