

Public Document Pack

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Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



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To: Cllr Teresa Carberry (Chair)

Councillors: Bill Crease, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Gina Maddison,
Dave Mackie, Ryan McKeown, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece,
David Richardson, Jason Shallcross and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted Members:

Lynn Bartlett and Wendy White

4 October 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 10TH OCTOBER, 2022 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Council Chamber, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire or on a virtual basis.

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. The live streaming will stop when any confidential items are considered. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 **APOLOGIES**

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 32)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the joint meeting of the Education Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees held on the 30 June 2022 and the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings held on the 14 and 29 July 2022.

4 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING** (Pages 33 - 46)

Report of Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

Purpose: To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.

5 **REGIONAL SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT SERVICE (GWE) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022** (Pages 47 - 190)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To receive an update on the support provided by the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, GWE and its impact on schools.

6 **SELF-EVALUATION REPORT EDUCATION SERVICES 2021-22** (Pages 191 - 246)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To update Members on overall service performance 21-22 and Learner Outcomes from 2021.

7 SCHOOL RESERVES YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2022 (Pages 247 - 258)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year.

8 UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UPFSM) (Pages 259 - 264)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To provide an update on the local implementation of the universal primary free school meal initiative.

9 COUNCIL PLAN 2022/23 TIMELINE REVIEW (Pages 265 - 272)

Report of Chief Executive - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To review timelines for Council Plan 22/23 following request from County Council in July.

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

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**JOINT EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES
30 JUNE 2022**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Joint Education, Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 30 June 2022

PRESENT:

Councillors Helen Brown, Mel Buckley, Teresa Carberry, Tina Claydon, Bill Crease, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Andy Hughes, Dave Mackie, Gina Maddison, Hilary McGuill, Andrew Parkhurst, Michelle Perfect, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson, Jason Shallcross and Linda Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Lynn Bartlett

APPOLOGIES: Mrs Wendy White

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure; Councillor Christine Jones, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing, Chief Officer (Education & Youth), Chief Officer (Social Services), Senior Manager (School Improvement) (for minute number 4), Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) (for minute number 4), Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) (for minute numbers 5 and 7), Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) (for minute numbers 6 and 7), Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding (for minute number 8).

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Councillor Paul Cunningham proposed Councillor Hilary McGuill as Chair of the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Hilary McGuill be appointed as Chair for the joint meeting

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

3. WELSH GOVERNMENT (WG) PROGRAMMES SUMMER OF FUN AND WINTER OF WELL-BEING

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) provided a detailed overview of the successful “summer of fun” and the “winter of wellbeing” programmes confirming that updates had been presented to the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December 2021. The national evaluation

report demonstrated how important this was to young people and Welsh Government (WG) had agreed to provide further funding through the winter and for this year's programme.

The Chief Officer provided an overview of the key objectives and activities provided and outlined the collaborative work undertaken with partners (Aura libraries and leisure, young carers, NEWCIS, Menter Iaith Flint a Wrecsam and Theatr Clwyd) and the teams who supported this. Information on how the funding of £276,000 would be distributed to enable targeted support for vulnerable families was given and she explained how these would be promoted to families. This had been delivered in conjunction with existing schemes that the Council already provided with Town & Community Councils.

In response to questions from the Chair on provision of food, accessibility and registration, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed food would be provided at the summer of fun events, but not at the Council's playschemes as WG had enabled direct payments to be made to families entitled to free school meals during the school holidays. However, WG had agreed for some food and snacks to be provided at the playschemes. Referring to the accessibility question, the Chief Officer advised that the activities were spread geographically across the authority with the aim to enable as many families as possible to attend within local communities.

In response to a question from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst on provision in rural areas, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed this would be provided across the county and agreed to circulate information on this following the meeting. She confirmed that vulnerable children were specifically being targeted with the support of the Youth Justice and Children Services teams. Information on the provision of buddies to enable children to access Playschemes in their area was also given.

In response to a question from Councillor Andy Hughes on promotion of these events, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that social media, the family information service, and every other means possible was being used to promote this. She asked Members if they could assist in getting the message across that would be helpful. The Chair added that it was on her Community Council website and circulated via local schools in their newsletters.

In response to a question from Councillor Gladys Healey concerning the playscheme in Hope, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that Town and Community Councils were approached earlier in the year to collaborate to support the summer playschemes and she agreed to speak to Councillor Healey outside of the meeting. The Summer of Fun would not have been shared as it was run by the County Council.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst wanted to ensure that the Town and Community Councils were aware of the Summer of Fun programme and that all families living in rural communities were able to access the Summer of Fun programme. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) said the Playscheme information had been sent but not

the Summer of Fun as it was run by the Council but agreed to feed this back to the strategic planning meetings.

Councillor Teresa Carberry thanked all the offices and partners groups involved. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) agreed to feedback the committees' thanks to the team.

The recommendations, outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie and Mrs Lynn Bartlett.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Joint Committee is reassured that children and young people in Flintshire have benefitted from Welsh Government funding through the Winter of Wellbeing Programme;
- (b) That the Joint Committee is satisfied with the arrangements for the Summer of Fun programme for 2022; and
- (c) That the feedback from the national evaluation of the Welsh Government programmes which provided evidence of their positive impact on children and young people be acknowledged

4. SAFEGUARDING IN EDUCATION

The Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding provided an overview of safeguarding processes provided by the Council and Officer involvement on the Education & Youth Safeguarding Panel and with Children's Services. Information on the priorities around safeguarding training and sharing key information with schools to keep learners safe was also provided.

The Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding provided information on the key focus around the Welsh Government (WG) Keeping Learning Safe guidance, which included an audit tool for schools to use and she explained that all schools had statutory duties especially around safeguarding. During the summer all the audit tools and reports would be reviewed to enable feedback to be provided on key themes which would assist with training. She provided an overview of the professional training, which was delivered online, and which had received positive feedback with the comments shaping future training programmes.

Information on the Education & Youth Safeguarding Panel Action Plan and the Estyn Action Plan was provided, and it was confirmed the WG Action Plan was still awaited. An explanation was given on how this would be embedded in schools ready for the September term.

The Senior Manager (School Improvement) thanked the Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding for her work. She re-assured Members that the team provided excellent advice, training, professional development, and support to schools to signpost them to different agencies. The Education & Youth

Safeguarding Panel sat under the Corporate Safeguarding Panel ensuring that all processes were up to date.

Councillor Teresa Carberry commented that she had undertaken the training which she commended. Following suggestions of additional online topics for training, the Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding agreed to speak to Councillor Carberry following the meeting.

Councillor Bill Crease recommended that all Members undertook this training and commended the work provided by the Council. The Senior Manager (School Improvement) said that the new training and refresher training were excellent ways of learning. She would be happy to circulate some suggestions and was open to receive any ideas for training for School Governors. As this was held online more training sessions had been provided.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure said that this was not just an issue for schools and social services, it was for everyone working at the authority. He provided examples of concerns raised regarding at schools, modern slavery, controlling behaviour, domestic abuse, or abuse of vulnerable adults. He urged Councillors to take up the offer of training to gain a better understanding of these issues which were operating in Flintshire. He thanked officers who dealt with these matters daily in schools or across the whole of the Council.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) reported that he was a co-chair with the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) on the Corporate Safeguarding Panel. Referring to the corporate safeguarding training he urged Members to undertake the training so they could be fully informed to make decisions. During the pandemic there had been a significant increase in reports, especially for vulnerable adults, and the training would enable Members to be fully apprised in these situations. The Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) suggested that the safeguarding contact numbers and information be circulated to Members of the Joint Committee following the meeting.

The Chair referred to previous years when a poster was placed in secondary school toilets providing contact information for pupils who felt at risk and asked if this was still in place. The Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding agreed to check and make sure information on referrals was visible in schools.

In response to questions from Councillor Carolyn Preece on mandatory safeguarding training and safeguarding button, the Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) said there was a safeguarding button that everyone could press together with a telephone number. The best way to report any concerns was via the safeguarding report form, and she agreed to circulate information on this. The Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding confirmed that the safeguarding lead or governor with level 3 training would be expected to undertake training every two years. Level 2 course training would be every three years but for best practice this was provided annually for the whole school staff.

Referring to the Corporate Safeguarding Panel, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing, provided information of representations across the county. She suggested that Members download the Wales Safeguarding Procedures App as it explained all the procedures for children and adults and was very simple to use. It was a good reference tool and well worth having on your phone. The Training was easy to complete and did not take a lot of time.

Mrs Lynn Bartlett was pleased that that peer sexual harassment in secondary schools was included and suggested that the Joint Committee receive a report on Relationships and Sexual Education in due course to provide information on how this was contributing to reducing harm. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Bill Crease and Councillor Teresa Carberry

RESOLVED:

That the content of the safeguarding in education report be noted.

5 PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) presented the Placement Commissioning Strategy which set out the Council's ambitions and plans to support looked after children locally with parents and families being given support to provide safe loving homes in Flintshire. Some children would require foster care and residential care and if they could be kept in Flintshire it would enable them to sustain their friendships, keep their schools placements, friends and family connections. It was also easier for the authority's officers to maintain that support and build trust if they remained within Flintshire and resulted in better outcomes. However, for some children they would need to move away from Flintshire for their own safety and well-being.

The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) provided detailed information on "the Mockingbird" approach to fostering and outlined how the three hubs grouped foster carers together in clusters to support each other. He outlined the issues around recruitment of foster carers and that the authority was reliant on commercial independent fostering agencies. These commercial agencies recruited their own foster carers and the authority had to buy the placements from them at a much higher cost. He recommended that Members visited Arosfa, a residential home run by Action for Children, which provided respite care for children with disabilities and outlined the support provided there. At present this was the only in-house residential provision for residential care and the Council was totally reliant on the Independent Sector. He referred to the Independent Sector placements within Flintshire which had worked well with positive outcomes. He provided an overview of the programme for developing residential care homes with two being developed in Mold.

The Strategy set out the Council's ambition over the next three years which aligned with Welsh Government's (WG) ambition to eliminate profit from children's

social care. Information was provided on the funding, template and partnership working and the number of foster carers and placements that would be required to achieve this.

In response to a question from Councillor Gina Maddison on why people chose the Independent Agencies rather than the Council, the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed that these Agencies charged the authority more and paid foster carers more money. All local authorities in Wales were working together to develop a local authority brand and he provided detailed information on the work that was being undertaken.

In response to a question from the Chair about carers who chose to care for sibling groups, the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed that there were a range of initiatives as the Council was a foster friendly employer and these were explained together with other schemes available to support sibling groups.

In response to a question from Councillor Gladys Healey on the age limit for foster carers, the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed there was no limit, and the process was fully inclusive, as it was about the best fit for the child.

In response to a question from Councillor Andy Hughes on the differences were between the processes for private providers and the Council, the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed the assessments were the same. There were different thresholds especially with regards to skills and resilience, where applicants were deemed unsuitable by the authority but were accepted by the Independent Agencies but added that there were excellent carers in the Independent Fostering Agencies. The Independent Fostering Agencies were sometimes quicker processing applications, but it was felt there were disadvantages to that as we needed to ensure that the foster carers were fully prepared. He provided information on the timescale and panel processes.

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to the Foster Care Panel which he was a member of and said the foster carers were seen before the six-month period. It was dependant on the information provided by the foster carers and their availability for panel, with some people getting through quite quickly.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure commented that Officers in Social Services were working in very difficult circumstances as decisions had to be made to remove children from their families. These children had experienced adverse childhood trauma and the Council had to support them. He was pleased that WG had made a commitment to make children's social care non-profitmaking.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst commented on the standard of foster carers at Independent Fostering Agencies and whether the outcomes for foster children were measured in-house verses private. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) explained that in Wales there was an approved framework that the Council had to use to buy placements. This was managed by the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (CCCC) which all providers had to be registered with. Quality assurance was undertaken to enable registration with checks on their processes and

finances managed by the CCCC. If the council were unable to offer a place for a child, then the information would be uploaded on to the system for Independent Providers to offer a place. The Council then had to carry out its own due diligence and had developed its own framework to ensure the placement was safe and appropriate and were registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

Councillor Parkhurst raised concerns around whether foster carers were vetted to ensure they were up to the required standard. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed that the profile of the young person would be looked at with quality assurance processes carried out to see if that foster carer was the best fit for the child. Independent Reviewing Officers, as part of their roles, reviewed outcomes for each child and monitored whether their needs were being met within the first 28 days of placement. In addition, the social workers visited every 6 weeks, and the foster carers were part of the review and held to account for the care they were providing.

Councillor Tina Claydon commented that she had visited Ty Neath which was excellent and asked if there were plans to build more of these units in the future. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) provided information on what was hoped to be achieved at Ty Neath, the property next to Ty Neath and another property recently submitted to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). A bid had been made to WG to carry out more refurbishments and he provided an overview of the application process, assessment of locations and timeframes involved.

Councillor Andy Hughes commented that bringing more services back in house was key and asked for information on current social worker staffing levels. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) confirmed that the recruitment and retention of children's social workers was a significant challenge and provided information on the national gaps in social care across Wales and across the Country. The Programme growing and developing in house staff was continuing together with a successful recruitment programme with agency staff used in the short term as there were challenges attracting Level 3 Social Workers. The Chief Officer (Social Services) reported that there was a national shortage of social workers and statutory frontline childcare work which was very challenging, with recruitment and retention after 5 years qualified a real issue for all authorities. The authority was looking at pay, better use of agency social workers and working with partners and neighbouring authorities. He asked members for assistance in promoting the service to ensure the Council's reputation remained as positive as possible.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure reported that the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) were working to get national pay scales across Wales which would assist in the recruitment and retention challenges. He outlined the work Cabinet was undertaking with senior officers around this area.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Carolyn Preece and Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee support the future commissioning intentions as detailed in the Placement Commissioning Strategy to be submitted to Welsh Government.

6. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (WALES) ACT 2018

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) outlined the key points in the report, advising that Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2008 came into being in 2008 but was not fully implemented until September 2021.

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) and new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) systems would be running in parallel for three years. Information on the processes for identifying if a child had additional learning needs and moving a child from one system to the other was provided together with an explanation of the Individual Development Plan (IDP). Now that the Code had been published it had enabled processes and panels to be put in place when identifying if a child had additional learning needs and implementing the IDPs.

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) reported that several statutory roles had been identified within the Code which included the creation of ALN Co-ordinators in schools and the Early Years Additional Learning Lead Officer with responsibility for pre-school children. An overview was provided of the ECLIPSE system which ensured schools and the authority carried out their responsibilities and the new requirements for pupils with ALN. Information on the training provided to schools, new requirements and consultation carried out in schools as well as changes regarding post 16 learners was provided.

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) confirmed that she was a member of the National Steering Group which had been set up to guide Councils around ALNET and ensure that the work on developing a Post 16 funding scheme was fair to all local authorities. She confirmed that challenges made to WG with regards to the cost neutrality of the new ALN legislation, which included a letter from the Chair of this committee, had had an impact with WG now providing additional funding for councils and schools for a 3-year period to support implementation. Further information on how the grant funding would be used was also provided.

The Senior Learning Advisor for Additional Learning Needs commented that the feedback from families and schools on the new system and processes had been very positive. There had been increased collaboration with the ALN Coordinators, children and young people and parents in line with the Council's principles. The feedback was reassuring.

Councillor Dave Mackie raised concerns that this could become a costly time-consuming process for schools. He commented on the WG guidance with regards to the processes for Post 16 learners which had only just been published and suggested that the Joint Committee receive a report outlining the approach to the identification and commissioning of post 16 education for Flintshire young people in due course. The Committee supported this suggestion.

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) confirmed that the funding would be kept under review and provided information on the forum meetings attending by officers and WG ministers to ensure this was at the forefront of discussions. She provided detailed information on the Regional Post 16 working group meetings and on the 'flow through model' and agreed to bring a report back to this Joint Committee in due course.

Mrs Lynn Bartlett asked if all children were moving from one system to the other or were some children not qualifying. She was also pleased that Health was supporting this especially for early years children. The Senior Learning Advisor for Additional Learning Needs confirmed the definition of ALN was not dissimilar to SEN but that some pupils may now receive support through a school's universal provision without the need for an IDP. She explained that there could be fewer children formally identified as having ALN, but that children and families were now more involved with the schools in these decisions, with the priority being to ensure that individual needs are met. She confirmed that there had always been good relationships with Health colleagues.

In response to a question from the Chair on parents' right of appeal, the Senior Learning Advisor for Additional Learning Needs confirmed parents still had the right of appeal as do children and young people. If parents or children were not satisfied with the school assessment/decision or IDP, their first approach should be to contact the authority. This matter would be considered by the authority and if this decision/plan was upheld and no changes were proposed, then the parents or child had the right to approach the Education Tribunal for Wales.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Carolyn Preece and Mrs Lynn Bartlett

RESOLVED:

That Committee receives and considers the report on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

7. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN FLINTSHIRE

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) provided an overview of the highlights for the key stages and the links with social care. An outline of the percentage of pupils with special education needs in this cohort was provided together with the number of pupils with Individual Development Plan (IDPs) that the authority had responsibility for, as this had changed. The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Officer with responsibility for children who were looked after has mapped out and provided a timeline for these children to ensure the authority was assessing their needs under the new ALN legislation. She reported on the role of the Vulnerable Learning Co-ordinator and Service Manager who worked with children who were looked after, schools, and foster carers to ensure these children accessed their education. Most children who were looked after were educated in mainstream schools within Flintshire with a small minority requiring more specialist provision.

For those children who left school last year Welsh Government (WG) had not requested outcome data to be collated but destination data had been recorded and she provided information on this. The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) provided detail on the Steering Group and the funding available to support these children and the virtual school model being considered by WG.

The Chair commented on the effect of funding being provided directly to looked after children leaving care, as announced by WG and asked whether officers felt this would be a positive change or if they thought it would have a negative effect on the young people. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) suggested that a report be presented to the Joint Committee in 12 months to outline challenges and positive working from the pilot and how young people were being supported.

In response to a question from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst on the percentage of looked after children with special educational needs, the Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) indicated that it was difficult to determine whether children became looked after because of their special needs or whether they developed special needs due to being looked after and it was likely to be a mix of both factors. She agreed to speak to colleagues in the Educational Psychology Service who may be aware of research into this. She provided reassurance that there were lots of services across education and social care who assist children and that the support would differ from child to child.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillor David Mackie and Councillor Bill Crease

RESOLVED:

- (a) For Members to actively engage as Cooperate Parents for looked after children, promoting awareness and challenging provision within Flintshire educational settings; and
- (b) For Members to actively encourage all educational staff to promote the educational welfare of looked after children within Flintshire establishments at a 'whole school level'.

8. PERIOD DIGNITY UPDATE

The Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding presented the report which explained how the Welsh Government (WG) funding was being used to ensure all pupils were able to access products. She provided an overview of the WG Strategic Action 5 Year Plan which was awaiting publication.

An overview of the Grant Funding provided to local authorities and schools had been given with information on how the products would be distributed. The funding had increased with a requirement that 50% of the products be eco-friendly and information on the contract and products supplied was provided.

The Learning Adviser for Health, Well-being and Safeguarding provided information on the "Hey Girls" contract, which had been commissioned to provide

products, chosen by pupils, which were then delivered to their home address. Over 2000 orders had been made and an overview of the products and year groups supported was provided in the report. She explained what eco products were available with WG requiring 90% to be eco-friendly. This year flexibility was provided by WG to enable some of the funding to be used to provide training for teachers in schools around puberty at the right age. The Code for relationships and sexuality would be enforced in September in schools and several workshops had been arranged to ensure teachers were prepared. An outline of the funding for this year was provided with plans to extend the work with “Hey Girls”. There was also an increased offer to youth clubs, food banks, refugees and community hubs with 8 – 18-year-olds able to order online.

Councillor Paul Cunningham commended the report and felt that this should be further highlighted to support pupils who could not afford the products.

Councillor Teresa Carberry said it addressed inequalities and that this was now more openly discussed in schools with topics taught in mixed gender groups. She was pleased that staff were receiving training to deliver this and that the products were available within the schools which was great.

Councillor Carolyn Preece commended the report and welcomed the use of eco-friendly products.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Paul Cunningham and Councillor Teresa Carberry

RESOLVED:

That the Committee was assured that the grant funding had been appropriately spent and had helped to meet the needs of those targeted by the Welsh Government initiative.

9. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.48 pm)

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Chair

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 JULY 2022

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 14 July 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor Teresa Carberry (Chair)

Councillors: Bill Crease, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Andy Hughes, Gina Maddison, Dave Mackie, Ryan McKeown, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson and Jason Shallcross

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Lynn Bartlett

APOLOGIES: Mrs Wendy White

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure, Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Democratic Services Manager (for minute number 9) and Senior Learning Advisor (Engagement) (for minute number 10)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officers

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 were received.

The minutes were moved as a correct record by Councillor David Mackie and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the draft Forward Work Programme clarifying that the document had been updated following the briefing session at the last meeting and was attached at Appendix 2. An overview of the items listed for the September, October, December and February 2023 was provided. Moving on to the Action Tracking report she confirmed that all actions arising from the last meeting, as shown at Appendix 2 of the report, had been completed.

In response to questions from Councillor Dave Mackie on the strength of the internet in schools and the provision of school meals, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed they were aware of the internet issues which were because of the PSBA National Infrastructure Programme. She confirmed that the Council's IT department were working to ensure these issues were resolved saying these were not exclusive to Flintshire. Referring to the school meals question the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) provided information on the changes to the business model used by NEWydd and the central production kitchen based at County Hall. She agreed to ask the Managing Director of NEWydd to prepare a report outlining the recruitment challenges they were facing, the changes to the provision of school meals and include information on the universal roll out for school meals for infant aged school children. Referring to the Forward Work Programme the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) asked if the School Balances Report could be included for the September meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Gladys Healey on vapes in schools the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) referred to discussions held at recent meetings of the Federation of Head Teachers and Education Consultative Committee. Work was being undertaken to provide good policy guidance to support teachers to manage the situation in schools as the health implications for children were not fully understood. Trading Standards were also involved as sales of vaping products to children under 18 was against the law and she outlined the procedures being put in place for schools to contact Trading Standards if they had concerns or local intelligence. This was an important issue and she suggested that this be included in the spring as part of the Healthy Schools initiative. She reassured Members that this was being monitored closely.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst asked if vaping was allowed on school premises to which the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed it was not. This would be addressed within the school policies and was being managed at present, but it was about understanding the legislation on what was acceptable on school premises.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

In presenting the report the Democratic Services Manager explained that in October last year the Chief Officer structure was changed and that the Terms of Reference required amendment to align with those changes. He referred members

to Appendix 2 on page 26 of the report which highlighted the changes in red for the committee's approval.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Mrs Lynn Bartlett and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the proposed amendments to its terms of reference as set out in Appendix 2.

10. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS

In presenting the report the Senior Learning Advisor (Engagement) provided detailed information on the levels of attendance and exclusions across the county which were the main reasons for pupil absence from September 2020 to Summer 2021. Information on the trends for school attendance, levels of fixed term and permanent exclusions was given but the national picture from Welsh Government (WG) was suspended during this period, so the information presented was gathered from our local schools and SIMS data. He referred Members to Appendix 1 and explained that Welsh Government (WG) had provided specific Covid-19 absence marks for schools to use but many of the absences were recorded with the (i) mark. The work of the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and other teams had changed during, and following, the Covid-19 pandemic and he outlined what processes and support were provided to vulnerable learners to maintain contact, ensure they were in a safe environment to enable them to engage with education.

The Senior Learning Advisor then provided information on the Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions which had been increasing in recent years and he outlined the reasons for these exclusions. Detailed information was provided on how his team had changed their approach to proactively look for hotspots and engage with these pupils to hopefully turn the situation around and enable them to return to education.

Following several questions from Members the Senior Learning Advisor provided detailed information on the exclusion process, patterns of behaviour, marks used by Head Teachers and responsibility for logging absences. The pandemic had impacted pupils attendance at school with covid, mental health and other issues a concern. He outlined the proactive way that engagement with these pupils was taking place to understand the reasons for absence and provide support to pupils and families to enable them to return to school.

The Senior Learning Advisor then referred to unauthorized absences and provided information on the Welsh Government (WG) thresholds and levels within Flintshire schools. It was anticipated that the situation would improve with the new approaches from the Education Welfare Service (EWS) that would be in place from September. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that schools wanted to keep unauthorized absences to a minimum from a safeguarding perspective and outlined the systems in place in schools such as the Attendance Policy which required follow up from the school from the first day of absence if no contact had

been received from the parents. Head Teachers could escalate unauthorised absences to the EWS so that fixed penalty notices could be issued. The Senior Learning Advisor reported on the monthly meetings held with the Education Other than at School team (EOTAS) and gave an overview of the Early Intervention Strategy to help, assist and support pupils and families to enable better outcomes.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst asked if there was a target for the whole of Flintshire not individual schools for unauthorised absences. In response the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) commented their aspiration would be zero but recognized that there would be absences, but it was important that schools understood the reasons why pupils were absent and that they were safe.

In response to questions from Councillor Carolyn Preece, the Senior Learning Advisor advised that Welsh Government (WG) had not removed the covid marker yet but reported on informal networks across the region where information could be shared. The situation in Flintshire was not uncommon with other authorities. Schools were using the same generic systems when logging attendance information which included links to all agencies such as the Schools Inclusion Service and Youth Justice Service. It was explained that the authority had a duty of care to provide automatic support and education to those excluded learners. For those permanent exclusions engagement would be made with the families to understand the process which could enable them to return to school with parents having other options such as choosing another school for their child. The EWS had recruiting staff to provide that liaison between elective home educated children and to ensure the service was more responsive. with the service becoming more responsive. An overview of the work undertaken by the Strategic Group to understand and support pupils with more than 3 exclusions was provided.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure, commented that previously the blanket target figure for attendance across all schools was 95% with some schools achieving this and other schools struggling to achieve it was not constructive. There were a range of other strategies including managed moves used when a fresh start could be suitable for pupils. It was very easy to set targets, but these did not to recognize the challenges met in schools to achieve that target. The Senior Learning Advisor said welfare and working with families was always a starting point to target support in the most effective way. With data and information more effectively underpinning the work of the EWS with more targeted interventions it was hoped that there are more positive outcomes for learners, particularly in improved attendance and reduced exclusions.

In response to the comments made by Councillor Dave Mackie, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) said just setting an arbitrary target would not drive improvements in every school. She provided reassurance to Members that schools had robust processes, policies, and systems in place with the Senior Learner Advisor and his team providing that extra scrutiny and support to schools. If schools were unable to secure improvements with a family the Senior Learning Advisor and his team would step in to provide those interventions and support. She outlined the changes within the team to support schools to exercise their statutory functions and that next year it would be possible to demonstrate the impacts of those actions.

In response to a question from Councillor Gina Maddison on whether this was an emerging trend prior to Covid, the Senior Learning Advisor commented that Covid had been exceptional with the impacts felt across the country. From a welfare perspective, when trying to understand what children had experienced, as regards isolation, working from home, missing friends, and routine this provided some of the reasons why they were reluctant to go to school. The Head Teacher would have the evidence in line with the graduated response to allow them to authorize the absence or not and enable them to enable engagement with various options available to support that pupil. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) reported that prior to Covid there had been a declining attendance trend at secondary school level which was referenced in the 2019 Estyn Report. Cases of anxiety and mental health issues were being reported by pupils then, resulting in some not wanting to attend schools and the pandemic had exacerbated that.

In response to a question from Councillor Andy Hughes on the first batch of fixed penalty notices, the Senior Learning Advisor confirmed that the application of a fixed penalty notice was at the discretion of the Head Teacher under the Attendance Policy. He outlined how his team administered and delivered them with every case dealt with on its individual merits.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved Councillor Gina Maddison and seconded by Councillor Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

- (a) Members accepted the attendance and exclusion data for Flintshire schools and the actions undertaken by officers to support increased engagement and the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people; and
- (b) Members recognised that the data provided had been impacted by COVID19 lockdown and school closures.

11. SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET SAFETY

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) commented that the report was brought to committee annually and she highlighted some of the headlines. There were significant challenges for pupils and schools as regards to online safety and it was important that they kept themselves safe online.

She referred Members to key points in the report which provided advice and guidance to schools on Social Media and Internet Safety. Information on the Hwb site which promoted the 360-degree Safe Cymru Tool for schools, was something the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) wanted all schools to use. Reference to the Safer Internet Day was provided, with training provided by the Regional Improvement Service (GwE) and all schools having access to the online bullying form and explanations on how it should be reported. The IT web filtering systems were explained, and she also provided information on the Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) and the "Be Kind Online Pledge".

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) sought members thoughts on whether the Social Media and Internet Safety report should continue to be part of the Annual Safeguarding in Education report or be a separate report presented to this committee or indeed presented to the joint Education Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

A discussion followed with some Members commenting that it should go to the joint meeting with the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee to enable wider debate.

Members were also requested to email questions to the Healthy Schools Practitioner and the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and that all questions and responses would be circulated to members of the committee.

Councillor Carolyn Preece had concerns with the second recommendation saying that this could get lost in the main report and lose focus. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) provided re-assurance that there would be a specific section for this within the Safeguarding in Education report.

The first recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey

The second recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

- (a) Members confirmed they had received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the support and monitoring of schools with regard to social media and internet safety.
- (b) Members agreed for future reporting that Online Safety was incorporated within the annual Safeguarding in Education report and presented to the Joint Education Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

12. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The report was presented by the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and included a summary of the outturn progress of the Council Plan priorities, which were relevant to the Education & Youth portfolio for 2021/22. This was a very positive report and demonstrated progress made against those priorities. She referred members to page 69 which included the range of targets which were mostly green with a small number which were amber.

In response to a question on targets from Councillor Dave Mackie, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) clarified that these were for areas around attendance and exclusions and explained that targets were not collected as Welsh Government (WG) had suspended performance measures because of the pandemic. She confirmed that the authority's localised data on attendance and exclusions was

recorded as unverified data and included in the report and agreed to take Councillor Mackie's comments back to the team. WG did not require the authority to produce targets, but she said these were being set for the current year and that the summary report would provide that context.

Carolyn Preece thanked the team for a very thorough and excellent report and commended the team, schools and staff for the work undertaken throughout and coming out of the pandemic. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) agreed to pass on her thanks to team and schools.

Councillor Paul Cunningham commented that having this information enabled good scrutiny and he looked forward to the reports providing better information as we recover from the pandemic. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) welcomed scrutiny by committee members as it was a very important process. She reiterated if any member had any concerns that they could contact her at any time to discuss them.

Councillor Gladys Healey agreed with the comments made by Councillor Mackie and had real concerns regarding housing and poverty. In the current climate with bills increasing this would exacerbate issues of poverty although she understood that budgets were tight. She asked if the Leader could lobby Welsh Government (WG) for more money to provide support for people in poverty.

In response the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and referred to the new Council Plan on the committee's Forward Work Programme saying that every portfolio of the Council was contributing to Poverty. She reported on the Child Poverty initiative, Well Fed initiative and additional discretionary payments endorsed recently by Cabinet. This was a corporate responsibility to address the impacts on children and families but some of the issues were out of the Council's control.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure, re-assured members that he was constantly lobbying WG on this. He agreed with the comments made by the Chief Officer on the corporate response and praised the schools for the significant work they were doing with initiatives such as for school uniforms and breakfast clubs enabling children to get a good breakfast which had increased attendance levels. He outlined the corporate initiatives across the council and commented on the excellent schemes provided by the voluntary sector and said that all of this would ensure the best possible outcomes.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Mrs Lynn Bartlett.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the committee supported the levels of progress and had confidence in the achievement of priorities within the 2021/22 Council Plan;
- (b) That the committee supported the overall performance against 2021/22 Council Plan performance indicators; and

- (c) That the committee was assured by explanations given for those areas of underperformance.

13. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 15.49 pm)

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Chair

EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
29 JULY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held remotely on Friday, 29 July 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor Teresa Carberry (Chair)

Councillors: Bill Crease, Gladys Healey, Gina Maddison, Dave Mackie, Ryan McKeown, David Richardson, Jason Shallcross and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted Member: Lynn Bartlett

APOLOGIES: Councillor Helen Brown and Wendy White

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor David Coggins-Cogan for Councillor Andrew Parkhurst; Councillor Mel Buckley for Councillor Paul Cunningham; and Councillor Ted Palmer for Councillor Carolyn Preece

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Richard Jones, Dave Mackie, and Mike Peers (initiators of the call in)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts (Leader and Cabinet Member for Education), Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy) Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Education Youth and Culture), Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Manager for Capital Programme and Assets, Senior Manager, Inclusion & Progression

IN ATTENDANCE:

The Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

15. CONSIDERATION OF A MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE CALL IN ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair advised that the Cabinet had considered a report on 'Sustainable Communities for Learning - Mutual Investment Model (MIM) - Financial Close for the 3-16 Campus Project, Mynydd Isa' at a meeting held on 12 July 2022. The decision (Record of Decision 4001) had been called in by Councillors Bernie Attridge, Helen Brown, Richard Jones, Dave Mackie and Mike Peers. Copies of the Cabinet report, Record of Decision and Endorsement of Call in, which identified two reasons for the call in, were included in the agenda pack.

The Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator explained the procedure for the call in of a Cabinet decision as detailed in the supporting document which was included in the agenda.

The Chair invited the signatories to present the reasons for the call-in to the Committee.

16. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING - MUTUAL INVESTMENT MODEL (MIM) - FINANCIAL CLOSE FOR THE 3-16 CAMPUS PROJECT, MYNYDD ISA

Representations from call in signatories

Councillor David Mackie

Councillor Mackie asked if the previous Cabinet had approved the Mynydd Isa project. He said no evidence of a report could be found considering the viability of the Mynydd Isa project or any of the options or evaluation of the effects on other schools. In addition, no evidence could be found of a decision taken by Members to demolish the Argoed School. The previous administration had stated that this item should be considered by Scrutiny so that Members views could be fed back to Cabinet.

Councillor Mackie referred to the meeting of Cabinet on 19 November 2019 when a report on the Mynydd Isa project was considered. He provided information on meetings of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee where reports on the MIM project had been provided since 2019. Councillor Mackie stated that when Members had raised questions on MIM the response had been that MIM was not the same as PFI. There had been no information given to Overview & Scrutiny Committees that the Argoed School was to be demolished.

Councillor Mackie referred to items 1.16 and 1.17 in the report to the meeting of Cabinet on 19 November 2019 on the Mynydd Isa project. Councillor Mackie also referred to the reports relating to the MIM and Mynydd Isa project which had been submitted to the meetings of Cabinet held on 17 March 2020, 14 July 2020, and 16 March 2021. Councillor Mackie said there had been no information in the reports to Cabinet on plans to demolish the Argoed High School.

In conclusion Councillor Mackie said the signatories felt that there should be a report outlining all the options, reasons, and wider implications before the Argoed School was demolished. He asked the Committee to consider option 4 so further consideration could be given to the item at Council. Councillor Mackie explained his concerns around the Council's use of the MIM scheme.

Councillor Richard Jones addressed the Committee. He said he was concerned that the project did not represent good value for money for Flintshire or Wales. He referred to the report on 21st Century Schools - Mutual Investment Model update to the meeting of Cabinet held on 14 July 2020, and said the estimated cost of the annual service charge as stated in the report had increased significantly to £1.187m. Councillor Jones commented on the total cost of the project over 25 years. He said there had been little or no Scrutiny involvement in the funding method decision. He raised questions around intervention rates, capital costs for furniture, fixtures, equipment and Information and

Communications Technology (ICT), building capitalisation period, cost of abortive fees, consideration of options other than the MIM scheme in relation to value for money, and quality of products in terms of 25 years use and beyond.

Councillor Mike Peers commented on the age of the Elfed High School, Buckley, which was considerably older than the Argoed High School and asked if the “right” school was being replaced. He referred to the information in the report on the ‘life-cycle’ of the building and asked for clarification of what Condition A meant. Councillor Peers commented on the escalation in the cost of the annual service charge and asked if there was any guarantee that this would not increase further as the project progressed.

Responses from the decision makers

Councillor Ian Roberts commented on the need for quality educational provision for young people in Flintshire. He referred to the reasons stated by the signatories for the call-in. Councillor Roberts advised that the funding models and projects contained in the Council’s 21st Century Investment Programme had been considered and accepted by the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee from 18 January 2018, and Cabinet from 23 January 2018. He said there had been regular reporting of the School Modernisation Programme to Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet. Councillor Roberts stated the MIM had been debated on numerous occasions and commented that most members of the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been satisfied with the funding model. Councillor Roberts felt that there had been no lack of member involvement in the decision-making process.

In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Mike Peers regarding the age of school buildings in Flintshire, Councillor Roberts referred to school buildings which were on the Council’s capital programme and cited other buildings in the Council’s portfolio which had been demolished. Councillor Roberts said a report was submitted to the meeting of Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 18 January 2018 on the Welsh Government’s 21st Century Schools Programme, Education Programme Band B, and Mutual Investment Model (MIM). He referred to further reports submitted to the meetings of the Committee held on 28 June 2018, 20 December 2018, 28 January 2021, and 3 February 2022. Councillor Roberts also cited the reports which had been submitted to the meetings of Cabinet on 23 January 2018, 17 March 2020, 19 November 2019, 14 July 2020, 21 September 2021, and 12 July 2022. Councillor Roberts thanked Officers for their work.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) outlined the educational benefits of the proposal which would create a single campus with a primary and secondary school and shared facilities which would provide first class learning services for children from 4 – 16 in the Mynydd Isa area. She explained that the ambition was to have a single governing body which would be more efficient and streamline the operational business model of both schools. The Chief Officer advised that the current infant and junior provision in Mynydd Isa was provided on two separate sites which was inefficient for management purposes and created a need for transition which research demonstrated caused anxiety and slowed pupils’ rate of progress. Both schools currently worked well within their

consortium group, and she commented on the excellent outcome of the recent Estyn Inspection of Mynydd Isa Primary School.

The Chief Officer explained that the Welsh Government had introduced a new curriculum in Wales which all primary schools would adopt from September 2022 and secondary schools would introduce in September 2023. She said it was critical that primary and secondary schools worked together to create a seamless curriculum offer for learners and the proposal to create a single campus at Mynydd Isa would enhance this. Commenting on the well-being of children and young people the Chief Officer said that the opportunity to have all learners on the same site with both schools working together and aligning policies around attendance, behaviour, and well-being, would be a positive experience which could be sustained to the end of a pupil's secondary education.

The Chief Officer commented on further benefits of the proposal and cited the opportunities for the extended professional development of staff and the greater use of specialist staff. Referring to Additional Learning Needs, she explained that both Mynydd Isa and Argoed High schools had County specialist resource units to support children with additional learning needs which focussed on speech and language difficulties. The Chief Officer said it was particularly important that specialist support for pupils was maintained and additional support was given during transition from primary to secondary education. Argoed High School also had resources for pupils with social communication difficulties, including pupils with a diagnosis of autism, and the proposal provided a purpose-built area to support learners' needs. In conclusion the Chief Officer said that a co-located campus and the benefits created by the arrangement was essential to the delivery of high-quality education for learners in the area and she fully supported the proposed model.

The Corporate Manager for Capital Programme and Assets provided background to the MIM scheme and outlined the advantages which he said provided additional funding to the investment programme. He explained that without the MIM a reduced programme would be available based on investment through the traditional capital route. He advised that a project had to meet specific criteria to be eligible for the MIM funding. In response to a question raised by Councillor Richard Jones, the Corporate Manager reported on how the project would be managed. He gave a brief overview of progress and explained that planning consent had been granted in January 2022, the design/development process had been completed and the project was now at the construction stage. The Constructor was currently compiling the actual final costs of the work modules on the construction project.

The Corporate Manager provided clarification in response to the questions and comments which were raised by Members on costs and referred to the capital contribution, annual service charge, project fees, and accumulated costs if the project was aborted. The Council's full Business Case was currently being considered by the Welsh Government (WG) and the project would only proceed following Ministerial approval. It was expected that formal notification would be received from WG mid August.

In conclusion the Corporate Manager commented on the timeline for the new build, the age and poor condition of the existing primary and secondary

schools in Mynydd Isa, and the reasons why the existing buildings could not be remodernised or amalgamated with neighbouring schools. The Corporate Manager gave reassurance that the WG would be providing full support for contract management of the project during the next 25 years.

The Corporate Finance Manager gave further reassurance that the Council's Finance officers had been fully involved in all aspects from the start of the project. He said MIM appeared to be the best option for an ambitious and balanced project. The Corporate Finance Manager reported on the revenue and capital budget implications.

The Chief Executive commented on the need to consider the wider value the project would create in the community and the improvement in educational standards as a result.

The Chair asked the signatories of the call-In if they had further questions.

Councillor Mike Peers asked what would happen if the contractor went into liquidation during the 25 years 'life cycle'. The Corporate Manager for Capital Programme and Assets explained that Welsh Education Partnership Company (WEPCo) held responsibility for appointing a replacement contractor and said the risk was with them.

Councillor Richard Jones asked for further clarification on the annual service charge funding cap and the contribution to be made by the Council. The Corporate Manager for Capital Programme and Assets explained that the actual cost was expected to be lower than the capped figure, however, there was no approval to proceed if the cap increased. He also advised that the capital figure was a one-off payment to procure furniture, fixtures and equipment. Councillor Jones referred to the reasons for the call-In which was to ensure there was continued 'value for money' due to the significant increase in the MIM contractual costs.

The Chair asked if any members of the Committee wished to raise a question.

Councillor Bill Crease reiterated the concerns expressed by Councillor Jones around the funding cap and whether the project still delivered 'value for money' due to the increased costs.

Councillor Ian Roberts, referred to the two reasons for the call-In as appended to the agenda. He thanked officers for their full and precise accounts of the educational, financial, and social implications to ensure 'value for money' was achieved.

Councillor David Mackie stated that he could not find a report which compared the Mynydd Isa project to any other options and no record of a decision taken by Members which agreed that the project would go forward. Councillor Mackie said the Corporate Finance Manager had explained that the MIM scheme had been thoroughly considered by the Council's finance officers and approved and he was therefore satisfied that it was fit for purpose. However, he remained unsatisfied that a report had not been provided which detailed the

purpose of the project, approval by Members, and that it had been substituted for an earlier project to be built in Saltney.

Councillor Ian Roberts thanked Councillor Mackie for his comments and in response he drew attention to a report on the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) 21st Century Schools Welsh Education Partnership – Deed of Adherence which was considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 21 September 2021. Councillor Roberts emphasised that systems were in place which enabled Members at any point to raise concerns and request that further consideration be given to matters by Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Bernie Attridge reiterated that the reason for the call-In was due to the significant increase in costs of the MIM scheme since 2018 and said this matter had not been raised for consideration by Overview & Scrutiny.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item by virtue of exempt information under Paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

At this point, the livestreaming and recording of the meeting was paused.

17. CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES TO AGENDA ITEM NUMBER 4: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING – MUTUAL INVESTMENT MODEL (MMI) FINANCIAL CLOSE FOR THE 3-16 CAMPUS PROJECT, MYNYDD ISA

Councillor Richard Jones raised a number of questions around what additional advantages were to be gained by the Council from the Contract, and referred to the community benefits, local interests, and local contract arrangements. He sought clarification on paragraph 12.13.1 (page 57 of the report), and reference to delegated low value trade, and also paragraph 2.05 in the Cabinet report and reference to wear and tear.

The Chief Executive responded to the comments and questions raised by Councillor Jones on the social value implications and advised that it was a prerequisite of the contract that the supply chain should seek to utilise as much Welsh labour and resources as possible.

Speaking in support of the Chief Executive's response to Councillor Jones, the Chief Officer (Education, Youth and Culture) advised that the Council had a dedicated officer to monitor the social value of contracts. The Corporate Manager for Capital Programme and Assets provided further response and clarification to Councillor Jones on social value, delegations, maintenance arrangements and contract management.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO RESTART THE LIVE STREAM FOR THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That following consideration of the confidential item the live streaming of the meeting be resumed to enable the press and public to view the remainder of the meeting.

At this point, the livestreaming and recording of the meeting was resumed.

18. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING - MUTUAL INVESTMENT MODEL (MIM) - FINANCIAL CLOSE FOR THE 3-16 CAMPUS PROJECT, MYNYDD ISA

The Chair invited the initiators of the call in to sum up.

Councillor Richard Jones spoke on behalf of the signatories of the call-in and thanked everyone for their contribution. He commented on the increased costs of the MIM project, citing the increase in annual service charge, and said that the concept of ensuring continued 'value for money' was not only in terms of financial considerations but also the social and educational benefits to be gained. Councillor Jones said that the signatories of the call-in remained concerned about why an earlier project for new school build in Saltney had been substituted by the Mynydd Isa project. Councillor Jones said the signatories wished the Cabinet to reconsider the project in Mynydd Isa in view of the concerns raised and also to determine whether it remained 'value for money'.

The Chair invited the decision makers to sum up.

Councillor Ian Roberts reminded Members that there had been opportunities to raise concerns on the matters raised at an earlier stage. He advised that the increase in the annual service charge from £681k in 2017 to current costs was not comparable. Councillor Roberts referred to the reasons for the call-in and citing the second reason he urged members of the Committee to raise any items they wished to be scrutinised during consideration of the Committee's Forward Work Programme. Councillor Roberts emphasised that Cabinet had given due consideration to the project on numerous occasions as previously advised.

The Chair invited the Education and Community Overview & Scrutiny facilitator to remind Members of the options for decision-making as detailed in item 3 of the agenda.

Councillor David Mackie proposed Option 4 and this was seconded by Councillor Bill Crease.

Councillor Ted Palmer proposed Option 1 and this was seconded by Councillor David Coggins-Cogan.

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator gave a reminder of the voting procedure and advised that having been moved and seconded, the substantive

Motion would need to be put to the vote before an alternative option could be considered.

The Chair asked Members of the Committee to vote on Option 4. When put to the vote the proposal was lost.

The Chair asked Members of the Committee to vote on Option 1. When put to the vote the proposal was carried.

In her closing remarks the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution and said close scrutiny was welcomed and valued. She said the project would reduce the impact of transition on pupils, increase the expertise available for students at Key Stage 2, facilitate more close relationships with families, meet the individual needs of students, and provide physical accessibility for all.

RESOLVED:

That, having considered the decision, the Committee was satisfied with the explanations received and therefore the decision may now be implemented.

19. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.04pm)

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Chair



EDUCATION YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 10 th October, 2022
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?6. Is the issue of Public or Member concern?
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Education Youth & Culture OSC.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2. Contact Officer: Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Telephone: 01352 702305 E-mail: ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible / Contact Officer
<p>Thursday 20th October, 2022 2.00pm</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 37</p>	<p>School Performance Monitoring Group Update</p>	<p>To receive an update on progress and learning from the School Performance Monitoring Group.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>
	<p>Flintshire Summer of Fun & Summer Play Schemes</p>	<p>To provide feedback on the Flintshire Summer of Fun & Summer Play Schemes.</p>	<p>Information Sharing</p>	<p>Play Development Officer</p>
	<p>Estyn Report on Adult Community Learning Partnership</p>	<p>To present the Estyn Report on Adult Community Learning Partnership</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Senior Manager – School Improvement</p>
	<p>Council Plan Development 2023/24</p>	<p>To contribute to the development of the Council Plan.</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Strategic Performance Advisor</p>
<p>Thursday 1st December, 2022 2.00pm</p>	<p>Council Plan 2022-23 Mid-Year Performance Reporting</p>	<p>To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>
	<p>MTFS & Budget Setting 23-24</p>	<p>That the Committee reviews and comments on the Education, Youth and Culture cost pressures and overall budget strategy, and advises on any areas of cost efficiency it would like to see explored further.</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>

	<p>Elective Home Schooling</p> <p>Integrated Youth Provision – Delivery Plan Update</p>	<p>To provide the Committee with an update on the levels of pupils being Electively Home Educated and the Council’s oversight of this group of learners.</p> <p>To provide an update to the Committee on the Integrated Youth Provision Delivery Plan.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Consultation</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p> <p>Senior Manager Youth Justice and Flintshire Sorted</p>
<p>Thursday 2nd February, 2023</p> <p>2.00pm</p>	<p>Music Service Theatr Clwyd</p>	<p>To provide the Committee with information on the Music Service, including numbers of learners.</p>	<p>Information Sharing</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>
<p>Thursday 23rd March, 2023</p> <p>2.00pm</p>	<p>Anti-racist Wales Action Plan</p>	<p>To outline how the Council is meeting the requirements of the Welsh Government Anti-racist Wales Action Plan in line with the development of the new Curriculum for Wales.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>
<p>Thursday 11th May, 2023</p> <p>2.00pm</p>	<p>Tackling Inequality</p>	<p>To outline how the Council supporting early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education and all forms of post-16 education, training and lifelong learning to ensure an equitable education system for all.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>

	<p>Supporting Service Children in Education</p> <p>Attendance & Exclusions</p>	<p>To provide an update report to outline the priority actions of schools following the audit.</p> <p>To provide Members with an overview of school attendance and exclusions and the role of the Portfolio’s support services in this area.</p>	<p>Information Sharing</p> <p>Information Sharing</p>	<p>Senior Manager – School Improvement</p> <p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>
<p>Thursday 29th June, 2023</p> <p>Joint meeting with S&HC OSC - 2.00pm</p> <p>Page 39</p>	<p>Safeguarding in Education including Internet Safety and Social Media</p> <p>Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018</p> <p>Looked After Children in Flintshire</p>	<p>To provide an update on the discharge of statutory safeguarding duties in schools and the Education portfolio. To include information on Relationship and Sexual Education and how this was contributing to reducing harm.</p> <p>To outline the approach to the identification and commissioning of post 16 education for Flintshire young people.</p> <p>To provide an update on the provision for Looked After Children. And to provide an update on the challenges, positive working and how young people were supported through the pilot to provide funding directly to looked after children leaving care.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and Healthy Schools Practitioner</p> <p>Senior Manager – Inclusion & Progression</p> <p>Senior Manager – Inclusion & Progression</p>

	Supporting Refugees in Schools	To provide information and an overview of support service provided to support refugees in schools.	Information Sharing	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Thursday 13th July, 2023 2.00pm	Annual Report from Regional School Improvement Service, GwE	To receive an update on the support provided by the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, GWE and its impact on schools	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and Managing Director of GwE
	Council Plan 2022-23 Year-End Performance	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)

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INFORMATION REPORTS/BRIEFING PAPERS TO BE CIRCULATED TO THE COMMITTEE

Item	Purpose of information report	Month
Health & Safety in Schools	Information report on accidents during the academic year and the actions taken to support schools in achieving healthy and safe environment.	December
Parking Outside Schools	To provide information from the Highways Team on legislation around parking outside schools and the mechanism in place for joint working with the Police and Schools.	-
Policies for dealing with bullying in schools	To provide information on School Policies for dealing with instances of bullying.	-

Items to be scheduled

- Healthy Schools report - to include overview of Healthy Schools Programme, Challenges of Pandemic, Design to Smile and public health risk of Vape use by pupils – **As agreed during the July, 2022 meeting.**
- School Meals Service - to include overview of structural changes since moving across to NEWYDD, central production model, plans for universal roll out of Free School Meals and use of processed food in school meals - **As agreed during the July, 2022 meeting.**
- Update to be requested from IT on issues with PSPA, National infrastructure challenges in Flintshire - **As agreed during the July, 2022 meeting.**
- Recycling School Uniforms – **Referred to the Committee from the Environment & Economy OSC.**

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
February/ March	School Modernisation	To update Members on the progress made with School Modernisation.	Senior Manager School Planning & Provision
May	Attendance & Exclusions	To provide Members with an overview of school attendance and exclusions and the role of the Portfolio's support services in this area.	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
September	Self-evaluation on education services & learner outcomes	To update Members on overall service performance including Learner Outcomes.	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
June	Additional Learning Needs	To update members on the implementation of national ALN reforms in schools and the role of the Portfolio's support services in this area.	Senior Manager – Inclusion & Progression

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
July	Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE)	To receive an update on progress with the development of the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, to include a presentation from the Chief Officer of GwE.	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) & GwE Senior Officers
September	School Balances	To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year.	Finance Manager
Annually	Learning from the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) -	To receive the annual report on progress and learning from the SPMG.	Senior Manager – School Improvement;
Annually	Social Media & Internet Safety - now part of Safeguarding Report to the Joint Scrutiny Committee	To receive an annual report assurance/monitoring.	Healthy Schools Practitioner

ACTION TRACKING FOR THE EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
30.06.2022	4. Welsh Government (WG) Programmes Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-being	Following a question from Cllr Andrew Parkhurst, Cllr Claire Homard suggested that a list of provision and their location in rural areas be provided to Members of the Joint Committee following the meeting.	Claire Homard	Information on locations of Summer of Fun Activities e-mailed to Members of the Joint Committee on 28.07.2022.	Completed.
		Cllr Gladys Healey referred to page 35 of the report and asked why a playscheme was not being provided at Hope and Caergwle. Claire Homard said that she would speak to the play team following the meeting and provide a response to Cllr Healey.	Claire Homard	Cllr Healey was contacted by the play team and information was shared.	Completed.
		In response to a question from Cllr Parkhurst on communication to Town and Community Councils on the Summer of Fun Scheme, Claire Homard said that she would raise this matter at the next Strategic Planning Meeting.	Claire Homard	The Chief Officer has confirmed that this matter will be shared as part of the process of reviewing the Summer of Fun programme in the weeks ahead, but this has been communicated to the Senior Manager for the Integrated Youth Provision and the Play Manager.	Completed.
30.06.2022	5. Safeguarding in Education	It was suggested that the safeguarding contact numbers and information be	Jane Davies / Ceri Shotton	Information circulated to Joint Committee Members via e-mail on 04.07.2022.	Completed.

		<p>circulated to Members of the Joint Committee following the meeting.</p> <p>Following a question from Cllr Hilary McGuill, Claire Sinnott agreed to check and make sure information on referrals was visible in schools.</p> <p>Lynn Bartlett suggested that the Joint Committee receive a report on Relationships and Sexual Education in due course to provide information on how this was contributing to reducing harm.</p>	<p>Claire Sinnott</p> <p>Vicky Barlow / Ceri Shotton</p>	<p>This will be checked during the new School term.</p> <p>Item added to FWP for next Joint Committee meeting scheduled for 29.06.2023.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed.</p>
30.06.2022	7. Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018	Cllr Dave Mackie commented on the Welsh Government guidance with regards to the processes for Post 16 learners which had only just been published and it was agreed that the Joint Committee receive a report outlining the approach to the identification and commissioning of post 16 education for Flintshire young people in due course.	Jeanette Rock / Ceri Shotton	Item added to FWP for next Joint Committee meeting scheduled for 29.06.2023.	Completed.
30.06.2022	8. Looked After Children in Flintshire	Cllr Hilary McGuill commented on the effect of funding being provided directly to looked after children leaving care, as announced by Welsh Government. Craig Macleod suggested that a report be presented to the Joint Committee in 12 months to outline challenges and	Craig Macleod / Jeanette Rock / Ceri Shotton	Item added to FWP for next Joint Committee meeting scheduled for 29.06.2023.	Completed.

		positive working from the pilot and how young people were supported.			
14.07.2022	4. Forward Work Programme	<p>That the following items be added to the FWP:-</p> <p><u>September 2022</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan development <p><u>October 2022</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flintshire Summer of Fun & Summer Play Schemes (Janet Robert, Play Development Officer to be invited to meeting) • Adult Community Learning Estyn report • Annual Report on School Balances <p><u>December 2022</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective Home Schooling <p><u>February 2023</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Service Theatr Clwyd. <p>Items to be scheduled:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Schools report - to include overview of Healthy Schools Programme, Challenges of Pandemic, Design to Smile and 	Ceri Shotton	<p>Included on Agenda for the September meeting.</p> <p>Item added to FWP for the October meeting. Janet Roberts has also confirmed her attendance at the meeting</p> <p>Included on Agenda for the October meeting.</p> <p>Item added to FWP for the October meeting.</p> <p>Item added to FWP for the December meeting.</p> <p>Item added to FWP for the February, 2023 meeting.</p> <p>Item added to FWP under the heading 'Items to be Scheduled'.</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p>

		<p>public health risk of Vape use by pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Meals Service to include overview of structural changes since moving across to NEWYDD, central production model, plans for universal roll out of Free School Meals and use of processed food in school meals. Update to be requested from IT on issues with PSPA, National infrastructure challenges in Flintshire. 		<p>Item added to FWP under the heading 'Items to be Scheduled'.</p> <p>Item added to FWP under the heading 'Items to be Scheduled'.</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Completed.</p>
14.07.2022	7. Social Media and Internet Safety	It was agreed that as Claire Sinnott (the Health Schools Practitioner) was not able to attend the meeting, questions could be emailed to her, and the Chief Officers and the responses would be shared with the Committee.	Claire Homard / Claire Sinnott	A query via e-mail had been received and a response provided. Further clarification on a couple of points was currently being sought from IT.	On-going.
14.07.2022	8. End of Year Performance Monitoring Report	Councillor Dave Mackie raised concerns that target information was not included in the table. The Chief Officer agreed to convey his concerns to the Performance Lead/Team.	Claire Homard	Information has been shared with the Performance Team.	Completed.



EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 10 th October, 2022
Report Subject	Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) Annual Report 2021-2022
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The GwE Annual Report provides a detailed overview for members of the work of the Regional School Improvement Service across the North Wales region.

This year's report outlines how GwE have repurposed their work appropriately over the last two years to continue to deliver effective services and support for all schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this difficult period, GwE has stayed true to its vision and values as an institution that is still learning and evolving and which continues to respond to challenges and changes within the education system.

The report describes how GwE has continued to support schools across a number of key priorities e.g. supporting schools in their preparations for the Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales; improving the quality of teaching and leadership; focusing on staff and pupil wellbeing, the ongoing development of the Welsh language and the continuous focus on school improvement, particularly where there may be schools causing concern.

The report also identifies strategic and regional priorities for 2022-23. GwE's overall vision is reflected in the 3 year business plan and is further strengthened in the annual business plan.

The regional priorities and areas for improvement are based on the findings of internal self-evaluation processes, external reviews on GwE's current practice and direction of travel, and through consultation with headteachers and local authorities. The Business Plan addresses Welsh Government and local authorities' strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE.

Additionally, GwE will continue to work in partnership with individual councils to support additional local priorities, as appropriate. It also takes into consideration the views and priorities of other middle tier partners such as Estyn, Qualifications Wales, WJEC, National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL), Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Education Workforce Council (EWC).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Education, Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to accept the Annual Report from GwE and note the positive impact of the regional service in supporting Flintshire schools throughout the pandemic, maintaining the focus on effective and successful schools and supporting schools in their preparations for the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE GWE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022
1.01	<p>The GwE annual report for 2021-2022 provides an overview of the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background and context 2. GwE work programme and support to schools during the pandemic: making a difference 3. Evaluating the Impact of our work 4. Supporting schools in their preparation for The Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales 5. Supporting and improving the quality of teaching and leadership 6. Y Gymraeg 7. Wellbeing 8. Peer Engagement 9. Business matters 10. Business plan priorities for 2022-2023

1.02	This year's report outlines how GwE have repurposed their work appropriately over the last two years to continue to deliver effective services and support for all schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this difficult period, GwE has stayed true to its vision and values as an institution that is still learning and evolving and which continues to respond to challenges and changes within the education system. At the heart of the work with schools and partners were the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) transversal themes of Trust, Thinking Together, Time and Technology.
1.03	The regional service, in its entirety, has redirected several times during the COVID-19 period in an attempt to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. Flexibility and adaptability and effective collaboration in different teams, often across sectors, have had a significant impact on institutional behaviour. At the core of the redirection, the need to ensure the well-being of school leaders, staff and learners was of utmost importance in any decision making, ensuring that the service could accurately direct the appropriate level of support, be that operational support or professional dialogue. This involved operational discussions on the safe opening of schools, and professional discussions regarding distance and blended learning.
1.04	The new Curriculum for Wales will be rolled out from September 2022. In Flintshire this will begin with primary schools, primary pupil referral unit provision and special schools. Secondary schools and secondary pupil referral unit provision in Flintshire have deferred until September 2023, taking advantage of the flexibility provided by the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language to ensure they are well prepared.
1.05	The response to COVID-19 has inevitably impacted on schools and disrupted some of their plans for the preparation and implementation of the new curriculum. GwE is fully committed to supporting all schools to maintain the momentum towards the new curriculum to ensure that all learners are offered provision of the highest standard.
1.06	Crucial to ensuring progression towards the new curriculum is the ongoing provision of quality professional development for schools. During the year, GwE refocused and rescheduled training sessions to meet the needs of schools, provided additional resources and developed exemplar models for schools to adapt. Over the year GwE has supported all schools to work collaboratively in clusters or alliances to share the best practice and help manage workload.
1.07	Alongside supporting schools to deliver education during the pandemic and prepare schools for the new curriculum, GwE has also maintained its core purpose of driving school improvement in partnership with local

	<p>authority education teams. GwE and the local authorities know their schools well and provide robust and appropriate challenge where needed alongside targeted support.</p> <p>During 2021-22, revised processes for identifying and supporting schools causing concern was developed between GwE and local authority officers. Thresholds and triggers have been adopted by all local authorities to ensure consistency in identifying concerns in relation to standards, teaching and learning, assessment, leadership, inclusion and school management. Where a concern is identified a 360° plan is put in place and carefully monitored to ensure it has the appropriate impact. Where progress is not sufficient, concerns are escalated to the Chief Education Officer for consideration of further action e.g. use of statutory powers of intervention.</p>
1.08	Professional development for staff in schools has remained a priority for GwE during 2021-2022 with focused learning opportunities for staff at every level e.g. schools leaders, classroom teachers and classroom support staff, all designed to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning to support learners to achieve their potential, particularly following the period of disrupted learning during the pandemic.
1.09	Supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of staff and learners has also been a core focus over the year with the unprecedented challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on children, young people and adults.
1.10	With all local authorities and GwE committed to supporting the Welsh Government’s strategy to achieve one million Welsh speakers by 2050, another constant focus of the regional service over the year has been to provide support for specific projects to enhance the teaching of the Welsh language and other professional development through the well-established school clusters which are also supported by local authority Welsh language teams.
1.11	<p>Governance and accountability arrangements</p> <p>The Management Board comprising of GwE senior managers and the six North Wales Chief Education Officers, monitors matters of governance continuously. GwE has procedures in place to ensure the Joint Committee meetings, where the six North Wales Cabinet Members for Education have governance oversight and decision making powers, supported by the host authority Gwynedd, are conducted effectively and the service is held appropriately to account. A series of reports have been produced and shared with the Management Board and the Joint Committee during the 2021-22 period and are available on the GwE</p>

	<p>website. These reports include the views of schools, staff and local authorities on the effectiveness of regional practice. Each report describes the quality of the provision and identifies areas for improvement to drive the learning agenda forward.</p>
1.12	<p>The main annual report from GwE for 2021-22 is included in the appendices and this is supported by further documents from GWE which are referenced as appendices in their report:</p> <p>Document 1 – GwE Annual Report 2021-2022</p> <p>Appendix 1 – GwE Support during the pandemic Appendix 2 – Impact of GwE’s work (presentation slides) Appendix 3 – Progress Report on Reform Journey Appendix 5 – Renew and Reform Strategy Appendix 5 – Training Data Report Flintshire Appendix 6 – GwE Regional Business Plan 2022-2023</p>
1.13	<p>Looking forward, GwE’s strategic priorities for improvement in 2022-2023 are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum and Assessment - supporting a national curriculum with equity and excellence at its core that sets high standards for learners 2. Developing a high quality education profession - improving the teaching and learning in our schools 3. Leadership - supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards and includes future leadership and professional networks 4. Strong and inclusive schools – committed to excellence, equity and wellbeing 5. Supporting a self-improving system – supporting a system where the education profession have the skills, capacity and agency to continually learn and improve their practice 6. Business – ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business operational support that provides value for money.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within the current financial resources.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions.</p> <p>GwE maintains its own risk register to identify and manage risks on a local, regional and national level which is regularly updated and reported upon to the Management Board and the Joint Committee.</p> <p>The Council's Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>Regular discussions are held with GwE Management Board which comprises of the Senior Management Team of GwE and the six Chief Education Officers of the North Wales authorities.</p> <p>GwE use a range of models and surveys to consider impact, based on national and international research, as well as working collaboratively with strategic Higher Education Institutes (HEI). GwE is working closely with Bangor University on the 'Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact' (CIEREI) Project to establish more effective systems to evaluate the impact of its work.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Document 1: GwE Annual Report 2021-2022</p> <p>APPENDIX 1: GwE support during the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>APPENDIX 2: Impact of GwE's work March 2022</p> <p>APPENDIX 3: Progress Report on Reform Journey - Autumn Term 2021</p> <p>APPENDIX 4: Regional Strategy - Renew and Reform Strategy</p>

	<p>APPENDIX 5: Training Data Report Flintshire</p> <p>APPENDIX 6: GwE Regional Business Plan 2022-2023</p>
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Cwricwlwm i Gymru / Curriculum for Wales</p> <p>https://hwb.gov.wales/cwricwlwm-i-gymru/</p> <p>https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/</p> <p>Cymraeg 2050</p> <p>https://llyw.cymru/cymraeg-2050-strategaeth-y-gymraeg</p> <p>https://gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director Telephone: 01492 806115 E-mail: ArwynThomas@gwegogledd.cymru</p> <p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704019 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>GwE – is the North Wales regional school improvement service working alongside and on behalf of the six North Wales local authorities.</p> <p>SIA – Supporting Improvement Adviser</p> <p>OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives.</p>

PDG – Pupil Development Grant; funding to support the work to improve outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and Looked After Children (LAC). It is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential.

Cymraeg 2050 – Welsh Language Strategy; long-term approach to achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050.



Cydweithio · Dysgu · Llwyddo
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ANNUAL REPORT

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CONTENT

1. Background and context
2. GwE work programme and support to schools during the pandemic: making a difference
3. Evaluating the Impact of our work
4. Supporting schools in their preparation for The Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales
5. Supporting and improving the quality of teaching and leadership
6. Y Gymraeg
7. Wellbeing
8. Peer Engagement
9. Business matters
10. Business plan priorities for 2022-2023

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- **APPENDIX 1:** GwE work programme and support to schools during the covid pandemic
- **APPENDIX 2:** Impact of work streams
- **APPENDIX 3:** Progress Report on Reform Journey - Autumn Term 2021
- **APPENDIX 4:** Regional Strategy - Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression
- **APPENDIX 5:** Business Plan Regional Data
- **APPENDIX 6:** GwE Regional Business Plan 2022-2023

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. This year's GwE Annual Report outlines how GwE staff have re-purposed their work appropriately over the last two years to continue to deliver effective services and support for all their communities of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this difficult period, GwE has stayed true to its vision and values as an institution that is still learning. At the heart of the work with schools and partners were the OECD's transversal themes of Trust, Thinking Together, Time and Technology.

The regional service, in its entirety, has redirected several times during the Covid-19 period in an attempt to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. Flexibility and adaptability and effective collaboration in different teams, often across sectors, have had a significant impact on institutional behaviour. At the core of the redirection, the need to ensure the well-being of school leaders, staff and learners was of utmost importance in any decision-making, ensuring that the service can accurately direct the appropriate level of support, be that operational support or professional dialogue. This involved operational discussions on the safe opening of schools, and professional discussions regarding distance and blended learning.

The report also describes how GwE has continued to support schools in their preparations for The Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales, and in improving the quality of teaching and leadership.

Section 9 outlines GwE governance and accountability arrangements. The Management Board monitors matters of governance continuously and GwE has procedures in place to ensure the Joint Committee meetings are conducted effectively and that decision making is effective. A series of reports have been produced and shared with the Management Board and the Joint Committee during the year. These reports include the views of schools, staff and local authorities on the effectiveness of regional practice. Each report describes the quality of the provision and identifies areas for improvement to drive the learning agenda forward.

The report also identifies strategic and regional priorities for 2022-23. GwE's overall vision is reflected in the 3 year business plan and is further strengthened in the annual business plan.

2. GwE WORK PROGRAMME AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Appendix 1 outlines how the whole service has been re-purposed several times to meet the revised requirements of our stakeholders during the covid pandemic. Our different roles since the end of March 2020 has consisted of:

- Supporting the wellbeing and development of leaders
- Leading from the middle and lateral leadership
- Meaningful Professional Learning
- Collaborative leadership
- Modelling
- Managing stakeholder expectations

There has been a strong emphasis on modelling appropriate and supportive behaviour throughout the period. This has included very regular contact with headteachers to ensure that they get the appropriate support to operate

effectively and also as a sounding board to support their own well-being. Further support for senior leaders well-being has been provided through a series of workshops and webinars which supported their resilience during this difficult period. GwE staff also conducted face to face pastoral visits on behalf of the Local Authorities and also when schools reopened in spring 2021 after the second lockdown period.

GwE sees itself as a partnership organisation, especially with the Local Authorities and even more so during the pandemic and in moving forward. GwE worked effectively with Welsh Government on policy and continuity of learning. It also worked consistently with the other regions and with Estyn in preparing guidance and resources for distance and blended learning and to provide advice on formative and continuous assessment. It has also strengthened the working relationship between those parties with positive professional exchanges, ensuring that the stakeholders are getting quality advice and resources.

One of the main strengths of work across North Wales has been the consistent messaging from the six local authorities through their political education portfolio holders and directors working with GwE to have one common message for the schools in North Wales. This consistency of messaging has been not only welcomed by schools but also by teacher unions and non-teaching unions who welcomed the clarity of messaging and support for their staff.

The six local authorities and GwE have taken a collegiate and collective regional approach to supporting schools throughout the COVID pandemic. This was clearly demonstrated in the consistent regional approach in developing a supportive framework to ensure that all regional schools had the right policies in place together with a comprehensive risk assessment in order to create a safe environment to welcome the children back into schools.

Teamwork, joint working and collaboration has also been at the heart of the work with schools. All schools in the region are part of a cluster or a forum where they can come together to discuss operational issues as well as sharing best practice regarding distance and blended learning. This joint work facilitated by GwE staff has been very successful and sets a very strong infrastructure in place for future work and working relationship across the region.

One noteworthy aspect of the work has also been the bespoke nature of support for teachers and schools. GwE worked on the strengths of individuals within the team and redeployed them where they provided the maximum impact in their roles in supporting individual local authorities, schools, clusters, subject and phase networks. This bespoke provision of support based on strong principles of collaboration, exchanging and sharing and developing the best practice is a key learning principle that we will continue to develop in the next stages of evolving the service.

Schools who were causing concern prior to the pandemic have had access to clear and targeted support to help them through this difficult period. This has been at several levels including network support, support to senior leadership and middle management in those schools and support with provision of distance and blended learning. Schools that have found the lockdown and post lockdown period difficult due to staff having to self-isolate have been supported in various ways. This has included modelling of exemplar materials, webinars, shared materials and resources. Also, GwE staff directly leading, directly teaching in schools or providing distance learning to learners.

A lot of time and energy was put in place to contact international experts and to research international practice to learn and establish the principles of effective distance and blended learning. GwE provided practical support for leaders to enable them to consider their whole school strategic planning of provision for remote and blended learning, refine and evaluate their evolving provision and planning for various scenarios where pupils may be in school and / or at home during the academic year. This has supported schools to have a better strategic overview of their provision.

Many schools acknowledge that parental engagement was a key factor in securing effective remote/blended learning. GwE and the Local Authorities provided a range of guidance to support school in improving parental engagement, including the sharing of good practice.

Many schools also acknowledge that there were operational challenges that changed on a day-to-day basis, where a range of scenarios had to be planned for including cohorts of learners self-isolating or individual / small groups of learners and staff self-isolating. There are many examples of how schools managed these complex situations well, having clear whole school strategies. GwE and the Local Authorities continued to support schools, using clusters and networks of schools to support each other and share resources and strategies. Schools in the GwE region have a significant collection of resources for each age group and these resources can be accessed through the GwE Support Centre: <http://cefnogaeth.gwegogledd.cymru/?lang=en>

GwE also adopted a regional approach to accelerating learning, working on a tri-level approach which included universal support led by the consortium, targeted support jointly led by the consortia and the local authority, with the acute being the responsibility of the local authority. This work was developed on an evidence base approach working closely with Bangor University and regional staff to ensure a range of high-quality resources to support physical and emotional wellbeing, literacy and numeracy, these being made available to all learners across all age range in all schools.

3. EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK

It is important that schools and all partners are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Without such an understanding, the system is unlikely to function efficiently or effectively. There is also a greater likelihood of conflict between the different bodies, drawing energy and focus from the underlying goal of continuous improvement for the benefit of learners. It is ultimately by working in partnerships, based on trust, that GwE, local authorities, governing bodies, headteachers and school staff will have the biggest impact in continuously improving schools.

The learning organisation research indicates that in order for school improvement to make a difference everyone within the organisation has a part to play to bring about positive change in individuals, organisations and learner progress. Impact is seen to be attributable to an intervention, piece of support, or professional learning activity that influences improvement and makes a difference when the conditions are right. This might include changes in the knowledge skills and behaviours of individuals or groups. These changes may occur in the short medium or longer term and should impact on organisational change and outcomes. Impact can be defined as changes that happen to individuals, to defined groups e.g. leaders, practitioners and organisations as a whole, the ultimate impact will be how these changes impact on learner progress.

GwE use a range of models and surveys to consider impact, based on national and international research, e.g., Kirkpatrick model, etc, as well as working collaboratively with our strategic HEI partners. GwE is working closely with Bangor University on the 'Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact' (CIEREI) Project to establish more effective systems to evaluate the impact of our work.

This evaluative process informs future planning and allows GwE to develop and improve current support for schools and future delivery of professional learning programmes across the region. Measuring impact is an area we are continually strengthening to improve our evaluation and planning processes.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Effective collegiate relationships and a collective regional leadership approach between the six local authorities and GwE has ensured:

- Effective co-constructed strategic thinking and direction.
- Strong governance, regional consistency in support, messaging and guidance given to schools.
- Strengthened collaboration between school peers at a cluster/forum level
- Approach in place for effective repurposing of both the service and its schools.
- Schools are well informed and confident that effective support is available should any needs arise.

- School leaders' wellbeing supported through professional learning, regular and clear communication.
- Schools provided with coherent guidance and resources to effectively support vulnerable learners with their wellbeing, engagement and learning.
- Best practice being shared between and across schools and clusters, i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems, blended learning models, etc.

In North Wales, we define impact as the difference that we make to:

- Delivering our values and behaviours
- Developing a culture of collaboration and sharing
- Promoting a self-improving system
- Influencing the wellbeing and achievement of learners
- Developing greater resilience and improved Headteacher wellbeing
- Empowering schools to have greater ownership over their direction of travel
- Increasing practical understanding of curriculum design, planning, assessment and progression
- Developing greater understanding and engagement with the 12 pedagogical principles
- Developing greater ability to innovate and deliver teaching practice that is evidence based
- Improving digital skills within the workforce to enhance the pedagogy

The main impact of GwE work during the pandemic is outlined below:

- Joint working has ensured strong governance and regional consistency in support, messaging and guidance given to schools.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster/forum level has ensured effective co-constructed strategic thinking and direction.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for effective repurposing of both the service and its schools.
- Schools are well informed and confident that effective support is available should any needs arise.
- School leaders' wellbeing supported through regular and clear communication.
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure both remote and blended learning.
- Schools provided with coherent guidance and resources to effectively support vulnerable learners with their wellbeing, engagement and learning.
- Best practice being shared across schools and clusters, i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems, blended learning models, etc.
- Schools and settings have built upon several growth points in preparation for the new curriculum and generally have:
 - a more adaptable and skilled teaching profession;
 - greater focus and emphasise on both learner and staff wellbeing;
 - improved digital competency amongst staff, pupils and parents;
 - a more blended approach to teaching and learning;
 - improved partnerships with parents.

Other outcomes and impact include:

- Effective communication provided via single point of contact (Supporting Improvement Adviser) for school leaders and ease of access to support.
- Schools have been able to remain open to key workers in the event of staff shortages.
- Schools are well informed and confident that support is available should any needs arise. School leaders' wellbeing is supported through regular communication.
- Shared understanding of the importance of the welfare of pupils, parents and staff
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure both Distance and Blended Learning.
- Schools having access to a wealth of quality resources for reference as they plan for and deliver distance and blended learning.
- Comprehensive distance and blended learning models available for schools to adopt, adapt or refer to. This has in turn ensured strengthened leadership and improved balance of work that can be completed at home.
- Co-ordinated approach to supporting schools which has led to greater consistency and quality of remote and

blended learning across the region.

- Best practice being shared across schools i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems etc.
- Strengthened use of ICT to enable effective communication between schools, within schools and with school stakeholders.
- School staff being upskilled through the use of a digital platform for professional development.
- Information shared with the LA is up to date and timely support is given to any School.
- In conjunction with the LA, ensured that the process of appointing school leadership candidates is appropriate and fair.
- Consistent messages disseminated to schools by GwE / LA officers.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster level through digital means ensuring co-constructed strategic thinking.
- Strengthened collaboration between local authority officers and GwE.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for adapting schools for different purposes.
- Effective cascading of key messages to school staff to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Increased collaboration between regions and other stakeholders.
- Increased understanding of key messages and work streams.
- Stronger awareness amongst school leaders of effective strategies to ensure continuation of school business.
- Quality Professional Learning developed in readiness for future needs.
- Newly Qualified Teachers having clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

The impact of our work streams can be seen in Appendix 2.

4. SUPPORTING SCHOOLS IN THEIR PREPARATION FOR THE REFORM JOURNEY AND CURRICULUM FOR WALES

THE REFORM JOURNEY

GwE has continued to support schools in their preparations for The Reform Journey and Curriculum for Wales and has been flexible in its provision in order to meet schools' various needs during the pandemic.

Wales is committed to an ambitious reform agenda to realising a transformational curriculum. The education reform programme in Wales, built around the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW), provides a positive way forward as we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic. It has at its heart a number of guiding ideas:

- That the curriculum and associated teaching, learning and assessment should flow from four clear purposes agreed nationally and pursued locally.
- That those purposes should encompass helping all of our young people to become: ambitious and capable learners; enterprising and creative contributors; ethical and informed citizens; and healthy and confident individuals.
- That young people's learning should build progressively towards those four purposes across their time in school education.
- That teachers and schools should have greater freedom to realise those purposes in ways that can meet the needs and characteristics of the young people and the communities that they serve.

These basic ideas give rise to a number of important implications:

- That the national curriculum framework should establish necessary national consistency of purpose and

- approach but leave wide scope for local decision making about key aspects of learning and teaching.
- That curriculum making is a process that should involve collaboration amongst teachers, schools and wider interests.
- That accountability should not inhibit the quality or narrow the scope of learning. Wherever possible it should pursue quality enhancement rather than narrow quality assurance.
- The success of the reform programme should be judged against the extent to which it leads to better and more relevant learning for young people and to higher standards of achievement. Both the quality of the learning and the nature of standards should relate to the extent to which the agreed purposes are being realised in practice for all young people.

The impact of the pandemic has naturally influenced how schools and settings can move forward with the reform. They need to re-establish the relevance of its four guiding purposes for Wales's young people. In many ways the pandemic has made those four purposes more relevant than ever as schools seek to build the confidence of their young people and rekindle their desire to learn. Schools have had to think deeply about what matters in learning during periods of interrupted schooling and the four purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales stand up well to that examination. The pandemic has also required changes to the nature of the teaching and learning process, not least in the ways in which digital technologies can enhance possibilities for more independent learning.

GwE have worked with fellow regional consortia, Estyn and Welsh Government to set out the expectations on schools and settings in respect of reform as we move towards implementation of Curriculum for Wales in [Curriculum for Wales: The journey to Curriculum Roll-out](#). This document also acknowledges the challenge that Covid-19 continues to present to all schools within the renew and reform strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that even in the most challenging of circumstances positive change is possible. In North Wales, GwE, the Local Authorities, Schools and PRUs have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working. Schools have delivered meaningful teaching and learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences need to be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time and preparing for the future.

The four transversal themes of the learning organisation of time, trust, thinking together and technology have developed as strong foundations of a collaborative way of working as we move forward with the renew and reform agenda.

The response to COVID-19 has of course had a significant impact on schools and is likely to have disrupted some of their plans for preparation and implementing the new curriculum. The report in Appendix 3 – 'Progress Report on the Reform Journey' outlines where schools and PRUs were during the autumn term 2021 as they addressed the renew and reform agenda and is based on evidence gathered by GwE Supporting Improvement Advisers as part of their work in supporting schools.

As we undertake national reform, it's clear that we are in a different place to the one that we imagined when the guidance for the Curriculum for Wales was published. We recognise that some of the preparation time for the curriculum will have been devoted to managing the impact of the pandemic over the past year. On the other hand, with an even stronger focus on well-being and significant investment in teaching and learning, the values underpinning the curriculum have been at the heart of how schools have been working. GwE is fully committed to supporting schools and PRUs to maintain this momentum to ensure that every learner in north Wales is offered provision of the highest standard.

Attached (Appendix 4) is our 'Regional strategy - Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression', which sets out the strategic direction of our work during the next stage. Through working with partners and key stakeholders and listening to them, we have identified themes to support our aim of ensuring that every pupil in north Wales benefits from provision of the highest possible standard. These themes are noted in our Business Plans and implemented through partnership programmes and an offer of generic and differentiated

bespoke support to our schools and PRUs.

THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES (CfW)

The Minister for Education has confirmed that the Curriculum for Wales will continue to be implemented in primary schools, maintained nursery schools and non-maintained nursery PRUs from September 2022. The Minister also confirmed that some additional flexibility will be given to secondary schools. In 2022, schools that are ready to roll out the curriculum to year 7 will be able to press ahead with that. However, formal implementation of the new curriculum will not be mandatory until 2023, with roll-out in that year to years 7 and 8 together. This will also be the case in special schools and all-through schools for 3 to 16-year-olds.

GwE have encouraged secondary and special schools who are able to proceed with their current plans to implement the new curriculum with Year 7 from September 2022. We also realise that some secondary schools will continue their path towards curriculum reform from September 2022, and will implement the new curriculum from September 2023 when it will become mandatory for years 7 and 8. However, it is important that the work of reforming the curriculum, and particularly direct engagement between secondary and primary schools, continues in order to support learner transition irrespective of the timeline for implementation adopted by the secondary school.

Beyond 2023, the Curriculum for Wales will be rolled out on a year-by-year basis, and the first qualifications designed specifically for the Curriculum for Wales will be awarded in the 2026-27 academic year, as planned. The reform of qualifications will play a fundamental role in the success of the curriculum and GwE will support the work of Qualifications Wales over the coming year to help shape a set of qualifications of the highest quality that are aligned with the philosophy of the new curriculum.

As part of the support to schools for the new Curriculum for Wales, GwE has worked with the other regional consortia to develop a national professional learning offer that integrates all aspects of the wider reform including Schools as Learning Organisations, Y Gymraeg (towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050) and the Additional Learning Needs Transformational Bill. This cross regional offer is aimed at supporting all school practitioners, and focuses initially on Senior Leaders with the following themes:

- Leading Change
- Leadership for the new curriculum
- Developing a Shared Vision
- Planning for Curriculum Change – to include curriculum design, progression and assessment
- Leading Pedagogy
- Time and Space for Professional Learning

This professional learning offer was originally scheduled to begin in spring term 2020, however was naturally paused due to the priorities of the Covid-19 pandemic. In discussions with Head teachers across GwE, the professional learning resumed virtually in January 2021 with the Leading Change session. These sessions across the region are cluster-based and enable smaller groups of primary schools and their local secondary school to discuss the new Curriculum for Wales across the 3-16 learning continuum. Across the region, 832 Senior Leaders attended these Leading Change sessions. In recognition of the re-opening of schools to all learners in March and April, the Professional Learning sessions were again paused in March 2021.

Following discussions with the Directors of Education through the GwE Management Board, a series of consultative workshops were held in April 2021 in each Local Authority to listen to feedback from Head teachers on the professional learning offer and how best to re-engage. Over 300 Head teachers attended the consultations.

Feedback indicated:

- Head teachers of both primary and secondary sectors recognise the importance of continuing to collaborate across the sectors to support the 3-16 continuum;

- All leaders recognise the importance of maintaining the momentum of the professional learning but acknowledge the challenge of timing given current pressures and challenges;
- Leaders are keen to work with GwE and to draw on the input of external experts where appropriate;
- Leaders recognise that flexibility in engaging with the professional learning offer is key to ensuring effective engagement.

To support re-engaging with the Curriculum for Wales work, a further leadership planning session was held for each individual cluster across the region to build capacity of clusters to collaborate across the requirements of the reform journey as a whole and form an agreed action plan for each cluster. As part of this, Supporting Improvement Advisers facilitated sessions where schools within a cluster had the opportunity to work collaboratively to strategically plan for the implementation of the curriculum. Adopting a flexible and sensitive approach to the timings of these sessions has been a key aspect of the discussions between GwE, the local authority and schools. Activities to support preparations for the new curriculum at school and cluster level have been identified within School Development Plans.

The use of technology to collaboratively develop cluster plans and websites ensure that the dialogue is ongoing and Senior Leaders are able to continue this work, following discussions back at individual school level.

Further support available to schools also includes a series of 'Think-Pieces' which have been written by the GwE team as part of the weekly reform sessions with Professor Graham Donaldson. These papers, which cover key aspects of the curriculum reform journey including leadership, vision, pedagogy, assessment and curriculum design, have been shared and refined through consultation with wider partners in Local Authorities, Estyn and Bangor University.

In addition to the Professional Learning offer, additional support from GwE is available to schools as they prepare for Curriculum for Wales. This support will be accessed at both cluster and individual school level, including tailored bespoke support where needed.

To ensure schools are ready for first teaching in September, all schools should:

- have completed a high-level curriculum design to meet statutory requirements
- developed a shared understanding of what is important in progression of skills and knowledge
- developed whole school shared understanding of progression & assessment
- have examples of planning for trialling to include assessing learners
- have identified increasing opportunities for professional dialogue across the 3-16 continuum

To enable schools to meet expectations, the GwE offer over the Spring and Summer term will include supporting all schools in developing:

- whole school curriculum design and high-level curriculum statement
- effective AOLE planning
- whole school assessment policy and practice

In preparation for the professional learning offer, GwE staff have developed guidance and exemplar models for whole-school curriculum design, curriculum planning and assessment to aid leaders and teachers as they prepare for roll-out. The resources, models and exemplars have been fully endorsed by Professor Graham Donaldson.

Guidance and resources are utilised by both the Regional and Local Curriculum Networks as they continue to promote and instigate partnership working across the system. This will allow all schools access to a rich library of resources and support as they design and plan their own unique local curriculum. Underpinning the work of the networks will be continued input from GwE staff, thus ensuring that this is a truly collaborative venture.

The initial series of workshops have taken place during February and March to support schools through the process of curriculum design. The workshops focused on creating a high-level curriculum statement where the

rationale is based on local context.

The workshops guide school leaders through different models of design and provide a variety of curriculum statement examples. These models will be further built upon by the regional and local curriculum design networks, providing all schools with a wide variety of examples to consider when approaching their high-level curriculum design and statements. Once a school's rationale and statement is in place, a school will be able to start planning the new curriculum.

Once the curriculum design workshops have been delivered, practitioners from across the region will be able to access professional learning on effective Area of Learning Experience (AOLE) planning. These sessions will prepare leaders and teachers for first teaching of the new curriculum in September. The offer will continue throughout 2022/23 building on learning from first teaching.

The workshops will provide an overview of planning principles followed by working through various models of planning. Workshops will look at:

- Inquiry-based statements or questions as a basis to the planning.
- Planning considerations for the teacher
- Activity ideas
- Progression steps and assessment considerations
- Different planning models i.e. disciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, integrated models

Various examples of planning models have been created for all sectors and for all six AOLEs. These models will be shared with schools and will be utilised by the regional and local networks as a basis in ensuring additional models are created. This will add further capacity to the system.

The third area of support that will be provided over the next two terms is for whole school assessment policy and practice. Learner progress is a key aspect that runs through both the design and planning of the new curriculum. A series of workshops will take place providing schools with an overview of the national guidance and exploring the principles of assessment and learner progress. As part of these sessions, schools will have access to models and examples of assessment, including a progress tracker designed and created by GwE staff. The Regional and Local Assessment Network will again build upon this work and provide schools with many reference points to explore while considering assessment policies and practices.

A matrix of GwE support will be provided to all schools, detailing the professional learning offer available to support them in ensuring the new curriculum is realized in their schools. Schools will be able to choose which areas of support are appropriate to them and have access to a wide variety of resources, models and examples.

CURRICULUM FOR WALES NETWORKS

GwE continues to facilitate Curriculum for Wales networks at both regional and local levels. The Networks work in partnership with Professor Graham Donaldson, GwE and the six North Wales LAs in developing effective AOLE practice which will help schools on the Reform Journey.

In June 2021, schools were invited to express an interest to be part of the regional Curriculum for Wales networks to contribute to GwE's ongoing support programme for schools in the following areas:

- Whole school Curriculum Design
- Progression and Assessment
- Unpacking the potential of one of the AOLEs
- Language, Literacy and Communication (both Welsh and English)
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science & Technology
- Humanities

- Health and Wellbeing
- Expressive Arts

During the Summer term 2021, 300 teachers initially expressed an interest in being part of the networks. During September and October 2021, many more schools requested to be part of the local networks and there are now over 700 practitioners from school settings across the region committed to being part of this work.

Through the networks, practitioners are accessing:

- networking opportunities with school colleagues locally and regionally
- a deepening of understanding of the curriculum design process
- co-construction opportunities and the sharing of examples of local curriculum planning
- development and sharing of examples of assessment within Curriculum for Wales

All materials and recordings of regional meetings are available for all schools to access on the GwE support centre along with resources and examples of design and planning work. In addition to this, link Supporting Improvement Officers are available to offer bespoke support at school and cluster/alliance level.

5. SUPPORTING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP

GwE and the Local Authorities know their schools very well, and provides a robust and appropriate challenge as well as effective support and intervention for them. There are very clear strategies, policies and processes in place for school improvement that are understood by all stakeholders. There are robust procedures in place both regionally and locally for setting a direction and holding the regional service to account. The specific role of the service in school improvement is explicit and clear to all stakeholders.

GwE evaluates its work regularly and uses qualitative data and information effectively to ensure that areas for improvement are identified swiftly and are firmly addressed via detailed business planning. There is a clear and effective process to ensure that the regional service meets Local Authorities corporate priorities and targets.

LEADERSHIP

GwE provide a rich array of professional learning to develop leadership at every level, together with targeted focused support for schools as required. In addition, there are robust arrangements in place where school leaders collaborate to support one another in primary clusters and secondary alliances and take ownership and increasing accountability for each other's improvement journey.

During 2021, 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.

For schools whose performance is consistently strong or strong overall, improvements are addressed through peer collaboration, LA/GwE's generic Professional Learning Programme, courses of action and professional learning programmes noted in the School Development Plan and via GwE's bespoke support plans for the school. This is the approach taken with the secondary schools in 2021-22. However, when Authority/GwE procedures highlight a concern, more intense support is targeted through the 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. In order to ensure an agreed

understanding and consistency of approach, training was organised for all officers and advisers. Once a school is identified as causing concern, the lead officer, Core Lead and Link Improvement Support Adviser work with the school's leadership team to develop a holistic 360 support plan. The multi-agency group takes responsibility for ensuring that the holistic plan and monitoring are undertaken effectively. There are arrangements in place to review plans on a regular basis and, where appropriate, to amend them. Where concerns arise about lack or pace of progress, these are escalated to the Head of Education through meetings of the Quality Standards Board so that an appropriate decision is taken regarding whether or not to execute statutory powers.

The regular flow of information between officers and GwE advisers has ensured effective implementation within the structures. Regular meetings are held between relevant departments and agencies in order to take into account any other schools approaching the threshold and to consider early intervention.

GwE and Local Authorities have an effective procedure to support schools with their self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Schools are firmly challenged on the quality of their self-evaluation processes, and through their visits the Supporting Improvement Advisers support schools effectively to strengthen their evaluation processes such as scrutiny of work, lesson observations and learning trails.

Almost all schools have managed to continue to evaluate the quality of their provision throughout the Covid-19 period using a variety of useful sources of information and evidence, including regular discussions with other schools and GwE link officer. Most schools have gathered the views of stakeholders effectively via questionnaires for pupils and parents, telephone calls or conversations with individuals. Based on these findings, most adapted and improved their provision considerably.

Effective collaboration takes place between the Local Authorities and GwE to support the development of leaders across the 'Leadership Pathway'. Information regarding their progress is regularly communicated via Regional Leadership Group meetings. This thorough collaboration and communication ensure that Local Authorities can identify developmental needs and target further support if necessary.

All leadership programmes have been adapted for virtual delivery. Teachers have shown a very noble commitment to develop their practice and leadership skills during the Covid-19 period.

Effective collaboration takes place to support new head teachers and acting head teachers. The programme consists of a rich array of regular training throughout the educational year in order to equip head teachers to be able to successfully undertake their work as head teachers, including briefing sessions on finance management, safeguarding, site safety amongst other managerial elements (heads and experienced leaders are also invited to attend). All new heads have access to a mentor who is an experienced and successful head to provide firm support on local managerial matters in relation to their work as head teachers. This means that new heads are provided with timely and punctual support and that they have access to several sources of support, as required, as well as good opportunities to develop their knowledge and deepen their skills in the role.

A rich array of professional development is provided for teaching assistants through the national programmes, i.e. the Teaching Assistants Learning Pathway. TALP includes 'Induction', 'Practicing Assistants' and the 'Aspiring HLTAs' programme, leading up to HLTA status assessment. In the same manner as the Leadership programme for teachers, these programmes encourage individuals to become reflective practitioners who evaluate their practice against the 'Professional standards for assisting teaching'.

All TALP programmes have been adapted for virtual delivery, a change that has been very well-received by teaching assistants. The 'Induction' programme was put in the form of a playlist The 'Practicing Assistants' programme was adapted during 2021-22 for virtual delivery.

A new national Aspiring HLTA programme was created in 2020 which has now been running over four cycles. Upon completion of the new Aspiring HLTA programme, and meeting literacy and numeracy qualification requirements,

teaching assistants can apply for HLTA status assessment.

Focused collaboration between the Local Authorities and GwE saw very inclusive support being provided to school leaders in order to ensure that their settings were safe for return after the first lockdown. A strategic approach was adopted across the region to create a fit for purpose tool in the form of a very manageable dashboard. This dashboard provides leaders with firm guidance on identifying specific risks in their planning for children, staff and other stakeholders upon return to school. In addition to this, this tool provides very thorough guidance to schools on how to minimise identified risks - by collating all relevant guidance documents in one place under headings such as Safety, Site and Facilities, Staffing amongst other headings.

Effective collaboration at a cluster level in the primary and in the secondary alliance is a strength in the region. All Supporting Improvement Advisers working as Link Advisers with the primary schools are experienced and have been supporting specific clusters for an extended period. This means that the regional service and local authorities now have a thorough knowledge of the strengths and needs of specific schools and clusters/groups of schools. There are numerous examples across the primary catchment areas that show that systems and processes for collaboration are maturing amongst schools in order to share expertise and reduce workload in response to the Reform Journey. At best, collaboration involves leaders from all tiers meeting regularly to discuss and share good practice, collaborating in a structured and directed manner and successfully developing a wide variety of areas such as Curriculum for Wales, pedagogy, Additional Learning Needs, digital and primary-secondary transition. This collaboration has resulted in improving learner experiences and outcomes.

Head teachers and staff engaged in the programme all agree that this process has been a firm foundation upon which they have been able to collaborate and share resources over the lockdowns. They also noted that it is a good foundation upon which to develop future leaders amongst the improvement facilitators.

TEACHING

The quality of teaching is generally robust across the sectors and purposeful action is taken to improve and align where there are anomalies. GwE has been taking positive steps to support leaders and teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning during and prior to the Covid-19 period. Since the beginning of lockdown, the region has been proactive in their support for schools. A wide range of quality materials and models for distance and blended learning have been provided through digital platforms such as 'Google Classroom' and [GwE Support Centre Canolfan Cefnogaeth GwE](#). The work has drawn on the findings of research into effective international practices.

Collaboration in clusters and alliances to jointly develop and share resources and successful practices in this regard has been a strength and testifies to the strong working relationship between stakeholders. Head teachers have appreciated the input of the Link Supporting Improvement Advisers and Authority officers in terms of providing guidance and support for schools and clusters to develop their provisions. Facilitating cluster and alliance meetings has been instrumental in sharing ideas and good practice for developing their distance and blended learning provision. It was also noted that these meetings have had a positive impact on their mental health and well-being.

We have also provided a range of high-quality guidance and resources to support schools to improve parental engagement, and have also worked with Mike Gershon to facilitate parental access to quality materials so that they also can support their children. 'Helping your Child to Learn' (HYCTL) and 'Helping your Teen to Learn' (HYTTL) materials, and the 'Revise with Mike' resource have been very well-received. The range of revision strategies has also impacted on teachers' classroom floor practices as they prepare KS4 and 5 learners for this year's examinations.

Over the last two and a half years, most schools have made very effective use of guidelines and guidance on delivering distance and blended learning including planning successful recall and learning practices as learners return to face-to-face learning. There has also been an appropriate focus across schools on identifying a baseline upon learners' return and implementing purposeful plans in response to any gaps in learning.

Over the period, GwE has supported schools to evaluate the quality of their blended and distance learning provision, and has shared examples and local case studies of effective provisions to minimise variations. Regular discussions with leaders and teachers over the period, scrutiny of learners' work (both on-site and virtually) and in some instances, learning trails, have all resulted in valuable and focused experiences being provided to the ability range, under very difficult and challenging circumstances. There is also explicit evidence that a higher number of practitioners are now able to use the technology more confidently to support learning. This is one of the key growth points.

The support of the Accelerated Learning Programme had a positive impact on basic skills and well-being once children returned to formal education after lockdown. All schools had ensured that they carried out an internal assessment procedure, whether qualitative or quantitative, in order to identify the impact of lockdown on children's well-being and learning. Although only a small minority of parents and families did not engage in tasks and activities during lockdown, this contributed to a situation where pupils required accelerated support upon returning to the classroom. Teachers' deemed that lockdown affected the confidence and well-being of the majority of pupils, with the behaviour of a few pupils having worsened. The accelerated support work was successfully driven by school leaders once baseline standards had been identified.

All schools have made purposeful use of the various grants and most have employed or extended teachers' or assistants' hours in order to target groups and individuals in literacy, numeracy and well-being. GwE provided guidance and guidelines, with a good number of schools accessing specific training such as Trauma Informed Schools well-being sessions, SAFMEDS, Headsprout and Elklan training.

Overall, schools have risen well to the challenge and can testify to clear improvements and progress in the basic skills of many of the pupils targeted through these accelerated programmes.

Schools are continuing to deliver effective intervention strategies for pupils, e.g. through daily precision teaching sessions, SAMEDS sessions to develop Welsh and English reading/spelling skills, Tric a Chlic sessions to develop literacy skills in the Foundation Phase, specific Trauma Informed Schools activities, conducting Nurture groups, Talkabout, or Mind Mechanics. Schools acknowledge that this precise targeting has a positive impact on pupils' standards, well-being and confidence and a good number note they have seen vulnerable pupils being able to cope well with mainstream classroom challenges and various social challenges.

Schools have been provided with detailed guidance to support their preparations for delivering the new curriculum. The focus on pedagogy and the 12 principles are central to this work. Since September 2021, the service and school representatives have been working effectively with Professor Graham Donaldson in an attempt to deepen understanding of the Curriculum for Wales Framework. This work has involved promoting successful collaboration meaning that schools have been able to jointly-plan examples and models to share across the region.

GwE and Shirley Clarke's Formative Assessment Action Research project has been one of the pillars of the professional learning programme since November 2017 with schools engaging with the project in 3 tiers, over a 4-year period (Tier 3 over 2 years due to Covid-19 complications). According to a direct impact evaluation on the region's schools:

- there has been a positive impact on the quality of teaching in classes, standards of attainment, pupil well-being, attitudes to learning and development as independent learners.
- teachers have deepened understanding of effective pedagogy on the basis of wide and current research, both on a local and international level. They have also become leaders of teaching in their schools and beyond.
- teachers have undertaken action research in their schools, and have taken part in professional collaboration and become confident pioneers. Consequently, schools that are a part of the project are developing well as learning organisations.
- there has been a sharper focus on effective pedagogy in cluster collaborations.
- there have been explicit inputs to improving schools' readiness and preparations for delivering the new

- curriculum e.g. increasing focus on the four purposes, 12 pedagogical principles, schools as learning organisations, professional standards for leaders and teachers, assessment purposes and planning principles.
- schools have made good and effective use of formative assessment principles and strategies for distance and blended learning.
- parents have come to understand more about formative assessment in their efforts to support their children at home e.g. learning powers, learning outcomes, success criteria and verbal feedback.

There has also been a consistent focus on supporting schools to improve the quality of differentiated support across the ability range. Establishing the secondary MAT Coordinators' Network is one specific example of this work. Specific guidance and support have been issued to develop better understanding and confidence amongst coordinators to lead on this across schools and to develop their processes and systems for identifying, tracking and supporting this particular group of learners. There was also input to ensure that they were aware of the national developments in this regard. As a group, they have collaborated to ensure a shared understanding and how to ensure an appropriate level of challenge and how to promote recall and revision strategies. Feedback from the schools involved has been extremely positive and work is ongoing to evaluate the impact on the quality of provision and standards of achievement.

The service has also worked effectively with an external expert to provide first-class professional development to develop effective styles of differentiation and effective use of discussion in classroom. This has equipped staff to make incisive use of various approaches such as taxonomy, effective questioning, modelling and scaffolding to plan effective differentiation in response to the universal needs of the range of learners in class. This programme has been delivered at three tiers - bespoke sessions for Additional Learning Needs co-ordinators so that they can successfully support teachers in their schools; sessions for assistants to empower them to deal with and support learners in class along with sessions for classroom teachers on developing a rich differentiated provision and to improve the use of discussion in support of that.

A range of networks and forums are up and running to support leaders, at every level, to be able to take the lead on pedagogy with increased confidence and effectiveness. At secondary, for example, a Teaching and Learning Network has been set up for senior leaders. There is evidence that this collaboration in the network has been a particular strength and mutual support has been key in order to ensure consistency of teaching and learning approach in the secondary schools. In order to support teaching and learning over lockdown, there was a specific focus on supporting leaders to respond to the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning. The Network worked within general parameters and principles with the aim of ensuring that the experiences of every child are the best they can be. As part of GwE's support for the network, guidance was provided on Distance and Blended Learning and resources were shared in order to support schools in this regard.

The network was a vehicle to respond to professional learning needs in order to deliver on the principles and digital training was ensured. In addition, resources were developed and successful practices were shared. The impact of this training and collaboration was reflected in teachers' confidence to adapt their teaching to suit different scenarios, in the breadth of experiences available and in the quality and format of resources available for pupils.

The impact of actions taken during the pandemic was evaluated by ensuring leaders had access to Google Classroom to verify the quality of departmental provision; regular virtual meetings between SMT and staff to discuss and adapt any work programmes/lessons; responding to learner voice/questionnaires; pupil forums and councils. Regular phone calls to homes has also been a strong feature of the team approach that has been apparent in schools, and findings lead to subsequent action being taken or teaching and learning being adapted. Throughout the period, schools have invited Supporting Improvement Advisers to partake in scrutiny exercises and learning trails. During lockdowns and blended learning, they were given access to teaching documents and pupils' work. Reports by Supporting Improvement Advisers refer to the positive impact of action on provision.

The network's coverage of teaching and learning is ongoing and the current focus is on developing the 12 pedagogical principles as part of the preparations for the new curriculum.

The subject networks have also been active for the secondary core subjects. The work has focused on supporting middle leaders to take the lead on teaching and learning; on facilitating and supporting peer collaboration and on strengthening evaluation and improvement planning processes and procedures; on promoting a better understanding of planning and pedagogy in the context of the new curriculum; on improving literacy and numeracy interventions as well as supporting specific aspects of KS4 and KS5 preparations and assessments. The work of the networks is much appreciated by secondary leaders who make effective use of the quality resources that have been jointly-developed and hosted on GwE's Support Centre, Tanio websites [Science], MathsCymru [Maths], Y Pair [Welsh] and Herio [English].

The impact of the network's work is clear on several levels and across a range of aspects:

- middle leaders have been up-skilled in their knowledge and understanding of methodology and quality of planning e.g. recall strategies, strategies to improve oral and writing work, use of technical equipment to develop subject skills etc.
- middle leaders have improved their knowledge and understanding of the 12 pedagogical principles and preparations for the new curriculum.
- good practices have been disseminated and are being more widely adopted. A considerable number of leaders have noted their appreciation of the opportunities to share ideas and developments and to support one another professionally.
- increasing use of the digital library resources on GwE's Support Centre and of the subject websites to improve learner experiences, to prepare learners for examinations and to prepare purposeful intervention programmes.
- leaders and teachers are more confident in their digital skills.
- leaders are more confident with pupil predictions, assessment and grading.
- effective targeting to promote Welsh oracy skills e.g. 'Ein Llais Ni' project.

In addition to the networks and forums, specific support is available to all individual secondary schools and this targeting has resulted in clear improvements in several instances. The content of the Support Plan for individual schools is based on the school's specific needs arising from their self-evaluation and which is a priority in the School Development Plan. Support to improve aspects of teaching and learning underpins these plans. They are jointly produced with the senior management teams and Supporting Improvement Adviser. The relationship and collaboration between schools and GwE is very strong and the positive impact of the support is evident in several aspects of schools' work.

In the primary sector all link Supporting Improvement Advisers are very experienced in working with specific schools over an extended period of time. This has led to them having a sound knowledge of strengths and improvement needs - both at an individual school and cluster level. There are numerous examples of purposeful and effective support for schools on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning.

There is robust evidence that the toolkit for 3-8-year-olds at an individual school, cluster or authority level, is effective. In most schools, this has had a positive impact on provision and pupil outcomes as well as reducing variation within schools. The support has also ensured a deeper understanding of Foundation Phase principles and pedagogy, in line with the Curriculum for Wales 'Enabling Learning' and 'Pedagogy' guidance. The toolkit includes a professional offer for SMT, teachers and assistants of 3-8-year-olds in the form of termly networks, a regional training programme and bespoke cluster training. The focus is primarily on developing aspects of pedagogy, teaching and well-being within practical and holistic learning experiences, and training practitioners to develop as effective learning facilitators. All practitioners have access to the professional offer and resources to support learning via GwE's Support Centre. Many schools within the Authority use the webinars in staff meetings and INSET to up-skill the workforce. Evidence from schools note that this has a positive impact on the quality of provision (teaching and learning experiences) and on pupil outcomes.

Since 2019, the professional offer has involved Y3 practitioners in order to build on some of the Foundation Principles in KS2 in preparation for Curriculum for Wales. The professional offer continued throughout lockdown with the provision planned to target those aspects identified by schools as needing to be prioritised following

Covid-19, e.g. pupils' communication skills and health and well-being. The focus was upon developing these skills within appropriate developmental pedagogy. Evidence of the impact of this support programme includes:

- deepening practitioners' understanding of how the pedagogical principles (including 12 CfW principles) link with one another to create productive and effective learning experiences.
- practitioners using a range of developmentally appropriate pedagogical methods that meet the needs of learners (including emotional and social skills).
- practitioners creating effective cross-curricular links to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, drawing on learners' previous knowledge and experiences.
- practitioners not only considering the physical learning environment, but also the emotional climate that supports learners to reach their potential.
- practitioners' deepening their understanding of the importance of daily practice in order to improve their understanding of pupils' needs, skills and progress; allowing practitioners to find the preferred learning approaches of children and young people and how best to engage them in learning; identifying those pupils who might require extra support to help them reach their full potential.
- practitioners understanding that effective observations enable them to plan an appropriate provision that supports learner commitment and enjoyment within their learning activities, as well as planning to support them to move on to the next stage in their learning.
- practitioners understanding the need for assessment to be an ongoing process rooted in day-to-day practices, invisible within teaching and learning.

Overall, observations by Supporting Improvement Advisers and Estyn inspection findings where relevant, note that the support programme has a positive impact on the quality of provision and pupil outcomes with practitioners making better use of observations and Assessment for Learning strategies to plan the next stages of learning to allow for progress.

When concerns arise about a primary school, a bespoke and focused Support Plan is agreed with the school leaders and Authority. These plans are monitored on a regular basis and adapted accordingly. Historically, these schools make firm progress as a result of the specific intervention.

Across both sectors, quality support and guidance has been provided to improve the quality of planning and provision in literacy, numeracy and digital competence.

In addition to the professional learning menu, individual schools have received specific input and the impact of the interventions can be seen in the quality and standards of skills in several schools, in teachers' confidence levels and in the progress seen in collaboration between schools. The provision of guidance and support provided to schools includes planning guidance for Literacy/Numeracy coordinators/TA; support for NQTs on delivering effective lessons, specific support for developing oracy in order to improve mathematical and scientific skills; guidance to improve the level of challenge in planning; deepening mathematical skills and improving higher-order reading skills. The programme is further enhanced by termly meetings of the relevant networks. Over the Covid-19 period, there has been close collaboration with schools to develop materials and distance learning packs to support schools in developing learners' basic skills. The impact of the work has been captured in several evaluative reports and in the feedback received from school leaders.

In cooperation with Bangor University and research experts, resources, programmes and packs have been developed to support reading proficiency in both languages. Collaboration has also taken place on SAFMEDS materials to support numeracy skills. In several schools, these programmes have had a positive impact on learners' reading fluency and on the confidence of teachers and staff to deliver.

Live briefing sessions were delivered to heads and leaders on how to make effective use of the national assessments in reading and number which improved understanding and confidence when measuring individual learners progress over the period.

In the secondary, there was a specific focus on supporting accelerated learning programmes and providing intervention resources in KS3 and guidance on strategies to improve parental engagement. Moreover, a toolkit was developed for Literacy which supports planning and scaffolding opportunities for reading and writing and assisting with learning and developing vocabulary along with revision and recall materials. These have been shared with schools via the Tanio website and GwE's Support Centre. This has resulted in better quality intervention programmes and schools report improved fluency and confidence in learners and a better understanding amongst staff of how to approach scaffolding and planning.

In Digital Competence, the professional learning offer focuses on making effective use of the services available through Hwb to develop teaching and learning and to develop learners' digital competence. In light of training, there has been increase in the number of learners logging on to Hwb every month.

In response to the pandemic, a series of webinars and on-line training were provided focusing on making effective use of learning platforms to sustain teaching and learning during periods of distance and blended learning.

A Digital Facilitator Programme was recently delivered where every cluster nominated an individual, a Digital Champion, to work closely with the LAs and GwE to develop strategic leadership of the digital domain within the cluster. Clusters have started to re-engage with the programme by nominating a facilitator as representative. The majority of clusters have formed a working party to oversee digital developments and to fully incorporate digital competence as part of the Curriculum for Wales.

Specific support has been provided also to improve the quality of teaching and learning in STEM subjects. STEM Gogledd is an ESF European grant funded project, operational across Anglesey, Conwy and Gwynedd. The project began in 2019 with its main aim being to inspire, encourage and support young people to study STEM subjects at school, and encourage them to study and pursue a career in STEM. The project uses Careers Wales trained mentors to provide STEM guidance and support for students on a 1:1 and group basis, and runs alongside the STEM Gogledd Hub which is also a reference point for careers, apprenticeships and post-16 courses.

Groups of pupils are also engaged to challenge stereotypes and promote equal opportunity for girls in particular, encouraging them to partake in other STEM projects such as Technocamps. STEM Gogledd also works directly with teachers to support STEM in their preparations for Curriculum for Wales and also support them to integrate Careers and Work-Related Experiences in the curriculum. Miller Research Audit is carrying out a full evaluation of the project and the final report will be released later in 2022 after consultation with all stakeholders. Based on our involvement with schools over the period, there is firm evidence of the project's positive impact across a wide-range of aspects. Details have been captured in a comprehensive report.

6. Y GYMRAEG

EIN LLAIS NI

This is a co-operative project (funded by Welsh Government) to develop Welsh oracy teaching and learning strategies between GwE schools, Bangor University and other partners. The aim of the project is to:

- Focus on developing learners' Welsh oracy in a modern context relevant to Wales.
- Integrate traditional strategies for teaching oracy with digital strategies.
- Place emphasis on offering 'real' experiences that are relevant to real life.
- Develop pedagogy that integrates naturally with the planning principles and vision of the Curriculum for Wales.
- Develop teachers as action researchers - reflecting on modern research, modelling strategies and evaluating success.
- Teachers sharing case studies of what has worked well.
- Produce an evaluation of the project and a reference for teachers by Bangor University researchers.
- Develop a supplementary pack for professional learning

All Welsh-medium or bilingual Regional schools were given the opportunity to be involved in the Project, and the

100 schools that applied were accepted. The Authorities and GwE encouraged schools through strategic forums and direct contacts to express an interest.

Teachers who have committed to the project are developing effectively as teachers who undertake action research, and are beginning to share their findings to date. They are all working towards submitting a case study by the end of the summer term 2022, elaborating on the success of strategies to promote oral skills through the medium of Welsh.

Schools that are part of the network have had opportunities to share their experiences, and there is positive feedback in terms of the early impact of trialling the strategies in their classrooms. They have appreciated hearing from other schools, including taking ideas and adapting them for their classes.

GwE and Bangor University have collaborated on developing very comprehensive supplementary resources for teachers to assist them with the research. These include:

- **Ein Llais Ni website** - all presentations from the initial launching conference, research papers and documents, examples of successful practice, suggestions for teaching and learning, access to 'Trysorfa Llais 21'(CSC), case studies, examples of digital programmes and apps to promote oral work etc.
- **Podcasts** - a series of conversations on oracy and bilingualism.
- **Newsletters** - to share updates on any developments with schools, including responding to questions and examples from schools.
- **Webinars** - series of sessions promoting the use of digital tools to support and enrich oral work.
- **Networks** - an opportunity to share information and experiences throughout the year.
- **On Demand sessions** - an informal session for any project school to attend, to discuss their work and receive updates.
- **Research** - input from experienced researchers on the associated research and any useful recommendations to support teachers' options when planning.

From the direct contact with project teachers either via telephone calls/Teams, during on-demand meetings or in breakout rooms in networks, it was noted that being involved in the project has allowed a specific and successful focus on developing speaking and listening skills in Welsh, in which there has been a deterioration following lockdown periods, and that purposeful planning for progress in those skills is beginning to come to fruition, especially in terms of enthusiasm and confidence to use the Welsh language. The project has also improved teachers' confidence to develop digital and more modern methods of developing oral skills, which ties in effectively to the formative assessment process, especially aspects such as reflecting on work and improving the quality of spoken language. Consequently, learners are enthusiastic to complete their tasks through the medium of Welsh.

There is a strong link between the project and preparing for the Curriculum for Wales, and the Welsh aspect, with schools encouraged to provide 'real' experiences, provides a purpose and context with learners seeing the language in use beyond the school gates and at work in their community. Digital webinars have effectively equipped teachers with ideas for planning the enrichment of oral skills using relevant programmes or apps, and have provided suggestions and ideas for improving the quality of speaking and listening.

CLUSTER WORK

Funding for developing informal Welsh and the Welsh language skills of the workforce has been provided on an annual basis for 3 years, directly to clusters in order to support schools to hold Language Charter activities and support any member of staff to develop language skills on the appropriate level.

Regular and constructive meetings are held with local authority officers in order to collaborate on the support for schools. Consequently, there is agreement on the principles of the cluster co-ordinators' programme of work in order to plan for the grant funding for Welsh. This has successfully led to consistency of action across the north.

Co-ordinators plan purposefully and update a 'dashboard' spreadsheet for Welsh funding in consultation with Local Authority officers in order to collate planning information, costs and report on progress. As a result of close collaboration, the process is progressing smoothly and purposefully with funding allocated to the 54 clusters in 2021-22. Co-ordinators report on progress and impact in meetings during the year and formally at the end of the financial year in order to exemplify good practice and identify next steps for development.

LANGUAGE CHARTER

In a few clusters planned activities have been adapted during the year due to staffing challenges, or it was not possible to take the intended action. Nevertheless, there are excellent examples where learners have had exciting experiences of planning and preparing for developing the use of the Welsh language e.g. collaborating with many artists to undertake various activities such as composing school anthems, composing new melodies, language games, creating podcasts to celebrate the local area. Consequently, this has led to deepening a sense of pride in Welsh identity and inspiring the use of spoken language. In addition, there are examples of successful collaboration between primary and secondary schools, with one Welsh department in a secondary school setting musical challenges for the primary schools in the cluster. Co-ordinators are in the process of updating the information on progress and impact in their cluster 'dashboard', taking into account next steps for planning for 2022-23 funding.

DEVELOPING THE LANGUAGE SKILLS OF THE WORKFORCE

Data has been received by the National Language Centre regarding Croeso on-line training. Following discussions with Welsh Government, the Welsh in a Year course has been offered to schools for the next academic year. Monthly meetings are being held with Canolfan Bedwyr and Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg (Bangor University) to promote courses that are already up-and-running and to collaborate on developing specific courses for Authorities or education practitioners e.g. course for teaching assistants.

7. WELLBEING

Our main priority during this time of unprecedented change and disruption has been the safety and well-being of our children and our workforce, doing all we can to support the physical and mental well-being of our children, young people and workforce throughout this period. There has been a focus on a variety of aspects within the wellbeing agenda e.g. resilience, adapting to a changing environment, personal reflection, action learning etc.

All Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) have ensured regular contact with the head teacher of their link schools, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure that they receive the required support. To support this further, a series of workshops was be offered to school leaders and education officers.

PDG

The regional PDG strategy has been implemented across the region with all school's/settings accessing the digital Thinking Differently professional learning offer in addition to the SIA support. All schools / settings are accessing the PDG grant dashboard as evidence of funds.

There is evidence of effective use of the additional consortia led funding to support the accelerated learning additional projects in line with the research team at CIEREI / health and wellbeing whole school and targeted support. The PDG is aligned to supporting whole school approach to wellbeing and targeted support/interventions. Early Years PDG element of the regional strategy – a number of Talk Boost sessions has been delivered for targeted schools; 8 schools have received the training so far. We have also developed a LA annual monitoring form showing the proposed use of the grant in line with the regional priorities for non-maintained settings.

LAC PDG & WELLBEING

The main developments are as follows:

- Most schools have started the process of change in school culture/ethos and mindsets via the whole school

framework of Trauma Informed Schools / Restorative Approach and Nurture.

- Nearly all schools have attended the TIS whole school approach PL across the region.
- Nearly all schools have attended at least 1 of our Wellbeing PL sessions.
- Clusters who have high number of LAC have all attended TIS or Observational Checklist PL.
- More Relationship based policies & strategies in schools as a result of the Trauma Informed Schools PL.
- Evidence of developing collaborative practice between schools/clusters/CAMHS and children services.
- More settings confident in using a range of impact and evaluation measures in regards to wellbeing.
- Stronger communication and collaboration in place with local authorities and Health in regards to the targeted and universal support.
- Regional and LA Wellbeing mapping completed.
- Increase in schools using a neuro-science based approach within teaching and learning, with
 - Staff more confident in their approaches
 - Learners more able to self-regulate / reflect on their behaviors and feelings.
 - Changes in Learners Behavior and Exclusions
 - Attitudes to learning changed –both learners/staff
 - Learners happier in school
- Practical TIS Toolkit for Schools to use via the universal approach
- Established Trauma Informed Community network / Mental Health First Aid that brings together education with mental health to support learners.
- Staff accessing Reflective Space and support sessions.
- LAC PDG has been aligned to whole school focus and CfW with nearly all clusters having completed the dashboard.
- All LA/Schools have had access to the Designated Lead PL offer.
- Increase in the schools who have LAC who have engaged with our PLO
- Supported schools/settings to implement the professional learning into the curriculum delivery and pedagogy in addition to additional interventions.
- Delivered 3 PL sessions to NQT's across the region to be trauma informed and embed practice into teaching and learning.
- 3 primary schools in the region have been awarded Trauma Informed Status.
- We have 2 trainers qualified to deliver TIS whole school training in Welsh.
- During the last months SIA's have achieved TIS practitioner status and incorporated their skills and knowledge into the supporting school's role.

8. PEER ENGAGEMENT

The support for individual schools from GwE is ongoing and is strengthened by the alliances between schools and the Partnership Programme that reflect their quality enhancement processes.

Prior to the COVID pandemic agreement was reached on a regional set of principles for peer engagement. For this purpose, a peer review model was distributed (the Schools Partnership Programme [SPP]) to stakeholders, approved by the Management Board and Joint Committee.

Continuous training and support were provided for all GwE SIAs on peer review, facilitation, mentoring and coaching. By March 2022, twenty-nine SIAs have been trained as peer reviewers and improvement facilitators as part of the SPP. All GwE staff members received SPP refresher training on 17 September, 2021. On 4 October 2021, thirteen SIAs were trained to deliver the Programme, and following a programme of observing training they can now deliver SPP training to schools and clusters. This means that by March 2022 twenty-one SIAs have the capacity to deliver the Programme successfully.

By March 2022, eighteen clusters/alliances (105 schools) have received SPP training, and they have already undertaken peer review, or are preparing to undertake peer review during the summer term / beginning of the

autumn term 2022. One hundred and sixty-one Headteachers / senior leaders have been trained as peer reviewers across the region. One hundred and fifty-four senior leaders / middle leaders and proficient teachers have been trained as 'improvement facilitators'. This enabled leaders and teachers to benefit from professional education of a high standard and it will contribute to improving leadership capacity across the region. The first tier of primary schools and clusters involved in the Programme received training at the beginning of the summer term 2021. Due to the impact of the pandemic additional training was offered for those schools to train additional staff and increase their capacity to complete the work in January 2022. The latest training for secondary schools / clusters involved in the Programme was delivered during March 2022. All special schools in the region completed the full training during the summer term 2021.

There is a programme in place to offer SPP training to all 407 regional schools and Referral Units. The intention is to train approximately 15 clusters every term during the 2021-22 academic year, and in 2022-23. The Programme will be aligned to developing a new curriculum in order to support schools and clusters to evaluate their progress towards the reform journey. To this end a series of reflection questions with a focus on the reform journey have been created in alignment with the peer process.

In September 2021, schools and clusters were asked to express an interest in participating in SPP training. A total of 33 clusters across the region expressed interest, which included 193 regional schools. During March 2022, thirty-three schools received training and it has now been arranged for the remaining clusters to receive training during the summer/autumn term 2022. Three clusters / alliances have been identified to be included in a case study on research into the impact of the Programme in 2022-23.

9. BUSINESS MATTERS

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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

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

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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

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

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

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

where there is an element of risk in terms of improving experiences and educational outcomes for learners.

VALUE FOR MONEY

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

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

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

RISK REGISTER

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

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

10. BUSINESS PLAN PRIORITIES 2022-2023

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. The Business Plan also addresses Welsh Government and the Local Authorities strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE.

Additionally, GwE will work in partnership with Local Authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate. It also takes into consideration the views and priorities of other middle tier partners such as Estyn, Qualifications Wales, WJEC, National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL), Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Education Workforce Council (EWC).

Our priorities are a combination of improving school provision, leadership and outcomes, as well as delivering the reform journey. Our approach to the reform journey has been integrated in all aspects of our work from the beginning. Not one element of the reform journey can stand alone. It is viewed from the need of learners and the baseline of individual schools and clusters to deliver change according to agreed expectations.

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

Our focus is on support and on capacity-building for a self-improving system. Challenge Advisers have become 'Supporting Improvement Advisers' and this is more than a name change – it signals a determination to build trust

with key stakeholders and to move away from a top-down approach to school improvement, developing a more long-term, supportive and sustainable strategy.

In partnership with stakeholders, GwE has developed a long-term supportive and sustainable strategy which is successfully building capacity across the region to meet the challenges of the wider reform. The integrated approach has focused on developing collaborative opportunities across clusters of schools. To further support schools, GwE has developed the concept of creating termly milestones through the information management system G6. These offer all schools an opportunity to reflect and through continuous professional dialogue with SIAs, activity and its impact along with identification of next steps are shared.

Professional learning will be central to ensuring that all school staff have the professional knowledge and skills to deliver on the education reforms that are well underway in Wales. Taking into consideration the system expectations and working in collaboration with partners, a clear framework for themes for professional learning has been identified for practitioners within schools.

Our **strategic priorities** for improvement for 2022-2023 are:

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1. Curriculum & Assessment** - Supporting a national curriculum with equity & excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners
- 2. Developing a high-quality education profession** - improving the teaching & learning in our schools
- 3. Leadership** - supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks
- 4. Strong & inclusive schools** committed to excellence, equity & well-being
- 5. Supporting a self improving system** - supporting a system in which the education profession have the skills, capacity & agency to continually learn & improve their practice
- 6. Business** - ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.

The four purposes as outlined in the *Curriculum for Wales* guidance should be the starting point and aspiration for schools as they prepare to design the new curriculum and support their learners to become:

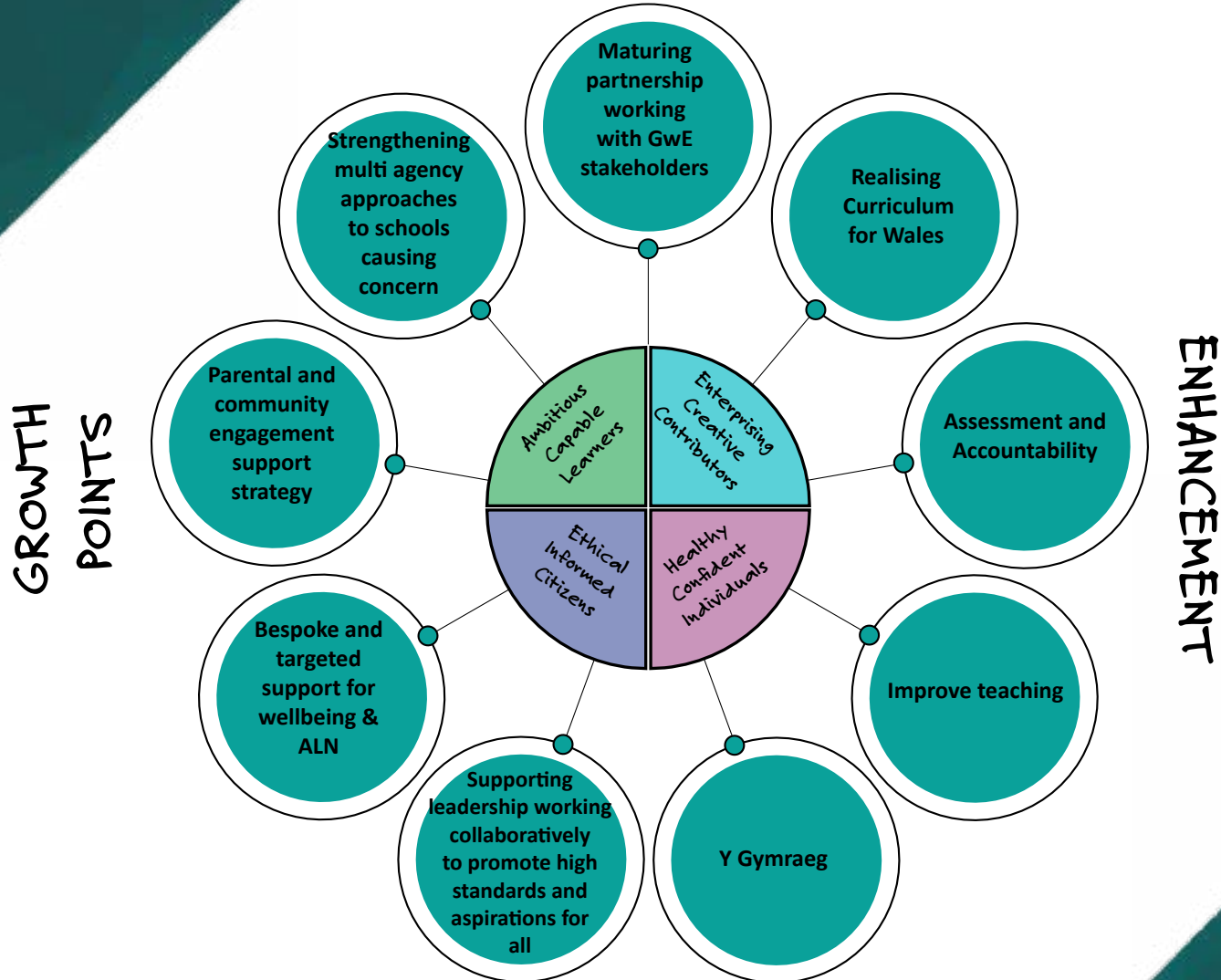
- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Our **regional priorities for 2022-23** are outlined below are aimed to support schools as they work towards those four purposes (Appendix 6 – GwE Regional Business Plan 2022-2023).

These priorities are supported by the service's detailed plans, outlining how and when the aspects of each priority will be delivered and setting expectations for the next steps in delivering the reform journey. Also, each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser.

OUR HIGH LEVEL PRIORITIES 2022-2023

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



Collaboration

Learning Organisation

Quality Enhancement

Developing leadership and supporting workforce wellbeing



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RHAGLEN WAITH GWE A CHEFNOGAETH I YSGOLION YN YSTOD PANDEMIG COVID

GWE WORK PROGRAMME AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC



- Gwasanaeth yn ei gyfanrwydd wedi ailbwrpasu sawl gwaith er mwyn diwallu gofynion diwygiedig y rhanddeiliaid.
- Whole service has been repurposed several times to meet the revised requirements of stakeholders.

Gwahanol rolau ers diwedd mis Mawrth 2020

- **Cefnogi lles a datblygiad arweinwyr – Atebolrwydd a monitro**
- **Arwain o'r canol ac arweinyddiaeth ar draws**
- **Dysgu proffesiynol ystyrlon**
- **Arweinyddiaeth gydweithredol**
- **Modelu**
- **Rheoli disgwyliadau rhanddeiliaid**

Our different roles since the end of March 2020

- **Supporting the wellbeing and development of leaders - Accountability and monitoring**
- **Leading from the middle and lateral leadership**
- **Meaningful Professional Learning**
- **Collaborative leadership**
- **Modelling**
- **Managing stakeholder expectations**

Gwaith a wnaed ers mis Mawrth 2020

Cam 1: Cyn y cyfnod clo

- Cytuno ar strategaeth gyfathrebu â Chyfarwyddwyr y chwe awdurdod lleol.
- Cyswllt ffôn rheolaidd â phob ysgol drwy'r YCG i gefnogi penaethiaid i gadw ysgolion ar agor a lleddfu pryderon.
- Lleoli staff GwE mewn ysgolion ac UCD, ble roedd angen, i'w cefnogi i aros ar agor.
- Lleoli staff GwE yn yr awdurdodau i'w cefnogi gyda gwasanaethau hanfodol.
- Timau GwE yn llwytho adnoddau cychwynnol ar Google Classroom penodol i gefnogi ysgolion ddechrau cynllunio ar gyfer dysgu o bell.

Work undertaken between March 2020 – present

Phase 1: Pre-lockdown

- Communication strategy agreed with Directors of six local authorities.
- Regular phone contact with each school through SIA to support head teachers to keep schools open and assuage concerns.
- Deploy GwE staff in schools and PRUs where identified to support them to stay open.
- Deploy GwE staff in the authorities to support them with essential services.
- GwE teams upload initial resources to a designated Google classroom to support schools with initial planning for distance learning.

Cam 2: Cefnogi ysgolion ar ddechrau'r cyfnod clo

- Cadw mewn cysylltiad rheolaidd ag ysgolion er mwyn sicrhau iechyd a lles y staff a'r disgyblion.
- Parhau i gefnogi ysgolion neu Hybiau unigol ble roedd prinder staff yno.
- Uwch sgilio staff GwE o ran dysgu'n ddigidol.
- Datblygu canllawiau, cymorth ac adnoddau dysgu i ysgolion ddechrau cefnogi dysgu o bell mewn ysgolion.
- Cefnogi ysgolion gyda Dysgu o Bell a chynhyrchu fideos defnyddiol ar 'Sut i....' fel bod athrawon yn gallu datblygu ac amrywio eu dulliau dysgu o bell.

Phase 2: Supporting schools at the beginning of lockdown

- Keeping regular contact with schools in order to ensure health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils.
- Continuing to support individual schools or Hubs when there was a shortage of staff to attend.
- Upskilling of GwE staff for digital learning.
- Developing guidance, support and learning resources for schools to begin to support distance learning in schools.
- Supporting schools with Digital Learning and producing useful 'How To' videos so that teachers can develop and vary their distance learning methodology.

Cam 3: Dysgu o Bell

- Datblygu **canllawiau dysgu o bell** i ysgolion ar y cyd â rhanbarthau eraill.
- Ar y cychwyn, llwytho deunyddiau a syniadau priodol ar Google Classrooms ar gyfer pob Cyfnod Allweddol.
- Cymorth fel bod athrawon ac arweinwyr yn gallu gweithredu yn unol â'r arferion gorau wrth greu a defnyddio adnoddau dysgu ar-lein.
- Datblygu modelau DP effeithiol o fewn GwE a'u rhannu'n genedlaethol a'u mabwysiadu gan bob rhanbarth.
- Annog ysgolion, arweinwyr ac athrawon i rannu adnodau ar draws y gyfundrefn ac annog ysgolion i ddefnyddio Hwb i rannu eu dulliau gweithredu, eu cynlluniau a'u hadnoddau dysgu.
- Sicrhau bod gan bob dysgwr fynediad cyfartal at ddysgu ac adnoddau dysgu.
- Pob YCG wedi cael DP priodol ar yr hyn yw DP effeithiol.

Phase 3: Distance Learning

- Developed **distance learning guidance** for schools in collaboration with other regions.
- Initially, google classrooms populated with appropriate materials and ideas for all Key Stages to refer to.
- Support to enable leaders and teachers to act in line with best practice in creating and using online learning resources.
- Effective DL Models were developed in GwE and were shared nationally and adopted by all regions.
- Schools, leaders and teachers were encouraged to share resources across the system and to encourage schools to use Hwb to share their approaches, plans and learning resources.
- Ensured all learners have an equitable access to learning and learning resources.
- All SIAs to have appropriate PL as to what makes effective DL.

Cam 4: Cefnogi ysgolion i ail agor

- Cydweithio â'r chwe Awdurdod Lleol.
- Sefydlu trefn gyfathrebu glir efo rhanddeiliaid allweddol.
- Cyfarfod yn wythnosol â'r Cyfarwyddwyr a'r Deilyddion Portffolio Addysg.
- Creu Fframwaith Polisi a Dangosfwrdd.
- Modelu asesiad risg i bob sector.
- Adnabod rolau rhanbarthol a lleol o ran cefnogi dysgwyr bregus.
- Uwch sgilio staff GwE i gefnogi arweinwyr ysgolion yn y meysydd hyn.

Phase 4: Supporting schools to re-open

- Joint work with 6 Local Authorities.
- Establish clear lines of communication with key stakeholders.
- Weekly meetings with Directors and Education portfolio holders.
- Created a Policy Framework and Dashboard.
- Modelled risk assessment for each sector.
- Regional and local roles identified in supporting Vulnerable learners.
- Upskilled GwE staff to support school leadership in these areas.

Cam 5: Dysgu Cyfunol

- Uwch sgilio tîm GwE gyda gwaith ymchwil rhyngwladol ar ddysgu cyfunol.
- Plethu'r Cwricwlwm i Gymru yn naturiol â'r arferion presennol.
- Unedau aml-ddisgyblaethol i atgyfnerthu a datblygu sgiliau.
- GAC/Cymwysterau/Arholiadau

Phase 5: Blended Learning

- Upskilling of GwE team with international research on blended learning.
- Naturally blending CfW into current practice.
- Multi disciplinary units to consolidate and develop skills.
- CAGs / Qualifications / Exams

Cam 6 Dysgu ar Garlam

- Triongl o angen;
- Lles corfforol;
- Lles emosiynol;
- Llythrennedd a rhifedd;
- Sail y dystiolaeth.

Phase 6 Accelerated Learning

- Triangle of need;
- Physical well being;
- Emotional well being;
- Literacy and numeracy;
- Evidence base.

Cam 7

Cymorth cyfunol i ysgolion ac ALL

- Canolfan Cefnogaeth GwE
- Adborth o'r 'cyfnod gweithredol' gan ysgolion. Rhannu arferion gorau.
- Cynllunio ar gyfer gwahanol sefyllfaoedd, ar wahanol lefelau.
- Symud yr agenda dysgu yn y cyfnod nesaf. Cefnogi ysgolion o ran DC – cynllunio a'r ddarpariaeth
- Cefnogi Arweinyddiaeth / Penaethiaid – atgyfnerthu hyder ac adeiladu gwytnwch i'r system.
- Dysgu Proffesiynol
- Cefnogi ALL (cynhwysedd)
- Lles dysgwyr
- Cyfathrebu a chydweithio

Phase 7

Blended support to schools and LAs

- GwE Support Centre
- Feedback from 'operational period' from schools. Shared good practice.
- Planning for different scenarios, on several levels.
- Moving the learning agenda forwards in the next phase. Support schools as regards BL – planning and provision.
- Support for Leadership/Head teachers – restoring confidence and resilience building within the system.
- Professional Learning
- LA Support (capacity)
- Pupil wellbeing
- Communication and collaboration

Cydweithio â Chymheiriaid

- Datblygu ar fuddsoddiad cryf mewn gwaith a chydweithio clwstwr.
- Hwyluso cydweithio clwstwr o fewn sector, ac ar draws sector, i gefnogi ysgolion drwy'r pedwar cam.
- Hwyluso cyfarfodydd i arweinwyr dysgu ac addysgu a rhwydweithiau pynciol i drafod dulliau dysgu o bell a chyfunol (math PISA).
- Cydweithio â phenaethiaid a Swyddogion yr ALL drwy gyfarfodydd fforymau strategol.
- Cydweithio â swyddogion yr ALL drwy grŵp safonau lleol.
- Hwyluso gwaith i gyd-lunio modelau dysgu cyfunol.
- Cydweithio â phartneriaid yn yr haen ganol.
- Arwyddo Memorandwm Dealltwriaeth rhwng GwE a Phrifysgol Bangor.

Peer Collaboration

- Building on strong investment in cluster working and collaboration.
- Facilitation of sector and cross-sector cluster collaboration to support schools through the four phases.
- Facilitation of meetings for teaching and learning leads and subject networks to discuss distance and blended learning approaches (PISA style).
- Collaboration with head teachers and LA Officers via strategic forum meetings.
- Collaboration with LA officers via local standards group.
- Facilitation of co-construction of blended learning models.
- Collaboration with middle tier partners.
- MoU between GwE and Bangor University signed off.

Ein rôl ni wrth symud ymlaen:

- **Cefnogi lles a datblygiad arweinwyr – Atebolrwydd a monitro**
- **Arwain o’r canol ac arweinyddiaeth ar draws**
- **Dysgu proffesiynol ystyrlon**
- **Arweinyddiaeth gydweithredol**
- **Modelu**
- **Rheoli disgwyliadau rhanddeiliaid**

Our role in going forward:

- **Supporting the wellbeing and development of leaders - Accountability and monitoring**
- **Leading from the middle and lateral leadership**
- **Meaningful Professional Learning**
- **Collaborative leadership**
- **Modelling**
- **Managing stakeholder expectations**

Canllawiau ac adnoddau

- Google Classroom
- Cymorthyddion
- Grŵp Dychwelyd i'r Ysgol rhanbarthol
 - Aseidiadau Risg
 - Dangosfwrdd
 - Lles
 - AD
 - Cyfathrebu
- Weminarau
- Gwefan DC
- Dysgu Carlam

Guidance and resources

- Google Classroom
- Support staff;
- Regional return to School Group;
 - Risk assessments;
 - Dashboard;
 - Well being;
 - HR
 - Communication
- Webinars;
- BL Website
- ALP

Dysgu Proffesiynol

- Canllawiau DC a DoB
- Rhaglen waith GwE
- Rhwydweithiau Dysgu ac Addysgu a phynciol
- Hyfforddiant i'r Clystyrau
- Cwricwlwm i Gymru

Professional Learning

- DL and BL guidance;
- GwE work programme;
- Teaching and Learning and subject Networks;
- Training for clusters
- Curriculum for Wales

Cyfathrebu

- Un i un gyda phennaeth;
- Clwstwr;
- Bwrdd Rheoli;
- Fforymau Penaethiaid;
- BAS;
- Aelodau Etholedig;
- Cyd Bwyllgor;
- Bwletin a'r wefan.

Communication

- One to one with HT;
- Cluster;
- Management Board;
- HT fora;
- LAQB;
- Elected members;
- Joint Committee;
- Bulletin and website.

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Workstream - The 12 Pedagogical Principles

Difference made

- Schools are developing further as self-improving schools with a deepened understanding of a collegiate approach to improving teaching and learning
- Schools are developing as learning organisations by collaborating in research and to implement shared understanding, consistency in planning and delivering the pedagogical principles in schools across the 3-16 continuum within the clusters
- Raising standards of teaching and learning in schools and a solid foundation for Curriculum for Wales
- An agreed vision for pedagogy in place in the clusters that contributes to realising the 4 Purposes
- Deepen practitioners understanding of how the pedagogical principles relate with each other in the creation of productive, effective learning experiences.
- Practitioners using a blend of developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches that responds to learner needs(including emotional and social skills)
- Practitioners creating effective cross-curricular connections to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, drawing on learners' previous knowledge and experiences.
- Practitioners to consider not only the physical spaces but also the emotional climate that support learners to achieve their potential.
- Pupils taking responsibility for their own learning and developing their metacognitive skills.
- Pupil voice having a more integral role in the teaching and learning.
- Pupils can make connections to solve rich, authentic real-life problems by using their critical and creative thinking skills.

Workstream - Formative Assessment

Difference made

- Participating schools have developed well as learning organisations, undertaken action research , and have had valuable opportunities to collaborate with schools across the region
- Teachers have deepened their understanding of effective pedagogy based on extensive and current local and international research
- Consistency of messages on effective teaching principles
- Positive impact on learner independence, wellbeing and attitude to learning
- Positive impact on learning climate, teaching and learning quality
- Has made a significant contribution to schools' readiness and preparations for the Reform Journey and the CfW

Workstream - Formative Assessment and Assessment

Difference made

- Deepening practitioners understanding of the importance of observation in their everyday practice to:
 - gain a greater understanding of the needs, skills and progress of pupils
 - allows practitioners to identify the ways in which children and young people prefer to learn, and how best to motivate them to participate in the learning process.
 - identify those learners who might need extra support to help them reach their full potential.
- Practitioners have a clearer understanding that effective observations enable them to plan appropriate provision that supports learners' involvement and enjoyment in their learning, as well as planning to support them in moving to the next stage of learning.
- Greater understanding that assessment needs to be an ongoing process embedded into day-to-day practice, in a way that is indistinguishable from teaching and learning



GwE and Shirley Clarke Formative Assessment Action Research Implementation, Impact and Evolving Practice



GwE

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Aims

- ▶ Build expertise across the region to collaborate on pedagogy and self-improvement
- ▶ Raise teaching standards and ensure consistently high quality teaching across and within schools
- ▶ Develop teams of teachers to be active researchers
- ▶ Update teachers with current research findings
- ▶ Support teachers as they review and adapt their practice, develop their confidence and expertise to lead others.
- ▶ Share and celebrate successes and passion for teaching
- ▶ All this in preparation for Curriculum for Wales and the national reform journey

The vision/ the plan

Tier 1 (October 2017 - Nov 2018)

27 schools - 54 teachers

Formative Assessment Action Research Teams led by Shirley Clarke

Tier 2 (Sept 2018- Sept 2019)

Formative Assessment Action Research Teams led by Tier 1 and GwE following Shirley Clarke's work

Tier 3 (Sept 2019- Sept 2020)

The remainder of the schools in the region.

Formative Assessment Action Research Teams led by Tiers 1, 2 and GwE following Shirley Clarke's work

Numbers

89% of the region's schools

- 96% Primary
- 80% Secondary
- 70% Special

	Schools	Teachers
Tier 1	27	54
Tier 2	193	386
Tier 3	140	261
TOTAL	360	701

Research Areas - over a year

Growth mindset ,learning powers, Learning zone 'bullseye' diagram

Talk Partners

Prior Knowledge Questioning

Learning Intentions - out of context, when to present, recording, Open and closed

Success Criteria - pupils co- constructing, closed (compulsory) and open (choice) SC, exemplification of 'excellence

Feedback - oral and written, before, during and after a lesson.

Eliminate ability grouping

Eliminate comparative reward

Reducing cognitive load

Measuring Impact

Used both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the impact of teacher's action research

Project teachers;

Discussion in structured review meetings,

Discussions with their schools' Supporting Improvement Adviser

Questionnaires

Collaboration with Bangor University:

Administered 3 questionnaires

- Teachers' Evidence Informed Practice
- Teachers' understanding and confidence with Formative assessment strategies
- Pupils feedback questionnaire

PhD Student Research - Tier 2 schools - using a health economics perspective to evaluate the regional action research

Estyn - for Tiers 1 and 2. Inspection Area 2 (Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning) and Inspection Area 3 (Teaching and Learning Experiences).

Workstream - Developing Pedagogy during the lockdown (Digital Learning)

Difference made

Increased number of schools using a range of digital services to support teaching and learning and early evidence shows that the enhanced usage during the lockdown period has been sustained since returning to school.

In response to the pandemic we hosted a series of webinars and produced online training that focused on making effective use of learning platforms to support teaching and learning through periods of distance and blended learning. Following the training offered, there has been an average increase of 326% in the number of learners logging in to Hwb monthly. There is a 341% increase in the number of times each learner engages with Hwb on average each month compared to pre covid months. In 2021 'Google Workspace for Education' login data increased by 904% through Hwb. In 2022 to date the average remains 771% above pre-pandemic levels suggesting that these platforms continue to be used regularly within schools.

- Total number of asynchronous support videos views - 9,693 views
- Total number of users participated on online asynchronous courses – 948
- Regional Hwb engagement average for Quarter 3 – 98.3%

Number of effective examples uploaded to GSC (School to School) - [GwE Support Centre - School to School](#)

- Total number of page views of effective examples uploaded to GSC (School to School) - 27,576

Number of useful resources uploaded to GSC – [GwE Support Centre](#)

- Total number of page views - 123,690
- Total number of downloads - 23,067

Workstream - Assessment

Difference made

- Most schools in the region are part of an emerging dialogue on revising and developing assessment processes
- Small number of schools trialling a progress record

Workstream - MAT

Difference made

- Increased focus on needs of MAT pupils
- Schools adopting T and L approaches suited to MAT and useful for all pupils.
- Increased precision in pedagogical approaches in schools.
- Refined understanding of what challenge in T and L is – and isn't
- Providing teachers with practical teaching strategies based on recent research
- Ensuring the issue of challenge and high aspiration feeds into development of CfW

Workstream - Differentiation

Difference made

- Schools had access to bilingual resources on differentiation covering a range of learning needs
- Schools had ongoing support to embed and develop according to own school needs
- Additional support for English and Welsh departments provided a depth and focus on application

Workstream - Developing Pedagogy during the lockdown (Distance Learning, Blended Learning and Live Learning)

Difference made

- A greater understanding of how adaptations to the school day structures can be further developed to support learning within the new curriculum
- Pupil and parent voice have contributed to monitoring of engagement and wellbeing. Schools have responded better to feedback and adapted their provision appropriately.
- An effective blended approach to remote learning including live learning adopted in most schools. A variety of methods used including recorded video presentations, use of breakout rooms, online quizzes and opportunities for independent study time to apply new knowledge and skills. Schools continue to build upon this to further develop their teaching and learning.
- SIAs have supported all schools to evaluate their provision and with planning to build on successes to develop CfW.
- Evolved GwE PL offer - recordings of all PL virtual sessions has offered flexibility and access to all members of staff in schools

Workstream – Evolving and Strengthening Peer Engagement

Difference made

- Strengthened collaboration at all levels across the region
- Greater ownership within partnerships of the improvement journey for each school
- Increasing readiness and confidence to share practice between schools, clusters and alliances

- Number of schools / clusters participating in the program: 105/18
- Number of trained Peer Reviewers: 161
- Number of Improvement Facilitators trained: 154
- Number of schools / clusters for the next tier: 154/20

Workstream - ALN

Difference made

- Develops effective collaboration between ALNcos
- Schools fully aware of the Transformation requirements.
- Schools able to identify effectively areas for further development with implementation of the transformation.

Workstream – Trauma Informed Practice (Wellbeing)

Difference made

- Nearly all schools/settings have accessed 1-day whole school training on TIS practice. Over 120 schools have gone on to complete the 11-day Diploma. As a result, schools are now using a neuro-science based approach within teaching and learning. Staff are more confidence tin their approaches and pupils are more able to self-regulate and reflect on their behaviours and feelings (a key element to reducing toxic stress and mitigating a life-long trajectory of mental ill-health).
- We are the first region in the country to develop a Trauma Informed Community network that brings together education with other sectors who work holistically with children.
- Networks of practitioners built and offering both formal and peer supervision and support building well-being and capacity of staff.
- We have teachers training as trainers to further develop capacity and embed a common language and practice across the region and Wales. We also have 16 short films showcasing effective practise and impact.

Workstream – Wellbeing of Leaders/Staff

Difference made

- All leaders who have taken part in the pilot have embraced the opportunity to access 6 x reflective sessions.
- Nearly all, 17 out of 20 colleagues in the initial phase of the offer have requested continuing sessions and the offer now has a waiting list.

Workstream – Universal Wellbeing Support

Difference made

- Aligned funding to develop better collaborative practice
- More settings confident in using a range of Impact and evaluation measures regarding wellbeing.
- Stronger communication and collaboration in place with local authorities and key stakeholders
- A range of evidence-based resources/ guidance is available to support schools with wellbeing models and professional learning offer

Workstream - Supporting Parents

Difference made

- Enables parents to play a critical role in providing learning opportunities at home and in linking what children learn at school with what happens elsewhere.
- Builds upon increased parental engagement that developed during COVID pandemic and provides a valuable tool for schools if there are further lockdown.

Workstream – Supporting Teaching Assistants with their teaching

Difference made

- Increase in engagement of teaching assistants in professional development.
- Google Classroom has raised the awareness of teaching assistants of the training available to them and led to an increase in numbers on the national programmes within the region. It is also a valuable tool for schools for INSET days and should a further lockdown arise.
- Improved awareness of the new curriculum and the ability to support pupils.
- Induction – changing the delivery of this training has resulted in numbers doubling during 2020-21 to over 100.
- Aspiring HLTA – raising professional skills leading towards HLTA status, with 85% achieving the status at the end of Cylch 1.

Difference made

- As a result of establishing and delivering the collaborative 'Ein Llais Ni' project (between GwE and Bangor University), teachers involved in the project now have a better understanding of the importance of purposeful planning to improve opportunities and the quality of learners' speaking and listening skills. This has also resulted in developing teachers' action research skills and increasing their use of evidence in order to select successful and specific teaching methods for their learners.
- Partnership working with Bangor University, amongst others, has resulted in Welsh-medium evidence-based intervention programmes being compiled and evaluated (reading, language comprehension and vocabulary recognition).
- By empowering discussions and collaborations with local authorities, arrangements and activities involving the cluster plans to support Welsh have deepened and developed effectively. There is robust evidence that collaboration and joint-development have resulted in strengthening the provision for learners across sectors and in every linguistic context.
- Full commitment to the Sabbatical courses has been successful and has further built teachers' confidence to speak Welsh and inspired them to continue to develop their skills.
- GwE staff continue to receive weekly Welsh lessons and are becoming more confident and are fully committed to attending a week-long course at Nant Gwrtheyrn at the beginning of April.

Workstream - Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: The Accelerating Learning Programme

RRRS projects:

- **Improving Fluency in Oral Reading (iFOR) Project:** These resources are focused on the use of evidence-informed teaching and fluency-building strategies to help pupils improve basic reading skills. 42 schools signed up for training in spring term 2021-22. All schools will now be invited to attend four remote implementation support sessions in November 2021, January, March and May 2022, and will be able to contact the research team for any support in the meantime. Further development of the Welsh medium materials is also underway, bringing them in line with the more recent developments of the English medium resources. Schools are also being invited to get involved in measuring progress in Oral Reading Fluency using the DIBELS screening test as well as trailing the use of these fluency materials by parents at home. 103 teachers that have accessed the bilingual Google Classroom resources.
- **Remote Instruction of Language and Literacy (RILL) Project:** RILL is an 8-week teaching programme that can be delivered either remotely or in school. It is designed to help maintain and/or improve reading and spelling skills for children with and without literacy difficulties, and targets core skills for word-level literacy (phonological awareness, vocabulary, word reading and spelling). In 2021 we developed a bilingual version of RILL. 54 schools have signed up for training in September 2021, the majority being Welsh medium schools. 31 schools and 55 teachers have been trained in RILL so far. In addition to a full day training, we currently offer weekly drop-in sessions to support teachers. We have also developed a Hwb network where teachers can access information and training materials (e.g., tutorials and how to videos), ask questions, and reflect on their experience with the research team/other teachers.
- **Keeping Pupils Reading (KPR) Project:** This is a continuation of our longstanding Headsprout implementation projects. Headsprout Early reading and comprehension programme is an evidence-based intervention to help struggling readers in primary schools. This project is designed to support schools and parents make effective use of Headsprout programmes. 63 schools have engaged with this support since 2020. This includes over 700 views of the teacher and parent support videos and resource centre. 74 teachers have joined the Hwb support network, and many of these are literacy and/or ALN specialists.

Workstream - Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: The Accelerating Learning Programme

RRRS projects:

- **Evidence Reviews:** These four reviews provide a summary of the current evidence for a range of commonly used programmes and interventions. For each programme, a range of practical information useful for school leaders is presented, including information on efficacy, cost, training requirements and curriculum links. These are hosted on the GwE Support Centre. These reviews are on the GwE Support Centre and have been promoted as part of Welsh Government's Evidence Informed Profession Project (EIPP).
- **SAFMEDS numeracy support:** Say All Fast Minute Every Day Shuffled (SAFMEDS) is an evidence-based teaching strategy designed to help pupils improve their fluency and progress in mathematics. This resource is focused on the use of evidence-informed teaching and fluency-building strategies to help pupils improve basic number skills. The strategies have been identified as having a strong theoretical research base and alongside positive evidence from efficacy trials. The strategy can be used in class, online and at home. The following SAFMEDS resources have been created and shared with schools: Monthly 'drop-in' sessions have been accessible to all regional schools; Bespoke training delivered to regional schools and PRUs; Promotion of SAFMEDS through the Bulletin and GwE Support Centre; Creation of bilingual resources; SAFMEDS online tutorial; SAFMEDS bespoke online website; Introduction to Precision Teaching training; Additional Phase SAFMEDS hand-held cards to extend breadth of coverage from the Numeracy Framework; Commissioned creation of new Learning materials – these can be used as targeted and universal provision, targeting regular retrieval practice and fluency development.

Work stream - Research and Evaluation

- **Evidence-Informed Profession Project (EIPP):** We have recruited 11 clusters (41 schools) to this project from all six LAs. The launch meeting took place in December 2022, and the research team are now distributing the baseline survey to schools before we commence the school input sessions from February to June 2022. We have delivered two 'active ingredient' evidence sessions for schools in 2022, namely 'using logic models' and using evidence reviews'.
- **National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP):** We currently have 42 schools participating in the NPEP project, comprising 11 lead and 31 partner schools across all LAs. GwE continue to work with Bangor and Glyndwr university staff to support these schools via half termly meetings and input on research and evaluation methods. We meet these schools regularly to support their enquiry and evaluation work.
- **Developing a model for collaborative research with schools:** Two research papers accepted for publication this year:
 - Owen, K., Watkins, R. C. and Hughes, J. C. (2022). From Evidence-Informed to Evidence-Based: An Evidence Building Framework for Education. *Review of Education*
 - Pegram, J., Watkins, R. C., Hoerger, M. and Hughes, J. C. (2022). Assessing the Range and Evidence-Base of Interventions in a Typical School Cluster. *Review of Education*

Workstream – REGIONAL AND LOCAL AOLE NETWORKS

Brief Overview

- All schools invited to be part of regional and local Curriculum for Wales networks. **300+** expressions of interest in July 2021, rising to **700+** expressions of interest by October 2021.
- March 2022, currently have **733** members from schools, GwE SIAs, LA colleagues, CABAN staff
- **49** networks have been established - 6 x AOLEs, curriculum design, progression & assessment
- Infrastructure established with monthly regional meetings with Professor Graham Donaldson attending and offering guidance / feedback - focus of meetings based on expectations within **Journey to Rollout**
- All local meetings across all 6 LAs meet monthly in between the regional meetings
- Communication key aspect in sharing work with all schools through GwE SIAs, website, regular updates at Headteacher forums
- Established a TEAMS infrastructure where regional and all local networks have dedicated TEAMS to share work and collaborate
- Realises GwE strategy to support both leaders and teachers to engage in professional learning and collaboration

Difference made

- Between **117-130** Regional group members meeting monthly has enabled understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework and principles of working to **deepen significantly**
- Regional chairs, who are school practitioners report they have **increased confidence and ownership** to establish local communication channels, leading discussions in local forums and across clusters of schools
- **Increased number of schools** developing and sharing examples of their approaches to curriculum design and planning
- **Increased number of website hits** accessing **greater number of materials and examples** shared by networks & schools – 3923 hits on the Networks page within Curriculum for Wales Jan - March 2022
- **Increased usage and communication across TEAMS** areas where Individuals within networks share key messages and examples of further sharing within their clusters and secondary alliances.
- **Confidence in the system** that there is a clear and transparent strategy to respond to the statutory requirements of September 2022.

Curriculum for Wales Workshops:

- Leading Change sessions took place in Feb 2021 with 30 sessions and 732 SLT practitioners attending
- 54 sessions during June – July 2021 based on shared vision, planning for curriculum change sessions (108 hours of PL)
- % who've attended 1 session or more in June/July was 80.3%
- 1155 attended the sessions = 2310 hours of Professional Learning for school leaders
- All clusters have access to bespoke website link with padlets and collaborative documents which act as central resource base for PL work, capture discussions and identify areas for further local discussions (examples available)

Curriculum Design Workshops

- Target audience was SLT members and 10 sessions run virtually over a week period in March 2022
- 101 Secondary SLT members, 504 primary SLT members, Special schools/PRUs 16 and 8 other consortia/Estyn attended
- Many SLTs used these sessions to have wider staff join the webinar for discussions
- All schools have had access to this material and follow up sessions with SIAs taking place in most schools/clusters
- CFW regional and local networks able to feed into PL with examples of high level curriculum summaries and principles of design in line with Journey to Rollout expectations

Progression & Assessment Workshops

- Target audience was SLT members and 10 sessions run virtually over a week period in March 2022
- 141 Secondary SLT members, 620 primary SLT members, Special schools/PRUs 18 and 11 other consortia/Estyn attended
- CFW networks feeding into examples shared on the purposes of assessment, along with Heads sharing their experiences
- Very positive feedback received 'the session was spot on! Excellent messages presented in a clear and simple way.'
- All materials and recordings available on GwE CFW support centre – xxx hits

Principles of planning workshops to follow in April 2022 (rearranged due to feedback from schools on their capacity)

Next phases of cross-regional national PL programme for CFW to be shared in April.

Workstream – PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Difference made

1. **Increased levels of engagement** across the region by SLT members and teachers since Summer 2021 – **all schools** engaging with PL offer
2. **Increased confidence** of SLT members and teachers in understanding the principles of CFW framework and their planning to reach new statutory requirements
3. All SIAs engaged in regular professional dialogue with SLT members across all schools as follow up to the local PL offer and offering bespoke PL to individual school needs where appropriate
4. **Increased number of schools** on track to meet new statutory requirements by September 2022 (6 steps report)
5. Increasing number of examples of Senior Leaders in schools using PL resources to engage wider with all staff e.g. leading change
6. Clear programme in place for SIAs regular professional learning with input from Graham Donaldson has led to increased understanding and confidence across the team – bringing secondary and primary colleagues to better understand the 3-16 continuum (#sessions & hours).
7. **Sharing integrated messages** across team allows all SIAs to follow up in classrooms and staffrooms e.g. CFW PL – many examples of schools sharing developing their vision and using road map to plan implementation priorities for 2020-21, high level curriculum design follow up work

Workstream – PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Next phases of cross-regional national PL programme for CFW to be shared in April – e.g. focus on progression, strategic planning 2022 and beyond

Senior Leaders

Middle Leaders, Teachers

What do we mean by progression?

Understanding the CFW framework / AOLEs

How do we design high level progression / different models

What do we mean by progression?

Strategic planning for curriculum development Sept 2022 and beyond

Planning for progression within disciplines / AOLEs

Designing mandatory and wider elements

Planning different curriculum models

Curriculum design across 3-16 continuum

Planning for cross-curricular skills

Purposes of assessment within CfW

Planning for integral skills

The role of assessment within accountability

Planning for cross-cutting themes

Evaluating CfW within your schools

Planning for increasing breadth & depth across 3-16

CFW within a smaller school setting

Planning for the Principles of Progression within AOLEs

Purposes of assessment

Role of research & enquiry in curriculum planning

Data that shows the engagement during Summer term 2021 – vision / planning for curriculum change 1 & 2

Cod ALI	Awdurdod Lleol	Nifer o Ysgolion	Nifer wedi Mynychu 3 sesiwn	% wedi Mynychu 3 sesiwn	Nifer heb fynychu dim un sesiwn	% heb fynychu sesiwn	Nifer wedi Mynychu 1 neu fwy o sesiynau	%wedi Mynychu 1 neu fwy o sesiynau	Nifer wedi Mynychu 2 neu fwy o sesiynau	%wedi Mynychu 2 neu fwy o sesiynau
660	Ynys Môn	46	34	73.9%	4	8.7%	42	91.3%	37	80.4%
661	Gwynedd	96	49	51.0%	10	10.4%	86	89.6%	69	71.9%
662	Conwy	60	31	51.7%	5	8.3%	55	91.7%	49	81.7%
663	Sir Ddinbych	54	18	33.3%	16	29.6%	38	70.4%	26	48.1%
664	Sir y Fflint	77	26	33.8%	15	19.5%	62	80.5%	45	58.4%
665	Wrecsam	68	28	41.2%	14	20.6%	54	79.4%	43	63.2%
	Cyfanswm	401	186	46.4%	64	16.0%	337	84.0%	269	67.1%

Workstream – Leadership Development

Difference made

- School leaders on all levels participating in the Leadership programmes are showing a general increased confidence and understanding of effective leadership. Delegates are developing into self-reflecting leaders who demonstrate competence, innovation, high expectations, clearly articulated goals and the ability to develop and influence others.
 - All Programmes lead delegates to develop close professional peer to peer collaboration networks which will help them contribute on cluster and regional levels to the national reform agenda.
 - By undertaking whole school 'Leadership Development Tasks' to improve aspects of the work of their schools, delegates have developed their leadership skills and have a specific responsibility within their organisations to drive whole school improvement.
 - By contributing to driving priorities within their schools the individuals on the programmes are accountable for improvement activity. In addition, they are able to self-evaluate their personal actions against the Professional Standards for Leadership, adopting personal responsibility for their own professional development.
 - Through critical reflection and consideration of the impact of their actions, individuals are able to exemplify how following the programmes not only help develop their organisations but also how they themselves have grown and developed as leaders.
-
- Middle Leadership Development Programme: 98
 - Senior Leaders Development Programme: 61
 - Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme (preparing for NPQH): 72
 - New and Acting Headteacher Development Programme: 37
 - Experienced Headteacher Development Programme: 17
- TOTAL: 285

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Progress Report on the Reform Journey

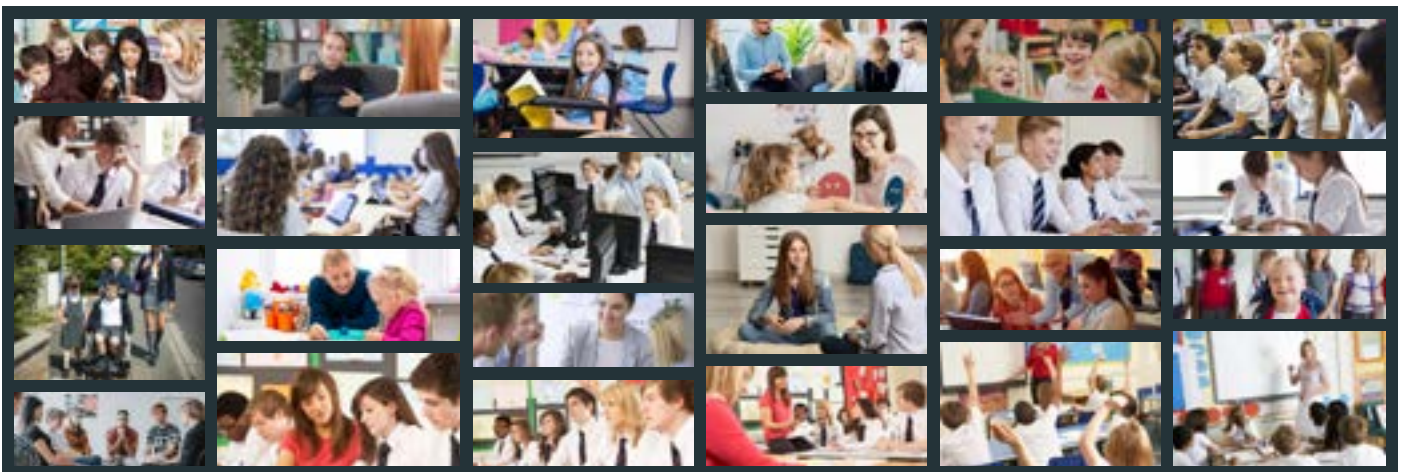
AUTUMN TERM 2021





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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that even in the most challenging of circumstances positive change is possible. In North Wales, GwE, the Local Authorities, Schools and PRUs have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working. Schools have delivered meaningful teaching and learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences need to be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time and preparing for the future. The four transversal themes of the learning organisation of time, trust, thinking together and technology have developed as strong foundations of a collaborative way of working as we move forward with the renew and reform agenda.

The response to COVID-19 has of course had a significant impact on schools and is likely to have disrupted some of their plans for preparation and implementing the new curriculum. This report provides an outline of where schools and PRUs are currently at as they address the renew and reform agenda and is based on evidence gathered by GwE Supporting Improvement Advisers as part of their work in supporting schools during the autumn term 2021.

For each school and PRU, Supporting Improvement Adviser reported on:

Pupil Progress

Primary and special sectors

- *How does the school capture and measure progress in areas such as literacy, numeracy, basic skills, well-being, learners who are vulnerable to learning?*
- *What is the information that comes out of this summative or qualitative data?*

Secondary sector including relevant special schools and PRUs

- *How have secondary schools used 2021 Centre Determined Grades for GCSE and A level to undertake self-evaluation to support continuous improvement?*

Curriculum for Wales (CfW)

- *What are your school priorities for CfW during the Autumn term?*
- *What are your cluster priorities for CfW during the Autumn term?*
- *How are you engaging further with the resources from the CfW professional learning offer?*
 - *Leading change*
 - *Developing a shared vision*
 - *Curriculum reform*
- *What will be the role and contribution of your SIA and extended GwE team members in supporting this work?*
- *What are your initial approaches to developing curriculum design within your school and across your cluster?*

ALN Reform and Progress Towards Implementation

- *How will the regional and local networks support your school/cluster?*
- *What are your priorities for ALN Transformation as a school/cluster for the Autumn term?*

Professional Learning

- *Have you identified further areas/aspects for professional learning?*



Accountability

- *What should accountability look like?*
- *How will you measure progress and the impact of your work?*
- *What will reporting look like?*

The report also summarises the **GwE Professional Learning Offer and support provided to schools**.

The **areas for further development and support** and the **high-level regional priorities** are summarised below:

AREAS THAT NEEDED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Schools across all sectors have identified the following areas where they would like further support for development:

- Curriculum for Wales implementation - especially curriculum design and planning the Areas of Learning and Experience;
- Approaches to assessments and the concept of progression in preparation for the new curriculum;
- Implementing the 12 pedagogical principles to improve teaching and learning, differentiation and formative assessment;
- Using quality enhancement processes including the use of qualitative and quantitative data as evidence to support improvement;
- Further strengthen primary cluster collaboration and continue establishing and facilitating secondary alliances to agree on the principles and functions of their collaborative work;
- Further establishing and developing peer review through the School Partnership Programme
- Improving Welsh Language skills and especially oracy;
- Strengthening transition arrangements and provision between primary and secondary/ special and developing a 3-16 continuum;
- Developing parental engagement to support the learning;
- Supporting secondary schools to prepare for the 2022 summer examination and their contingency arrangements should there be further disruptions.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED

The evaluation process has identified the following high-level regional priorities:

1. Ensure that all schools will be ready to roll out the curriculum and are addressing mandatory/statutory requirements for planned delivery in 2022 or 2023 (secondary sector option).

The rollout will be supported by:

- Providing regional and local networks with clear guidance on curriculum design, planning, assessment and progression through modelling and exemplifying curriculum practice;
- Promoting learner transition by ensuring effective direct engagement between secondary and primary schools;
- Working in tandem with leaders to ensure that all settings have a clear plan to effectively respond to the guidance delivered in the Curriculum for Wales Professional Learning Programme;
- Ensuring all settings adopt and publish a summary for key stakeholders of their curriculum and assessment arrangements as outlined by the 'Journey to Rollout' guidance.

2. Implement processes addressing schools causing concern and work with Local Authorities to ensure



schools have the appropriate level of support and challenge for their improvement.

3. Further strengthen and embed peer review especially within secondary alliances to strengthen self-evaluation and the improvement planning.
4. Support the Local Authorities in the delivery of ALN Transformation by providing Professional Learning to improve teaching and learning.



MAIN FINDINGS

PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SECTORS INCLUDING RELEVANT PRUs

MEASURING LEARNER PROGRESS

- *How does the school capture and measure progress in areas such as literacy, numeracy, basic skills, well-being, learners who are vulnerable to learning?*
- *What is the information that comes out of this summative or qualitative data?*

Nearly all primary and special schools have prioritised pupil wellbeing engaging with several schemes/ activities such as 'Trauma Informed Schools', 'PASS', 'Nurture Groups', 'Talkabout', 'Mind Mechanics', 'Lego Therapy' and 'Seasons for Growth'. This has enabled them to better support and track their pupils' wellbeing. There are many examples of good practise across the region where an effective approach to monitoring well-being has been developed. These include schools who have carried out a baseline assessment for learners' well-being to identify those vulnerable to learning on return to school. Some schools have been supported by Universities to carry research on how best to identify wellbeing needs. This has allowed them to identify Individuals and groups of learners for the most appropriate intervention such as 'ELSA'. Teachers and school staff have been trained in a variety of specialist interventions, e.g., mental health practitioners, 'Seasons for Growth' and 'Mindfulness' while school-based counselling, 'NICOS' and Educational Psychologist input is also being used effectively within many schools. There is no doubt that pupil wellbeing remains a high priority for most schools as they continue to address the impact of COVID on their pupils.

Over the last year, almost all schools have continued with their internal assessment systems to track progress. These tracking and assessment systems include:

- Tracking of performance following individual interventions;
- Using standardised scores from national tests;
- Using reading and spelling tests such as 'Salford reading tests' and 'Youngs spelling tests';
- Undertaking 'CAT 4 tests';
- Undertaking 'White Rose' maths assessments to inform planning;
- Undertaking baseline assessments with both nursery and reception;
- Using 'Incerts' to track levels from baseline onwards;
- Individual teachers' using tracking notes effectively;
- Teachers keeping 'Read Write Inc' records;
- Leaders using 'Building Blocks', 'Maestro' and 'Taith 360';
- Schools beginning to trial the GwE tracker for tracking Curriculum for Wales Areas of Learning and Experience progress'
- Using wellbeing questionnaires such as 'PASS' and 'Boxhall';
- Using pupil portfolios for standardising and moderation.

Many schools stated that the support and close rapport with families ensured that most pupils returned to education ready for learning after the lockdown. However, they also acknowledged challenges with the school's youngest pupils and the most vulnerable individuals.

There is therefore a significant variation reported by schools regarding pupil progress. Many primary schools report that good progress is being made overall whilst others identify limited progress by cohorts of pupils. Many schools have focused targeted schemes to support groups of pupils as deemed necessary. For example, there is a consensus that lockdown has impacted more at the lower end of the school. Most schools have identified the need to prioritise support in foundation phase to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Key Stage 2 pupils have tended to 'catch-up' sooner after returning from lockdown.



However, most schools have identified the need to maintain a focus on improving pupils' fine motor skills, including presentation of their work, social interaction, writing stamina and perseverance. Most schools, including Welsh medium schools, acknowledge the need to improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills.

Nearly all schools are continuing to deliver effective intervention strategies for pupils, e.g. through daily precision teaching sessions, 'SAFMEDS' sessions to develop Welsh and English reading/spelling skills, 'Tric a Chlic' sessions to develop literacy skills in the Foundation Phase. Nearly all schools report that this focused targeting has had a positive impact on standards.

Most schools are continuing to monitor the progress made by learners from different groups such as vulnerable learners, entitlement to Free School Meals (eFSM), ALN pupils, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities. Most schools provide appropriate and purposeful support for these pupils and are seeing the impact of this work through their assessment processes and are reporting that vulnerable pupils can then deal much better in mainstream class and with various social challenges.

CURRICULUM FOR WALES (CfW)

• *What are your school priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?*

All primary schools have School Development Plan priorities linked to the Curriculum for Wales in 2021-22, and these are linked to head teachers' performance management. These priorities are in line with the national professional learning journey and journey to roll-out, and include aspects of developing vision, familiarisation with content and planning and trialling.

Throughout the autumn term, examples of areas implemented by our regional primary and special schools include:

- Focussing upon the Four Purposes of the new curriculum, e.g., pupils describing what they mean to them, staff auditing where current provision addresses these. All primary schools now have access to GwE's 'Quality Assessment Framework' which supports primary schools in this audit, a minority of primary schools have already begun to use this tool effectively.
- Trialling with planning, e.g., referring to Areas of Learning and Experience in the planning and highlighting coverage;
- Developing parents' information sheets/ communications to inform them about the Curriculum for Wales;
- Teaching subjects and relabelling books around the Areas of Learning and Experience;
- Trialling with the progression statements in planning;
- Staff are attending relevant professional learning;
- Leaders are considering ways to track and assess the Curriculum for Wales;
- Regular updates to governors and governor monitoring of progress in the Curriculum for Wales;
- Developing appropriate whole school themes and topics;
- Including more pupil voice in planning;
- Auditing against the GwE Pedagogical Principles tracker;
- Revisiting feedback and formative assessment work;
- Continuing to develop outdoor learning – embedding wellbeing through exciting and engaging outdoor experiences;
- Continuing to focus upon wellbeing including learners, their families and staff wellbeing;
- Implementing physical fitness initiatives;
- Continuing to develop digital skills.

Nearly all schools have made initial preparations for the implementation of the new curriculum, i.e., the Four Purposes and 12 Pedagogical Principles have received appropriate consideration and are now



becoming a natural part of their teaching and learning provision.

Across the region, there are numerous examples of innovative practice with various approaches to planning themes, tasks and activities to meet the requirements of the new curriculum. Many schools are also collaborating well and are sharing successful practice.

Most schools are planning a suitable Professional Learning provision to develop effective teaching and learning considering Curriculum for Wales principles and requirements. Schools have arranged a variety of professional learning opportunities to enrich teaching, learning and pedagogy to further support Curriculum for Wales development.

Nearly all schools have planned their grant expenditure to support their work in meeting September 2022 statutory requirements. In general, this expenditure has been earmarked to improve staffing ratios, to target pupils, purchase additional resources and to release staff to attend training.

- **What are your cluster priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?**

Most clusters across the region work well together and genuinely collaborate. This collaboration strengthened during lockdown when the clusters met regularly on-line.

Clusters across the region have agreed on a variety of priorities. These include:

- Ensuring all staff in all schools within the cluster have a good understanding of Curriculum for Wales and the principles that underpin it;
- Further developing the pedagogical aspects and how that transfers itself into classroom practice;
- Developing high level curriculum design;
- Exploring pedagogy and enquiry-based learning model for the Gymraeg aspect Language Learning and Communication Area of Learning and Experience;
- Building on Outdoor Learning Experiences training and putting the principles and methodology into practice.

Nearly all school leaders have collaborated to co-create priorities and to set a direction for the Curriculum for Wales developments. The work is progressing well and is beginning to show impact e.g. a cluster planning format is in place, common cluster visioning sessions, cluster newsletters etc.

Primary/Secondary collaboration is also developing well in some areas; however, this currently varies in effectiveness from cluster to cluster. Further work remains to be done by leaders in some clusters to create and agree a vision and specific direction for the cluster. In general, the clusters are only just beginning to plan for a shared, 3-16 curriculum which includes strengthening transition. This is a next step for many clusters. Many have planned next term to:

- Share ideas and models for curriculum design including links to the local Curriculum for Wales networks;
- Share planning of similar age groups between schools;
- Share topics/themes to support 3-16 transition work, including work on integral and cross curriculum skills;
- Begin to develop a shared approach to assessment;
- Begin to develop modern languages 3-16;

Twelve primary clusters and all special schools have engaged in peer review training to support their improvement journey. During the autumn term 33 additional clusters, comprising 193 regional schools and 6 PRUs, have applied to participate in peer review through the Schools Partnership Programme.



- **How are you engaging further with the resources from the Curriculum for Wales professional learning offer?**
 - **Leading change**
 - **Developing a shared vision**
 - **Curriculum reform**

In most primary and special schools, leaders have made effective use of these resources to develop staff skills in planning for the curriculum for Wales. In other schools, SIAs have re-familiarised leaders with the resources and they plan to use them in the spring term. Where the resources have been used effectively, leaders have planned practical and engaging ways to utilise the regional Curriculum for Wales resources, such as think pieces, PowerPoints, and webinars, through regular weekly staff meetings, often supported by the Supporting Improvement Advisers.

Most Head teachers attended all the Curriculum for Wales workshops and engaged very well with the process, providing thoughtful insights. Many are implementing the approach from this professional learning with their schools, e.g., writing to stakeholders to develop a truly local curriculum vision; and holding stakeholder groups to participate in developing a shared vision. Governors are very much part of this process and in general very well informed and beginning to lead curriculum change in their schools.

- **What will be the role and contribution of your Supporting Improvement Adviser (SIA) and extended GwE team members in supporting this work?**

Across the region, school leaders have requested the following from their SIAs:

- Staff meeting support on the GwE resources and support centre;
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning support;
- Support for monitoring curriculum developments;
- Support and advice on assessment and progression and how to plan for these;
- Bespoke support where appropriate for staff;
- Support to develop the cluster's Curriculum for Wales plan;
- Support for 3-16 planning and transition;
- Facilitating School Partnership Programme projects;
- Sharing examples and models of how to design the curriculum;
- Disseminating information and resources from the regional networks and raise awareness of the programme;
- Continued pastoral care.

- **What are your initial approaches to developing curriculum design**
 - **within your school?**
 - **across your cluster?**

Most schools across the region have plans in place to develop curriculum design through the academic year through their School Development Plans. These are linked to the regional and national reform journey stages. Staff will continue to redesign their curriculum in line with these as the year progresses. However, curriculum design remains a key area for support and guidance.

Schools noted that teachers have trialled planning approaches to support the Curriculum for Wales and are continuing to do so through:

- Planning on new formats including references to Areas of Learning and Experience and the Four Purposes;



- Whole school topics have been planned including the local curriculum;
- Topics and themes include pupil voice planning – especially at the start of topics;
- Immersion activities to engage learners in their new topics and themes;
- Planning taking consideration of the cross-curricular and integral skills and cross cutting themes;
- Developing the learning environment to support work in the Curriculum for Wales, which includes significantly developing outdoor learning, relevant to the locality;
- Continuing to build upon digital learning.

Most clusters are planning to develop a shared approach to planning for 3-16 progression during the spring term.

Many schools have already developed systems for collaborating within teams and jointly experimenting with and sharing successful practices in planning for the arrival of the new curriculum. Work undertaken to evaluate the use of the 12 Pedagogical Principles is also effective groundwork for this work.

- *How will the regional and local networks support your school/cluster?*

There are 228 primary and special schools with 533 practitioners involved in the Regional and Local Networks. The networks have established a system for sharing the work at a regional and local authority level. Through these and through collaborating with cluster colleagues in other Areas of learning and Experience areas, schools are already improving their knowledge of specific areas of the Curriculum for Wales and are already beginning to share ideas and planning. Throughout the term they have been involved in the development of shared resources and approaches and have developed learning through working with other colleagues in other Areas of learning and Experience areas within the authority and across the region.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

- *What are your priorities for ALN Transformation as a school/cluster for the Autumn term?*

Cluster area priorities to develop ALN have been compiled in every cluster, and schools are currently refining and taking ownership of these priorities.

Most schools appear to be responding successfully to the act and statutory requirements overall across the region and regularly updating members of staff on developments.

The ALN Coordinator (ALNCO) role in schools is developing. Most schools have used G6 milestones to review the school's progress and to see whether there are further aspects that need attention, with the remainder in the process of completing this work before the end of the autumn term.

Key ALN staff have received 'Eclipse' training and are ready to develop the system across the school. Examples of School priorities for this term include:

- Policies will be updated to reflect ALN reform once these become available from the Local Authority;
- Trialling with Individual Development Plans (IDPs) is taking place – new learners will have an IDP;
- All children will have a one-page profile by the end of term
- ALNCo, governors and teachers to undertake relevant professional learning, including whole school Pupil Centred Training (PCP) training and 'Eliesha'.
- Schools will update families on their rights to appeal and tribunal;
- Continue to implement universal and targeted provision working in clusters;



- Develop practice of children planning and co-constructing their own IDP style review meetings.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- *Have you identified further areas/aspects for professional learning?*

All schools are committed to professional learning for developing staff on the journey towards Curriculum for Wales and are following a national and regional timescale. Regional and local networks will be a key driver for this work.

Overall, schools' Professional Learning plans have been purposefully aligned with their Performance Management processes. This ensures that they provide developmental opportunities that respond to the requirements of the school's priorities in an effective and structured manner.

There are numerous examples of Professional Learning opportunities in schools across the region to develop and upskill staff. Some specific examples involve upskilling the workforce to support pupil wellbeing through the 'Trauma Informed Schools' diploma, 'Seasons for Growth', 'ELSA' and 'MAPA'. Most schools are continuing to address the development of Assessment for Learning aspects too by attending Shirley Clarke training. Over a hundred schools are committed to developing the Welsh language oracy skills via the 'Ein Llais Ni' project. Leadership development remains a priority through the GwE's Leadership Programmes.

Most leaders, teachers and staff participate well in professional learning and, in most schools, information is shared with colleagues following training opportunities. Professional learning is clearly identified in nearly all schools through the School Development Plan. Many leaders have requested support to plan and develop their own and staff skills through:

- SIA input in staff meetings, especially for Curriculum for Wales developments;
- Continued staff development through national and regional programmes, e.g., Teaching Assistants, Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), Leadership, etc;
- Cluster and joint collaborative working;
- Regional and local networks;
- Input for developing 3-16 planning across the cluster.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- *What should accountability look like?*
- *How will you measure progress and the impact of your work?*
- *What will reporting look like?*

Nearly all primary head teachers produce regular, detailed reports for governors, these are created through whole school self-evaluation. Accountability procedures include a variety of stakeholders including children and parents. Many schools have a draft monitoring timetable in place, linked to School Development Plans' priorities, which include a range of monitoring strategies such as:

- Pupil and staff learning walks;
- Book looks;
- Interviews and questionnaires;
- Lesson observations in line with performance management;
- Peer observations and triads.

Clusters' working with the School's Partnership Programme will further develop cluster monitoring,



contributing towards developing joint accountability across the cluster. ALN provision is monitored through self-evaluation against the 'G6' milestones and through the ALN cluster group.

Leaders' capacity to develop monitoring and accountability has been hindered by the pandemic during the term, and many have not yet fully implemented book scrutiny and performance management processes across their schools.

Curriculum for Wales is a key priority for all schools this year and will be monitored through self-evaluation and monitoring systems. In addition, the cluster aspects of these priorities will be monitored in regular cluster meetings with the link SIA involved in discussions.

Most school leaders ensure that their teachers are accountable for adapting, fine tuning and experimenting with their teaching while considering Curriculum for Wales principles and requirements through regular staff meetings and lesson monitoring procedures. In doing so, leaders ensure consistency of pace in responding to the reform journey across their schools whilst encouraging individuals to experiment and trial new teaching and learning strategies.

A large number of schools ensure opportunities for staff to share their work through focused professional dialogue, e.g., in staff meetings. This helps when ensuring consistency and identifying best practice.

All schools report to governors and stakeholders on the reform journey, including the impact of any actions or trialling over the coming year.



SECONDARY SECTOR INCLUDING RELEVANT SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND PRUs

2021 CENTRE DETERMINED GRADES FOR GCSE AND A LEVEL

In his written statement (dated 21 June 2021) the Education Minister confirmed 'that the suspension of Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures will be extended to the 2021/22 academic year. Qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortium level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.' He also confirmed that 'all schools and post-16 providers will continue to be required to undertake effective self-evaluation to support continuous improvement. Our evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements require consideration of a broad range of information, relevant to a school's own context, when undertaking self-evaluation and identifying improvement priorities. This will involve schools, with support from local authorities and regional consortia, using the learner level information they have to reflect on and improve their existing arrangements.'

All schools and settings ensured internal procedures met the requirements for the awarding of qualifications set out by Qualifications Wales and WJEC in 2021 for the Centre-Determined Grade process. Assessment plans were submitted and – following amendments in some cases – all accepted by the awarding body. All schools and settings engaged in pre-preparatory sessions run by the region with Qualifications Wales and WJEC.

Many schools reported that Headteachers and staff benefited from working in collaboration within their secondary Alliance to respond to national expectations and develop school level policies and processes. This ensured consistency and shared understanding.

All schools ensured that guidance from awarding bodies was shared quickly and clearly with teaching staff and that clarification was sought when needed. Schools – for the most part- made full use of the recommended WJEC assessments and mark schemes to provide the base of evidence for the Centre Determined Grades. All schools ensured there were appropriate access arrangements in place for learners with ALN and special consideration was considered where applicable. All schools used internal moderation procedures exercises to support the moderation and standardisation of assessments. Several schools built on their work through local alliances and used cross-school moderation to support internal standardisation. This was particularly the case where subjects were taught by one teacher or where subject teams were small; it was less necessary in larger teams within larger schools.

During the process schools were generally strong at communicating and sharing policies and expectations with parents (via written communication and virtual briefing sessions). This was a particular strength of the schools' processes and provided transparency to parents on current performance against targets and expected outcomes.

Effective remote learning assisted the transition back to school for most learners in exam years in April 2021. There were some issues with the engagement of specific groups of learners. Learners from low-income families had been identified as a 'concern' group in relation to engagement and progress. The performance of groups of learners and especially those in receipt of FSM remains a priority area for a number of schools.

A*-A grades increased significantly. Many schools reported this was due to the diligence of the learners and from making effective use of national resources available to them to prepare for the assessments. In addition, many learners had generally benefitted from having less materials and content to revise, shorter time scales between revision and assessment thus fostering a greater degree of retention of learning, fewer



assessments and assessments that had been presented beforehand to pupils via WJEC website.

Most schools analysed in-school variance using Information Technology platforms and developed an overall review of individual students' grades against their previous year profiles. Many schools looked closely at their target-setting and data collection points to ensure consistency in practice. Target-setting was often based around 'FFT' projections / 'CATS scores' and internal assessments. 'ALPS' was also used to support data collection and evaluation at Sixth Form level. In many schools, actions are being undertaken to address issues that have arisen in specific departments where the base for establishing grades was not as strong or where inconsistencies were identified. Most are working to ensure that departments will be ready to present a strong evidence base of assessments if required to undertake similar processes this year.

Several schools have identified the low levels of literacy among groups of learners and are taking steps to support and further improve this. The Welsh language skills of learners, especially those from non-Welsh speaking homes and in Welsh medium education has clearly been affected by the lockdown periods.

CURRICULUM FOR WALES (CfW)

• *What are your school priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?*

At the beginning of the Autumn Term, nearly all 54 secondary/all-through schools indicated their intention to embed Curriculum for Wales from September 2022. However, many secondary schools are finding it increasingly difficult to adhere to the timelines they have set themselves due to the pandemic. Many have struggled during this term due to staff absence and a lack of supply cover. Arrangements for the summer examination series may also further hamper their ability to engage with the new curriculum from September 2022. If the pandemic continues to blight the work of schools post-Christmas, we would envisage an increasing percentage of secondary schools reviewing their position and possibly deferring until 2023. Schools need to confirm arrangements with Welsh Government by April 8th 2022. Ensuring the effective prioritisation of Curriculum for Wales planning has been a challenge for most schools which are in an Estyn statutory follow-up category. Effectively supporting these schools will continue to be prioritised.

In nearly all schools, the Curriculum for Wales is a whole school priority and actions for the autumn term align with the national expectations as set out in the amended document 'Curriculum for Wales: the journey to 2022'. All schools have identified the need for staff in the autumn term to further develop their knowledge and understanding of Curriculum for Wales framework and ensure that teachers are planning for progression within / across AOLES and cross-curriculum skills. Much of the focus this term is on developing their curriculum design, unpacking the statements of what matters and developing a shared understanding of progression within and across the progression steps. Possible processes exemplified in the regional and local Curriculum for Wales networks have been shared with staff in most schools to support their planning.

Amongst the priorities for Curriculum for Wales identified by secondary schools are:

- planning for progression in cross curricular skills and cross-cutting themes;
- high level curriculum design;
- planning and implementing the AOLES;
- assessment and progression;
- further developing the 12 pedagogical principles and digital learning;
- community engagement, particularly around outdoor learning
- pupil voice activities feeding into development planning;
- developing a coherent vision to underpin the new curriculum and share this with stakeholders;



- building on cluster work with partner primary schools and working towards a seamless transition in learning.
- ***What are your cluster priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?***

This term nearly all secondary schools have worked in collaboration with their primary clusters to plan for Curriculum for Wales. Most clusters have revisited their vision and shared their experiences with the GwE regional and local networks. In others, secondary teachers are working closely with cluster primaries to develop a common understanding around pedagogy or working effectively together focusing on how to articulate a curriculum that is seamless and where progression is understood and underpinned in their learning plans.

Primary/Secondary collaboration is developing well in many clusters; however, this is not consistent across the region and further targeted support will be required to ensure effective engagement at all levels. Further work remains to be done by secondary leaders in some clusters to better engage in creating and agreeing a joint vision and specific direction for the cluster.

Amongst the cluster priorities for Curriculum for Wales identified by secondary schools are:

- Developing effective transition plans;
- Plan transition activities that fit in with Areas of Learning and Experience design;
- Focusing on Progression Steps 2 to 4 and a 3-16 continuum;
- Looking at data and information transfer around learners – what needs to be passed on and understood;
- Where engagement is as yet under-developed, take steps to move this forward;
- Sharing and developing a common element to vision, values and behaviours;
- Looking at assessment methods that can be used as part of teaching and learning; how progression can be evaluated;
- Joint training day to share plans and progress;
- Developing work around shared areas within the context of Curriculum for Wales. For example, joint work around trauma-informed schools; pedagogical approaches around Modern Foreign Languages; common approaches to literacy, numeracy and digital skills;
- Planning for a curriculum focussed joint-cluster training day;
- Developing a cluster enquiry-based research approach supported by the School Partnership Programme.
- ***How are you engaging further with the resources from the Curriculum for Wales professional learning offer?***
 - ***Leading change***
 - ***Developing a shared vision***
 - ***Curriculum reform***

These sessions were run during a very busy period for secondary schools who were preparing to award Centre Determined Grades. Thus, the level of engagement varied across the region. Most schools attended at least one of these sessions and many accessed recordings of the training at a later date. Many schools shared the resources with SLT members; some found this challenging and re-engaged during the autumn term with support from their SIAs and the recorded sessions. Some resources, e.g., those around the vision or curriculum design, have been effectively used in schools. In one school, for example, each member of the senior staff led a workshop with the whole teaching body; in another, findings were shared and discussed around senior leadership teams to inform decisions. Many schools are continuing to make use of elements of this support, such as for example using the route planner app, and using the visioning ideas



about evaluating current provision against the vision.

- **What will be the role and contribution of your Supporting Improvement Adviser (SIA) and extended GwE team members in supporting this work?**
- Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) have encouraged designated staff to be part of the Curriculum for Wales regional/local networks and have supported and facilitated the work.
- SIAs have supported school based bespoke Curriculum for Wales developments with guidance and input to training and meetings as per school's needs and capacity.
- Core Lead / SIAs support developments and curriculum design in the secondary schools and the clusters.
- Subject SIAs have supported Heads of Core Subjects with Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLE) planning. As a result, middle leaders have improved their knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework and considerations for planning;
- SIA teams continue to deliver staff professional learning, contributing to professional development days and to support the work of Areas of Learning and Experience teams in designing and delivering the new curriculum.
- SIAs are supporting senior leaders and Governors in updating whole school plans for implementing the new curriculum from 2022.
- SIAs are raising awareness of the available resources that have been and are being developed and shared through the GwE Support Centre.
- **What are your initial approaches to developing curriculum design**
 - **within your school?**
 - **across your cluster?**

Schools are taking a variety of approaches to 'designing' the new curriculum. For example, some schools are looking closely at the development of a clear vision; some have looked at curriculum planning tools and asked departments to plan new schemes with authentic contexts and skills as key elements; others are tackling the curriculum through revised approaches to pedagogy. Some have made changes to staffing structures or made additional appointments to support key initiatives. Some have focussed strongly on developing local and authentic contexts to support learning. During the past few years, many schools have developed and embedded effective pedagogical approaches and progression of skills. Learning in new technologies and digital pedagogies can also be built on and developed to support learning within the new curriculum.

Some schools are building on the work of the consortium workshops delivered in the summer and looking at curriculum design closely, trialling more work in multi-disciplinary areas, across Science and Technology or integrated outcomes in Expressive Arts. One school has appointed a teacher for wellbeing and are developing a bespoke curriculum for the school in that area. Others are looking at curriculum allocations through a critical lens and asking what is fit for purpose for learners moving forward. Some schools now have specific Curriculum for Wales meetings to replace historical departmental meetings. There is an increasing focus in schools on cross-departmental working. Some schools have moved to restructure their staffing based on the AOLE's.

Some schools are also looking at other curriculum elements, e.g., cross curricular skills, integral skills, cross-cutting themes and mapping links across the curriculum.

Many schools are taking advantage of the GwE offer to make use of consortium expertise in supporting this. Ideas are being shared across schools through regional and local networks. However, curriculum design



remains a key area for support and guidance.

- *How will the regional and local networks support your school/cluster?*

All schools are engaged with consortium-led training and development activities. Currently there are 44 secondary schools (88%) and 197 secondary teachers involved in the networks. All four of the 3-16 all-through schools are involved with 22 practitioners participating.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

- *What are your priorities for ALN Transformation as a school/cluster for the Autumn term?*

Most schools reported that they are progressing well towards implementation. In most, there is a good awareness of the reforms and the changes they will bring across staff and governors.

Priorities for ALN Wales Transformation in secondary schools include:

- Developing the role of the ALN Coordinator (ALNCo) as a strategic lead;
- Revising and finalising relevant policies;
- Establishing and confirming rights of appeal procedures and sharing with parents;
- Further developing expertise and training capacity amongst teaching and support staff;
- Developing universal and targeted provision which enables learners to make progress regardless of their starting point;
- Improving differentiation and the universal provision;
- Continuing to develop Person Centred Practice (PCP);
- Undertaking a systematic evaluation of the quality of leaders' and practitioners' knowledge and use of PCP to identify how well it is used to inform teaching and learning;
- Ensuring smooth transition from primary to secondary and that robust transitional plans are in **place**;
- Developing strategies to provide additional learning provision in Welsh (in some Local Authorities).

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- *Have you identified further areas/aspects for professional learning?*

Professional learning needs identified in secondary schools include:

- Curriculum for Wales: deepening understanding; 'unpicking' curriculum design; promoting good teaching and learning; building and understanding assessment and progression;
- Understanding how to develop the skills underpinning the new curriculum, e.g. numeracy, literacy and digital competency;
- Implementing ALN reforms, including further Person Centred Planning (PCP)/ provision mapping work and looking at transition across a cluster;
- ALN reform – regular updates for staff and governors and targeted PL for ALN Coordinators and relevant staff;
- Effective differentiation strategies;
- Further developing current and future leaders through national leadership programmes, e.g., Preparing for NPQH, Senior leaders, Middle leaders, post-16 leaders;
- Supporting effective teaching and learning (pedagogical principles);
- Developing coaching and mentoring for middle leaders;
- Provide training & support for new Core Subject leads;
- Governors – whole school evaluation and improvement planning;
- Support for self-evaluation, monitoring process and improvement planning;



- Support for developing and restoring Welsh Language skills;
- Specialised support to develop wellbeing and attitudes to learning.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- *What should accountability look like?*
- *How will you measure progress and the impact of your work?*
- *What will reporting look like?*

Most schools are concerned about the lack of clarity that remains around the use of national performance measure for accountability and the uncertainty around the design and content of the new suite of qualifications linked to the new curriculum. Support and guidance with understanding the assessment requirements and capturing pupil progress for the new curriculum is a priority for most schools.

Some schools, especially those with a higher eFSM number are uncomfortable with the 'vacuum' created by the removal of benchmarking data and are concerned that the school's performance could be exposed misinterpretation if contextual factors are not duly taken into consideration.

Overall, secondary schools are comfortable with moving to a more intelligent model of accountability, with a focus on 'improving' rather than 'proving'. The schools' use of robust processes to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils is key as is identifying and addressing in-school variation.

Schools are well aware of the need to re-establish quality enhancement processes and are aware of the current challenges in doing this. Many schools have maintained a degree of quality enhancement activities in remote learning during periods of lockdown. Some schools have invited GwE link SIAs and subject SIAs to support senior and middle leaders with quality enhancement activities, e.g., lesson observations, review documentation, book scrutiny, attend and support internal pastoral and subject review meetings. Most schools are by now moving back to a more robust system of Quality Assurance processes and have a clearer picture of the quality of provision and outcomes.

Nearly all schools are in discussions with partners to establish Alliances and all are eager to engage or re-engage with peer review through the School Partnership Programme. The role of and contribution of robust peer challenge and verification is accepted as crucial in moving forward.

Listening to learner voice have generally been strengthened during the pandemic and it remain an important and impactful element of internal measures for nearly all schools.

The Governing Body in nearly all schools have been updated on developments relating to various areas of school improvement including teaching and learning, Curriculum for Wales and its impact on the quality of provision and standards.



SUMMARY OF GWE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFER AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS

The delivery of effective professional learning programmes has supported schools across all sectors with developing their initial curriculum plans. Leaders and teachers across the vast majority of schools are experimenting with approaches to developing a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences of their pupils. Planning at individual school and cluster levels are supporting a clearer understanding of the 'what matters' statements and how the 12 pedagogical principles should underpin approaches to teaching.

Regional and local networks and forums are effectively supporting practitioners' understanding of what works in curriculum design. Over 700 regional staff and school practitioners are working closely together to address this at whole school and AOLE level. GwE are working in collaboration with partners in Higher Education Institutes in supporting schools to develop the role of enquiry in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. This work is an important aspect of the wider work on developing effective teaching and learning, which in turn builds on the work of developing assessment for learning. For this purpose, GwE have worked with schools across the region over the last three years to develop and share effective practice in formative assessment using evidence-based learning. There are 360 schools across the region participating in this work.

During the last three years, the regional consortia has invested heavily in delivering an ambitious professional learning for all practitioners. The core principle of the offer has been on developing institutional capacity as a 'learning organisation' and allowing leaders to more effectively reflect on the challenges of leading change. Prior to lockdown, in many schools across the GwE region, teachers began trialling with the Curriculum for Wales, initially familiarising themselves with its content. In many primary schools, teachers have begun to experiment with new ways of planning, teaching and learning. During the pandemic, teachers across most schools have supported learners to develop a variety of skills linked to the 4 purposes. For example, an emphasis on skills and wellbeing was strongly continued throughout the lockdown period and learners, parents and school staff's digital skills were revolutionised. Leaders across the region have already made use of resources available via the GwE Resource Centre to develop staff skills in planning for the Curriculum for Wales. Where these resources have been used effectively, leaders have planned practical and engaging ways to utilise them, e.g., Think Pieces, PowerPoints and webinars stimulating discussions in weekly staff meetings and often supported by the link Supporting Improvement Advisor. Across the region, many teachers attended GwE Curriculum for Wales workshops with several schools now implementing the shared ideas and approaches. These professional learning opportunities have also been attended by colleagues from other regions and by north Wales local authority officers.

Below is a brief outline of the GwE Professional Offer to schools and clusters:

- principles of Curriculum for Wales are embedded in all training and the four curriculum purposes are always at the forefront of presenters' minds, as they set about planning relevant, up-to-date and engaging training.
- we have integrated all aspects of the wider reform into our PL offer, including Schools as Learning Organisations, Y Gymraeg (towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050) and the Additional Learning Needs Transformational Bill.
- resources and areas of professional learning includes the 12 Pedagogical Principles within the broader context of teaching and learning, assessment, regional Areas of Learning and Experience networks and curriculum design and planning at school level.
- cross regional offer aims to support all school practitioners, but focused initially on Senior Leaders with the following themes: Leading Change; Leadership for the new curriculum; Developing a Shared Vision; Planning for Curriculum Change – to include curriculum design, progression and assessment; Leading Pedagogy; Time and Space for Professional Learning. These sessions are cluster-based and enable smaller groups of primary schools and their local secondary school to discuss the new curriculum across



the 3-16 learning continuum. Across the region, 832 Senior Leaders attended the Leading Change sessions. During June and July 2021, GwE ran a series of sessions over a three-week period for senior leaders, focused on the themes of developing a shared vision and planning for curriculum change, to include curriculum design. These sessions were hosted digitally on a cluster basis and allowed for breakout opportunities for schools to discuss this work within their local networks. Over 1150 senior leaders attended the sessions across the region.

- as part of the preparations, all Supporting Improvement Advisers have facilitated sessions where schools within a cluster have the opportunity to work collaboratively to strategically plan for the implementation of the curriculum. Activities to support preparations for the new curriculum at school and cluster level have been identified within School Development Plans. Many of the clusters have also developed a Cluster Development Plan for implementing the reform journey.
- in addition to the Professional Learning offer defined above, additional bespoke support from GwE is being made available to schools as they prepare for Curriculum for Wales. This support can be accessed at both cluster and individual school level and tailored according to need.
- supporting resources include a series of 'Think-Pieces' which have been developed by the GwE team as part of the weekly reform sessions with Professor Graham Donaldson. These papers, which cover key aspects of the curriculum reform journey including leadership, vision, pedagogy, assessment and curriculum design, have been shared and refined through consultation with wider partners in Local Authorities, Estyn and Bangor University. All senior leaders were invited to attend a webinar in May 2021 to explain and share this work on the 'Think Pieces'.
- a key aspect of the support offer is the Curriculum for Wales networks established at both a regional and local level. School based practitioners and wider partners from across the region are working collaboratively with a network of peers supporting development of the six Areas of Learning and Experience, assessment and curriculum design. Practitioners communicate and cascade learning and successful practice across the schools within each local authority and contribute to developing planning and design models to support schools in trialling, evaluating and preparing the workforce for first teaching. A regional strategic group, made up of cross-sector representatives from the eight LA groups provides direction and an overview of the work. Networks have access to Professional Learning and work in partnership with Professor Graham Donaldson, GwE and the six North Wales LAs. During the Autumn Term 2021, there have been four regional and over 80 local network meetings involving 272 schools and well over 700 practitioners. All resources produced are shared with all schools through the GwE Support Centre and information cascaded to each secondary/primary cluster group.
- GwE are also working in collaboration with partners in Higher Education Institutes in supporting schools to develop the role of enquiry in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. This work is an important aspect of the wider work on developing effective teaching and learning, which in turn builds on the work of developing assessment for learning. For this purpose, GwE have worked with schools across the region over the last three years to develop and share effective practice in formative assessment using evidence-based learning. There are 360 schools across the region participating in this work.
- schools have access to a series of milestones within the GwE information management system that allows them to reflect on their progress on the reform journey. These milestones have been warmly welcomed by schools
- the GwE Support Centre continues to be a point of referral for all settings and we are currently working to further enhance and enrich the resource bank. By the end of the Autumn Term 2021 there have been over 75,000 'hits' on the site.
- GwE has also worked with practitioners and wider partners to develop a framework of qualitative indicators which will allow schools to reflect and evaluate how they are implementing the four purposes of the new curriculum.





Collaborating · Learning · Succeeding

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REGIONAL STRATEGY

Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression

CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that even in the most challenging of circumstances positive change is possible. In North Wales, GwE, the Local Authorities, Schools and PRUs have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working. Schools have delivered meaningful teaching and learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences need to be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time and preparing for the future. The four transversal themes of the learning organisation of time, trust, thinking together and technology have developed as strong foundations of a collaborative way of working as we move forward with the reform agenda.

As we undertake national reform, it's clear that we are in a different place to the one that we imagined when the guidance for the Curriculum for Wales was published 18 months ago. We recognise that some of the preparation time for the curriculum will have been devoted to managing the impact of the pandemic over the past year. On the other hand, with an even stronger focus on well-being and significant investment in teaching and learning, the values under-pinning the curriculum have been at the heart of how schools have been working. GwE is fully committed to supporting schools and PRUs to maintain this momentum to ensure that every learner in North Wales is offered provision of the highest quality.

We will ensure that all learners in North Wales are able to learn effectively. Their mental health and emotional wellbeing, their relationships and their physical health are all critical enablers of good learning. We will support schools to focus on these areas and also to develop the key enabling skills which include oracy, literacy, numeracy, planning, organising and critical thinking.

We will support schools to ensure that learners are making meaningful progression in their learning. Focusing on progression is forward-looking, emphasising what learners need to make the next steps in their education. This avoids a deficit based model focused on 'catching up' on everything that has been missed. Appropriate assessment arrangements support this progression, helping to identify, capture and reflect on individual learners' progress over time. We will support schools to develop both formative and summative assessment as they plan to implement the new curriculum.

The Minister for Education, has confirmed that the Curriculum for Wales will continue to be implemented in primary schools, maintained nursery schools and non-maintained nursery PRUs from September 2022. The Minister has also confirmed that some additional flexibility will be given to secondary schools. In 2022, schools that are ready to roll out the curriculum to year 7 will be able to press ahead with that. However, formal implementation of the new curriculum will not be mandatory until 2023, with roll-out in that year to years 7 and 8 together. This will also be the case in special schools and all-through schools for 3 to 16-year-olds.

GwE will encourage secondary and special schools who are able to proceed with their current plans to implement the new curriculum with Year 7 from September 2022. We also realise that some secondary schools will continue their path towards curriculum reform from September 2022, and will implement the new curriculum from September 2023 when it will become mandatory for years 7 and 8. However, it is important that the work of reforming the curriculum, and particularly direct engagement between secondary and primary schools, continues in order to support learner transition irrespective of the timeline for implementation adopted by the secondary school.

Beyond 2023, the Curriculum for Wales will be rolled out on a year-by-year basis, and the first qualifications designed specifically for the Curriculum for Wales will be awarded in the 2026-27 academic year, as planned. The reform of qualifications will play a fundamental role in the success of the curriculum and GwE will support the work of Qualifications Wales over the coming year to help shape a set of qualifications of the highest quality that are aligned with the philosophy of the new curriculum.

In North Wales, GwE and the six Local Authorities firmly believe that it is of the utmost importance, that leaders and staff in every establishment are encouraged and supported in the work of forging strong and effective partnerships within and across the education system. Our regional approach has already adopted a cluster/alliance working model to implement key transformational reform areas such as curriculum development, ALN and Welsh Language. It has also been used effectively to share resources and effective practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. GwE is fully committed to continue this work and also to develop and embed structured and planned partnership programmes that will be evidence informed. GwE and the six Local Authorities, will continue to support schools and PRUs to ensure that peer engagement and collaboration becomes a mainstay of our approach in developing a robust, sustainable and effective self-improving system.

We fully support the Minister's vision, as outlined in the '*Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026*' strategy, to create bilingual citizens who are confident to use Welsh in all aspects of everyday life. GwE will work in partnership with the six Local Authorities to ensure that schools and PRUs are fully supported to develop the Welsh language skills of the workforce and the learners.

The Welsh Government have updated the document '*Curriculum for Wales: the journey to 2022*' which sets out the expectations on schools to reform the curriculum. GwE will support both regional and national networks for curriculum implementation from the autumn onwards. Regional schools will work in partnership with Professor Graham Donaldson, GwE and the six Local Authorities in developing effective practice to unpack the potential of the six Areas of Learning and Experiences (AOLEs) and to develop whole school curriculum design and assessment.

Structures and processes for identifying and supporting schools causing concern will ensure that intervention is timely and appropriate to the context of the school. All schools identified as a school causing concern will have a holistic 360 support plan clearly articulating the nature and intensity of the support provided by either GwE or the Local Authority service that is

responsible for the delivery. This process is outlined in the Partnership Agreement between each Local Authority and its schools. All schools causing concern will be involved in cluster/alliance working that will also contribute to their improvement journey.

GwE and the six Local Authorities, will work closely with key partners such as Welsh Government, Estyn and Qualifications Wales to influence policy, the new Estyn Framework and the reform of qualifications to ensure that we contribute to implementing the Minister's priorities.

THEMES

Through working and listening to partners and key stakeholders, we have identified the following themes to support our aim of ensuring that every learner in North Wales is offered provision of the highest quality. These themes will be actioned by our Business Plans and will be implemented through partnership programmes and an offer of differentiated generic and bespoke support for our schools and PRUs.

The Reform Journey / Curriculum Realisation

- Ensure support for schools in responding to the education reform journey, with strong emphasis on pedagogy, effective teaching and action research.
- Ensure good or better use of formative assessment strategies in all schools.
- Ensure support for all schools in responding to the education reform journey, with strong emphasis on the 12 pedagogical principles and action research.
- Ensure consistency in schools' understanding of the key principles of the new assessment guidance.
- Ensure support for schools in relation to whole-school Curriculum Design and within AOLES.

Re-ignite learning (RRRS)

- Implement programmes which aims to mitigate the effects of school closures on pupils' reading and writing attainment in both English and Welsh.
- Evidence-based teaching strategy designed to help pupils improve their fluency and progress in mathematics.
- Develop online resources suitable for both school staff and parents to enable use of these interventions to assist the reading development of children.
- Continue to develop and produce a suite of universal support materials for secondary numeracy and literacy.

Strategy to support parents / carers to help their children to learn

- Develop a holistic package that supports and helps parents and carers to transform their understanding of learning and what they can do to help their child.
- Develop a comprehensive course for parents and carers, giving them all the tools, knowledge and confidence they need to help their children to learn while they are at home.
- Provide written guidance containing strategies and techniques that parents/carers can use to support their child's learning.

- Provide practical strategies, activities and techniques that can be used by parents and carers to help their children to learn.
- Develop and adapt resources appropriately to meet the needs of specific groups of parents and carers.
- Review the provision that is offered across the region in order to ensure that current resources fully and effectively support and meet local and regional needs.

Learners and whole school wellbeing

- Continue to work closely in partnership with Local Authorities to provide wellbeing support for learners in schools and settings.
- 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 disproportionately affected by school closures.
- To further develop & implement the national PDG strategy across the region.
- Develop a Whole School Approach to wellbeing, promoting 'Ethically Informed Citizens of Wales'.
- Co-create Whole School Wellbeing resources with schools from across the region.

Workforce wellbeing (GwE and schools)

- Continue to work closely in partnership with Local Authorities to provide wellbeing support for practitioners in schools and settings.
- Support the emotional well-being of the individual in the context of their professional role.
- Placing health and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do.
- Use a coaching framework in conversations, meetings and everyday leadership to unlock potential and encourage individual growth.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

In collaboration with the Local Authorities:

- Support the process of reviewing the quality of ALN provision.
- Develop a professional learning offer that meets the needs of the workforce.
- Continue to support clusters to develop innovative plans to achieve ALN transformation goals.
- Continue to support the delivery of the schools support and training programme.

Y Gymraeg

In collaboration with the Local Authorities we will work to implement the Welsh Government '*Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026*':

- Develop the informal use of Welsh through 'Siarter iaith' and 'Cymraeg Campus'.
- Provide a professional offer for the Welsh language which is part of the region's Accelerated Learning Strategy.
- Offer professional learning to develop the Welsh language skills of the workforce.
- Promote the profile of the Welsh language amongst leaders in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales and the Welsh Government target of achieving a million Welsh Speakers by 2050.

- Provide support for schools and settings who teach through the medium of Welsh as their first language to improve the Welsh First Language skills of their learners, and especially those from non-Welsh speaking homes.
- Work in partnership to support each Local Authorities with their WESP priorities.

Developing leadership

- Ensure that all learning organisations have the leadership capacity at all levels to inspire, coach, support, share practice and collaborate at all levels to ensure all learners' achieve their potential.
- Ensure that the principles of distributive leaderships are embedded in all learning organisations across the region.
- Continue to offer a wide range of Professional Learning opportunities in relation to leadership developmental programmes in order to develop present and future leaders:
 - Middle Leaders
 - Senior Leaders
 - National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH)
 - New and Acting Headteachers
 - Experienced Headteachers:

Digital

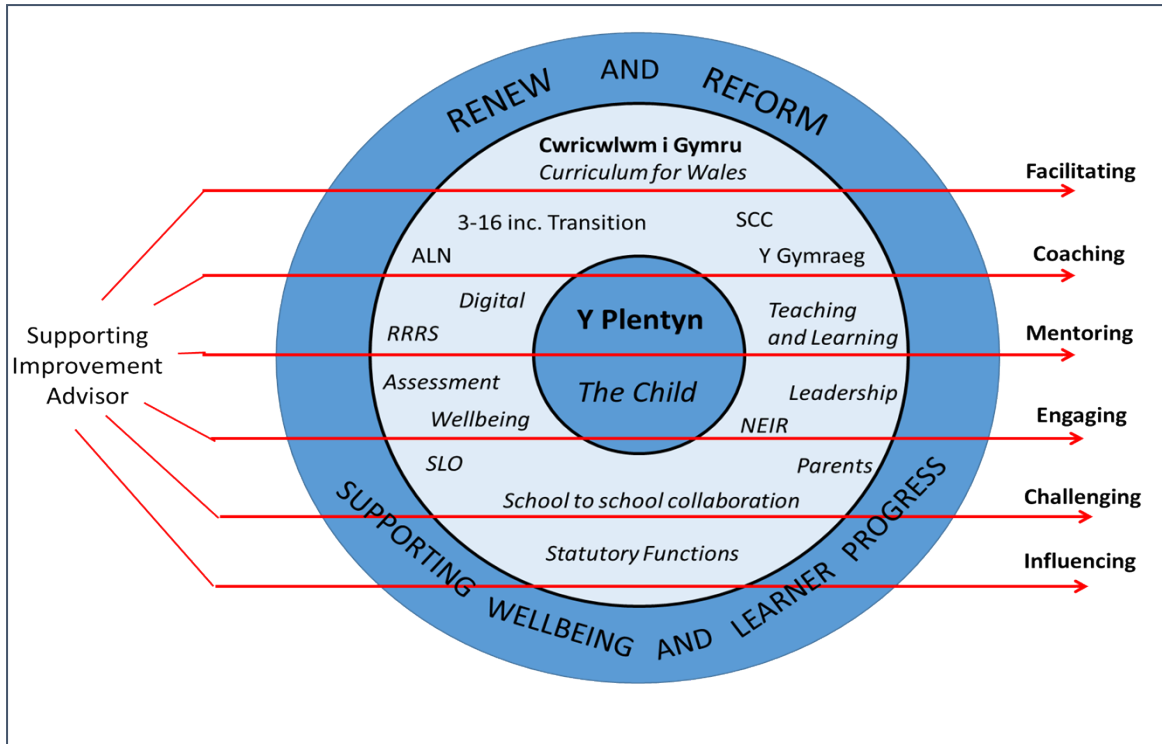
- Ensure that the region's schools' understanding of digital resilience is current and that the teaching and learning of digital security issues is purposeful and effective.
- Develop effective digital leadership within the region's schools to strengthen strategic approaches to improvement planning, change management and impact monitoring.
- Ensure professional learning opportunities are available to all school staff to train them how to use the tools available through *Hwb* and how to make effective use of the tools to improve the quality of learning.

Professional Learning

- Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise the Reform Journey and prepare for the new curriculum.
- Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility in line with professional standards.

EVOLVING THE REGIONAL MODEL

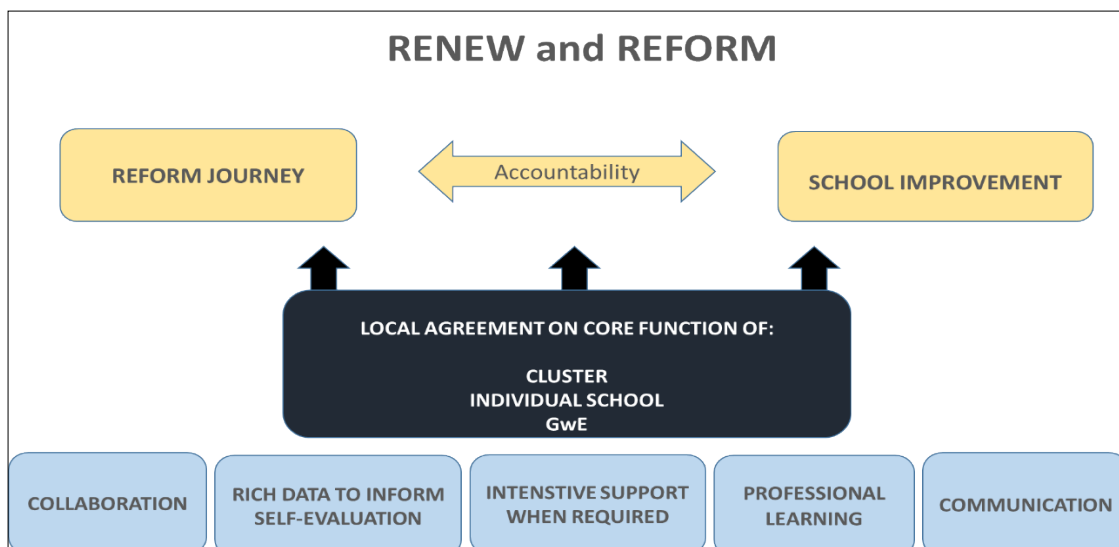
The role of the Supporting Improvement Advisor (SIA) is continuing to evolve as we continue to meet the needs and expectations of all our stakeholders. Our approach will be to support wellbeing and learner progress through working in partnership across the system to enable renewal and reform. With the learner at the centre of everything we do, advisors will use a variety of approaches to support Welsh Government in renewing education post pandemic and ensuring the reform journey remains on track.



The two core aspects of our work moving forward; the reform journey and school improvement will be underpinned by five areas of work:

- Collaboration
- Rich Data to inform Self-evaluation
- Intensive Support when required
- Professional Learning
- Communication

The Core Function of the work will involve a regional partnership approach with collaborations of schools and individual schools. This will give local flexibility regarding the model of delivery.



To ensure that we continue to meet the requirements and expectations of stakeholders, our schools partnership model will need to further evolve. With schools, clusters and alliances at differing points on the self-improving continuum, a nuanced approach will need to be adopted.

Primary focus is on enabling schools to improve by developing a high quality self-improving system which ensures the best for every child.

Arrangements at all levels will be rigorous, robust and coherent and underpinned by the principle of encouraging and supporting schools, clusters and alliances to take increasing ownership and accountability for their improvement journey.

We will ensure that the regional approach for schools partnership is:

- Fair: where we promote equity and inclusion and never lose sight of the learner.
- Coherent: where schools and GwE work together with locally determined core functions, roles and expectations.
- Proportionate: where we ensure that we have a manageable model which makes a difference to all schools. Our approach will support greater autonomy for those schools, clusters and alliances who have the capacity for self-improvement, whilst also allowing for a more comprehensive and intensive support package to be agreed with schools who face specific challenges at a certain point in time and for a specific period of time.
- Collegiate: where no school sees itself as an island. By working together in a structured way, schools can improve faster and more sustainably. Peer collaboration and engagement will be a central feature of our model. All key partners will engage in developing collective efficacy based on high trust, transparency, openness and honesty. It is about partners working together to build capacity into the system through quality enhancement processes and activities.
- Transparent: where we recognise the breadth of learning experience across the region and the value added by schools, leaders, teachers, support staff and advisers working together to an agreed common purpose.

As we move forward with the planning and delivery of the reform journey, our school partnership approach will allow flexibility for schools, clusters and alliances to agree core functions for:

- collaborative developmental work
- approaches to supporting improvements in individual schools within their cluster/alliance
- reporting and accountability processes

Clusters and alliances will also be given the flexibility to agree what the core function and contribution of GwE should be to the three aspects identified above. Where a cluster/alliance determines it has the capacity to undertake many of the core functions, it will be given resources to support with the work and the contribution of GwE will be proportionate. Where a cluster/alliance determines that they require GwE to undertake a greater percentage of the

core functions, the level of resources allocated will be proportionate. GwE contribution could include:

- Leading on or participating in quality assurance or quality enhancing opportunities
- Leading or contributing to developmental work
- Coaching or mentoring groups or individuals
- Facilitating cluster/alliance collaborative activities
- Leading on whole school or cluster/alliance professional development
- Delivering a more intensive support package to individual schools within a cluster/alliance
- Specialist role contributions
- Supporting the professional development of the workforce
- Signposting and sharing best practice

Roles and contributions will be defined within a cluster/alliance ‘*partnership agreement*’ which will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of the year (see Infographic below).

SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME						
CORE FUNCTIONS	CO-DEVELOPING		SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENTS		REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY	
	<i>What?</i>	<i>How?</i>	<i>What?</i>	<i>How?</i>	<i>What?</i>	<i>How?</i>
Cluster						
Individual Schools						
GwE						
IDENTIFIED EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME						
AGREED ALLOCATED RESOURCE BY GwE FOR CLUSTER						
£XXXXX						

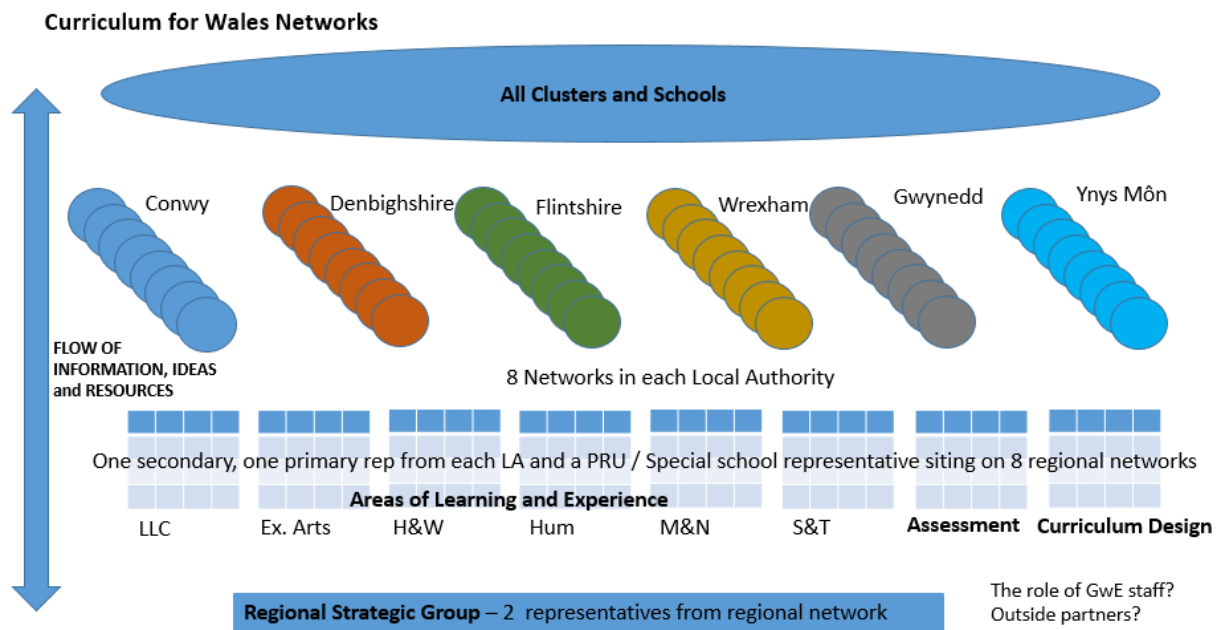
To strengthen the development of the new curriculum, AOLE development networks will be established at regional and a local level. School leaders and practitioners will collaborate to unpack the potential of each AOLE through modelling, designing and sharing curriculum practice.

Collaborative networks will work on the following areas:

1. Unpacking the potential of one of the AOLES
 - Language, Literacy and Communication (both Welsh and English)
 - Mathematics and Numeracy
 - Science & Technology
 - Humanities
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Expressive Arts

2. Assessment
3. Whole school Curriculum Design

School based practitioners and wider partners from across the region will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with a network of peers supporting curriculum design and AOLE development on a local and regional level. Practitioners will communicate and cascade learning and successful practice across the schools within each local authority and contribute to developing planning and design models to support schools in trialling, evaluating and preparing the workforce for first teaching. The principle of subsidiarity will ensure a local context to this work.



Eight local AOLE networks will be established in each Local Authority, one for each of the areas noted above. Individuals from these local groups will represent the LA in eight regional AOLE networks, ensuring consistency of approach across the region. A regional strategic group, made up of cross-sector representatives from the eight LA groups will provide direction and an overview of the work.

Networks will have access to Professional Learning and work in partnership with Professor Graham Donaldson, GwE and the six North Wales LAs in developing effective AOLE practice which will support all schools on their Reform Journey.

Peer review and school to school support

In North Wales, we firmly believe that peer review and school to school support should be a key driver for continuous improvement in schools as they plan to deliver the new curriculum and national reform. We will work with schools and PRUs to embed a programme of peer review that is based on the following processes:

- **Self-review:** effective peer review should start with how well the school knows itself and be led by the school being reviewed. Self-evaluation should focus on the learner, their achievements, progress and experiences in school and focus on learning and teaching, leadership, the development of a learning organisation culture, well-being of pupils and staff, equity and inclusion. In moving forward, the self-evaluation should also focus on the four purposes of the new curriculum and evaluate the progress the school is making towards realising the new curriculum. The self-evaluation processes should allow the school to identify areas of strengths and priorities for improvement. It should also identify aspects of their improvement journey that require peer support to aid improvement.
- **Peer-review:** the most effective peer reviews have an agreed focus. The purpose of the collaboration must be to improve outcomes and any agreed focus should be based on strong evidence of what's needed to improve and what outcomes would be most benefit to the school. Peer reviewers working as a team or trio work best where they can triangulate evidence and jointly analyse their findings. They are not there to pass judgement but to seek evidence and agree findings to be shared with the school. The partnership must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose with transparency, trust and honesty crucial and integral to the process. The peer review should also provide professional development opportunities and include leaders at all levels.
- **School-to-school support:** if peer review is going to be a vehicle for ongoing improvement in school systems, then it must go further than the review itself and involve school to school or cluster support. Where the outcomes are owned by the staff, the long-term and sustainable impact will be greater. This helps to further build capacity and increased resilience within a self-improving system. The partnerships built should therefore go beyond school leaders and engage with students, teachers, families and communities.

Schools Causing Concern

Structures and processes for identifying and supporting schools causing concern will ensure that intervention is timely and appropriate to the context of the school.

A **Multi-agency Group** will meet on a regular basis (monthly or as appropriate) to:

- Identify those schools at risk of causing concern
- Agree with the school the bespoke 360 support plan. Plans will clearly identify which service will provide support and resources against identified actions
- Agree the monitoring arrangements of the 360 support plans
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the 360 support plans and work with schools to monitor progress and impact
- Share any effective practice within and across regional local authorities
- Where concerns escalate, the Multi-agency Group will report to the Quality Board so that Directors/Heads of Service can make informed and timely decision regarding the use of statutory powers of intervention

The **LA Quality Board** will meet on a half termly basis and will be chaired by the Chief Education Officer. Decisions for action by the Board should be recorded and shared with the Multi-agency group or supporting service as appropriate.

The Board’s main focus will be on:

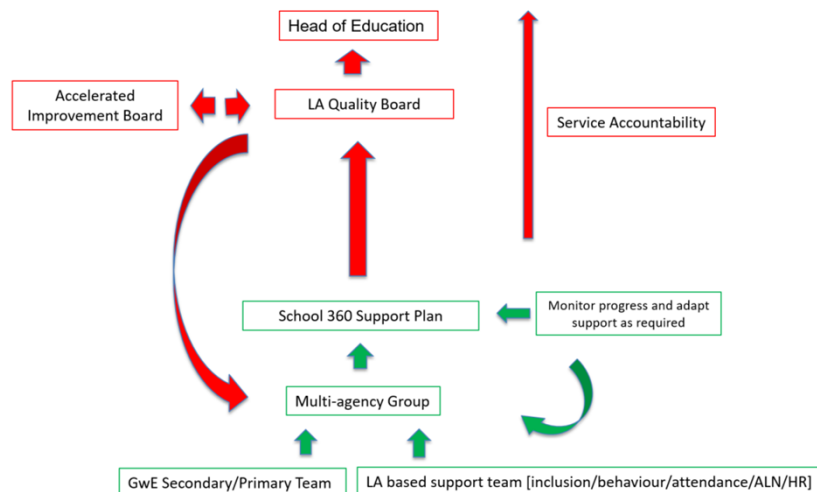
- assessing the progress of those schools causing concern that have been identified by Estyn or by local processes
- assessing the quality of the support planning for schools causing concern undertaken by the Multi-agency Group
- ensuring the Multi-agency Group undertakes its monitoring functions effectively
- taking required actions when escalation of concerns are shared by the Multi-agency Group and specifically around ability of school leadership and governance to improve at sufficient pace
- considering use of statutory powers of intervention when there are concerns around progress or pace of progress
- identifying best practice to share within and across local authorities

Where required, the local authority could also establish an **Accelerated Improvement Board** to support individual schools on their improvement journey. Membership will include representatives from the local authority, GwE, the head teacher and the governing body of the school. The purpose of the AIB will be to:

- Provide support for school improvement
- Provide an internal and external challenge forum
- To identify any concerns
- To identify any actions to be prioritised
- To further inform the Head of Education as to whether it is necessary for the LA to use its powers of intervention

The regional structures and processes for supporting and challenging schools causing concerns are summarised below:

Regional structures and process for supporting and challenging SCC.



Statutory Functions and Accountability

The GwE Core Lead and the Supporting Improvement Advisers will work in partnership with Local Authority officers to implement the *Local Authority-School Partnership Agreement*. Monitoring and evaluation of overall standards, quality of teaching, learning and leadership will be undertaken by GwE's Core Lead and Supporting Improvement Advisers working in partnership with schools and clusters. However, GwE and the six Local Authorities will work with schools to evolve the current accountability system to allow schools and clusters to become more autonomous. Peer review will be a key element in supporting schools to evaluate their strengths areas for improvement and in helping them focus on specific improvement areas as they plan and deliver the new curriculum.

In moving towards a self-improving system, there will be a greater emphasis on moral and professional accountabilities. Accountability relationships for school will include those with pupils, parents, colleagues and the local community. The challenge for us over the next few years will be to create a culture where schools feel greater ownership of accountability and shift the perception that accountability is based just on data and inspection and imposed from above.

In North Wales, GwE and the six Local Authorities are committed to work in partnership with schools to develop a robust accountability system that has the confidence of all key stakeholders and holds each partner fully accountable for their role in developing our 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.

System expectations in North Wales

By September 2024:

- All schools will meet the statutory requirements of the *Curriculum for Wales* and each school will have a strong relationship with their community and are developing a broad range of learner skills that will make them ready for further education, training and employment.
- Planning around the four purposes of the new curriculum will provide a balanced offer to meet the needs of all learners.
- A basic skills strategy comprising literacy, numeracy and digital competency will underpin the curriculum in every school.

- A strategy for children who are vulnerable to learning, concentrating on their inclusion, emotional wellbeing, attendance and any additional learning needs will be operational and impacting positively on their progress and wellbeing.
- We will have worked with schools and local authorities to adopt a new accountability model, which will include robust quality assurance processes, to ensure that there are clear and appropriate lines of accountability at all levels for regional school improvement and developments.
- An effective school causing concern strategy will be in place with the right capacity to identify and address need.
- Improving teaching will be at the heart of all improvements.
- Mature school collaborations through clusters and alliances will be in place across the region and a more collegiate approach to school improvement will be firmly established in order to secure better outcomes for learners.
- A robust regional Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will be operational to fully support both local and national priorities for improving the Welsh Language skills of both learners and the workforce.
- There will be a robust professional learning offer in place that meet the needs of all leaders and teaching staff to help each school implement all aspects of the reform journey and enable their learners to develop towards the four purposes of the new curriculum.
- GwE will effectively operate as a learning organisation in line with the seven 'action-orientated' dimensions identified by the OECD, and will have strong mature partnerships with its key stakeholders that will include a clear communication strategy.

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GwE Business Plan 2021-2022 Regional and LA data Quarter 4



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2021-2022 BUSINESS PLAN

REGIONAL PRIORITIES & PROVISION 2021-2022

Regional and Local Authority Data

OBJECTIVE 1 - CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

Supporting a national curriculum with equity & excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners

EDUCATION CONTINUUM 3 TO 16

Regional data:

GwE and Shirley Clarke project

Total schools across the region who have participated in Tiers 1,2, and 3

	Schools	Teachers
Tier 1	27	54
Tier 2	193	386
Tier 3	140	261
Total	260	701

- 89% of the region's schools
- 96% Primary
- 80% Secondary
- 70% Special

Over 1000 teachers from across the region attended the Shirley Clarke twilight session 12/10/2022. Unable to get a definite number as whole schools were attending under one registration to ensure that all could attend in Zoom.

Local Authority data:

Shirley Clarke twilight session 12/10/2022.

Percentage of registrations by LA

Flintshire:	15%
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CURRICULUM REALISATION (CURRICULUM FOR WALES)

Regional data:

Curriculum design sessions

- Secondary attendees: 101
- Primary attendees: 504
- Special schools and PRUs: 16
- Others e.g. LA, ESTYN, other consortia: 8

Progression & Assessment

- Secondary attendees: 141
- Primary attendees: 620
- Special schools and PRUs: 18
- Others e.g. LA, ESTYN, other consortia: 11
- Taking place post Easter

Principles of Planning

GwE support centre (as of 24/3/22)

- Page views 122k
- File downloads 23k

Curriculum for Wales Section (as of 24/3/22)

Local Authority data:

Attendance at the 3x SLT sessions in Summer term 2021 – figure engaging in at least 1 session or more

Flintshire:	81%
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- Curriculum For Wales 2,845 views
- Cwricwlwm i Gymru 2,674 views
- Curriculum Design 856 views
- Dylunio Cwricwlwm 1002 views

AoLE TEAMS

Regional data:

As of 8/4/22, numbers of practitioners who are involved in the CFW regional and local networks. These numbers continue to increase as schools continue to express interest in being part of local groups.

Description	Number
Assessment	120
Curriculum Design	153
Science and Technology	89
Health and Well-being	88
Languages, Literacy and Communication	118
Mathematics and Numeracy	86
Expressive Arts	81
Humanities	69

Attendance at Regional Meetings

21/9/21 – 132 attendees

6/10/21- 115 attendees

16/11/21 – 117 attendees

14/12/21 – 130 attendees

2/3/22 – 116 attendees

5/4/22 – 112 attendees

The video area in the TEAMS area has increased hits – moving from 214 views in November 2021 to 601 views in March 2022.

The Curriculum for Wales website has increased number of hits and increased material being shared and uploaded for all schools to access.

GwE support centre (as of 24/3/22)

- Page views 122k
- File downloads 23k

Curriculum for Wales Section (as of 24/3/22)

Curriculum For Wales 2,845 views

- Cwricwlwm i Gymru 2,674 views
- Curriculum Design 856 views
- Dylunio Cwricwlwm 1002 views

Local Authority data:

Flintshire:	182
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All local groups have a TEAMS area dedicated to their local groups with increasing numbers of materials and examples of work being uploaded and shared.

OBJECTIVE 2- DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION PROFESSION

Improving the teaching & learning in our schools

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Regional Data:

Cerdd Iaith- Primary/ number of schools : 5	22.6.21
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Open University TELT COURSE number of teachers: 9	2021-2022
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Power Language new subscription- primary	Oct 22 /number of new schools: 35	March 22 number of schools: 69
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Webinar Primary Power Language Number of schools: 23	22/11/21
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Anthea Bell Prize-Translation competition- secondary : Number of schools:	18
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Year8/9 Mentoring programme: number of schools :18 Turbo tutoring	Oct 21- March 22
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MFL Network meeting- secondary	1/7/21 Number of schools: 26	14.10.21 33 schools - 46 teachers	Drop in session 28.3.22 11 teachers
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Local Authority Data:

Cerdd Iaith- Primary/ number of schools : 5	22.6.21
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Flintshire:	1
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Open University TELT COURSE number of teachers: 9	2021-2022
--	------------------

Flintshire:	2
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Power Language new subscription- primary	Oct 22 /number of new schools: 35	March 22 number of schools:69
Flintshire:	14	20

Webinar Primary Power Language Number of schools 23	22/11/21
Flintshire:	10

Anthea Bell Prize-Translation competition- secondary : Number of schools/: 18	
Flintshire:	1

Year8/9 Mentoring programme: number of schools :18 Turbo tutoring	Oct 21- March 22
Flintshire:	3

MFL Network meeting- secondary /	1/7/21 Number of schools:26	14.10.21 33 schools - 46 teachers	Drop in session 28.3.22 11 teachers
Flintshire:	4	8	3

PL : Gillian Campbell-Thow	13.12.21	7.2.22	10.3.22
CFW	CFW Secondary Number of teachers attending: 27	Secondary: 10	Secondary Primary: 13

MFL NQT nwork meetings-secondary: number of teachers	18.11.21 : 6	13/1/22 : 7	31/3/22 : 3
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PL : Rachel Hawkes	20.1.22: 55	17.2.22: 13	17.3.22: 11
	Secondary Primary	Secondary Primary	Secondary Primary

PL : Gillian Campbell-Thow	13.12.21	7.2.22	10.3.22
CFW	CFW Secondary Number of teachers attending	Secondary	Secondary Primary
Fflint / Flintshire:	4	3	4

MFL NQT nwork meetings- secondary: number of teachers	18.11.21	13/1/22	31/3/22
Fflint / Flintshire:	3	3	2

PL : Rachel Hawkes	20.1.22	17.2.22	17.3.22
	Secondary Primary	Secondary Primary	Secondary Primary
Fflint / Flintshire:	26	6	4

HLTA - TALP

Regional data:

Newly appointed TAs

	2021-22
Regional	77

Teaching assistants at work

Regional	85
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Aspiring HLTA Cylch 3

Regional	39
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Aspiring HLTA Cylch 4

Regional	33
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HLTA Status Assessments Cylch 2

Regional	30
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Local Authority data:

Newly appointed TAs

Flintshire:	21
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Teaching assistants at work

Flintshire:	11
-------------	----

Aspiring HLTA Cylch 3

Flintshire:	15
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Aspiring HLTA Cylch 4

Flintshire:	7
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HLTA Status Assessments Cylch 2

Flintshire:	11
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HLTA Assessors <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Regional</td> <td>35</td> </tr> </table>	Regional	35	HLTA Assessors <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>13</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	13										
Regional	35														
Flintshire:	13														
Y Gymraeg (PL)															
Regional data: Ein Llais Ni – 100 schools involved in the project. Autumn term provision for schools involved in the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference: 111 • On demand: 1: 41 • Network: 67 Sabbaticals Scheme - Regional: 12 ‘Cymraeg mewn Gwaith’course - intermediate for GWE: 8	Local Authority data: ‘Ein Llais Ni’ schools: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Conference 20/10</th> <th>On demand 9/11</th> <th>Network 23/11</th> <th>On demand 7/12</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Sabbaticals Scheme: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	6		Conference 20/10	On demand 9/11	Network 23/11	On demand 7/12	Flintshire:	5	3	8	0	Flintshire:	2
Flintshire:	6														
	Conference 20/10	On demand 9/11	Network 23/11	On demand 7/12											
Flintshire:	5	3	8	0											
Flintshire:	2														
A LEVEL															
Regional data: Attendance at most recent post-16 leaders network meeting (Spring 2022). Networking and sharing of practice across Heads of 6 - Networks across joint authorities: 17	Local Authority data: Networking and sharing of practice across Heads of 6 - Networks across joint authorities: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	6												
Flintshire:	6														
Research and Evaluation															
Regional data: RILL January 2022 update: Following advertisements in June 2021, 33 schools have been trained in RILL (58 teachers) in 2021-22. SAFMEDS March 2022 update: Viewing figures for online materials as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Jan 22 webinar: English = 100 views, Cymraeg = 43 views • Oct 20 webinar: English = 1153 views, Cymraeg = 490 views • Oct 20 SAFMEDS training: English = 424 views, Cymraeg = 76 views • *2022 SAFMEDS training: English = 25 views, Cymraeg [pending upload to YouTube] • *2022 Precision Teaching training: English = 36 views, Cymraeg = 21 views 	Local Authority Data <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	2												
Flintshire:	2														
DIGITAL															
Regional data:	Local Authority data:														

Hwb

Data on Hwb usage in the region remains high. The average number of schools in the region that engaged with Hwb during quarter 4 was 98.06%.

The average for each month was as follows:

- January - 98.17%
- February - 98%
- March - 98%

Hwb usage Quarter 4

Flintshire:	97%
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Number of individuals who have been involved in activity from the digital facilitator program to date

Flintshire:	23
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MATHS AND NUMERACY**Regional data:****Primary:****Maths/Numeracy Support (Apr21-Apr22)-**

Estyn category support schools

Schools causing concern

Bespoke school support on request

Bespoke Cluster Support

Introduction to Mathematics and Numeracy AOLE

Regionally – Primary practitioners

Welsh Medium session – 39

English Medium session -56

Financial Education**Regionally**

Number completed e-learning – 48

Number trained 'Face to Face' - 69

Local Authority data:**Maths/Numeracy Support (Apr21-Apr22)-**

Flintshire:	1
	1

Introduction to Mathematics and Numeracy AOLE

	Primary - Welsh 15/11/21	
	No. of schools	No. of people
Flintshire:	1	1

	Primary- English session 23/11/21	
	No. Schools	No. people
Flintshire	12	15

Regional data:**Heads of Maths Network Meeting (March 2022)**

Number of attendees: 34

Several requested a recording as not able to attend, current viewing figures of recording: 12

Familiarising with the 5 Mathematical Proficiencies (CfW) workshop

UPDATE on current viewing figures:

Welsh medium: 493, English medium: 527

Online workshops

Thursday 9/12/21 4pm – 5pm Workshop 1: Developing algebraic thinking through number

Local Authority data:**Heads of Maths Network Meeting (March 2022)**
Number of attendees: 34

	No. Schools
Flintshire	8

Bespoke support for schools

Flintshire:	5
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15 Secondary attendees, current viewing figures: 139

Thursday 13/1/22 4pm – 5pm Workshop 2: Understanding the meaning and structure of expressions

10 Secondary attendees, current viewing figures: 52

Thursday 3/2/22 4pm – 5pm Workshop 3: Finding the unknown- an introduction to linear equations

12 Secondary attendees, current viewing figures: 35

Pedagogical development to support the C4W

Online Workshop: Familiarising with the Mathematics & Numeracy AoLE. Cyfrwng Cymraeg/Welsh medium 15/11/21

Primary		Secondary	
No. Schools	No. People	No. Schools	No. People
23	39	15	20

Online Workshop: Familiarising with the Mathematics & Numeracy AoLE. Cyfrwng Saesneg/English medium 22/11/21

Primary		Secondary	
No. Schools	No. People	No. Schools	No. People
41	56	20	24

Online Workshop: Familiarising with the Mathematics & Numeracy AoLE. Cyfrwng Cymraeg/Welsh medium 15/11/21

	Primary		Secondary	
	No. Schools	No. People	No. Schools	No. People
Flintshire	1	1	1	1

Online Workshop: Familiarising with the Mathematics & Numeracy AoLE. Cyfrwng Saesneg/English medium 22/11/21

	Primary		Secondary	
	No. Schools	No. People	No. Schools	No. People
Flintshire	12	15	5	5

Secondary – 11 schools of the 54 received individual support

20 schools of the 54 have received individual support during this period

Heads of Maths video viewing figures

Updating Heads of Maths on CfW network developments, professional learning opportunities and key messages from WJEC

October video

Welsh-medium	88
English-medium	108

Flintshire	5
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November video

Welsh-medium	37
English-medium	42

Numeracy Coordinators Network Meeting (30/11/21) = 27

*Recording also shared with all Heads of Maths & Numeracy Coordinators

Online workshops

Thursday 9/12/21 4pm – 5pm Workshop 1:
Developing algebraic thinking through number

Workshop 1

15 Secondary attendees, current viewing figures: 106

Numeracy Coordinators Network Meeting (30/11/21)

Flintshire	7
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*Recording also shared with all Heads of Maths & Numeracy Coordinators

ENGLISH AND LITERACY**Data Rhanbarthol / Regional data:
Primary**

Estyn category support = 2

Bespoke school support/schools causing concern = 16

Data Awdurdod Lleol / Local Authority data:

Flintshire:	1 3
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Regional data:

Literacy support for school either in Estyn category/Special Measures, causing concern or needing guidance.

Secondary = 20 schools have received individual support

All secondary schools attended Heads of English forum

Local Authority data:

	Primary	Secondary
Flintshire	6	2

WELSH AND LITERACY**Regional data:**

Network meeting and 'Drop in' sessions
(February 22) = 14

HoD who attended WJEC session: February '22
+ March '22 = 16

Members of the Teams / Google Classroom
'GwE - Welsh - Secondary' = 27

A Level Welsh Language Conference = 10

Local Authority data:

Flintshire:	1
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Flintshire:	1
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Flintshire = 1

Flintshire:	1
-------------	---

'Ein Llais Ni' (GwE) Project - number of secondary schools that are members of the project = 13	Fflint / Flintshire:	1

SCIENCE

Regional data: No Science specific networks have taken place in this time, due to the development of the regional and local Science and Technology AoLE networks. No. of schools that have received bespoke school support: 27	Local Authority data: No. of schools that have received bespoke school support:	
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:
Flintshire:	6	

FOUNDATION PHASE

Regional data: Number of schools receiving bespoke support: 32 Wood work project: 26 Spring network meeting: 303	Local Authority data: Wood work project			
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> Spring Network Meeting <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>57</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	5	Flintshire:
Flintshire:	5			
Flintshire:	57			

OBJECTIVE 3 - LEADERSHIP
Supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks

LEADERSHIP

Regional data: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2020-21</th> <th>2021-22</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.Middle Leadership Development Programme</td> <td>98</td> <td>102</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.Senior Leaders Development Programme</td> <td>61</td> <td>72</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme (preparing for NPQH</td> <td>71</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.New and Acting Headteacher Development Programme</td> <td>46</td> <td>32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.Experienced Headteacher Development Programme</td> <td>17</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td>294</td> <td>258</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2020-21	2021-22	1.Middle Leadership Development Programme	98	102	2.Senior Leaders Development Programme	61	72	3.Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme (preparing for NPQH	71	35	4.New and Acting Headteacher Development Programme	46	32	5.Experienced Headteacher Development Programme	17	17	TOTAL	294	258	Local Authority data: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>T</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>7</td> <td>4</td> <td>56</td> </tr> </table> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>T</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>37</td> <td>17</td> <td>10</td> <td>6</td> <td>4</td> <td>74</td> </tr> </table>	2020-21	1	2	3	4	5	T	Flintshire:	14	15	16	7	4	56	2021-22	1	2	3	4	5	T	Flintshire:	37	17	10	6	4	74
		2020-21	2021-22																																															
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2021-22	1	2	3	4	5	T																																												
Flintshire:	37	17	10	6	4	74																																												

- **Biophilia = 90**
- **Talk Boost = 9**
- **Drawing and Talking = 20**
- **Designated Person for LAC training = 25**
- **Governor's LAC in schools training = 10**

- **Biophilia - Flintshire = 18**
- **Talk Boost - Flintshire (EYTB) = 1**
- **Drawing and Talking – Flintshire = 10**
- **Designated Person for LAC training. Flintshire = 0**
- **Governor's LAC in schools training Flintshire = 0**

RE-IGNITE LEARNING

Regional data:

Remote Instruction of Language and Literacy (RILL) – PHASE 2: 54 schools have signed up for training from September 2021 and into spring term 2022.

Precision Teaching and SAFMEDS: Eight regional training sessions have been delivered in the autumn term 2021, and now all GwE schools can access the live SAFMEDS pupil website, webinars and online resources.

- English: 1023 views on the reignite learning webinar and 391 views on the SAFMEDS training video.
- Cymraeg: 474 for the webinar and 70 for the SAFMEDS training.
- Pupils completing around 677 maths activities in the first launch week.

Improving fluency in Oral Reading (iFOR): 42 schools have signed up for training from September 2021 and into spring term 2022 as follows:

The number of teachers that have accessed the Google classroom is as follows:

- 62 have accessed the English resources
- 41 have accessed the Welsh resources.

Warwick Collaborative Well-being Project

In January 2022 we recruited 33 primary schools to take part in both language strands of our Connect well-being study.

UK National Institute for Health Research KiVa Anti-Bullying Study

From 2020 we have been working with 29 primary schools to evaluate the impact of KiVa.

Local Authority data:

Remote Instruction of Language and Literacy (RILL) – PHASE 2:

Flintshire:	3
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Precision Teaching and SAFMEDS:

Flintshire:	1
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Improving fluency in Oral Reading (iFOR):

Flintshire:	8
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Warwick Collaborative Well-being Project

Flintshire:	10
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UK National Institute for Health Research KiVa Anti-Bullying Study

Flintshire:	6
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<p>Evidence-Informed Profession Project (EIPP)</p> <p>In the autumn term 2022 we recruited 52 primary schools.</p> <p>National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP)</p> <p>We are currently supporting 40 primary and secondary schools.</p>	<p>Evidence-Informed Profession Project (EIPP)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table> <p>National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	4	Flintshire:	-
Flintshire:	4				
Flintshire:	-				

OBJECTIVE 5 - SUPPORTING A SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM
Supporting a system in which the education profession has the skills, capacity and agency to continually learn and improve their practice

PEER ENGAGEMENT									
<p>Regional data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schools / clusters participating in the program: 105/18 • Number of trained Peer Reviewers: 161 • Number of Improvement Facilitators trained: 154 • Number of schools / clusters earmarked for the next tier: 154/20 	<p>Local Authority data:</p> <p>Number of schools:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>17</td> </tr> </table> <p>Number of trained Peer Reviewers :</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>23</td> </tr> </table> <p>Number of Improvement Facilitators trained:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>16</td> </tr> </table> <p>Number of Schools to Train Summer and October 2022:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flintshire:</td> <td>23</td> </tr> </table>	Flintshire:	17	Flintshire:	23	Flintshire:	16	Flintshire:	23
Flintshire:	17								
Flintshire:	23								
Flintshire:	16								
Flintshire:	23								

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Collaborating · Learning · Succeeding

GwE Regional Business Plan

2022-2023



CONTENTS

1. Our vision, values and behaviour
2. Regional context
3. Introduction
4. GwE Regional Business Plan:
 - Strategic Objectives 2022-2023
 - Regional Priorities 2022-2023
5. Governance: Monitoring and Evaluation
6. Risk Register
7. Funding
8. Additional Supporting Documents

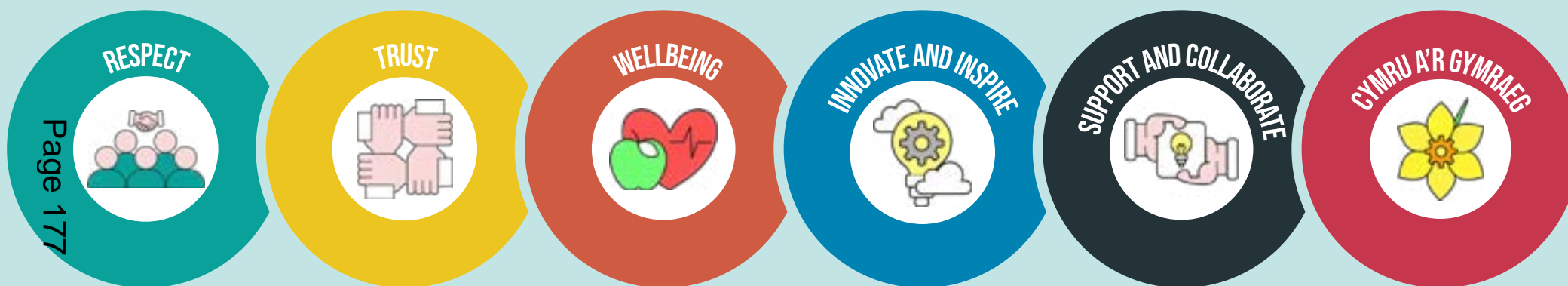
Collaborating, Learning, Succeeding



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



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 provides school improvement services for a region of six local authorities: Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Anglesey.

The number of pupils of compulsory school age in 2021 was 82,432. This represents 21.7% of all pupils in Wales. There are 401 maintained schools in the region, 27.2% of all maintained schools in Wales (School Census Results, 2021).

The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals increased yet again from 18.2% in 2020 to 20.4%, which is lower than the national figure of 22.9%. This level of eligibility is still the lowest of the four regional consortia (School Census Results, 2021).

In the region, 41.6% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 29.5% (Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics).

As of the 30th of September 2021, ethnic minorities account for 2.2% of the population in the region and this is below the Wales average of 4.8%. (Annual Population Survey/Office for National Statistics (ONS)).

As of the 31st March 2021, 1,465 children in the region are looked after by a local authority and this represents 20.2% of looked-after children in Wales. (Children Receiving Care and Support Census)

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.

GwE has a clear plan that sets out how, in close collaboration with key stakeholders, it will strengthen leadership, improve teaching and learning and increase aspiration to impact on standards.

3. INTRODUCTION

Our regional business plan sets out the priority areas for improvement across the region.

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. The business plan also addresses Welsh Government and the Local Authorities strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE.

Additionally, GwE will work in partnership with Local Authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate. It also takes into consideration the views and priorities of other middle tier partners such as Estyn, Qualifications Wales, WJEC, National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL), Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Education Workforce Council (EWC).

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 in relation to the 'National School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability'. 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.

Our priorities are a combination of improving school provision, leadership and outcomes, as well as delivering the reform journey. Our approach to the reform journey has been integrated in all aspects of our work from the beginning. Not one element of the reform journey can stand alone. It is viewed from the need of learners and the baseline of individual schools and clusters to deliver change according to agreed expectations.

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

Our focus is on support and on capacity-building for a self-improving system. Challenge Advisers have become 'Supporting Improvement Advisers' and this is more than a name change – it signals a determination to build trust with key stakeholders and to move away from a top-down approach to school improvement, developing a more long-term, supportive and sustainable strategy.

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

Professional learning will be central to ensuring that all school staff have the professional knowledge and skills to deliver on the education reforms that are well underway in Wales. Taking into consideration the system expectations and working in collaboration with partners, a clear framework for themes for professional learning has been identified for practitioners within schools.

4. GwE REGIONAL BUSINESS PLAN

Our business plan, along with the Regional Strategy 'Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression' incorporates how GwE will respond to the impact of post-Covid in the context of education. 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. Their mental health and emotional well-being, their relationships and physical health are all essential enablers of good learning. We will support schools to focus on these areas as well as developing the key enabling skills, which include oracy, literacy, numeracy, planning, organising and critical thinking. In addition, the Supporting Improvement Advisers' initial visit to schools at the beginning of the year have focused on the needs of schools, taking into consideration the impact of Covid. Compound information arising from these visits inform schools' support plans, and we have refined our business plan to reflect this.

The high level priorities for 2022-2023 were agreed with the Joint Committee on 16 February 2022. The Business Plan for 2022-2023 has been formally agreed by the Chief Education Officers of each Local Authority, the Joint Committee and the Lead Chief Executive on xxxxx.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Our strategic objectives reflects the current regional and national priorities.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2022-2023

- 1 Curriculum & Assessment** - Supporting a national curriculum with equity & excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners.
- 2 Developing a high-quality education profession** - improving the teaching & learning in our schools.
- 3 Leadership** - supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks.
- 4 Strong & inclusive schools** committed to excellence, equity & well-being
- 5 Supporting a self improving system** - supporting a system in which the education profession have the skills, capacity & agency to continually learn & improve their practice
- 6 Business** - ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES 2022 - 2023

The four purposes is the starting point and aspiration for schools as they prepare to design 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.

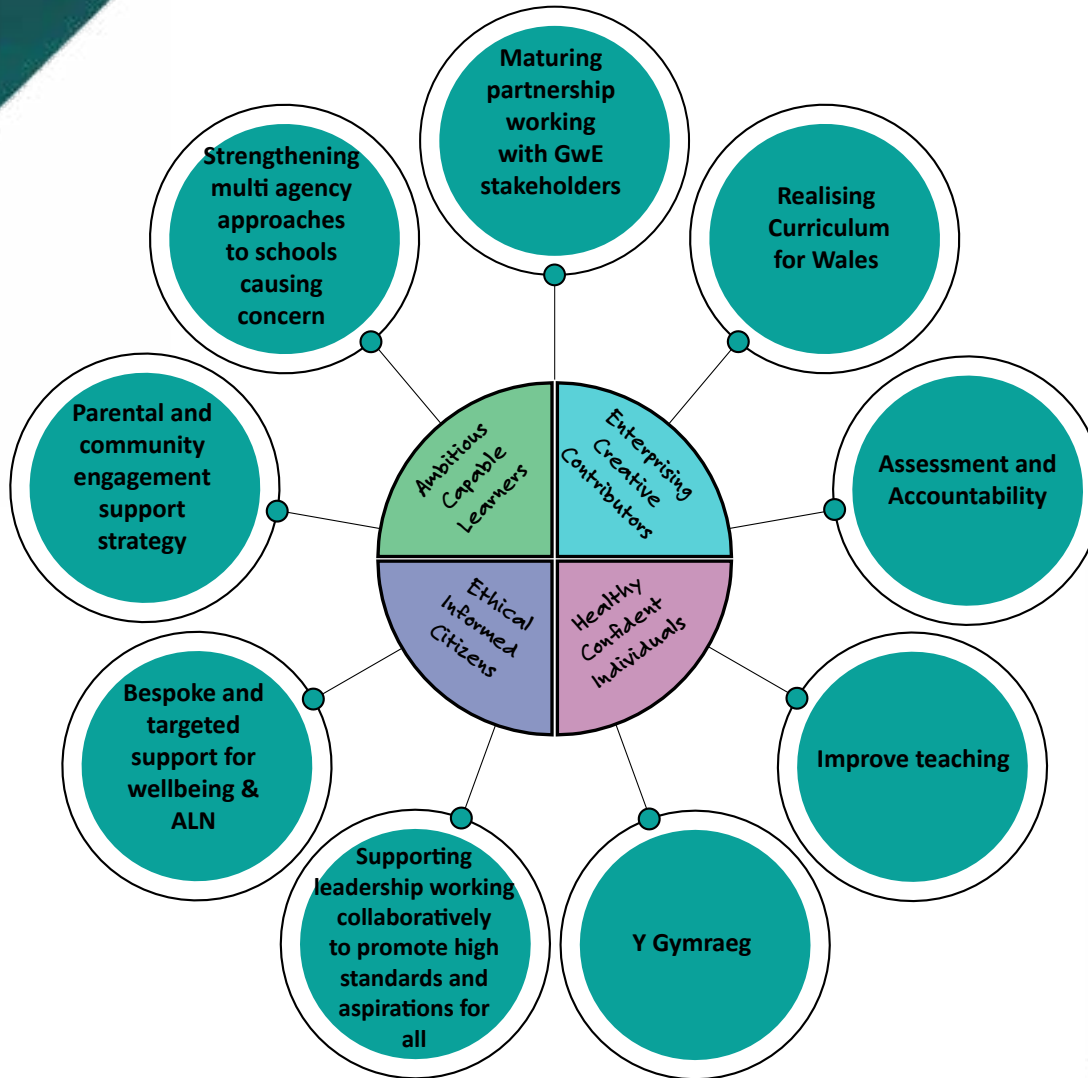
Our priorities outlined below are aimed to support schools as they work towards those four purposes.

These priorities are supported by the service's detailed operational plans, outlining how and when the aspects of each priority will be delivered and setting expectations for the next steps in delivering the reform journey. Also, each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser.

OUR HIGH LEVEL PRIORITIES 2022-2023

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

GROWTH
POINTS



ENHANCEMENT

Collaboration

Learning Organisation

Quality Enhancement

Developing leadership and supporting workforce wellbeing

OUR HIGH LEVEL PRIORITIES 2022-2023

OBJECTIVE 1: CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

Supporting a national curriculum with equity & excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners

- Page 182
- 1.1 Realising Curriculum for Wales**
- » Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise all aspects of the Reform Journey and implement the new curriculum.
 - » Support all staff and governors to realise Curriculum for Wales through ensuring that all schools are ready for first teaching of the new curriculum and meet mandatory requirements for September 2022
 - » Provide support for secondary schools and settings in preparing for the new curriculum in Years 7 and 8 in September 2023 by:
 - Providing regional and local networks with clear guidance on curriculum design, planning, assessment and progression through modelling and exemplifying curriculum practice;
 - Supporting schools to ensure that learners have the opportunity to use, apply and extend the mandatory cross-curricular skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence in a range of authentic contexts;
 - Promoting learner transition by ensuring effective direct engagement between secondary and primary schools;
 - Working collaboratively with leaders to ensure that all settings have a clear plan to effectively respond to the guidance delivered in the Curriculum for Wales and plan effectively for Professional Learning;
 - Ensuring all settings adopt and publish a summary for key stakeholders
 - Continuing to encourage schools to develop and refine their curriculum and assessment arrangements as part of continuous evaluation
 - » Encourage schools to develop methods of holistically capturing and evaluating progress and success of all learners towards an agreed end that encompass the Four Purposes within their school community.
-
- 1.2 Assessment and Accountability**
- » Work in partnership with schools to support the development of effective assessment rationale that addresses the reasons of why and what is assessed and identifies the requirements of different stakeholders for relevant assessment information
 - » Support the principles and practices of the Curriculum for Wales, and create the significant system and culture change necessary for the Curriculum to succeed.
 - » Work in partnership with schools to facilitate effective professional dialogue within and between schools to develop a shared understanding of progression across the breadth of the curriculum, allowing practitioners to identify, capture and reflect on



learner progress over time.

- » Support schools to effectively report on learner progress to parents/carers.
- » Work in partnership with schools and local authorities to develop performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, which effectively captures the progress of schools and settings against the four purposes of the new curriculum.
- » Work in partnership with schools and local authorities to adopt a revised accountability model, which will include robust quality assurance processes, to ensure that there are clear and appropriate lines of accountability at all levels for regional school improvement.

OBJECTIVE 2: DEVELOPING A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION PROFESSION

Improving the teaching & learning in our schools

2.1 Improve Teaching

- » Support schools in responding to the education reform journey, with strong emphasis on pedagogy, effective teaching and action research
- » Ensure effective and consistent implementation of formative assessment principles and strategies across and within all schools
- » Ensure consistency of messages in GwE Professional Learning and support for schools regarding the 4 purposes and pedagogy, including the 12 pedagogical principles
- » Support schools to implement the key principles of the assessment guidance
- » Support cross sector collaboration to ensure consistency of effective teaching practice to support learner transition

2.2 Y Gymraeg

- In collaboration with the Local Authorities:
- » Support schools to promote the benefits of bilingualism and the benefits of Welsh-medium education;
 - » Support and incentivise the development of the growth of Welsh-medium provision in the English-medium schools;
 - » Develop a professional learning offer for the Welsh Language in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales (3-16) and strengthen collaboration / transition from primary to secondary sector;
 - » Promote the profile of the Welsh language amongst leaders in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales and the Welsh Government target for a million Welsh speakers;
 - » Develop the informal use of Welsh through the 'Siarter iaith' and 'Cymraeg Campus';
 - » Develop the language skills of the education workforce to expand the proportion who can teach and work through the medium of Welsh.

OBJECTIVE 3: LEADERSHIP

Supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks

- 3.1 **Supporting leadership working collaboratively to promote high standards and aspirations for all**
- » Continue to support collaboration at all levels of leadership to ensure all learners achieve their potential. Specifically:
 - Ensuring that all clusters and alliances are effectively engaging in developmental work within and across sectors.
 - Further strengthen and embed peer review in all clusters and alliances to ensure robust and rigorous self-evaluation and improvement planning.
 - Support leaders in clusters and alliances with Quality Enhancement processes which evaluate the quality of provision and pupil progress as we move to the new curriculum.
 - Ensuring that the principles of distributive leaderships are embedded in all learning organisations across the region.
 - » Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility in line with professional standards.

OBJECTIVE 4: STRONG & INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Committed to excellence, equity & well-being

- 4.1 **Bespoke and targeted support for wellbeing & ALN**
- » Continue to work closely in partnership with Local Authorities to provide wellbeing support for practitioners and learners in schools and settings.
 - » Continue to implement regional strategies for children who are vulnerable to learning, concentrating on their inclusion, emotional wellbeing, attendance and any additional learning needs to impact positively on their progress and wellbeing.
 - » Develop a Whole School Approach to wellbeing, promoting 'Ethically Informed Citizens of Wales'.
 - » Support the Local Authorities in the delivery of ALN Transformation by providing Professional Learning to improve teaching and learning.
- 4.2 **Support schools to tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment and set high standard for all**
- » Support schools to deliver the long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise.
 - » 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 disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

- » Further develop and implement the national PDG strategy across the region.

4.3 Parental and community engagement support strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Develop a parental and community support strategy to help parents and carers on how to best support their child's learning. Encourage schools to listen to children and young people as they engage with their learning and supporting them in achieving their aspirations. » 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; » Support schools and Local Authorities to invest in the learning environment of community schools to secure stronger engagement with parents and carers outside traditional hours.
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OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING A SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM

Supporting a system in which the education profession have the skills, capacity & agency to continually learn & improve their practice

Strengthening multi agency approaches to 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. 	
	5.2 Maturing partnership working with GwE stakeholders	<p>Strengthen our collegiate approach to school improvement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Continuing to work closely with schools and settings to deepen the peer work already established to plan, develop and evaluate their priorities and share the professional Learning gleaned. » Providing professional learning to further develop peer review. » Continuing to develop our work in clusters, alliances and sector transition to improve quality and develop the Curriculum for Wales agenda. » Continuing to implement our memorandum of understanding with Bangor University to further develop our evidence-based practice. » Continuing to work collaboratively with other Regions to bring a more consistent approach to deliver national priorities.

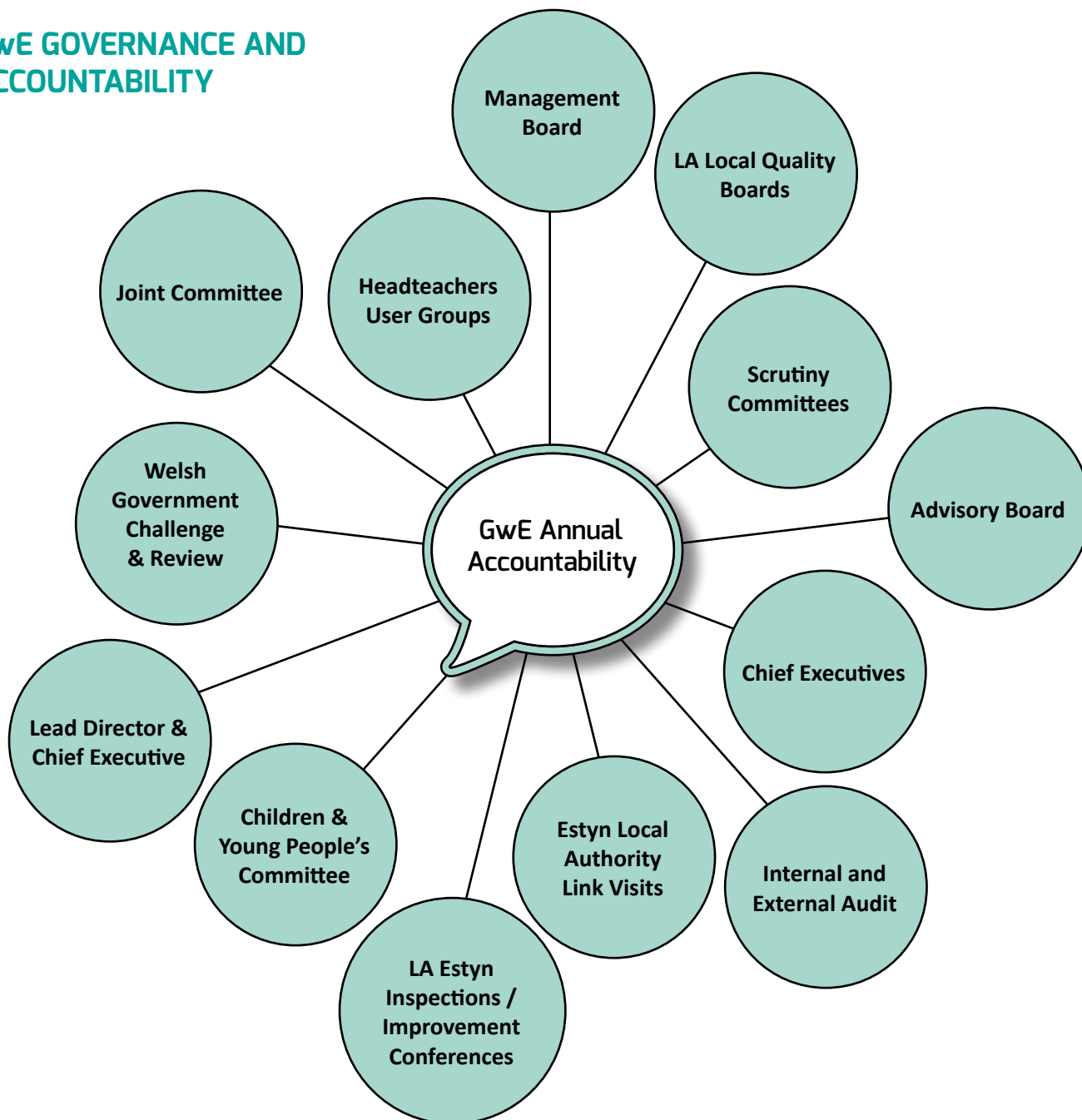
OBJECTIVE 6: BUSINESS

6.1 **Business** » Ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.

5. GOVERNANCE: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is a clear and robust accountability framework in GwE.

GwE GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



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
- 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 as outlined above. Progress against the regional business plan is reported on a quarterly basis to the Joint Committee.

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 affects strategic long term planning.
- Uncertainty regarding grant cuts and funding arrangements from WG hampers strategic long term planning. Significant delays in confirmation of funding levels affects the implementation of the Strategic Business Plan.
- 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.
- The impact of Covid-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for schools to work on engaging with their original Curriculum for Wales preparations.
- 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.
- 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.

7. 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 2022-2023 our core budget is £3,924,269. Our core budget is now around 25% less than just before GwE was set up. This year our Education Improvement Grant will be £29,309,224 (including match funding). This is a £7.5million cut on the 2015 budget. At the same time, there has been a 22% 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 around 3% 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	14/15	£37,021,296		
EIG	15/16	£33,549,764	-£3,471,532	-9.38%
EIG	16/17	£31,902,703	-£1,647,061	-4.91%
EIG	17/18	£31,672,444	-£230,259	-0.72%
EIG	18/19	£29,124,247	-£2,548,197	-8.05%
EIG	19/20	£29,064,551	-£59,696	-0.20%
EIG	20/21	£28,776,349	-£288,202	-0.99%
EIG	21/22	£29,397,227	£620,878	2.16%
EIG	22/23	£29,309,224	-£88,003	-0.30%
		Cumulative	-£7,712,072	-22.39%

8. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Detailed Business Plans 2022-2023
- GwE Risk Register
- Regional Professional Learning Offer
- Strategic Priorities of Local Authorities 2022-2023
- Reform Journey Think Pieces



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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 10 th October, 2022
Report Subject	Self-Evaluation Report Education Services 2021-22
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Education and Youth Portfolio undertakes a rigorous annual self-evaluation of its performance and services to provide assurance to the Council on the quality of education services in Flintshire. The report identifies strengths and areas for further improvement and those areas for improvement are then reflected in the Council Improvement Plan and the Portfolio's own Business Plan.

For the previous two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the suspension of inspection activity by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training, Estyn, the portfolio's previous two evaluation reports have not followed the Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection framework but provided a detailed overview of the portfolio's range of services and how they have responded to supporting learners and schools during the pandemic.

However, with the resumption of all inspection activity by Estyn from April 2022 onwards, including the inspection of Local Government Education Services, the Portfolio's evaluation report this year has reverted back to the Estyn framework. The report is structured to provide assurance to the Council across the three inspection areas of:

- Outcomes
- Quality of Education Services (including Youth Services)
- Leadership and Management

Each inspection area is evaluated in detail for the period 2021-2022 and concludes with a summary of further areas identified for improvement to ensure the continued provision of quality education services to the residents of Flintshire.

The overall conclusion of the self-evaluation report is that education services in Flintshire are strong, effectively support children and young people and provide good value for money.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To review the outcome of the Education Portfolio's annual self-evaluation report on the quality of education services for the period 2021-2022.
2	To provide any observations to the Portfolio Team on the report.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE SELF EVALUATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES
1.01	<p>The prime purpose of self-evaluation is to lead service improvements within the Education and Youth Portfolio to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people. Only by robustly evaluating the strengths of the current provision and identifying areas for further improvement can the portfolio continue to refine the manner in which it delivers services to secure better outcomes.</p> <p>At the heart of self-evaluation are three questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well are we doing and what impact are our services having?• How do we know?• How can we improve things further?
1.02	<p>The new Estyn framework for the inspection of Local Authority Education Services was introduced in 2018 and recently refreshed following national changes to the use of education performance data and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on three inspection areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Outcomes<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.1 Standards and progress overall1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups1.3 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning2. Quality of Education Services<ol style="list-style-type: none">2.1 Support for School Improvement2.2 Support for Vulnerable Learners2.3 Other education support services3. Leadership & Management<ol style="list-style-type: none">3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning3.3 Professional learning3.4 Safeguarding arrangements3.5 Use of resources <p>The portfolio's self-evaluation report is structured in this way.</p>

1.03	<p>The inspection programme of Local Authority Education Services began in 2018 with the intention that all local authorities would be inspected over a four year cycle. Due to COVID-19 this has been severely disrupted and so Estyn will now inspect between four and six local authorities per year to complete the cycle by the summer of 2024.</p>
1.04	<p>Education services in Flintshire were inspected under this framework in June 2019. The report was positive and there was no requirement for any Estyn follow up. The report identified four recommendations for improvement which the service has continued to focus on since 2019, despite the interruptions caused by the pandemic, and these are embedded in the Council Plan and Portfolio Business Plan.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <p>R1 Improve outcomes for learners in key stage 4</p> <p>R2 Reduce exclusions and increase attendance in both primary and secondary schools</p> <p>R3 Improve the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the few front line education services identified in the report in order to provide more accurate information about the impact of the local authority's work</p> <p>R4 Manage the reduction in school budget deficits more effectively</p>
1.05	<p>The suspension of learner assessments, public examinations as well as other data collections by Welsh Government during the pandemic and its decision not to collect and report on pupil assessment data below the national level has resulted in many of the key performance indicators by which the portfolio traditionally measured its progress and referenced in its annual self-evaluation report now not being available.</p> <p>The focus is now on schools using their own performance data to drive improvements for all their learners at an individual level. The role of the local authority's education service and the regional school improvement service is to rigorously challenge schools and provide targeted support where needed to ensure that schools are using their own evaluation processes effectively to continuously improve and by doing so, secure pupil progress and improved outcomes for all.</p>
1.06	<p>Section 1 of this self-evaluation report describes the portfolio's current view of 'outcomes' within this context. It uses evidence from Estyn reports on its schools over the last five years where it is available. It is also based on first hand evidence of working closely with school leaders and reviewing every individual school in Flintshire with the school improvement advisers from the regional school improvement service, GwE.</p> <p>Section 2 provides a detailed overview of the range of education services within Flintshire and how they contribute to securing positive pupil outcomes.</p>

	Section 3 provides an evaluation of the quality of the leadership and management of education services at a whole council level as well as specifically within the Education and Youth portfolio.
1.07	The full self-evaluation report is included at Appendix 1.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no revenue or capital resource implications as a result of this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment document which outlines the key risks related to the delivery of education services. It is regularly reviewed by the Portfolio's Senior Management Team and is regularly reported to the appropriate Council committee.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	N/A for this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Self Evaluation Report Education Services 2021-22

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Estyn Report Flintshire Education Services 2019 https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2021-08/Inspection%20report%20Flintshire%20County%20Council%202019.pdf</p> <p>Estyn Framework for the Inspection of Local Government Education Services 2021 https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2021-11/What%20we%20inspect%20-%20Local%20government%20education%20services%20for%20inspections%20from%202021.pdf</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Claire Homard, Chief Officer Education & Youth Telephone: 01352 704190 E-mail: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Estyn – the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales.</p> <p>GwE – Regional School Improvement Services for the 6 Education Authorities of the North Wales region.</p> <p>SEREN – Welsh Government programme for the most able students to improve access to Oxford, Cambridge and Russell Group universities.</p>

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Education & Youth Portfolio

Self-Evaluation Report of Education Services

April 2021- March 2022



Introduction & Local Context – Flintshire County Council

Formed in 1996 following local government reorganisation, Flintshire is a well governed and high performing unitary local authority in the north east corner of Wales bordering Cheshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. Flintshire has a strong track record of being a direct provider of local services from Education, Social Care, Streetscene and Housing. Whilst direct provision is at the core of its model, Flintshire is also a creative and flexible council and operates both as a provider and a commissioner of services. It has been instrumental in developing collaborative arrangements such as a regional school improvement service, an employee-owned mutual in leisure, libraries and cultural services, catering and cleaning services and a local social housing trading company. Continuing to develop sustainable models of delivery and maintaining high quality services continues to be a priority for the Council, particularly in challenging financial times, in order to secure the best outcomes for its residents and value for money for the public purse.

Flintshire provides local public services for 156,847 people (2020) who live in 66,973 households.¹ It has the largest population of the North Wales authorities and is the sixth largest in Wales. The population is expected to rise by 2.1% by 2028 but this reflects more of an increase in the number of people over the age of 65 as the numbers of children, young people and the working population are predicted to decrease. This will obviously impact on future demands for services in different ways.

With 6,072 staff, the Council is one of the two largest employers in the county, alongside Airbus, and provides direct services including, education, housing, planning, refuse collection, environmental health, recycling, roads, social services, trading standards, transport and tourism. It provides leisure, library and catering/cleaning services via 'arms' length' trading companies. Flintshire has seven libraries, ten sports and leisure centres, two country parks and maintains 733 miles of roads. Flintshire has 78 schools (64 Primary, 11 Secondary, 2 Specialist & 1 PRU) providing education for 23,347 pupils, including those educated other than at school. Approximately 13.28% of the total population are of school age.

Manufacturing, retail trade and human health and social work are the sectors which currently employ the most people in Flintshire. The availability of employment is rising and unemployment in Flintshire at October 2021 stood at 3.9%. The COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit will, however, have implications for the local economy and the population in the short, medium and long term. The North Wales Economic Framework, supported by UK, Welsh Government and Local Government funding streams provides a clear strategy for future economic growth and clearly articulates the skills and knowledge that will be needed within the local and regional population to deliver on emerging economic, social, digital, and wellbeing priorities.

The County has a mix of affluent and deprived areas. Due to the interconnections of factors there are particular communities that are more vulnerable than others in Flintshire. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019 highlights that coastal communities in Flintshire experience high levels of deprivation (3.3% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in 10% most deprived; 10.9% in 20% most deprived in Wales), particularly when it comes to the employment, income, education, and community safety dimensions.

The number of school aged pupils entitled to Free School Meals (e-FSM) has increased from 13.47% in 2019 (Wales 2019 average 15.96%) to 20.41% in 2022. This figure is now much closer to the current Welsh average of 20.52%.

Based on the 2021 Annual Population Survey, the Welsh language is spoken by 23.9% of the population in Flintshire compared to 29.5% across Wales. This is a significant increase on the data

¹ StatsWales

from the 2011 national census which reported 13.2% of the county's population having some Welsh language skills. The county has 5 Welsh medium primary schools and 1 Welsh medium secondary school. There are no dual stream or bilingual schools in Flintshire. Currently 6.23% of children in Flintshire are educated through the medium of Welsh. There are ambitious targets in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to more than double this number over the next ten years.

The county also has a mixed provision of faith based education with 7 Church in Wales Voluntary Aided primary schools, 5 Roman Catholic primary schools and 1 Roman Catholic secondary school. 11.02% of children in Flintshire currently receive their education in a faith based setting.

Flintshire has a strong tradition of supporting a local infrastructure of non-maintained early years' provision through both English and Welsh, which supports the Council in its delivery of childcare and early years' education. Flintshire was an early adopter of the Welsh Government's flagship childcare policy of 30 hours free provision for working parents and there is a strong network of childminders, playgroups and private day nurseries delivering this combination of childcare and early education prior to children transitioning into schools. Flintshire Council also supports neighbouring local authorities with the administration of their Childcare Offer.

Overall, 13.77% of school aged pupils in Flintshire are designated as having a Special Educational Need in 2022. Of this number 3.14% have Statement of Special Educational Need, higher than the Welsh average of 1.73%. 7.02% of pupils are designated as School Action which is lower than the Welsh average of 11.22% and 3.6% are at School Action Plus, lower than the Welsh average of 7.87%.

The current Chief Executive, Neal Cockerton, was appointed in November 2021 and was previously a member of the Council's Chief Officer Team. The Chief Officer for Education and Youth, Claire Homard, was appointed in June 2017, initially as Interim Chief Officer and then permanently in 2018. She is also fulfils the role as Statutory Director of Education for the Council. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Roberts, is also the Cabinet Member for Education. Following the Council elections of May 2022, the newly appointed Chair of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee is Cllr Teresa Carberry.

The Council's Education Services were last inspected by Estyn in June 2019 under the Local Government Education Services Framework. The outcome was a positive report and no requirement for any kind of follow up. The recommendations from the report were as follows and are embedded in business plans for the Council and the Education & Youth Portfolio:

R1 Improve outcomes for learners in key stage 4

R2 Reduce exclusions and increase attendance in both primary and secondary schools

R3 Improve the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the few front line education services identified in the report in order to provide more accurate information about the impact of the local authority's work

R4 Manage the reduction in school budget deficits more effectively

Structure of the Council

Flintshire County Council has 67 Councillors that are normally democratically elected every 4 years. After the elections of May 2022 there is a minority Labour administration with informal support from the Liberal Democrats. The political make up of Flintshire County Council elected members from May 22 is as follows:

Labour: 31 Independents: 22 Flintshire Independents: 4 Liberal Democrats: 4 Eagle Group: 3
Conservative: 2 Non-Aligned: 1

The Council has a Cabinet and a Scrutiny function. Decisions are usually made by the Cabinet for all issues including major policy matters. The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold the Cabinet to account and to assist in the improvement and development of the Council's policies and services. Flintshire has 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees covering:

- Education, Youth & Culture
- Corporate Management & Governance
- Community, Housing & Assets
- Environment & Economy
- Social and Health Care



Leader of the Council
Cllr Ian Roberts



Chief Executive
Neal Cockerton



Chief Officer Education & Youth
Claire Homard

Working in Partnership

Flintshire County Council has a longstanding and proud track record of partnership working. The communities it serves rightly expect statutory and third sector partners to work together to manage shared priorities through collaboration. The Flintshire Public Services Board (PSB) is at the heart of promoting a positive culture of working together and concentrates energy, effort and resources on providing efficient and effective services to local communities. It works within the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its sustainable development principles.

In addition, Flintshire also has joint Public Service Board with Wrexham County Borough Council as it was acknowledged that by joining together, knowledge and resources could be shared and joint solutions found to tackle common challenges, specifically those around community resilience and COVID-19 recovery. This Joint PSB was formed in June 2020. Those priorities marked with * are the priorities of the Joint PSB. The priorities of the Public Service Board are:

- Community Safety
- Healthy and Independent Living
- Community Resilience : Children and Young People*
- Community Resilience : Environment and Carbon Reduction*
- Community Resilience : Mental Health and Well-being*
- Community Resilience : Poverty and Inequality*

Public Services Board partners include: Wrexham County Borough Council, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales, North Wales Police, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, HM Prison and Probation Service in Wales,

Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham, Coleg Cambria, Wrexham Glyndwr University, Do Well Ltd, NE Wales MIND and the Department for Work & Pensions.

Flintshire's Corporate Plan 2021-22

The Council Improvement Plan is reviewed and refreshed each year and approved by full Council. In the period 2021-2022 the following core improvement themes drove the business plans of each portfolio and were reported on via quarterly monitoring reports, culminating in an Annual Performance Report.

Theme / Wellbeing Objective	In-year Priority
Poverty Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs	Income Poverty
	Child Poverty
	Food Poverty
	Fuel Poverty
	Digital Poverty
Affordable and Accessible Housing Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities	Housing support and homeless prevention
	Housing Needs and Housing Options
	Social Housing
	Private Rented Sector
	Empty Properties
Green Society and Environment Limiting the impact of the Council's services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint.	Carbon Neutrality
	Fleet Strategy
	Green Environment
	Renewable Energy
	Active and Sustainable Travel Options
Economy Enabling a sustainable economic recovery	Town Centre Regeneration
	Business
	Transport and digital infrastructure
	Local Development Plan (LDP) Targets
	Spending money for the benefit of Flintshire
Personal and Community Well-being Supporting people in need to live as well as they can	Reducing worklessness
	Independent Living
	Safeguarding
	Direct Provision to support people closer to home
	Local Dementia Strategy
Education & Skills Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities	A well-connected, safe and clean local environment.
	Educational Engagement and Achievement
	Digital Learning Opportunities
	Learning Environments
	Learning Community Networks
Specialist Educational Provision	

The themes for the Education & Youth Portfolio were incorporated into the E&Y Business Plan 2021-22 and progress was regularly reported to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

Self-Evaluation of Education Services

INSPECTION AREA 1: OUTCOMES

1:1 Standards and progress overall

Estyn suspended inspections of all education providers maintained by local authorities in March 2020 due to COVID-19 and no further inspections were carried out in 2019- 2020 or 2020-2021. Inspections in the non- maintained settings began again in spring term 2022 as well as pilot inspections for schools. Inspections in the school sector began again in summer term 2022 and two Flintshire primary schools were inspected under the revised inspection framework.

Inspection performance across the school sectors is strong. There are no schools in Estyn follow up or statutory category at the current time. There is a strong record of close correlation between the Council's pre-inspection reports and Estyn findings. The Council has a very good track record in effectively supporting schools being removed from categories. Powers of intervention are used effectively where schools cause concern, to ensure challenge and support is timely and effective. Interim Executive Boards have provided successful challenge and intervention to schools in serious categories of concern. This has helped to increase the pace of change and ensure robust accountability for standards and progress.

The primary school inspection profile for Flintshire has been continuously strong. Between September 2017 and March 2020, 24 primary schools in Flintshire were inspected. 96% of the schools inspected were at least Good for standard of care, support and guidance for pupils, with 29% judged to be Excellent. Nearly all primary schools inspected also effectively promote pupil wellbeing and positive attitudes to learning (92% judged to be Excellent or Good). Standards of Teaching and Learning were judged to be Excellent or Good in 88% of these schools. One primary school was placed in Special Measures in December 2019. Following a comprehensive package of support provided by the LA and GwE, the school was removed from follow up in spring 2022. Two primary schools placed in Estyn review in autumn term 2018 have both been removed from follow up. During the summer term 2022, two Flintshire primary schools were inspected under the new inspection arrangements. Judgements are no longer given by Estyn for the 5 inspection areas. Both schools have no follow up requirements by Estyn as a result of their inspection and one school has been invited to prepare a case study on its work in relation to ensuring rapid progress for pupils following the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Overall, the inspection profile for Flintshire secondary schools is strong. No secondary schools are in any Estyn follow up category. The two schools that were in Estyn Review were successfully removed from follow up in 2022. All secondary schools have bespoke support plans in place to ensure continued improvement. Schools causing concern are subject to robust monitoring. There are 360° action plans in place when needed and highly focused support provided by both the Regional School Improvement Service, GwE and the Local Authority.

1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups

Early Education Funded Provision for 3 year olds (Early Entitlement)

Over the last three years Flintshire has averaged 485 three year olds per month accessing early education, known locally as Early Entitlement (EE) through a mixed provision of mostly playgroups and

private day nurseries. During the 2020/21 financial year significantly less children accessed provision due to the pandemic. Some schools offer early education as part of their nursery/reception class if there is a lack of non-maintained provision in the area. Pupil level data on standards achieved by three year olds is not collected by the Local Authority. Quality of provision in the non-maintained sector is monitored regularly by the Early Entitlement Advisory Team (EET) and a number of partner schools and is quality assured by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). The Local Authority uses Estyn inspections as the main source of data on standards and progress in funded non-maintained settings alongside professional observations from the Early Entitlement Advisory Team.

Early Entitlement provision has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last two years. In summer 2020, in line with Welsh Government (WG) legislation, the EE scheme was suspended and all EE registered playgroups and a third of private day nurseries closed. No summer eligible EE children were registered with the scheme. Spring funded EE children had their places withdrawn. Some non-maintained settings did reopen but only for the provision of childcare for essential workers and for vulnerable children as directed by Welsh Government.

In response to the closure of settings and the focus on 'home learning', the Early Entitlement Team (EET) created a new Facebook page and used it to bilingually share a learning activity suitable for 3 year olds each day. Parents of spring funded EE children were invited to view the EET's activity ideas directly or through 'Home Learning' sites set up by the child's setting. The response to the Facebook page was very positive with setting staff and parents signing up in good numbers.

Between September and December 2020 registered EE providers were open but were operating under challenging and restrictive conditions and worked hard to remain open despite staff absences. No 'in person' visits were made by the EET to settings during this time because settings have no funded EE children during the autumn term and many settings' risk assessments didn't include EET members as 'essential visitors' at that time.

Overall, the inspection profile for Flintshire non maintained settings is strong. Over recent years there have been mostly positive outcomes from Estyn inspections of non-maintained settings funded to deliver Foundation Phase education to eligible 3 year-olds. The turnover of staff in the non-maintained sector can make securing consistency of standards and provision challenging and the Early Entitlement Team often find themselves having to train staff with no prior knowledge about how to meet the additional demands of educational provision rather than childcare.

A very small number of settings have been placed in Estyn Review or Focused Improvement over the last five years and the LA has a positive track record in supporting these settings to be removed quickly.

Estyn suspended inspections of all education providers maintained by local authorities in March 2020 due to COVID-19 and no further inspections were carried out in 2019-2020 or 2020-2021. Inspections in the non-maintained settings began again in spring term 2022. One setting was placed in Focused Improvement in spring 2022. One setting was removed from Progress review in summer term 2022. There are no other settings in any level of follow up.

The Advisory Teachers' reports clearly identify a setting's strengths as well as areas for development. Teachers have undertaken this task with integrity and objectivity and the correlation between their judgement in the reports and the final inspection outcomes match closely. No concerns have been raised by the Inspectors undertaking an individual visit or through the Local Area Inspection visits to the local authority that these reports are not accurately reflecting the standards and quality of provision in the non-maintained settings

1.3 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

Of the 24 primary schools inspected between September 2017 and March 2020, 92% of the schools inspected were at least Good for wellbeing and attitudes to learning, with 25% judged to be Excellent. The secondary special school was also judged to be Good. The primary special school was judged to be Excellent for Care support and guidance in its last inspection. Two of the three secondary schools inspected under wellbeing and attitudes to learning were judged to be good and the third school judged to be excellent.

Attendance

The impact of the pandemic makes it difficult to draw conclusions on pupil attendance and the impact of the training which has been offered to support emotional health and wellbeing. (See Inspection Area 2). The data below indicates a dip in the attendance across both sectors, but noticeably in the secondary sector with 64% of secondary schools dipping below 90% compared with none in the two years prior to the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 was more evident across the secondary sector and appeared to be the result of community transmission.

In line with Welsh Government directives, the Council suspended the use of tools such as Fixed Penalty Notices in favour of wellbeing visits/contact from the Education Welfare Service (EWS). There is no national data available to see how Flintshire compares with other LAs at this point in time. Targeted attendance reviews by the EWS are underway and these form part of the revised monitoring system that is being implemented. Illness remains the main reason for absence. Levels of unauthorised absence remain low prior to 2020 but have seen a rise, particularly in the secondary sector.

Table 1: Flintshire Schools' Attendance in comparison with Welsh Averages

	Attendance (%)				Unauthorised absence (%)			
	2020/21 *	2019/20 *	2018/19	2017/18	2020/21 *	2019/20 *	2018/19	2017/18
FCC Primary Schools	92.7	-	94.6	94.6	0.9	-	0.5	0.5
Wales Average	-	-	95.4	95.2	-	-	0.3	0.3
Best in Wales	-	-	94.6	94.5	-	-	1.4	1.3
FCC Secondary Schools	88.8	-	93.3	93.7	2.6	-	1.2	0.9
Wales Average	-	-	94.8	94.4	-	-	0.7	0.6
Best in Wales	-	-	95.0	94.8	-	-	1.7	1.6

* not published data

Table 2: Spread of attendance figures

Attendance (%)	<90	90.0-90.9	91.0-91.9	92.0-92.9	93.0-93.9	94.0-94.9	95.0-95.9	96.0-96.9	97.0-97.9	98.0-98.9	99.0-100
Primary 2020/21	7	5	6	7	11	15	6	7	0	0	0
Primary 2019/20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Primary 2018/19	1	0	1	4	9	20	21	7	1	0	0
Primary 2017/18	1	0	0	6	7	21	23	5	1	0	0
Attendance (%)	<90	90.0-90.9	91.0-91.9	92.0-92.9	93.0-93.9	94.0-94.9	95.0-95.9	96.0-96.9	97.0-97.9	98.0-98.9	99.0-100
Secondary 2020/21	7	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Secondary 2019/20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Secondary 2018/19	0	0	2	3	2	4	0	0	0	0	0
Secondary 2017/18	0	0	2	1	2	5	1	0	0	0	0

Exclusions – Permanent and Fixed Term

A reduction in the level of permanent exclusion remains a priority for the Council as it is a recommendation from the LGES Inspection of 2019. Significant work has been undertaken internally with regard to central services to review practice and particularly the use of data to support effective tracking and intervention. The Senior Learning Adviser – Engagement has worked directly with schools and other services in relation to permanent exclusion to identify appropriate support and intervention to help prevent this. The data below does suggest a downward trend over the last three years however, the potential impact of the pandemic on the educational offer makes direct comparisons with previous years problematic.

Table 3: Number of Permanent Exclusions from Flintshire Schools

	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Flintshire	9*	19	26
Wales	*	234	249

* not published data

The level of fixed-term exclusion also suggests a decreasing trend but still remains notably above the Welsh average for incidents of 5 days or less, whilst the rates of 5 days or more has remained below the Welsh average for the published data. Levels of exclusion remain significantly higher in the secondary sector with disruptive behaviour, assault/violence to a pupil and verbal abuse towards an adult being the predominant reasons for exclusion. Schools have reported an impact of the pandemic on their school communities with regards to behaviour, with the availability of wider pastoral provision being reduced as a result of the physical restrictions and staff absence due to COVID-19. A half-termly monitoring process has been introduced to further target individuals/schools for support.

Table 4: Fixed-Term Exclusions

Year	Exclusion Type	Number of Exclusions	Rate of Exclusion (per 1000 pupils)
2020/21*	5 Days or Less	991	42.78
	Wales		

	Over 5 days	34	1.4
	Wales		
2019/20	5 Days or Less	1069	45.7
	Wales	13,496	28.7
	Over 5 days	22	0.9
	Wales	562	1.2
2018/19	5 Days or Less	1347	61.2
	Wales	19,252	41.0
	Over 5 days	32	1.4
	Wales	799	1.7

*Not published data

The number of managed moves across Flintshire remains small with the majority being within the secondary sector. Approximately 35% of these prove to be successful, with the others either resulting in a return to the original school or a move to more specialist provision.

Table 5: Number of managed moves

Year	Primary	Secondary
2021/22	3	12
2020/21	1	6
2019/20	2	10

Outcome 1: Standards and Progress Summary

Areas for ongoing improvement & sustainability

- Maintain support for primary schools and early years settings with the implementation of the revised curriculum from September 2022
- Ensure all secondary schools are ready for the implementation of the revised curriculum in September 2023
- Improve attendance rates and reduce the number of fixed and permanent exclusions through targeted interventions and bespoke educational packages
- Maintain positive inspection outcomes across all sectors - early years, primary, secondary and specialist provision
- Continue to Improve the skills and confidence of staff and learners to raise standards in the use of the Welsh language

INSPECTION AREA 2 : QUALITY OF EDUCATION SERVICES

2.1 Support for School Improvement

School Improvement Processes

The Council knows its schools very well. There are clear strategies, policies and processes that are understood by those involved and give a clear shape and direction to the Education Service.

The relationship and collaboration between Flintshire and the Regional School Improvement Service (GwE) is very good and similarly, relationships between GwE and schools in Flintshire are very positive. Through this relationship, the Council has quality information about its schools and provides them with robust and appropriate challenge but also support and intervention. As a result, schools benefit from a diverse regional professional learning offer and bespoke support at individual school and cluster level. This can be evidenced by the improvement dialogue with schools and the strong inspection profile.

Improving performance in Key Stage 4 continues to be a priority following the last inspection. As a result, each secondary school has an agreed programme of support that helps deliver the identified priorities within a school's improvement plan. The school support plan clearly defines how school improvement resources ensure targeted improvements in key priority areas. Where required, schools are also supported by a 360° support plan which identifies enhanced support needs through the LA and GwE. These plans are monitored through the Council's Quality Board.

The Council, in partnership with GwE, has effective procedures to support schools in their self-evaluation and improvement planning. Schools are robustly challenged on the quality of their self-evaluation processes. The impact of this can be seen in the positive profile of Estyn inspections.

Schools make effective use of the milestones provided by GwE for the reform of the Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs. This allows schools to reflect on their current position with regards to the reform journey and provides clear next steps for their consideration. Cluster work is enhanced through collaborative work and the sharing of priorities and dialogue helps capture the level of support required by schools and collaborations of schools.

Senior leaders within the service use a range of data and intelligence effectively to ensure areas of improvement are identified quickly and addressed robustly through detailed business planning. Data and information is scrutinised more robustly to monitor progress against agreed actions. As a result, the Council is effective in challenging schools where needed and allocating specific support for those schools.

There is a comprehensive professional learning offer for all schools in Flintshire and this is enhanced by what is being offered at local level by schools and between schools. The professional learning offer supports school leadership at all levels across the county and has been strengthened by a range of strategies including access to regional and national development programmes. The local authority has supported the development of leadership in Flintshire schools on a number of levels. Subscription to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and Aspiring Heads course is strong while existing and recently appointed headteachers are very well supported through the New and Acting headteacher programme. The impact of this has been demonstrated in the good recruitment levels at senior leadership level across Flintshire schools.

There has been a clear focus on improving teaching in Flintshire schools. Many schools have been part of teaching and learning professional learning opportunities such as the regional Shirley Clarke Assessment for Learning project. The impact of this focus can be evidenced in the evaluation of practice at school and regional level and through the continued improvement in Inspection Area 3 of the Flintshire Estyn profile (Teaching). All schools have been involved in the ongoing professional development and support programme for the implementation of the new curriculum.

Primary and Secondary networks and peer-to-peer work has strengthened collaboration and led to a stronger shared understanding of effective practice. The Secondary Alliance model is developing well and leading to improved levels of collaboration between schools in sharing practice at senior and middle leadership level and in standards of teaching and learning. The Middle Leadership professional development programmes have been successful in improving the quality of leaders in core subjects, literacy and numeracy and Foundation Phase through development of skills and knowledge. Bespoke approaches have been tailored to meet the requirements of individual schools; coaching programmes for groups and individuals have been delivered in a number of schools and had a clear impact on the work of leaders. Shortages in key personnel have also been supported through the deployment of expertise from neighbouring schools.

Collaborative practice amongst leaders is reinforced through strategic forums, at both headteacher and deputy level. The Council supports strong and effective communication and a mutual sense of common responsibility for the development of responses and actions to local and national challenges. Good practice is shared and local expertise nurtured.

Schools in Flintshire are generally well prepared for the National Reform Journey. The regional reform strategy gives clear direction on how GwE works with schools to ensure a clear and systematic approach to providing support and also opportunities to assist schools to reflect on their engagement with all aspects of the reform journey. As a result, primary schools in Flintshire are well prepared for implementing the new curriculum from September 2022. All secondary schools in Flintshire have opted to defer implementation until September 2023. Each school cluster has two designated leads to facilitate the change management process and required planning to develop the new curriculum and implement new professional standards. Flintshire schools are positively engaged with developing themselves as Schools as Learning Organisations.

Flintshire schools have made effective use of the Small and Rural Schools grant. The Council facilitated a group of small schools to work collaboratively on shared priorities. This facilitation included reviewing and evaluating the impact of their strategies on standards in these schools. The impact was positive and the schools involved valued the opportunity to reflect on their own practice and share successful practice with others. This funding ended in March 2022. However, the network continues to work together on agreed areas of focus and is well supported by the Primary Learning Adviser.

Post-16 Education

There are six high schools in Flintshire with sixth forms and one FE college with a dedicated A level centre. Two high schools merged their sixth forms to create Flint 6th. In 2021, there were 662 learners in Year 13 and 589 in year 12. 65 post-16 learners are learning through the medium of Welsh at Ysgol Maes Garmon. All school sixth forms offer the Welsh BaccaLaureate, however, the number completing the full qualification differs between schools and years.

The Council continues to work closely with its six post-16 providers and in partnership with Coleg Cambria to shape post-16 provision for students and to ensure clear pathways to professional and

technical routes to employment, alongside robust academic routes. The appointment of a Post-16 Learning Adviser has added additional capacity to the portfolio's work. Regular meetings are held of the Post-16 network of schools to agree and review curriculum planning and local delivery. Annual plans are submitted to Welsh Government for scrutiny. The portfolio engages with the Economic Recovery Board who are keen to work with schools, particularly around developing apprenticeships.

The Minister for Education cancelled the 2021 summer examinations series due to the pandemic. No performance measures, including the consistent measures for achievement and value added, are available.

Welsh Government did not collect the data for SEREN for 2020 due to the pandemic. It may be therefore that some students achieved places at Russell Group Universities but didn't register for SEREN. In 2021, based on destination data available to the network, 60% of students gained a place at a Russell Group University. Nearly all other students took up a place at other universities or on specialist courses. A very few opted to defer their places until 2022.

Welsh Language Advisory Service

The Welsh Advisory Team (WAT) consists of 3 staff; 2.8 full time equivalent teachers working in English and Welsh medium primary schools and 1 Admin Support Officer for 20hrs per week. This includes the Service Manager/Team Leader. There are 59 English-Medium primary schools and 5 Welsh-Medium primary schools. According to Welsh Government's language categorisation policy, all 59 English-Medium schools are defined as Category 5 schools and all 5 Welsh schools are defined as Category 1 Welsh-Medium primary schools.

The Team's main objectives are to contribute to Flintshire's Welsh in Education Strategy by improving standards in Welsh (first and second language) by improving the quality of teaching and developing the language skills of the education workforce in primary schools. The Team works in partnership with all primary schools within the local authority to raise standards of Welsh. This is carried out via a range of strategies and a targeted approach to achieve the best outcomes for learners and includes the direct training of teachers and teaching assistants through intensive language and methodology course as well as working collaboratively with other key partners e.g. GwE, Canolfan Bedwyr (providers of the Sabbatical courses), Urdd and Coleg Cambria. Members of the team represent the Council on local, regional and national panels, ensuring that Flintshire schools receive up to date information regarding broader priorities pertaining to the development of Welsh in schools.

The informal use of Welsh in all schools is very much a strategic priority. It is delivered by an appointed coordinator for Siarter Iaith (Welsh Language Charter) and PCAI (Prosiect Cefnogi Arferion Iaith / Supporting Welsh language use project) in Welsh medium primary and secondary schools and a designated person leading and co-ordinating Cymraeg Campus in English medium primary schools. All 5 Welsh medium primary schools in Flintshire have achieved their Gold award. All English medium primary schools in Flintshire have embarked on their journey with Cymraeg Campus, with 4 schools achieving the Silver Award, one of whom has now gone on to achieve the Gold Award. They are the first school in North Wales to achieve this.

Flintshire schools have consistently sought opportunities to further their language training through the WG funded sabbatical courses. Numbers attending from Flintshire have been consistently high on nearly all courses across the North Wales region. Between 2019 and 2022, 15 teachers have accessed the sabbatical programme. They continue to receive post course support from the Welsh in Education team in embedding their practice within their school. For September 2022, a further 7 Flintshire teachers have been allocated places and 2 for the spring term intermediate sabbatical course. The

Welsh Advisory Service work closely with the course providers, deliver methodology sessions during the courses and provide focused support to staff on their return to school, with a particular aim of supporting embedding of practice across the whole school.

One member of the team is designated to work with Welsh medium primary schools should any latecomers arrive at KS2. A programme of intervention is prepared by the Advisory Service and delivered by the school when the need arises. A member of the team also works closely with the Welsh secondary school supporting the 'Trochi' programme for Year 6 learners who transfer from English medium primary school into Welsh medium secondary. The service has made effective use of the first year of the additional funding stream (spring 2022) for Latecomers to Welsh medium education. This included projects for Foundation Phase, KS2 and KS3.

The Team continually evaluates its work to ensure schools receive a high quality service, refining its methods accordingly, e.g. results from the Welsh language skills section of the School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC) are used to identify support for language development, to create working parties of teachers refining curriculum planning for schools and for identifying schools to share good practice.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and Forum

The Flintshire Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for 2017-2020 was accepted by the Welsh Government in April 2018 and an Implementation Plan adopted by the Forum. The draft 10 year plan for 2022-2032 has recently been approved by Welsh Government following a period of public consultation and endorsement by the Council's Cabinet and Scrutiny process. The implementation of the WESP is driven and monitored by the Flintshire Welsh Strategic Forum made up of officers, elected members, school representatives and other organisations linked to the development of the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. A representative from Welsh Government regularly attends meetings of the Forum. The Forum is currently chaired by the Leader of Flintshire County Council who is also the Cabinet Member for Education & Youth.

The Forum works very effectively as a multi-agency platform for delivering and monitoring the WESP. All members bring high levels of knowledge and expertise to the Forum which are freely shared to achieve the common vision of promoting Welsh-medium education and the Welsh language. Most members of the Forum sit on one or more of the three sub-committees – Provision, Standards and Workforce. These meet at least once a term to work on their specific targets and then feed back their progress in the following termly Forum meeting. These sub-groups have each produced a highly focused action plan to support the overall WESP.

The Forum is very robust in holding the Council to account in its delivery of the Plan and achieving the targets contained within it. The Forum membership is regularly reviewed. Reports on the progress of the WESP are routinely presented to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Flintshire remains committed to build additional capacity in the Welsh Medium school network to support the WESP. Significant capital investment has been made through the Council's capital programme and through the Sustainable Learning Communities funding to improve facilities and increase the number of Welsh medium places available. Advanced planning is underway to review further opportunities for growth in Welsh medium schools including a new build for an existing Welsh medium school in Flint and a new start up Welsh medium school in the Buckley/Mynydd Isa area. This would deliver on the Council's key objective of having Welsh medium early years and primary school provision in every major town across the county.

School Governance

The governor support role within the Education Portfolio (0.2fte) sits with the Senior Manager for Business Support. The part time provision and support provided to governing bodies is enhanced by access to the dedicated subscription resource and help line provided by the Governors Cymru web service. Exemplars of good practice from governing bodies in Flintshire are posted to the site.

The key functions of the service relate to supporting governing bodies in the following areas - Schools Causing Concern procedures; School Federations; Accelerated Improvement Boards; Interim Executive Boards; training and development, either through commissioning or direct delivery; administration of the Flintshire Governors Association; appointment of Local Authority governors to governing bodies, and securing governor nominations to the Schools Budget Forum and Education, Youth & Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The ability to offer face to face governor training remained curtailed during 2021/22 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Council continued to remain compliant with the statutory duty to offer the regulatory school governor training programme as the Welsh Government statutory governor training modules are available online. The online training portal registered 40 new log-ons during the year suggesting a good level of engagement with statutory training. Governing Bodies are able to monitor virtual attendance of their governors through the portal and are responsible for monitoring the impact of training on the discharge of their duties.

Non-statutory training modules continue to be developed in partnership between the six North Wales councils adding to the online training programme, with a module on the role of governors in 'pupil voice' becoming available during 2021/22. This year there has also been commissioning of virtual training from external partners on the role of governors in safeguarding and in data protection.

The network of North Wales Governor Support Officers continue to meet virtually each term with the GWE lead for Governor Support. The network continues to share approaches and resources to support governor development. GwE offers support to individual governing bodies, when requested, through their professional learning offer for 2021/22, including the roll-out of the new Curriculum for Wales. Similarly, there continues to be representation at the ADEW National network of Governor Support Officers who meet termly with representatives of Welsh Government. The Governor Development Manager for the Council is currently Vice Chair of the national network and contributor to a WG working group on review of schools complaints procedures.

Administration of the Flintshire Governors Association continues to be provided by the Council. The Forum is an effective, regular consultative platform and a timely vehicle for providing updates on key national and local issues. During the year a regular newsletter was issued updating governors on national/local developments. Meetings of the Schools Budget Forum, Education and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Welsh in Education Strategic Form are held virtually and there remains consistent representation by governors.

Although there are approximately 1250 governor positions within the Authority, the Council only has responsibility for administering the nomination of Local Authority governors to school governing bodies, approximately 400 nominations. Vacancies on governing bodies remain at a consistent level and no major concerns relating to 'resignations' arising have been reported by schools during the year in support of government recruitment. However, the Council has recently engaged with Governors for Schools, to 'skills-match' an applicant governor to a long standing vacancy within a special school. The Council does not capture data on governor ethnicity.

2.2 Support for Vulnerable Learners

Flintshire provides a suitable range of services to promote social inclusion and support for learners with ALN through a combination of internal and externally commissioned services and provision. The Council meets its statutory duties well as demonstrated by the low levels of appeal to the SEN Tribunal and the low levels of young people becoming NEET.

Funding to support children with Special Educational Needs/Additional Learning Needs has been delegated to schools for a number of years now. Delegation of this funding has enabled schools to respond proactively to the needs of their school community and has resulted in a range of internal and external interventions being deployed. These include the use of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), FRIENDS group sessions, targeted therapeutic interventions and the development of sensory spaces.

The model for delegation to primary schools has been remodeled this year in response to the changes brought into place by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET). This places greater autonomy on schools to develop provision at a universal level but also on a more targeted basis, as additional learning provision (ALP) for pupils identified as having ALN.

The Council has made a significant investment to support vulnerable learners in the form of a purpose built facility for its pupil referral unit, Plas Derwen. The new building opened to pupils in September 2021 and provides a specialist learning environment to support the academic and social emotional needs of the pupils. The move saw the coming together of four different centres and staff have worked hard to support a positive transition for the whole Plas Derwen community. Multi-agency intervention is an important aspect of the provision and the additional of weekly sessions from an Assistant Education Psychologist has been beneficial for the pupils and staff to aid the settling in process.

In terms of percentage expenditure, the services and provision to support children with a range of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is comparatively higher than other areas of service under the learning inclusion umbrella. This is in direct response to Council priorities and presenting need. Where possible, services provide individual intervention to pupils however, the delivery model does focus on providing advice, guidance and training to build capacity and effect change within schools.

The focus on nurture and trauma-informed practice has been expanded and a range of training opportunities offered to schools and central services to support the development of this. The Behaviour Support Service has been rebranded as Nurture Outreach and operates as an outreach service from Plas Derwen.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Additional capacity has been allocated to the ALN team in response to the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET). The team now comprises of a six Learning Advisers, including the Early Years ALN Lead Officer (ALNLO) and a dedicated ALN officer for looked after children. The Senior Learning Adviser for ALN manages the team and leads on the implementation of ALNET.

The Learning Advisors have continued to work to meet the statutory obligations in respect of children and young people with additional learning needs. Each of the officers has a cluster groups of schools and follow the pupils from entry into primary school, transition to secondary and on into post-16 provision. The department works within clear protocols and decision making processes to assess and make decisions regarding placement and provision for learners with ALN.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the ALN team continued to work from home, in line with national and

local guidance. Local Authority ALN/SEN Decision Making Panels continued to be held, with the use of online platforms to facilitate this process. All members of the team have the necessary equipment to enable them to continue to fulfil their roles. The use of online platforms has resulted in leaner working practices, with much reduced travel. This has resulted in financial and time savings.

During the pandemic the vast majority of annual reviews have taken place using alternative means. This has included telephone and online platform reviews. The officers provided support to schools and the PRU to ensure that the reviews for the academic year were completed. Thorough risk assessments was undertaken where it was necessary for an officer to attend an annual review in person. All annual review documentation is scrutinised by the Learning Adviser to ensure the provision remains appropriate and pupils are making suitable progress.

Family engagement remains a high priority and officers have worked hard to maintain build and maintain relationships remotely. There has been an individual approach to working with families, recognising that not all families have appropriate devices for online platforms. This approach has maintained the very low levels of appeal to tribunal against the Council. In 2021 there were only 2 appeals which were overturned in favour of the Council.

The Council responded proactively to the Welsh Government amendments to the implementation of ALNET in September 2021. Processes and systems were developed to allow the parallel working of the SEN and ALN statutory duties. Training and awareness raising sessions with schools and officers continued to ensure that schools and the Council were in a confident position to respond to the new requirements. The creation and development of the new IT ALN system, Eclipse, to support schools and the Council with the new ALN process has been a vast undertaking. This comprehensive system has been designed to ensure compliance with statutory duties in the absence of a national system. This has been a joint undertaking by four authorities across North Wales which has supported a collaborative approach to implementation.

Considerable time has been allocated to the identification of ALN through the development of a shared understanding of what constitutes Additional Learning Provision (ALP). Schools have worked in clusters, supported by ALN officers to develop this. A toolkit has been developed to offer further support to schools. This has had input from specialist services across the Portfolio to ensure a shared corporate approach and understanding. Multi-agency working has been important with regards to early years' identification of ALN, in particular with Health. Processes have been reviewed and revised to ensure that children are identified appropriately. A positive relationship has been developed with the Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO) in Health which has supported a collaborative approach and a confidence that the correct children are being identified as having ALN.

The pandemic has had an impact on the Council's compliance with SEN Code of Practice timescales. A total of 124 Statements were issued in the academic year 2020/21, 52% of which were issued within the 26 week timescale. A further 41% were issued late but with permissible exceptions and the remainder were as a result of late advice, particularly from Health colleagues. Despite the delays, pupil needs were identified and provision was allocated pending the outcome of the statutory assessment process so as not to disadvantage any individual.

Officers have completed a number of school monitoring/support visits. ALNCos have provided positive feedback, indicating that they have appreciated the time to discuss matters on an individual basis. The importance of these visits has become paramount following the further delegation of funds to primary school budgets from April 2022 and will be a priority going forward.

Transition between primary and secondary phases was an issue for pupils again for the start of the

2021 academic year given the restrictions placed on schools around the mixing of pupils. Schools responded positively and proactively to provide meaningful transition experiences but this has been challenging for a number of pupils. The wider impact of COVID-19 on the educational experiences of pupils also led to an increased number of parents requesting more specialist provision for their children placing pressure on Resource base places. Despite this, the number of education day placements commissioned in specialist/independent not maintained by Flintshire has seen a downward trend, from 87 in 2018/19, 53 in 2019/20 to 46 in 2021/21, which is indicative of the positive engagement of the ALN team with families.

Destination data for pupils within Flintshire's specialist school indicate that of the 17 learners, 14 left with a qualification and went on to access the local further education institute and 1 went on to access a specialist college placement.

Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The EWS has undergone a review following the Estyn recommendations in 2019. The service now comprises of a Team leader, 6 Education Welfare Officers and 2 Education Support Officers. This change has afforded greater service flexibility to offer support regarding attendance and exclusion in a targeted way. System reviews have been undertaken in a number of schools to ensure that a clear and graduated response to attendance is in place. The increased use of attendance data across the service has facilitated the appropriate targeting of this intervention. There is also a clearer delineation of roles, with officers having identified responsibilities for Elective Home Education, Children Missing Education and the link to the Youth Justice Service.

The ongoing impact of the pandemic has, however, resulted in two years of variable attendance data due to periods of closure and absence, and a result, it has not been possible to see the real impact of the service changes at this point. The use of statutory tools such as Fixed Penalty Notices in response to non-attendance was also suspended by Welsh Government. The EWS has played a pivotal role in pupil safety during the pandemic, making home visits where concerns were expressed by schools.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

In line with other councils, Flintshire has seen an increase in the numbers of children becoming EHE with 172 children registered in April 2022 compared with 91 in 2018. The Local Authority lead officer for EHE is actively engaging in the national meetings and is working in collaboration with other regional leads to develop a co-ordinated approach across North Wales. The additional funding received from Welsh Government has enabled the appointment of a designated officer for EHE who provides information and advice and engages proactively with parents who wish their child to be educated at home. An information pack is circulated and annual visits are undertaken as part of the monitoring process. Officers work closely with colleagues across Social Services as required where safeguarding is deemed to be a concern and work proactively to secure a return to school where this is considered to be in the child's best interests.

Young Person's Counselling Service

The Young Person's Counselling Service is an integral part of the Council's support mechanism to prevent young people from becoming vulnerable. All secondary schools, including the specialist school Ysgol Maes Hyfryd and Plas Derwen (PRU) are allocated designated counsellor time with referrals also being taken for Year 6 pupils. Group work sessions for younger children in primary schools has also been piloted in 6 schools this year with positive outcomes reported from the children, staff and parents. In addition, the service has also responded to requests for young people accessing college or in some cases who are NEET.

Levels of self-referral to the service are low with the majority of referrals coming from school-based staff or through the multi-agency Youth Engagement Progression Framework (YEPF) meetings. A triage system is now being implemented to ensure that a referral has been made to the correct service to support access to a timely and suitable intervention. Schools are also investing increasingly in a range of interventions to address mental health issues which provides further support in targeting counselling for those most in need of this. It is interesting to note a change in the nature of the presenting issues on referral which reflects the impact of the pandemic.

Table 6: Number of clients and presenting issues

	2020/21	2019/20
Number of Clients	308	226
Number of sessions attended	1351	933
Presenting issues on referral (3 most common in rank order high to low)	Anxiety Family Bereavement	Family Anxiety Behaviour related

All young people engaging with the Counselling service undertake an initial assessment (YP-Core) and this is repeated at the end of the intervention to measure impact. The information below shows that on average, the young people note a positive outcome following engagement with the sessions.

Table 7: Impact of the Young Person's Counselling Service

	2020/21	2019/20
Changes in the average result of the Young People's Core Score - Start of Episode	18.57	17.28
Changes in the average result of the Young People's Core Score - End of Episode	9.57	8.86

TRAC

TRAC is a European funded project focused on supporting children between 11 and 16 to engage in education, training or employment. A total of 563 individuals were referred for TRAC intervention between April 2021 and March 2022. The pupils received support with regards to their attendance and wellbeing through a range of activities and interventions. Of these 137 have achieved additional qualifications and 242 have been identified as being at a reduced risk of becoming NEET. The project will cease after August 2022 as the funding comes to an end.

Progression Team

The Engagement Progression Coordinator (EPC) works in partnership to co-ordinate support for pupils between the ages of 11 and 25 who are potentially at risk of disengagement or are currently not in education, employment or training (NEET). The EPC manages the Progression Team who support the potential NEETS. The team receive referrals for pupils who are starting to, or have disengaged from education from Education Welfare Officers or teachers. The EPC ensured links with other relevant services such as TRAC, Youth Justice, Sorted Drug and Alcohol Team and the Young Person's Counselling Service.

Home visits are made by the Progression Team to build rapport and explore the pupils' interests and needs. This engagement work supports pupils to participate in a range of alternative education activities. Support for transition between school and post-16 provision was a priority during the summer months of 2021. The Team supported 147 individuals across the year, 110 of which were Year 9 to

Year 11 and 37 who were post-16. A total of 12 pupils were supported into further education, 2 into an apprenticeship and 3 into employment. A further 13 individuals were supported to transition into Communities for Work or to gain further targeted support for mental health difficulties through services such as the Resilience team.

A further 612 pupils were supported through activities organised by the EPC funded through the Winter of Wellbeing Welsh Government funding. The pupils achieved a range of qualifications, vocational skills and experience along with positive improvement in self-esteem and wellbeing.

The level of year 11 NEET has remained low over the past 4 years as a result of the targeted multi-agency work across the authority, underpinned by the work of the EPC and the Progression Team.

Table 8: Year 11 Leavers (%) from schools in Wales known to be not in education, employment or training (NEET)

	2021	2020	2019	2018
Flintshire	1.4 (23)	1.2 (19)	1.9 (28)	1.2 (18)
Wales	1.6 (507)	1.7 (527)	1.8 (537)	1.6 (476)

Source: Careers Wales

Table 9: Year 12 and 13 Leavers (%) in Flintshire known not to be in education, employment or training (NEET)

	2021	2020	2019	2018
Flintshire Year 12	0.3 (2)	1.1 (6)	0	0
Wales Yr 12	0.4 (55)	0.6 (76)	0.8 (99)	0.7 (90)
Flintshire Year 13	3.4 (19)	3.7 (20)	2.9 (16)	2.5 (15)
Wales Yr 13	2.3 (251)	3.5 (355)	2.5 (269)	2.5 (279)

Education Psychology Service (EPS)

Recruitment of Educational Psychologists (EPs) remains challenging and has resulted in the appointment of 3 Assistant Educational Psychologists to offer additional support to the team. The ratio of EPs to pupils in Flintshire remains the most challenging in Wales sitting at 1:7089 pupils compared with the Welsh average of 1:5154 (range 1:1750 - 1:7089). The issue of recruitment has been raised with Welsh Government, with the challenge being accentuated in the North given the location of the doctorate training course being based in South Wales. The Principal Education Psychologist has also become a member of the interview panel and management committee of the Cardiff training course in an attempt to effect change.

The EPS completed 134 statutory assessments in the last year under the SEN Code which is 93.2% completed within the allocated timescale or with permissible exceptions. Despite the high level of requests for statutory assessment, the team continued to offer group consultation sessions covering a range of topics including:

- Emotionally-Based School avoidance
- Autism
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Person centred planning tools
- Attention and concentration

During the Summer Term 2021, the Group Consultation model was subject to evaluation by a trainee on placement with the team. The research found “The questionnaire data reveals that although ALNCoS experiences vary, the majority of ALNCo participants reported positive experiences and strongly agreed that GC was a good use of time and helpful for gaining strategies for individual pupils

as well as the whole school”.

EPs are a standing member of the 2 new ALN panels under ALNET.

Communication & Language Advisory Support Service

The pandemic has had a notable impact on the speech, language and communication skills of pupils, with teachers identifying a particular impact on children in the Foundation Phase. The Learning Adviser for Speech, Language & Communication has worked closely with Health and family support services to develop an appropriate training package for schools and early years' settings.

Flintshire is the first authority to roll out the Talkboost training offer to all primary schools. To date, 40 schools have engaged with the training, resulting in 288 trained staff. Data collection is at an early stage with regards to the intervention however, the initial reports from 13 schools shows a positive impact when considering pre and post intervention assessment. All pupils were seen to have a positive improvement in their skills, with 75% moving from having language skills at a below age expected level to achieving age expected levels. The area highlighted as having the biggest overall impact following training was social interaction which ties in with the concerns over isolation due to the pandemic.

Support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Gypsy Travellers

The number of pupils identified as having EAL has increased by 84 pupils to 1491 this year, with 53 languages being spoken across Flintshire schools in addition to English and Welsh. All pupils are assessed with regards to their language capabilities and appropriate support allocated either on an individual or group work basis. In the region of 50 pupils have accessed support in the Foundation Phase through the Language Development project and feedback from schools regarding the project impact remains positive. No pupils with EAL have needed access to additional support to engage with their education.

As well as supporting pupils and schools in relation to EAL, the service has supported a number of refugees including 40 Afghan children, 23 children under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme and 1 child under the Ukrainian sponsorship scheme during this reporting period. All pupils and families have had access to EAL intervention and wrap-around support services. The response from schools to supporting children and families has been excellent with pupils settling well into their new schools and communities.

The number of Traveller children attending school saw a notable dip at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the primary sector where attendance is usually stronger. Numbers have been increasing gradually since December as staff have been able to physically re-engage with families and numbers are back to figures similar to those prior to the pandemic. Engagement with the secondary sector remains challenging despite the offer of alternative curriculum projects and significant outreach work with families. Transience also remains a challenge with Flintshire continuing to have a high transient Traveller population.

Additional Welsh Government funding was received this year to support the increase in numbers across minority ethnic groups. In response, an Additional Curriculum Advisory teacher and coordinator were appointed from September 2021 to deliver a range of alternative activities to pupils with EAL, Travellers and other vulnerable children such as those who are Looked After by the Council in its role as corporate parent. The focus of the interventions was to support the development of self-esteem and confidence as well as developing a sense of identity, belonging and community participation. The development of friendships and relationships were also key to support individual wellbeing. To date, 70 pupils from KS2/3 have engaged with the project, 35 pupils with EAL and 10 from the Traveller community and 25 who were Looked After. Schools report an improvement in the following areas:

- Increased engagement in lessons/wider school community
- Increased engagement with other pupils
- Willingness to ask for help
- Improved self-esteem, confidence and positive mood
- Ability to regulate emotions with a reduction in the frequency of emotional outbursts

The funding was also used to create additional capacity within the Nurture Outreach service specifically for targeted vulnerable groups. There has been a positive response from schools following the input noting improvements such as a greater ability to play with others, improved engagement and lower levels of anxiety being displayed.

Support for raising the educational achievement of Looked After Children

The levels of children who are 'looked after' have remained fairly stable over the past 3 years, 255 in 2019, 259 in 2020 and 258 in 2021. The number of those of school age varies year on year, with there being 178 in 2021. Specific funding to support improved outcomes for 'looked after' children comes in the form of the Pupil Development Grant which is overseen by GwE at a regional level. Schools are required to operate in clusters and bid for funding, with the bids being overseen by local officers. This year, the funding has been targeted at a range of training and interventions, including the following:

- Nurture training and intervention
- developing trauma informed practice
- Training on Emotion Coaching, Emotional Literacy and Friends Resilience programmes
- Therapeutic type interventions, e.g. Lego therapy, Unearthing boxes, Positive Power of Play, sensory room

The Council is looking to pilot the use of a screening tool with children who are 'looked after' to measure the impact of interventions with a higher level of consistency. Similar to other pupils, the pandemic has impacted on levels of engagement across this specific cohort, with the average attendance sitting at 88% for 2021. The destination data for Year 11 pupils who are 'looked after' indicated that 69% of the cohort went on to access a post 16 placement in a school, college or with the armed forces.

Sensory Service

During this reporting year the service has continued to support schools to meet the educational and emotional needs of sensory impaired pupils - 75 pupils with a visual impairment (VI) and 115 with hearing impairments (HI). Support for families of pre-school children remained a key priority for the service during the year but this was more of a challenge due to the nature of this provision. Garden visit support and remote support was offered wherever possible. There were 9 preschool children with HI and 7 with VI. The service continued to use national eligibility criteria to determine the level of involvement although due to the pandemic, visits were not always possible and were replaced by remote support via emails/phone calls/video conferencing as appropriate.

The continued aim of the service is to build capacity within schools/placements in supporting children and young people with sensory impairment. Bespoke packages were offered at both a county and school level and 12 schools/settings were offered virtual training via Microsoft TEAMS in Flintshire with excellent feedback received. Professional development opportunities, both formal and informal was felt to be of extreme value in helping staff understand the needs of the learner as well as improve their own communication with parents. Provision of specialist equipment was also highlighted as having improvements on behaviour and independence. Parents have also appreciated the efforts of the team in being flexible and working remotely/outside to provide the service safely in times of pandemic

restrictions.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Flintshire has an established multi-agency forum to oversee and guide its response to emotional health and wellbeing. The forum has identified training needs and prioritised the allocation of the WG Wellbeing grant. The Council is developing a relational approach to practice and intervention across its services and schools. Nurture intervention and trauma informed practice were identified as key areas for investment and training for this remains a priority given the impact of the pandemic.

The feedback from the training has been positive with a high percentage of participants indicating that the courses offered would lead to a positive impact on their work with children. The Education Psychology Service is leading on the supervision/follow up support with the aim of developing and embedding practice.

Table 10: Training offered to support Emotional Health & Wellbeing

Training/support	Number of staff trained
ELSA initial training	69
ELSA Supervision	37
Emotion Coaching	290
Emotionally Based School Avoidance	110
Meditation for staff wellbeing with option to train to use with staff	53
Trauma informed schools awareness raising	141
Therapeutic Story writing pilot	4
Story Links pilot	4
National Nurture Schools Programme/ Whole School Nurture Approach for Learning	25 schools

The Education Portfolio has also reviewed its Serious Incident Policy with regards to process and support in response to the sad rise in the number of tragic events involving children and young people. The Education Psychology Service has offered support and guidance to school leaders when responding to serious incidents such as the death of member of the school community. The Young Person's Counselling Service has also offered immediate support to the pupils in response to such incidents. The feedback from schools in relation to this support has been positive.

In September 2021 the 'Challenging Bullying online reporting system' was introduced for Flintshire schools which was developed by Flintshire IT and hosted on the 'Flintshire Workspace' platform. This enables schools to report incidents of bullying, including racist incidents, on an online form and maintain these in one place and update as required. 'Challenging Bullying' sits alongside health and safety incident reporting on the platform and staff illness absence. Designated officers have access to this data which enables the LA to maintain an overview of recorded bullying incidents in order to identify emerging trends or groups being discriminated against, monitor exclusion rates. Long term, as the system embeds, the aim is that the data would show progress towards the Council's equality objectives.

Early Help Hub (EHH)

In early 2017 the Flintshire Public Service Board (PSB) commissioned the establishment of an Early Help Hub to support the delivery of more timely and appropriate early intervention and support for families with greater needs. There were multiple drivers for this including the introduction of the Social Service and Wellbeing Act 2014, the CSSIW inspection report recommendations about prioritising early intervention, intervening earlier at lower cost and for better outcomes and the extent to which so many cases being referred and re-referred to Children's Services did not meet thresholds for a statutory intervention, notwithstanding that the families often presented with persistent challenges.

Since inception in 2017 Flintshire's Early Help hub model has continued to develop and adapt to the ever changing circumstances and landscape of support needed across the county. The Early Help Hub is now a well-established provision prioritizing early intervention for families, receiving approximately 10,995 referrals since inception, of which 83% are for school aged children and above. There are a total of 16 agencies including health, education, police, housing and third sector representatives participating in hub discussions and actioning support to ensure families receive services at the point struggles start to emerge in their family journey.

All services participating utilise the Paris system to record information allowing quick escalation if a concern comes to light as part of hub information gathering and an efficient step down process for families where child protection is not the most appropriate route. This has dramatically decreased the number of 'No Further Action' decisions (NFA's) and all families receive an offer of support. Recent work through Vanguard has united and streamlined the 'front door' processes for Children's Services and Early Intervention and work is currently being undertaken to ensure a what matters conversation is held with families at the point of referral, ensuring the families voice is at the heart of any decision making process.

The Hub development has been supported strategically by the Chief Officer for Education and Youth and led on behalf of the portfolio by the Senior Manager for Integrated Youth Provision who has responsibility for commissioning Families First, The Hub has also been actively supported by the Senior Manager for Inclusion and Progression. The IYP Families First commissioning has been a key driver in the development of the EHH throughout and continues to commission and fund a significant element of the delivery. Families First has a consortia approach to three elements with a variety of services and partners commissioned to provide a range of support to families. The lead agencies commissioned into the Hub are:

- **Y Teulu Cyfan (Families First-Parenting)** leading on direct interventions with families the consortia provide needs led approaches to supporting families at early stages of problems preventing issues escalating further. The model utilizes trauma informed approaches to support families, recognizing signs and responding appropriately with needs led, flexible, effective provision including 1:1 home based provision, volunteer support, counselling for parents, family therapy and coordinated family plans.

- **Action for Children (Families First – Young People)** leading on targeted 1-1 working and group work with young people and families and the engagement of young people up to the age of 25 in education, employment, volunteering and work experience through the Resilience Project. They will also draw upon their effective partnerships with the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and Aura, the local provider of leisure services.

- Action for Children (Families First) – Disability leading on the provision of support and services for families with disabled children/young people to ensure better engagement in social, leisure, play and sporting opportunities to improve physical and mental health and transition into adulthood.

Nominated staff from the Education and Youth portfolio have remained a consistent and integral part of the offer, evolving from one education representative to the current inclusion of the Education Welfare Team. This has facilitated a wider dissemination of the knowledge shared as part of the process to schools and their wider partners and enabled comprehensive sharing of information regarding children and families. During the last quarter 28% of referrals to hub came from education and 11% of actions allocated to the education representatives. The team disseminate valuable information about families and their needs enabling an appropriate and effective support package to be identified, as well as providing a valuable conduit to support often linking families and encouraging engagement with the identified services. All referrals receive an action, whether that be a single service provision, multiple service or voluntary sector information support. This is an innovative and highly effective model of support that is having a tangible impact on children and families.

2.3 Other Education Support Services

Funded Part Time Early Years Provision – Early Entitlement

Flintshire has a long tradition of supporting early years' education and during 2021-22 had 74 settings registered to deliver part time, early education for three year olds – 22 playgroups, 20 day nurseries and 32 schools supporting 710 children. Provision is for 10 hours of funded education per week.

Despite the removal of the grant conditions by Welsh Government to provide '10%' teacher time for funded settings and reducing central resources, the Council continues to maintain appropriate levels of support to settings registered for early education delivery to ensure high quality standards of provision, which in turn leads to better outcomes for learners. A central team of 4.2 fte teachers and 1 specialist learning assistant work across the settings to provide targeted role modelling of teaching, to develop quality learning environments and support setting staff to produce robust self-evaluation reports and improvement action plans as required by the Estyn framework.

The core team is also supported in this delivery by a number of early years' teachers in schools, funded by the Council, where the local playgroup is the main feeder into the school nursery class. Initially developed as a strategy to maintain delivery in the face of reducing budgets and recruitment restrictions, there have been other intended benefits of this approach such as improved transition arrangements for pupils and sharing of best practice. However, the school based teachers have acknowledged their reliance on the Council's core EE team who are real experts in provision for 3 year olds. All support teachers produce pre-inspection reports on settings and assist with post-inspection action plans. Where settings require follow up after an inspection, particularly in the more significant categories, then the level of support is increased.

The Council still has sufficient capacity to deliver the number of early education places required. As an early implementer of the Welsh Government's 30 hour Free Childcare Offer, many settings have registered as joint providers so this additional funding provides some mitigation in the sector. The Welsh Government acknowledged the pressure on settings to maintain a combined delivery of early years' education and childcare with a difference in funding rates. This resulted in WG using Flintshire as a pilot authority for the provision of additional funding to equalise the rates of payment. WG then monitored the impact on protecting educational provision within the 30 hour offer. This pilot began in January 2019 and because of its positive impact in the sector, WG has confirmed that they will continue to provide this additional funding to the Council.

Flintshire continues to work closely with Mudiad Meithrin, the Welsh-medium early years' organisation, to develop new Welsh language provision in key geographical locations in the county as part of its Welsh in Education Strategy (WESP). There is currently sufficient capacity to deliver Welsh medium early years' education but the aim is to increase this as a stepping stone to more children accessing their full time education in a Welsh medium school and support the WG target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. A new Cylch developed by Mudiad Meithrin opened in May 2019 in Buckley and this is part of a longer term strategy through the WESP and WG capital funding schemes to create a new Welsh medium primary school provision in the Buckley/Mynydd Isa area.

The Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG) has been used by the Early Entitlement Team (EET) since 2015 for the professional development of the non-maintained workforce with a focus on strengthening staff impact on the engagement, well-being and performance of disadvantaged learners. For the 2020-21 financial year, the majority of the grant was used to enable the EET to assess the influence of EYPDG funded training and support to date and to then act upon the information gained to improve future support of vulnerable learners. A proportion was used to provide each non-maintained EE setting with funding to be used specifically to support the engagement, well-being and performance of disadvantaged learners. Non-maintained EE setting staff were asked to consider disadvantaged learners in their own settings, to identify appropriate resources to develop the specific skills of those learners and to inform the EET of those resources and skills. The EET approved/ did not approve each resource request and in doing so were able to gain further insight into settings which showed understanding of the challenges faced by disadvantaged learners and the methods of addressing these challenges.

The support provided for an EE child with developmental delays or difficulties traditionally takes place within the setting. The EET offer advice to setting staff on strategies that they can use with the child. As many EE settings closed for large parts of the last financial year as a result of the pandemic, the EET had to adapt the format of this support which resulted in more direct contact by the Team with parents rather than through the setting staff. The EET's Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) checked on the wellbeing of EE registered children during lockdown periods and offered parents strategies for supporting the children's development if required. Parents expressed their gratitude for this contact and for the ALNCo's input. The ALNCo's direct involvement with parents has highlighted the valuable insight this interaction can provide and the more rounded picture the EE service has gained of individual children.

The EE Service has increased the ALNCo's level of involvement with setting staff and the impact has been that there are now more structured approaches to offering strategies for supporting individual EE children identified as having particular needs. Feedback on this increased specialised input indicates that staff feel the strategies are having a positive impact on the child/children's engagement in learning. Support for children with developmental delays or difficulties is an area which the EET is focusing on in partnership with Childcare Services and the Inclusion Service in order to create a more integrated process for requesting and receiving support under the new ALNET Act (Wales).

Partnership working on a local, regional and national level has always been a strength of the EE Service but this expanded further during the pandemic. There was an increased volume of meetings between local services/ stakeholders which highlighted the need for clear, open and consistent communications. During the Summer Term 2020 the EE Team leader worked collaboratively with other services (Flying Start and Childcare Development) to create documents clarifying the COVID-19 response in the Early Years and to appropriately place vulnerable children under the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme (CCAS).

The EET works in partnership with Flying Start, the Childcare Development Team and the Inclusion

Service to agree an ALN training programme for the non-maintained sector. EET helped the Inclusion Service to create a document which would form the basis of future ALN training for the early years non-maintained sector. Other services then provided further input (Flying Start, Childcare Development Team, Speech and Language Service, Educational Psychology Service) to create a document with agreed content. EET work cooperatively with Social Services teams to identify a range of resources suitable for supporting children's speech, language and physical skills. This work was to make effective use of a Welsh Government grant given to support children's development due to the impact of COVID-19. EET worked in partnership with the Early Years Pathfinder Project to identify opportunities for extending good practice in Flying Start settings into EE settings which resulted in the piloting of 'Wellcomm' - a speech and language screening tool.

Regionally the EET continues to work in partnership with other North Wales EE Teams and the EE Team Leader attends local and regional meetings supporting ALN transformation work. On a national level EET members continue to support the work of Estyn through their stakeholder meetings and also support Welsh Government's working parties on the development of the new curriculum.

Integrated Youth Provision – Youth and Play Services including Play Sufficiency

Play services have been embedded into Flintshire's Integrated Youth Provision (IYP) since 2017. The Council has a strong tradition of providing safe spaces and quality play opportunities for young children during summer holidays. This also includes Welsh language provision. The service has an excellent track record in partnership working with over 30 Town and Community Councils to deliver these quality play schemes. The schemes also offer employment for the young Flintshire workforce (Majority aged 18 – 25) and supports the workforce development target for the Council.

Flintshire County Council upholds Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 which places a statutory duty on all local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children, and to consider the many aspects of community life that affect play opportunities e.g. use of the environment; traffic and transport; play and leisure provision, and parental and community involvement with play. Flintshire is effective in adhering to the statutory guidance, 'Wales – A Play Friendly Country'.

The Education Portfolio has maximised the impact of the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant from Welsh Government. A key success has been the *Playful Futures* schools project, which has improved opportunities for play across a range of school settings. It has made a major difference to the school day by creating more playful environments, supporting pupil voice and training midday supervisors and there is clear evidence that the projects have impacted positively on the quality of children's play as well as their health and wellbeing.

Lack of capacity within some service areas to deliver some activity agreed in the Play Sufficiency Action Plan was identified as a concern during the most recent audit process. As a result, Flintshire County Council is prioritising a strategic approach to drive forward local annual action plans and is being supported in this by Play Wales.

The play development delivery staff continue to engage a range of statutory and non-statutory partners and this has enhanced the inclusive range of opportunities, such as working specifically on traveller sites to provide and enhance play opportunities as well as continuing successful programmes such as Kicks for Kids Football, Shed Project Play, Forest Schools and a drama project with Theatr Clwyd Cymru.

To improve monitoring and performance, the registration and general administration for the summer programme has been switched online, thus allowing for efficient reporting against key indicators as well

as swift communication with key partners such as Corporate Health and Safety and Town and Community Councils.

The Integrated Youth Provision Team deliver a diverse range of targeted and open access activities across Flintshire, both directly, and through working in collaboration with a range of statutory, non-statutory and voluntary organisations. Core council funding for the service is supplemented by Welsh Government grant funding streams e.g. Youth Support Grant and Families First Grant.

The service delivers traditional club based activity as well as detached youth work, school immersion work, Welsh language provision, homelessness prevention, a Forest School, Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, a Resilience Programme, LGBTQ+ Youth Club and the Youth Council. During Covid, much of this provision was placed online, but young people overwhelmingly indicated that they want to move back to a face to face provision so the service has moved back to this over the year as restrictions have been removed. The provision of digital services will continue to be developed to enhance the service.

Provision for youth services is planned in conjunction with partners, such as Aura Leisure and Libraries, NEWCIS Young Carers, the Urdd and Theatre Clwyd. The service has been innovative in supporting Aura staff to upskill and achieve Level 2 and 3 youth work qualifications as part of the doorstep sport provision and to potentially grow its own future workforce. The service has also provided grants to partners to support delivery across Flintshire and/or, for the benefit of Flintshire residents e.g. to Newcis Young Carers. The service also supports the Inspire Project in partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council to provide bespoke youth support services those young people who self-harm or are at risk of suicide ideation. The service has a longstanding partnership with Theatr Clwyd which has resulted in powerful interactive drama opportunities for young people to explore key issues such as consent. During the pandemic the service commissioned Theatr Clwyd to work with young people to develop a platform to share their stories of lock down and create supportive networks for young people which has received widespread recognition for its success, including support from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Internally, regular meetings occur with the Youth Justice Service and Sorted (Drug and Alcohol Team), to share insights and maximise resources, as well as with other partnerships e.g. groups commissioned via the Families First funding. IYP is also a key member of the Flintshire VARM/ASB partnership, a multi-agency group tasked with identifying and reducing ASB and police demand through a collaborative approach. This enables the service to effectively target its intervention work through its detached work team in particular communities as needs arise.

In the past 12 months the IYP service has supported refugees from both Afghanistan and the Ukraine, most notably within the Forest School provision, in a range of activities and created networking and social opportunities for young people and also their parents/carers.

Work is ongoing with Glyndwr University in order to place a number of students as well as providing Continuing Professional Development for all staff, and a young leaders course which is a result of requests from young people themselves currently volunteering within clubs. Agored Cymru qualifications are available to participants across all programmes. Recruitment of fully qualified youth workers remains very challenging so initiatives such as these are designed to grow the workforce from within the service.

Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) participants from Flintshire County Council dedicated 1183 hours to volunteering between April 2021 and March 2022, with a social value of £5465.46. In total 469 learners were registered in the past 12 months and are working towards completing their awards. 10 of the 11 Secondary schools in Flintshire registered learners for the scheme.

Further partnerships have been created with Airbus, who have been providing staff hours and material donations for the Forest School and Buckley Town Football Club, who have been supported by qualified JNC Youth Workers within the IYP service to start their own youth club and will be mentored through their journey in order to develop sector leading practice.

A cross border partnership between the Flintshire and Wrexham Youth Services was formed to develop a joint consultation process to support and inform both Public Service Boards and other partner organisations on the effects of COVID-19 on young people's mental Health. The results of the 20/21 consultation was presented to the PSB's and distributed to partner organisation to inform delivery.

Young people's voices are continuously canvassed and the service has amended its provision where appropriate to reflect their opinions. The service has been as flexible and reactive in provision wherever possible to ensure it could respond quickly to changing need/priorities, particularly through the pandemic. Examples of how IYP have responded include:

"What Just Happened Project" - a filmed drama presentation that gave voice to the words of young people e.g. NEWCIS young carers, youth groups, schools groups etc. This film was premiered on January 27th 2022 to an invited audience including WG officers and Elected Members.

A Young Persons bi-lingual leaflet and online professional resource that responded to the key issues expressed by young people – mental health, suicide ideology, domestic violence etc. This leaflet is distributed across the Council's youth service provision and will be updated to reflect the results of the 2022 consultation.

Provision was developed by sourcing funding from the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing grants to the Council, to reflect young people's feelings of frustration, poor mental health and isolation e.g. Wepre Park Project, (bi-lingual) music and arts mental health and wellbeing projects "Can Y Lles and Lles Y Gaef, LGBTQ group and Looked After Children's wellbeing packs.

Evidence across all IYP projects and supported by the joint Flintshire Wrexham consultation clearly identified that LGBTQ+ YP had struggled throughout Covid so a number of provisions were developed as a response. e.g. Inspire Pride through which young people were supported virtually. Numbers attending increased during COVID-19. The Inspire Pride group continues to run and any young person working with Inspire from Flintshire can attend the group which has now transitioned to face to face delivery. A partnership between Integrated Youth Provision and Theatre Clwyd was established and a LGBTQ+ group was created after a consultation event with young people in April 2022. The group runs fortnightly on alternative Tuesdays to Inspire sessions so LGBTQ+ young people have access to a range of groups.

In addition to the core youth provision of clubs and detached work in communities, the service has also established School and Community Immersion Youth Workers in five secondary schools including Welsh medium, which provide specialist youth service interventions in the areas of Mental Health, Sexual Health, Relationships, Child Sexual Exploitation and Modern Slavery. The support ranges from group sessions and 1 to 1 sessions, and also focuses on mental health and wellbeing, anger management, anti-bullying and respecting others, building confidence and self -esteem, relationships and stress and anxiety support and resilience along with lunch time drop in sessions and signposting to other services. The team also provide community work, supporting young people in their school and community settings and any crossover issues are managed i.e. community cohesion, anti-social behavior, bullying (often involving social media etc.). This community work has also included a parent drop in sessions for parents to voice their opinions, issues and concerns to the youth work team and source advice. At one Flintshire high school, the School and Community Immersion Worker supports a project working in partnership with the Portfolio's Inclusion Team and school staff to work positively

with students on improving behaviour and attendance in order to improve engagement and pupil outcomes.

The IYP team developed a comprehensive Transition Support resource for students in years 6, 7 and 8 students in response to evidence that these learners were struggling the most, having missed out on face to face transition activities for the move from primary to secondary education during the pandemic. A targeted youth club provision was established in one area of the county for year 6, 7 and 8 students to build resilience in mental health, wellbeing and confidence and self-esteem as a result of concerns expressed by the local high school.

In the county's only Welsh medium high school young people received support directly from the service through its Welsh Language Immersion Worker in response to feelings of isolation and poor mental health being expressed by students. These sessions encouraged students to express other concerns about sexuality and homophobia and the service responded proactively by commissioning other specialist organisations to provide information and other support mechanisms to young people.

This level of activity clearly demonstrates the responsive and wide ranging services provided to Flintshire's young people over the last twelve months and how interventions have been tailored to meet specific needs alongside universal provision.

Youth Justice Services & Flintshire Sorted

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) has a rolling cohort figure of around 60-70 young people that they are working with at any one time. Around 29% of these young people are on Statutory Orders from Court or the Police but the majority are working with the service on a pre-court order or on a voluntary, prevention basis. The latest age 10-17 population figure for Flintshire (2011) was 14,711 so the YJS is working with on average 0.54% of the population of children and young people age 10-17 in Flintshire.

Whilst the YJS does not have a statutory obligation to provide Education, Training, and Employment (ETE), the service facilitates access to education through assessment and signposting/referral, and will provide cohort information to Education colleagues to ensure a cross-portfolio approach.

All young people involved within the YJS undergo a comprehensive holistic assessment which assesses their likelihood of re-offending, risk of serious harm to others in addition to their safety and wellbeing needs. This also includes issues and concerns relating to education, training and employment, physical health and emotional and mental health.

All children and young people entering the YJS are assessed by a dedicated Education Support Worker who will assess and highlight any attendance or additional support needs and will inform the relevant YJS and Education colleagues to ensure that appropriate support plans are in place. Attendance is also monitored at monthly YJS ETE Panels and information is shared with colleagues within Education, local colleges and Careers Wales in order to support and address attendance and access to education, training and employment.

The YJS is also a standing member on the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) panel which provides opportunities for the service to raise the needs of children and young people open to them who are experiencing difficulties in school attendance and engagement.

The three year Youth Justice Plan is committed to the following priorities:

- Increasing the number of young people in Education, Training and Employment (ETE)
- Increasing the range of ETE opportunities for children and young people
- Equipping the workforce with trauma informed approaches and restorative justice solutions.

The YJS reports ETE performance to the Youth Justice Board and local performance frameworks on a quarterly basis. These key performance indicators are a measure of the education provision a young person is offered and engages in through the lifetime of the Court Order. If a young person is not being offered appropriate provision, the Education Support Worker within the YJS will liaise with the Education Service, Careers Wales or local colleges to improve provision, and then the YJS Case Manager will support the young person to ensure that their engagement is maintained.

The YJB National Performance indicator only looks at those young people whose Statutory Court Orders have closed in the reporting period and therefore is a much smaller cohort than that reported upon locally. Due to the low numbers, the Youth Justice Board is reconsidering its criteria and is planning to include young people on prevention programmes for future reporting to give a timelier overview of the work being undertaken.

The YJS has committed to undertaking work with Public Health Wales, the Youth Justice Board and Wrexham Glyndwr University to become a recognised trauma informed service building on its previous success of implementing an Enhanced Case Management (ECM) approach utilising the Trauma Recovery Model. Whilst access to ECM during the pandemic was paused due to capacity within the Forensic Adolescent Child Treatment Service (FACTS), the YJS has been working to improve access to this support. Whilst not all children and young people will access this formal intervention, the YJS service has continued to train staff including 'trauma champions' through the Youth Justice Effective Practice Award to ensure all YJS staff have the ability to respond to the needs of children and young people who may have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences.

Flintshire Sorted (Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team) aims to prevent substance use and to minimise the impact of substance use on children and young people, families and the community. It provides a universal, targeted and specialist service to children and young people up to the age of 20 years.

Despite the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, Flintshire Sorted has continued to offer this service within secondary schools across the county. The targeted content aims to promote healthy choices, challenge attitudes to drugs, anti-social behaviour and other risky behaviours, and strengthen protective factors. Flintshire Sorted provide universal delivery via awareness raising of the risk of using substances through the PSE (Personal, Social, Education) curriculum in schools and via outreach delivery within the community. Flintshire Sorted offer a referral based service for more intensive work with young people whose substance misuse is having a negative impact on their lives. A range of therapeutic interventions is offered to meet the individual needs of young people and help them to make changes and lead healthier lifestyles. The service also provides a consultation service for parents and professionals who may have questions about suspected substance use in their children.

Between April 2021 and March 2022:

- 182 sessions were held in 10 secondary schools and colleges, with the team re-establishing themselves in schools once they reopened following COVID-19 related closures. 503 young people were engaged in these sessions
- Community Outreach sessions in 10 communities engaging 99 people
- Drug and Alcohol Community Support Sessions took place with trained staff attending identified hotspots for anti-social behaviour where substances were an issue. The staff offered support and advice to young people at risk of offending, and provided targeted support session to individuals and groups. They were also able to direct young people to specialist services.
- 78 young people received a targeted intervention.

- 81% of young people reported that they had met their goals i.e. had gained more knowledge of substances, understood the long term effects of drugs, and/or had quit alcohol or smoking.

Healthy Schools & Healthy Pre-Schools

The Healthy Schools Scheme was suspended for a period of time during the pandemic but has now been reinstated. During that time members of the team were redirected to support the initial roll out of the Track, Trace and Protect service within the Council.

In Flintshire four staff are funded by Public Health Wales to support schools and pre-school settings to actively participate in both the healthy schools and pre-schools programme. The Flintshire Healthy Schools Scheme works to ensure that health education and promotion becomes an integrated part of the school curriculum as well as part of the ethos of the school and community. The Scheme was established in Flintshire in 2002 and works in partnership with local and national organisations to ensure a coordinated and multi-faceted approach to health within schools. The Healthy and Sustainable Pre School Scheme (HSPSS) was launched nationally in 2011 and was developed as an extension of the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme (WNHSS). The criteria for the HSPSS have clear parallels with the WNHSS National Quality Award to ensure a consistent whole-school / setting approach to health and wellbeing.

Of the 46 pre-school settings 37 have completed the nutrition and oral health theme and 37 have completed the physical activity and active play theme. This is an increase in the number of Early Years Settings achieving the Physical Activity/Play and Nutrition and Oral Health benchmarks overall within the Flintshire HSPSS.

The Flintshire team has worked proactively with the Implementation Lead in order to develop a regional model in North Wales for the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing developed by Welsh Government. 4 schools were identified in Flintshire to participate in a pilot for the self-assessment tool. The Implementation Lead held 'drop-in' sessions across the region during autumn 2021 which were supported by Healthy Schools' colleagues and schools were supported to complete the tool. The team are now providing ongoing support to enable schools to complete and deliver action plans to improve emotional health and wellbeing.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Training has been co-ordinated during the Spring Term 2022 to support Flintshire schools. Flintshire Teams were established for Primary and Secondary colleagues to access all the required resources for RSE - including an RSE Audit and curriculum exemplars. This work has prompted the restart of the secondary schools' Healthy Schools and PSE county forum meeting which was suspended during the pandemic.

School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP)

The School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) is a school-based scheme that provides healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to children during the summer holidays. '*Food and Fun*' is the brand identity used at local level to promote the scheme to children and families' which is part funded by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). The aim is to prevent children going hungry in the summer holidays, to improve children's health and promote learning through a programme of enrichment activities.

The Healthy Schools Team have overseen SHEP Food & Fun in Flintshire since it began in 2018 initially with 2 schools. The Team manage all planning and coordination including the steering group, the funding and provide direct support for schools. 2021 was the third year that the programme has been delivered in Flintshire and is the most successful to date, reinforcing the positive impact strong partnership working can have within communities. In 2021, over 160 children and young people aged

5-12 years benefited from SHEP in 6 schools, with over 2000 meals served during the 12 day programme. 9 cohorts have been recruited for the summer programme for 2022.

Pupil Voice

The Council is committed to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are reflected in its work and actively seeks their engagement.

Following the introduction of the Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing, schools are required to complete an assessment tool and develop an implementation plan based on the outcomes. This includes specific indicators where schools need to demonstrate how the whole school community is engaged and involved in day to day life of the school in influencing decision making and reviewing progress.

As part of the statutory processes in the identification of additional learning needs, children and young people are actively supported to contribute as appropriate to their age or stage of development. Youth Justice assessments and plans clearly reference the views and needs of the young person themselves and the Integrated Youth Provision regularly consults with its users and refines its services as a result. A Youth Council is in place and meets regularly. It has the opportunity to also meet formally with the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Chief Officer for Education & Youth.

Any proposals for school organisation change include a young person's version of key documentation and council staff facilitate consultations sessions with learners as part of the statutory process and report on their feedback in reports to decision makers.

The Healthy Schools Scheme requires schools to demonstrate their commitment to pupil participation in core areas of school life which directly affect the health and well-being of children and young people including teaching and learning; environment and pastoral care. Schools can evidence how they meet the requirements of the Welsh Government Guidance for Governing Bodies on the Establishment and Operation of School Councils Circular No: 42/2006 23 October 2006. Schools use a variety of forums to ensure young peoples' views are listened to and that they receive feedback about what has happened to their views.

The Healthy Schools team have led on the Portfolio's contribution to the corporate Climate Change Strategy. Young people's engagement activities have been developed in order to establish the views of young people as part of the Council's strategy.

As part of the Period Dignity Grant the Portfolio launched a home subscription service for products to be delivered to home addresses of children and young people directly with a suitable provider. Training has been provided for schools and this has been linked to the work for RSE. A survey of users of this service was very positive with 96% agreeing the products were delivered in discreet packaging; 92% of responders saying they would recommend the providers' sanitary products to others and 91% of responders would consider using the provider again.

Engagement with schools and promotion of the School Health Research Network (SHRN) Survey was conducted during the autumn term 2021. In total, 7537 young people from Flintshire took part which is an increase from the previous surveys - 6585 in 2017 and 6773 in 2019. The biggest increase this year has been across years 10 and 11. The Healthy Schools Team work with schools to ensure that the data from this survey, which clearly reflects young people's voices, is used to create school action plans to ensure positive change is achieved.

Sport Wales has coordinated the School Sport Survey for learners in Years 3 to 11 for over twenty years. All schools which collect the required number of survey responses from their learners receive unweighted results in a school report and providing enough schools have participated, the local

authority also qualify for a report. The numbers of learners that have completed the survey has steadily increased from 5090 in 2015, 5208 in 2017, and 5212 responses in 2022. This year 3052 secondary aged learners from 8 secondary schools completed the survey alongside 2160 primary aged learners from 25 primary schools. Schools, supported by the Portfolio, will be expected to share their reports with their School Councils and use the information to secure further improvements in sports and physical activities within their schools.

School Place Planning & Provision including provision for Welsh medium & admissions processes

Flintshire County Council has a strong track record in strategically managing its school estate through both its own resources and through the effective use of grant funding schemes e.g. Sustainable Learning Communities Programme in order to manage effective and efficient delivery of school places. It has demonstrated a willingness to take difficult decisions to modernise the school network to improve the quality of the learning environment to underpin teaching and learning and address issues related to condition and suitability within its school estate.

Under its School Modernisation Strategy the Council has undertaken a major programme of school organisational change proposals which have included the closure of one nursery school, three primary schools, one secondary school, the development of four federal arrangements across the primary and secondary sector, the amalgamation of all infant and junior schools, the rationalisation of post-16 provision in the north of the County resulting in a partnership arrangement with Coleg Cambria, the extension of primary Welsh medium provision, the building of two new primary schools and an award winning 3-16 learning campus and other major remodelling projects. The Sustainable Learning Communities Band A Programme has now been fully completed (on time and within budget) bringing the total investment envelope to £64.2m for this phase of investment.

The Council's Strategic Outline Plan (SOP) for Band B is equally ambitious at £85m and has approval from Welsh Government and the Council's Cabinet. The Council is constantly evaluating its programme priorities and how to use the differing forms of funding available e.g. Capital and Revenue based funding under the Mutual Investment Model (MIM).

The proposed programme provides efficient and effective educational infrastructure to meet current and future demand. The programme has potential to remove up to 10 educational buildings from the service portfolio and ensure suitable investment in new facilities. All projects within the programme will be designed to promote, where applicable, early years' provision and community access to school and sports facilities.

The backlog maintenance for projects within the programme is £7,732,996 for secondary and £1,692,356 for primary. For new school projects the Council would expect to achieve 100% reduction in backlog maintenance, for large remodelling projects an 80% reduction and smaller scale projects the aim would be for 50% as a benchmark. The Council has clearly defined arrangements for repairs and maintenance of schools and responds appropriately to emergencies.

The SOP is linked to the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. The Band B programme is focused on 3 of the 6 schools within the Welsh Medium (WM) sector, linking in with the Council's desire to ensure that WM is given priority and linking into the National Welsh Language Strategy. Further funding opportunities have been identified and secured to build a new start up Welsh Medium Primary school in an area of known Welsh medium demand.

Voluntary Aided schools are maintained jointly by the County Council and either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Church. Aided schools also have access to separate capital funding streams

directly through the Welsh Government. The Council continues to work successfully in partnership with the Diocesan Authorities to ensure that Aided schools are appropriately located and fit for purpose.

In September 2021 the Pupil Level Annual School Census showed the 64 primary schools had a total capacity of 14059 full time places and had 11,807 total numbers on roll (NOR), which is a surplus of 16.02% . 11 Schools in the secondary sector had a total capacity of 10,718 with 9658 NOR and 9.89% surplus places. When combined, these figures equate to 13.4% average surplus places across the school network, which is higher than the maximum national target of 10%.

Unfilled places at September 2021 were 3,312, this is an improvement on statistics produced in January 2013, when there were some 4,000 (15.4 per cent) unfilled places in Flintshire schools distributed across primary and secondary schools. The proposals contained within the SOP for the Band B 21st Century schools investment programme should they be implemented, will reduce unfilled places in schools to near the national target.

Pupil number projections methodology are aligned with other authorities across the region and are completed twice per year, these are linked to school data returns, namely, January PLASC and September PLASC returns. The capacity assessments are conducted using the Welsh Government's Measuring the capacity of schools in Wales methodology and are audited once per year.

The Council has an up-to-date Asset Management system and data from the system is used to influence decision making on capital investment in the school network. Priorities for investment for the schools capital programme are clear, linked to the School Modernisation Strategy and are funded and based upon up-to-date information.

In 2016/17 suitability surveys were commissioned and conducted across the schools' portfolio based on national guidance. Despite the significant investment through 21st Century Schools programme and the Council's own capital programme, it is estimated that an investment in excess of £130m is still required to address suitability issues across the schools network.

Table 11: Suitability of Primary and Secondary School Buildings

Suitability Grade	No of Schools	Percentage %
A	11	14.66%
B	24	30.66%
C	37	50.66%
D	3	4%

School condition surveys are re-assessed in line with national asset management guidance on a five year cycle, with the repair & maintenance (R&M) backlog estimated in excess of £12m, a substantial improvement from the £35m backlog reported in the 2010 SOP.

Table 12: Condition of Primary and Secondary School Buildings

Condition Grade	No of Schools	Percentage %
A	4	5.34%
B	62	82.66%
C	9	12%
D	0	0.00%

Flintshire County Council has no schools in condition 'D' as this would mean that the school building life would have expired or be at risk of imminent failure.

The Council consults with children and young people, parents, school governors and staff and other relevant stakeholders prior to making proposals for any school modernisation change. The consultation process involves the completion and presentation of impact assessments around community, transport, buildings, equalities and language and includes a financial appraisal.

The responses from each formal consultation process is presented to the Council’s Cabinet, along with the impact assessment, options appraisal and officer recommendations. Cabinet then decide on how to progress. For all construction projects the Head Teacher or nominated person from School forms part of the “operational team”.

Flintshire consults other admission authorities and coordinates admission arrangements with neighbouring authorities, including common dates of return and common offer dates. Flintshire participates in the regional North Wales Admissions Group to coordinate admissions arrangements and develop/deliver joint training. The Council is represented at the ADEW School Admissions Officers’ Group and is aware of national and Welsh Government initiatives in the service.

The composite prospectus, “Guide to Education Services” is reviewed and published annually and is made available on line to all parents on 1st September each year, as part of the annual admissions round. Feedback from Welsh Government on the composite prospectus has been incorporated in to the Guide.

The vast majority of parental preferences continue to be met (96%). All appeals are held before the end of the academic year and any appeals outside the timetabled admissions process are heard well within 30 school days in accordance with the School Appeals Code. Panel members are trained in accordance with the Appeals Code, and advertising, recruitment and training of panel members takes place every 3 years jointly with other admission authorities. This is a cost effective way of managing recruitment and training and ensures consistency across the region.

Applications for mid-term transfers are made online and every effort is made to process the application to admit pupils within 10 school days. Flintshire’s Managed Moves Protocol has been revised recently and agreed with all head teachers.

Music Services for Schools

Music services for Flintshire schools are now delivered by Theatr Clwyd Music which was established in 2020 when Theatr Clwyd adopted the Flintshire Music Service to ensure this discretionary service was protected in the face of significant financial challenges for the Council. Flintshire pupils continue to have access to high quality individual, group and whole class music tuition. Learners have the opportunity to undertake music examinations and progress to county ensembles and national music groups. The Council works in partnership with the Theatr Clwyd Music Trust to maximise the impact of new national funding for music services provided by Welsh Government via the Welsh Local Government Association.

2. Quality of Education Services Areas Summary

Areas for ongoing improvement & sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further develop, strengthen and embed peer working between schools to share best practice and raise standards for all• Continue to support schools with the implementation of ALNET• Continue to support schools and services to increase their digital offer for children and young people• Increase access to education, employment and training for young people in the YJS

- Consolidate the outreach support and training for schools provided by Plas Derwen (PRU)
- Continue to strengthen links between the Portfolio and its secondary schools with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to maximise learner access to apprenticeships and employment opportunities through the 14-19 strategy
- Continue to improve the school estate through the school modernisation and capital investment strategy
- Expand the Adult Learning Offer and develop systems for monitoring and evaluating progression
- Implement the Year 1 action plan from the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
- Roll out the National Framework for embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Improve provision for children with Autism
- Refresh and embed the strategy for Youth Service provision
- Continue to work collectively across schools and council services to mitigate the impacts of poverty and reduce inequality.
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INSPECTION AREA 3: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

The Council benefits from strong leadership with an effective working relationship between professional officers and elected members, led by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. This is demonstrated through the portfolio structure within the Council where Cabinet Lead Members and Chief Officers work closely together to successfully achieve corporate priorities. This is exemplified in key documents such as the Council Plan and Well-Being Plan which are focused on improving outcomes for Flintshire communities and their residents, including children and young people.

Programme Boards are in place for each portfolio and are attended by the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, designated Cabinet Members, Chief Officer and senior managers. The Education and Youth Programme Board provides a purposeful platform for developing the strategic direction of the portfolio, informs policy development and ensures performance oversight. A robust and transparent scrutiny process ensures that there is continuous challenge of performance and evaluation of impact. Cabinet reports, Overview & Scrutiny reports, performance monitoring reports and risk registers are jointly owned by members and officers.

The leadership structure and hierarchy of accountability within the Council, both from an elected member and an officer perspective, is clearly articulated and understood. Roles and responsibilities are clearly documented and there is a constructive working relationship between officers and members that delivers an appropriate level of challenge to the work of the portfolio to ensure the best outcomes for learners but also ensures that positive impacts and successes are celebrated.

Professional and political leadership is used effectively to manage the Council's core business of providing quality and responsive public services in the face of long-term austerity, the impacts of the Covid pandemic and challenging budget settlements year on year. This has been clearly demonstrated by the collective problem solving by senior officers and elected members in managing the Council's financial strategy and achieving legally balanced budgets whilst protecting and sustaining services. Financial planning processes are robust with high levels of scrutiny and assurance. Officer and elected members have a track record of working together constructively and with clear purpose on difficult issues. This has been reflected in decisions taken e.g. the management of the school estate and the additional financial support provided for services supporting pupils with Additional Learning Needs and deficit budgets in secondary schools.

The Council's management of services and the support provided to its residents, its strategic partners and to its schools during the COVID -19 pandemic, especially in the emergency phase of the response, was exemplary. The emergency command structure, led by the Chief Executive and ably support by Chief Officers and senior managers across the Council ensured that appropriate decisions were made quickly to protect the public and reshape services. This included the delivery of an effective network of childcare hubs when statutory education was suspended, followed by the reintroduction of education services when schools were able to reopen. Alongside this the Council supported the rapid development of digital learning platforms in schools to ensure continuity of learning with effective distribution of digital and Wi-Fi devices to those in need. The provision of free school meals via its catering partner, NEWydd, subsequently replaced by a system of direct payments, ensured that vulnerable families received their entitlement. Senior officers provided schools and settings with clear guidance and support to develop robust COVID-19 risk assessments and COVID-19 safe working

practices to enable the safe, ongoing delivery of education throughout the pandemic. Officers and school leaders responded to regular changes in Welsh Government legislation and Public Health Wales advice and worked closely alongside the Test, Trace and Protect Service.

The Council's approach to strategic leadership is underpinned by public service values. Within the context of delivery of services to children and young people there is a moral commitment to delivery in an inclusive, nurturing and worthwhile way which enables them to successfully embrace adult life and become responsible, independent, economically active and resilient citizens. This is clearly reflected in the structure and priorities of the Council Plan which reflect the Welsh Government's Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles and the Well-being Goals of the Future Generations (Wales) Act and focus on six core areas :

- Poverty
- Affordable and Accessible Housing
- Green Society and Environment
- Economy
- Personal and Community Wellbeing
- Education and Skills

The Council has a good track record of communicating with residents, service users, its workforce and wider stakeholders through external and internal processes. There is a strong culture of engagement and inclusivity when agreeing priorities. An example of this is the Council's post-Covid recovery plan and Wellbeing Assessment and Action plan and in its work through the Public Service Board. What matters to communities is integral to priority setting and resource allocation. From an educational perspective this can be seen in its engagement work around the budget settlement for schools, in its consultations around school organisational change, in the School Health Research Network surveys and action plans and in other key areas e.g. youth service provision, play and childcare sufficiency.

The Council is proactive in making difficult decisions and where needed, the professional and political leadership intervene effectively to overcome obstacles. Systems leadership and the delegation of resources support the efforts to place the learner first and protect the quality of education and support services. This has been exemplified in the work by all officers and elected members to set legally balanced budgets in the face of significant financial challenge. Despite these financial challenges, delegation rates to schools to protect front line services are above the Welsh average and additional funding to protect schools' budgets are channeled in wherever possible. The Council has made considerable progress in reducing the number of schools in a deficit position, a recommendation from the inspection of its education services in 2019, by targeting additional financial resources for secondary schools despite the overall challenging financial context.

Across all education services commissioned by the Council over the value of £25k, social value is considered and included as a key priority. Social value is separately weighted during the procurement process, and supply chain partners are expected to monitor and report against the generation of localised social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being outcomes, in order to evidence value for money and social return on investment. A significant amount of social value is generated through education services including; the creation of local employment and training opportunities, retention of local people in employment, employee upskilling, growth of the local economy through a commitment to local spend, investment in local community needs projects, increased engagement with local schools through investment and volunteer time to assist in the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales, and waste reduction through implementing circular economy solutions to reduce, reuse and recycle waste. Two

recent school capital projects at Ysgol Brynford and Ysgol Castell Alun achieved £968k in social value outcomes.

There is strong corporate and political support for Education and Youth Services across the Council. Political and officer leadership of Education is innovative and pragmatic. Education priorities are exemplified in corporate and portfolio level plans and are regularly scrutinised through the quarterly monitoring reports presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. The annual performance report for the period 2021 – 2022 identified no performance indicators (PIs) showing a red RAG status for current performance against target and no measures off track, with 86% of outcomes on track (Green RAG) and only 14% of outcomes requiring monitoring (Amber RAG). The positive impact of this approach has been that the needs and priorities of pupils have been consistently supported both by officers and elected members. Overall this has delivered consistently good outcomes for children and young people and this is reflected that at the end of the performance monitoring cycle for 2021-22, no Flintshire school was in any category of follow up by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, Estyn.

Elected members effectively undertake their statutory duties and make a worthwhile contribution to the development and progress of statutory plans. They also show real commitment to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable learners. There is strong member engagement in the following areas relevant to children and young people:

- The Welsh in Education Forum
- The Corporate Parenting Forum
- The Corporate Safeguarding Panel
- The Schools Standards Quality Board
- The Youth Justice Executive Board
- The Education Consultative Committee
- SACRE
- School Budget Forum
- Regional School Improvement (GwE) Joint Committee

Senior leaders and managers communicate high expectations for securing improvement and challenge schools to good effect through a range of forums. For school improvement these include regular meetings with the head teacher community, working through nominated representatives on the primary and secondary Head Teacher Federations, School Performance Monitoring Group and other specific groups e.g. Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator Forum, County Curriculum Steering Group and Emotional Health and Well-Being Strategy Group, Digital Advisory Group and Welsh in Education Strategic Forum. There is also effective monitoring and challenge for other areas of provision through the Youth Justice Executive Board, Children's Services Forum and the Corporate Safeguarding Panel. The key objectives of the Public Service Board are clearly aligned with the Council's and Portfolio's strategic improvement plans.

The Council and its partners have a clear commitment to learners and to developing a learning culture in the county, from early years to adulthood. They understand the impact of national and regional priorities and how this impacts on decision making locally for services e.g. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, Education in Wales - Our National Mission, Cymraeg 2050 – Welsh Language Strategy and the North Wales Economic Growth Deal.

Whilst a lean team in terms of personnel, senior leaders in the Education Portfolio work in a collegiate way with a range of strategic partners across public services to set high level priorities together for the young people of Flintshire. They are well respected by elected members, external partners, regional colleagues and school leaders. There are effective performance management arrangements which bring about improvements. Managers ensure that objectives for individual officers link well to operational and strategic priorities.

The Council works effectively with GwE (Regional School Improvement Service). Since the inception of the service in 2013, there has been a good track record of engagement with the service to support its development and robust scrutiny of the service in holding it accountable for the scope of its delivery on behalf of Flintshire. GwE officers participate fully in Flintshire business and understand and contribute to the vision, aims and objectives of the Council. This is evidenced by the way in which GwE Business Plans support the Portfolio's Business Plan and the Council Plan. Roles and responsibilities of GwE officers in contributing to the delivery of the service within Flintshire are clearly articulated. This mutually supportive, yet challenging culture fostered between GwE and Flintshire officers, helps the Council maintain its focus on outcomes for learners across all phases. The Chief Officer for Education in Flintshire is currently the Lead Director on the GwE Management Board.

The six North Wales local authorities and GwE worked very effectively through the COVID-19 pandemic to support schools and this is reflected in the positive reports authored by Estyn to both the Council and to GwE during the period when statutory inspections were suspended as a result of national lockdowns.

All schools have chosen to access the Human Resources, Employment Services and Occupational Health SLA provision which provides for a range of services to assist them in complying with their 'people related' statutory responsibilities and operational/ business obligations. Customer led solutions manifest themselves in a wide range of service delivery including: model policy and information provision, confidential telephone and face to face support, Heads Federation and cluster group briefings, conference sessions, case conferences and discrete advisory sessions. The take up rates, activity levels and repeat business support consistent 'buy back' levels and evidence that these services are valued and contribute significantly to school performance. Relationships between school leaders and central service providers are very good and the ethos is to support school leaders in their management functions.

Relationships between senior Council officers and trade union representatives are good and there is a high degree of engagement on key issues through the Education Consultative Committee and other statutory groups e.g. School Budget Forum. There is also a good level of informal interaction between the Portfolio's HR officers and local union representatives in individual school processes e.g. redundancy, absence management etc.

3.2 Self Evaluation processes and improvement planning

The Council has a well-established process of evaluation, review and challenge. Leaders, managers and elected members have an accurate understanding of the Council's strengths and weaknesses. They routinely make good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities.

The Education Portfolio undertakes a wide range of self-evaluation activities, first at a service level analysing any available data and first-hand evidence to make accurate evaluations of the quality and impact of individual services. The arrangements also identify clearly the areas for improvement and help ensure that progress against strategic plans are reviewed effectively and timely interventions

made. This is then fed up into the Portfolio's overall evaluation of its annual Business Plan and into the Portfolio Annual Self Evaluation Report. This then links to the Council Plan which is regularly reviewed by Chief Officers and senior managers and reported on regularly to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

Through its joint working with GwE there are clearly defined plans for primary and secondary schools which are agreed between the Chief Education Officer and Senior Manager for School Improvement and GwE Core Lead Officers. Agreed priorities in the business plans are based firmly on the findings of self-evaluation processes within schools. The plans accurately identify key issues and include bespoke improvement plans to address the specific challenges, drawing on the resources of both GwE and the Council's own services. Plans are regularly updated to reflect the outcomes of whole school reviews and support visits commissioned by the Education Portfolio. Progress towards achieving the agreed outcomes are regularly reviewed by the Senior Manager for School Improvement and the GwE Core Leads. This then feeds into termly Quality Board meetings with the Cabinet Member for Education, Chair of Education, Youth and Culture Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer for Education and Youth. This ensures that strategic leaders are fully informed on school performance in Flintshire.

The Portfolio works swiftly and effectively with GwE Officers to address 'Schools Causing Concern' and 360° support plans are put in place. Where rapid progress in some schools has been required, Accelerated Improvement Boards (AIB) have been used successfully to oversee progress. When deployed, these Boards meet regularly and include key officers of the Portfolio, GwE and school leaders, including governors. Where required, the Chief Officer has used statutory powers of intervention and established Interim Executive Boards (IEB) to replace traditional governance models. This has been successful in improving the pace of improvement in identified schools. GwE senior officers support the IEB alongside senior LA managers. At the current time there are no schools in Flintshire which have either an Accelerated Improvement Board or an Interim Executive Board.

Where it is available, education officers use data effectively to ensure areas for improvement are identified quickly and addressed robustly through detailed business planning. As a result, the quality of information shared within Flintshire is of a high standard, enabling members to scrutinise and challenge progress effectively. With the Welsh Government decision to remove a range of data sets that were traditionally used for accountability purposes, officers of the Local Authority, Elected Members and GwE Officers are in the process of developing other ways to effectively monitor performance and measure progress.

Education officers within the Council focus well on joint planning and resourcing as well as building capacity for continuous improvement. The Portfolio has strong links with the community, has good liaison and communication with schools, engages positively with parents and carers and works effectively with other Council portfolios and external agencies enabling officers to deliver joined-up programmes that improve outcomes and wellbeing for learners. Good examples of this include the statutory processes around provision for children with Additional Learning Needs, the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Steering Group, the Adult Learning Partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council and the Council's delivery of the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing Programmes.

The Portfolio engages well with partners, service users and other stakeholders in its evaluation processes and in planning for improvement. For example, the Integrated Youth Strategy "Multiplying Impact" featured robust engagement of young people's representatives in its development. Any aspect of school organisational change includes consultation with the children and young people potentially impacted and school leaders are regularly consulted directly or through the Federations on major issues. The Council supports schools to make good use of surveys to improve provision and outcomes e.g. School Health Research Network and Sports Surveys.

The Council uses a corporate database for the recording of complaints, concerns and requests for services. A senior manager within the Portfolio is the link officer for complaints. Parental complaints about schools have to be re-directed back to the individual school to be dealt with via their own complaints procedures. Complainants are advised of the correct procedure and, as necessary, the Portfolio provides support to schools on ensuring its procedures are in line with the national guidance. On-line complaints training is available to all governing bodies. During the period April 2021 to March 2022, there were 8 formal complaints against the Portfolio received via the Council's Complaints process. These were in relation to school admissions, school closure during the pandemic and SEN support. Only one complaint was upheld. There were no complaints in relation to education services in Flintshire investigated by the Ombudsman in 2021-2022.

The Council is compliant with the requirement regarding partnership agreements with its schools.

3.3 Professional Learning

Relationships between the Education Portfolio and schools are strong and productive. Regular head teacher meetings and the partnership groups in the consultative structure form an effective mechanism for raising issues and agreeing actions to tackle them. Flintshire benefits from well-established learning networks within and across schools, and more widely across the region, enabling schools to develop and share their professional knowledge. Working in clusters and alliances has developed well in Flintshire over the last few years with all schools engaging in this co-operative learning approach. Key areas such as Additional Learning Needs, Digital Learning and Welsh Language have all benefitted from a cluster training and support model.

Flintshire schools engage effectively with the range of professional development opportunities provided by GwE and the Council for school leaders, teachers and support staff at all levels. Flintshire staff have access to a comprehensive learning continuum provided by GwE which delivers appropriate training at all stages of professional development, from Newly Qualified Teacher to Executive Headteacher. Data shows that the take up of these opportunities from Flintshire schools is very positive. Staff within the Education Portfolio are able to access professional development opportunities within GwE where appropriate e.g. curriculum reform.

Partnership activities make a strong contribution to widening the range of choices for learners and this has benefits for their standards and wellbeing. The Council takes a leading role in developing joint working practices and promotes trust and good communication between partners. These include effective partnerships between the Council, North Wales Police, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Youth Justice Board, Coleg Cambria, Wrexham Glyndwr University, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and other local education authorities.

Partnership working between the Portfolio, further and higher education establishments, employers and secondary schools in developing the work of the 14-19 network is good. They successfully promote co-operation and enable school governors, Coleg Cambria, employers and the Council to plan, monitor and resource an effective 14-19 curriculum that meets the needs of learners.

The Welsh Advisory Team in the Portfolio actively encourages school staff at all levels, including head teachers, to engage in the WG sabbatical training programmes for practitioners who wish to teach through the medium of Welsh or wish to improve their Welsh-language skills. This is a key component of the Council's Welsh in Education Plan which has been approved by Welsh Ministers. Take up across

the different sabbatical options are good and Flintshire staff represent a sizeable proportion of each cohort. This is extending the number of employees with improved Welsh language skills, which is contributing to the improving quality of provision for learners in both English and Welsh medium schools. The manager of the Welsh Advisory Team is a key member of the Regional Welsh Language Board. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Welsh Advisory Team rapidly and successfully adapted their professional learning offer from face to face to digital delivery which was very welcomed by schools.

The professional learning offer supports current school leaders across Flintshire but also invests in developing leaders of the future. Subscription rates to the NPQH and Aspiring Heads courses from Flintshire staff are strong. Newly appointed headteachers are supported through development programmes and are also allocated mentors and leadership coaches.

Networking and peer-to-peer work is a positive feature in Flintshire schools. This collaborative work has led to a shared understanding of what constitutes good leadership. Collaborative practice amongst leaders is reinforced through strategic forums, at both headteacher and deputy level. These forums support strong effective communication and nurture a mutual sense of common responsibility for the development of responses and actions to local and national challenges.

The Council promotes professional learning for its core portfolio team through structured learning opportunities, most visible through the Flintshire Academi Infonet, which provides learning and e-learning modules on leadership and management, personal development, specific professional development, equality and diversity, Welsh language, health and safety and ICT. Education Portfolio staff also access training opportunities offered by GwE e.g. the development of the new curriculum.

The Council has a well-established and successful Trainee (Apprentice scheme). The Council recruit local people every year to undertake work based qualifications. The outcome of the scheme over the last 5 years is very positive with 95% of those undertaking an FCC Apprenticeship achieving good outcomes e.g.

- 75% gaining employment within the Authority after completing the programme
- 15% gaining employment externally
- 5% moving on to Higher Education or other professional training programmes.

All staff benefit from the annual appraisal scheme which ensures personal and professional objectives are linked to the annual corporate service and portfolio plans. Centrally employed teaching staff have statutory performance management. The process enables employees and managers to explore individual strengths and identify wider opportunities for these to be utilised effectively. These opportunities support succession planning at a time where central services remain under pressure from financial and recruitment/retention challenges, particularly post-pandemic and also focus strongly on staff wellbeing.

As part of its People Strategy, the Council takes a proactive approach to talent spotting and succession planning. Senior managers regularly identify officers who have potential and signpost them to learning opportunities to develop their skills. Many officers within the Portfolio have accessed professional development e.g. Institute of Leadership & Management qualifications and NVQs through a partnership arrangement with Coleg Cambria. Senior managers are identified for external learning opportunities through Academi Wales and SOLACE (Chief Executives' professional association).

Senior managers network and share good practice through quarterly Flintshire Academi sessions which not only provide key updates but also are the driver for developing cross-cutting policies and strategies e.g. the Council's People Strategy and Carbon Reduction Strategy. Specifically within the Portfolio, there are termly workshops for service managers to share updates, future plans and engage in consultation and professional development opportunities. There is a comprehensive online training programme available for all staff of the Council to access on corporate training priorities e.g. safeguarding, GDPR, leadership and management etc. Networking by senior managers through representation on various groups of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales ensures service planning is informed by current and best practice from across Wales.

However, in more recent times, and particularly since the pandemic, there have been increasing challenges in recruiting into key posts both in the Education Portfolio and in schools. Educational psychology, youth work, youth justice work and IT systems administration have all experienced difficulties recruiting appropriately qualified staff with adverts having to be go out multiple times and Head teachers are reporting challenges in recruiting skilled classroom support staff as well as key roles such as caretakers. The recruitment difficulties in relation to school cooks, catering staff and cleaners has also had an adverse impact on the Council's key partner, NEWydd, which has sometimes made their service delivery to schools challenging at times.

3.4 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a corporate priority set out in the annual Council Plan and the Council has robust arrangements in place across all areas. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy provides a framework for all council services to safeguard and protect children and adults, ensuring that all are fully aware of their responsibilities. This policy applies to Flintshire County Council employees, councillors, volunteers and organisations commissioned to provide services on behalf of the Council. Flintshire County Council is a member of the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (NWSCB) and North Wales Safeguarding Adults' Board (NWSAB).

The Corporate Safeguarding Panel is well established and includes representation from all portfolios, including Education and Youth, to ensure that all services integrate safeguarding awareness into the way they work. This panel receives information regarding the working practices and procedures of every service in the Council, providing assurance that the services are meeting their duties in accordance with the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines and reports to Cabinet on an annual basis.

The Chief Officer for Education and Youth ensures that all the statutory requirements in terms of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults receive due consideration and that effective safeguarding arrangements operate within the Education and Youth portfolio at the three levels of responsibility of strategic, support and operational.

In order to further sharpen the focus on safeguarding, the Education Portfolio has established its own Safeguarding Panel and this is attended by senior managers within Education and from Children's Services. It has clearly defined terms of reference, an action plan and ensures that communication up to, and down from, the Corporate Safeguarding Panel is effective.

The Senior Manager for School Improvement has the lead strategic responsibility for Safeguarding in the Portfolio and is the designated contact for officers and schools. The Learner Adviser for Health, Wellbeing and Safeguarding is the deputy designated contact who provides operational activity support, including attendance at national and regional safeguarding meeting. This officer also co-ordinates training for schools, governors and portfolio staff and provides model policies for schools. There is

effective communication between Education and Youth and other portfolios in the Council as well as with external partners.

The Portfolio has appropriate arrangements for the strategic planning for safeguarding within both the core education service and schools, which includes monitoring. Safeguarding and Child Protection model policies are updated regularly in line with revised national guidance e.g. Keeping Learners Safe and the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. A structured training programme is in place which includes training for Level 3 Designated Safeguarding Leads, Level 2 Safeguarding for Managers and Senior Leaders including lead Governor for Safeguarding and Train the Trainer for Level 1. Basic Safeguarding Awareness and responsibilities of individual staff including governors. Safeguarding basic awareness / updates are also incorporated into termly LA headteacher conferences and into planned LA training programmes for NQTs and new and acting headteachers. In addition, key safeguarding themes are addressed on a rolling programme e.g. Prevent and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual violence (VAWDASV). There are strong relationships with key local partners including North Wales Police, Hafan Cymru and NSPCC. Between 2020 and 2022, 952 staff accessed safeguarding training across the Education Portfolio and schools despite the challenges of the pandemic. Feedback from Headteachers confirm the training and support for schools is welcomed and effective. Evaluation forms are completed at the end of each training delivery and the information is reviewed on an individual basis in addition to any immediate response that can be implemented. Feedback is also included in the annual report to the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Children's Board.

Support materials and model lessons for teachers at secondary level have been produced to support the delivery of key aspects of Personal & Social Education including Prevent, County Lines and materials for National Safeguarding Week each year. Excellent partnership working with Theatr Clwyd has resulted in a powerful drama workshop for Key Stage 3 pupils on the issue of consent, that has proved highly effective in enhancing pupils' knowledge and skills in keeping themselves safe and encouraged some young people to come forward to request individual support.

The Portfolio and schools operate safe recruitment procedures and make sure that all appropriate checks are carried out. All schools are routinely reminded of their responsibilities under Section 28 of the Children Act and as outlined in the Welsh Government guidance - Keeping Learners Safe. There is regular monitoring activity through audit procedures. Schools have been provided with a model annual monitoring report for school leaders to use to report to their governing bodies and the LA on safeguarding matters. The Strategic Lead for safeguarding works in partnership with managers from Social Services and the Human Resources team effectively in the event of allegations against members of staff from schools.

Online safety is an area regularly considered by the Education, Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Council actively encourages all schools to use the 360° Safe Cymru Tool and the All Wales School Liaison Core Programme. The IT Service Level Agreement provides for web filtering in schools.

3.5 Use of resources

Flintshire's response to funding reductions in recent years has been measured and appropriate. The Council has adopted a systematic approach to ensure that efficiencies are secured across all services and the organisation has embraced alternative models of delivery where appropriate. There are plenty of examples of good practice and innovation within the Council.

Education reform and investment has remained a priority for the Council despite the challenging financial climate. The high strategic priority given to the education service is reflected in the Council's

allocation of both revenue and capital resources. The schools' delegated budgets have been protected from efficiency reductions in recent years and elected members across the Council have directed additional funding streams to schools when they have become available. Risks related to the impact of poor funding on the quality of education services have been clearly set out and are understood by elected members and head teachers. The Council reviews the outcomes of its financial plans to make sure that funding is spent wisely and has a positive impact on standards.

The school funding formula is regularly reviewed in consultation with schools and reported to the School Budget Forum. Staffing, accommodation and financial resources are effectively managed and deployed to support learning and improvement. Partnership activity provides good value for money because it contributes to extensive opportunities and improved outcomes for learners in aspects which the Council and its schools alone could not provide.

The Council is committed to an ambitious school modernisation investment programme by maximising Welsh Government's Sustainable Learning Communities funding (previously 21st Century Schools) and its own capital funding. Flintshire is also a Pathfinder Council for the new Mutual Investment Model created by Welsh Government to deliver a new 3-16 learning campus in Mynydd Isa which will be the first net zero carbon school both in construction and in operation in Wales. The Council has also secured funding in recent times through Welsh Government's additional grant funding streams for Small and Rural Schools Infant Class Sizes, Welsh Medium, Childcare, Community Learning and Community Facilities. The Council has a positive reputation for delivering quality projects on time and within budget.

The Council currently has an estimated Repair & Maintenance (R&M) of approximately £12m, which is a substantial improvement from the £35m backlog reported in the 2010 Strategic Outline Programme and has been achieved through targeted capital investment. However, the level of R&M remains a risk and is strategically linked to the Band B of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

In response to a recommendation in its Estyn inspection of 2019, the Council has made significant progress in reducing the number of schools in deficit. It has refreshed its policy for the management and monitoring of schools deficits which is robustly applied. There are effective working relationships between senior council officers and school leaders to ensure an appropriate level of both challenge and support to control spending and reduce deficits in schools. The Council has been proactive in providing additional financial resources for secondary schools despite the ongoing challenges of setting a legally balanced budget and this has been targeted to ensure that those in greatest need receive the most support. Schools budgets have also benefitted from additional Welsh Government funding as a result of the pandemic and from periods of statutory closure. Where balances are above the recommended levels, schools are required to submit spending plans to clearly demonstrate how resources are being invested appropriately for the benefit of current learners. An annual report on school balances is presented to the Council's Cabinet and Audit & Governance Committee for member scrutiny.

Many grant funded initiatives track the progress of learners and service users and their families effectively, e.g. Families First, Flying Start, Community Focused Schools, Youth Justice Grant and Youth Support Grant. In the best examples, early bespoke interventions with families make measurable contributions to improved educational outcomes. However, late notification of grant funding and associated conditions can make it difficult for officers to plan. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that grant funding is maximised to support strategic priorities and deliver quality services and drive positive change. The more recent move by Welsh Government to move to three year indicative budgets however, is helpful and will allow for more strategic planning across the Council.

There are detailed and rigorous financial management processes across the Council and regular reviews of portfolio budgets to ensure value for money and the identification of efficiencies. Cost pressures and other financial risks e.g. price volatility and inflation, are closely monitored. The Education and Youth Portfolio has delivered almost £2.5m of efficiencies through the business planning process over the last seven years which represents an average of 4% of the annual core portfolio budget each year during that period. These efficiencies have been achieved whilst ensuring high quality services continue to meet need. Through regular portfolio budget management processes, senior managers take responsibility for their services budgets, well supported by the corporate finance team.

With a significant proportion of its budget used to commission the regional school improvement service, it is important that the Council is reassured that GwE has effective financial management processes in place. Communication and consultation about financial arrangements are effective with both core funding and grant-expenditure kept under regular review by GwE, the host local authority and the Joint Committee. Detailed work has been undertaken to align grant allocations with priorities. Supporting Improvement Advisers challenge schools on their use of grant funding. This has closed the inconsistencies between schools around identifying the impact of the use of grant funding on pupil outcomes.

Overall, the Council's education services, including schools, continue to provide good value for money.

3. Leadership & Management Summary

Areas for ongoing improvement & sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain rigorous budgetary monitoring and management processes to protect the sustainability of Council funding in challenging financial times to ensure the delivery of quality education services.• Maintain the effective monitoring and governance of the education service to ensure continuous school improvement and the best impact for learners.• Continue to develop effective partnerships to deliver services in an integrated and cost efficient manner.• Continue to improve the school estate through the School Modernisation Strategy and the maximisation of Welsh Government funding streams.• Continue to support the professional development of staff in schools and in the Council to mitigate recruitment and retention challenges post pandemic.

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 10 th October, 2022
Report Subject	School Reserves Year Ending 31 March 2022
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall level of reserves held by Flintshire schools was £12.555m at 31 March 2022, an increase of £5.652m compared with the previous year.

A summary of the position at the end of March 2022 is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

Sector	Reserves 31st March 2021 (£)	% of Budget	Reserves 31st March 2022 (£)	% of Budget	Variance (£)	Variance (%)
PRIMARY	6,025,937	11.4%	8,445,703	16.2%	2,419,766	4.84%
SECONDARY	472,112	1.1%	3,488,879	7.3%	3,016,767	6.23%
SPECIALIST	404,402	9.4%	620,330	14.7%	215,928	5.27%
TOTAL	6,902,451	6.8%	12,554,912	12.1%	5,652,461	5.23%

The level of school reserves has increased considerably across all sectors over the past year and continues the trend seen at the end of the last financial year, however this is a reversal of trends prior to 2020/21.

A factor contributing significantly to the increase in school reserves is the volume of additional grants being awarded to schools by Welsh Government in recognition of the significant effect the pandemic has had on our learners and the need for schools to provide additional support. Whilst additional grant funding is to be welcomed and notification of grants was generally earlier than received last year, a number of grants were awarded during the last quarter of the financial year and have the impact of inflating the level of school reserves at the year end.

Higher levels of uncertainty around future pay and utility costs due to levels of inflation not seen for decades will mean setting future balanced budgets at a Council, and at an individual school, level will be very challenging in the medium

term. Prudent management of school reserves will be an important component in assisting schools to achieve balanced budgets over this difficult period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | To review the report and level of school reserves as at the 31 March 2022. |
|---|--|

REPORT DETAILS

1.00 EXPLAINING SCHOOL RESERVES

- 1.01 The overall level of reserves held by Flintshire schools was £12.555m at 31 March 2022, an increase of £5.652m compared with the previous year.

A summary of the position at the end of March 2022 is shown in table 1 below.

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SPECIALIST	404,402	9.4%	620,330	14.7%	215,928	5.27%
TOTAL	6,902,451	6.8%	12,554,912	12.1%	5,652,461	5.23%

The level of reserves each school in Flintshire held at the end of March 2022 is shown at appendix 1 along with the total amount of additional grant funding each school received during 2021/22 and 2020/21 financial years.

Please note that the figures in Table 1 for March 2022 includes a total of £0.263m that schools are required to set aside in the ICT HwB Reserve held centrally on schools behalf. This is to fund future investment in schools ICT and was a requirement by Welsh Government as part of the conditions of the HwB grant to ensure levels of ICT investment in schools in recent years funded by grants are sustained.

- 1.02 Overall, the total level of primary schools reserves increased by £2.420m, the total level of secondary schools reserves increased by £3.017m and the total level of specialist schools reserves increased by £0.216m.

This is a continuation of the situation at the last year end with reserves increasing, however this is a reversal of trends seen in recent years. Table 2 below illustrates and shows the level of school reserves at the year-end over the past 5 years.

Table 2

Sector	Reserves 31st March 2018 (£)	Reserves 31st March 2019 (£)	Reserves 31st March 2020 (£)	Reserves 31st March 2021 (£)	Reserves 31st March 2022 (£)
PRIMARY	2,402,461	2,565,109	1,901,956	6,025,937	8,445,703
SECONDARY	-1,285,856	-1,454,811	-2,076,302	472,112	3,488,879
SPECIALIST	168,193	224,789	286,303	404,402	620,330
TOTAL	1,284,798	1,335,087	111,956	6,902,451	12,554,912

The common factor affecting both financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 is the significant additional funding all schools have received in the form of specific grants.

1.03 Additional Grants

In recognition of the challenges the pandemic presented to both schools and learners, Welsh Government over the past 2 years have provided significant additional funding to schools in the form of grants which must be spent on specific activities and targets. The challenges continue as the effects of school closures during the pandemic, on our learners becomes clearer. To assist schools and councils in planning services Welsh Government have indicated that 'catch up' programmes will continue into 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 albeit at a reduced funding level.

Additional grants have also been awarded to support other ongoing developments in schools including the introduction of the new curriculum and the phased implementation of new legislation for learners with additional learning needs.

Table 3 below shows the level of grants schools have received in the last 3 financial years split across the 3 sectors. Demonstrating the total amount of additional funding being awarded to schools all with specific terms and conditions that must be adhered to.

Table 3

Sector	Grants 2021/22	Grants 2020/21	Grants 2019/20
PRIMARY	14,370,115	11,404,009	8,852,568
SECONDARY	10,898,836	9,222,854	8,018,691
SPECIALIST	364,503	197,703	203,801
TOTAL	25,633,455	20,824,566	17,075,060

A number of additional grants in 2021/22 were announced in the last quarter. These announcements were earlier than last financial year. Due to their notification dates being in the last quarter, combined with other issues such as difficulties in recruiting suitable employees, this can have the effect of displacing expenditure already incurred and act to release planned use of general schools funding. This inflates the level of school reserves as at 31st March 2022, as the school allocations are carried forward into 2022/23 financial year to fund spending in 2022/23.

	<p>Whilst additional funding is welcomed, it is important to note that grants come with specific terms and conditions which must be adhered to, and therefore schools are restricted to what they can use the funding for. Grants also create an administrative burden on schools and councils in the form of returns, monitoring outcomes, tracking expenditure etc, which is generally unfunded.</p>
1.04	<p>Council’s role in monitoring the level of School Reserves.</p> <p>The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 require local authorities to have the following provisions in their Scheme for Financing Schools:</p> <p>The use that a governing body proposes to make of a surplus in the school balance which exceeds 5% of the school budget share or £10,000, whichever is the greater.</p> <p>A provision under which–</p> <p>(a) the authority may direct the governing body as to how to spend a surplus in the school balance for a funding period, if –</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(i) in the case of a primary school the surplus is £50,000 or more, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(ii) in the case of a secondary school or a special school the surplus is £100,000 or more;</p> <p>(b) the authority may, if the governing body do not comply with such a direction, require the governing body to pay all or part of that surplus to the authority to be applied as part of their schools budget for the funding period in question.</p>
1.05	<p>In accordance with the Regulations, the Council’s Scheme for Financing Schools requires a spending plan from schools as to the use that the governing body proposes to make of a school balance which exceeds the limits specified.</p> <p>Given the level of uncertainty within which schools were preparing to set their 2022/23 budget, and the impact of grants in recent years from Welsh Government, the Council notified all schools in January 2022 that it would not be automatically clawing back school reserves in excess of 5% of school budget share at 31st March 2022. However, schools were advised that the Council would require more detailed information to better understand each school’s financial position at 31st March 2022 and each governing body’s plan for spending reserves in excess of the 5% level over the medium term (3 years).</p> <p>Schools were required to complete a revised ‘School Reserve Declaration Form’, by 30th June, alongside setting their annual budget. An example form is attached at Appendix 2 for information.</p> <p>Analysis of the completed forms shows that the main reasons schools gave for balances being excess of the 5% of school budget recommendation are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants from Welsh Government acting to replace spending from school reserves.

- A challenging labour market with conditions generally making it difficult to recruit, especially employees on a supply or temporary basis.
- Building / premises projects that schools had planned and had set reserves aside to fund haven't been able to take place due to issues and delays related to the pandemic. It is difficult to find contractors and some materials, and works also need to coincide with school holidays.
- Reserves built up due to a combination of additional resources and savings from periods of school closures during the pandemic.
- Reserves purposefully built up to fund a predicted shortfall in funding in future years due to falling pupil numbers.
- Reserves purposefully built up due to concerns over ability to afford future energy price increases.

Plans schools have for spending their reserves over the medium term are as follows:

- Reserves to be used in balancing future budgets.
- Increasing levels of employees to reduce class sizes and raise standards / focus on catch up learning as a result of the pandemic.
- Staff release time, training, purchasing resources required to introduce the new Additional Learning Needs legislation which is being phased in.
- Preparing for the introduction of the new curriculum.
- Purchasing additional resources and ICT equipment.
- Building and premises projects e.g. a numbers of schools have indicated that they need to invest in their outdoor learning environments.

1.06 Secondary Schools

During the year there has been a general increase in reserves in the secondary sector. Overall secondary reserves stood at £3.489m - an increase of £3.017m. This equates to 7.3% of secondary budgets and is an increase from 1.1% at 31st March 2021.

Table 4 categorises school reserves by number in various percentage brackets.

Table 4

No. of Secondary Schools	Reserves 31st March 2021	Reserves 31st March 2022
In Deficit Reserves	4	2
Reserves between 0% and 5% of School Budget	1	1
Reserves between 5% and 10% of School Budget	6	4
Reserves between 10% and 15% of School Budget	0	2
Reserves in excess of 15% of School Budget	0	2
TOTAL	11	11

2 schools out of 11 were in a deficit position compared with 4 the previous year. Deficits amounted to £0.745m compared with £1.912m the previous year. In line with the Protocol for Schools in Financial Difficulty school

support and challenge meetings will be continue to be held with these schools.

In general, the financial resilience of the secondary school sector in Flintshire is still of concern. The total level of reserves across the sector has risen to 7% at 31st March 2022 however at 31st March 2021 it was just 1.1% of secondary budgets, and for the previous 3 years the sector was in deficit overall.

Demographic changes in the distribution of pupils across the primary and secondary sectors have taken place in recent years, with secondary pupil numbers declining whilst primary pupil numbers were increasing. This resulted in a redistribution of funding between sectors. However, this trend is now reversing and pupil numbers in the secondary sector are now increasing which will have a positive financial impact on the secondary sector going forward. There is still concern for our smaller secondary schools with deficit reserves.

Under the Protocol for Schools in Financial Difficulty rigorous reviews have taken place during the past year to fully understand the financial position of each school in deficit. The schools in deficit cannot set an in year balanced budget from the resources allocated through the funding formula whilst delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. This elicits the question as to whether the funding formula provides sufficient resource for schools, particularly smaller schools, and those serving our most deprived communities, to operate sustainably. As part of the response to the Estyn recommendation to manage the reduction in school budget deficits more effectively, additional funding was allocated to secondary schools in 2021/22 for this purpose and initial work was conducted with secondary schools to review the funding formula. The funding remains in the base budget and the work on the formula continues to ensure every secondary school receives an allocation that allows them to operate sustainably.

1.07 **Primary Schools**

During the year there has been a general increase in reserves in the primary sector. Overall primary reserves stood at £8.446m an increase of £2.420m. This equates to 16.2% of primary budgets, an increase from 11.4% at 31st March 2021.

Table 5 categorises school reserves by number in various percentage brackets.

Table 5

No. of Primary Schools	Reserves 31st March 2021	Reserves 31st March 2022
In Deficit Reserves	1	0
Reserves between 0% and 5% of School Budget	7	3
Reserves between 5% and 10% of School Budget	17	7
Reserves between 10% and 15% of School Budget	21	20
Reserves between 15% and 20% of School Budget	13	16
Reserves in excess of 20%	5	18
TOTAL	64	64

	<p>At the end of the financial year there were no primary schools in deficit compared with 1 in the previous year.</p> <p>Demographic changes in the distribution of pupils across the primary and secondary sectors have taken place in recent years, with secondary pupil numbers declining whilst primary pupil numbers increased. This resulted in a redistribution of funding between sectors. However, this trend is now reversing and pupil numbers in the secondary sector are now increasing with pupil numbers in the primary sector declining. Funding will need to be redistributed from Primary to Secondary which will have a negative financial impact on the primary sector going forward.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>No direct resource implications as a result of this report.</p> <p>The impact of high levels of inflation on the financial resilience of schools is an area of concern.</p>

3.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	As budgets come under increasing pressure from high levels of inflation and reduced financial settlements from Welsh Government compared with recent years, there is a risk that more schools will slip into a deficit position. The Schools Accounting Team have developed a risk rating process to identify schools where the financial position is a cause for concern so that they can target their support.
3.02	To balance budgets schools may need to review their employment structures which may result in redundancies.
3.03	Continued pressure on school finances may result in increased class sizes, a reduced curriculum and falling standards.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	This report has been circulated to all Headteachers and will be reviewed by the School Budget Forum and the Governance and Audit Committee at their September 2022 meetings.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 - School Reserves 2021-22</p> <p>Appendix 2 – School Reserves Declaration Form 31st March 2022</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Liz Thomas, Strategic Finance Manager - Schools Telephone: 01352 702289 E-mail: liz.thomas@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>School Reserves – Reserves are sums of money that schools carry forward from one year to the next. They arise from underspends and overspends against school allocations over time. Schools are responsible for managing their own finances. The level of reserves held by an individual school will depend on a number of factors. These will include the timing of receipt of income and of payments, and the level of contingency fund the school governing body considers appropriate and the particular plans each school has for expenditure.</p> <p>Flintshire County Council’s Scheme for Financing Schools – The Scheme defines the financial relationship between Flintshire County Council and its maintained schools. The Scheme details the financial management arrangements to which the Authority and its schools are required to adhere. The framework for this Scheme is based on legislative provisions contained in sections 45-53 of the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998 and as further detailed in The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010.</p>

SCHOOL RESERVES ANALYSIS MARCH 2022

Primary School		Reserves 31st March 2021	% of Budget	Reserves 31st March 2022	% of Budget	Total Value of Grants Received in 2020/21	Total Value of Grants Received in 2021/22
		£		£		£	£
123	BRYNFORD C.P.	45,659	11.7%	74,642	18.6%	76,509	96,801
125	WESTWOOD C.P.	60,235	6.9%	174,491	19.4%	269,932	377,768
127	SOUTHDOWN C.P.	117,788	8.3%	246,722	17.4%	321,679	409,997
129	MOUNTAIN LANE C.P.	169,246	11.0%	335,910	21.2%	294,671	398,048
134	YSGOL YR ESGOB	9,944	3.3%	70,996	22.5%	52,405	68,682
135	YSGOL BRO GARMEL	46,608	6.9%	90,438	13.4%	129,156	143,786
145	YSGOL Y FOEL CILCAIN	22,804	8.9%	32,937	13.1%	43,697	52,376
151	YSGOL PARCY LLAN	55,790	10.9%	79,773	15.8%	93,557	124,049
156	YSGOL BRYN DEVA	100,021	8.8%	109,463	10.4%	279,470	343,417
159	GOLFTYN CP.	251,125	16.7%	268,814	17.9%	342,498	404,937
161	WEPRE CP.	117,734	9.5%	125,820	10.1%	213,561	256,353
162	YSGOL CAE'R NANT	208,913	15.3%	224,176	16.5%	361,636	402,732
175	DRURY C.P.	32,385	5.7%	66,519	10.9%	102,609	144,724
181	EWLOE GREEN C.P.	192,916	13.7%	207,744	15.5%	243,386	302,226
185	YSGOL BRYN GARTH	30,395	7.2%	34,075	8.4%	97,377	140,992
186	CORNIST PARK CP	107,937	9.8%	128,283	11.9%	253,380	318,259
187	YSGOL GYMRAEG CROES ATTI	161,684	21.8%	347,207	47.9%	222,964	310,265
188	YSGOL GWYNEDD C.P.	242,830	12.7%	250,931	13.8%	458,103	623,899
189	ST MARY'S	175,425	16.6%	112,563	12.2%	175,117	197,280
201	YSGOL MAES GLAS	190,301	17.5%	251,120	24.3%	237,563	279,702
202	GRONANT C.P.	53,813	15.1%	122,110	42.0%	80,144	75,577
203	YSGOL Y WAUN	100,301	20.4%	70,826	16.4%	73,311	90,747
204	GWERNMYNYDD C.P.	47,123	12.5%	34,399	10.2%	70,326	76,775
209	GWESPYR PICTON (YSGOL MORNANT)	29,356	11.0%	46,228	16.7%	68,780	80,485
215	HAWARDEN VILLAGE V.A.	129,418	8.7%	178,899	11.9%	285,855	341,064
218	PENARLAG C.P.	39,311	5.4%	19,830	2.7%	156,183	191,176
221	YSGOL DERWEN	108,462	15.1%	80,683	11.4%	127,898	145,226
225	ST. WINEFRIDES	30,638	4.4%	91,470	12.3%	163,560	223,543
226	YSGOL GWENFFRWD	153,956	20.6%	178,738	27.2%	176,931	203,268
227	YSGOL ESTYN	120,355	14.3%	72,532	8.7%	162,869	181,008
245	LEESWOOD C.P.	19,576	4.0%	32,393	6.6%	104,427	119,591
246	LIXWYM C.P.	36,155	11.6%	32,336	10.4%	51,858	59,048
287	YSGOL GLANRAFON	155,827	12.5%	201,977	16.0%	222,137	263,599
288	YSGOL BRYN COCH	94,101	4.1%	201,187	8.4%	448,423	637,841
289	YSGOL BRYN GWALLA	112,191	14.8%	155,556	22.7%	177,458	269,310
291	ST. DAVIDS R.C.	69,354	17.3%	87,421	22.6%	74,306	105,866
292	BRYN PENNANT C.P.	89,337	16.1%	106,548	20.0%	156,952	180,781
301	NANNERCH V.P.	-24,215	-9.6%	8,008	2.9%	48,429	68,524
302	NERCWYS V.P.	52,339	21.1%	49,482	21.2%	52,880	77,832
305	YSGOL OWEN JONES	22,928	4.6%	47,510	9.3%	100,273	125,180
306	NORTHOP HALL C.P.	143,782	18.8%	231,221	32.9%	156,391	177,003
327	YSGOL PENYFFORDD	170,474	14.1%	206,330	17.2%	216,510	262,489
331	ST JOHN THE BAPTIST VA SCHOOL	43,749	8.9%	37,425	7.3%	105,299	158,818
344	QUEENSFERRY C.P.	120,175	16.9%	87,300	14.4%	241,655	263,895
355	RHOS HELYG C.P.	87,410	14.6%	122,006	23.1%	100,552	138,538
381	ST.ANTHONY'S R.C.	67,224	13.8%	98,413	20.6%	114,396	132,274
382	SALTNEY FERRY C.P.	66,956	11.3%	125,751	21.4%	193,471	211,082
383	WOOD MEMORIAL C.P.	66,915	9.6%	76,069	11.8%	167,278	255,710
384	SANDYCROFT C.P.	116,432	9.0%	182,969	14.5%	326,762	392,819
385	SEALAND C.P.	151,004	19.4%	195,553	26.8%	214,771	248,090
386	ST. ETHELWOLD'S	47,085	10.5%	43,022	9.6%	123,574	165,003
389	VEN. EDWARD MORGAN R.C.	127,404	13.3%	106,657	12.8%	193,080	232,723
391	YSGOL TY FYNNON	130,148	10.4%	282,905	22.3%	230,351	287,022
394	SYCHDYN C.P.	47,228	7.0%	27,075	4.2%	108,674	120,297
406	TRELAWNYD V.P.	72,709	17.9%	86,978	23.8%	75,583	90,836
407	TRELOGAN C.P.	86,040	21.3%	106,590	29.7%	65,082	83,093
409	YSGOL TERRIG	12,702	4.3%	75,096	23.0%	64,688	126,739
421	YSGOL Y LLAN WHITFORD	48,028	11.0%	50,801	12.2%	77,310	120,817
422	ABERMORDDU CP	43,317	5.6%	90,147	11.8%	143,405	189,105
423	YSGOL GLAN ABER	94,677	16.6%	119,240	19.8%	161,425	188,025
424	YSGOL MERLLYN	3,860	0.7%	88,100	14.3%	131,600	169,368
425	BROUGHTON C.P.	118,340	6.2%	328,163	16.3%	415,777	572,173
426	YSGOL MYNYDD ISA C.P.	221,898	10.3%	402,651	18.1%	389,881	458,944
428	YSGOL MAES Y FELIN	158,317	12.7%	224,483	17.9%	314,227	412,531
	PRIMARY - DEFICIT TOTALS	-24,215		0			
	PRIMARY - SURPLUS TOTALS	6,050,152		8,445,703			
	PRIMARY TOTAL	6,025,937	11.4%	8,445,703	16.2%	11,404,009	14,370,115

Secondary School		Reserves 31st March 2021	% of Budget	Reserves 31st March 2022	% of Budget	Total Value of Grants Received in 2020/21	Total Value of Grants Received in 2021/22
503	ELFED HIGH SCHOOL	274,801	6.5%	426,936	9.5%	483,680	605,591
509	CONNAHS QUAY HIGH SCHOOL	428,538	8.4%	881,387	16.9%	553,067	745,532
515	FLINT HIGH SCHOOL	406,604	9.8%	455,925	11.0%	1,031,248	1,111,173
517	ST RICHARD GWYN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL	-303,921	-9.7%	93,749	2.4%	754,434	994,808
521	HAWARDEN HIGH SCHOOL	274,905	5.3%	348,978	6.5%	1,109,752	1,268,598
523	YSGOL TREFFYNNON	-674,218	-38.5%	-393,791	-13.6%	326,806	451,718
525	CASTELL ALLUN HIGH SCHOOL	445,446	7.5%	778,746	13.0%	1,744,799	1,813,647
529	ALLUN SCHOOL	255,359	3.7%	431,819	6.1%	2,110,420	2,353,026
531	YSGOL MAES GARMON	-120,234	-4.4%	167,360	5.4%	631,935	862,025
533	ARGOED SCHOOL	298,424	9.5%	649,227	20.6%	253,065	371,244
551	ST DAVIDS HIGH SCHOOL	-813,594	-67.3%	-351,456	-14.8%	223,649	321,475
	SECONDARY - DEFICIT TOTALS	-1,911,967		-745,247			
	SECONDARY - SURPLUS TOTALS	2,384,079		4,234,126			
	SECONDARY TOTAL	472,112	1.1%	3,488,879	7.3%	9,222,854	10,898,836

Specialist School		Reserves 31st March 2021	% of Budget	Reserves 31st March 2022	% of Budget	Total Value of Grants Received in 2020/21	Total Value of Grants Received in 2021/22
601	YSGOL PEN COCH	170,836	8.1%	248,147	12.3%	96,704	176,757
602	YSGOL MAES HYFRYD	233,567	10.7%	372,183	17.0%	100,999	187,746
	SPECIALIST TOTAL	404,402	9.4%	620,330	14.7%	197,703	364,503

GRAND TOTAL		Reserves 31st March 2021	% of Budget	Reserves 31st March 2022	% of Budget	Total Value of Grants Received in 2020/21	Total Value of Grants Received in 2021/22
		6,902,451	6.8%	12,554,912	12.1%	20,824,566	25,633,455

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Please return your signed form to your school's Finance Officer by no later than **30th June 2022**

0	EXAMPLE SCHOOL
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The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 requires:

A statement as to the use that a governing body proposes to make of a surplus in the school balance which exceeds 5% of the school budget share or £10,000, whichever is the greater.

A provision under which

(a) an authority may direct the governing body as to how to spend a surplus in the school balance for a funding period, if

(i) in the case of a primary school the surplus is £50,000 or more, and

(ii) in the case of a secondary school or a special school the surplus is £100,000 or more;

(b) the authority may, if the governing body do not comply with such a direction, require the governing body to pay all or part of that surplus to the authority to be applied as part of their schools budget for the funding period in question.

School Reserve Information - 31st March 2022

School Reserve at 31st March 2022	£		£
	150,000	Includes ICT HwB reserve of	5,000
5% of 2021/22 School Budget Share	£		
	50,000		
Greater of £10,000 or 5% of School Budget Share			£
			50,000
Level of School Reserve above WG guidelines			100,000

Please outline below the reasons below for exceeding WG guidelines

Please continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Please outline below the planned use of reserves to bring reserves back in line with WG guidelines

	Financial Year 2022/23 £	Financial Year 2023/24 £	Financial Year 2024/25 £
Balancing budget - spending plan to funding allocation			
Employee related			
Premises related			
ICT related			
Resources related			
Grant c/fwd to be spent by 31/8/22 - ALN New System Implementation (All)			
Grant c/fwd to be spent by 31/8/22 - Transition Funding AY 21/22 (Secondary)			
Grant c/fwd to be spent by 31/8/22 - Post 16 Learner Recovery&Progression			
Other - please specify			
Other - please specify			
Other - please specify			
Other - please specify			
Projected School Reserve at Financial Year End	150,000	150,000	150,000

Please use the space below to include a narrative to accompany the figures above

Please continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Please use the space below to include any other comments relevant to school reserves

Please continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Signatures

Headteacher

Chair of Governors

Scrutinising carefully the level of reserves each school holds is part of the Council's role in monitoring the management of school budgets. Schools with excessive reserves, that are consistently above the prescribed limits, will be required to invite the Strategic Finance Manager for Schools to a meeting of



EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 10 th October 2022
Report Subject	Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM)
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru have made a commitment to ensure all primary school aged children in Wales can access a free school meal by 2024.

Implementation of universal primary free school meals (UPFSM) will be phased, with first rollout in Flintshire commencing in September 2022 to Reception aged children.

There is a significant amount of work to do to ensure the infrastructure, equipment, resource and processes are in place to enable full implementation of UPFSM.

This report provides a progress update on local implementation of UPFSM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the progress made to date on implementation of UPFSM.
2	To consider the resource implications and risks identified in relation to UPFSM.
3	To support the UPFSM Policy and local implementation.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UPFSM)
1.01	As part of a Co-operation Agreement, Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru have announced plans and funding for all primary school children to be able to have a free school meal by 2024.
1.02	Welsh Government's commitment to Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) is in response to the escalating costs of living and aimed to help tackle child poverty, whilst ensuring no child goes hungry in school.
1.03	Some families who meet certain criteria, such as those on lower incomes or in receipt of certain benefits, are entitled to receive a free school meal – eligibility tested free school meals (eFSM). The UPFSM Policy does not affect eFSM and families who are eligible for eFSM are being encouraged to continue to use the eFSM application process. This will ensure these families can continue to access other grants and benefits, such as the PDG Access grant (School uniform grant).
1.04	Implementation of UPFSM will be phased. Locally, in Flintshire, rollout will mirror the national timetable, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2022 – Reception age children offered UPFSM • April 2023 – children in Reception and years 1 and 2 offered UPFSM • 2024 – all primary aged children to be able to take up UPFSM.
1.05	A significant amount of work is required to ensure that in Flintshire we have the infrastructure, equipment, resource and processes in place to support full implementation of this Policy. It is not just about ensuring a meal can be provided but that eligible children have access to cutlery to eat it with, a place to sit whilst eating, that schools have adequate staff to act as lunchtime supervisors for an extended period to enable all children to have a lunch sitting, that data is captured on eligibility and meal uptake, etc.
1.06	To oversee implementation of UPFSM in Flintshire, a small, cross organisation Project Team has been formed within the Local Authority, with the involvement/support of key stakeholders. The UPFSM Project Team is supported by a number of task and finish groups, focusing on specific matters such as: implementation in schools; communications and engagement; kitchen and dining room audits; application process; data capture and finance.
1.07	The first priorities for the Project Team, and supporting task and finish groups, have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting kitchen and dining room audits to identify the additional kitchen and dining equipment and works required to fulfil full implementation; • Managing and disseminating information to stakeholders; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of light equipment to enable delivery of the first phase of implementation in September 2022.
1.08	In addition to the local Project Team, the Council has officer representatives on a number of national groups and forums involved in the development, implementation, delivery and rollout of UPFSM.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Welsh Government have committed to fully funding UPFSM Policy with a number of grant funding streams being made available.
2.02	<p>Revenue Grant 2022</p> <p>The first grant funding stream available was a revenue grant, which was made available for councils' preparatory work for the eligibility changes to free school meals.</p> <p>More specifically, the revenue grant received by Flintshire County Council was to provide support to the Council in three areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early engagement with stakeholders to understand behaviours that might impact on the delivery of UPFSM and level of uptake; 2. Kitchen and dining room facility audits and workforce and contractual arrangements review to understand existing capacity and where investment is needed; and 3. Consideration of the practical implications of changing free school meal eligibility.
2.03	<p>Capital Grant Funding</p> <p>The Council has, and will continue to, receive capital grant funding to support the investment required to enable UPFSM delivery. In accordance with the grant conditions this includes the procurement of equipment and works to enable UPFSM rollout.</p> <p>Capital funding will be available in tranches broadly reflecting the UPFSM phased rollout.</p>
2.04	<p>Local Authority Education Revenue Grant – UPFSM Delivery</p> <p>The Local Authority Education Grant will include the Council's allocation for UPFSM delivery. This allocation is calculated at a set unit rate per meal served. The number of meals served will be estimated for each month, using a set week per month to calculate the daily average number of pupils taking up the offer which is adjusted for school days per year, etc. to arrive at a monthly allocation from Welsh Government based on actual numbers of UPFSM delivered. As such, the Council will need to record actual uptake and be able to return data to Welsh Government on this throughout the academic year.</p>
2.05	The Local Authority Education Grant funding allocation includes an administration fee. This payment is to cover staffing time to process additional meal request forms, record data, negotiate contracts, marketing and communications, etc.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	Applying for eFSM Whilst UPFSM will be available to all primary aged children from 2024, those who remain eligible for eFSM (eligibility tested) still need to apply. Application does enable parents to access other grant funding.
3.02	eFSM application is also used for funding allocations to the Council and schools. For 2022/23 eFSM application data has been roughly calculated as providing a total of circa £10m grant funding.
3.03	There are concerns that the universal entitlement of UPFSM will result in a marked reduction in the number of parents applying for eFSM, which could potentially have a significant financial impact on both schools and the Council. It could also undermine the eFSM statistic across Wales which is a key indicator of poverty and deprivation and used in many other ways nationally.
3.04	Local communications have continued to reiterate the need for parents to apply for eFSM and this will need to be an ongoing annual reminder effort to ensure those who are eligible for eFSM continue to apply in future years.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Parent and Child Survey To help with preparations for UPFSM, including to ascertain likely meal uptake, a parent and child survey was developed and launched in June 2022, with a closing date of 31 st July 2022. This was advertised on the Council's website and council maintained primary schools were asked to circulate the link to parents of children attending their school.
4.02	A total of 2,122 survey responses were received, representing the views and opinions of parents of children attending 58 of the 67 local primary schools. NB: 16 respondents skipped the question on which school the child attended. As such, more schools may be represented than stated above.
4.03	The vast majority of responders to the parent and child survey expressed enthusiasm for UPFSM, noting the huge (positive) difference it will make given the cost of living increases. However, some respondents felt that the phased rollout is discriminatory and unfair.
4.04	Early indications are that uptake will be fairly consistent across age groups and the days of the week, with slightly higher demand on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

4.05	School Survey To enable effective planning and to inform procurement requirements, especially to enable delivery to reception aged children from September 2022, a further survey was developed and launched in July 2022 for completion by schools.
4.06	61 of the 67 Flintshire County Council maintained schools responded to the survey. Of those that responded 93.5% reported an increase in projected meal uptake from September, with 50% anticipating uptake to double on 2021/22.
4.07	One of the most frequent concerns raised by schools was the additional time required to ensure young children eat their meals in the allocated time for lunch. Concerns were also expressed around the need for additional lunch sittings and the impact this may have on outdoor play time and the school day more broadly.
4.08	Schools were also asked about the need for additional lunchtime supervisors, with 23 schools describing the need for additional staff from either September 2022 or April 2023.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Not applicable.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Welsh Government (2022) <i>Universal Primary Free School Meals</i> , available online: https://gov.wales/universal-primary-free-school-meals-upfsm#:~:text=Registering-Overview,child%20goes%20hungry%20in%20school
6.02	Flintshire County Council (2022) <i>Universal Primary Free School Meals FAQs</i> , available online: https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Schools/Free-School-Meals.aspx

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Kelly Oldham-Jones – Strategic Executive Officer Telephone: 01352 702143 E-mail: kelly.oldham-jones@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Free School Meals (eFSM): eligibility tested free school meals that are available to families who meet certain criteria, such as being on lower

incomes or in receipt of certain benefits, making them entitled to receive a free school meal regardless of the UPFSM Policy.

Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM): Welsh Government Policy to ensure every primary school aged child will be universally eligible for a free school meal by 2024, regardless of household income.

Uptake: the percentage of children who are eligible for a meal who take a meal when offered.

PDG: The Welsh Government funded Pupil Development Grant is available to help towards the costs of a child's school uniform and equipment, for those on a low income.



EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 10 th October, 2022
Report Subject	Council Plan 2022-23 Timeline Review
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council Plan for 2022-23 was adopted by County Council in July. The Plan was reviewed and refreshed for content following on from our response to the pandemic and our Recovery Strategy. The themes and priorities remain the same to 2021/22 however there are some developments with sub-priorities.

The outline of the Council Plan for 2022/23 including the six themes, their priorities and actions is appended (as Part 1).

At County Council in July, it was requested Overview and scrutiny Committee's review; (1) action timelines; and (2) some of the definitions be reviewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To agree Council Plan Part 1 reviewed and updated timelines for completion
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	COUNCIL PLAN 2022/23
1.01	It is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for organisations to ‘set out any actions to increase the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements.’ Plans for organisations should be robust; be clear on where it wants to go; and how it will get there.
1.02	<p>In July, County Council requested a review of timelines due to several target completion dates being set as March 2023. This review has been carried out for each of the actions of the Council Plan and is appended for reference. The dates have been reviewed by officers to ensure accurate targets are now identified. The document contains the updated target dates and rationale for the changes or no changes. The three categories of rationale are:</p> <p>Core Business – activity is ongoing; Project – activity has clear start and end dates; and New Initiative – activity has clear start date which may develop in the future</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Resource implications have been considered during preparation of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme and will continue to be monitored during the regular budget monitoring and financial review arrangements.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	All Members have had the opportunity to consider and review the content of the draft Plan themes and priorities. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have reviewed and discussed the overall content of the Plan throughout January and February 2022.

4.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT						
4.01	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td rowspan="5">The Council Plan 2022/23 continues to be aligned to the Sustainable Development Principles across all their working. Assessment against these will be made at the end of year Annual Performance Report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> </tr> </table> <p>Well-being Goals Impact</p>	Long-term	The Council Plan 2022/23 continues to be aligned to the Sustainable Development Principles across all their working. Assessment against these will be made at the end of year Annual Performance Report.	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement
Long-term	The Council Plan 2022/23 continues to be aligned to the Sustainable Development Principles across all their working. Assessment against these will be made at the end of year Annual Performance Report.						
Prevention							
Integration							
Collaboration							
Involvement							

	Prosperous Wales	Council Plan 2022/23 continues to provide evidence of alignment with the Well-being Goals. Specific strategic and policy reports include impact and risk assessments.
	Resilient Wales	
	Healthier Wales	
	More equal Wales	
	Cohesive Wales	
	Vibrant Wales	
	Globally responsible Wales	
	<p>Risk Management Risks have been captured and added for information within Part 2 Council Plan 2022/23.</p>	

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Council Plan (Part 1) 2022-23 Timeline Review.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Jay Davies, Strategic Performance Advisor Telephone: 01352 702744 E-mail: jay.davies@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Council Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council.
8.02	Medium Term Financial Strategy: a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period, and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.

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Portfolio	Task Description	Task Estimated Completion Date	New Estimated Completion Date	Task Type
Education and Youth	Ensuring children have access to well-maintained outdoor play areas which offer a varied and rich play environment	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Making the processes for claiming free school meals as simple and straightforward as possible to increase the percentage of take-up against entitlement	31/03/2023	30/09/2022	Core Business
Education and Youth	Encouraging take-up of the free school breakfast for year 7 pupils eligible for free school meals	31/03/2023	31/12/2022	Core Business
Education and Youth	Maximising the take-up of the school uniform grant	31/03/2023	30/09/2022	Core Business
Education and Youth	Maintaining support for settings and schools with the rollout of the revised curriculum for pupils from 3-16 which better prepares them for their future lives and employment	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	School employees continuing to access the GwE professional learning offer and engage in cluster working	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Embedding the revised processes and procedures in relation to attendance and exclusion, using data to better inform and target interventions at both a pupil and school level	31/03/2023	23/12/2022	Project
Education and Youth	Working with schools to support development and implementation of flexible and bespoke educational packages to improve attendance and engagement	31/03/2023	31/08/2023	Project
Education and Youth	Supporting schools and wider education services to increase their digital offer for children and young people	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Upskilling employees within the Education and Youth Portfolio through access to the GwE professional learning offer and other appropriate training opportunities	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Embedding the delivery plan for Integrated Youth Services by maintaining focus on increased digital engagement	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Continuing to increase the range of digital material hosted on the North East Wales Archive website and other digital services to encourage greater participation	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Continuing to monitor schools' provision for learners who are 'digitally disadvantaged'	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Supporting schools to maximise their available hardware via the national Hwb programme and to ensure sustainable funding plans in place	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Starting construction of the proposed 3-16 campus at Mynydd Isa	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business

Portfolio	Task Description	Task Estimated Completion Date	New Estimated Completion Date	Task Type
Education and Youth	Consult on increasing capacity of Drury CP and Penyffordd CP schools through the School Organisation Code	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Commissioning a contractor and start design and development process for Drury CP and Penyffordd CP	31/03/2023	31/12/2022	Project
Education and Youth	Seeking Council approval to progress B and B Wales Government 21st Century Schools Investment Programme	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Progressing the development of a new premises plan for the North East Wales Archive	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Continuing to consolidate the joint working between Flintshire County Council and Denbighshire County Council through the North East Wales Archive to provide a sustainable and resilient service	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Developing the Delivery Plan for Adult Community Learning to increase engagement and improve skills within local communities	31/03/2023	30/09/2022	Core Business
Education and Youth	Developing a Supporting Learners strategy to increase levels of engagement and provide appropriate progression routes to further engagement, study or employment	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Expanding the adult learning offer to reflect national, regional and local priorities in order to provide the skills required through partnership planning	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Working in partnership with Aura to provide Alternative Provision to young people excluded from school to help gain meaningful qualifications	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Implementing Year two of the Transformation plan for children and young people with additional learning needs, in line with Welsh Government legislation and associated guidance	31/03/2023	31/08/2023	Project
Education and Youth	Further defining and embedding the menu of outreach support and training to be offered to schools via Plas Derwen Pupil Referral Unit	31/03/2023	31/08/2023	Project
Education and Youth	Developing a strategic proposal for the next phase of the Additional Learning Needs provision which increases the level of in-house provision and seeks to reduce the reliance on out of county provision	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Continuing to increase the capacity and take up of Welsh medium education to achieve Welsh Government targets	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Continue to improve the Welsh language skills of employees in schools to more effectively support learners and the delivery of the curriculum	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Providing targeted support and intervention to schools to raise standards and promote bilingualism	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business

Portfolio	Task Description	Task Estimated Completion Date	New Estimated Completion Date	Task Type
Education and Youth	Extending the range of youth services delivered bilingually to encourage young people to retain and use their Welsh language skills into early adulthood	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Embedding the role of the Integrated Youth Provision Welsh language coordinator	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Ensuring all digital and face to face youth and play provision has an increasing bilingual offer which supports the expansion of the Council's Welsh Language immersion programme	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Rolling out the National Framework for Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing in all Flintshire schools	31/03/2023	No Change	Project
Education and Youth	Supporting all secondary schools to complete the School Health Research Network survey in 2022. Developing action plans based on the findings, particularly in relation to Emotional Health and Wellbeing	31/03/2023	30/09/2022	Core Business
Education and Youth	Meeting the requirements under Wellbeing Whole School Approach Development Fund for employee training and pupil engagement	31/03/2023	No Change	Project
Education and Youth	Consolidating the Inspire Youth Work Hospital Project which provides support to young people at risk of self-harming behaviour	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Improving awareness of trauma informed practice with schools and Education and Youth workforce	31/03/2023	No Change	Core Business
Education and Youth	Developing action plans based on the findings, particularly in relation to Emotional Health and Wellbeing	31/03/2023	31/12/2022	Core Business

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