

(English below)

Cwestiynau i Estyn ar Adroddiad Blynyddol 2011-2012

Diogelu plant

C1 Pa mor dda y mae plant a phobl ifanc yn cael eu diogelu mewn lleoliadau ledled Cymru a beth arall y gellid ei wneud i wella hyn?

Tlodi ac anfantais: Mynd i'r afael â'r bwloch mewn cyrhaeddiad

C2 Sut y dylai Llywodraeth Cymru sicrhau bod y Grant Amddifadedd Disgyblion yn gwneud gwahaniaeth amlwg o ran gwella perfformiad addysgol disgyblion o dan anfantais a bod ganddo fwy o ffocws nag ymyriadau tebyg blaenorol?

Cynyddu capasiti

C3 A fydd y £7 miliwn sydd wedi'i ddyrannu i'r Rhaglen Gymorth Genedlaethol i helpu i roi'r Fframwaith Llythrennedd a Rhifedd ar waith yn ddigonol i gynyddu'r capasiti sydd ei angen?

Arweinyddiaeth

C4 Pwy a ddylai fod yn bennaf cyfrifol am ddarparu arweinyddiaeth ar y cyd ar bob lefel mewn addysg a hyfforddiant yng Nghymru - rhywbeth yr ydych yn dweud ei fod yn angenrheidiol?

Arweinwyr systemau a consortia rhanbarthol

C5 Faint o gynnydd y mae'r pedwar consortia rhanbarthol a'u harweinyddion systemau wedi'i wneud?

Newid

C6 Mewn cyfnod o newid sylweddol mewn polisi addysg a hyfforddiant yng Nghymru, gan gynnwys y ffordd y caiff gwasanaethau eu darparu o bosibl, a oes gennych unrhyw bryderon na fydd digon o sefydlogrwydd i sicrhau y gwneir y gwelliannau angenrheidiol?

HMCI's annual report on education and training in Wales 2011-2012

Estyn response to the Children and Young People Committee

February 2013

Safeguarding

Q1 How well are children and young people being safeguarded in settings across Wales and what more could be done to improve this?

Most schools have appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding. Where schools do not have appropriate procedures, it is usually because of inadequate pre-employment checks (CRBs) or a lack of understanding of the school's exact role in safeguarding pupils. To improve, schools should make sure that a senior manager has oversight of safeguarding and carries out systematic and rigorous checks that procedures are implemented consistently across the whole school at all times.

Estyn has recently provided schools with a safeguarding self-evaluation checklist to complete before inspection. This has the potential to help schools check their procedures systematically. Currently, this is only completed by schools when they are due to be inspected. We would recommend that all schools use the self-evaluation or similar form to check their procedures and practices on a regular basis.

Local authorities play a key role in managing the safeguarding of children and young people in most schools and settings. In the summer of 2011, we conducted a joint investigation with the social services inspectorate, CSSIW, of how well Pembrokeshire local authority safeguards children in its schools and other education services. We also undertook a joint survey of safeguarding and behaviour management in a wider selection of pupil referral units nationally. As a result of our published findings, local authorities, schools and pupil referral units across Wales have looked more closely at their own safeguarding practices. Increasingly, they have been developing and updating their policies and procedures for safe recruitment and child protection. There remain a few schools and local authorities where procedures are under-developed, arrangements for safe recruitment are not rigorously applied, key staff have not received recent training and a few are not aware of how to respond to a disclosure.

Local authorities are only now beginning to monitor regularly their schools' use of behaviour management strategies, and how the schools report on them. Following our reports, the more pro-active local authorities have issued guidance about how to use 'time out' appropriately with pupils to de-escalate difficult situations.

Estyn undertakes annual monitoring visits to independent residential special schools to check on standards and on safeguarding as these schools house some of our most vulnerable pupils.

Poverty and disadvantage: Addressing the gap in achievement

Q2 How should the Welsh Government ensure that the Pupil Deprivation Grants makes a tangible difference in improving educational performance among disadvantaged pupils and is more focused than previous interventions of a similar nature?

There is a danger that schools will use the PDG funding to support underachievers generally rather than focus on disadvantaged pupils. All pupils who are disadvantaged should benefit from it and not just those who are underachieving.

To help to focus on disadvantaged pupils, schools need to set clear and quantifiable targets for disadvantaged learners that are linked directly to the use of PDG funding, then monitor progress against these targets. In a few schools, planning involving PDGs has lacked detail and funds have been used to plug general budget deficits.

We have published a series of remit reports over the last three years about the use of grant funding for disadvantaged learners. These include: Thematic reports - Tackling child poverty and disadvantage in schools - January 2010; Thematic reports - Tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools: working with the community and other services - July 2011; Thematic reports - Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools - November 2012.

Guidance for the PDG needs to state clearly that actions that schools design to bring about improvements in the achievement of deprived pupils need to be focused specifically on these pupils. Too many actions in schools' funding plans for the PDG are focused on raising the achievement of underperforming pupils and not those who are disadvantaged by poverty. Many schools have focused their spending on literacy and numeracy initiatives designed to help learners who have poor skills in these areas, not specifically on raising the achievement of FSM learners.

Local authorities scrutinise schools' spending plans for the PDG. However, the advice they have given to school to refine their plans is tends to focus on processes in too many instances. For example, LAs comment that targets are not specific enough, or that plans need to identify responsible staff. While this advice is useful to improve the school's planning and evaluation procedures, it does not help the school enough to identify exactly how to improve the outcomes for FSM pupils. Local authorities do not give enough guidance on how to spend the PDG. A few LAs have organised events to share good practice in raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners, but this is not widespread enough.

Estyn is prepared to undertake a survey of the use being made of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and to make recommendations for further action as necessary.

Building capacity

Q3 Will the £7 million that has been allocated to the National Support Programme to help deliver the Literacy and Numeracy Framework be sufficient in building up the required capacity?

To answer this would require us to speculate on what might happen in future whereas Estyn's job is normally to report on existing evidence. The NSP does not stand alone in its responsibility to deliver the LNF of course. There is potential for it to be coherent with and to build on other school improvement initiatives at consortium, local authority and school cluster levels in order to maximise and enhance its impact.

Leadership

Q4 Who should be primarily responsible for providing the collective leadership at all levels in education and training in Wales, which you identify as necessary?

Leadership roles are outlined in the WG's action plan for 'Improving Schools'. The challenge is to create a synergy between leaders at national, regional and local level, including that being offered in schools. The School Effectiveness Framework model still offers a credible structure for doing this although in practice, it is not being achieved consistently at present. The 'Improving Schools' Action Plan based on the Minister's 20-point speech continues to define SEF as involving leadership at a series of levels. Achieving coherence in what is being offered at those levels and a consensus about it is the challenge.

System leaders and regional consortia

Q5 How much progress has been made by the four regional consortia and the respective system leaders in place?

Progress is uneven at the moment. Three consortia are up and running and the fourth has been set up and its delivery of the school improvement function across the six authorities will begin formally in April. System leaders in regional consortia are key to helping schools to improve and change their culture. Their success will be judged by how well they can analyse challenges, plan interventions and support, use existing good practice, set clear expectations for action and how effectively the action leads to an improvement in learner outcomes.

While there is evidence that progress is being made in regional consortia on identifying, training and using system leaders, progress is uneven and there has been too little joined-up thinking across Wales as a whole. We need:

- common criteria for the selection of system leaders
- a definition of the core role of system leader that would allow some local flexibility
- agreement about the knowledge, understanding and skills/competencies that system leaders need to demonstrate
- agreed monitoring arrangements for quality assurance purposes.

There is a need to work to an agreed framework for system leadership and we need joint training at national level that will offer a common starting point and context for more regional training by consortia to build capacity in the school sector, among headteachers, middle leaders and teachers.

The outcome of the training at national level would be to set consistent standards for the role of system leader and consistent expectations for the level of professionalism that the role requires.

Estyn has trained more system leaders as peer inspectors and expect them to join Estyn inspections in order to hone their skill-sets and develop a good working knowledge of inspection standards and of the schools they are involved in inspecting.

Although we have yet to inspect the school improvement services being delivered in conjunction with the regional consortia, we have seen early indications that where system leaders are effective, they are tackling issues and having a greater impact than some of the previous school improvement link officers, especially in weaker local authorities. However there are a few examples where system leaders are less effective and procedures to quality assure their work is at an early stage

Change

Q6 At a time of considerable change in education and training policy in Wales, including potentially the way services are delivered, do you have any concerns that there is insufficient stability to deliver the required improvements?

It is true that a number of aspects of education provision and services are currently under review and for good reasons. Before introducing wholesale change there will be an opportunity to reflect on the likely effects and cumulative effects of changes when or if some or all recommendations from the different reviews are implemented. Some kind of large-scale modelling exercise would help at that point to consider aspects such as the dependencies between review strands, the resourcing implications and the optimum timing for implementation or transition so as to maintain stability.