

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** **LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** **THURSDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2013**

**REPORT BY:** **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

**SUBJECT:** **SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT**

**1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To update on Primary Schools Performance and Monitoring for under-performing schools.

**2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 The School Standards Monitoring Group (SSMG) was established to ensure that schools who are under-performing are rigorously challenged by the Local Authority but are also appropriately supported in order to make progress and improve the outcomes for their learners. The group also provides elected members with the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of the levels of school performance within the authority and actively work alongside officers in providing that challenge and support.

The membership of the group for the academic year 2012-13 was as follows:-

Cllr Chris Bithell	Lead Member for Lifelong Learning
Mr David Hytch	LL Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Dave Mackie	LL Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Nancy Matthews	LL Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Ian Roberts	LL Scrutiny Committee
Ian Budd	Director of Lifelong Learning
Kevin Grandfield	Principal Secondary Officer
Claire Homard	Principal Primary Officer

2.02 The criteria for monitoring schools were mainly two-fold – those with data trends that showed a period of performance below the Free School Meal benchmarks for their family of schools and those in an Estyn follow up category. The Headteacher and the Chair of Governors were invited to attend two meetings over the year – the first, in the autumn term, to establish the context for the school's current performance and strategies for improvement; the second, at the end of the summer term, to be advised of the impact of those

strategies on pupil outcomes and the result of any Estyn revisits. The meetings also provided the opportunity for the Head teacher and Governor representative to demonstrate their strength of leadership in tackling the issues faced by their school.

- 2.03 At the end of the monitoring cycle, a decision was then made by the panel whether the school had made sufficient progress to be removed from the monitoring or whether it needed to remain for another term.
- 2.04 Ten primary schools were subject to monitoring in the academic year 2012-13. All were identified through data trends. Five were subject to either Estyn monitoring or were in formal Estyn categories of concern.
- 2.05 The meetings established that there are some common themes in securing school improvement:-
- The strength of the leadership provided by the Headteacher through effective self evaluation, detailed action planning and resource deployment
  - The strength of the Governing Body in understanding the school's position and acting as a critical friend, holding the Head and staff to account in a constructive manner
  - The careful planning of appropriate intervention strategies, delivered by well trained staff
  - The need to have very robust systems of early identification and pupil tracking
  - The need to have a rigorous target setting process for all pupils by all teachers that sets the most aspirational expectations for individual performance, based on data analysis and effective ongoing teacher assessment
  - High levels of parental engagement, even with those 'hardest to reach'
  - Effective use of local authority services and external agencies to support individual learners
- 2.06 The feedback from the Head teachers and Governors involved in the process over the year was that the first meeting was daunting, particularly as it was a new experience for them to be put under such scrutiny. However, subsequently and overall they found the process to be very constructive and it helped them to maintain the momentum on their school improvement issues. They welcomed the participation by the members of the Scrutiny Committee. They respected the need for challenge but also felt that those members participating in the panel had a better understanding of some of the challenges they faced in their schools. By the second visit, all schools had positive stories to tell reflecting the successes they had achieved in improving their data profile and/or being removed from an Estyn category.

- 2.07 The meetings also highlighted the very high level of multi-agency working being undertaken in schools to meet the needs of individual learners and their families. Many Head teachers reported on the amount of time they were spending on child protection/child in need referrals, case conferences and review meetings in order to support vulnerable learners. One of the major themes expressed regularly in meetings was the paucity of children's language skills on entry into school and the levels of intervention required to ensure learners were developing expressive and receptive language skills that would enable them to access the curriculum. This concern was heightened because of the delay in being able accessing speech therapy services because of waiting times due to pressures in the Health Service.
- 2.08 In one school where there is the highest proportion of children with English as an Additional Language in the authority; there are significant challenges in developing learners' language skills in order for them to be able to fully access the curriculum. As it takes five years to become fully competent in a new language, this has an impact on the school's data. The school noted that it does get good levels of support from the LA's EAL service but that it has to invest a significant amount of its own resource to meet the well-being and academic needs of these learners.
- 2.09 The Directorate's response to these two important issues has been to create a small team of expert teaching assistants who are trained in the development of early language skills. They are being placed in schools for half a term at a time to model excellent practice and build the capacity of teaching and support staff in classrooms to ensure that learning opportunities exploit the potential for effective language development. The impact of this initiative will be monitored over time.
- 2.10 Some Head teachers' brought significant issues relating to premises to the attention of the panel and outlined their frustration at the amount of time it took to resolve these difficulties, taking their attention away from their core role of raising standards. Local authority officers will continue to liaise with other departments of the Council to ensure that these issues are resolved as quickly as possible.

2.11 Outcomes from the PSSMG by July 2013:

School	Stage	Outcome
1	4	Remain on Stage 4, new Acting Head appointed. High levels of support from GwE and LA officer. Data for 2013 much improved on 2012 although still below family & Wales averages.
2	2	Removed from SSMG – good progress.
3	3	Remain on Stage 3 – data improving but risk due to maternity leave of HT and amalgamation.
4	3	Remain on Stage 3 – steadily improving data at KS2 – expecting Estyn Monitoring visit in Autumn Term to be successful then remove.
5	3	Move from Stage 4 to Stage 3 – removed from Estyn category of Significant Improvement in Summer Term. Improving data but maintain watching brief.
6	3	Remain on Stage 3 until Estyn Monitoring visit in Autumn Term. Expect positive outcome then anticipate removing from PSSMG. Data improving well.
7	2	Removed from PSSMG–good progress Removed from Estyn Special Measures in Dec 12.
8	3	Remain on Stage 3 – good progress in data but risk due to HT retirement and inspection 2014. Support from GwE & LA officer.
9	3	Remain on Stage 3 but light touch – placed in LA Monitoring by Estyn – ensure support for post inspection action plan from GwE & LA. Aim to remove by Dec.
10	2	Removed from PSSMG – good progress and removed from Estyn Monitoring category.

2.12 Define the stages.

2.13 The SSMG will continue to monitor those schools highlighted above and will draw in any other schools identified as at risk based on the information received from GwE's summer visit reports.

**3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 None.

**4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 None.

**5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 None.

**6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 None.

**7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None.

**8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 None.

**9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None.

**10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 None.

**11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 None.

**12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985  
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.

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