



EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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