

Public Document Pack

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Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



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To:

Councillors: Bill Crease, Dave Mackie, Debbie Owen, Andrew Parkhurst,
Carolyn Preece, Jason Shallcross, Labour Group x4 and Eagle Group x1

Co-opted Members:

Lisa Allen, Lynn Bartlett and Wendy White

17 May 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 23RD MAY, 2024 at 2.00 PM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Delyn Committee Room, 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 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Purpose: At the Annual Meeting, Council determined that the Labour Group will Chair this Committee. The Committee is advised that Councillor Teresa Carberry is the Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Purpose: To appoint a Vice-Chair for the Committee.

3 APOLOGIES

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

5 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on the 21 March 2024.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (Pages 15 - 28)

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.

7 CHANGES TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DELIVERY MODELS IN WALES (Pages 29 - 38)

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

Purpose: To provide an update following the Welsh Government announcement to change the mechanism of funding for all regional consortia across Wales and the outcome of the Welsh Government commissioned middle tier review which has had significant implications for the current arrangements for school improvement service.

8 **ESTYN REVISED FRAMEWORKS FOR INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES** (Pages 39 - 46)

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

Purpose: To provide information on the new Inspection Framework for Schools from Estyn and revised Local Government Inspection Framework.

9 **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS** (Pages 47 - 62)

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

Purpose: Providing the Committee with the latest information on learner attendance and exclusions for Flintshire Schools.

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

The following item is considered to be exempt by virtue of Paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public interest in withholding the information outweighs the interest in disclosing the information until such time as the proposals within the report have been implemented.

10 **SALTNEY & BROUGHTON SCHOOL NETWORK REVIEW** (Pages 63 - 106)

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

Purpose: To consider the proposed school network options for the Saltney/Broughton area prior to Cabinet approval.

The following item is considered to be exempt by virtue of Paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public interest in withholding the information outweighs the interest in disclosing the information until such time as the proposals within the report have been implemented.

11 **WELSH GOVERNMENT'S (WG) SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING ROLLING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME AND MUTUAL INVESTMENT MODEL (MIM)** (Pages 107 - 162)

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

Purpose: To consider the Council's Strategic Outline Plan (SOP) which identifies future investment needs for the school estate over the next seven years via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Learning Communities Fund.

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

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **21 MARCH 2024**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 21 March 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor Teresa Carberry (Chair)

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

SUBSTITUTIONS:

Councillor Debbie Owen (for Councillor David Richardson),

APOLOGIES: Councillor Arnold Woolley, Lynn Bartlett and Wendy White

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Mared Eastwood (Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure); Leader of the Council; Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Education & Youth); The Regional Manager (Emergency Planning) (for agenda item 52)
Senior Manager (School Improvement) (for agenda item 53)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitators and Democratic Services Officer

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations were received.

49. MINUTES

1 February 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Dave Mackie and Gladys Healey.

Matters Arising

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In response to questions from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst on the future risks around the 'Unallocated Schools Budget.' The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) asked Councillor Parkhurst to e-mail her the questions following the meeting so that she could liaise with the Finance Manager and provide a response to all Committee Members.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

50. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

In presenting the report, the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator outlined the items listed on the Forward Work Programme which were attached at Appendix 1. The Forward Work Programme would be updated to include the upcoming meeting dates following the Annual Meeting of County Council.

Presenting the Action Tracking report, the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator confirmed that the action on recruitment and retention had been included on the Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. It was also highlighted that the Saltney & Broughton Area Review and Theatr Clwyd actions were included under items to be scheduled. The letter from the Chair thanking Headteachers had been circulated by email and it was confirmed that the action relating to the Council Plan had been completed with the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) circulating an email to all staff thanking them for their hard work in achieving the key priority targets. All actions were now completed.

The Chair requested that a report from NEWydd in relation to School Meals be added to the Forward Work Programme. Following a request from Councillor Dave Mackie that feedback from schools/pupils be included in the report, the Chief Officer suggested that Steve Jones and Claire Sinnott work jointly on a report to capture pupil engagement with NEWydd around School Meals.

Councillor Mackie asked that a report on School Improvement in relation to GwE, specifically around the funding of the organisation and proposals going forward be added to the Forward Work Programme. The Chief Officer welcomed this and suggested that a report detailing the implications of the changes, financial impacts and the expectations on Local Authorities to make different arrangements be presented to the Committee at the meeting in May.

The Chief Officer suggested that a report on the Youth Justice Service Inspection be added to the Forward Work Programme for the September meeting.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst asked if the report to the Joint Scrutiny Committee in June on Additional Learning Needs would include information on the provision of education for children with Autism. The Chief Officer said that within the report there would be specific reference to specialist education and what was being done to meet this growing demand.

In response to a question from Councillor Parkhurst on the School Reserves report the Chief Officer commented that schools had to submit their budgets to the Council by 30 June and that there were a number of processes taking place currently around the restructure of the workforce. It was felt that this would not be ready prior to the summer holidays and that September was the best time to bring this to the Committee.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Carolyn Preece

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.

51. EMERGENCY PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive introduced the report and confirmed that it included information on the incident relating to a burst water main and the wider Emergency Planning Service as requested by the Committee at a previous meeting.

The Regional Manager for Emergency Planning provided background information on the formation and function of Emergency Planning in Flintshire. This included the statutory responsibilities under legislation and the role of the Chief Executive on the North Wales Council's Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS).

A presentation was provided which included detail on the following slides:-

- Why we have Emergency Planning
- The Civic Contingencies Act 2004
- Other Legislation
- Definition of Emergency and Major Incidents
- What can cause emergencies?
- What is the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service
- Emergency Planning Structure in FCC
- Recent Emergencies in Flintshire and North Wales
- Local Resilience Forum Structure
- Covid Response
- Debriefing
- Main risks in North Wales
- Elected Members E-Learning

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to the flooding issue he was involved with and asked if Members could be provided with a contact number for a person who would be able to guide the school on whether to close or not.

The Chief Executive referred to point 1.03 of the report and to the debrief saying Welsh Water should have had an escalation plan in place which would have alerted the Emergency Planning Team who would have co-ordinated the contact points. This did not happen. Following the learning on this and establishment of the test plan this should ensure that the plan was enacted in future. The Regional Manager confirmed that she had worked with emergency planning counterparts within Welsh Water to ensure the plan was in place so that the team were informed in future. She reassured Members

that if they were alerted to any incident and were unsure of who to contact then they could contact her team for advice.

In response to questions from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst around funding, the Chief Executive commented that previously each Local Authority had its own team and that as part of the regional approach to rationalise and create consistency it was brought together with the team dealing with issues more effectively. The Regional Manager explained the funding was allocated on a population base percentage. The funding was allocated to cover staffing costs, training for local authority staff and the production of e-Learning and performance management reports. The team also attended six scrutiny committee meetings for each local authority with the Annual Report presented to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The team worked with the Information Management Team to discuss topics for learning and looked at the Debrief from the Manchester Arena attack specifically around the role of Members. A Members handbook was being produced which would outline the responsibilities for Members, Leaders and Heads of Service to ensure that the correct messages were sent out to the public. Once this had been reviewed it would be circulated to Members. It was explained that after every incident, even if not in Flintshire, the learning was reviewed and looked at to understand how this would look in North Wales to ensure that the authorities responded correctly.

Councillor Ryan McKeown referred to Councillor Parkhurst's comment on the bus incident saying that it related to when one of the operators withdrew their service and reinstated it shortly afterwards. The Leader of the Council explained this related to a majority provider who announced on a Friday they were not providing that service on the following Monday. The Chief Executive and Chief Officers held discussions with the operator which resulted in the operator reinstating the provision.

Councillor McKeown requested further information on the decision to close all schools across Flintshire when the amber snow warning was given. He sought clarification on how that decision was made and asked could the minutes of that meeting be shared with Members. In response, the Chief Executive explained that the decision-making framework was included within the presentation. The Council's Emergency Management Response Team, based on detailed information from the MET office and other sources, analysed that information and following discussions with the Leader of the Council made that decision. It was confirmed that the notes from this meeting could be shared. The Leader commented that the recommendation was provided to Head Teachers to close schools on their individual weather circumstances, which also had to include their staff travelling to school from other areas where there was more snow.

Councillor Healey asked if there were enough ambulances in the event of a major incident. In response, the Regional Manager confirmed that every Ambulance Service had a reciprocal arrangement with North Wales able to contact Cheshire and Shropshire. If there was an incident then the region would call on resources from other areas to ensure that we were adequately able to respond. The Leader of the Council also confirmed that that reciprocal arrangement applied to the Fire and Police Authorities too.

The Leader of the Council referred to the difficult decisions made during the Covid response across the whole of North Wales which was led by the Police and included all Chief Executives and Leaders. The Leader then referred to a major incident that he was involved with at Bollingbrook Heights and said that following a discussion with the Chief Executive on what he could do to help, it was agreed that he would be briefed on what was happening and asked to speak to the press. He felt that Members had a supporting role given his experience with Covid and other incidents.

Councillor Paul Cunningham agreed that Members should stay out of the way, but the Leader had highlighted where Members could be useful. He referred to his previous career as a fire fighter and felt that the most important thing following an incident was the debrief. He commented that Flintshire was lucky to have such a wonderful Emergency Planning Team.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) reported that she chaired the Emergency Information Team as part of the EMRT Structure which had looked at communication and how Members were supported. The Member's Handbook was in the process of being reviewed and would be circulated as soon as possible with Members also encouraged to undertake the E-learning which the team provided. The Chief Officer reassured the Committee that schools had a Managing School Emergencies Policy in place and she outlined what was covered within this document. Schools also had the support of the portfolio when dealing with an emergency. It was agreed that the reviewed Members Handbook and the link to E-Learning be circulated to all Members via the Democratic Services Manager when it was finalised.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Jason Shallcross and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report together with the response from Welsh Water and the wider work of the regional service be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee thank Helen Kilgannon, Regional Manager for Emergency Planning for the report and presentation provided at the meeting.

52. TACKLING THE IMPACT OF INEQUALITY ON EDUCATION OUTCOMES

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) explained that this reported was being presented following a request from the Committee. It included an update on the work which was being undertaken to support schools to minimise the impact of poverty on learners who were in more disadvantageous circumstances.

The Senior Manager for School Improvement referred to the previous report presented to Committee in May 2023 which outlined the research and national challenges around tackling the impact of poverty and disadvantage. An update had been requested by Members on the actions and progress and this report highlighted the key aspects. Section 1.01 referred to the focus on poverty, a thread which ran through

the strategic improvement priorities within the Council Plan. Section 1.02 outlined the previous performance data on the national and local outcomes with Sections 1.03 to 1.06 referring to the focus on three priorities within the Corporate Plan. The Authority was successful in bringing all secondary schools into the pilot for free school meals for year 7 pupils, the nationally funded pilot which ended in July 2023. Praise was given to the network of school uniform exchanges which existed across the County and the mapping exercise which had been led by colleagues in the Revenue and Benefits team. Section 1.06 referred to the food and fun programme which had been delivered for the last 5 years and took place during the summer holidays with 300 children participating last year. Section 1.07 included an update on how schools were utilizing the resources from the Children's Commissioner and the "Check with Ceri" resource and also included feedback from schools. Section 1.08 highlighted how schools were making use of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) funding with examples included from recent Estyn Inspection reports. Section 1.09 of the report referred to the community focused schools' projects with Welsh Government grant funding used to target areas where it was most needed. Section 1.10 outlined the work with central services within the portfolio providing on-going advice to families to enable them to access appropriate benefits and services to which they were entitled.

The Chair was delighted to see how many initiatives which schools had implemented for the benefit of the students. The Chair also reminded the Committee that a letter had been sent to all schools, on behalf of the Committee, encouraging the use of the Pupil Development Grant.

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to his recent visit to the Westwood Centre to receive a presentation by Gail Bennett in Children's Services on the way a child's brain developed. The point was made that if a child received the right stimulation at the right age their brain developed in a positive way, if this did not happen then the number of connections within the brain reduced. It was so difficult to change the situation that these children found themselves in, to change those connections, and it was important that parents understood this.

In response to questions from Councillor Mackie on the gap in GCSE results between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in England and Wales, the Senior Manager commented that she had not had a chance to fully study the report by Luke Sibieta, published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies as only released today. She confirmed that this would feed into the portfolio's work moving forward.

Responding to questions from Councillor Mackie, the Senior Manager provided clarification on the lack of comparable data for A 'Level students and the successful Welsh Government pilot which had enabled the provision of a healthy and nutritious breakfast. Responses were also provided in relation to the Fun and Food Programme, especially the provision of hot meals and the support of school staff together with the School Uniform Exchange Programme.

The Leader of the Council reported on his visits with the Chief Officer to St David's in Saltney, Ysgol Trefynnon in Holywell, Connah's Quay High School and Ysgol Maes Glas in Greenfield. He also referred to the visit to Ysgol Bryn Garth, fun in the forest. These were excellent schemes, and the Council was extremely grateful to the

staff and school staff who supported them. These events were a lot of fun for children and parents.

The Chief Officer added that she and Councillor Mared Eastwood visited Flint on one of the days when parents were invited to attend. The parents said how important it was for their children and how much they appreciated the scheme, especially the opportunity to take food home. The number of schools taking this on had grown every year and this was an important strategy with funding from the WLGA and the commitment from support and teaching staff, AURA, the Health Board and the team running the activities.

Following a suggestion from the Leader of the Council it was agreed that Members of the Committee be invited to the Food and Fun Programme 2024 sessions to speak to learners and families to better understand the positive impact. The Chief Officer commented that she would be delighted if Members of the Committee came along to visit on the food and fun explorations next summer. The dates would be shared with the Committee.

In response to questions from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst, the Senior Manager provided clarification on the education attainment gap which had been worsened with Covid, the registration for Free School Meals which led to funding from the Pupil Development Grant and the link with Learner's destinations. Information was also provided on Post 16 provision and the SEREN Programme for students to apply to the Russell Group universities and other universities which extended to year 9 and above to get those conversations started earlier in schools. The Senior Manager confirmed she was part of the Regional Skills Partnership Board for North Wales which endeavoured to develop better connections with employers and schools. It was explained that the Chair of the Board would be attending the Secondary Head Teachers Meeting in May to outline what was on offer. The Adult Learning and Post 16 Advisor was looking at work around apprenticeships to ensure that information was circulated to schools. Information was also provided on the Adult Learning Opportunities.

The Chief Officer referred to Councillor Parkhurst's question on school attendance saying that this was a priority for the portfolio and that an annual update was provided to Committee on this. She reassured Members that the Inclusion Service were constantly refining the approach to ensure all learners were in school. Small positive steps were being made since Covid, but this was a constant battle to ensure young people returned and stayed in school.

Following questions around Free School Meals, the Facilitator referred to a letter recently written by the Chair of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee on what work was being done by Welsh Government, on a national level, to publicise and encourage the take up of Free School Meals. A response had been received from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and it was agreed that a copy of the letter and response be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Bill Crease agreed with the comments made by Councillors Mackie and Parkhurst and felt the first 3 or 4 years of a child's life were so important with huge implications on the outcomes for young people and resources required to try and rectify

this. It was essential that a method and mechanisms were found to help the Covid cohort to challenge, develop and improve the situation for these young people.

The Senior Manager explained that there were huge challenges, but the biggest impact was the quality of education, teaching and learning that young people received. Early Years education was so important, and she paid tribute to the schools and the work that they were doing to help young people to catch up and to provide positive encouragement and reinforcement. These pupils were responding really well, albeit with challenges, and the focus was on the quality of teaching and learning which would help a young person to move out into the world of work and use their skills to transfer to jobs.

The Chief Officer commented that as an early years practitioner she agreed with Councillor Crease. Colleagues in primary schools were describing what the very youngest children coming into primary were presenting with and the level of support they needed. The support provided by Gail Bennett and the Flying Start Programme to 2-year-olds, children could access the funded education for 3-year-old with guidance provided to playgroups to provide that quality early years provision. It was explained that Welsh Government (WG) had published their new plan for ages 0 – 5 years “The Early Childhood Play Learning and Care Plan in Wales (High Level Plan)” and an overview of the focus for this plan was given. It was agreed that this document would be circulated to Members of the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Debbie Owen sought clarification around the breakfast club and asked if schools organised this themselves. In response, the Senior Manager commented that some schools had their own clubs, with others receiving funding. The Chief Officer added that Welsh Government (WG) had made provision for primary breakfast, but that this had become a childcare provision for parents. Some schools just offered breakfast for 30 minutes prior to the start of the day.

Councillor Debbie Owen referred to Quay Play and asked if it was possible to work together. The Chief Officer commented that these were two distinct programmes with the Food and Fun running for 4 days over that 3-week period. The Quay Play was a successful part of the school holiday play provision, but Welsh Government (WG) had confirmed that it was not possible to have a situation of double funding. It was not possible to use the Play Opportunities Grant for the provision of food but last year play schemes were able to offer snack provision where there was an identified need.

The Leader of the Council praised the Chair for the work that she had undertaken in relation to the uniform exchange scheme. He referred to Free School Meals saying that parents were required to register to obtain not only Free School Meals but also the School Uniform Grant. He added that the Chief Officer and himself had spent a significant amount of time speaking up for younger children to access education with the issues of behaviours and socialising of these children lingering within the education system. The Leader felt that encouraging students to get the appropriate provision such as apprenticeships which could lead to quality lifelong jobs was important. University was not for everyone with families fearing the build-up of debt which was key to this.

Councillor McKeown commented that he had been a Flintshire school pupil and a recipient of Free School Meals and Uniform Grant. He had attended university but said that university was not for everyone, and apprenticeships should be encouraged. When he was in school the focus was on university when apprenticeships at Airbus could have provided an excellent career. He was pleased to see the focus on community focused schools.

Councillor Jason Shallcross referred to the importance of parental influence and through his experience as a governor had witnessed a lack of expectation and aspiration. He felt there was a lack of encouragement from home and questioned how this could be changed.

Councillor Gina Maddison referred to the “charter for change” and asked if High Schools practiced period poverty. In response, the Senior Manager confirmed that there was a Period Poverty Grant Scheme which was well-supported in schools and managed by the Healthy Schools Team. The team worked with schools and communities through Youth Services and Adult Learning provision circulating free products and educational information on those products. The Chief Officer referred to the promotional campaign currently taking place along with the subscription service which ensured that all young people had the items delivered discreetly to their homes with information provided around the products which were available. The Scheme ensured that everyone who needed these products received them which included workshops with parents. It was suggested that an update report on ‘Period Poverty’ be added to the list of items of the Joint Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 27th June 2024.

In response to questions from Councillor Preece on the roll out for Free School Meals, the Chief Officer confirmed that the Council was on track with the roll out for Years 5 – 6 commencing after Easter and she thanked NEWydd and schools for this last phase of the project. Referring to the menu and portion sizes the Chief Officer suggested that these questions be put to the Managing Director when he attended a meeting of the Committee.

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

RESOLVED:

That that Committee confirms that it had received a continued level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in supporting schools to tackle the impact of poverty and disadvantage on their learners.

53. 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 4.15 pm)

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Chair

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EDUCATION YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 23 rd May, 2024
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	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>Tuesday 28th May, 2024</p> <p>10.00am</p> <p>Special Meeting with all Members invited to attend</p>	<p>Future options: leisure, libraries, and museum services</p>	<p>To present a report on longer-term options for service provision and seek Members opinion on the available options.</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Strategic Executive Officer Strategic Finance Manager</p>
<p>Thursday 27th June, 2024</p> <p>Joint meeting with S&HC OSC - 2.00pm</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 Placements - Outcome of the review and impact on FCC local policy</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 education for Flintshire young people and also what was being done to meet the growing demand for specialist education.</p> <p>To outline the outcome of the review and impact of FCC Local Policy</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>

	<p>Social Media and Internet Safety</p> <p>To provide Members with an update on the Portfolio’s Social Media and Internet Safety policy and provision.</p>	Assurance Monitoring	Learning Adviser - Health, Well-being and Safeguarding
	<p>Period Dignity Update</p> <p>To provide Members with an update on the Council’s support for Period Dignity.</p>	Assurance Monitoring	Learning Adviser - Health, Well-being and Safeguarding
<p>Thursday 11th July, 2024</p> <p>2.00pm</p>	<p>Council Plan 2023-24 Year-End Performance</p> <p>To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<p>September 2024</p> <p>2.00pm</p>	<p>School Reserves Year Ending 31 March 2023 and Demographics</p> <p>To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year and information on changes in demographics.</p>	Assurance Monitoring	Strategic Finance Manager (Schools)
	<p>Youth Justice Service Inspection</p> <p>To present the report following the recent Youth Justice Service Inspection</p>	Consultation / Assurance Monitoring	Senior Manager Youth Justice and Flintshire Sorted
	<p>Young Flintshire Pilot & Strategy</p> <p>To share the outcomes from the Young Flintshire Pilot that took place May – July 2024 and explain the strategy going forward following an academic year model</p>	Information Sharing	Healthy Schools and Pre Schools Officer

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

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Recycling School Uniforms – **Referred to the Committee from the Environment & Economy OSC.**

Healthy Schools Scheme and Healthy & Sustainable Pre-School Scheme (HSPSS) – That the Committee be advised / consulted on the aims & objectives when the scheme is relaunched – **suggested at July 2023 meeting**

- Consultation on Member Role Descriptions - To consult Members on the draft role descriptions as provided in the revised draft Model Constitution – **moved from October, 2023 to be allocated to a new meeting date**
- Leeswood Transition Club – To receive a fuller report on the success of the scheme – **suggested at October meeting**
- Theatr Clwyd and School Music Service – Annual report on the involvement of young people in the activities at Theatr Clwyd, together with an update on the School Music Service – **suggested at February 2024 meeting**
- Saltney and Broughton Area Review – **suggested at February 2024 meeting**
- Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan – **Deferred from 21 March meeting**

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
September	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

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
Annually (September)	Young Flintshire Annual Report	To share project outcomes from key topics identified by young people voice across Flintshire.	Healthy Schools and Pre Schools Officer

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

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
21.03.2024	Minutes	In response to questions from Cllr Andrew Parkhurst on the future risks around the 'Unallocated Schools Budget'. Claire Homard asked Cllr Parkhurst to e-mail her the questions following the meeting so that she could liaise with the Finance Manager and provide a response to all Committee Members.	Claire Homard	Response provided to Cllr Andrew Parkhurst via e-mail on 08.04.24. Response circulated to Members of the Committee via e-mail on 19.04.24.	Completed
21.03.2024	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	The Chair requested that a report from NEWydd in relation to School Meals be added to the FWP. Following a request from Cllr Dave Mackie that feedback from schools/pupils be included in the report, the Chief Officer suggested that Steve Jones and Claire Sinnott work jointly on a report to capture pupil engagement with NEWydd around School Meals.	Steve Jones / Claire Sinnott		
21.03.2024	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	Cllr Dave Mackie asked that a report on School Improvement in relation to GwE, the funding of the organisation and proposals going forward be added to the FWP. Claire Homard welcomed this suggestion and suggested that a report detailing the implications of changes, financial impacts and the	Claire Homard	Report added to the FWP.	Completed

		expectations on Local Authorities to make different arrangements be presented to the Committee at the meeting in May.			
21.03.2024	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	Claire Homard suggested that a report on the Youth Justice Service Inspection be added to the FWP for September.	Ceri Shotton	Report added to FWP.	Completed
21.03.2024	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	Cllr Andrew Parkhurst asked if the report to the Joint Scrutiny Committee in June on Additional Learning Needs would include information on the provision of education for children with Autism. Claire Homard said that within the report there would be specific reference to specialist education and what was being done to meet this growing demand.	Claire Homard / Jeanette Rock	Request for information on specialist education and what was being done to meet this growing demand to be included in the report sent to Jeanette Rock as the report author. Purpose of report on FWP also amended to reflect the additional information to be included in the report.	Completed
21.03.2024	5. Emergency Planning Arrangements	It was agreed that the reviewed Members Handbook and the link to E-Learning be circulated to all Members via the Democratic Services Manager when finalised and available.	Helen Kilgannon		
21.03.2024	5. Emergency Planning Arrangements	Following a request from Cllr Ryan McKeown, it was agreed that the minutes of the EMRT meeting, which discussed the snow alert be circulated to Members of the Committee.	Helen Kilgannon		

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

21.03.2024	6. Tackling the Impact of Inequality on Educational Outcomes	Following a suggestion from the Leader of the Council, it was agreed that Members of the Committee be invited to the Food and Fun Programme 2024 sessions to speak to learners and families to better understand the positive impact.	Vicky Barlow		
21.03.2024	6. Tackling the Impact of Inequality on Educational Outcomes	Following questions around Free School Meals, the Facilitator referred to a letter recently written by the Chair of the Community & Housing OSC on what work was being done by Welsh Government, on a national level, to publicise and encourage take up of Free School Meals and a response received by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language. It was agreed that a copy of the letter and response be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.	Ceri Shotton	Copy of letter from the Chair of the Community & Housing OSC and response from Welsh Government circulated to all Members of the Committee via e-mail on 27.03.2024	Completed
21.03.2024	6. Tackling the Impact of Inequality on Educational Outcomes	Claire Homard suggested that the 'Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan in Wales (High Level Plan)' produced by Welsh Government be circulated to Members of the Committee following the meeting.	Claire Homard	The document was circulated to all Members of the Committee via e-mail on 27.03.2024	Completed
21.03.2024	6. Tackling the Impact of Inequality on Educational Outcomes	Following a question from Cllr Gina Maddison, it was suggested that an update report on 'Period Poverty' be added to the list of items of the Joint	Ceri Shotton	'Period Dignity Update' added to FWP for Joint Scrutiny meeting on 27.06.2024	Completed

		Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 27 th June, 2024.			
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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 23 rd May 2024
Report Subject	Changes to School Improvement Delivery Models in Wales
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language and Culture
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to provide an update to elected members following the Welsh Government announcement to change the mechanism of funding for all regional consortia across Wales and the outcome of the Welsh Government commissioned Middle Tier Review which has significant implications for the current arrangements for school improvement services locally and nationally.

The report outlines the change from a regional approach to the delivery of school improvement services to an individual local authority commissioned model for the transitional period of May 2024 to March 2025.

It sets out the basis of that commissioned model and the principles adopted by senior officers in the local authority and in GwE, to ensure the continued delivery of high quality support services for schools to maintain high standards of education for Flintshire learners.

The report also highlights the change that is expected to the longer term delivery of school improvement activity and the development of more localised partnerships. It also highlights a number of challenges currently being managed as a result of this change of Welsh Government policy which require careful consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm that they have received sufficient information about the changes initiated by Welsh Government through the middle tier review, the changes to funding mechanisms to regional consortia and the
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	arrangements to local school improvement services in Flintshire for the financial year 2024-25.
2	Members acknowledge that there is a significant amount of change management to be undertaken to successfully achieve Welsh Government's proposals for a revised school improvement model in the longer term.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE CHANGES TO THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES IN WALES
1.01	<p>In July 2023 the then Minister for Education and the Welsh Language announced the Welsh Government's decision to undertake a review of the roles of the wide range of education partners in Wales. This is generally referred to as the review of the 'middle tier'.</p> <p>The purpose of the review was to reconsider the future direction of school improvement approaches in Wales, to revisit the roles and responsibilities of partners within the middle tier and to further develop collaborative school improvement arrangements. Its purpose was to enhance the delivery of the Welsh Government's National Mission, which is to achieve high standards and aspirations for all by investing in all young people and by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment.</p> <p>The purposes of the review were set out as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To clarify the roles and responsibilities of organisations and partners in the education system, how they can work together to support learners and practitioners and foster collaboration within and between clusters. • To set expectations for school improvement arrangements for the Welsh education system which build upon current effective practice, reflect evidence and experiences from within Wales and internationally in this area. • To explore the features of the current system, identifying what works well and less well, and how improvements might be made. • To understand the breadth of views and experiences from across the system, sensitive to the pressures and of day-to-day activities continuing. • To identify how capacity, collaboration and ways of working can be improved for the benefit of learners and all those who support learners across Wales. • To help shape thinking so that there is a clear approach going forward; an approach which we can be confident is fit for the future. <p>The Minister appointed Professor Dylan Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of University of Wales Trinity St David to lead the review.</p>

1.02	<p>The review was undertaken during the autumn term of 2023 and an initial report was presented to the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language in December 2023. The review was based on a range of direct meetings with Headteachers across Wales, with Directors of Education and senior education officers in local authorities, managing directors of current regional school improvement services, Estyn, Education Workforce Council (EWC), National Academy for Educational Leadership in Wales and Trade Unions representing the educational workforce in Wales. There was also an electronic survey for practitioners to complete. A link to that report is included in the accessible document section below.</p>
1.03	<p>In its draft budget report published in December 2023, Welsh Government indicated that the funding arrangements for school improvement regional consortia would change from the beginning of the new financial year. Its rationale was to streamline the funding linked to school improvement activity and provide greater transparency around the very complex funding arrangements to all stakeholders.</p> <p>Funding that had previously been passported to regional school improvement consortia would, from the start of the new financial year, be given to Local Authorities to manage via a revised Local Authority Education Grant.(LAEG)</p> <p>The new LAEG grant comprises of four elements. The total amount of Welsh Government grant is included in brackets.</p> <p>School Standards – Education Improvement Grant, Recruit/Recover/Raise Standards, Foundation Learning (£159.9m) Equity – Pupil Development Grant, Minority Ethnic Gypsy Roman Traveller Grant, Elective Home Education (£154.9m) Reform – Curriculum, ALN, Professional Learning (£54.4m) Cymraeg 2050 – Welsh Language, Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, Siarter Iaith (£9.7m).</p> <p>The level of grant funding being passported directly to schools, rather than via the Consortium or Local Authority to support professional development and cluster working has also been increased by Welsh Government, reducing the amount of funding to Local Authorities.</p>
1.04	<p>Recognising that this decision reflected a major change of funding arrangements and that it needed to be effected within a short period of time, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language requested that local authorities continued to work closely with regional educational consortia and partnerships to deliver curriculum reform, professional learning and improvement services to schools for the financial year 24-25, while planning the transition to new school improvement arrangements from 2025 and beyond.</p>
1.05	<p>It needs to be acknowledged that this change of direction by Welsh Government in terms of its funding arrangements, linked to the early findings of the middle tier review, will ultimately result in the cessation of GwE as the regional school improvement service for North Wales. This has understandably created a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty for</p>

	colleagues employed by GwE which all partners are endeavouring to manage sensitively and transparently.
1.06	<p>Officers of the Education Portfolio have worked closely with senior officers of GwE to manage this change for the period 2024-25. Flintshire County Council has passed back the requisite level of funding to GwE, under the appropriate grant headings, to provide a continuity of service to Flintshire schools for the period 2024-25. The allocations under each of the grant headings to GwE are as follows:</p> <p>School Improvement - £236,910 Reform – Professional Learning - £428,312 Reform – Curriculum Support - £231,571 Cymraeg - £61,004 Total grant funding returned to GwE for financial year 24-25 - £957,397</p>
1.07	<p>The core allocation to the regional school improvement service for 2024-25 from the six North Wales Local Authorities remains the same as it is stipulated by the Inter-Authority Agreement. The formula allocation is based on pupil numbers in each local authority. Flintshire, as the authority with the highest proportion of pupil numbers, makes the highest financial contribution. For this financial year, the total core funding contribution by the Council to GwE is £801,988 and is 10% lower than previous years, in line with Council policy on making financial efficiencies to balance its budget.</p>
1.08	<p>The national changes to the LAEG, and different decisions made by individual councils about the levels of grant funding being passed back to GwE, means that there can no longer be a single regional approach to business planning by GwE that is delivered across all six North Wales authorities. For the period 2024-2025 this will be delivered by an individually commissioned plan between GwE and each Council.</p>
1.09	<p>Chief Officers across the region identified a number of GwE led activities which they felt were fundamental to the school improvement function. These have been protected in all North Wales councils via the core funding provided under the Inter-Authority Agreement. This included the protection of the Core Lead role for each authority which provides the vital link between GwE and LA officers regarding school improvement activity, the current performance of schools and the evidence to support the need for intervention and further support. The Core Lead role includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality assuring the work of the Supporting Improvement Adviser team • preparation and support for Local Authority Quality Assurance processes including fortnightly meetings with the Senior Manager for School Improvement, attendance at School Performance Monitoring Group meetings and attendance at the half termly Local Authority Quality Board meetings • preparation for and support from Core Leads for Local Authority termly meetings with Estyn • contributing to core inspections of Local Authorities • preparation and support for Council scrutiny meetings • attendance at local headteacher forums

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributing to the appointment of headteachers and deputy headteachers as per the current protocol • contributing to the professional learning offer for school governors • responding to specific commissioning requests from the Chief Officer for Education <p>This work equates to 43.5 days of support for Flintshire from the Core Leads for the year.</p>
1.10	<p>Another protected element which is supported by the core funding to GwE is the level of support for schools causing concern. Flintshire has a very successful graduated support model for schools which begins with early identification and the development of a 360° support plan to address need. If more support is required then schools are brought under the scope of the School Performance Monitoring Group which is a more focused support and challenge mechanism with an enhanced improvement plan and regular scrutiny from senior portfolio officers and elected members. Schools with the highest level of need, designated as 'schools causing concern', who may also be in a statutory follow up category with Estyn, get an even higher level of support.</p> <p>As a result of its percentage contribution through the core funding, Flintshire will receive the highest level of GwE time to support its schools that need additional intervention. Flintshire will receive the equivalent of 124 days of GwE officer time to provide additional monitoring and support for schools on this continuum. The funding will be used on a graduated basis in line with the existing model as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to a maximum of 4 days per primary schools on an early identification 360° plan (but not SPMG) • Up to a maximum of 7 days per secondary school on an early identification 360° plan but not SPMG) • Up to a maximum of 6 days per SPMG primary school • Up to a maximum of 10 days per SPMG secondary school
1.11	<p>Funding from the core contributions also provides GwE officer time for school support, monitoring and challenge and is the equivalent of 4.43 days per school in Flintshire. This is dedicated time for each school's Improvement Adviser to deliver the equivalent of three full days of support over the year to enhance self-evaluation, school improvement planning and the monitoring of progress against improvement priorities. It also provides an additional day to work with the school senior leadership team to undertake a detailed annual evaluation of progress to inform future improvement plans and a half day to support the governing body with the annual Performance Management of the Headteacher.</p>
1.12	<p>Based on the differing levels of contributions from each local authority under the other grant headings – Standards, Reform (Professional Learning), Reform (Curriculum Support) and Cymraeg 2050 – each LA has a further amount of GwE officer time for school support, monitoring and challenge. This will be planned and used at the discretion of the senior Portfolio Management Team in consultation with schools. As Flintshire has passported the greatest proportion of funding to GwE under these headings,</p>

	<p>it can draw down the highest level of support of the 6 North Wales local authorities from GwE. This equates to the equivalent of an additional 4.3 days per school and there is a menu of activities from GwE which can be delivered. Local authorities, in conjunction with its schools, will need to identify the improvement activities they wish to prioritise and how much time to allocate to it. This support can be delivered at an individual school level, within school clusters or for the whole local authority.</p>
1.13	<p>Primary school support could include aspects of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving standards in specific AoLEs or areas identified by schools through self-evaluation processes. • supporting schools to be ready for the new School Improvement Framework which focuses on self-evaluation and improvement planning • curriculum provision and development – further building on the regional professional learning offer • teaching, learning and assessment – concentrating on specific aspects e.g. developing independence, More Able & Talented (MAT), differentiation, level of challenge. • leadership development [senior & middle leaders • AoLE planning - further building on the regional professional learning offer • facilitation of Foundation Learning networks • Specific aspects of the AOLEs to include areas such as pupil voice, role of the AOLE co-ordinator, effective learning environment
1.14	<p>Secondary support could include most of the same aspects as outlined for primary schools above, but also have more specific areas for this phase e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing whole school literacy skills - further building on the regional professional learning offer and the six step GwE skill strategy approach • developing whole school numeracy skills - further building on the regional professional learning offer and the six step GwE skill strategy approach • developing whole school digital competency skills - further building on the regional professional learning offer and the six step GwE skill strategy approach • AoLE planning - further building on the regional professional learning offer • Welsh medium developments • English Language/Literacy – subject specific support • Mathematics – subject specific support • Science – subject specific support • facilitation of secondary subject based LA networks in each core subject • facilitation of Teaching and Learning LA networks for senior leaders with this responsibility
1.15	<p>Support for Specialist Schools and the Portfolio Pupil Referral Unit, Ysgol Plas Derwen, will be individually commissioned. There will be a strong emphasis on supporting their particular needs locally but also ensuring</p>

	access to the regional networks that have become well-established for this particular sector.
1.16	<p>What has been foremost in the planning for this new approach, which came into effect from 1st May 2024, is that for this summer term, it should be 'business as usual' for our schools to ensure continuity. Every school in Flintshire has a plan of support agreed between GwE and the LA based on their previous self-evaluation and their school improvement priorities for the academic year 2023-24. It is crucial that these plans, and the support activities contained within them, are fully delivered by the end of the summer term. In order to ensure this, the total number of support days already committed for the summer term have been honoured in our calculations. This means that 20.5 days from the universal core offer will be used in primary schools this term and 45 days have been committed for secondary schools. The remaining number of days will then be allocated for the autumn and spring terms.</p>
1.17	<p>Senior portfolio officers have been consulting with headteachers through the primary and secondary federations to discuss this new commissioned approach and how this additional support time, funded through the grant allocations to GwE, should be allocated to schools for the remainder of the financial year 2024-25. The proposal, which has been accepted by the Federations is as follows:</p> <p>For the autumn and spring terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to a maximum of 2.5 days per primary (including special) • Up to a maximum of 4 days per secondary (including special and PRU) • Up to a maximum of 2 days additional for schools with sixth forms • 25 days for facilitation of cluster working (to be allocated across 10 clusters) • 17 contingency days for direction by the Local Authority to meet emerging needs and priorities
1.18	<p>Support plans for Federated Schools will need to reflect shared capacity and the Federation may not require the maximum number of days allocated for individual schools. This will be managed by consultation.</p> <p>There is an agreement with Core Leads that all school support plans for the academic year 24-25 will be completed by October half-term to complete the oversight of support days allocated. This will enable any further discussion on any surplus days and how best to deploy them.</p> <p>The model includes flexibility for schools to share allocated days and work collectively e.g. Foundation Phase working, GCSE specification preparation, subject specific work etc. This would be a discussion between the Headteacher and their Supporting Improvement Adviser, escalated to the Core Lead who will then liaise with LA senior officers.</p>
1.19	Schools have received funding directly from Welsh Government through this grant model. If they wish to purchase additional support time from GwE,

	<p>either as individual schools or in their clusters, they have the capacity to do so.</p>
1.20	<p>Senior officers of the portfolio are confident that this commissioned model of support is equitable for all schools in the first instance. It then provides a graduated model of support based on the level of need in particular schools. The model continues to deliver high quality support for Flintshire schools through the expertise in the regional consortia to continue to raise standards of achievement for all learners and provide for the effective development of their workforce.</p>
1.21	<p>The Middle Tier Review has signalled a change model for the longer term delivery of school improvement services, putting greater responsibility back into the hands of local authorities. It is also seeking to enhance the roles of schools as system leaders, so they are contributing more strategically to the improvement of all schools in the area rather than just their own, and a greater partnership approach with local authorities.</p> <p>This has signposted a move away from wider regional models of support to more local partnerships between authorities, with the Minister's position being that no local authority should be working alone.</p> <p>The review also clearly indicated that local authorities and schools want stronger national leadership from Welsh Government and a smaller number but more clearly defined national priorities.</p>
1.22	<p>Welsh Government officials, members of the Middle Tier Review Team and Education Directors across Wales are now working together to move into the next phase of delivery and how new models of school improvement partnerships will be developed. The timelines for implementation of these new models initially outlined in the Middle Tier Review are proving to be very challenging to meet – it is a major piece of organisational change to be delivered, whilst maintaining the quality of current school improvement delivery functions and within the context of huge financial challenges at local authority and school level.</p> <p>The new Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle, SM, who has only been in post for a number of weeks, has indicated she is listening to concerns about these timescales and capacity to deliver such significant change from across the system. Everyone involved agrees that it is vital that this change is managed carefully to ensure the needs of learners continue to be appropriately met and that this change is owned by all stakeholders to deliver it successfully.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that colleagues employed in regional consortia will need clarity about their opportunities for future employment in the new school improvement partnership models and this needs to be managed through appropriate Human Resources (HR) processes.</p> <p>Officers of the portfolio will bring an additional report to this committee in due course to provide an update on the proposed school improvement partnership arrangements for Flintshire.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no financial implications arising from this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>GwE have revised their risk assessment model to reflect these changes to school improvement functions and funding arrangements and this will be considered for approval through its governance processes at the next Joint Committee in June.</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. The risks resulting from this change of approach to school improvement delivery models are currently being assessed. Risks are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Regular discussions are held between education officers and the regional school improvement service to ensure that schools receive appropriate advice and support for self-evaluation and improvement planning. Local authority officers regularly attend headteacher forums to consult with schools on support needed and this change of model initiated by Welsh Government.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	https://www.gov.wales/review-roles-and-responsibilities-education-partners-wales-and-delivery-school-improvement-html

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Estyn – the office of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training (HMCI) in Wales. Estyn provides an independent inspection and advice service on quality and standards in education and training provided in Wales.</p> <p>GwE – the regional school improvement service for North Wales</p> <p>Education Workforce Council (EWC) – the independent, professional regulator for the education workforce in Wales.</p> <p>National Academy for Educational Leadership – its main purpose is to contribute to the development of the professional capabilities of current and aspiring leaders across the education system by providing coherence and quality assurance for the range of educational leadership development opportunities available in Wales.</p>



EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 23 rd May 2024
Report Subject	Estyn Revised Frameworks for Inspection of Schools and Local Government Education Services
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide members with an overview of the Estyn Inspection Framework for schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) and an update on the revised Local Government Inspection Framework, from September 2024.

Estyn commissioned an independent review into the work of the inspectorate and, 'A Learning Inspectorate,' was published in June 2018. The report made a series of recommendations on how Estyn might adapt their work moving forward in order to contribute constructively to the national education reform underway in Wales.

Estyn adopted a gradual approach to the development of inspection in schools and PRUs and have already made a number of changes to the inspection framework which have been trialled over the past twelve months;

- In their transition year 2020–2021, Estyn paused maintained school and PRU inspections so that inspectors could visit settings to discuss and prepare for curriculum changes.
- In September 2021, Estyn amended inspection arrangements for schools, to align with the changes to education in Wales. This included the removal of the four summative judgements (Excellent, Good, Adequate and Unsatisfactory) and the reduction in notice time for inspections from 15 days to 10 days.
- In recent months, Estyn have worked with a number of providers to pilot their proposed inspection arrangements which will be introduced during the 2024 academic year.

Estyn have published their guidance for the next inspection cycle of maintained schools and PRUs; "Inspecting for the future (2024 – 2030)".

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm that they have received sufficient information about the new inspection arrangements for Estyn's inspections of schools, pupil referral units and local government education services.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE CHANGES TO INSPECTION ARRANGEMENTS
1.01	<p>What will guide Estyn's new approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners will continue to be Estyn's priority. Everything they do has to have their best interests at heart.• The new arrangements will be leaner and more focused on the most important areas that drive improvement.• Arrangements will be manageable for all providers and complement their own processes of evaluation and improvement.• Will explore a wider variety of inspection activities to better support improvement across individual providers and sectors. This will include how Estyn tailor activity in individual provider inspections, thematic inspections and a range of other visits.• More regular contact with schools and other providers, offering more up-to-date feedback for parents and carers.• Bring external inspection and providers' internal evaluation processes closer together. Better alignment of these processes will better support improvement.• Use of Estyn's resources where they are needed most, such as with settings that need support and monitoring for improvement.
1.02	<p>2024 inspection framework for schools and pupil referral units</p> <p>The school or pupil referral unit will continue to receive 10 working days' notice for a core (Section 28) inspection.</p> <p>Across the inspection framework, inspectors will consider the focus areas in relation to the impact they have on all pupils' learning and well-being. There will now be 3 inspection areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teaching and learning2. Well-being, care, support and guidance3. Leading and improving <p>Estyn will continue to include a nominee, peer and lay inspector as part of their core inspection team. They will continue to publish a report following a core inspection which will show strengths and areas for improvement. A separate report will also be published for parents.</p> <p>Within a 6 year period, schools and pupil referral units will now also have an interim visit in addition to their core inspection.</p>

	<p>Interim visits will last between a day or two days and will involve between one and four inspectors visiting, depending on the size of the school or pupil referral unit. These visits will normally reflect on the recommendations made during the previous core inspection or current school or pupil referral unit improvement or development plans.</p> <p>Schools and pupil referral units will not need to prepare for an interim visit and will normally be given 5 days' notice ahead of time. Following an interim visit, Estyn will provide feedback to the headteacher and publish a short letter on their website.</p>
1.03	<p>Inspection area 1: Teaching and Learning will focus on:</p> <p>How effectively does the school's or PRU's curriculum, teaching and assessment support all pupils, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example those pupils affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barriers to progress to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn and make progress • develop their knowledge, skills and understanding • develop positive attitudes to learning • develop their Welsh language skills
1.04	<p>Inspection area 2: Well-being, care, support and guidance will focus on:</p> <p>How effective is the care, support and guidance the school/PRU provides in ensuring that all pupils, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example pupils affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barrier to progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are safe and secure • attend school regularly • are respected and fairly treated • develop leadership skills and take on responsibility • receive any additional guidance or support they require relating to the next steps in their development.
1.05	<p>Inspection area 1: Leading and Improving will focus on:</p> <p>How effectively do leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that all pupils, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example pupils affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barriers to progress, learn and make progress • develop a culture, inclusive ethos and strategic direction that support the progress and well-being of all pupils • identify and address areas for improvement, including addressing previous Recommendations • address national priorities, including improving the quality of teaching and the development of the Welsh language • ensure that professional learning improves the quality of teaching, supports school improvement and equips all staff to carry out their roles • manage the school's/PRU's resources.

1.06	<p>During all core (Section 28) inspections, the inspection team will continue to consider whether the school or pupil referral unit needs any follow-up activity.</p> <p>There are two types of statutory follow-up activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Special measures 2. Significant improvement <p>Special measures and significant improvement are statutory categories that apply to schools and pupil referral units causing concern as defined by the Education Act 2005 and any associated circulars.</p> <p>Estyn has a duty to inform the Minister for Education and Welsh Government officers when schools or PRUs are placed in these categories and will keep them informed of subsequent progress following monitoring inspections, as required by the legislation.</p>
1.07	<p>Inspection of local government education services (LGES)</p> <p>Estyn are also evolving their local government education services (LGES) inspection model. They have carried out consultation with stakeholders to help inform their thinking and have piloted proposed arrangements during this academic year.</p> <p>In their consultation, Estyn proposed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out separate inspection of school improvement services and services provided through a formal partnership of two or more local authorities. • Shorten the notification period from ten to eight weeks. • Have a five-week notification period for a school improvement service inspection and inspections of other services provided through formal partnerships. • Continue with developing local inspection questions and discuss and finalise these with the local authority, school improvement service or other services provided through formal partnerships. • Develop local inspection questions for school improvement services inspections as well as inspections of services provided through formal partnerships. • The current inspection guidance has three inspection areas – outcomes, education services and leadership. Estyn proposed to combine the outcomes and services areas into one inspection area (IA) which they are calling 'Education services and their impact' (IA1) and the second inspection area (IA2) would then be called Leading and Improving. • Use regular monitoring visits as part of follow-up activities in local authorities causing significant concern • Develop the same follow-up processes for a school improvement service or a service that is provided through formal partnerships which is 'causing significant concern' • Identify reporting requirements for all LGES and school improvement services' inspections • Gain feedback on usefulness of inclusion of cameos and case studies in their reports

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with a designated link inspector for each local authority and school improvement service • Introduce an annual focused visit to each local authority /school improvement service • Formally evaluate the impact of the local authority’s work in supporting individual schools and PRUs in special measures. Estyn propose that the link inspector undertakes specific activities which could include for example, joining the monitoring team or visiting the school independently of the monitoring team to consider and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the support provided by the local authority. The outcome of this work would be a brief letter to the local authority. <p>Estyn published the findings from their consultation in December 2023 and have used them to help inform the new inspection arrangements from 2024 onwards.</p> <p>The revised guidance has not yet been published.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no financial implications arising from this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions.</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	Regular discussions are held between education officers and the regional school improvement service to ensure that schools receive appropriate advice and support for self-evaluation and improvement planning. Local authority officers regularly attend headteacher forums to consult with schools on support needed.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>1. Estyn inspection arrangements: how the inspectorate will inspect education and training from 2024 and beyond.</p> <p>https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/inspecting-future-2024-2030</p> <p>2. Estyn guidance on how and what they will inspect in maintained schools and pupil referral units from September 2024</p> <p>https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection-guidance-search</p> <p>3. Estyn consultation results - Local Government education services</p> <p>https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2024-02/Survey%20Results%20-%20LGES%20ENG.pdf</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Estyn – the office of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training (HMCI) in Wales. Estyn provides an independent inspection and advice service on quality and standards in education and training provided in Wales.</p> <p>Estyn’s vision – to improve the quality of education and training and outcomes for all learners in Wales.</p> <p>Estyn’s mission – to support education and training providers to develop a self-improving and learning culture through their advice, inspection and capacity building.</p> <p>Section 28 inspection – section 28 of the Education Act 2005, says that registered inspectors must report on; the educational standards achieved by the school; the quality of education provided; how far education meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school; the quality of leadership and management; the spiritual, moral, social and culture development of pupils and the contribution of the school to the well-being of pupils.</p> <p>Nominee – Estyn actively involve schools in the inspection process by inviting a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to liaise with the inspection team during the visit. They are not a full member of an inspection team and do not ‘inspect’ or evaluate the provision.</p>

Peer Inspector – Estyn use peer inspectors on inspections in nearly all sectors that they inspect. Peer inspectors work as senior leaders/ managers in schools/ providers. They are full members of the inspection team and they undertake a wide range of inspection activity. They also write parts of the inspection report.

Lay Inspector - members of the general public and Estyn's corporate services staff who Estyn train to join a school inspection. The lay inspector focuses on the experience of school for pupils and the contribution that the relationships and environment make to their safety, attitudes to learning and well-being.

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 23rd May 2024
Report Subject	School Attendance and Exclusions
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language and Culture
Report Author	Chief Officer Education & Youth
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides information regarding the levels of attendance and exclusion across Flintshire schools for the academic year 2022/23. The main reasons cited for pupil absence and exclusion have been included within the report.

The period reported on reflects the second full year following the COVID-19 pandemic and the legacy of this exceptional event continues to impact on the levels of attendance and exclusion. Schools across Wales continued to re-engage learners and families following the lengthy periods of isolation brought about by the pandemic. Many of the learners have again found it difficult to resume the routine and expectations of school life. This ongoing situation has once again prevented meaningful comparison with the data from years prior to 2020/21 for Flintshire, but it does provide another opportunity to provide some insight into its legacy.

Attendance across Flintshire schools once again remains lower than pre-pandemic levels, with illness accounting for the majority of absences. The levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusion remain on an increasing trend, particularly across the secondary sector. Meetings on a regional and national level suggest that similar trends with regards to attendance and exclusion are evident across other authorities and concerns continue to be flagged to Welsh Government; a national multi-agency group has been established to further consider inform practice in this area. National data releases have now been reinstated by Welsh Government in recent months allowing Local Authorities to obtain some insight into the performance of schools across the whole of Wales.

Services continue to review and develop their operational procedures in response to the need to support an improvement in attendance and overall reduction in

exclusion as per the recommendation from the 2019 Estyn Inspection and the report outlines some of the changes implemented. There is evidence that Flintshire’s overall performance has been improving regarding school attendance but that levels of exclusion are continuing to rise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members consider 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.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND AND CONSIDERATIONS
1.01	Prior to the pandemic, school attendance and exclusion comparative data had been published by Welsh Government (WG) retrospectively on an annual basis. During the pandemic, data publication and performance measurement was suspended and was constructed utilising Flintshire County Council unverified data extracted from local databases. The data provided thereafter and including the last academic year 2022/23 was taken from PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) which is provided directly from schools each year.
1.02	Table 1 in Appendix 1 provides the overview of pupil attendance across both primary and secondary schools (mainstream and special) for the last 4 academic years. Primary attendance data, whilst below pre-pandemic levels is confirming similar levels of school attendance for the last 2 years. Comparison with national data for 2022-23 indicates that attendance across Flintshire’s primary schools is the 5th highest, where the range is between 89.8% and 92.9%. Attendance in secondary schools reduced to below 90% during the pandemic and this situation has remained unchanged for 2022/23. However, overall secondary school attendance was 89% for the year which represented an improvement of 1.3% for 22/23 and is the 3 rd highest nationally (range 85.5% - 89.4%).
1.03	Headteachers have the discretion whether to authorise a child’s absence or not based on the information provided by the parent/carer. The high levels of authorised absence outlined in Table 3 suggest that parents/carers were continuing in the main, to provide schools with acceptable reasons for absence. It is evident that illness remained the predominant reason for absence across the year in both sectors with this significantly surpassing all other reasons. Holiday absences also increased significantly to 19.61% in the primary sector for 2021/22 as travel restrictions eased. However, the level of absence recorded for holiday

	absence during 2022/23 reduced to 16.86 %, but remains a significant reason for absence in the primary sector.
1.04	<p>Parents/carers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. It is evident that parental attitudes to school attendance have changed, with some not perceiving attendance at school to have the same level of importance as it did pre-pandemic. Headteachers continue to reinforce the overall importance of attendance on pupil engagement and attainment and are implementing a range of strategies to promote and secure attendance in collaboration with Council Services. Many schools have looked to respond proactively to the ongoing attendance challenges and have tried to expand their support and provision offer which has included access to an alternative curriculum offer and offsite provision. The challenging financial climate will impact on the ability of schools to maintain the delivery of such initiatives. A change in the model for Welsh Government grant allocation has seen a redirection of some grant funding directly to secondary schools that had previously been available to support the delivery of central services to support engagement. It is anticipated that this additional funding may assist in the continuation of some aspects of the offer in our schools but the increase in presenting need remains a concern.</p> <p>Maximising collaborative approaches between schools and Council Services, such as Youth Services, to enhance the provision on offer remains a priority. These options have also been utilised to support individuals either at risk of, or those who have been excluded from school. Services are being further enhanced this year by the Community Focused Schools Service which has recently been established following access to WG targeted grant funding in 2022/23.</p>
1.05	<p>Other services across the Education & Youth Portfolio have key roles to play in supporting improved attendance and reducing levels of exclusion. These include the Education Welfare Service (EWS) which has a statutory responsibility about school attendance matters along with other teams such as Additional Learning Needs, Education Psychology, Young Person Counselling, Personal Support, Community Focused Schools, English as an Additional Language and Gypsy/Traveller services which offer specialist support to schools, families, and individual learners to improve their engagement levels. Attendance and exclusion data at both school and individual level is circulated to service managers and reports are also shared once per half term with all Secondary Pastoral Leads at their regular review forum that is organised and led by the Local Authority. This facilitates discussion around the ongoing challenges and the sharing of effective practice.</p>
1.06	<p>A particular focus has been on Year 6/7 transition data for the EWS. A review of the data during 2021/22 suggested that transition from Year 6 to 7 was a potential area of opportunity to assess and engage pupils where attendance had fallen below an 85% threshold in Year 6. After an initial pilot in one of our secondary schools, services have been further</p>

	<p>developed to work directly with pupils that have recorded absence below the WG threshold for persistent absenteeism of 85% (recently increased by WG to 90%). The Community Focused Schools service are developing a group work model to provide in several Flintshire schools specifically focusing on the transition cohort from Year 6 to Year 7 with the aim to intervene proactively and at an early stage. This group will be monitored to see if the revised approach can improve the attendance of this particular cohort during 2023/24.</p>
1.07	<p>In 2021/22, the role of Education Support Officer (ESO) was introduced to the Education Welfare Service with the aim of providing a specific focus on embedding a consistent graduated approach to attendance monitoring across the county. The ESOs within the service support schools in relation to attendance management with the Education Welfare Officers being targeted at more complex cases, including the implementation of court proceedings where necessary.</p> <p>A model Attendance Policy was shared with all Flintshire Schools and was updated in 2023. This provides schools with an appropriate framework in relation to attendance processes and clarifies roles and responsibilities to support a more consistent approach across the county. These actions appear to have been well received by Headteachers and are supporting the gradual increase in attendance and the pleasing comparisons at a national level as referenced in section 1.02.</p> <p>The Council has also received additional WG grant funding targeted at expanding the offer from the EWS. Assistant Support Officers have been recruited on a temporary basis in line with the funding and have been targeted at schools where attendance is known to be a challenge and where in some cases, it has been identified as an Estyn recommendation. These officers provide a valuable link between the school and the family, spending a significant part of their day carrying out home visits. This additional activity has had a significant impact in some areas with high levels of challenge and supported a collaborative approach between the Council and the school to secure greater levels of engagement.</p>
1.08	<p>As part of the broader structure of the EWS, 2 ESOs have also been appointed to provide dedicated support for families that choose Elective Home Education (EHE) to educate their children. This revised approach allows the authority to provide a dedicated point of contact with such families and to utilise additional funding provided by WG to support/safeguard such families in an enhanced manner. The levels of parents deciding to EHE continue to rise in Flintshire. In 2019, there were 95 children who were EHE. This rose to 167 in 2022 and 177 in 2023. This mirrors an increasing national trend.</p> <p>The largest cohort that became EHE in 2023 were children in year 7, with September being recorded as the month where the largest number of children became EHE. The majority of children who became EHE in 2023 were in years 7 – 9 and overall, the largest percentage of children who</p>

	<p>were EHE in the year were in year 10. The dedicated officer continues to develop our practice in response to the WG guidance and aims to build positive relationships with children and families who have taken this decision. Families are also supported to re-engage their children in schools where this is felt to be a more suitable option.</p>
1.09	<p>As well as the EHE officer, a dedicated ESO has taken a lead role as Children Missing Education (CME) lead to ensure any pupils that fail to arrive in their school or leave the locality are placed on the central Lost Pupil Database. These service revisions ensure that the Local Authority meets its duty to work with other councils when children leave our schools and to promote safeguarding matters robustly.</p>
1.10	<p>The Education Welfare Service implements the legal challenge to parents/carers on behalf of the Council in collaboration with the FCC Legal Services Department where appropriate/necessary. The full range of legal powers that are usually available to support an improvement in attendance were suspended by Welsh Government during the lockdown period and have only been re-implemented during 2022. Such legal action is only applied in cases where there are significant levels of unauthorised absences and where all interventions have failed to improve the situation.</p> <p>As outlined in Table 1, the levels of unauthorised absence were gradually increasing. However, this trend has reduced in 2022/23 and reduced in both primary and secondary sectors. Whilst the percentages overall remain low, it does indicate that Headteachers are presenting an increasing level of challenge to parents/carers where they feel there is insufficient evidence to support learner absence.</p>
1.11	<p>In response to the increasing level of challenge being applied by some schools the Local Authority Education Welfare Service (EWS) has administered and progressed Fixed Penalty Notice applications from individual Headteachers in accordance with the published FCC Code of Conduct for the school year 2022/23. This process ensures that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are delivered by hand and confirms if any payment of the notices has been received. Where payment has not been received and absences remain unauthorised, the cases now progress to court proceedings to ensure that the application of such actions is consistent and conclusive.</p> <p>In 2022/23, 99 fines were issued in a bid to tackle persistent unauthorised absences. Of the 99 FPN, fines were issued. Nearly half were paid within the prescribed time period confirming that these individuals accepted that their children were absent without a satisfactory reason. For those that remained unpaid court action was progressed by the EWS where appropriate with 8 fines of £660 and other disposals being applied by the Magistrates Court. The impact of these initial actions was monitored and Headteachers were made aware of the outcome. Information was also published by the Council in local media outlets as a press release to</p>

	<p>promote awareness of the possible consequences associated with persistent unauthorised absences.</p>
1.12	<p>As stated, the main factor impacting on attendance continues to be illness with mental health issues a concern for learners particularly in the secondary sector. Whilst there is regular engagement with health colleagues to consider the range of services available to Flintshire children and young people, access to appropriate services and intervention remains a challenge. The school medical process to consider cases of persistent absence is available to the EWS, but resource deficits with partner Health Services has placed this system under pressure. The Council's EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) Panel can provide medical home tuition for learners with appropriate medical evidence is available to support this request. Additional targeted support in this area is available from the Progression Team who engage with young people that are isolated from school to ensure that they do not become NEET.</p> <p>Officers have also worked with health colleagues to secure regional grant funding targeted at supporting children with a neurodivergent (ND) profile. An additional teacher has been seconded to straddle education and health with the aim of supporting children on the ND assessment waiting list to maintain their educational placements. The focus across year 6 – 9 to support transition and maintenance of secondary placements. This project is in its infancy but has been well received by both health and educational professionals.</p>
1.13	<p>The level of fixed term and permanent exclusion across our schools had generally been increasing in the period prior 2020. The main reasons cited for exclusion were physical assault against a pupil, verbal/threatening behaviour against an adult, persistent and disruptive behaviour and 'other'. Council services work in partnership with individuals, schools, and families to offer support and intervention to prevent exclusion. The increasing complexity of need and wider contributing factors such as children at risk of exploitation, substance misuse issues and anti-social behaviour continues to make this increasingly difficult. Levels of exclusion in 2022/23 increased with permanent exclusions and occasions of fixed term exclusion over five days in secondary being recorded at a significantly higher level. (See Appendix, Tables 5 and 6).</p>
1.14	<p>The primary reasons for exclusion recorded during the period 2022/23 remained within the categories stated earlier within this report. However, one noticeable increase recorded was in relation to substance related issues. A partnership approach has been developed in such cases to provide support with agencies such as the Drug and Alcohol Service 'Sorted' being key to these interventions. North Wales Police are consulted or engaged as appropriate, but this trend was recognised as a matter that required a revised strategic approach to meet this increasing trend with the locality during 2022/23. In response, the Council's Substance Misuse Policy has been reviewed and is being consulted on with schools to try and</p>

	<p>secure a shared approach on how to respond and ensure that pupils are suitably both reprimanded and supported.</p> <p>The promotion of trauma informed practices remains a priority for the Education & Youth Portfolio to support a greater understanding of the presenting behaviours of some learners and the potential consequences of exclusion. A Trauma Informed Champions group has been established which has representation from secondary schools where this is an agreed priority along with a number of key officers from the Portfolio. This is proving to be a useful forum to consider the challenges around implementing this approach and also sharing effective practice.</p>
1.15	<p>The improvement of attendance and reduction in the levels of exclusion remain as Council priorities. The Senior Learning Advisor for Engagement (SLA) has undertaken a strategic revision of the Engagement services to implement a number of changes to improve both service consistency and accountability. As stated previously, an enhanced approach to data analysis has been implemented to ensure all actions are evidence based and targeted. These practices have become more established into the current academic year and, whilst attendance and exclusion rates remain an area for improvement, there are examples of positive practice against a very challenging backdrop; recent WG data publications also place attendance across Flintshire schools in the upper quartile nationally.</p>
1.16	<p>The importance of creating a sense of belonging is spearheading our overall approach as a Portfolio and will focus our actions in relation to securing an increase in attendance and reduced levels of exclusion. Work has recently been undertaken by all managers across the Portfolio to develop a clear vision, ethos and principles to inform and guide our work in the coming years. Further engagement with schools, children and young people alongside other key stakeholders will be undertaken to support and embed a shared understanding and approach from all.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The increased level of demand for EOTAS services is placing an increasing financial pressure on the Council. This is currently being funded via a combination of school budgets, grant funding and Council service budgets and has been identified as a budget pressure. There are also a small number of learners for whom more bespoke educational packages are required, either due to the lack of capacity within the specialist sector or the lack of suitable provision to meet their complex needs. The Council has a duty to provide education and this also brings with it an increased level of cost. The development of a range of suitable provision to meet the presenting need has been identified and work is underway to identify the range of options required to meet the presenting need.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None undertaken as a result of this report.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	There are a number of risks associated with increased levels of disengagement and pupil exclusion, including safeguarding, pupil wellbeing, pupil outcomes and financial expenditure. The increased use of data across services along with the regular monitoring of the Council/Education & Youth Portfolio Business Plan and the annual reports on attendance and exclusion to the Overview and Scrutiny committee will ensure that progress is checked, and action taken to mitigate the identified risks.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 FCC Attendance and Exclusion Data for 2019/20 to 2022/23
5.02	Appendix 2 Attendance Codes

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>WG All Wales Attendance Toolkit WG Guidance - Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units April 2024</p> <p>Contact Officer: John Grant, Senior Learning Adviser - Engagement Telephone: 07785695823 E-mail: john.grant@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Authorised absence - an absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absence for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness, family bereavement or religious observance).</p> <p>Unauthorised absence - an absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.</p> <p>Persistent absenteeism - absent for at least 20 per cent of the sessions that schools were open to pupils.</p>

Appendix 1

1.1 Attendance in Flintshire Schools

Pupil attendance is measured at local and national level using a number of different factors. The data provided following the COVID 19 pandemic and including the last academic year 2022/23 which populates this report was taken from PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) which is provided directly from schools each year.

Table 1 below contains information relating to the attendance of pupils within Flintshire's mainstream and specialist schools. In 2022/23 and the years preceding, pupil attendance within the primary sector has remained consistent with a notable reduction taking place during the pandemic in 2020/21. Attendance across secondary schools had reduced noticeably during the pandemic and is starting to show some slow signs of improvement. Illness had been the main reason cited for absence in the years preceding 2022/23 and still accounts for the highest percentage of absence in both sectors.

Schools have generally maintained very low levels of unauthorised absence across Flintshire. The overall picture for the monitoring period suggests that school attendance has not fully recovered following the COVID 19 pandemic.

Table 1: Levels of attendance and unauthorised absence in Flintshire mainstream and specialist schools.

	Attendance (%)				Unauthorised Absence (%)			
	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20*	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20*
FCC Primary Schools	92.1	92.4	91.2	93.2	0.94	0.95	0.89	0.85
FCC Secondary Schools	89.0	87.8	88.5	91.6	3.05	3.19	2.56	1.87

*Figures for 1/09/19 to 20/03/20 when lock down commenced

Table 2 shows the spread of attendance figures across primary and secondary mainstream schools from 2019/20 onwards. Secondary attendance has suffered the most significant impact following COVID. The data reflects the downward trend of attendance across our schools. For the majority of secondary schools overall attendance levels below 90%.

Table 2: Spread of attendance figures (Number of schools in each % bracket)

Attendance %	Primary				Secondary			
	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*
<90	16	10	6	4	7	9	7	0
90.0-90.9	7	6	6	0	4	0	1	0
91.0-91.9	4	7	5	4	0	2	1	1
92.0-92.9	8	10	9	5	0	0	1	3
93.0-93.9	11	12	10	12	0	0	1	3
94.0-94.9	9	16	15	19	0	0	0	3
95.0-95.9	6	3	6	15	0	0	0	1
96.0-96.9	3	0	7	4	0	0	0	0
97.0-97.9	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
98.0-98.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
99.0-100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Figures for 1/09/19 to 20/03/20 when lock down commenced

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the coding applied to authorised absence within Flintshire schools by percentages. The data clearly demonstrates that illness has remained the predominant reason for pupil absence from Flintshire schools up to and including the period reported for 2022/23.

Table 3: Reasons for authorised absence

Reason for Absence	Primary (%)				Secondary (%)			
	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*
C	10.35	10.73	39.72	11.8	19.60	20.8	28.43	17.05
F	0	0	0	0.03	0	0	0	0.02
H	16.86	19.61	11.02	15.75	3.99	3.52	1.95	4.81
I	64.73	61.99	42.69	62.02	64.33	52.39	48.07	66.29
M	4.76	4.5	3.77	5.23	6.26	5.89	4.45	7.92
S	0.01	0	0	0	1.08	13.36	13.66	0.01
E	0.25	0.31	0.25	0.41	4.33	3.39	2.68	3.21
R	0.10	0.05	0.09	0.02	0.06	0.04	0.06	0
T	2.97	2.81	2.47	4.73	0.34	0.61	0.7	0.68

**Figures for 1/09/19 to 20/03/20 when lock down commenced*

Key:	C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/ description)
	F	Agreed extended family holiday
	H	Agreed family holiday
	I	Illness
	M	Medical or dental appointment
	S	Study leave
	E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
	R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
	T	Traveller absence

1.2 Exclusion of pupils from Flintshire schools

Welsh Government had normally reported annually on the national levels of fixed term and permanent exclusion. This was usually completed a year in arrears with a publication date in the month of October. As previously stated, WG data collection and publications have been suspended and internal data has been used to inform the report. On this occasion therefore, the data provided includes the academic year 2022/23.

The possible reasons for exclusion are recorded as follows:

- Physical assault against a pupil
- Physical assault against an adult
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult
- Bullying
- Racist abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Drug and alcohol related.
- Damage
- Theft
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Other

The level of exclusion across Flintshire schools continues to rise. Schools are responding positively to the investment in Nurture and Trauma informed approaches and practices. A range of training opportunities have been offered to upskill staff to deliver targeted interventions and also raise awareness and understanding around the reasons for challenging behaviours and also the impact of exclusion. Despite this, the data indicates that there are still a number of learners who are struggling to re-engage and respond to the requirements across our schools.

Table 4: Number of Permanent Exclusions from Flintshire Schools

No of permanent Exclusions				
	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Primary	1	0	0	1
Secondary	30	27	10	19

Table 5 shows the levels of fixed-term exclusion across primary and secondary schools. The figure within the brackets indicates the number of pupils who received one or more exclusion.

Table 5: Fixed-Term Exclusions

Fixed Term Exclusions				
	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)
Primary 5 Days or Less	123 (58)	158 (18)	99 (55)	144 (70)
Primary Over 5 days	8 (6)	7 (7)	13 (12)	1 (1)
Secondary 5 Days or Less	1885 (807)	1446 (716)	902 (490)	879 (405)
Secondary Over 5 days	80 (70)	66 (53)	22 (20)	19 (18)
Rate of exclusion per 1000 pupils (Primary & Secondary Combined)	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
5 days or Less	86.5	73.4	54.5	43.4
Over 5 days	7.6	6	3.2	0.8

Reasons for exclusion.

The primary reasons for exclusion are documented in Table 6. As can be seen, the main reasons for exclusion remain Physical assault against a pupil, Verbal/threatening behaviour against an adult, Persistent disruptive behaviour and Other. The data suggests there is an increasing level of verbal/threatening behaviour against adults with a higher percentage of exclusions attributed to this. There is also a notable increase in the percentage of permanent exclusion attributed to substance misuse within the secondary sector.

Table 6: Reasons for exclusion (%)

Reason	2022/23							2021/22							2020/21							2019/20						
	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Perman ent		T	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Perman ent		T	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Perman ent		T	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Perman ent		T
	P	S	P	S	P	S		P	S	P	S	P	S		P	S	P	S	P	S		P	S	P	S	P	S	
Physical Assault against a Pupil	26	16	25	28	0	17	17	23	21	0	32	0	24	22	23	22	38	36	0	50	23	21	14	0	16	0	21	15
Physical Assault against an Adult	29	1	25	0	0	10	3	26	1	57	7	0	4	4	13	1	23	0	0	0	2	19	2	0	5	0	5	4
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour against a Pupil	6	4	13	5	0	0	4	3	5	0	5	0	8	5	3	6	8	9	0	0	6	6	4	0	5	0	0	5
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour against an Adult	7	25	13	19	0	20	23	15	24	0	16	0	4	23	16	19	0	5	0	20	18	16	19	0	21	0	5	18
Bullying	2	1	13	4	0	0	2	1	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Racist Abuse	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	8	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sexual Misconduct	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Drug & Alcohol Related	0	4	0	11	0	27	5	0	2	0	12	0	28	3	0	1	0	5	0	10	1	0	1	0	5	0	26	1
Damage	2	2	13	8	0	0	3	3	3	0	1	0	0	2	3	4	0	5	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Theft	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	16	27	0	16	10	13	26	24	31	29	14	0	24	29	38	25	8	27	0	0	26	34	32	0	26	10	5	32
Other	10	16	0	10	0	13	15	3	10	14	8	0	8	9	3	20	15	14	0	10	18	1	23	10	21	0	37	20

: Fixed ≤5 days – Fixed term exclusion, 5 days or less
 Fixed >5 days – Fixed term Exclusion, over 5 days
 Perm – Permanent exclusion
 P – Primary
 S – Secondary
 T – Total of primary and secondary

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Appendix 2

Welsh Government Attendance Codes (excluding Temp Covid coding)

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
Λ	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity
J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	authorised absence
I	Illness	authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	authorised absence
S	Study leave	authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	unauthorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	unauthorised absence
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	unauthorised absence
Y	Partial and forced closure	not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	not required to attend

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