

EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 18 th March 2021
Report Subject	Self-Evaluation Report of Education Services
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council undertakes an annual self-evaluation of its education services. Normally it is written against the framework for the inspections of Local Government Education Services published by Estyn but as this framework was suspended as a result of Covid-19, this report is presented in a different format with each service area focusing on its work over the last twelve months and how it has responded and adapted to the ongoing health emergency. It also identifies areas for ongoing development which will be reflected in the Council Plan and the Portfolio Business Plan for 2021-2022.

The suspension of key data collections by Welsh Government during the pandemic has resulted in many of the key performance indicators by which the portfolio usually measures its progress not being available. Pupil assessment data at all key stages is also unavailable to be able to make judgements on standards.

The committee has already received detailed reports on how schools have adapted their provision and developed a blended learning approach for pupils and also how the regional school improvement service, GwE have provided robust support for school improvement so this is not revisited as part of this report.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, Estyn, have maintained contact with the portfolio during the last twelve months and have undertaken a thematic review of the work of education services across Wales. Their positive report about Flintshire's response is included as part of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members note the content of the self-evaluation report and provide their feedback to officers on the current performance of education services.
2	That members note the positive thematic report undertaken by Estyn on the work of education services in Flintshire to support children and young people during the pandemic.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE SELF EVALUATION REPORT
1.01	<p>The last twelve months have been unique and posed unprecedented challenges for the Council, particularly in relation to its delivery of education services. The statutory provision of education for all learners was suspended for the period March 2020 to September 2020 and schools were forced to completely repurpose themselves as childcare hubs for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.</p> <p>Since the restart of education provision in September and the rising rates of infection through the Autumn Term and early Spring Term, the delivery of education in all Flintshire schools has been significantly disrupted with pupils having to isolate for extended periods of time.</p> <p>In January 2021, Welsh Government directed all schools to cease face-to-face learning for the majority of pupils and only making provision for those children identified as vulnerable or those of critical workers in the face of escalating infection rates. Foundation Phase pupils have only recently returned to school and more learners are able to return from 15th March and then after Easter, when all pupils will have returned to full time school.</p> <p>The committee has already received and commended a report on Blended Learning which gave assurance on how schools have facilitated the ongoing learning offer for pupils on digital platforms during the lockdown periods.</p>
1.02	<p>The prime purpose of self-evaluation is to lead service improvements to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people supported by the Education and Youth Portfolio. Only by robustly evaluating the strengths of the current provision and identifying areas for further improvement can the Portfolio continue to refine the manner in which it delivers services to secure better outcomes.</p>
1.03	<p>Flintshire County Council normally undertakes an annual self-evaluation of its education services against the framework for the inspections of Local Government Education Services published by Estyn but as this framework was suspended as a result of Covid-19, this report is presented in a different format with each service area focusing on its work of the last</p>

	twelve months and how it has responded and adapted to the health emergency.
1.04	The suspension of key data collections by Welsh Government during the pandemic has resulted in many of the key performance indicators by which the portfolio usually measures its progress, not being available. Pupil assessment data at all key stages is also unavailable to be able to make judgements on standards.
1.05	Each section of the report provides an overview of the service area, how it has adapted and its ongoing development priorities which will be reflected in the Council Plan and the Portfolio Business Plan for 2021-2022. Where progress has been possible, against the Estyn recommendations following the 2019 inspection of Education Services in Flintshire, these are reflected in each service report.
1.06	Although the formal inspection frameworks for school and local authority education services remains suspended, Estyn has maintained regular contact with schools and education officers. Welsh Government commissioned Estyn to undertake a review of the work of local authorities in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period March to October 2020 and this was undertaken in the Autumn term.
1.07	The feedback report is based on virtual meetings with Education Officers, the Cabinet Lead Member for Education, the Chair of the Education & Youth Scrutiny Committee and a sample of headteachers in schools and PRUs.
1.08	<p>The report is attached at Appendix 2 and outlines the swift and effective response of the Council to support children and schools from the outset of the pandemic.</p> <p>It acknowledges the strong leadership from the Council's Emergency Response Team and the Education Portfolio. It highlights the strength of the shared collaborative approach across the Council and with external partners e.g. GwE, to effectively adapt services to meet the needs of children, young people and their families during the national emergency.</p> <p>It also notes the thorough review of the Council's response through the work of the Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report is very positive and does not identify any recommendations for further improvement.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no revenue / capital implications as a result of this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Impact Assessment not required for this report.</p> <p>The Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and the continued disruption of teaching and learning as a result of the ongoing pandemic and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the committee.</p>
4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	N/A for this report.
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Education & Youth Portfolio Self-Evaluation Report 2020-2021</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Estyn Thematic Review Feedback Letter for Flintshire</p>
6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Claire Homard Chief Officer Education & Youth Telephone: 01352 704190 E-mail: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Estyn – the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales</p> <p>GwE – Regional School Improvement Service for the North Wales region commissioned by Flintshire County Council</p>