EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	

Date of Meeting	Thursday 2nd February 2017
Report Subject	Skilled Education Workforce Shortage
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education & Youth
Report Author	Chief Officer – Education & Youth
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scrutiny Committee have requested a report on the availability of suitably skilled personnel to undertake roles within its schools and the challenges faced by school leaders in recruiting to vacant posts.

The beginning of the report provides some context on the national and local authority data related to school populations and teacher workforce taken from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). This is useful in understanding national and local trends which may have some relation to changes in the workforce. It is acknowledged that there are other factors, such as budgetary pressures in the current financial climate, which also have an impact on how schools manage their workforce.

The second part of the report is based on informal feedback provided to the Senior Manager for School Improvement on the issue of staff recruitment in Flintshire. A direct email request was sent to all schools at the beginning of January 2017 and has been supplemented with anecdotal evidence gathered over time from discussions with Head Teachers and Governing Bodies.

While the number of responses to the email request for information from schools was low, there was fair representation from primary, secondary and special schools; from large and small schools; from urban and rural areas and from the Welsh medium sector. This informal exercise in information gathering provides a useful snapshot of the challenges faced by schools in Flintshire in recruiting appropriately qualified and skilled staff to a variety of roles in the education sector. It provides the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the main areas of challenge in terms of recruitment in the authority's schools.

	RECOMMENDATIONS
1	That members receive the report and note its contents.
2	That members who are also school governors highlight any particular issues they have experienced to the senior officers of the Education & Youth Portfolio to add to the current view of recruitment issues in the authority.
3	That members' views on how to address the skills shortage in the workforce be collated and shared in appropriate forums and with Welsh Government to try and effect positive change.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	**EXPLAINING THE SKILLED EDUCATION WORKFORCE SHORTAGE**
1.01	Every year in January, schools complete the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) for Welsh Government (WG) which records a variety of data about the number of pupils and staff in each school. The analysis of this survey by WG is published by StatsWales in a document called 'School Census Results'. The most recent report was published in July 2016. The data is useful when considering the trends of pupil numbers and staffing levels across all phases – primary, secondary and special. What the data does not show is the reason why staffing numbers change.
1.02	The national picture across Wales was summarised as follows in the report: - There were 24,235.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified teachers in LA maintained schools, 275.0 fewer than at January 2015. - The pupil teacher ratio for all LA maintained schools was 18.6, up from 18.4 in January 2015. - There were 23,994.9 support staff (FTE) in LA maintained schools, 446.1 fewer than at January 2015. - The total number of pupils in LA maintained nursery, primary, middle, secondary and special schools across Wales was 466,555, a rise of 851 pupils since January 2015. This data shows that despite rising pupil numbers over the period 2015-16, teacher and support staff posts were reduced and the overall pupil:teacher ratio increased slightly across Wales.
1.03	WG analysis of trends in the pupil population across Wales show that: - The numbers of pupils aged under 5 have been increasing since 2006 to reach 73,693 in 2016.

	- The numbers of pupils aged 5 to 10 have increased to 207,328 in 2016 compared to 203,847 in 2015. Prior to 2011, they had been decreasing year on year since 2000. - The numbers of pupils aged 11 to 15 increased between 2000 to 2004 and have decreased year on year since then.
1.04	Analysis of infant class sizes across Wales, which are statutorily limited to 30 unless by approved exemption, shows that the average class sizes are increasing e.g. from an average of 25.1 in 2013 to 25.6 in 2016. The percentage of large infant classes (more than 31) rose during the same period from 5.2% to 6.0%. This increase is reflected in the analysis of junior classes across Wales, increasing from an average class size of 24.5 in 2013 to 25.6 in 2016 with the number of large junior classes (more than 31) rising from 5.9% to 10.2%, a significant increase.
1.05	Data for **Flintshire schools** from the 2016 PLASC shows the following (2015 figures are in brackets for comparison where appropriate): - 67 primary schools, 12 secondary schools and 2 special schools - 5/67 primary schools and 1/12 secondary schools are Welsh medium - 13, 936 pupils in primary schools (13,927) - 9,507 pupils in secondary schools (9,578) - 206 pupils in special schools (221) - Total school population recorded on PLASC 23, 649 (23,726) - 683 primary school teachers (691) - 649 secondary school teachers (660) - 31 special school teachers (34) - Total teacher workforce 1363 (1385) - the average pupil:teacher ratio in **primary** schools in Flintshire in 2016 is 21.2 (in 2015 this figure was 20.9 so has increased by 0.3) - this is lower than the Wales average of 21.6. - the highest pupil:teacher ratio was in Rhondda Cynnon Taf at 24.5 and the lowest pupil:teacher ratio was in Ceredigion at 18.5. - the average pupil:teacher ratio in **secondary** schools in Flintshire in 2016 is 16.1 (in 2015 this figure was 15.8 so has increased by 0.3) - this is lower than the Wales average of 16.3 - the highest pupil:teacher ratio was in Swansea at 17.0 and the lowest pupil:teacher ratio was in Conwy and Gwynedd at 15.2. - the average pupil:teacher ratio in **special** schools in Flintshire in 2016 is 7.0 (in 2015 this figure was 6.7 so has increased by 0.3) - this is higher than the Wales average of 6.5 - the highest pupil:teacher ratio was in Wrexham at 10.6 and the lowest pupil:teacher ratio was in Monmouth at 3.6 - the number of full time equivalent (fte) support staff across Flintshire schools in 2016 was 736 in primary, 294 in secondary and 85 in special

	schools.
	- data from the 2015 PLASC shows that support staff numbers have reduced during the period 2015-16 by 39 in primary schools, 32 in secondary schools and 10 in special schools across the authority.
	The data clearly shows that the schools workforce in Flintshire has reduced over the last twelve months. What is difficult to determine is the reason for that reduction i.e. reductions due to budgetary pressures and schools adjusting their workforce or vacant posts that have not been permanently filled.
1.06	The workforce in schools includes a wide range of roles including leadership positions, class/subject teachers and a variety of administrative posts, learning support staff, technical and ancillary staff. The governing body of each school has the responsibility for ensuring that the school has an adequate workforce that is appropriately skilled and qualified, working within statutory guidance and recommendations issued by Welsh Government e.g. infant class size regulations, health and safety guidance for technical subjects, Foundation Phase ratios, provision for additional learning needs etc. It is the responsibility of the governing body to undertake the recruitment of school funded posts, not the Local Authority.
1.07	When schools have vacancies for particular posts, nearly all will advertise them via the e-Teach website which is subscribed to by the Local Authority and links to the County Council's website. Schools may also use a variety of other means to advertise vacancies to reach the widest possible audience e.g. school newsletters, social media, local press, specialist publications etc. As the cost of advertising in the press is expensive it is becoming less popular and greater use is being made of internet based advertising on dedicated websites which are more cost effective and have a global reach.
1.08	Nearly all the Local Authority's schools have a service level agreement with the Council to access support for Human Resources and this would include advice and guidance on how to effectively and safely recruit and give access to the Council's website and e-Teach to advertise vacancies.
1.09	The Council does not host its own supply register of teachers and support staff. Most schools have a trusted bank of regular supply teachers they will deploy to cover short term absences and short/medium term vacancies where appropriate. Increasingly, schools are entering into contractual arrangements with a number of local and national supply agencies to source staff to cover absences and vacancies.
1.10	Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher vacancies have to be advertised nationally. The use of web-based platforms such as e-Teach allow this to be achieved cost effectively and ensure the widest possible audience is reached.
	In the case of Head Teacher appointments in the Local Authority's maintained schools, the Chief Officer for Education and Youth or Senior Manager for School Improvement provide dedicated advice and support to governing bodies during this process alongside colleagues from the Human Resources team.

1.11	Over the last twelve months, 3 of the 12 secondary schools and 4 primary schools out of 65 have recruited a new permanent Head Teacher. Whilst the number of applicants for Head Teacher posts in the authority has generally reduced over the last few years, the governing bodies of these schools have been able to shortlist an appropriate number of suitable candidates and have then made successful appointments.
1.12	At the current time, Flintshire has 5 'Acting/Interim Head Teachers across its whole school estate of but only one of these posts is as a result of difficulties in recruitment. In this case, the post was advertised twice and no candidate of a suitable calibre was found so a temporary internal promotion was made. In the other cases, the vacancies are temporary for a variety of valid reasons e.g. to cover the fixed term secondment of the substantive Head to another role; are related to ongoing school modernisation projects where the future leadership arrangements may change as a result.
1.13	Informal feedback from secondary schools in Flintshire reflects the national trend of difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers in the core subjects of Maths, English, modern foreign languages and the Sciences including Physics and Chemistry. A number of secondary schools reported that they failed to recruit successfully to these key posts and had to make alternative arrangements using agency supply staff or use non-specialist teachers to cover for extended periods. For some schools, recruiting Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators with the appropriate skills and experience has been difficult and this is more challenging when posts are temporary and/or part time.
1.14	Many English medium secondary schools report significant difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced Welsh teachers into Flintshire and feel this situation is exacerbated by being a 'border' county. This is currently a significant area of concern with changes to the GCSE requirements for Welsh Second Language from September 2017 and the greater demands this will place on schools to deliver a new syllabus and achieve higher standards. These changes are part of the Welsh Government's ambitious strategy to increase the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050 and local authorities are expected to set targets to achieve this as part of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. The issue in Flintshire is that the majority of the newly qualified teachers recruited into English medium primary and secondary schools are not bilingual and are classified as Welsh learners themselves. Therefore, they need support to develop their own Welsh language skills to use them successfully in the classroom to extend the language skills of their students either in dedicated Welsh lessons or in its use across the curriculum.
1.15	Recruitment issues in Flintshire's Welsh medium schools where subjects are delivered wholly through Welsh (except for English) are a significant area of concern. In the secondary sector there have been difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers of the Sciences and of Welsh itself. In the primary phase, Welsh medium teaching vacancies generally attract very few applicants. For example, one primary head reported that an advert for a 0.6 teacher at KS2 had to be advertised three times and only resulted in four applications and that they were not particularly strong.

	The recruitment of classroom support staff in the Welsh medium sector is another key issue raised by primary heads, particularly with the numbers of staff required to meet recommended Foundation Phase ratios or to support pupils with additional learning needs. They report that many applicants may have spoken Welsh when they were younger, or attended Welsh medium school, but have lost confidence in using the language in the workplace or cannot model it accurately enough for the learners. This is also an issue in Welsh pre-school provision supported by the authority to deliver its part time education offer for three year olds and can have a significant impact on the sustainability of the local Welsh playgroup and on the quality of education delivered. This undermines the authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which is built upon the target of encouraging more parents to choose a Welsh medium education for their children. Heads in the Welsh medium sector at primary and secondary level report huge difficulties in finding appropriately qualified supply staff who can teach through the medium of Welsh to cover staff absences.
1.16	Feedback from the authority's special schools confirms that there is also a recruitment issue in this sector because of the very specialised nature of the roles that are required there for both teachers and support staff. Getting suitable supply teachers is also an issue for special schools who have reported that they have to use supply agencies as far away as Liverpool to try and get suitable staff to cover short/medium term absences. The Heads in this sector feel that the teacher training model does not pay sufficient attention to special educational needs to equip more teachers to be competent to work in this sector.
1.17	Primary schools are generally reporting difficulties in recruiting staff to support roles such as Mid-day supervisors, caretakers, learning support assistants with appropriate knowledge of additional learning needs and staff to run before/after school provision with the necessary qualifications required by the regulatory body. They believe that these roles are perceived as unattractive due to their part time nature, low pay and restrictive hours. Heads in rural parts of the authority find recruiting to these roles particularly difficult where the low pay and geographical issues adding to travel times and costs appear to be making posts even more unattractive. In one primary school where the caretaker/cleaner has been off with a serious illness since September, failure to recruit a temporary replacement has resulted in the Head and Deputy Head undertaking some of the cleaning duties and splitting the daily 7am opening and 7pm locking up time between them for over a term, adding to an already extensive workload.
1.18	Primary Head Teachers generally report high levels of applications for teaching posts from Newly Qualified Teachers and find that they are able to make good appointments. However, one has raised concerns that the number of male applicants into the primary phase is particularly low and that this does not help schools maintain a balanced workforce and provide good role models to boys. This is particularly true of posts in Foundation Phase which covers 3-7 year olds. In a recent advert for three teachers at his

	school, he had over 30 applications and shortlisted 7. However, only 5 of these applications were from male teachers, of whom one was short listed who then withdrew from the process.
1.19	Another key challenge facing schools, not only in Flintshire but across the UK, is the retention rates of teachers within the profession. Recent press articles and published research by teacher unions indicates that four in ten newly qualified teachers will leave the profession in the first year of taking up a teaching post and that the number of teachers completing their teaching qualification but never actually taking up a teaching post has tripled over the last few years. A survey by NUT Cymru in 2015 indicated that morale in Welsh schools was 'at an all-time low' and that nearly half of those teachers surveyed were considering leaving the profession within two years, citing workload at the main reason.

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

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	No formal consultation required.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Difficulties in recruiting effective school leaders is identified as a potential risk in the Council's Improvement Plan. This is mitigated against by the intervention of senior officers of the portfolio to support governing bodies to broker interim leadership arrangements where necessary and to support the appointment process.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Schools Census Report – Stats Wales

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. **Contact Officer:** Claire Homard – Senior Manager School Improvement **Telephone:** 01352 704019 **E-mail:** claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.