

REGIONAL STRATEGY

Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression

CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEMES

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

The Reform Journey / Curriculum Realisation

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

Re-ignite learning (RRRS)

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

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

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

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

Learners and whole school wellbeing

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

Workforce wellbeing (GwE and schools)

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

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

In collaboration with the Local Authorities:

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

Y Gymraeg

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

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

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

Developing leadership

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

Digital

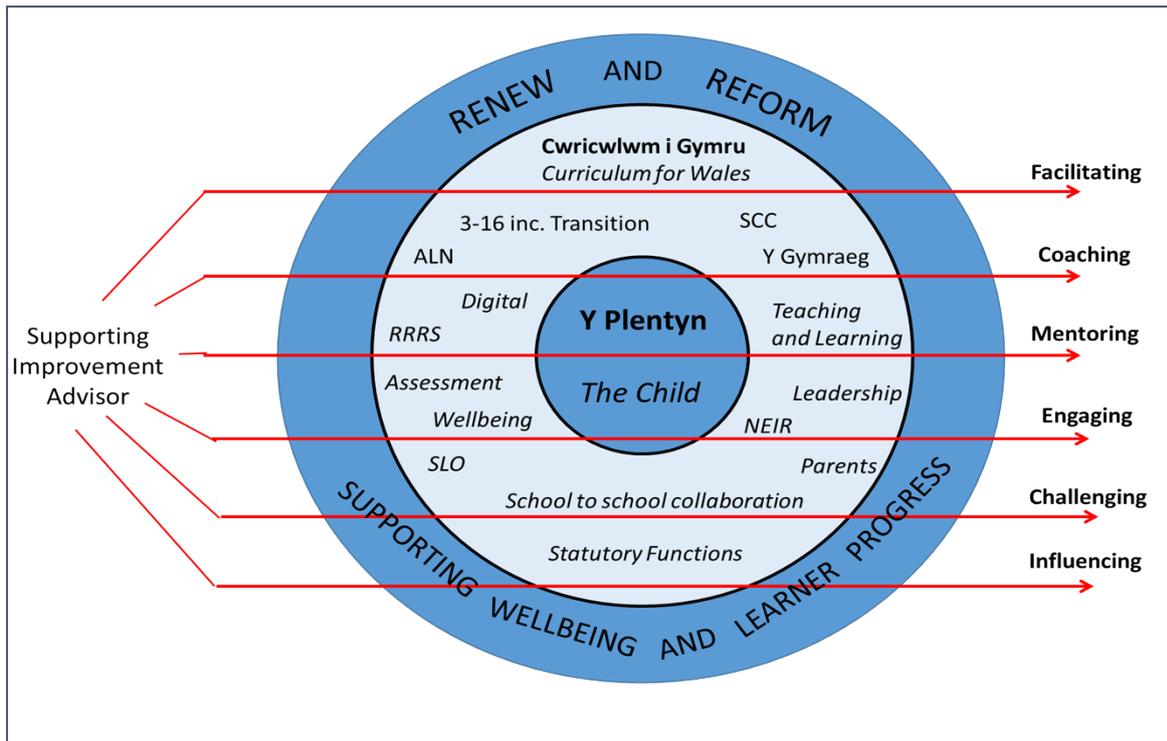
- Ensure that the region's schools' understanding of digital resilience is current and that the teaching and learning of digital security issues is purposeful and effective.
- Develop effective digital leadership within the region's schools to strengthen strategic approaches to improvement planning,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

Professional Learning

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

EVOLVING THE REGIONAL MODEL

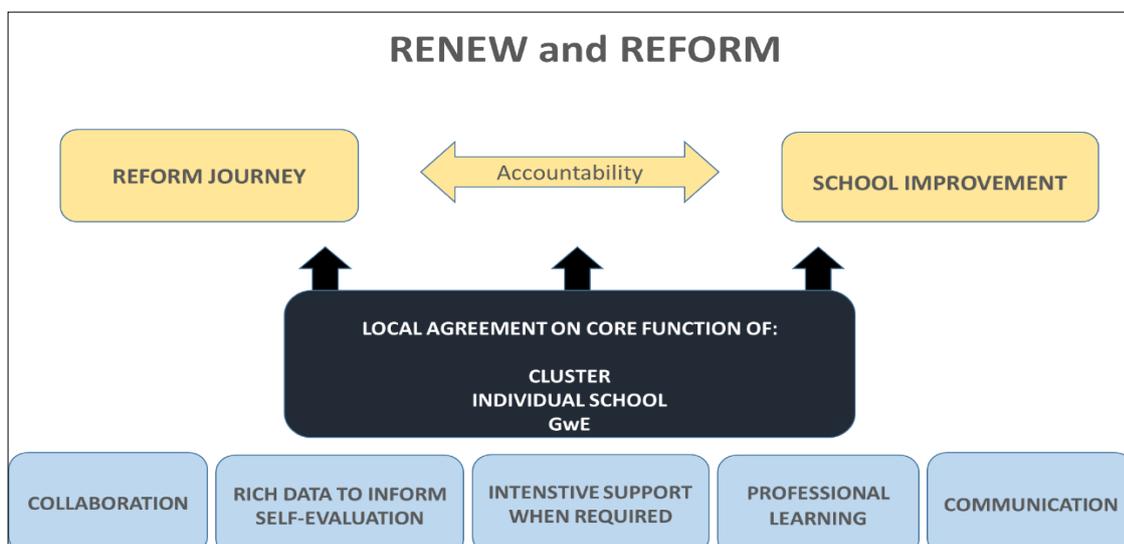
The role of the Supporting Improvement Advisor (SIA) is continuing to evolve as we continue to meet the needs and expectations of all our stakeholders. Our approach will be to support wellbeing and learner progress through working in partnership across the system to enable renewal and reform. With the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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

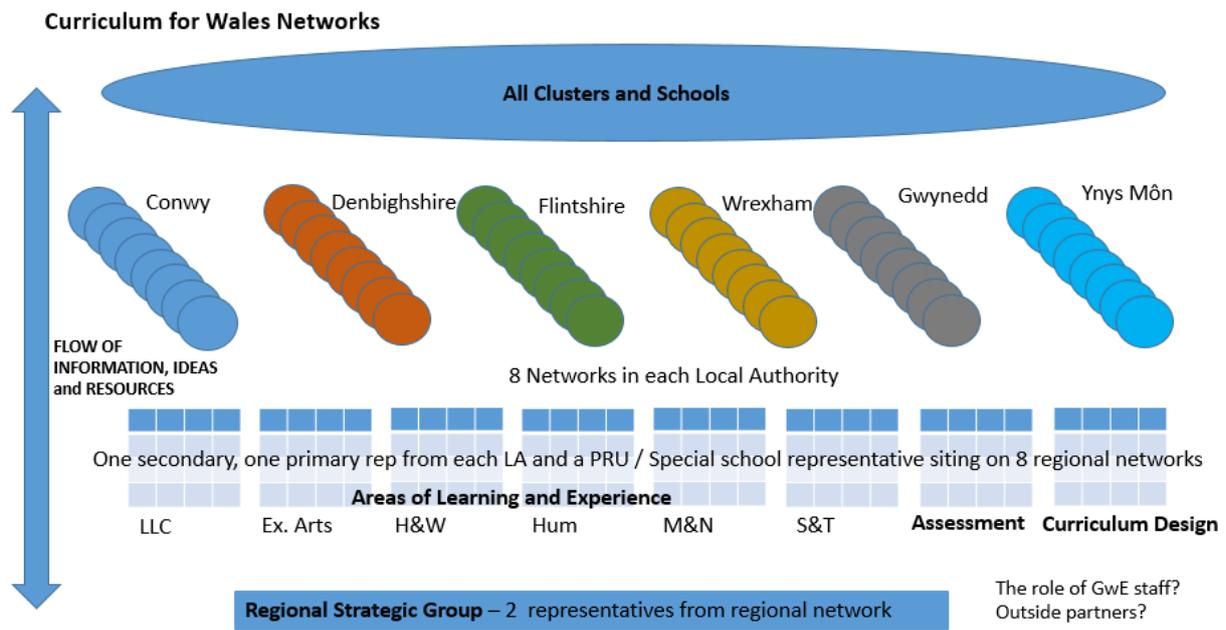
To strengthen the development of the new curriculum, AOLE development networks will be established at regional and a local level. School leaders and practitioners will collaborate to unpack the potential of each AOLE through modelling, designing and sharing curriculum practice.

Collaborative networks will work on the following areas:

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

2. Assessment
3. Whole school Curriculum Design

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



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

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

Peer review and school to school support

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

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

Schools Causing Concern

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

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

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

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

The Board’s main focus will be on:

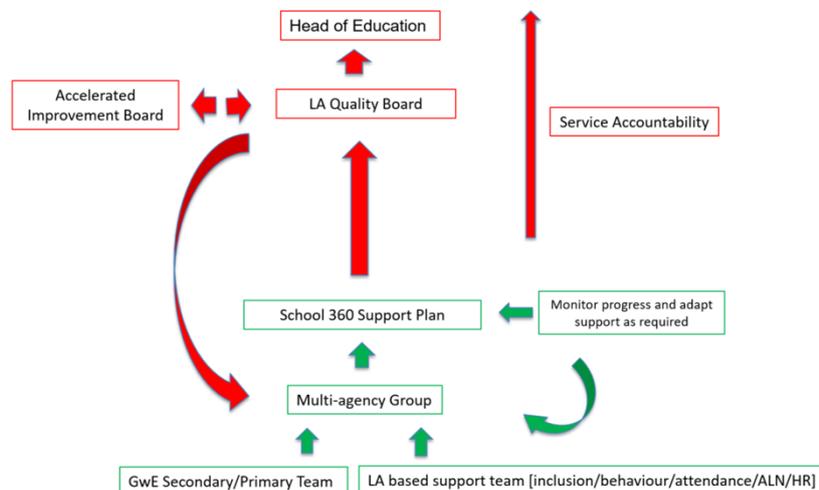
- assessing the progress of those schools causing concern that have been identified by Estyn or by local processes
- assessing the quality of the support planning for schools causing concern undertaken by the Multi-agency Group
- ensuring the Multi-agency Group undertakes its monitoring functions effectively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

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

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

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

Regional structures and process for supporting and challenging SCC.



Statutory Functions and Accountability

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

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

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

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

System expectations in North Wales

By September 2024:

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

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