

Appendix 2: DEVELOPING A REVISED SECONDARY CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME MODEL FOR 2017

Context

The *GwE Challenge and Support Programme* has taken full account of Welsh Government's guidelines as outlined in the guidance document '*National Model for Regional Working*' [November 2015]. However, between 2013 and 2016 the pattern of improvement across the region has been inconsistent, and concerns remain over the performance and inspection profiles of a significant percentage of schools in the secondary sector. During 2015-16, the support programme for both sectors was revised and whilst this led to improvements in the resilience and quality of leadership and teaching and learning experiences in the primary sector, little impact was seen on standards and outcomes in a significant number of secondary schools. The situation remains unstable in at least two authorities, and extremely fragile in another two.

Specific concerns have been identified with regard to the following:

- 61.8% of schools are in the lower 50.0% of the national FSM benchmarks in the L2+ and Capped Points Score, and 60.0% in English and Maths.
- In 61.8% of the region's schools, performance in the L2+ is lower than the expected outcome based on FSM eligibility. This figure is 75.0% or above in two authorities.
- 41.8% of secondary schools are in one of the two more intensive support categories, with 12.7% in the most intensive.
- 11% of schools are in a statutory follow-up category, with 5% in the Special Measures category.
- The current risk assessment for all of the region's schools highlights that a further 10-20% of schools are at risk of being placed in a statutory follow-up category in upcoming inspections.

The above statistics, along with findings from formal and informal discussions with Challenge Advisers, the GwE SMT and senior leaders in schools and authorities across the region, clearly highlight the need to review the current implementation model and urgently establish an alternative method for supporting, challenging and securing accountability on all levels.

Expectations in going forward:

- Raise standards in Key Stage 3, 4 and 5;
- All 6 Local Authorities perform well in relation to their FSM rankings and expected benchmarks in Key Stage 3 and 4;
- No school to be placed in an Estyn statutory category;
- Achievement of FSM and More Able and Talented pupils is a priority in each school;
- Ensure leadership in all schools is at least good.

Aims and Objectives

Local authorities retain the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement. The national model is based on a vision of regional school improvement consortia working jointly and on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and education of young people. The job of regional consortia is to challenge and support schools in their efforts to:

- improve learner outcomes for all young people;
- ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning; and
- support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools.

In relation to improving learner outcomes and provision in schools, GwE will provide challenge and support through:

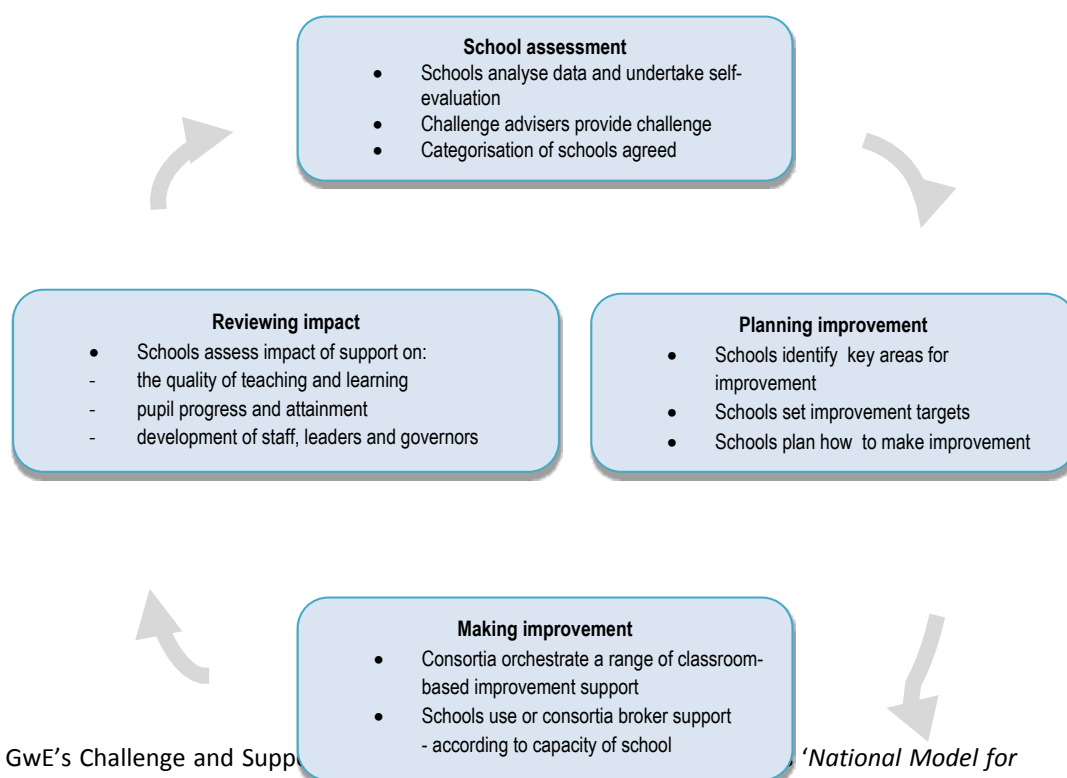
- monitoring the work and performance of schools, using all-Wales standardised data sets, projections and in-school and in-year data on pupil progress and the quality of classroom teaching and learning, to categorise a school's performance and development needs in accordance with the nationally agreed categorisation model;
- examining with school leaders and chairs of governors performance and provision at whole-school level and for different subjects, year groups and sub-categories of pupils, in order to compare the progress

of individual and or groups of pupils with progress made in other comparable schools and to identify areas of underperformance and achievement gaps;

- confirming with headteachers and chairs of governors the priority areas for improvement as articulated by the school’s improvement plan (SIP) and the strategies to be deployed to secure improvement;
- ensuring that SIPs appropriately reflect schools’ improvement journeys and expected outcomes in line with Education Improvement Grant (EIG) and Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) terms and conditions and GwE’s business plan;
- agreeing stretching but realistic targets that will raise expectations, set the standard for improving the quality of teaching and learning and provide the success criteria by which pupil attainment and progress will be judged;
- assessing for schools that are in special measures, require significant improvement, are subject to Estyn or local authority monitoring or otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern, whether governors and school leadership teams have the capacity and will to lead school improvement – and making appropriate recommendations as necessary;
- advising LAs and diocesan authorities of those situations where statutory intervention is required and providing input on the form(s) that intervention might take whether appointment of additional governors, removing the schools delegated budget or the establishment of an interim executive board (IEB) or another appropriate measure; and
- deliver effective leadership development for leaders at all levels.

GwE will be responsible for delivering the above functions and for their effectiveness and impact on standards. These functions will be applied proportionally – that is to say those schools most in need of support will be monitored most closely. Conversely where schools are performing strongly there will be less monitoring. GwE will be both supported and held accountable for its work in improving learner outcomes and provision in schools by the six Local Authorities individually and by the Joint Committee.

Schools are at the heart of the national model for school improvement which sets out clear guidance for school-to-school support arrangements and the annual school improvement cycle. The GwE Challenge and Support Programme follows this model of school improvement.



The ethos within GwE’s Challenge and Support Programme is about increasing autonomy for our best schools and building capacity for improvement to the level of the best within others.

The Welsh Government publication '*Qualified for Life*' sets out an education improvement plan for 3 to 19 year old in Wales. As a region, GwE's model of working aims to meet the requirement of Strategic Objective 4: '*Leaders of education at every level working together in a self-improving system, providing mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools*'.

The GwE Challenge and Support Programme for all schools involves school leaders, challenge advisers and peers working together, in different ways, to make immediate planned improvements, whilst building capacity, responsibility and resilience for self-improvement in the future.

The Challenge and Support Programme aims to:

- raise standards;
- develop a system of co-challenge and co-support;
- empower school leaders;
- provide professional development opportunities;
- share excellent practice and key documents;
- benefit schools through planned opportunities for schools to work together to develop robust systems within each other's schools;
- provide a springboard for self-review and improvement planning that leads to a journey of innovative and inspirational practices for all pupils;
- enable schools to take ownership of the National Model for Categorisation as a springboard for continued improvement; and
- further develop co-ownership and co-responsibility for improving standards, provision and leadership in each other's schools.

International research on self-improving initiatives, such as the London Challenge, tells us that when peers and schools work together they:

- raise standards;
- improve practice and allow schools to share and move knowledge around;
- develop sustainable practices that enhance the professional development of school leaders; and
- improve learners' outcomes, especially for children and young people from economically deprived backgrounds.

The Revised Secondary Model

The revised model aims to ensure that better use is made of the expertise and experiences of Senior Challenge Advisers, Challenge Advisers, School Senior Leaders and Education Officers, so as to provide high quality assistance and support using an approach that is consistent across all hubs and regions. The secondary model aims to ensure that schools receive a holistic support package for all aspects of its work drawing on expertise from within the consortium, Local Authorities and schools themselves to provide that high quality support.

The revised model for the secondary sector will include:

- Establishing a secondary team equivalent to 9 full-time CAs. The team will be accountable to the GwE SMT, the *Regional School Improvement Network* and, on local level, to the *Standards Quality Board* [SQB] in the respective authorities. It will be the responsibility of the SQB to report on the action taken and progress made locally to the Education Department's Management Team, and to respond to any inquiries arising from scrutiny carried out by elected members. The outcomes of local scrutiny in the 6 authorities will then be cascaded to the GwE Joint Committee, who will consider action and progress on regional level.
- The secondary team will consist of CAs employed by the service on a full/part-time basis; Education Officers from the authorities; provisionally seconded members of school SMTs [full/part-time]; and retired headteachers and consultants with a proven track record for school improvement who are commissioned to work for the regional service. The model will also include procedures for establishing a model whereby a *Lead School* is commissioned to arrange and provide the support package for another school or other schools in the *Amber/Red* categories. Funding streams will be allocated to the *Lead Schools* as follows: an initial sum provided to the commissioned school to invest in capacity; and an additional sum to be directly invested in the partner school; a final sum released to the *Lead School* provided that the agreed outcomes are achieved.

- *Regional and Local Portfolio Leaders* will be identified to ensure that consistent and high quality guidance and information is provided to all schools in the region. Discussions with key stakeholders, including GwE team members have identified the need to ensure more effective and productive use is made of the expertise and experiences of Senior Challenge Advisers, Challenge Advisers, School Senior Leaders and Education Officers, so as to provide high quality assistance and support using a holistic approach that is consistent across all hubs and regions. Moving to a distributed leadership model will ensure a more enhanced support model with better ownership of key decisions by team members. Team members will also be accountable for evaluating developments and progress against their areas of responsibility, again leading to a better ownership of outcomes. A distributed leadership approach will also ensure that the service can offer valuable professional development opportunities for all Challenge Advisers. The requirement for holistic support may be satisfied by a model consisting of CAs / Local Authority Education Officers and Education Teams /school senior and middle leaders. It is expected that leaders will be required to ensure high quality support for aspects such as: *curricular planning and the revised indicators; assessment, tracking and intervention; teaching and learning; senior and middle leadership; governing and human resources; scrutiny, inspection and categorisation reviews; deprivation; welfare, behaviour and attendance; ALN and groups of learners; supporting rural schools; raising standards in English, Welsh, Maths and Science [including literacy and numeracy]; digital competence; WBQ and 14-19.*
- Identifying a link challenge adviser for each school as well as a team of support CAs. The size of the team will be determined by the level of risk [e.g., Green = 2; Yellow = 4; Amber/Red = 6]. This will ensure that schools receive a holistic support package for all aspects of its work drawing on expertise from within the consortium, Local Authorities and schools to provide that high quality support.
- Using Subject Challenge Advisers as part of the team to challenge and support underperforming departments and offer support for literacy and numeracy development.
- Building capacity for a sustainable self-improving system. Senior and Middle Leaders from schools across the regional will need to be up-skilled and developed so that they can be effectively deployed and utilised by the regional service as advisers who will work intensively with coasting and under-performing schools for a fixed period. They will bring with them their knowledge and expertise that will be shared with the schools as they challenge and support their improvement in relation to specific and targeted areas such as Leadership, Teaching and Learning, Literacy, Numeracy, Improving the performance of e-FSM, ICT, Assessment and Tracking. In turn, they will also develop and enhance their own knowledge and skills creating a nucleus of Leaders within the school system that are able to challenge and support schools to improve.
- All schools will receive a *Support Programme* highlighting the nature of the assistance and support provided over the year.
- A *review and support exercise* will be carried out in schools when concerns about standards/leadership have been raised. Following the *review and support visit*, the link Challenge Advisor will work closely with the senior leadership team (SLT) to develop a comprehensive support plan closely aligned to the school's improvement priorities.
- All schools in the *Green/Yellow* support categories will also have the opportunity to receive a *review and support visit* by a team of peers and the link CA every 2 to 3 years in order to support them on their improvement journey.
- In undertaking a structured programme of **review and support visits**, GwE will be able to work with Headteachers and other key stakeholders to more effectively and robustly identify areas for improvement and development. Such a process will also, inevitably, highlight areas of strength, allowing better facilitation for disseminating outstanding practice within and across hubs and local authorities. However, it should be clearly pointed out that *Review and Support Visits* will not replicate Estyn inspections and should not be viewed as mock inspections. The review model will not be appropriate either for schools that have already been placed in an Estyn statutory category.

The strength and advantages of a *Review and Support Visit* are numerous:

- it is a process which starts with the school's own self-evaluation and School Development Plan;
- it will be focussed on the range of evidence the school currently has at its disposal i.e. the school will not be expected to produce any additional material for the visiting team;
- the visit can be tailored to address specific aspects of the school's improvement journey;
- it allows the school access to the rigour and professionalism of a team of GwE Challenge Advisers and current serving Headteachers/SLT as peer-reviewers;

- it facilitates a partnership approach to identifying aspects for improvement and on agreeing the best and most appropriate support package;
 - discussion about findings and recommendations for further action will be fully and openly discussed with the school's SLT;
 - the process will ensure that all schools have a tailored and appropriate support plan which clearly outlines GwE's contribution to the improvement journey;
 - outcomes from visits will further steer and determine regional and local development and support programmes from GwE; and
 - since all visits will include a peer-reviewer, enhanced development opportunities for senior staff in regional schools will be amplified. Peer-reviewers will be able to take the learning experience to further improve practice at their home school.
- The current requirements for action taken with *Amber/Red* schools will be maintained, i.e. these schools will continue to receive intensive support equivalent to one day per week [full details on the expectations are included in the 2015-16 Programme Handbook]. However, there will be an additional expectation on all schools in the *Amber/Red* support category to establish a *Standards Board* to monitor progress towards the expected outcomes. Membership will include the Headteacher, the link CA, the Education Officer and representation from the Governing Body. Progress reports will be presented to the attention of the *Regional Standards Board*.
 - Facilitating effective networks for sharing effective practice within and across schools including supporting small rural secondary schools to work effectively
 - Enhancing the delivery of the GwE Developmental Programme for improving pedagogy and leadership skills at all levels.
 - Encouraging and facilitating research and evaluation to develop effective pedagogy.
 - Matching national initiatives closely to the needs of schools and groups of schools.
 - Establishing a *Regional Standards Board* to monitor the progress of *Amber/Red* schools towards their expected outcomes. Membership to include: Managing Director, Assistant Directors, the 3 SCSAs, and representation from the GwE Advisory Board and Management Board. The Board's progress reports will be presented to the attention of the *Regional School Improvement Network*. Outcomes of regional scrutiny will then be reported to the *GwE Management Board* by the Lead Director.
 - Establishing a *North Wales Secondary Headteacher Association* and holding an annual conference to agree on priorities, set common expectations, and share best practice. It is recommended that an *Operational Steering Group* for the association is established to coordinate and arrange the annual conference and operate as a *Secondary User Group* for GwE.
 - Providing a regional training programme responding to the requirements of regional and national priorities [it is suggested that 2 common INSET days are earmarked across the 6 authorities – autumn and spring].
 - Providing an annual training programme that will target specific schools on the basis of risk assessments.
 - Undertaking a risk assessment in each secondary school to identify regional and local needs for support and development.
 - Providing partnerships between peers to help schools on their improvement journey. Head-teachers and senior leaders will be at the heart of the model providing school to school support for driving improvements.
 - Encouraging schools to continue to engage in a School-to-School collaboration and support programme on the basis of common needs.
 - Potentially asking all schools to contribute an annual % of the EIG towards the cost of leadership development programmes to support their improvement journey. GwE will work with the school to ensure that the support offered is closely aligned to the school's improvement priorities.
 - Implementing a robust Quality Assurance and monitoring process.