

**GwE submission to The National Assembly for Wales Children, Young People and Education Committee: School improvement and raising standards**

**1. A brief summary of:**

- **Your approach to school improvement in your region, including how this is informed by the school categorisation process.**

**Regional approach to challenging and supporting schools**

The regional consortium has worked hard over the last two years to change culture and behaviour and move away from a ‘top down’ approach to school improvement, to encouraging professional generosity, reciprocity and a collective moral purpose. There is a culture shift from ‘my’ to ‘our’ and the development of more collaborative and lateral leadership with cluster working and peer engagement integral to the work of school improvement whilst also integrating all aspects of the reform journey. We have also changed the name of the ‘Challenge Adviser’ to ‘Supporting Improvement Adviser’ (SIA).

The following outlines the regional approach to challenging and supporting schools causing concern. All schools are on an improvement journey and thus require differentiated and appropriate support and challenge to varying degrees. A few schools will require more intense targeted intervention.

The label ‘schools causing concern’ is very wide ranging and in its broader term has not been clearly defined in national guidance. For our own purpose within GwE, we have come up with the following definitions:

- Schools that need support to maintain or improve upon standards [i.e. moving from ‘good’ to ‘excellent’ or ‘coasting schools’];
- Schools that are improving but need further support to sustain their improvement trajectory and/or further reduce within school variability;
- Schools that need more specific targeted support and intervention to prevent them being a cause of significant concern;
- Schools that have been identified as causing significant concerns and/or are in a statutory category.

GwE and the local authorities have an overall good track record in effectively supporting schools and specifically those causing concern. All secondary schools have a bespoke ‘Support Plan’ which ensures that GwE support is closely aligned with their School Development Plan priorities. This allows for more effective deployment of resource, regional expertise and best practice.

High challenge and support is targeted in a timely and effective approach leading, in most instances, to an acceleration of the improvement journey in the identified schools, and, where relevant, their removal from Estyn follow-up category.

Local Quality Standards Board meetings are held on a regular basis between LA and GwE senior officer and used to share information around school performance and progress and to agree on any required adaptations to support plans. Interim Accelerated Improvement Boards provide challenge and intervention to those schools in serious

categories of concern. Where concerns remain, escalated action is taken which could include the use of powers of intervention as defined by national guidance.

### **Categorisation process**

The categorisation process on its own does not drive the identification of school needs. The categorisation process is an ongoing process throughout the spring, summer and autumn terms and is captured on G6 (the regional management information system). Clear guidance and exemplified templates are shared with all Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) to ensure greater consistency across the whole region. All SIAs use an appropriate evidence base on which to make an accurate and well informed categorisation judgements. Categorisation is discussed throughout the year with LA representative in the County Quality Boards that meet on a fortnightly basis.

All schools going into an Estyn statutory category are categorised as D Red and then reviewed following progress as noted in the guidance.

*'In normal circumstances the improvement capacity of a school requiring **significant improvement or special measures** should not normally be higher than D and the support category red in the first instance. As a school addresses the recommendations from its inspection, evidence about its progress should be weighed carefully and professional judgement applied when reviewing the school's support category.'*

There are clear rationale for reviewing and changing the support category based on progress against recommendations and end of key stage performance (time in category is also considered).

#### Strengths:

- Very good correlation between regional picture, categorisation process and Estyn findings, especially in the primary sector.
- Robust and consistent process in place.
- G6 management information system used effectively to inform categorisation.
- SIAs know their schools very well and schools have been accurately and robustly categorised.

#### Aspects for Development:

- Further develop cross-regional working for the process moving forward to ensure national consistency in the process.
- Continue to work closely with the Quality and Standards Group and ensure that all stakeholders are kept apprised of any changes to National Categorisation.
- Continue to involve SIAs for peer assessment in the quality assurance process.

### **Current regional situation**

Over the past 18 months, GwE has:

- re-profiled its service to ensure that additional resource is targeted towards the secondary sector;
- strengthened its team of link secondary SIAs to ensure relevant experience and expertise, including serving and retired headteachers;
- ensured all secondary schools have access to a generic and bespoke programme of support;

- facilitated access to curriculum, More Able and Talented (MAT), post 16 and subject networks to disseminate good practice;
- adopted a targeted 'wave' support for ensuring continued improvements in core subjects;
- enhanced the GwE offer of professional development opportunities [and especially for experienced, new and potential leaders of the future];
- led the *Assessment for Learning* regional initiative to improve teaching and learning with Shirley Clarke;
- ensured further support for head teachers via strategic forum meetings and for participating schools through the *Excellence and Innovation* forum;
- supported 12 regional schools to research and address in-school variance by improving data tracking and intervention. Lessons extracted from the pilot will be transferable to all schools across the LA;
- provided financial support for a more diagnostic approach to securing improvements at Key Stage 4 (KS4) English and Mathematics via PIXL;
- provided specific training at behest of schools for curriculum middle leaders and pastoral leaders;
- supported bespoke training for targeted schools and departments to improve aspects of the teaching and learning.

In addition to the bespoke support delivered for secondary schools in the core subjects, generic regional and local guidance has also been available via subject networks and forums. Some of the key areas addressed include:

- English: A Level study support, Accelerated Reader training, developing literacy across the curriculum, improving oracy to support writing, improving tracking and intervention at KS4, improving standards of writing at KS4, guidance on More Able and Talented (MAT) provision in English, development of resources e.g. *'Fix-it' resource to support the repair work required to address identified weak skills, Mastery Packs for KS4, Gothic SOW with grammar focus for Y7*
- Mathematics: leadership guidance and up-dates for new curriculum, sharing of best practice from Whiterose Maths Academies on the development of pedagogy within their cluster of schools, developing departmental pedagogy by 'deepening thinking', developing pedagogy at A level, supporting collaboration between numeracy co-ordinators to identify best practice in developing skills across the curriculum, develop leadership of numeracy co-ordinators who are within the first two years of being in post, developing understanding of the changes to the Numeracy Procedural tests.
- Science: excelling at GCSE Science – sharing best practice, sharing successful intervention strategies at KS4, developing scientific literacy – evidence based Research from Bangor University, developing strategies to engage learners in Science, working with schools to build scientific knowledge and supporting pupils in learning scientific concepts, developing reading skills in Science, sharing 'how to learn strategies' and retrieval practice, developing reading skills and the understanding of command and tier two words, developing deeper understanding of the GCSE specifications.
- Welsh: assessment for learning principles, sharing resources, language and grammar accuracy, opportunities for language teachers within schools to collaborate and plan together to respond to changes in the new curriculum, emphasis on literature and the development of oracy, reading and writing skills,

improving oracy, reading and writing standards in KS4, effective questioning, pedagogy - sharing effective strategies and ideas to promote oracy.

### **Moving Forward**

We recognise that all schools are on a continuum of improvement. Some are emerging and developing, others developing and strengthening whilst our strongest schools are more autonomous and empowered.

As a service we are often asked to synthesise a myriad of school improvement metrics into a single definition. However, it is just as important to capture the journey and not just the 'snap shot' of a school's position on that journey.

### **Peer engagement**

We also believe that peer engagement and support should be an integral part of school improvement. Welsh Government's vision for an evaluation, improvement and accountability system is one that is fair, coherent, proportionate, transparent, and based on shared values for Welsh education. The National Mission commits us to work with Welsh Government and other key stakeholders to establish new evaluation and improvement arrangements at all levels. These arrangements will need to be robust and strong enough to bring about the required improvements and especially so within the secondary sector. There is a clear expectation that within these arrangements schools develop not only the required capacity and skills to effectively challenge themselves, but also the ability to work collaboratively and systemically in a school improvement model founded on professional peer review.

GwE and the six regional local authorities has undertaken a consultation process with head teacher representation around the various aspects of the *National Reform Journey*. In terms of developing a regional framework for peer-to-peer engagement and support, head teachers suggested the following principles:

- a peer review approach should be adopted regionally to further drive progress towards a self-improving system;
- the peer-review model should not be developed to deliver a *pseudo-inspection* system;
- all stakeholders should work effectively together to ensure that we create the right conditions for effective peer review;
- we should agree and adopt a regional set of principles and technical language for our model;
- we should agree framework parameters which will allow flexibility for schools to operate a range of models;
- schools should have the freedom and flexibility to choose their peers;
- the model should involve peer engagement at all levels within a school;
- the model should promote trust, honesty, transparency and professional confidence;
- engagement should be a supportive and sustainable process and not a one-off imposition event;
- the model should support a cultural shift towards collegiate responsibility

As Steve Munby and Michael Fullen (2016) outline in their paper '*Inside-out and downside-up*', the critical success factors for an effective system-wide school collaboration are as follows:

- the purpose of collaboration must be to improve outcomes;
- the partnership must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose;
- transparency, trust and honesty are crucial;
- a commitment to and capacity for effective peer review form the engine that drives improvement;
- peer review needs to be carried out within a long-term relationship and a commitment to continuously improving practice and systems through cycles of collaborative enquiry;
- the partnership must have a plan to move from collaboration to co-responsibility to a position of shared professional accountability;
- the partnership should go beyond school leaders and engage with students, teachers, families and communities;
- partnerships welcome scrutiny and support from other partnerships as their contribution to a connected local, regional and national system.

We firmly believe that peer engagement should underpin a rigorous cycle of continuous improvement and include:

- **Self-review:** effective peer review should start with how well the school knows itself and be led by the school being reviewed. The national self-evaluation toolkit developed by Estyn/OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the profession should play a key role in this aspect. Self-evaluation should focus on the learner, their achievements, progress and experiences in school and focus on learning and teaching, leadership, the development of a learning organisation culture, well-being of pupils and staff, equity and inclusion. In moving forward, the self-evaluation should also focus on the four purposes of the new curriculum and evaluate the progress the school is making towards realising the new curriculum. The self-evaluation processes should allow the school to identify areas of strengths and priorities for improvement. It should also identify aspects of their improvement journey that require peer support to aid improvement.
- **Peer-review:** the most effective peer reviews have an agreed focus. The purpose of the collaboration must be to improve outcomes and any agreed focus should be based on strong evidence of what's needed to improve and what outcomes would be most benefit to the school. Peer reviewers working as a team or trio work best where they can triangulate evidence and jointly analyse their findings. They are not there to pass judgement but to seek evidence and agree findings to be shared with the school. It is imperative that the peer review process does not become a *pseudo-inspection* system. The partnership must be founded on a clearly articulated shared moral purpose with transparency, trust and honesty crucial and integral to the process. The peer review should also provide professional development opportunities and include leaders at all levels.
- **School-to-school support:** if peer review is going to be a vehicle for ongoing improvement in school systems, then it must go further than the review itself and involve school to school or cluster support. Where the outcomes are owned by the staff, the long-term and sustainable impact will be greater. This helps to further build capacity and increased resilience within a self-improving system. The partnerships built should therefore go beyond school leaders and engage with students, teachers, families and communities.



GwE and the six regional local authorities are currently working with schools to establish a regional peer engagement model which fully reflects the principles and values that have been identified by head teachers and which also harvests from best practice nationally and beyond. Supporting Improvement Advisers are central to the facilitation and the development of this model.

This articulates our approach within the 'accountability' aspect of the reform journey. It details how peer engagement can be used to underpin a rigorous cycle of continuous development and improvement. We believe that peer engagement and support should be an integral part of school improvement in moving to a self-improving system whilst also supporting those schools that are causing concern.

### **The Reform Journey**

GwE is working with all local authority schools to ensure a clear and systematic approach to support and reflect on their engagement with all aspects of the reform journey.

In partnership with stakeholders, GwE has developed a long-term supportive and sustainable strategy which is successfully building capacity across the region to meet the challenges of the wider reform. The integrated approach has focused on developing collaborative opportunities across clusters of schools i.e. secondary and their local primary schools. For both Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Curriculum for Wales (CfW), facilitators have been identified in each cluster and have received professional learning through a bespoke change management training accredited by an international awarding body. Each cluster, supported with appropriate additional building capacity funding, has identified a number of focused workstreams developing teaching and learning and as part of ALN and Curriculum for Wales reform. Success criteria include increased opportunities for primary and secondary practitioners to work together to plan and prepare for the continuum of learning from 3-16 and to reflect and develop innovative pedagogical approaches.

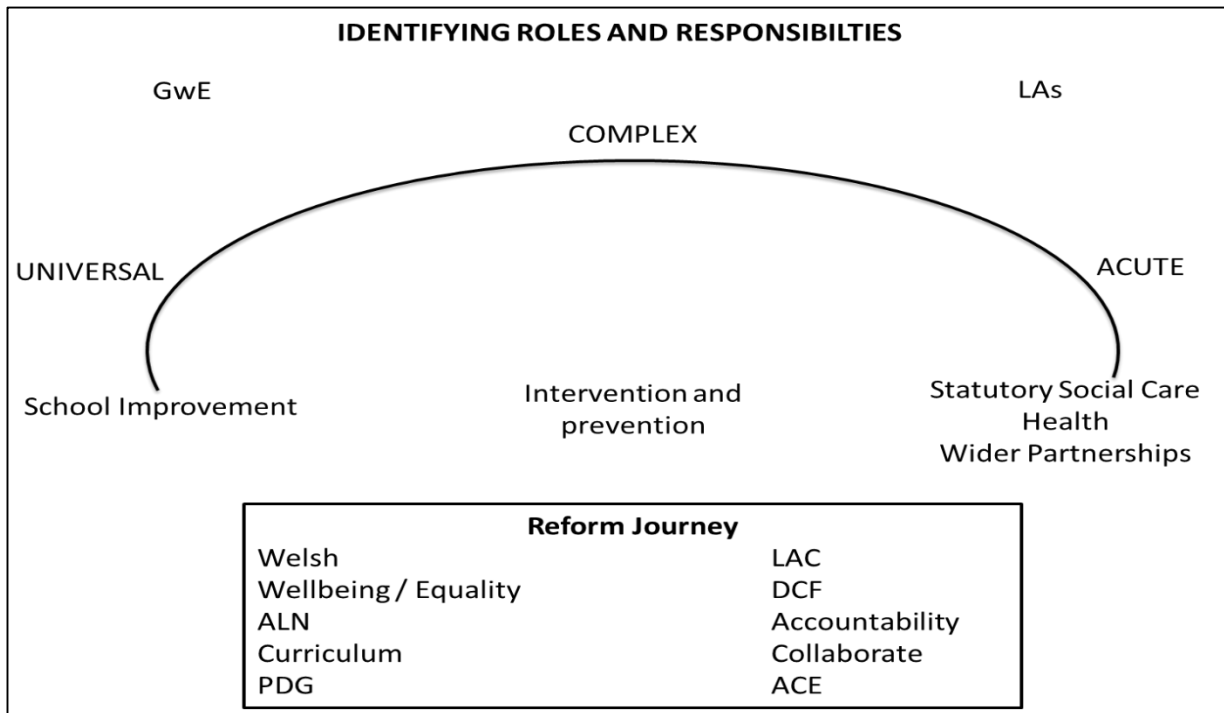
Schools are engaging well with all aspects of the reform journey to include ALN and Curriculum for Wales. Schools have welcomed the integrated approach taken by GwE and SIAs have had regular face-to-face contact with school leaders to develop relationships and share rationale as part of shift in culture, ethos, expectations and accountability. Impact of this can be seen in the increased engagement of G6 reform modules. In November 2018, 77% of schools across the region stated that they were partly on track or better for the Knowledge & understanding milestone. By November 2019 this figure has risen to 91%. In November 2018, 69% of schools across the region stated that they were partly on track or better for the Engagement & participation milestone. By November 2019 this figure has risen to 96%. Feedback is clear that at this point, schools feel they are on track with their staff awareness of the information currently available on the curriculum developments, in particular 4 purposes and 12 pedagogical principles.

Monthly SIA team meetings continue to provide important opportunities for the full team to share updates and develop consistent messaging on an integrated platform across the wider education reform. Further to this, prompt sheets and resources are shared.

SIA's effectively disseminate consistent key messages, including examples of successful practice regarding the national reform agenda with all schools. The national reform journey is embedded in regional and local authority priorities where SIA's provide thorough and informed support to all clusters on key aspect of the reform journey.

As a result of this work, schools are well placed to respond to the demands of the reform.

- **How you work with your member local authorities to ensure synergy and no duplication in your school improvement work.**



There is a clear and robust accountability framework in GwE. The Business Planning Framework that's in place ensures clarity, accountability and strategic coordination in the delivery of the priorities on a local, regional and national level.

Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE and align with *Education in Wales: Our National Mission* (Welsh Government), reflecting the current regional and national priorities, and clearly noting the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda.

The priorities and areas for improvement are based firmly on the findings of the self-evaluation processes and through consultation with headteachers and the local authorities.

Each Local Authority (LA) has a detailed business plan, which are closely aligned to the LA business plans, which has been agreed upon by the head of service and the lead Core Advisers. In each plan, there are details about key issues pertaining to the local authority along with a unique improvement plan to address specific challenges. These are quality assured at both regional and local levels to ensure there is no duplication and that the regional plans address local priorities.

The relationship and collaboration between the local authorities and the Regional School Improvement Service (GwE) is very good. Through this relationship, the local authorities provides its schools with robust and appropriate challenge, support and intervention. As a result, schools benefit from a diverse regional professional learning offer and bespoke support at individual school and cluster level. These partnerships have a positive impact on developing the quality of leadership and provision and on pupil outcomes in important areas.

The local authorities has benefited from the establishment of a Regional School Improvement team that has ensured greater consistency in its challenge and support especially to secondary schools. The strength of the service's revised strategy in using the expertise and experience of service staff and school senior leaders to provide high quality guidance and support to schools has contributed to improved consistency in the quality of school improvement activity within the local authorities.

During the recent inspection of Flintshire County Council, Estyn concluded that:

*The local authority and the regional consortium (GwE) work well together to support those schools which need to improve the outcomes pupils achieve by the end of key stage 4. There is a strong working relationship between the authority's education officers, the consortium's supporting improvement advisers (SIAs) and the secondary schools, focused on improvement. This relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding.*

*The authority has a strong working relationship with the regional consortium, and contributes well to its management, governance and scrutiny. The local authority and GwE share information frequently for operational purposes. This creates a shared understanding of school performance and ensures that the provision of bespoke packages of support is appropriate. (Estyn – June 2019)*

Similar findings were also found during Denbighshire and Wrexham inspections.

In September 2018, Steve Munby – an education consultant on leadership and system reform - reviewed GwE's current practice and direction of travel. Steve Munby recently re-visited the region to help us further evaluate the service and shape our future direction and concluded:

*It is encouraging to see that there is a genuine partnership approach being developed between GwE and local authorities and that the relationship with local authorities is at least as good as it was last year, if not better. Roles are being clarified, relationships are being strengthened and effective ways of working are being developed. "GwE's role is support and challenge; the local authority's role is accountability and statutory work". Steve Munby (October 2019)*

## **2. Details of funding you are responsible for spending in 2019-2020, to include:**



- **How much funding you are receiving in 2019-20 from each local authority for your school improvement services.**

Local Authority	2019/20 £	2019/20 %
Ynys Môn	368,745	10.20
Gwynedd	637,630	17.64
Conwy	553,019	15.30
Denbighshire	551,437	15.26
Flintshire	820,790	22.71
Wrexham	682,966	18.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,614,596</b>	

- **How much in Welsh Government grants you are responsible for distributing in 2019-20, including a breakdown between the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant and the Pupil Development Grant, as well as details of how much is delegated to schools and how much is administered / spent on a regional basis.**

	Total	Delegation	% Delegation
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant	33,794,084	29,477,494	87%
<i>* Includes LA match to Education Improvement Grant £2,486,280</i>			
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)	17,052,050	17,011,050	100%
PDG (Lead Regional PDG Adviser)	100,000	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,946,134</b>	<b>46,488,544</b>	<b>91%</b>

**3. A summary of Key Stage 4 and A/AS Level examination data for 2019 and previous years in your region, plus any analysis you wish to provide.**

**Reporting on Key Stage 4 (KS4) results**

New interim KS4 measures have been introduced for 2019 as part of the significant education reform programme in Wales.

National data capture for individual schools will be based on first entry results. The data provided regionally for individual school and LAs will also be based on first entry results.

JCQ/WJEC have published their data and press release based on the 'best outcome' obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series. There will be differences between first entry and best outcome data.

As a result, across several indicators, it will not be possible to compare 2019 figures with previous performance.

The table below shows the new interim measures and the methodology used for calculating. It also demonstrates the key differences with previous years.

Interim Measure	How it is calculated	Differences from previous years, and why comparisons cannot be made
Capped 9	<p>The Capped 9 Points Score is a performance measure calculating the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual pupils in the cohort, capped at a specified volume of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.</p> <p>Three of the nine slots require the awards of specific subjects and qualifications in order to contribute any points towards the measure. These slots are each one GCSE in size, specifying requirements in literacy, numeracy and science GCSEs only.</p> <p>The best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs can contribute towards the literacy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs can contribute towards the numeracy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from a science GCSE can contribute towards the science slot (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications currently available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award).</p> <p>The remaining six qualifications will include the pupil’s best performance in either GCSE and/or vocational equivalent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Only a pupil’s first entry will count</li> <li>✓ WJEC Science GCSE only</li> </ul>
Literacy measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a pupil.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count, with Literature also accepted within this measure

Numeracy measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a pupil	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count
Science measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from a science GCSE awarded to a learner (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award) - these are identified as being able to contribute towards science measures.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count
The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure	Calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.	Reported separately as a main indicator for the first time in 2019

In this context, the data should be analysed on a local level and as a starting point to question local priorities.

Although 2019 data is currently available on historical performance measures (L1, L2, L2+ and 5A\*-A), comparison with previous years is not valid because of the first entry counting rather than best outcome.

## **Emerging questions to help evaluate pupil progress, standards and performance**

### **Key Stage 4:**

- To what extent are all schools embracing the national change in direction and behaviour to maximise the performance of individual pupils across the ability range? Do school leaders have a clear vision for what to change and why?
- Have all schools developed effective self-evaluation arrangements which go beyond examination performance data to identify what they are doing well and what needs to change?
- How appropriate is the schools' curriculum across the region? Have all schools robustly evaluated the impact and contribution of individual non-core subjects into the revised C9 measure? Is this supported by leaders making effective and timely use of Welsh Government bulletin up-dates?
- Are current internal accountability and quality assurance processes robust enough to ensure consistent performance by individual pupils across their option choices i.e. are leaders effectively addressing In School Variance?

- What actions are leaders undertaking with departments that are outperforming the school average and with those that are underperforming?
- To what extent do individual departments forensically analyse the data shared by WJEC on subject performance?
- To what extent do all departmental staff, across the range of subjects, understand the assessment weighting for each specification? How does this effectively impact on their planning and delivery and, where relevant, the understanding of grading, awarding and reporting?
- To what extent are departments making effective use of the Chief Examiner's annual report which highlights strengths and weaknesses of performance?
- Many schools have members who are WJEC examination markers. To what extent are their expertise fully utilised within and across schools?
- Why has the performance in English dropped significantly in a number of historically strong performing departments?
- Why is there a variance in a number of regional schools between the performance of Mathematics and Maths-Numeracy?
- How well do current 14-19 local strategies ensure that funding is effectively used to deliver appropriate experiences and qualifications for targeted groups of pupils and to what extent do they contribute to the revised interim measures in each local authority?
- Are we confident that the national change in direction has sufficiently impacted on the local provision for Education other than at school (EOTAS)? To what extent has their performance in 2019 impacted on local authority outcomes?
- Are we confident that the national change in direction has sufficiently impacted on the local provision for Special Schools (145 pupils in Year 11) and Units? To what extent has their performance in 2019 impacted on local authority outcomes?
- Within the region there are \*\*\*\*\* EOTAS pupils in year 11 – by grouping them together this is a larger cohort than what we have in any school. To what extent are leaders and staff within Pupil Referral Units supported and skilled to clearly identify how best to maximise the performance of individual pupils across the revised performance measures?

#### **A/AS Level:**

The delivery model for Key Stage 5 varies within authorities and across the region. Provision is delivered by individual schools, sixth form colleges, further education colleges or collaboration between schools (and colleges) within the consortium. This deems it difficult to come to a meaningful conclusion regarding Key Stage 5 performance in the region.

GwE commission ALPs – a company who measure A level progress from GCSE to A level across over 2,000 providers across England and Wales - to provide results analysis for all schools and local authorities, and to provide us with a full regional report. The progress grade for the region ('T' score) has improved in 2019 from a 5 to a 4 which places regional performance as a whole in the top 40% of performers. This represents a significant improvement in the progress made by students in our Sixth Forms in 2019. At AS level the 'T' score is also a 4, suggesting progress in 2020 should also be strong.

**4. A summary of PISA 2018 results in your region (if available), plus any analysis you wish to provide.**

Regional analysis is not available.

Wales has seen its performance improve in international tests in reading, maths and science. The biggest improvement was in maths, while science is also now close to the international average.

The number of high-performing students in Wales rose from 4% to 7%.

There was also no significant gender gap for the first time.

**5. An update on progress to tackle the attainment gap in your region:**

**a. Between eligible for free school meals (eFSM) pupils and other pupils:**

A clear and robust Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Support Plan for both FSM and Looked After Children (LAC) is being implemented across the region with clear communication plans.

PDG grant - The following actions have been implemented to drive improvement across the region:

- Further development and implementation of the consortia's PDG Strategic Adviser Role across the region with focus on regional objectives/outcomes and national collaboration and consistency of role via the All Wales PDG project group.
- Increase in the number of schools implementing the regional PDG framework model, focusing on the 5 key areas that are evidence based.
- PDG Workshop developed and delivered across the region to support schools to further embed evidence based practises both via Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI) and via the EET toolkit.
- Targeted work on the effective practise in relation to PDG for school governors.
- Further development in supporting Pupil Referral Units (PRU) in the use of the PDG and developing key strategies via the regional PRU steering group.
- Targeted support via the PDG for schools to deliver evidence based practise such as the Readiness for Learning project and Trauma Informed Schools.
- Increase in the number of individual PDG monitoring visits across the region and working with Core Leads to identify schools/settings that need additional support and to identify successful practise.
- Further developed Oracy and Literacy intervention programmes. Good practise to be shared in the Evidence based conference in February 2020.
- Supporting schools to further develop key interventions with the PDG and evaluate its impact.
- Rolled out the Evaluating and measuring impact guidance across the region for schools to use to identify successful practice and distance travelled by FSM learners.

- Data, target setting and tracking are more effectively and consistently applied and discussed with SIA's/LA's via the Strategic & Core Lead.
  - Annual audit and evaluation of impact on the actual evidence of grant spend has been carried out on the PDG in each school for 2018/19 and 2019-2020. This has resulted in identifying specific lines of enquiry for SIA's during school monitoring visits.
- b. Between ethnic minority groups at risk of underachieving and other pupils;**  
**c. Between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, and other pupils;**

Since 2017, the Minority Ethnic Achievement, and Gypsy and Traveller Children Education Grants are passported directly from Welsh Government to Local Authorities. The grant amounts vary considerably depending on the demographics. For example in some authorities, there is a high percentage of Pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) and the grant is used to fund a support service.

Outcomes are analysed annually. Through the work of Supporting Improvement Advisers, the performance of various groups of learners are analysed and are part of the conversation with schools.

The GwE data team has produced a comprehensive assessment tracker tool which enables schools to analyse pupil performance and identify underperformance. Many schools who have adopted the tool as their main progress tracker have been identified by ESTYN as effectively tracking learner progress and used as good practice case studies. The impact of the data summary and tracking can be seen in many schools with schools focusing on progress of groups of learners.

Through the vast range of development programmes offered to schools, teachers are now much more knowledgeable about the development of literacy and numeracy, how to influence and advance learning for all groups of learners, lead subjects effectively in school and offer support to other schools, with regard to their own development journey.

- d. Between Looked After Children (LAC) and other pupils (and any work to identify and improve the attainment of adopted children compared to other pupils).**

Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Strategy - GwE's business plan model and strategy is fully implemented across the region. Our focus is to increase the cluster approach and ensure targeted schools/clusters are getting access to the regional funds. We are also working closely with the 6 LAs to ensure clear communication and collaboration in regards to additional support and intervention to show evidence of impact of LAC PDG. The main areas to drive improvement across the region are as follows:

- Focus on developing decision making and lines of accountability in regard to the PDG LAC between schools, LA and Consortia. Effective collaboration with children services across all 6 LA in regard to the LAC PDG.



- Strong communication strategies are in place to inform Looked After Children in Education (LACE) coordinators, school staff and wider stakeholders of regional plans, REC level provision, and processes for accessing funding which is delegated or open for bids
- Effective data sharing via the Children Receiving Care Census to Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) to ensure targeted support via the LAC PDG and PEPs (Personal Education Plan).
- The regional LAC PDG guidance model is fully implemented across the region. Most clusters are accessing the PDG and schools are also accessing individual bursary for LAC.
- Increase in the number of schools/settings who are trauma informed and ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) aware. This has resulted in teaching staff being more confident in dealing with learners and identifying suitable support and provision and more schools who have an inclusive approach in relation to the teaching and learning. Over 220 schools have attended the Trauma Informed / ACE practise within this academic year. During the last 18 months all schools who have LAC have been targeted to receive professional development in trauma informed practise and classrooms.
- Nearly all LAC have a Boxall Profile to measure the developmental needs and distance travelled. The LAC PDG has been utilised to offer training and mentoring for schools to implement the tool successfully. In addition we have increased the focus on supporting schools to measure wellbeing via a range of evidence based measures.
- The processes for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the LAC PDG have been developed and trialled with a number of schools in 2018/19. The One Page Evaluation received positive feedback and now forms part of the 2019-20 grant guidance along with a sample individual tracking tool. It also captures learner voice across the clusters / schools.
- More school accessing the LAC PDG to support adopted children. The consortia is piloting an Adopted Learner Plan for schools to share with adoptive parents and to identify key areas of support. Initial feedback is positive as it's ensuring a person centered approach.
- Health & Wellbeing self-assessment tool has been developed in partnership with CAMHS (Child and adolescent mental health services) and LA's, incorporating the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE ) / Estyn LAC checklist and ACES toolkit.
- Regional ACE strategy in collaboration with the 6 LA to ensure universal approach across the region and sustainability of support to schools.
- We have worked with all LA to identify Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs and this has informed the CPD GwE offer, this has also ensured we are not duplicating offers to schools and value for money.
- 22 targeted schools / LA staff across the region have completed their Diploma in Trauma Informed Schools and Mental Health. An additional 28 are currently completing the diploma. The Group will have a role in supporting successful practise in schools going forward and ensuring how the principles can be implemented within the pedagogical approaches.

- During 2018-19 around half of LAC have accessed additional tuition in year 10/11 to support with exam practice, study skills and revision that has impacted on their overall achievement.
- Collaboration with the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI), in regards to a project looking at Readiness to Learn and targeting schools with high number of FSM/LAC.

**6. An update on how you are challenging and supporting schools that participated in schools challenge Cymru. We would be particularly grateful to know how you have ensured that, where schools' performance improved during the programme, this positive momentum has continued.**

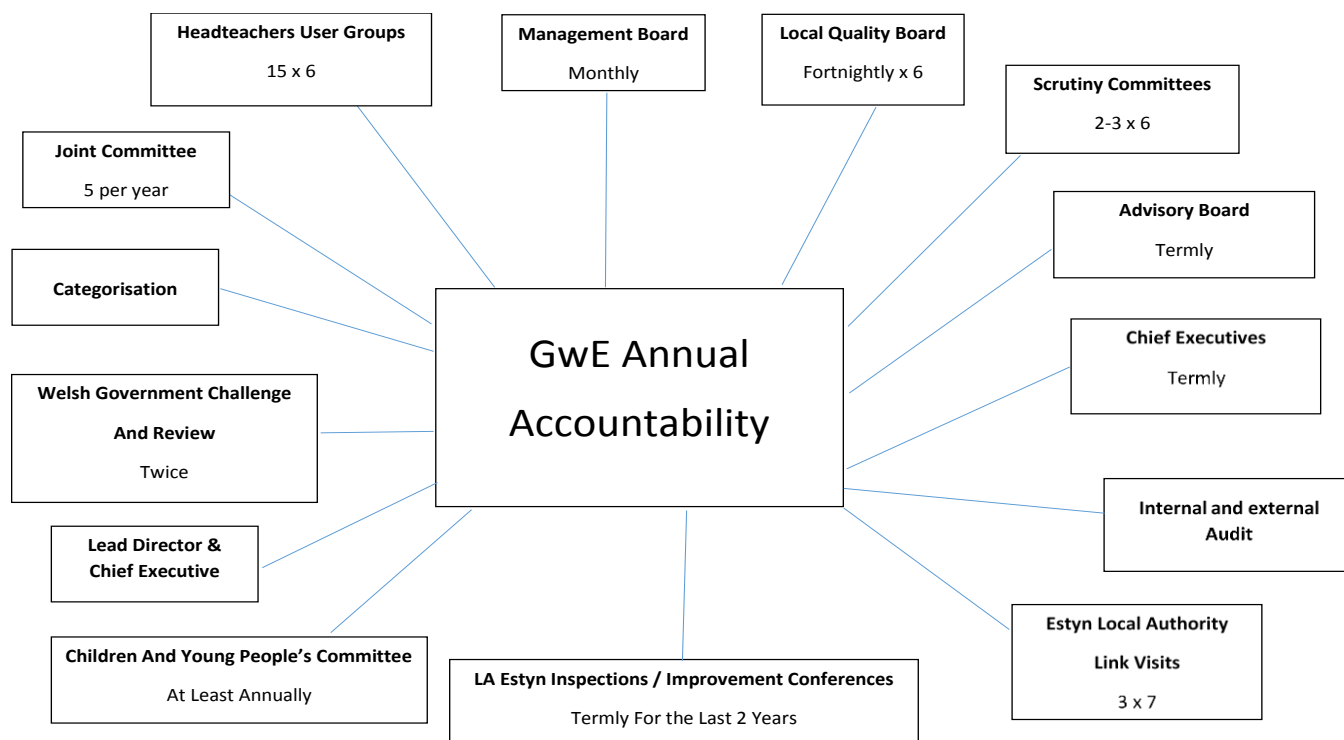
The GwE Region had only 5 schools that participated in School Challenge Cymru (SCC). The progress made in the five schools over the period of the programme was generally disappointing.

Three of the school have been placed in special measures and the other two have recently made improvements and been removed from Estyn follow-up categories - one from Special Measures and the other from Estyn Review.

The Schools Challenge Cymru programme had little or no impact on the schools participating from the North. Funding received for building capacity across the region was also much less compared to other regions, and therefore its impact on non SCC school was also minimal. However, GwE has taken some of the most effective elements from SCC and integrated them into the Secondary Challenge and Support Strategy. This includes the use of Accelerated Improvement Boards for schools causing concerns.

**7. Any comments you have on current and future school accountability arrangements and the impact of these on school improvement.**

**GwE Annual Accountability**



### Accountability system for schools in Wales

The Welsh Government alongside several partners and experts has undertaken a fundamental review of the accountability system for schools in Wales.

Findings highlighted that the existing system and its use of performance measures has many negative unintended consequences, such as:

- narrowing curriculum choice;
- disproportionate focus on particular groups of learners;
- the way in which benchmarking is used driving competition between schools rather than encouraging collaboration;
- an increased and unnecessary workload for teachers and others in the system, without the necessary impact or benefit for learners; and
- an aggregation of data for *accountability* purposes where it was designed for *improvement* purposes.

As a result, schools have heard conflicting messages from the various parts of the system about what matters. This has often diverted effort from learning and teaching and moved us towards a culture of compliance and bureaucracy.

A joint communication from **Welsh Government, the WLGA and Estyn** to Chairs of Scrutiny, Cabinet Members, Directors of Education, Chief Executive Officers, and Managing Directors of Regional Education Consortia, published on **16 July 2019** stated that:

*“It is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures. It is not in the interest of school improvement and risks undermining the ongoing change in culture that we are working together to achieve. We expect local authorities and regional consortia to support schools*

*to make appropriate decisions about their curriculum to avoid narrowing choice for learners.*

*Collectively, we have agreed that this is the right approach to take and strongly advise you to use a broad range of un-aggregated data and information to enable you to discharge your duties when reporting on school performance. Evaluating the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level will be more helpful to supporting and challenging individual schools with their improvement.”*

Consortia reporting on performance will adhere to this guidance.

### **Evaluation and Improvement Arrangements Workshops**

A seminar by WG and WLGA was recently held for elected members in the region in relation to the new Evaluation and Improvement arrangements. The main objectives were as follows:

- To update lead members for education and scrutiny leads on the development of new national arrangements for Evaluation and Improvement
- To identify and share good practice in the scrutiny of school performance that goes beyond looking at just headline data and key performance indicators
- To identify any potential barriers to the development of new approaches to Evaluation and Improvement Arrangements at a local level
- To discuss and debate what future arrangements for Evaluation and Improvement might look like at a local level
- To identify any future support needs

The seminar provided an opportunity for members to gain a broader understanding of the important role they will play in providing effective scrutiny under the new arrangements. The education system is changing, and we all must change our established practices. This will mean changing the way we challenge schools as well as how we support them. The role of Democratic Scrutiny in the new Evaluation and Improvement arrangements as a function of accountability is key to its success.

GwE have also held local workshops with elected members in some local authorities in relation to the new interim Key Stage 4 performance measures and the National Evaluation and Improvement Arrangements.

During the academic year 2020-2021, further professional learning for all elected members will be arranged.

This direction of travel is welcomed. As a region we welcome the changes to the accountability arrangements, the focus on a broader range of performance measures, the focus on self-evaluation and improvement planning and the increased support and resources for wellbeing.

## **8. Any other comments you wish to make on the school improvement and raising standards agenda**

### **Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO)**

GwE has worked with the OECD to develop the Consortia and LAs as learning organisations. Findings from this work were shared with other regions, and internationally, as we further strived to develop a vivacious and healthy organisation.

During 2018-19, 50 regional schools were randomly selected by Welsh Government to respond to a survey focusing on the seven dimensions of Schools as Learning Organisations (SLOs). Schools received a snapshot of their results. This was a quick overview of aspects for further development.

These schools have received support from GwE to develop these aspects through regular meetings, visiting effective practice in a national conference, along with looking at specific aspects of action research by attending a presentation on 'Spiral of Enquiry'.

Several GwE schools have been working on developing a resource to convey Schools as Learning Organisations to our pupils. Seven schools collaborated to develop an animation with pupils and young people, which is now to be seen on Welsh Government's website. Regional schools have also developed a community version of the presentation, which is to be included in a national resource jointly developed with the other regions.

All schools who took part in the survey have held various activities to further develop SLO in their schools, and have produced case studies to this purpose.

The region was requested by Welsh Government to produce a resource to raise the awareness of schools in Wales of what it means to be a SLO. This resource was jointly developed with the other regions in Wales, and is now used by 20 GwE schools to raise awareness of SLOs in their catchment areas and beyond across all schools in the North.

A national plan has been jointly developed with the other regions on how we will develop each school in Wales to be a learning organisation. Even though it is a national plan, there will be a local flavour when presented regionally.

The SLO survey has now been sent to all schools in Wales before the end of the summer term and schools are in the process of completing the survey and recognising which of the 7 dimensions they need to develop further through drawing up their own action plan.

The region has also worked closely with Bangor University recently in order to develop a LO survey for the middle tier. All regions have now agreed the contents and the survey will be ready in the new year for all regions to complete.

Finally, a member of staff from our original SLO survey schools has been appointed by Welsh Government to further develop SLO across all schools in Wales. Welsh Government have asked GwE to support and advise this new appointee during the early days of her new job.