



Education Department



The purpose of the Education Department is to ensure that Gwynedd's children and young people receive the best education in our schools to enable them to reach the highest standards and to nurture the qualifications and skills that enable them to live and prosper.

Together with the day to day work outlined below, this department leads on the following improvement priority projects:

- Free school meals for primary schools (*New for 2022/23*)(Improvement Priority 2)
- Post-16 Education Provision in Arfon - (Improvement Priority 2)
- Bangor Catchment Area (Improvement Priority 2)
- Cricieth Catchment Area (Improvement Priority 2)
- Meirionnydd Collaboration - (Improvement Priority 2)
- Transforming the provision of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion - (Improvement Priority 2)
- The Gap in Welfare and Attainment of Children and Young People - (Improvement Priority 2)
- Digital Learning Strategy - (Improvement Priority 2)
- Promoting Use of the Welsh language by Children and Young People - (Improvement Priority 5)

SCHOOLS SERVICE

Support for Leadership, Management and Effective School Governance

It is the responsibility of the Education Department to promote leadership, management and the effective governance of our schools by supporting, equipping and holding governing bodies and school management teams accountable. This is done in several different ways depending on the needs of individual schools.

Support is given in terms of leadership and the effective management of our schools via a series of professional programmes that offer a path for professional development of teachers, middle management and senior leadership. This is also done via an incentive programme drafted jointly between the Education Department and Learning and Development for headteachers, management teams and middle managers in schools. In addition, the Education Department seeks to identify opportunities to give leaders valuable experiences to build a resilient organisation.

Support is given by the Education Department to governors by ensuring that they understand their role and act effectively, by giving strategic and practical support to them according to need, advising them appropriately, as well as by providing them with a programme of bespoke training to ensure the effective governance of our schools. The Education Department also has powers to intervene that may be used when a school is not governed appropriately.

Schools Improvement Service

It is the responsibility of the Education Department and GwE, in partnership with our schools, to educate our children, and our schools' results are consistently good. GwE is a schools improvement service, that works on behalf of the six Local Authorities in north Wales, to lead, organise and coordinate improvements in schools' performance.

The partnership between the Education Department and GwE provides our schools with both support and a challenge to improve the quality of classroom learning and teaching, to support leaders to improve the quality of leadership in our schools - all of this to further improve results for our children and young people.

In Gwynedd, there are 80 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, 2 special schools and 2 follow-on schools.

Performance

Schools provide inclusive education for children and young people up to 16 years of age. In Gwynedd, post-16 education is provided in partnership with the colleges and secondary schools in Arfon, by Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai) in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd, and Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn in the Bala area.

Welsh Government has given clear direction to Local Authorities not to publish the educational results, and discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Government regarding the manner in which Education Authorities may be held accountable for their performance in the absence of comparative data on performance across Wales.

Transforming the schools system

Following consultation on the sustainability of the education system in Gwynedd, along with general concerns that the current schools system is not sustainable, the Council's Cabinet adopted the following, fit-for-purpose educational principles that will form the basis for realising the Education Department's vision and develop the organisation to ensure high-quality education for the children and young people of Gwynedd in the twenty-first century, namely:

- A system of viable secondary schools
- No more than two age ranges within the same class in the primary sector

- Approximately 80% of non-contact time for the Headteacher to focus on leadership issues in the primary sector.

Having adopted these principles, this field will become a part of the Department's day-to-day work, as it is anticipated that implementing the principles across the system, during the period of this Council, will not be a swift process. We will proceed cautiously to ensure that the education system can respond to the enormous changes on the horizon, such as changes to the schools inspection procedure (Estyn), along with very significant changes to the curriculum and the organisation of our schools in light of Professor Donaldson's recommendations.

EDUCATION MODERNISATION TEAM

Some of our school buildings are old and are unsuitable to meet the future learning and teaching needs of our children. The purpose of this service is to plan and realise innovative projects to adapt or build new schools for Gwynedd's children and young people to be educated in the best possible learning environment to enable them to thrive.

During the period from 2012-2021, the Council succeeded in investing £73 million to improve the condition and learning environments of the following schools for the benefit of the County's children:

- Ysgol yr Hendre, Caernarfon
- Ysgol OM Edwards, Llanuwchllyn
- Ysgol Craig y Deryn, Llanegryn
- Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn
- Ysgol Bro Llifon, Groeslon
- Ysgol Hafod Lon, Penrhyndeudraeth
- Ysgol Glancegin, Maesgeirchen
- Ysgol Bro Idris, Dolgellau Catchment Area
- Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Bala
- Ysgol y Garnedd and Ysgol y Faenol, Bangor

The Education Modernisation Team is developing viable education provision models that seek to:

- ensure a first-class learning environment for children and staff in Gwynedd schools
- improve the conditions and circumstances for headteachers to enable them to lead and manage schools effectively and efficiently
- ensure the most effective and best use of the Education Department's budget.



ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS SERVICE (ALN) AND INCLUSION

This service supports children and young people with Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion. The ALN Service includes specific areas of learning needs, communication and interaction, vision impairment, hearing and medical/physical impairments.

The service provides early intervention and support that is tailored for each individual pupil through a team of specialist teachers and assistants. The service offers support to schools through the Psychology Service. Every pupil has full access to Gwynedd schools therefore ensuring that every child reaches his or her full potential.

The welfare and inclusion service support schools to promote attendance, positive behaviour and support for children and young people who experience behavioural, emotional and/or social development difficulties. This support is delivered by a team of specialist teachers, welfare officers, school counsellors and specialist assistants.

We ensure that pupils with emotional and behavioural needs are fully included within Gwynedd schools through training, support in the classroom and providing behaviour support service outside mainstream schools. The welfare service promotes attendance by working with pupils, schools and families. Attendance at Gwynedd Schools over the last three years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic has been consistently good.

Although attendance is high and the rate of permanent exclusions is low, the challenge of maintaining and promoting welfare and inclusion is intensifying with an increasing number of pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour. The service will ensure that our schools receive appropriate training and support to meet the challenge. Underlying all of this, the service provides specialist guidance in the field of safeguarding. Specialist training and advice is provided to schools throughout the authority.

WELFARE AND ATTAINMENT GAP

There is concern that some children and young people can be left behind in terms of their educational attainment and welfare as a result of the impact of the lockdown period and the Covid-19 pandemic. In response, every school implements an Accelerated Learning Programme with funding from Welsh Government to respond to the impact of the lockdown period on the welfare and attainment of some specific groups of learners.

THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The Welsh language permeates through all of the Education Department's work and services. In accordance with the new regulations issued by the Welsh Government, we have prepared and consulted on the statutory document, 'Welsh in Education Strategic Plan', which will replace the existing document in September 2022 and have responded fully to the targets of the Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg 2050 - A Million Welsh Speakers' document. The 'Welsh in Education Strategic Plan' sets out clear expectations for the Department and our schools in terms of Welsh as a subject, as a teaching and learning medium, and as a social medium for the next ten years, and through the work programme of the Education Officers, Language Charter Coordinator and Secondary Language Strategy Coordinator and Catchment Area Language Coordinators, the Department supports schools to implement these expectations in all the County's schools.



Gwynedd has led the pioneering work of influencing children's social use of the Welsh language in primary schools through the Welsh Language Charter. The purpose of the Charter is to encourage children to speak Welsh outside the classroom, and to ensure participation from all members of the school community in order to achieve this aim.

Gwynedd is the only county in Wales that has established a Secondary Sector Language Strategy as a continuation of the Language Charter, and both the primary and secondary schools were all eager to see clear continuity with respect to the Language Charter. One fundamental distinction in the context of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy is that it involves the promotion of both formal and informal use of the Welsh language.

The Department also maintains Language Centres that provide intensive Welsh language courses for incomers to enable them to learn Welsh and contribute to Gwynedd's educational and social life. These Centres help our primary and secondary schools to implement the Welsh Language Policy. On 6 July 2021, the Cabinet approved and implemented the new vision of the "Immersion Education

System towards 2032 and beyond”, by investing £1.1 million of Welsh Government Welsh-medium education capital funding to establish new immersion education sites in Tywyn and Bangor, as well as improving existing facilities at Porthmadog. The immersion system in its new guise will come into force in 2022-23.

CATERING AND CLEANING

The purpose of the Catering and Cleaning Service is to provide nutritious and healthy food for the pupils of Gwynedd Schools and to keep educational establishments clean and safe to assist pupils to reach their potential.

In November 2021, it was announced that the Welsh Government intended to provide free school meals to all primary pupils. The Department and the Council greatly welcome this proposal, however this scheme will potentially double the number of primary pupils choosing school dinners, and therefore a number of considerations need to be addressed and we will need to commence the scoping work during 2022/23. This work is included as a project relating to Improvement Priority 2 (Every pupil is given the opportunity to achieve their potential).

SCHOOLS BUSINESS CENTRE

For some time now, there has been considerable concern among head teachers regarding their working conditions, as they have to fulfil a number of different roles; as leaders, managers, teachers and administrators. Without exception, Estyn inspections show that effective leadership, together with adequate resources and time, results in a good education and high standards.

Since September 2019, the Schools Business Centre has been established to develop the support and assistance provided to our schools, to rationalise and share management requirements. The core function of the Schools Business Centre is to provide the SIMS service to primary schools, and there is also a focus on providing service level agreements to primary schools for services such as written and simultaneous translation for schools. There is also a focus on reducing the managerial and administrative workloads of headteachers and teachers.

RESOURCES SERVICE

The purpose of this service is to provide the necessary statutory support for Gwynedd schools to operate on a daily basis. The service includes admissions to schools, staff salaries and contracts, and school transport. It also provides support for schools with finance, human resources, health and safety and information and communication technology. The service also provides support to school Governors.

This service provides the necessary statutory support for Gwynedd schools to operate on a daily basis. There are three specific services, namely:

- School Staff Salaries and Contracts

- Education Data Unit
- Governor Support

The School Staff Salaries and Contracts service ensures that the schools receive a support service of the highest standard in the salaries and contracts field promptly and correctly. This enables the heads and governors to concentrate on our children's education.

The Education Data Unit service provides support to the Department through providing a data and information infrastructure of high quality that drives decisions and performance. The School Admissions Service is also a part of the Education Data Unit.

The Governor Support Service assists Gwynedd school governors to operate effectively by ensuring that they understand their role, by giving strategic and practical support to them according to need, advising them appropriately, as well as by providing them with a programme of bespoke training to ensure the effective governance of our schools. The Education Department also has powers to intervene that may be used when a school is not governed appropriately.

The Resources Service also provides financial, human resources and health and safety support for schools as well as leading on education transport matters.

This Department's work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives

Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

Live in a natural Welsh society

Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.