

Scrutiny Investigation Report on Education Quality

Commissioned by the Cabinet Member – Councillor Siân Gwenllian

Investigation Members

Councillor Liz Saville Roberts (Chair, for the last part of the Investigation)
Councillor Dewi Owen (Chair and member for the first part of the Investigation)
Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd
Councillor Siôn Jones
Councillor Beth Lawton (for the last part of the Investigation)
Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn
Reverend Robert Townsend

Officers

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1. Context

- 1.1 In the Council's Strategic Plan for 2012/13 it was noted that Education Quality was a key intervention area. The Plan noted the importance of giving every child and young person the opportunity to develop fully, and to ensure consistency in the quality of experiences and opportunities offered to them in our schools. This means **closing the gap** between the pupils themselves, between classes within the same school and between one school and the other and to generally raise standards.
- 1.2 It was noted that it was necessary to establish a firm evidence base for key intervention by identifying the size and extent of the 'gap' in Gwynedd. At the request of the Cabinet Member, the Services Scrutiny Committee agreed to support the work by investigating aspects of the field and identify examples of good practice in Wales and beyond.

2. Purpose of the Scrutiny Investigation

- 2.1 The Cabinet member gave a brief to the Scrutiny Investigation to consider the following issues:
- Why did **polarisation** occur in the KS4 performance of schools?
 - Achievement standards in **Mathematics** and the impact of this on the TL2+ indicator
 - Why were the quality standards and **KS3** provision generally robust across all the authority's schools?
 - Foster a fuller understanding of the **performance of pupils receiving FSM** and the degree to which the achievement of this group of learners impacts on KS4 performance
 - The impact of **leadership** on the performance of schools and the way leadership skills are nurtured and developed.

3. Main Activity of the Investigation

- 3.1 A work programme that sought to address the brief was agreed upon. The work was allocated into 4 sections and an outline of these 4 sections was given when updating the Services Scrutiny Committee on 11th April 2013. In summary, the action taken was as follows:
- 3.2 Part 1 – understanding and analysing the data. Investigation members undertook considerable work to understand the field under the leadership of experts in the field, and to become able to analyse data correctly. Following this work, 3 different categories of schools were identified, namely
- Schools where the performance is good
 - School where the performance has / is changing significantly
 - Schools where there is under-performance in the core subjects indicator

- 3.3 Second part – challenging at grass roots level. The second part of the investigation was to challenge and truly understand what is happening at grass roots level. In other words, question those who are affected and take the users / customers' perspective. In order to be able to achieve this element successfully, the Investigation members decided that it was necessary to consult with the following groups in order to identify good practice:
- Head teachers of Gwynedd Secondary Schools
 - School pupils
 - Parents of pupils (by meeting with parent governors)
- 3.4 Third part – independent experts in the field. To underpin the Investigation interviews were held with independent experts in the field of education – especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy. This included Head teachers from outside the county, Head of Welsh Government School Standards Unit and more recently, the new Chief Officer of the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service. They were asked for their views on how to improve the quality of education and ensure consistency, together with challenging them for evidence of having introduced and achieved an improvement in quality.
- 3.5 Fourth part – draw up and submit evidence based recommendations to the Cabinet Leader. The fourth part is submitted in this report, namely to submit recommendations to the Cabinet Member that are based on evidence gathering and challenging different individuals.

N.B. It was also of course timely for the Investigation's work to run parallel with the ESTYN Inspection on the Authority's work. The Investigation received messages and considered the initial conclusions of the Inspection in order to assess to what extent they interweaved with its recommendations.

4. Main Findings of the Investigation

- 4.1 The questions asked by the Cabinet Member have already been noted in 2.1 above. However, having looked at the data and receiving evidence, the Investigation's discussions expanded as members identified related issues which were in their view key in terms of educational quality.
- 4.2 Consequently, the Investigation's main findings are more extensive than the original brief and they are presented here for the Cabinet Member's attention. In terms of order, the following are submitted by noting the main findings with some suggestions on possible activities, notes referring to the sources of the evidence for that finding and the recommendation to the Cabinet Member.

- 4.3 The Investigation appreciates that any action will be a matter for the Cabinet Member, however, it is anxious for the Scrutiny Committee to receive a report back in due course from the Cabinet Member on her response to the recommendations. It is also fair to note, that the Investigation has not answered the specific question regarding free school meals as its findings and recommendations get to grips with the Education System in its entirety. Specifically, on the Free School Meals' leagues, a focus on this may confuse the ambition and complicate the assessment of school standards and results.

A. Leadership in Schools

Findings -

Leadership within school has a direct and far-reaching impact on the quality of education within the school and further support is required to develop this and to further foster school leadership confidence

- Need to clearly outline the Authority's expectation from heads
- Need for School Leadership to establish clear expectations in terms of ambition, encourage staff and pupils, tracking progress (See C below) and early intervention where required
- Need for the CPCP to prepare new headteachers appropriately for practical work and the need to ensure additional training to ensure the development of leadership and management skills
- Need to skill leaders by developing mentoring arrangements and make wider use of strategic heads
- Need to organise specific support for heads and prospective heads
- Need to develop central / department leadership in order that responsibility for performance and standards are totally clear
- Need to enable heads to delegate key leadership responsibilities where appropriate
- Need to look creatively on time-table issues to make the best use of the academic year and stretch pupils and facilitate the procedure for dealing with teachers who cannot meet the requirements of the post
- Need to simplify the proficiency system, emphasising that it is about improvement and the opportunity to improve
- Need to develop the ability to use proficiency arrangements earlier and critically skills of persuasion and influence before arriving at proficiency action
- The Authority requires further Human Resources support for the proficiency system
- Need to recognise the extreme pressures on a head teacher in a small school

Source of Evidence -

Interviews with Dr Brett Pugh, Mr Geraint Rees, Head teachers of County Secondary schools and GwE Chief Officer

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -

Specific proposals should be developed to confirm the critical role of educational leadership in school, for heads, senior management teams and departmental heads, and support work to foster confidence to achieve this role.

B. Mathematics**Findings**

The attainment standards for Mathematics is a matter that truly needs attention and has an impact on the attainment of Gwynedd pupils especially with indicator TL2+.

Numeracy and mathematical skills underpin progress across the whole curriculum and in terms of life and work skills and specific attention should be given to this.

- Need to identify and share county excellence and wider in order to increase expectations via a wider strategy
- Need to develop interest in numeracy skills across the ability range
- Need to teach numeracy (and literacy) across every subject in Primary
- Need to strengthen numeracy skills across all subjects in Primary and Early Secondary before reaching Key Stage 4
- Need to recognise the impact of attainment in Mathematics on other subject also
- Need to encourage and develop alternative/creative methods to teach mathematics that is relevant to real life by introducing teachers to good practice by visits and sharing the most recent teaching methods
- Need to offer additional lessons in the subject that are planned as part of a wider learning plan
- Need to normalise retaining children in school in the pre-examination period in order to prepare them better for examinations
- Need a robust managerial system to support the above
- Need to identify the extent parents pay for private lessons which mean that the true picture is not evident
- Give attention where this is required to offer support to teachers and assistants to strengthen their personal skills in the fields of Literacy and Numeracy

Source of Evidence

Data indicates the significant impact of attainment in Mathematics on TL2+ and the impact of attainment in mathematics on other subjects as well.

Interviews with Dr Brett Pugh, Mr Geraint Rees, Head teachers of County Secondary schools and pupils.

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member

Urgent attention must be given to developing excellent educational methods in the teaching of Mathematics in Primary and Secondary Schools in the county and with other partners

C. Understand Performance and Data

Findings -

The picture in terms of identifying performance and responding to it is too inconsistent across the county

- Need to have a suitable procedure for the purpose of tracking individual pupil attainment at each school (It is not suggested that a rule is set regarding what system however it is expected that the system will enable:-
 - Identifying and tracking the attainments of the child
 - Clarity on responsibilities within the system
 - Tracking systems that highlight improvement pathways for pupils across the ability range
 - Setting targets via different methods
 - Acting on findings at classroom level
 - Understanding of the system amongst children and parents
- Need to give regular detailed attention to the standards of children's work in the classroom and in home work
- Need to empower the internal assessments of schools, especially in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 to ensure consistency and quality
- Need for collaboration between Primary and Secondary in order to facilitate transfer and continuation in developing achievement from one to the other

Source of Evidence -

Interviews with County Secondary Head teachers, Mr Geraint Rees and Huw Foster Evans, GwE Chief Officer

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -

A clear expectation should be set in terms of the achievement tracking system, monitoring guidance and the use made of the information for each school in the county, including in the cross-over from the primary to the secondary sectors

<p>Ch. Raise and Convey Expectations</p> <p>Findings -</p> <p>The Authority has to inspire and raise expectations of what is possible in terms of the achievement of the county's children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for everyone (the Authority, Governors, Leadership and Staff and Parents and Pupils) to shoulder the responsibility for education standards but with clarity about everyone's roles when working towards this • Need to set a higher ambition for the current county target for TL2+ without having an impact on the ambition in other subjects • Need to improve the understanding of parents and pupils in terms of what is done with expectations in the system and for individual pupils • Need to retain the interest of groups of specific pupils in education and not exempt them from the system and give further attention to occupational subjects
<p>Source of Evidence -</p> <p>Interviews with Dr Brett Pugh, Mr Geraint Rees, Head teachers of County Secondary schools and GwE Chief Officer</p>
<p>Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -</p> <p>We should inspire and raise the expectations of the Authority, Governors, staff and pupils on the attainment of the county's children so as to achieve above the targets set for TL2+</p>
<p>D. Polarization in terms of Quality</p> <p>Findings -</p> <p>Polarization within and between Schools throughout the county is an important matter to get to grips with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to recognise that there is evidence of polarization between schools and between subjects • Research required into robust improvement models in terms of the Authority's role and specifically regarding intervention where this is required • Need for school leadership to identify polarization within a school as a key matter to get to grips with in the school • Need to offer support to teachers to be able to get to grips with polarization within schools and subjects and strengthening professional objectivity in internal assessments • Need to widen horizons to learn from other areas, countries and initiatives

Source of Evidence -

Performance data of county schools

Interviews with Parent-governors of 6 schools, Mr Geraint Rees, Head teachers of County Secondary schools and Huw Foster Evans, GwE Chief Officer

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -

The Authority should develop a model of continuous improvement with effective support and challenge to improve schools

Dd The Authority's Role**Findings -**

There is a need to clearly define the Education Authority's role in terms of Education Quality and specifically establish a clear understanding of the link between the Authority and Schools in this field

- The Authority needs to establish a clear role to inspire and support schools to improve
- The Authority needs to set an expected standard in terms of education quality across the county
- Need to establish a clear procedure to support and share good practice to attain the expected standard
- Need for the Authority to undertake an audit of what is good in each school in terms of good practices
- Need to review the terms of reference of head teacher meetings which offer an opportunity to share good practices
- The Authority needs to look at the support offered to school governors soon (see point E below)
- Need to give more evident attention to educational quality and attainment in the work of the Scrutiny Committee, as a matter of procedure
- Need to increase the attention given by the Authority to Self-Evaluations and School Development Plans
- Need to maximise the Human Resources and financial support available to schools
- The Authority needs to encourage and facilitate collaboration between Schools in order to enable improvement
- Need to keep a careful eye on the Council's Service Level Agreement with GwE to ensure that it reflects the desire to improve rather than looking back critically on past performance
- Need to release leaders to lead on the quality of education by looking at the Service Agreement between the Authority and the schools

<p>Source of Evidence -</p> <p>Interviews with Head teachers of County Secondary Schools and Huw Foster Evans, Chief Officer GwE</p>
<p>Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -</p> <p>A broad joint understanding should be highlighted and established on the Authority's role and specifically the relationship with Schools in terms of responsibility for quality and release school leaders to give attention to quality</p>

<p>E. Role of Governors</p>
<p>Findings -</p> <p>There is onerous pressure on governors in the county in terms of their responsibilities with quality and there is a need to improve the support given in order to achieve these responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to support and enable governors to achieve their 'critical friend' role effectively (governors on the whole and Authority representatives on the governing body specifically) • Need to define what is expected from a good governing body, to include – Skilled governors/receive comparative information on performance / independent views / lively system of sub-committees / good clerk • Need to share good practice from governing bodies that operate effectively • Need to improve the current training system for governors and consider new ways of engaging and training, considering, amongst other things, training governors of individual schools together • Need to make wider use of support resources for Governors such as joint meetings of chairs and vice-chairs, Wales governors resources and enable access to other networks • Need to foster the confidence of governing bodies in their role, including empowering them to hold meetings without teachers/head teacher in attendance when appropriate • Need to ensure a clear understanding amongst governors of the Authority's role (see Dd above) • Need to look at the constitutional position of governing bodies eg to deal with disciplinary matters
<p>Source of Evidence -</p> <p>Interviews with Parent-governors in 6 schools, County Heads and Chief Officer of GwE</p>

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -

The type of support given to the role of governors should be looked at again in order to make it more suitable for purpose in the context of the quality programme

F. Contact with Pupils**Findings -**

The Investigation has benefited greatly from listening to the voice of pupils who have offered an important perspective for the discussions. It is necessary to establish a procedure to ensure that the voice of pupils is to be heard clearly in the future.

- Need assurance that the input of School councils is effective and gives an opportunity to offer extensive comments on education quality
- Need to ensure that there are arrangements whereby Governors have the opportunity to listen to the voice of pupils
- A regularly procedure is required in the Authority in order to try and listen to the views of pupils

Source of Evidence -

Sessions with pupils in 6 schools

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member -

A regular procedure should be ensured to bring the voice of pupils on education quality to the attention of governors at their meetings and to the Authority's attention

APPENDIX 1

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION QUALITY INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED TO THE HEADTEACHERS

The Headteachers of six secondary schools were questioned as part of the investigation. Here is a list of the main questions asked:

Questions

1. Can you give a brief presentation on the background of the school and your experience as a Headteacher? What is your vision for the school?
2. The school has performed well / disappointingly over the past few years? What are the reasons for this and how can standards be maintained?
3. Can you elaborate on the good practice – what has worked and what has not worked as well?
4. How do you share good practice in the school? Is there collaboration with other schools?
5. What steps are taken to ensure attendance?
6. What is being done to develop literacy and numeracy across the school?
7. What assistance have you obtained from the Local Authority?
8. Does the fact that there is no sixth form in the school have any influence?
9. What information do you obtain about the performance of pupils – how is this tracked / monitored? Who developed the tracking system? Has the tracking system led to improvement?
10. What finance management systems are in place in the school?
11. Does the demography, the local community, or location of the school have any impact on the achievement standards of the school?

12. Is there a problem regarding attracting and retaining staff?
13. Do any staff teach outside their expertise, and if so, why?
14. What problems are caused by staff teaching outside their expertise, and what assistance do they receive?
15. How are underperforming staff monitored?
16. What part do Governors have to play in improving performance in schools? Can you describe their role in the context of your school?
17. What part do parents play in the development of their children and improving performance in school?
18. What type of relationship exists between the school and parents?
19. How many children study vocational courses in KS4? What effect does this have on the school's GCSE results – i.e. are there any pupils who study vocational courses that do not sit GCSE exams?
20. What is your opinion on using FSM families to measure performance?
21. What effect does rural deprivation have on the school, and on results? Is there rural deprivation that is not reflected in the FSM figures? Does the FSM figure reflect the actual deprivation of the school catchment area?
22. There is a substantial difference between the performance of boys and girls in some subjects. Was there a reason for that? Is deprivation a factor?
23. What is the relationship between the secondary schools and primary schools in your catchment area? Does the standard of the education in the primary schools affect the performance of pupils in secondary school?
24. What is your opinion on the polarization and inconsistency between schools in Gwynedd? How, in your opinion, can education standards be improved in Gwynedd and the polarization and variety in the quality of education in the County reduced?
25. If you had to note three things that would lead to improving the quality of education, what would those three things be?

APPENDIX 2

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION QUALITY INVESTIGATION

OBSERVATIONS AND SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THE HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

The Headteachers of six secondary schools were questioned as part of the investigation. Here is a summary of the main conclusions of the questioning:

General

- A good Headteacher is key to the success of a school. A good Headteacher sets ambition, a vision and motivates.
- A Strategic Headteacher can focus on improving the quality of education by not having to spend time on the administrative activities that arise from day to day.
- More relevant training is required for Headteachers. The NPQH qualification is not enough preparation for being a Headteacher. Training must teach a Headteacher how to run a school as a business, and in terms of finance.
- The relationship between the Governing Body and the management team is all important. There is a duty on the Headteacher to ensure that the governing body challenges and obtains the correct information so they are able to do their work properly.
- A good and challengingly constructive relationship between the Headteacher and teachers can motivate teachers to teach better.
- The quality of education is dependent on completely practical factors and on internal systems in the school to ensure and maintain the quality of education.
- Effective pupil tracking is essential.
- Differences between KS3 and KS4 results because KS3 is an internal assessment.
- Good teachers mean a good education.

- Teachers who have a vision and who inspire get better results.
- Teacher tracking – namely visiting and observing lessons, looking at the marking leads to improvement.
- Teaching unions express concern regarding observation of lessons.
- Standardising the marking and homework processes within the school leads to improvement.
- Need to gain the parents' interest and engage with them effectively. This will encourage parental effort and participation to ensure the success of their children.
- To nurture a good relationship with parents, you must do more than just hold parent-teacher evenings; you must hold activities that make them a part of the community and the school.
- Asking the views of parents about the education in the school is a way of obtaining an understanding of what can be done to improve.
- It is important that parents understand the targets of the pupils, the tracking system and the information given to parents about their children.
- A good relationship between the parents and the school improves attendance levels.
- The school ethos and environment assists with improving attendance.
- Teachers teaching outside their specific subject is problematic.
- Difficult to obtain supply teachers.
- A small school in terms of numbers can mean that the Headteacher and teachers are better acquainted with pupils.
- Schools that have followed BTEC courses get better results – therefore, there is pressure on other schools to follow this procedure to get better results. However, this could be an example of prioritising results to the detriment of the quality of education.
- Some primary schools over-mark pupils. Primary marking should be better reconciled, because pupils can reach the secondary with their attainment standard lower than what it is in reality. This affects the ability of secondary teachers to teach them effectively.

- Pupils must reach the secondary schools with the basic skills - having mastered grammar and times-tables. Lack of mastery in basic literacy and numeracy in the primary affects the standard of learning in the secondary.
- Basing so many school performance measures on free school meal families can mislead, as a change in a small number of children can affect in which family the school is placed. This is particularly true in schools with fewer pupil numbers.
- Current performance measures over-emphasise core subjects at the expense of the other subjects.
- Although Welsh Government initiatives and intervention can be welcomed in the education field, these are increasingly numerous and the speed of change has considerable effect on the workload of teachers and school Headteachers, thus affecting the day to day teaching.
- A school will only succeed to raise and maintain standards through the continuous efforts of the Headteacher, the management team and teachers.

The Education Authority

- The Authority has not provided enough support in terms of providing advice on disciplinary steps, and how to implement an effective disciplinary procedure.
- Training for Headteachers and governors on disciplinary procedures would be useful.
- The Authority could challenge schools better.
- The Authority provides very little support to newly appointed Headteachers. More contact between the Authority and a newly appointed Headteacher would be good.
- CYNNAL is praised, in particular the role of subject advisor. However, possibly there is over-dependency on CYNNAL at the expense of support from the Authority.
- Mathematics is a problem; however, the Authority has not had a strategy to improve this.

Mathematics

- No planning on a strategic and/or regional level in the subject.
- The standard of teaching by an individual teacher is core to the success of pupils in the subject.
- Factors influencing the results of Mathematics include the quality of teaching during the primary education period. Pupils must be versed in basic numeracy principles, e.g. times-tables before reaching the secondary.
- Attracting Mathematics teachers is a problem, in particular in the secondary schools in the rural areas of Gwynedd.
- There is improvement in the attainment standard in Mathematics when the subject is taught in a practical way.
- Observation workshops and after-school Mathematics lessons can improve standards.

Examples of good practice

- If there is a gap between the attainment of boys and girls, creative working with boys e.g. choosing suitable books, more modern novels that are more likely to appeal to boys, could work.
- Cross-departmental pupil tracking.
- Not allowing any department to underachieve – monitoring and intervening early if there is a problem.
- Keeping Year 11 in school until the end of the examination period.
- Originality and flexibility in terms of the timetable, e.g. banding Mathematics and Science together.
- Creating a partnership between primary and secondary schools to develop numeracy and literacy.
- Using 6th form pupils to read with Year 7.
- Holding additional teaching and revision sessions – at the end of the school day and on weekends.

- Collaboration between schools can result in experiences being shared, although the travelling distance between some schools can disrupt the ease of this.
- Improving marking consistency – Management Team scrutinising pupils' books every half-term by selecting a sample from the year. Heads of Department to scrutinise every month.
- Thematic teaching.
- Sampling the pupils' work on a monthly basis.
- Establishing regular and formal procedures that are known to everyone within the school.
- Regular procedure of internal tests and examinations.
- Parent workshops/activities – informal sessions so that the school get to know the parents and for the parents to get to know the school. Better acquaintance of the parents leads to forming a relationship that promotes the parents' contribution to the educational success of their children.

APPENDIX 3

BRIEF FOR THE EDUCATION QUALITY INVESTIGATION MEETING WITH DR BRETT PUGH, WELSH GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STANDARDS UNIT, 8 FEBRUARY 2013

We have requested Brett Pugh to deal with the following, as part of his presentation:-

- Brief presentation outlining his role and the functions of the School Standards Unit.
- Give an overview of performance across Wales (including performance of education authorities and the 4 Education Consortia in Wales).
- In the all Wales context, provide a brief summary of the issues that have been highlighted at a north Wales level. What positive and negative factors have been highlighted in terms of the quality of education in north Wales?
- Brief analysis of the factors that have been highlighted in Gwynedd (referring to the impact and influence of the Welsh Government banding system).
- His view on closing the gap in performance between different children and groups.
- Examples of good practice in schools in Wales that have led to an improvement in performance and attainment and may be of benefit to Gwynedd pupils.
- His opinion on how RSEIS can contribute to raising standards in Gwynedd.

Suggestions of possible questions to ask Dr Brett Pugh

1. His opinion on the role of the local authority in Gwynedd – i.e. how well does the education authority currently perform and what is the likelihood for things to improve?
2. His opinion on what can be done to improve the quality of secondary education in Gwynedd, especially when dealing with the problem of polarization.
3. His view on the authority's resolution to appoint a Strategic Head at Ysgol y Moelwyn/Ysgol y Berwyn.
4. His opinion on the role of governors – what needs to be done to arm governors to enable them to contribute effectively and have ownership of a programme to improve the quality of education in each school.
5. His opinion on the training programme for authority staff.

APPENDIX 4

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTES

8 FEBRUARY 2013

Scrutiny Investigation into Education Quality – Presentation by Dr Brett Pugh, School Standards and Delivery Division

Present

Councillors:- Alwyn Gruffydd, Siôn Wyn Jones, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts and Canon Robert Townsend.

Officers: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commission Service), Vera Jones (Democratic Service Manager), Huw Rowlands (Assistant Performance Improvement Officer) and Glynda O'Brien (Members and Scrutiny Support).

Apology: Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn

Canon Robert Townsend chaired the meeting.

1. PRESENTATION BY DR BRETT PUGH, SCHOOL STANDARDS AND DELIVERY DIVISION

Dr Brett Pugh was welcomed to the meeting and the Chair thanked him for accepting the invitation to give a presentation to the Scrutiny Investigation.

Dr Pugh gave an outline of his career as a learning practitioner for over 20 years and his recent appointment had been through invitation by the Welsh Government's Education Minister to the post of Head of the School Standards and Delivery Division. He explained that the Division had been established as a catalyst to generate ambition to improve outcomes for children 3-16 years old. It supported improvement by focussing on the 'how' of policy implementation rather than the 'what' of policy development. It was noted that the Division had responsibility for sharpening the use of data; strengthening accountability; ensuring consistent sharing of high-impact practice and evaluating policy implementation.

He outlined the role of the Division that would help bring about improved outcomes for pupils in Wales:

(i) Data and analysis

- (a) Analysing performance data and building a shared understanding of the challenges faced by schools.
- (b) Leading the process of national banding of schools and drawing together data sources into a coherent set to be used by consortia and local authorities.
- (c) Leading accountability processes involving data such as the development of school targets and profiles.

(ii) **Planning and capacity**

- (a) Working closely with consortia and local authorities to identify and share high impact practice on a consistent basis.
- (b) Supporting coherent planning an capacity-building focussed on how to raise standards and narrow gaps.
- (c) Ensuring the Improving Schools Plan is delivering core improvement practices across the system by means of a robust performance management programme.

(iii) **Routines and response**

- (a) Leading stock takes with consortia to regularly review progress and be part of the two-way support and challenge with consortia, local authorities and the Welsh Government.
- (b) Carrying out fast-paced reviews to evaluate quality of policy implementation.
- (c) Producing feedback reports on progress in improving outcomes and policy implementation.

Dr Pugh added that 6 Civil Servants together with 6 Head teachers had been seconded (who work 30 days a year) as part of the Division and a stock take was carried out by having sessions of looking at school performances from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 3 / 4. These sessions are followed by actions that are submitted to Council Leaders, Chief Executives, Cabinet Members and Directors of Education.

Reviews were undertaken via conferences with Head teachers and the feedback reports were looked at and capacity reviews undertaken.

In response to a query by a Member regarding poor performances, Dr Pugh explained that he was directly accountable to the Minister of Education and he gave an assurance that he would voice his views if he saw inappropriate situations. If standards did not rise, Dr Pugh was of the opinion that the process had to be changed. From his experience working with a specific school, examples were seen of standards improving by implementing a strict tracking system in Year 7.

Reference was made to performance in reading, mathematics and science by country based on the PISA mean score in 2009.

In response to a comment made by a Member regarding the role of this authority to maximise standards in TL2+ with reference made to a comparison with a school in England that shared the same characteristics as some Welsh schools, Dr Pugh explained that the following factors influenced the performance in England and these had not been part of the system in Wales.

- (1) That the schools in England (North Harrow) had experienced a change in OFSTED inspections that were much stricter than ESTYN in Wales.
- (2) Forensic challenge for schools
- (3) Look at learning methods, working with Department Heads especially Mathematics

Members of the Scrutiny Investigation were referred to primary and secondary school performance in Wales since 2008, noting primary assessments, average performance and performance against the free school meals indicator.

Attention was drawn to the historical performance of pupils who attain level 2 including Welsh/English and Mathematics which was approximately 51% and the Welsh Government's ambition was to increase the percentage to 65% in the future.

Members were guided through the performance graphs for the last 3 years which indicated:

- (a) Comparison for years 2010, 2011 and 2012 by considering the regions of Wales as well as all Wales against the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including Welsh or English and Mathematics. An increase was seen across the regions in 2012.
- (b) Comparison between the authorities of north Wales against the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including Welsh or English and Mathematics. There was an ascending progress over the 3 years.

Comparison of performance of north Wales authorities for 2012 against the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving. A high percentage had excelled on level 2 Welsh First Language with a lower percentage on level 2 in English and level 2 in Mathematics.

At the end of the first year of schools banding:

- 61 out of the 79 Band 4 and 5 schools saw improvements.
- The average Level 2 including Welsh/English and Mathematics for Band 4 schools moved from 41.7% in 2011 to 46.5% in 2012.
- The average Level 2 including Welsh/English and Mathematics for Band 5 schools moved from 36.0% in 2011 to 41.8% in 2012.
- In contrast only 31 of the 80 Bands 1 and 2 schools made improvements.

Therefore, there was a need to raise ambition.

There had been significant progress in Bands 4 and 5 throughout the country in the number of 15 year old pupils who achieved TL2 including Welsh first Language /English and Mathematics between 2011 and 2012.

The priority of the Education Minister was improve performance in literacy, numeracy and pupils' attainment in deprived areas.

From his experience in education and through visits to schools, Dr Pugh highlighted the following issues for consideration:

- (a) In terms of literacy, the need to work closely and hold reading tests with 7/8 year old pupils was stressed in order to develop their reading attainment. In his experience as a Director of Education in Newport, evidence was seen of an increase in the reading attainment of pupils in key Stage 4 having targeted pupils in the primary sector.
- (b) Shortcomings in pupils not knowing their tables and as a result this contributed to an underperformance in Mathematics.
- (c) An effective partnership should be built for teachers to:

- develop literacy and numeracy;
- continuous professional development;
- leadership;
- information technology.

(ch) The effective development of numeracy in primary schools should be ensured. He outlined excellent examples at Ysgol Cae Top, Bangor where 7 year old pupils understood the concept of fractions. The importance of presenting an aspect of Mathematics was emphasised at the start of a child's school career in the Foundation Phase by combining it with practical activities such as:

- weighing in a cookery lesson
- introducing measurements by planning to build a house.

In terms of the secondary sector, competent teachers should be chosen for different sets. Good examples were seen at Ysgol David Hughes. It would also be beneficial to contact John Summers Secondary School, Flint to ascertain the good practice they undertook in Mathematics lessons.

- (d) Schools should be asked to outline their good practices as well as ask them what is done in specific response to underperformance in Mathematics in strategic planning; ask how they collaborate with parents.
- (dd) Schemes such as 'Parents and Pupils Together' pamphlets for parents to develop mathematical skills with their children.
- (e) Contact Karen Evans, Director of Education in Denbighshire to invite her to share experiences and good practices in their county.
- (f) That tracking the performance of each pupil was important in order to try and improve performance in mathematics together with ensuring suitable learning techniques.
- (ff) The need to be relentless with staff who are not up to standard to support pupils.
- (g) Use all the information to be pro-active; look at the systems of academy schools.
- (h) Look at practices where progress is seen in the attainment of level 2 pupils such as the standards in Tower Hamlets, England. Whilst accepting that the area was not flourishing in terms of the economy, Dr Pugh was of the opinion that the teachers had the correct focus to support pupils and get good results. He was of the view that the size of classes of 15 or less influenced attainment. It was noted that there was a great deal of useful international information available specifically regarding the performance of private schools.
- (i) That 10 secondary schools out of the 14 in Gwynedd within the banding system were to be praised, however, the performance of 4 schools had deteriorated which of course was a matter of concern.
- (j) The head teachers of secondary schools with a lower number should have a thorough knowledge of pupils and know them well. It was added that small schools were more changeable and there was no volatility in the banding

system. There was strength in the model of appointing a Strategic Head for the Ysgol y Moelwyn and Ysgol y Berwyn and that it was a way to move forward and be much more systematic. It would be much better to attract a good Head teacher for two schools and to implement a strategic plan in order to improve the quality of education.

- (k) It was necessary to ensure that good practices were spread to schools; identify competent school leaders; present small grants to support schools. Reference was made to the challenge in Manchester under leadership of Professor Mel Ainscow where significant funding had been invested to improve the results of underperforming schools, improve the attainment of deprived pupils and to create a school of exceptional quality. Schools should be encouraged to apply for grants in order that they may expand their school management teams.

Whilst accepting and agreeing with the above points, the Members of the Investigation noted that some created difficulties:

- (i) It was difficult to recruit Mathematics teachers who were experts in their subject.
- (ii) It was difficult to dismiss teachers who were not up to standard because of employment regulations etc.
- (iii) Whilst accepting that a system of appointing Strategic Heads for two schools would work successfully in towns, there was a fair distance to travel between secondary schools in Gwynedd and therefore it was difficult to implement this effectively.
- (iv) That there were too many changes in education policies and procedures by the Welsh Government compared with other countries that are left alone such as Finland where schools perform well.

To conclude, following a request to Dr Pugh from his experience of interviewing Head teachers /teachers and school visits, to outline three recommendations that would in his view be valuable in terms of implementation, he stated the following:

- (1) Build confidence in teachers in the primary sector to be good numeracy teachers.
- (2) Nurture the ability to develop leadership by middle managers to Heads.
- (3) Have an aspiration to move from what is good in Wales i.e. have an attainment level of more than 85%.

He added by noting that it would be an idea for the Scrutiny Investigation, stemming from the results of the investigation to suggest a model to the Education Cabinet Member as a starting point for the future.

Reference and further research

Professor Ben Levin – Toronto University : <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/magazines/features/ben-levin-on-leadership/>

Michael Fullan: Educational Change:
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/w/x/wxh139/Fullan.htm>

Robert Hill: Role of the Local Authority as a commissioning authority

APPENDIX 5

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTES

26 MARCH 2013

Scrutiny Investigation into Education Quality – Presentation by Mr Geraint Rees, Acting Head of Michaelston College and Glyn Derw High School Federation, Ely, Cardiff.

Present

Councillors:- Alwyn Gruffydd, Beth Lawton, Liz Saville Roberts and Dyfrig Siencyn.

Officers: Huw Rowlands (Assistant Performance Improvement Officer) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apology: Reverend Robert Townsend

Mr Geraint Rees was welcomed to the meeting by Cllr. Liz Saville Roberts and she thanked him for agreeing to give a presentation to the Scrutiny Investigation.

He gave an outline of his career background and noted that he had been a learning practitioner for 27 years in various contexts in Kenya, in a prison, schools and further education colleges. He was the initial head of Ysgol Plasmawr, Cardiff for 10 years and since 2011 was Head of the Ely Secondary Federation (Michaelston College and Glyn Derw High School, Ely, Cardiff).

He was seconded to the County as a senior officer in the Education Department for 3 years and to the Assembly Government to work on drafting the Welsh Language Education Strategy for six months.

In terms of the population, approximately 35,000 lived on the Council estate in Ely which was a very deprived community with social problems and many children suffered bereavements regularly.

It was resolved to bring Michaelston College and Glyn Derw School together because of the deterioration in the education standards of both schools. The challenge for Geraint Rees as a Head was to raise the standards in schools where the free school meals indicator was 49% and 37%. In terms of Key Stage 4 results, in the 1990s approximately 10-15% of the pupils managed to attain level 2. Throughout the 2000's 30-35% was adhered to with approximately 15-20% attaining level 2 including English and Mathematics. 20-25% disappeared from education, training and employment. School attendance throughout the year was approximately 80% during the same period.

Going through a process of closing the above two schools four years ago and unifying them as a federal college, and school was a total transformation and both Management Teams left the schools, however, there were no changes in the staff. There were approximately 700 pupils in one school with a little less than 600 in the other. 75 teachers, 25 assistants and 9 administrators were employed in the above

schools. The distance between the school was approximately 2½ miles which meant ten minutes by car.

In this case, Mr Geraint Rees was of the opinion that polarization occurred as the social order polarized society especially in populated areas (the rich in one community and the poor in another) and schools then profited or suffered due to this. He was of the view that people were too willing to accept low expectations and believed that that was the norm. ESTYN had also been too ready to accept the situation. It was too easy to accept and use deprivation as an excuse for failure.

Why were the quality standards and Key Stage 3 provision generally robust across all the authority's schools? The Head explained that staff had to understand KS3 levels and had to be encouraged to mark according to the correct standards and to try and find a baseline.

It was explained how the problem had been tackled in Ely with both schools, following an ESTYN inspection, categorised as "one with significant shortcomings" and the other as "being monitored". The aim in the first year, namely 2011/2012, was to improve attendance to 86% and improve the results of KS4 by specifying very clear targets and the need to increase results from 35% to over 50% for level 2. In addition, it was required to go from 19% to 30% in level 2 including English and Mathematics.

The actions taken to raise standards were outlined:

- Change expectations
- Tracking, tutoring, targeting, create competition
- Challenge, support and training for staff
- Use every possible support as every partner counts – TAF, Youth Service, local companies
- Collaborate with local services such as doctors, dentists to ensure appointments outside school hours to increase attendance.

In terms of expectations, it was explained to staff that the results for Level 2 had to be increased urgently and they were given targets to reach 50% by the summer, 60% by the following summer and 70% in the third year. 62% was attained in one turn with 32% achieving level 2+ including English and Mathematics. As a result the majority of the staff had also increased their pride. Both schools had responded to the expectations differently and an element of competition was created between them which assisted to raise standards.

In response to a query regarding how staff were inspired to change expectations, the Head explained that setting targets created a feeling that they were worth aiming towards. There was no excuse that poverty meant failure.

In the context of attendance, there was an improvement of 93% by now and the attendance score for every pupil was posted in a public place on notice boards. If a pupil was under 86%, then the Welfare Officer would deal with the matter. There was a focus, and hard work was undertaken with pupils between 90-94% in order to move them up to 95%. The children were awarded by, for example, holding and attending the school's annual Prom, going on trips etc.

Practices in the schools were changed with evening learning and study weekends at the Urdd Centre.

It was noted that it was important that every pupil counted and there should be intervention and there was value in the tracking system in order to:

- Know where we are
- To know every child
- Target every child – who should be targeted and who is borderline
- Target every group of children

In addition, Year 11 pupils were tracked every fortnight and staff encouraged to do this by buying cakes for them on a Friday afternoon. The Head outlined the tracking system where every subject had a different meaning with the colours – green on target, orange not as good and red not good at all. 25 pupils is the highest number of pupils taught by each teacher.

The Head was certain that the tracking system had changed the situation in the schools and he was of the view that it had created a good working relationship between teachers and pupils. Photographs of the pupils were shown on the notice board in the school's main entrance to show their attainment and in the opinion of the Head this encouraged them to work harder towards their targets.

Therefore, the tracking system raised a desire to learn amongst the pupils. A letter was sent to the parents of those pupils who were on red giving suggestions for change and often these pupils did change,

A C Grade was the highest grade ever to be achieved in both schools and the head was of the opinion that they had to move to get A-C grades and get pupils to apply for Universities.

The Head was of the view that there was potential for leaders within the Federation Management Team of both schools and there should be more turnover in order that schools can make a difference to poor children. The Management Team had the ability to proceed and improve and maintain the school if Mr Geraint Rees had to move on to another project.

The Next Steps

He expanded on the next steps for the schools, namely:

(i) Key Stage 3

Amend the curriculum in Year 7 to include:

Literacy – English, Geography, History and Religious Education
Numeracy – Science, Mathematics, ITC
and Social Skills – Technology, Music, Drama, Art, Welsh and French

and the above occurs for all in Year 7, half the year in Year 8 and then consideration in Year 9.

(ii) Development of Training

By:

- Support and challenge
- Promoting good practice

- Monday afternoons – the children were sent home an hour earlier on Monday afternoons during the summer term in order to hold 2½ hours of training to raise standards for all of the staff in a local hotel. An internal training plan is created for the school and an external person is used if there is no internal person available. The Head felt that there was no need to buy training in from a Consortium as the needs of each school were unique and he had good persons internally to provide training.

(iii) Staffing Structures

Change the roles of teaching assistants to lead in the following 3 categories:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Behaviour or other specialism

In terms of monitoring staff, lessons were observed (10-15 classes a day for approximately an hour and a half) and they had to be clear what improvements were required by each member of staff.

Where will the above schools be in 2014?

The Head trusted that the following would be seen:

- Level 2 -70%
- Level 2 and English and Mathematics – 40%
- Attendance - 94%.
- Pupils sent to University – target 20 (3-4 per annum 2010-2012)
- NEET down from 20% TO 10%.

To conclude, in response to general questions the following points were highlighted:

- That support from parents was limited. Approximately 15 parents used to attend the Parents Evening and by now approximately 40 attend each time
- A dialogue was held with the community in the local shops
- That exclusions had decreased from 950 to approximately 700 and it was hoped that the number would be 400
- It was expected that every Head would be aware of the Assembly Government's frameworks and if the Heads did not tackle this now it was anticipated that the staff would not have the resources to achieve the requirements
- Need to ensure that there was freedom to move the curriculum forward,
- The day to day problems had to be identified and three subjects prioritised (literacy, numeracy and social skills) with staff committed to literacy
- Collaboration between schools was a good idea. « Schools can even be twinned across local authorities e.g. Powys and Ceredigion.

How we can work together to improve standards

- (i) By undertaking a full audit of every school and good practice and get individuals to model this
- (ii) Hold training for staff

Reference and further research:

The Teacher in Education, Mel Ainscow – Manchester University (developed a model for the organisation of 8 schools)

Leading Aspect model – a scheme presenting what you do really well (identifying good practice). Individual comes in to see, approve in an on-line catalogue, once registered 4 days training per annum will be offered). An authority can create a Leading Aspect itself and it would be a way of promoting good practice in Welsh in terms of language.

Research by Professor John Hattie, Auckland University – create a league of things that work with a chart summarising everything.

APPENDIX 6

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION QUALITY INVESTIGATION

OBSERVATIONS AND SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM PARENT-GOVERNORS MEETINGS

1. The Authority was slow to intervene and gave support when teachers were ill for long periods. This was especially true when it appeared that a teacher had deliberately timed his/her illness in order to increase time off work, e.g. become ill and improve a few days prior to the Summer holidays and become ill again early in the Autumn Term.
2. A poor teacher meant a poor education.
3. Even experienced Governors found it difficult to challenge the Head teacher.
4. No consistency in the roles of the Governors and how they operated. This varied from school to school and it appeared that there were no guidelines in place whereby the Authority could observe or standardise activities. This was also true in terms of what information was shared, when and by whom. Some schools gave a great deal of information to Governors, others did not.
5. Good practice within governing bodies was not shared sufficiently.
6. Difficult to have a convenient time to meet with the teachers.
7. Meetings needed without the teachers and Head teacher present.
8. An environment was required whereby governors could operate and challenge and be critical friends.
9. Was there a need to re-consider the governor's role? Was a governing body with lay members the best way of ensuring that a school acted effectively?
10. No feeling that the governing body gave a strategic lead for the school. Too much of a tendency for governors to be passive and agree with what was placed before them.

11. Welsh Governors to 'support the effective governing of every school in Wales with professional and personal support to every school governor'. No evidence to indicate that the Governors of Wales managed to achieve this.
12. Was there a need to improve the Clerk's role - e.g. an operational Clerk at Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen that had made a difference?
13. Not much evidence of Head teachers arming governors in order that they may act effectively. Indeed, there was a feeling that Head teachers preferred to have governors who acted passively rather than actively.
14. Report by the National Audit Office stating that one of the main reasons for failure in schools was weak governing. Do the governors understand their role correctly? Does the local education authority promote and give sufficient importance to the role. There was evidence of schools in Gwynedd failing – however it was evident that the governing bodies had not intervened, despite evidence of continual failure in some cases.
15. One group of governors expressed total desperation due to the lack of understanding of their role and they saw it as having no purpose and were unable to achieve.
16. Need to improve communication between the Head teachers and the governors and between governors' sub-meetings.
17. Data was swamping and drowning the majority of governors – in terms of bulk and complexity. Lack of understanding and guidance with the data was leading to an inability to be able to challenge confidently.
18. Governors received data about their own schools, however, seldom did they get a picture of the school's performance compared with other Gwynedd schools. Bearing in mind that there were only 14 secondary schools in Gwynedd, this would not be too difficult a task.

APPENDIX 7

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION QUALITY INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF CLYWED WHEN QUESTIONING PUPILS

CLYWED (Bontnewydd Home) questioned Year 11 pupils in the 6 schools who were part of the investigation into the quality of education, except for Ysgol Eifionydd.

For various reasons, it was not possible to make arrangements to question Year 11 at Ysgol Eifionydd, and Year 11 pupils at Ysgol y Berwyn were questioned in their place. Ysgol y Berwyn is in a category similar to Ysgol Eifionydd, a school that has shown an improvement, therefore it is unlikely that this has impaired on the conclusions in any way.

The same questions were asked to the pupils of the 6 schools in order to ensure consistency in the questions.

MAIN FINDINGS

What makes a good education?

- Good teachers. Usually good teachers listen, are organised and maintain interest and enthusiasm.
- Consistency in terms of teachers
- School size – a school that is not too large is advantageous and promotes recognition between teachers and pupils
- Having a sixth form is beneficial to the school
- A happy school – more than just formal education.
- Order in the classroom – not sitting with friends leads to better concentration
- An organised school with procedures in place in order to ensure that the pupils achieve.
- Lessons and after-school clubs of assistance to raise standards
- Respect between the teachers and pupils

What has an impact on the quality of education?

- Teachers who are about to retire usually underperform and have lost interest in their subject
- Teachers marking work too generously. Then finding out that it is too late as the actual achievement standard is not good enough for GCSE.
- The poor performance of some departments lead to private lessons that mean better results than the education standard of the school merits.
- Teachers teaching a subject that it different to their core subject.
- More difficult for a weak school to retain good teachers – vicious circle.
- Additional lessons after school can be good but if the teacher is a poor teacher anyway giving additional lessons will not necessarily mean that they will be beneficial.

Mathematics

- Mathematics is a difficult subject.
- More emphasis needed on the basic principles.
- The basic principles have to be understood or there will never be an understanding.
- Mathematics is taught in a boring way.
- Mathematics need to be streamed in other subjects.
- Understand the value of Mathematics in the real world and make it more practical.
- Afraid to ask for help and say that they do not understand.
- Spending more time learning Mathematics is a good thing.
- Improving skills in Mathematics in Primary.
- Too many changes in teachers lead to different teaching methods and complexity.
- The ability of pupils within a class can vary greatly. Teachers need to understand this and tailor the lessons to the pupils' range of abilities.

CONCLUSION

Questioning the pupils have not given us conclusions that are basically different to those the investigation has already learnt from the Head teachers, Parent-governors and experts in the field.

APPENDIX 8

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

QUALITY OF EDUCATION SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR MR HUW FOSTER EVANS, GwE's CHIEF OFFICER

Purpose of the Meeting

To interview Huw Foster Evans, GwE's Chief Officer, to understand GwE's function and vision, and the implications of the change from CYNNAL's service.

Brief prepared by Siân Gwenllïan

- (i) Why did polarisation occur in the KS4 performance of schools?
 - (ii) Achievement standards in Mathematics and the impact of this on the TL2+ indicator (a child must gain 5 A*-C grades including language and mathematics) - an indicator that the Minister for Education insists that must improve over the next three years.
 - (iii) Why is the KS3 standards and provision generally robust across all the authority's schools?
 - (iv) Nurture a fuller understanding of the performance of pupils receiving free school meals and the degree the achievement of the groups of learners has an impact on KS4
 - (v) The relevance of the free school meals indicator to identify rural deprivation
1. Explain GwE's function and structure. How is GwE different to CYNNAL?
 2. What is your vision for GwE?
 3. What is the rationale for abolishing CYNNAL and establishing GwE?
 4. What will GwE do that is different and better than CYNNAL?
 5. How do GwE's resources and staffing levels compare to CYNNAL's?
 6. Does GwE have sufficient resources and capacity to be able to assist schools to improve as well as to monitor and challenge?
 7. As GwE will operate across North Wales, while CYNNAL was restricted to North West Wales, will this mean that Gwynedd's schools are less central to the service?
 8. What is the relationship between GwE and the North Wales Consortium?
 9. A recent ESTYN inspection (March 2013), on Gwynedd's education service, recommended:
 - Raising Key Stage 4 standards by more robust targeting of underperforming departments in secondary schools that have poor performance levels.
 - Monitor and challenge each school and use all the powers available to the authority to improve performance and management in underperforming schools.

What contribution will GwE make to the achievement of the above?

10. How will GwE ensure the continuity of a cross-curricular Welsh language service bearing in mind that not all officers within GwE speak Welsh?

11. What constitutes good education?

12. How can education in Gwynedd and North Wales be improved?

APPENDIX 9

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTES

INTERVIEW WITH MR HUW FOSTER EVANS, CHIEF OFFICER, GwE (Regional School Effectiveness & Improvement Service for North Wales)

5 September 2013

Present: Councillors Beth Lawton, Siôn Wyn Jones, Liz Saville Roberts and Dyfrig Siencyn.

Officers: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commission Service), Huw Rowlands (Assistant Performance Improvement Officer), Glynda O'Brien (Members and Scrutiny Support Officer)

Mr Huw Foster Evans was welcomed and he was thanked for agreeing to meet the members of the Quality of Education Scrutiny Investigation by Councillor Liz Saville Roberts. He was congratulated on his appointment as the Chief Officer of the new body, GwE. She explained that the purpose of the investigation, in accordance with the request from the Cabinet Member for Education, was to ascertain:

- (i) Why did polarisation occur in the KS4 performance of schools?
- (ii) Achievement standards in Mathematics and the impact of this on the TL2+ indicator
- (iii) Why were the quality standards and KS3 provision generally robust across all the authority's schools?
- (iv) Nurture a fuller understanding of the performance of pupils receiving free school meals and the degree in which the achievement of the groups of learners has an impact on KS4
- (v) The relevance of the free school meals indicator to identify rural deprivation
- (vi) The impact of leadership on the performance of schools and the way leadership skills are nurtured and developed.

1. GwE's Function

Mr Evans thanked the Members for the opportunity to meet them, and emphasised that as he had only been in post for three days that he would attempt to answer their questions to the best of his ability. Mr Evans explained that GwE was an arms-length body of the North Wales Consortium which had been commissioned by six authorities (Conwy, Denbigh, Flint, Gwynedd, Anglesey and Wrexham) to improve schools.

2. North Wales Consortium

These six authorities collaborate as the North Wales Consortium, which is an expression of the authorities' desire to undertake their work while respecting local culture, language and

accountability. Within the Consortium a strategic group has been established which includes the six North Wales Directors of Education and Anwen Williams as the Strategic Coordinator. Six sub-groups have been established within the Consortium with each of the Directors of Education leading the specific groups:

- Performance and Sustainability Sub-group
- Schools Effectiveness Sub-group
- Welfare and Partnerships Sub-group
- Finance and Resources Sub-group
- ITC and Data Sub-group
- Welsh Medium and Building Inclusivity Sub-group (under the leadership of Mr Dewi Jones, Head of Education, Gwynedd Council)

3. Service Level Agreement

A service level agreement had been established between the six authorities and GwE, effective between April 2013 and March 2014, which is identical for the six authorities. According to the formula, Gwynedd will pay 18% of the cost of funding the service.

The agreement prescribes in detail the service that GwE must provide, and therefore its functions are fairly restricted. When the agreement is renewed, there will be another opportunity to discuss the nature of GwE's services, following the lessons learnt from the experiences of the service's first year.

4. GwE's Role and Structure

GwE's role will be to monitor, challenge, intervene if required, and support schools, and it was emphasised that the six authorities will all have different aspirations. It was further emphasised that GwE is different to CYNNAL, and Mr Evans' personal feeling was that the level of the challenge had increased, and that there would be more targeting, supporting and intervention in schools where necessary in order to work in partnership with schools and raise the attainment level of pupils. There would be no universal support, and this could be a cause for concern. GwE would therefore need to encourage and increase the schools' abilities to bring about change for themselves.

GwE will offer a service to 466 schools with a budget of £3.5m, and a structure of 30 System Leaders located in the administrative centres for the following regions. It was noted that 19 out of the 30 System Leaders were Welsh speakers, with the original agreement stating that 16 must be bilingual. It was added that the recruitment and language policy depended on the operational location, which would be one of the following centres:

- Anglesey and Gwynedd
- Conwy and Denbighshire
- Wrexham and Flint

The six authorities had provided a budget of £250,000 for additional support for schools that required it, and it must be ensured that the funding was spent in a balanced manner, such as employing an individual with a successful track-record to work on a specific brief with schools.

Three Senior System Leaders had been appointed, acting as the Chief Officer's deputies. Mr Elfyn Vaughan Jones had been appointed Senior System Leader for Gwynedd and Anglesey, with 11 System Leaders to assist him.

In accordance with the service level agreement, each school will receive three monitoring visits (6 working days for each school through visits, preparation of reports, etc.) by the System Leaders, which corresponds to 55% of GwE services. It was further explained that if a school has been categorised by ESTYN as requiring special measures, that school would qualify for additional support from GwE. It was noted that approximately 88% of the service's time had been allocated, with the remaining percentage to be shared to deal with pre-inspection visits.

Mr Evans noted that ESTYN had consulted over the summer period with local education authorities regarding changing the inspection cycle. Under the current arrangements, schools were inspected every six years, and the theme of the consultation was to develop a more flexible risk-based system, which would mean inevitably that schools must be ready for an inspection at all times.

In relation to the schools banding system, it was confirmed that the Welsh Government's Standards Unit was driving this agenda, not ESTYN.

In response to an enquiry regarding the targeting of schools on the basis of risk, Mr Evans noted that the statutory role for schools remained with the local education authority, and that GwE would categorise schools, and report back on their performance to the local authority. It was emphasised that the six Directors of Education had the ultimate power to intervene in Governing Bodies. GwE would report to governors, and if the governing body did not accept a particular judgement, then further discussions would be held with the local education authority. Assurance was given that the Senior System Leader for Anglesey and Gwynedd would meet regularly with the local education authority team to discuss findings.

Further explanation was given on this term's process, to request Headteachers to provide self-evaluations of their latest outcomes for 2013, and to ascertain whether they have identified priorities. It was emphasised that challenging was essential, and therefore Headteachers' performance management must include target setting (as part of the three visits), to be reviewed by the governors. Directors of Education would have the right to see copies of the performance management targets of each Headteacher, and ESTYN would also be entitled to request them. It was felt that setting targets was a more powerful tool as it related to individuals and to Headteachers' salaries. It was noted that the local authority would deal with any instances of underperformance by Headteachers.

The Members of the Investigation felt that the link with governors regarding performance management was weak and that it should be strengthened. In response, Mr Evans said that it was not yet clear how the System Leaders Team would report on performance to the Governing Boards, and in his opinion this link was crucial to improving schools. Discussions

must be held with the System Leaders to ascertain their response in this respect. From GwE's perspective, it was felt that a formal report should be submitted to the full governing body and given due attention, and that the Chair of the governing body should prioritise this report. If a governing body was seen to be underperforming, then GwE could commission work with the governors.

It was noted that the recruitment of Headteachers was a problem as there was no incentive to undertake the post from the perspective of the difference in salary between Deputies / teachers considering the additional responsibilities of Headteachers.

5. Attainment Standards in Mathematics

In the context of the Quality of Education Scrutiny Investigation, reference was made to the concern regarding standards of attainment in Mathematics and its impact on the TL2+ indicator. Mr Evans acknowledged that Mathematics was problematic in almost all schools, and was not a weakness within Gwynedd only. This was discussed with the Senior System Leader, and it was obvious that one of Gwynedd's priorities was to address the concern. The reason behind the quality of the results was not evident, but it was suggested that the following matters had an impact:

- problems with recruiting mathematics teachers
- teaching styles of mathematics
- the subject is totally dependent upon examinations
- the preparation of pupils for the exam is crucial
- examination timetables, particularly in core subjects
- the amount of contact between pupils and teachers up to the day of the exam

If schools are underperforming, and are weak in certain subjects, there was confidence that GwE could identify the weaknesses, collaborate with the Department, and form partnerships with successful schools to drive them forward.

There was a tendency for the service's operational systems to focus on reviewing, concentrating on spreadsheets of 2013 results rather than placing the emphasis and priority on 2014 targets. Mr Evans was of the opinion that:

- focus should be placed on the future, rather than reviewing the past
- leadership was crucial, including the leadership of middle managers
- target-setting at the beginning of the cycle was essential (it was noted that the performance of secondary schools in Flintshire was 8% higher than Gwynedd on the basis of 2013 figures, and that this was due to the challenging targets which had been set)
- that joint support was important (e.g. partnerships between schools, mentoring)

From the perspective of the scrutiny role of Members, it was important to deal with the following issues:

- ask about the system of governance

- receive results data on a regional level
- monitor schools' attendance levels
- what works well in schools
- the role of the school in the community (a huge challenge for secondary schools - relationship with parents is important)

In conclusion, the Chair and Members thanked Mr Huw Foster Evans for his time and for his presentation, and wished him well in his post.

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For further background information, see the following websites:

My Local School: <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/index.html?iaith=eng>

Robert Hill's Report: www.wales.gov.uk/consultations

The London Challenge: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/london-challenge>