

GwE Regional Business Plan



April 2023 - March 2026

[Including Annual Plan 2023-2024]





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1. Our Vision, Values and Behaviour

Collaborating, Learning, Succeeding



OUR VISION

- Our work is driven by genuine ambition to see the schools and organisations we work with achieve their aspirations and to see all learners succeed.
- Proudly Welsh and internationally informed, we will support our schools to become successful and confident learning organisations. We will collaborate to provide learners with the climate and education they deserve so that they become capable and resilient individuals who realise their full potential.

OUR VALUES



RESPECT



TRUST



WELLBEING



INNOVATE AND INSPIRE



SUPPORT AND COLLABORATE



CYMRU'R GYMRAG

OUR BEHAVIOUR

We will be consistent, objective and fair in our work, valuing everybody's effort, contribution and achievement.

We will be professional, honest and open in our work with everybody. This is the core of successful collaboration.

We will show care, empathy and concern for the wellbeing of all.

We will be ready to take risks with our schools, embracing challenge, curiosity, perseverance and the willingness to learn from successes and failures. By being knowledgeable and sharing good practice we aim to empower and motivate schools to research and develop.

We will be dependable, flexible and sensitive in our support. We will be ready to collaborate and encourage working in partnership with others, recognising that there is room for us all to improve, develop and learn.

We will embrace and celebrate the Welsh language and culture in all aspects of our work.

2. Regional Context

GwE is the North Wales regional school improvement service working alongside and on behalf of the North Wales local authorities – Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd, Anglesey.

The number of pupils of compulsory school age in 2022 was 82,410. This represents 21.6% of all pupils in Wales. There are 399 maintained schools in the region, 27.1% of all maintained schools in Wales (School Census Results, 2022).

20.4% of pupils of compulsory school age are eligible to receive school meals across the region which is comparable to the % in 2021 and lower than the national figure of 23.3%. This level of eligibility is still the lowest of the four regional consortia (School Census Results, 2022).

In the region, 42.3% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 29.7% (Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics).

As of the 30 June 2022, ethnic minorities account for 2.0% of the population in the region and this is below the Wales average of 5.1%. (Annual Population Survey/Office for National Statistics (ONS).

As of the 31 March 2022, approximately 1,425 children in the region are looked after by a local authority and this represents 20.1% of looked-after children in Wales. (Children Receiving Care and Support Census)

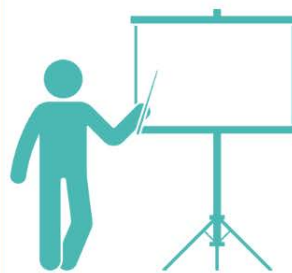
Overview of School Numbers in the Region

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS:

GwE



Number of schools / establishments >>> 405



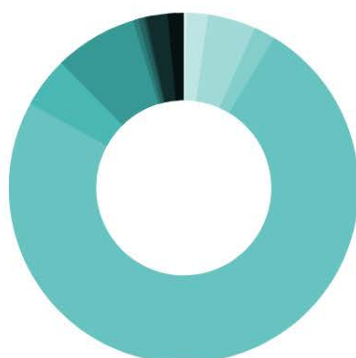
Number of staff

10,714

Teaching staff: 5,479

Support staff: 5,235

Type of schools / establishment



Nursery	1
Juniors [ages 7/8-11]	8
Infants & Juniors [ages 5-11]	18
Infant & Nursery	8
Nursery, Infant & Junior	301
Secondary [ages 11-16]	19
Secondary [ages 11-18]	31
Middle School [ages 3-16]	2
Middle School [ages 3-19]	2
Special [without Post-16 provision]	1
Special [with Post-16 provision]	8
Pupil Referral Units	6



Free School Meals 2022

20.4%

Local Authorities

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS: **ANGLESEY**

Number of schools / establishments >>> **46**

Number of staff **1,023**
Teaching staff: 520
Support staff: 503

Type of schools / establishment

Infants & Juniors [ages 5-11]	12
Nursery, Infant & Junior	28
Secondary [ages 11-18]	5
Special [with Post-16 provision]	1

Free School Meals 2022 **16.9%**

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS: **GWYNEDD**

Number of schools / establishments >>> **96**

Number of staff **1,863**
Teaching staff: 975
Support staff: 888

Type of schools / establishment

Juniors [ages 7/8 - 11]	1
Infant & Nursery	1
Nursery, Infant & Junior	77
Secondary [ages 11-16]	6
Secondary [ages 11-18]	6
Middle School [ages 3-16]	1
Middle School [ages 3-19]	1
Special [with Post-16 provision]	2
Pupil Referral Units	1

Free School Meals 2022 **14.3%**

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS: **CONWY**

Number of schools / establishments >>> **61**

Number of staff **1,577**
Teaching staff: 873
Support staff: 704

Type of schools / establishment

Juniors [ages 7/8 - 11]	5
Infant & Juniors [ages 5-11]	3
Infant & Nursery	5
Nursery, Infant & Junior	38
Secondary [ages 11-18]	7
Special [with Post-16 provision]	1
Pupil Referral Units	2

Free School Meals 2022 **20.8%**

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS: **DENBIGHSHIRE**

Number of schools / establishments >>> **55**

Number of staff **1,695**
Teaching staff: 855
Support staff: 840

Type of schools / establishment

Juniors [ages 7/8-11]	2
Infants & Juniors [ages 5-11]	2
Infant & Nursery	2
Nursery, Infant & Junior	38
Secondary [ages 11-16]	1
Secondary [ages 11-18]	5
Middle School [ages 3-16]	1
Middle School [ages 3-19]	1
Special [with Post-16 provision]	2
Pupil Referral Units	1

Free School Meals 2022 **21.5%**

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS: **FLINTSHIRE**

Number of schools / establishments >>> **78**

Number of staff **2,442**
Teaching staff: 1,240
Support staff: 1,202

Type of schools / establishment

Infants & Juniors [ages 5-11]	1
Nursery, Infant & Junior	63
Secondary [ages 11-16]	5
Secondary [ages 11-18]	6
Special [without Post-16 provision]	1
Special [with Post-16 provision]	1
Pupil Referral Units	1

Free School Meals 2022 **23.1%**

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS / ESTABLISHMENTS: **WREXHAM**

Number of schools / establishments >>> **69**

Number of staff **2,113**
Teaching staff: 1,016
Support staff: 1,097

Type of schools / establishment

Nursery	1
Nursery, Infant & Junior	57
Secondary [ages 11-16]	7
Secondary [ages 11-18]	2
Special [with Post-16 provision]	1
Pupil Referral Units	1

Free School Meals 2022 **23.1%**

3. Introduction & National Context

This Business Plan spans a three-year period between 2023-2026 and also contains a detailed 12 month Business Plan for 2023-2024. It sets out GwE's strategic objectives for 2023-2026, the priorities for improvement and the work programmes to be undertaken over the following 12 months.

The regional 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. Our priorities are a combination of improving school provision, leadership and outcomes, as well as delivering The Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales.

GwE continues to look outward and to welcome challenge from both inside and outside Wales whilst making sure that what it is developing is right for its context. This includes continuously listening to the voice of all stakeholders especially those of teachers and leaders in schools across all sectors and listen to children and young people as they engage with their learning and supporting them in achieving their aspirations.

GwE has a clear plan that sets out how, in close collaboration with key stakeholders, it will strengthen leadership, improve teaching and learning, increase aspiration to impact on standards, ensuring the school environment supports learners' and practitioners' well-being.

The Business Plan also addresses Welsh Government and the Local Authorities strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE. The plan also considers how schools and educational settings continue to face the challenges of the pandemic.

NATIONAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITIES

In North Wales, GwE and the six Local Authorities are committed to working in partnership with schools to ensure that we have robust and purposeful systems and processes in place to adhere to national expectations. Our approach will ensure that we have the confidence and support of all key stakeholders and that each partner will take full accountability for undertaking their role and contribution with transparency, effectiveness and efficiency.

Since 2015, Welsh Government have embarked on a significant cycle of change to realise a new Curriculum for Wales. The four purposes sit at the heart of the shared vision for every child and young person in Wales and as such, this ambitious programme of reform is far reaching and encompasses all aspects of the education system. Welsh Government recognise that for successful realisation, it is crucial that all aspects of the school system are aligned with, and support, the Curriculum for Wales and its underlying principles. Our approach to the reform journey has been integrated in all aspects of our work from the beginning. It is viewed from the need of learners and the baseline of individual schools and clusters to deliver change according to agreed expectations.

At a national level, Welsh Government have set out the following, describing the key attributes that schools will possess to successfully realise the curriculum:

1. Enabling all learners, and in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to progress along their own learning pathway and raise their aspirations to achieve their full potential; allied to a range of assessment approaches to understand and support this progress

2. Co-constructing a curriculum, in line with the Curriculum for Wales Framework, which promotes a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences (including social and interactional experiences) with a clear understanding of why these matters.
3. Ensuring the school environment supports learners' and practitioners' well-being.
4. Supporting practitioners' understanding of what works in curriculum design by investing in the enquiry and pedagogic skills of all staff.
5. Enabling ambitious professional learning for all practitioners in a school dedicated to being a learning organisation.
6. Embedding reflection, self-evaluation and improvement within schools, with good school leadership as a pre-condition for that.
7. Being at the heart of their communities - building better relationships between schools and families, communities and employers, to support and promote educational achievement and excellent employment, next steps education and training.
8. Listening to children and young people as they engage with their learning and supporting them in achieving their aspiration.

These factors are captured and are interwoven into our strategic objectives and priorities.

Our Business Plan will also contribute to the delivery of six objectives shared by the Education and Welsh Language Minister, namely:

OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTOR
Learning for life so that everyone in Wales learns, and continues to learn, developing their knowledge and skills, and engaging in experiences that are relevant to their lives today and into the future.	All learning guided by the four purposes of the curriculum, through collaboration across providers and with industries and employers.
Breaking down barriers so that excellent education opportunities and outcomes can be achieved by all learners, at all ages, in classrooms, online, and in work.	Through early identification, support and targeted actions, ensure that all learners gain the knowledge, skills and experiences to be an active citizen, including the cross-curricular skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence.
A positive education experience for everyone , with learners and staff supported in their wellbeing and resilience, which is essential for improving education outcomes and life chances	Ensure that learners are supported to be healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, within places of learning that are supportive, safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and bullying.
High-quality teaching and leadership , where everyone benefits from the best professional learning so that they can support the success of all learners, particularly those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.	Guaranteed career-long professional learning and support for all staff, from initial training through to leadership, focused on realising the four purposes of the curriculum, and capacity and capability to support success of all learners.

Community based learning , with strong institutions engaging, integrating and being empowered by their communities.	Empowering all learners and communities to have strong relationships with education providers, so that we tackle disadvantage and deliver world-class education locally and nationally.
Cymraeg belongs to us all , giving every learner equal access to the language and everyone the opportunity to reach their potential.	Encourage the use of Welsh across the education system, as an integral part of Curriculum for Wales, our Cymraeg 2050 ambitions and expanding provision post-16 to study through Welsh and opportunities to learn the language as active and engaged citizens.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GUIDANCE

In June 2022, Welsh Government published the new guidance and information on school improvement and the new framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability. This guidance applies to schools, PRUS, Local Authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and Estyn and outlines expectations of all in contributing to sustainable school improvement. The framework is intended to drive behaviours and practices that are required by the Curriculum for Wales and the new assessment arrangements.

Within the School Improvement guidance, Welsh Government recognise the new national priorities which schools must have regard to when setting their improvement priorities which are:

- Improving pupils' progression by ensuring their learning is supported by a range of knowledge, skills and experience;
- Reducing the impact of poverty on learners' progression and attainment.

With the school's self-evaluation and development plan as the starting point, regional consortia and local authorities will need to agree with each school the additional support it needs to improve and to build its own capacity. The agreed support schools will receive from regional consortia and the local authority is incorporated in their development plans, including published summaries, providing an incentive for schools to ask for the help they need and enhancing transparency.

GwE and the Local Authorities are collaborating closely together and have established a regional School Improvement Guidance Task and Finish Group to develop a regional approach to identify, create, deliver and monitor Schools Support Plans. The group are exploring potential avenues for stronger collaboration across LAs to build capacity and ensure greater consistency of support and ensuring that we adopt a holistic and transparent approach in term of reporting and sharing of information.

The self-evaluation and improvement cycle is central in enabling schools to continually develop and improve their practice: to give all learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes, whatever their background or circumstance, and in order to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Welsh Government have co-constructed the National Resource: Evaluation and Improvement to support schools in undertaking robust, evidence-based self-evaluation.

Working within the new framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability will enable newer ways of working for all stakeholders. As a service, GwE will:

- continue to work collaboratively with all schools and settings to develop and refine schools' self-evaluation processes as part of their strategic improvement process. Self-evaluation will be honest, robust and evidence-based, using a wide range of information effectively to consider the progress of all learners;

- continue to work in strong partnership with Local Authorities, engaging in focused collaborative approaches to develop appropriate 3600 holistic support plans for all schools and settings;
- continue to engage in a range of self-evaluation processes as part of the continuous improvement cycle of the service. These self-evaluation processes will enable the service to understand and capture impact of the work, drawing upon a range of sources and approaches to inform business planning and priorities;
- continue to work with Welsh Government to implement the new framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability and to realise the 8 contributory factors of the new Curriculum for Wales. This will involve supporting schools in their self-evaluation processes, promoting a balanced approach that draws upon a coherent and comprehensive set of qualitative and quantitative information to evaluate learners' progress in all schools and settings;
- continue to work collaboratively with partners, for example Estyn, to enable continuous professional dialogue and to support schools with consistent, coherent messaging within the expectations of the new framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability.

As the reform continues to develop, GwE will continue to engage with all stakeholders to ensure that national developments feed into regional work and are fully evaluated and impact captured.

SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE FOR SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

As part of the regional approach, GwE and the Local Authorities have further strengthened their support and challenge procedures. In response to the national pilot to support schools causing concern through the multi-agency model, procedures and structures for supporting, monitoring and challenging schools were reviewed. The aim was to ensure that all schools could access good-quality support in a timely manner in order to move along the 'desired' pathway at the required pace. A regional Task and Finish Group was established consisting of officers from each authority, together with GwE advisers, to drive the work.

A clear school causing concern strategy is in place and all schools identified have a holistic support plan clearly articulating the nature and intensity of the support provided and the improvements needed.

For schools whose performance is consistently strong or strong overall, improvements are addressed through peer collaboration, Local Authorities and GwE generic Professional Learning Programme and the bespoke support plan for the school. However, when Local Authority/GwE procedures highlight a concern, more intense support is targeted through the local multi-agency approach.

Within the revised structure, a multi-agency group of senior officers, lead officers from the relevant services and GwE staff meets regularly to share information and evidence so that concerns are identified at an early stage. Thresholds and triggers have been adopted to ensure consistency in identifying concerns in relation to standards, teaching and learning, assessment, leadership, inclusion or managerial matters. The multi-agency group takes responsibility for ensuring that the holistic plan is developed, delivered and monitored.

The evolved structures and processes ensures a more comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting schools causing concern. A joint approach between GwE and the LA services will be taken to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the revised approach.

LEARNING ORGANISATION

GwE has encouraged schools to collaborate through sharing practice and co-constructing areas that need improving. We have invested in various cluster models, alliances and networks, and encouraged schools to find a range of appropriate partners to deliver improvement and changes. The region has also looked outward

for good practice in terms of identifying effective peer review models as well as encouraging our schools to develop and evolve their own practice. GwE believe that peer engagement should closely complement the dimensions identified within the OECD publication *'What Makes a School a Learning Organisation'*.

At the heart of the work developed by GwE, is the commitment to the work of Schools as Learning Organisations as stated by the OECD:

'Today's schools must equip students with the knowledge and skills they'll need to succeed in an uncertain, constantly changing tomorrow. But many schools look much the same today as they did a generation ago, and too many teachers are not developing the pedagogies and practices required to meet the diverse needs of 21st-century learners.'

In response, a growing body of scholars, educators and policy makers is making the case that schools should be reconceptualised as "learning organisations" that can react more quickly to changing external environments, embrace innovations in internal organisation, and ultimately improve student outcomes.'

The principles within sit within all Professional Learning and across GwE. This work has been undertaken at dual levels:



- to develop GwE as a learning organisation to include sustainable development
- to support schools to learn more to continually develop as learning organisations

Critical to the development of the learning organisation work, there are four transversal themes which run throughout to include Trust, Time, Technology and Thinking Together. These have been fundamental in developing GwE's approach to developing strong partnerships as trust underpins the relationships needed internally and externally for learning organisations to thrive.

Over recent years schools have become better at sharing their best practice for the benefit of all learners. Our Welsh self-improving system needs every professional and institution to become aware of their own strengths and areas for improvement, and with this knowledge seek support for their own improvement and offer support for others to improve.

It is Welsh Government's ambition and expectation that all parts of the education system are dedicated to being a learning organisation, so that strengths are spread across the system, and areas for improvement are tackled through peer engagement and support. In achieving this, we will ensure that our education professionals can thrive in a supportive and collaborative environment to raise standards and ensure that every young person can fulfil their potential.

GwE and the six Local Authorities firmly believe that peer review should be the key driver as schools effectively deliver on the national reform and become a self-improving system. Our vision is to have outstanding schools that are naturally collaborating and jointly identifying direction for improvement.

Therefore in moving forward, and in line with the national direction of travel, implementing an effective peer review process is integral to the delivery of the GwE Business Plan 2023-26. We therefore aim to strengthen and build upon current practice to fully embed a rigorous and robust peer review process that will become an integral part of school improvement in moving to a self-improving system whilst also supporting those schools that are causing concern.

LOCAL AUTHORITY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2023 ONWARDS

GwE will work in partnership with Local Authorities to support additional local priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE 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).

LOCAL AUTHORITY	CORPORATE PRIORITIES *
Anglesey	<p>The Welsh Language - increasing opportunities to learn and use the language.</p> <p>Education - ensuring an effective provision for today and for future generations.</p>
Gwynedd	<p>Tomorrow's Gwynedd - Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life.</p> <p>A Welsh Gwynedd - Ensuring that we give our residents every possible opportunity to use the Welsh language in the community.</p>
Conwy	<p>Education and skills - People in Conwy are educated and skilled</p> <p>A thriving Welsh language - People in Conwy live in a county where Welsh is thriving, and people can participate in all parts of community life in Welsh</p>
Denbighshire	<p>A learning and growing Denbighshire - we want to support the provision of quality learning and training that enables people of all ages to fulfil their potential, both personally and professionally.</p> <p>A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language - we want to be a county where Welsh is a living, thriving language. The county will also maximise its rich cultural heritage and natural assets to support economic prosperity, skills development, and community cohesion.</p>

Flintshire	Education and Skills - Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Engagement and Achievement • Digital Learning Opportunities • Learning Environments • Learning Community Networks • Specialist Educational Provision • Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) • Well-being
Wrexham	Improving Education and Learning (with a focus on secondary education)

* Local authority corporate priorities as provided at the time of the completion of the final GwE Business Plan (2023-2026)

4. GwE Business Plan

Our business plan incorporates how GwE will respond to the impact of post-Covid in the context of education and reflects the current regional and national priorities. Through working with partners and key stakeholders and listening to them, we have identified specific themes to support our aim of ensuring that every pupil in north Wales benefits from provision of the highest possible standard.

This Business Plan has been formally agreed by the Chief Education Officers of each Local Authority, the Joint Committee and the Lead Chief Executive on 24/05/2023.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

WHAT ARE WE AIMING TO ACHIEVE?	
1.	School Improvement - embedding effective school improvement arrangements while implementing the Curriculum for Wales and associated reforms.
2.	Curriculum & Assessment - supporting the 4 purposes of the curriculum, ensuring that all learners progress along their own learning pathway gaining a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences, with equity and excellence at its core.
3.	Developing high-quality teaching and learning - improving the teaching and learning in our schools by supporting and developing practitioners' understanding of pedagogic skills to support the success of all learners through ambitious professional learning.
4.	<p>Leadership - developing inspirational leaders to work collaboratively to support the success of all learners along their own learning pathway through accurate self-evaluation and robust improvement planning and delivery.</p> <p>Continue to develop a self-improving system, in which the education profession have the skills, capacity and ability to continually learn & improve their practice, working towards being learning organisations.</p>
5.	<p>A positive education experience for everyone – committed to excellence, equity and well-being, with learners and staff supported in their wellbeing and resilience, which is essential for improving education outcomes and life chances.</p> <p>Ensure that learners are supported to be healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, within places of learning that are supportive, safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and bullying.</p> <p>Empowering all learners and communities to have strong relationships with education providers, so that we tackle disadvantage and deliver world-class education locally and nationally.</p>
6.	<p>Cymraeg belongs to us all - giving every learner equal access to the language and everyone the opportunity to reach their potential.</p> <p>Encourage the use of Welsh across the education system, as an integral part of Curriculum for Wales, our Cymraeg 2050 ambitions and expanding provision post-16 to study through Welsh and opportunities to learn the language as active and engaged citizens.</p>

7.	Business - ensuring that GwE has strong governance, appropriate and effective school improvement and business structures, that provides positive impact and value for money.
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REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The four purposes is the starting point and aspiration for schools as they realise the new curriculum and support their learners to become:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Our priorities outlined below are aimed to support schools as they work towards those four purposes.

OUR HIGH-LEVEL PRIORITIES

Our regional priorities for improvement are:

OBJECTIVE 1: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Embedding effective school improvement arrangements while implementing the Curriculum for Wales and associated reforms.

Ref.	Priority
1.1	Ensure all schools are supported to evaluate accurately and to deliver robust improvement plans effectively.
1.2	Supporting leaders working collaboratively to promote high standards and aspirations for all [to include quality of teaching and curriculum provision].
1.3	Support leaders in schools to become familiar with the new school improvement guidance and to be confident in implementing actions.
1.4	Strengthen multi agency and 'team around the school' approaches with schools causing concern.
1.5	Strengthen partnership working with Local Authorities.

OBJECTIVE 2: CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

Supporting the 4 purposes of the curriculum, ensuring that all learners progress along their own learning pathway gaining a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences, with equity and excellence at its core.

Ref.	Priority
2.1	Realising Curriculum for Wales.
2.2	Assessment, progression and accountability.

OBJECTIVE 3: DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

Improving the teaching and learning in our schools by supporting and developing practitioners' understanding of pedagogic skills to support the success of all learners through ambitious professional learning.

Ref.	Priority
3.1	Improve Teaching.

OBJECTIVE 4: LEADERSHIP

Developing inspirational leaders to work collaboratively to support the success of all learners along their own learning pathway through accurate self-evaluation and robust improvement planning and delivery.

Continue to develop a self-improving system, in which the education profession have the skills, capacity and ability to continually learn and improve their practice working towards being learning organisations.

Ref.	Priority
4.1	Implement Regional and National Leadership Programmes.

OBJECTIVE 5: A POSITIVE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

Committed to excellence, equity and well-being, with learners and staff supported in their wellbeing and resilience, which is essential for improving education outcomes and life chances.

Ensure that learners are supported to be healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, within places of learning that are supportive, safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and bullying.

Empowering all learners and communities to have strong relationships with education providers, so that we tackle disadvantage and deliver world-class education locally and nationally.

Ref.	Priority
5.1	Support staff in their wellbeing and resilience.
5.2	Support schools to ensure that learners are supported to be healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, within places of learning that are supportive, safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and bullying.
5.3	Support schools to provide equity for all by tackling disadvantage and to have strong relationships with parents/carers and their communities.

OBJECTIVE 6: CYMRAEG BELONGS TO US ALL

Giving every learner equal access to the language and everyone the opportunity to reach their potential.

Encourage the use of Welsh across the education system, as an integral part of Curriculum for Wales, our Cymraeg 2050 ambitions and expanding provision post-16 to study through Welsh and opportunities to learn the language as active and engaged citizens.

Ref.	Priority
6.1	Support schools to plan purposefully in order to support and develop learners' skills and literacy in Welsh in the context of the Curriculum for Wales.
6.2	Promote the learning of the Welsh language and develop the linguistic skills of the workforce.
6.3	Develop the informal use of Welsh through the 'Siarter iaith' and 'Cymraeg Campus'.

OBJECTIVE 7: BUSINESS

Ensuring that GwE has strong governance, appropriate and effective school improvement and business structures, that provides positive impact and value for money.

Ref.	Priority
7.1	Review current operating arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that the regional school improvement service is suitably structured to deliver local, regional and national priorities.

GwE Business Plan 2023-2024

The Business Plan details the activities that will take place during 2023-2024. Each priority outlines how we will contribute to the delivery of Welsh Government's objectives and contributory factors. These priorities are supported by the service's detailed delivery plans, outlining how and when the aspects of each priority will be delivered and setting expectations for the next steps. Also, each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the Head of Service and the Core Lead.

OBJECTIVE 1: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
1.1	Ensure all schools are supported to evaluate accurately and to deliver robust improvement plans effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve leadership at all levels by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Supporting all schools to further hone and strengthen their self-evaluation processes and improvement planning. ◦ Supporting leaders to further develop a culture of collective responsibility within their school. ◦ Ensuring that all SIAs and Core Leads have a clear overview of quality of leadership across their link schools and specifically around self-evaluation, improvement planning and accountability processes. ◦ Ensuring that all SIAs and Core Leads have identified and addressed appropriate support for leadership development within the Support Plan for their link schools and have facilitated relevant professional learning [delivered via universal GwE offer or commissioned as bespoke and targeted support].
1.2	Supporting leaders working collaboratively to promote high standards and aspirations for all [to include quality of teaching and curriculum provision].	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all SIAs and Core Leads support all schools to develop a clear and accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and curriculum provision and progress and how they are positively impacting on standards and progress across regional schools. • Supporting school leaders and staff to ensure that they effectively engage with the professional learning offer for teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment as captured within Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Business Plan and engage with various GwE networks. • Ensuring that all SIAs and Core Leads have identified and addressed appropriate support for improving the priorities identified within the Support Plan for their link schools and have facilitated relevant professional learning [delivered via universal GwE offer or commissioned as bespoke and targeted support].

1.3	Support leaders in schools to become familiar with the new school improvement guidance and to be confident in implementing actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support leaders to make effective use of the guidelines and guidance set out in the School Improvement Guidance and the national resource NR:EI. • Ensure appropriate focus on curriculum development, assessment and progression within cluster and alliance collaboration so that school leaders have an increasing awareness of the 8 contributory factors within the School Improvement Guidance. • Further embed school-to-school collaboration.
1.4	Strengthen multi agency and 'team around the school' approaches with schools causing concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with the Local Authorities, further strengthen and develop the processes for supporting and challenging schools causing concern. • Ensure that all schools in statutory category or which have been identified locally as SCC have access to an agreed comprehensive support plan to help them on their improvement trajectory. • Ensure the support package is effectively delivered in a timely manner and is robustly monitored to ensure impact on standards and provision. • Continue with multi-agency panel for the 3 secondary schools which will be part of the programme.
1.5	Strengthen partnership working with Local Authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Board as the overarching regional strategic group continues to have a cohesive approach to identifying and implementing national, regional and local priorities as identified within the respective business plans. • Further evolve and strengthen the role and focus of the Management Board Task Group. • Local Authorities and GwE to commission a review of current process and practices which could lead to an organisational restructure.

OBJECTIVE 2: CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
2.1	Realising Curriculum for Wales	<p>Continue to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of Curriculum for Wales in schools and PRUS to ensure all practitioners have a deepening knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework. • Support practitioners to develop principles and practice of curriculum design across all schools and settings to meet the mandatory requirements. • collaboration and enable opportunities for schools to share emerging practice • all secondary settings to meet the needs of the Curriculum of Wales for Years 7 and 8 in September 2023, whilst supporting teaching and learning for GCSE and A level in current system.
2.2	Assessment, progression, and accountability	<p>Work in partnership with schools and PRUs across the 3-16 continuum to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage in practice to develop a shared understanding of progression and regular opportunities for professional dialogue within and between schools across the breadth of the curriculum • enable practitioners to develop their understanding of assessment arrangements as an integral part of curriculum design and for the purpose of supporting individual learner progression through identifying, capturing and reflecting on learner progress over time. • gain a better understanding of the purpose, rationale and use of assessment information to inform learning and teaching, as well as wider self-evaluation, improvement, and accountability to various stakeholder as identified in the School Improvement Framework (including reporting to parents/carers) • Support schools, PRUs, clusters and alliances across and beyond the 3-16 continuum to improve transition.

OBJECTIVE 3: DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
3.1	Improve Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support regional leads on Teaching and Learning with developing high quality pedagogy at all levels. • Promote and facilitate cross sector collaboration to ensure consistency of effective teaching practice to support learner transition. • Support schools to effectively engage with enquiry and action research and with the national pedagogy programme. • Support the effective and consistent implementation of formative assessment principles and strategies across and within schools and support schools to implement the key principles of the assessment guidance. • Support schools to enhance and further improve their delivery of literacy, numeracy and MAT. • Continue to support key partners with ITE by building on the CIEREI collaboration with Welsh Government and the School of Educational Sciences, Bangor University. • Provide high quality bespoke support to improve teaching and learning in SCC.

OBJECTIVE 4: LEADERSHIP

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
4.1	Implement Regional and National Leadership Programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate the delivery of all elements of the leadership development pathway, offering a range of national programmes for middle, senior and experienced leaders. • Support LAs with AHDP (NPQH) endorsement processes to ensure they are consistent and robust. • Promote and raise awareness of the national leadership development programmes to ensure a robust recruitment process for future cohorts. • Revise contents of the HLTA programme nationally to align with Welsh Government Priorities. • Deliver a National Coaching & Mentoring Train the Trainer Programme. • Work with the Governor Support Officers from the six LAs to ensure that the requirements of the new School Improvement Guidance are understood and met by providing high quality professional learning opportunities and support for governing bodies on topics including self-evaluation, planning for improvement and guidance on effective governing bodies.

OBJECTIVE 5: A POSITIVE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
5.1	Support staff in their wellbeing and resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that all SIAs and Core Leads adhere to working practices which maintains and promotes the positive wellbeing of leaders and school staff. • To provide appropriate support for both identified individuals and groups of senior leaders that positively impacts their wellbeing. • To promote and develop awareness of a coaching and mentoring culture in schools across the region in order that practitioners demonstrate greater resilience and wellbeing.
5.2	Support schools to ensure that learners are supported to be healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, within places of learning that are supportive, safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools to develop a trauma informed approach leading to a whole school strategy based on trauma informed practice. • Support schools to make effective use of the National 'Teaching and Learning to Support Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners' Resource (SVL) in order to improve the skills of classroom practitioners to deliver effective teaching and learning strategies that support vulnerable learners.
5.3	Support schools to provide equity for all by tackling disadvantage and to have strong relationships with parents/carers and their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification, engagement and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic. • Further develop and implement the national PDG strategy across the region. • Support schools to embed a whole-school approach to family and community engagement. • Encourage schools to develop community partnerships and multi-agency working in order to strengthen family engagement, improve standards and have a positive impact on learning outcomes for those learners from poorer backgrounds.

OBJECTIVE 6: CYMRAEG BELONGS TO US ALL

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
6.1	Support schools to plan purposefully in order to support and develop learners' skills and literacy in Welsh in the context of the Curriculum for Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a professional learning offer for the Welsh Language to support the implementation of Curriculum for Wales (3-16) and strengthen collaboration / transition from primary to secondary sector to ensure progress across the 3-16 education continuum. • Support leaders to plan deliberately for increasing and enriching the provision for the Welsh language • Support and improve the quality of teaching, learning and planning for the Welsh language within the curriculum in schools and PRUs to improve learners' standards and progress. • Provide support to develop the skills in the Welsh language - listening, reading, speaking and writing (including Ein Llais Ni). • Collaborate with Bangor University to provide support for the Welsh language for Initial Teacher Education students and in developing literacy in the Welsh language through intervention programmes.
6.2	Promote the learning of the Welsh language and develop the linguistic skills of the workforce.	<p>In collaboration with the Local Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the language skills of the education workforce to expand the proportion who can teach and work through the medium of Welsh. • Develop, promote and coordinate a Professional Learning Programme to ensure that the education workforce has the opportunity to continually improve their Welsh language skills including the Sabbatical Schemes, the provision of the Cymraeg Cenedlaethol Learning Centre and local provision. • Support schools to promote the benefits of bilingualism and the benefits of Welsh-medium education. • Promote the profile of the Welsh language amongst leaders in implementing the Curriculum for Wales and the Welsh Government target for a million Welsh speakers.
6.3	Develop the informal use of Welsh through the 'Siarter iaith' and 'Cymraeg Campus'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with the Local Authorities continue to develop the informal use of Welsh through the 'Siarter iaith' and 'Cymraeg Campus'. • Ensure that successful and effective practices for developing the informal use of the Welsh language are shared across the region. • Support schools to promote the benefits of bilingualism for the pupils.

OBJECTIVE 7: BUSINESS

Ref.	Priority	Aims & Activities
7.1	Review current operating arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that the regional school improvement service is suitably structured to deliver local, regional and national priorities.	<p>Undertake a review of the current operating arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that the regional school improvement service is suitably structured to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that schools are effectively supported post COVID to address the impact of the pandemic on learners' progress and wellbeing; • ensure that schools are effectively supported to implement the new curriculum and all aspects of the reform journey; • address national expectations for school improvement as outlined in the recently published 'School Improvement Guidance (June 2022)'; and to • build upon the strong foundations of a collaborative way of working that has been established regionally as we move towards a self-improving system.

5. Governance: Monitoring and Evaluation

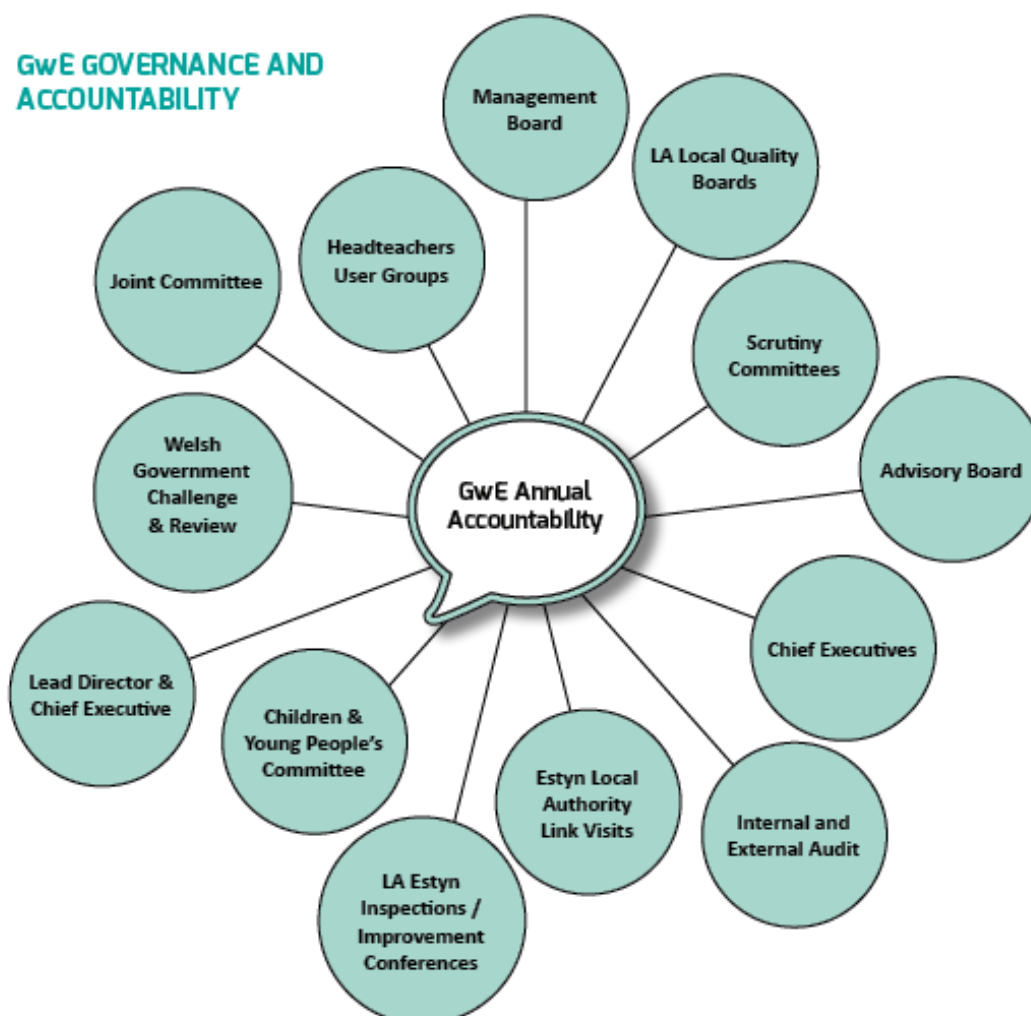
GWE BUSINESS PLANNING FRAMEWORK

There is a clear and robust accountability framework in GwE. The GwE Business Planning Framework that is in place ensures clarity, accountability and strategic coordination in the delivery of the priorities on a local, regional and national level and provides the structure for monitoring progress effectively.

Through our detailed business plans, progress is reported upon quarterly which provides a progress report on:

- Impact against actions and outcomes (including quantitative and qualitative success criteria, and statistical data)
- Issues or new risks identified for the reporting period
- Regional data
- Local Authority data
- Expenditure profile

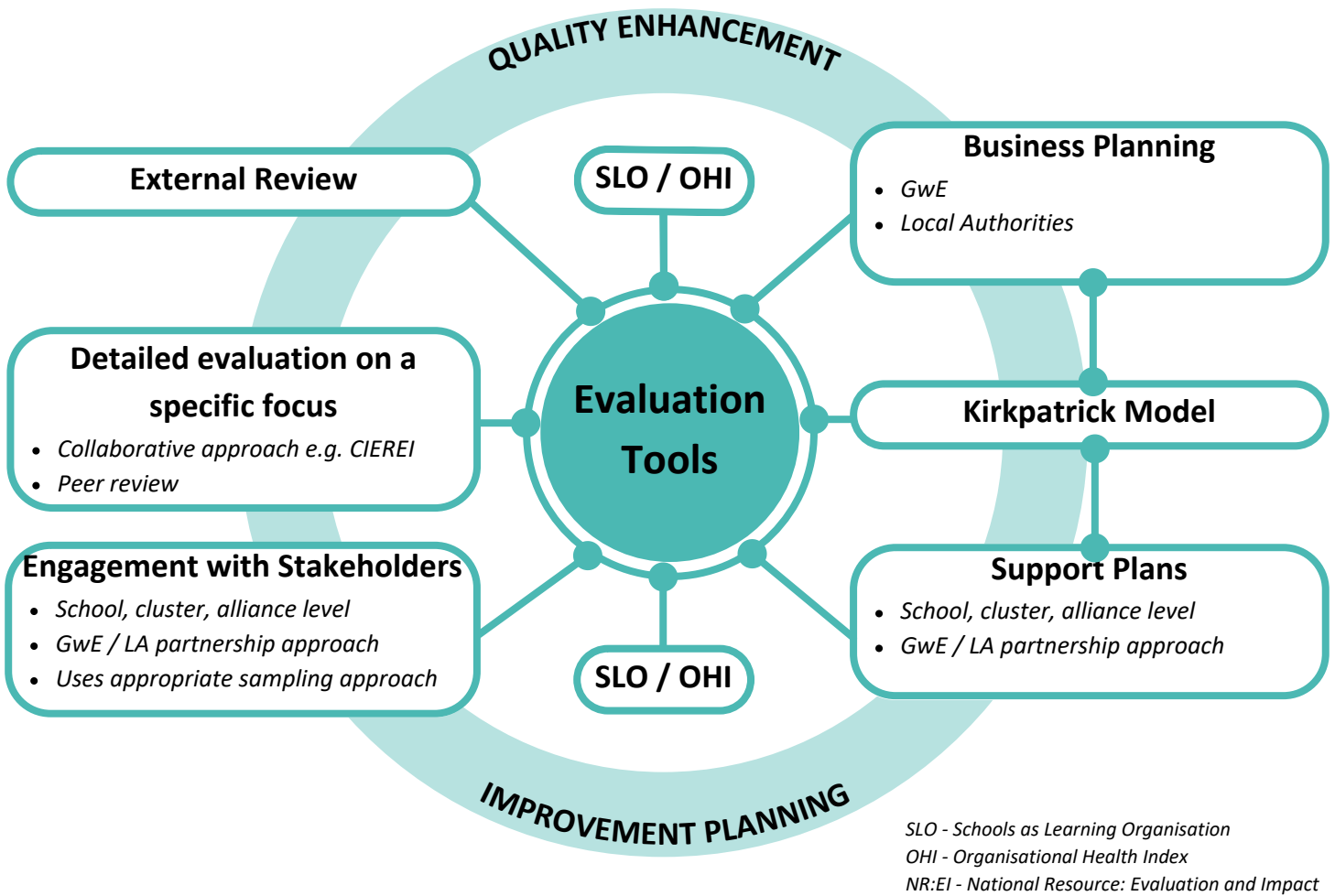
Throughout the year, reports associated with our priority streams within the business plan will be reported through our governance groups. Progress against the regional business plan is reported on a quarterly basis to the Joint Committee. Progress against the Local Authority business plan is reported on a quarterly basis through meetings between GwE and each local authority.



EVALUATION AND IMPACT STRATEGY

GwE have also developed an Evaluation and Impact Strategy so that it can clearly evaluate and capture impact of its work in line with its core school improvement function and to enable it to fully meet the expectations as outlined in the School Improvement Guidance.

The purpose of the strategy is to articulate clearly how GwE will engage in ongoing evaluation processes in line with its commitment to developing a culture of continuous improvement as a learning organisation. The self-evaluation processes will draw upon a range of sources that are both qualitative and quantitative which support schools in working towards the national priorities.



Across North Wales, GwE and the 6 Local Authorities have developed strong and effective collaborative partnerships for school improvement. This enables coherence in the way GwE and the Local Authority capture the impact of all school improvement provision and support offered to schools. Consideration will also be given as to how impact at individual school level and system level will be captured across the region, in the short, medium and longer term.

In line with the recommendation within Successful Futures, GwE will employ a sampling methodology as part of this strategy. Careful planning and consideration will be given to ensure that the sampling approaches are appropriate and purposeful, allowing for coverage of settings, learners and practitioners to form a representative regional sample.

A further aim of the strategy is to ensure that information is shared at timely intervals throughout the year to a wide range of stakeholders, giving confidence and clarity on the quality and impact of the wide range of work undertaken. This strategy will allow transparency to stakeholders and the wider public and demonstrate value for money.

The strategy will also enable GwE and Local Authorities to identify and understand effective practice within its own provision. In implementing national policy, the strategy enables GwE to capture impact of practice at both a local and regional level. In this way, self-evaluation findings will feed into regional and local business planning priorities and inform future national policy where appropriate.

6. Risk Register

The GwE Risk Register is a live document which is kept under regular review. It is presented to the Joint Committee on an annual basis and also when new risks are identified where the Joint Committee needs to be made aware.

There are several risks that have been identified as potential barriers to the successful implementation of the Business Plan priorities. These are:

- Cuts in funding to the GwE Core Budget affect strategic long-term planning.
- Uncertainty regarding grant funding arrangements from WG hampers strategic long-term planning. Significant delays in confirmation of funding levels affect the implementation of the Strategic Business Plan.
- Difficulties in the recruitment and succession planning of Senior Leaders across the region especially Welsh medium.
- Pace of moving deep-rooted issues in secondary schools placed in Estyn Statutory category.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for schools to work on engaging with their original Curriculum for Wales preparations.
- Uncertainty around accountability and performance measures hampering the pace of the Reform Journey especially in the secondary sector
- Uncertainty around what 2027 qualifications will look like is a restrictive factor in secondary schools.
- Coherence and range of Reform Journey and its impact on systemic leadership between WG, middle tier and schools with an increasing level of funding going directly from WG to schools.
- GwE current operating arrangements and staffing structure do not meet Welsh Government or regional direction in going forward.
- Difficulties in recruitment and succession planning within the service as salaries are not competitive with similar organisation or with Headteacher and senior leaders' salaries.
- Implementing the new school improvement guidance.
- Current Union climate.

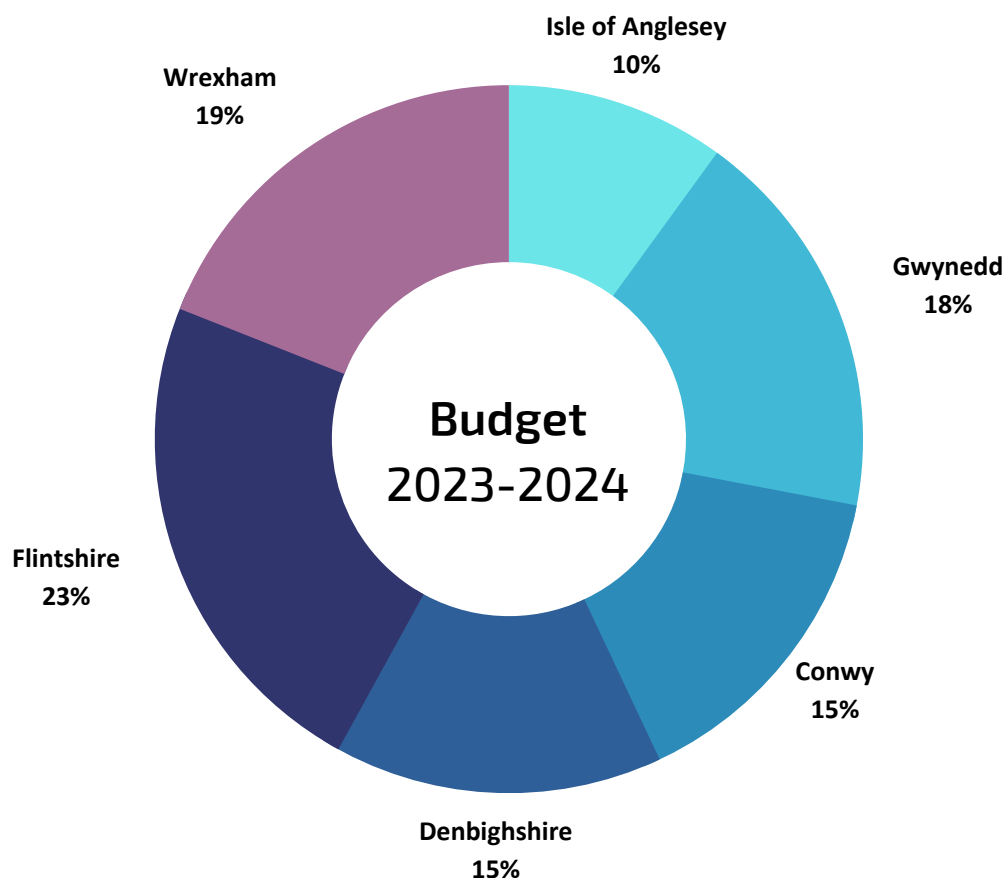
7. GwE Budget & Funding

We like everybody else are living in very difficult financial climate and have to make some difficult decisions. We are grateful for the support of the Chief Executives across the Region and our Elected Members in the Joint Committee for their advice and support in making the best decisions to support our learners and schools.

In 2023-2024 our core budget is £3,924,269.

The local authorities' indicative figures for 2023-2024 are as follows:

BUDGET - 2023-2024		
	£	%
Isle of Anglesey	395,923	10.09%
Gwynedd	687,858	17.53%
Conwy	595,368	15.17%
Denbighshire	608,601	15.51%
Flintshire	894,323	22.79%
Wrexham	742,196	18.91%
TOTAL	3,924,269	100%



This year our Education Improvement Grant will be £27,451,618 (indicative allocation - including match funding). This is a £9.6 million cut on the 2015 budget. At the same time, there has been a 25% increase in costs through introduction of minimum wage, living wage and pension contributions. As we manage these financial challenges, we have continued to increase our delegation rates to schools. GwE retains 3.91% of the EIG to provide support for schools.

		Grant and match	Grant and match	Grant and match
		Grant and match	Cut [£]	Cut [%]
11 Individual Grants	2014/2015	£37,021,296		
EIG	2015/2016	£33,549,764	−£3,471,532	−9.38%
EIG	2016/2017	£31,902,703	−£1,647,061	−4.91%
EIG	2017/2018	£31,672,444	−£230,259	−0.72%
EIG	2018/2019	£29,124,247	−£2,548,197	−8.05%
EIG	2019/2020	£29,064,551	−£59,696	−0.20%
EIG	2020/2021	£28,776,349	−£288,202	−0.99%
EIG	2021/2022	£29,397,227	£620,878	2.16%
EIG	2022/2023	£29,259,041	−£138,186	−0.47%
EIG	2023/2024	£27,451,618	−£1,807,423	−6.18%
		Cumulative	−£9,569,678	−25.8%

8. Additional Supporting Documents

- Detailed Business Plans 2023–2024
- GwE Risk Register
- GwE Annual Report
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans
- Evaluation and Impact Strategy