

# APPENDIX 4

## SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### NOTES

8 FEBRUARY 2013

#### **Scrutiny Investigation into Education Quality – Presentation by Dr Brett Pugh, School Standards and Delivery Division**

##### **Present**

**Councillors:-** Alwyn Gruffydd, Siôn Wyn Jones, Dewi Owen, Liz Saville Roberts and Canon Robert Townsend.

**Officers:** Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Commission Service), Vera Jones (Democratic Service Manager), Huw Rowlands (Assistant Performance Improvement Officer) and Glynda O'Brien (Members and Scrutiny Support).

**Apology:** Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn

Canon Robert Townsend chaired the meeting.

#### **1. PRESENTATION BY DR BRETT PUGH, SCHOOL STANDARDS AND DELIVERY DIVISION**

Dr Brett Pugh was welcomed to the meeting and the Chair thanked him for accepting the invitation to give a presentation to the Scrutiny Investigation.

Dr Pugh gave an outline of his career as a learning practitioner for over 20 years and his recent appointment had been through invitation by the Welsh Government's Education Minister to the post of Head of the School Standards and Delivery Division. He explained that the Division had been established as a catalyst to generate ambition to improve outcomes for children 3-16 years old. It supported improvement by focussing on the 'how' of policy implementation rather than the 'what' of policy development. It was noted that the Division had responsibility for sharpening the use of data; strengthening accountability; ensuring consistent sharing of high-impact practice and evaluating policy implementation.

He outlined the role of the Division that would help bring about improved outcomes for pupils in Wales:

##### **(i) Data and analysis**

- (a) Analysing performance data and building a shared understanding of the challenges faced by schools.
- (b) Leading the process of national banding of schools and drawing together data sources into a coherent set to be used by consortia and local authorities.
- (c) Leading accountability processes involving data such as the development of school targets and profiles.

(ii) **Planning and capacity**

- (a) Working closely with consortia and local authorities to identify and share high impact practice on a consistent basis.
- (b) Supporting coherent planning an capacity-building focussed on how to raise standards and narrow gaps.
- (c) Ensuring the Improving Schools Plan is delivering core improvement practices across the system by means of a robust performance management programme.

(iii) **Routines and response**

- (a) Leading stock takes with consortia to regularly review progress and be part of the two-way support and challenge with consortia, local authorities and the Welsh Government.
- (b) Carrying out fast-paced reviews to evaluate quality of policy implementation.
- (c) Producing feedback reports on progress in improving outcomes and policy implementation.

Dr Pugh added that 6 Civil Servants together with 6 Head teachers had been seconded (who work 30 days a year) as part of the Division and a stock take was carried out by having sessions of looking at school performances from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 3 / 4. These sessions are followed by actions that are submitted to Council Leaders, Chief Executives, Cabinet Members and Directors of Education.

Reviews were undertaken via conferences with Head teachers and the feedback reports were looked at and capacity reviews undertaken.

In response to a query by a Member regarding poor performances, Dr Pugh explained that he was directly accountable to the Minister of Education and he gave an assurance that he would voice his views if he saw inappropriate situations. If standards did not rise, Dr Pugh was of the opinion that the process had to be changed. From his experience working with a specific school, examples were seen of standards improving by implementing a strict tracking system in Year 7.

Reference was made to performance in reading, mathematics and science by country based on the PISA mean score in 2009.

In response to a comment made by a Member regarding the role of this authority to maximise standards in TL2+ with reference made to a comparison with a school in England that shared the same characteristics as some Welsh schools, Dr Pugh explained that the following factors influenced the performance in England and these had not been part of the system in Wales.

- (1) That the schools in England (North Harrow) had experienced a change in OFSTED inspections that were much stricter than ESTYN in Wales.
- (2) Forensic challenge for schools
- (3) Look at learning methods, working with Department Heads especially Mathematics

Members of the Scrutiny Investigation were referred to primary and secondary school performance in Wales since 2008, noting primary assessments, average performance and performance against the free school meals indicator.

Attention was drawn to the historical performance of pupils who attain level 2 including Welsh/English and Mathematics which was approximately 51% and the Welsh Government's ambition was to increase the percentage to 65% in the future.

Members were guided through the performance graphs for the last 3 years which indicated:

- (a) Comparison for years 2010, 2011 and 2012 by considering the regions of Wales as well as all Wales against the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including Welsh or English and Mathematics. An increase was seen across the regions in 2012.
- (b) Comparison between the authorities of north Wales against the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including Welsh or English and Mathematics. There was an ascending progress over the 3 years.

Comparison of performance of north Wales authorities for 2012 against the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving. A high percentage had excelled on level 2 Welsh First Language with a lower percentage on level 2 in English and level 2 in Mathematics.

At the end of the first year of schools banding:

- 61 out of the 79 Band 4 and 5 schools saw improvements.
- The average Level 2 including Welsh/English and Mathematics for Band 4 schools moved from 41.7% in 2011 to 46.5% in 2012.
- The average Level 2 including Welsh/English and Mathematics for Band 5 schools moved from 36.0% in 2011 to 41.8% in 2012.
- In contrast only 31 of the 80 Bands 1 and 2 schools made improvements.

Therefore, there was a need to raise ambition.

There had been significant progress in Bands 4 and 5 throughout the country in the number of 15 year old pupils who achieved TL2 including Welsh first Language /English and Mathematics between 2011 and 2012.

The priority of the Education Minister was improve performance in literacy, numeracy and pupils' attainment in deprived areas.

From his experience in education and through visits to schools, Dr Pugh highlighted the following issues for consideration:

- (a) In terms of literacy, the need to work closely and hold reading tests with 7/8 year old pupils was stressed in order to develop their reading attainment. In his experience as a Director of Education in Newport, evidence was seen of an increase in the reading attainment of pupils in key Stage 4 having targeted pupils in the primary sector.
- (b) Shortcomings in pupils not knowing their tables and as a result this contributed to an underperformance in Mathematics.
- (c) An effective partnership should be built for teachers to:

- develop literacy and numeracy;
- continuous professional development;
- leadership;
- information technology.

(ch) The effective development of numeracy in primary schools should be ensured. He outlined excellent examples at Ysgol Cae Top, Bangor where 7 year old pupils understood the concept of fractions. The importance of presenting an aspect of Mathematics was emphasised at the start of a child's school career in the Foundation Phase by combining it with practical activities such as:

- weighing in a cookery lesson
- introducing measurements by planning to build a house.

In terms of the secondary sector, competent teachers should be chosen for different sets. Good examples were seen at Ysgol David Hughes. It would also be beneficial to contact John Summers Secondary School, Flint to ascertain the good practice they undertook in Mathematics lessons.

- (d) Schools should be asked to outline their good practices as well as ask them what is done in specific response to underperformance in Mathematics in strategic planning; ask how they collaborate with parents.
- (dd) Schemes such as 'Parents and Pupils Together' pamphlets for parents to develop mathematical skills with their children.
- (e) Contact Karen Evans, Director of Education in Denbighshire to invite her to share experiences and good practices in their county.
- (f) That tracking the performance of each pupil was important in order to try and improve performance in mathematics together with ensuring suitable learning techniques.
- (ff) The need to be relentless with staff who are not up to standard to support pupils.
- (g) Use all the information to be pro-active; look at the systems of academy schools.
- (h) Look at practices where progress is seen in the attainment of level 2 pupils such as the standards in Tower Hamlets, England. Whilst accepting that the area was not flourishing in terms of the economy, Dr Pugh was of the opinion that the teachers had the correct focus to support pupils and get good results. He was of the view that the size of classes of 15 or less influenced attainment. It was noted that there was a great deal of useful international information available specifically regarding the performance of private schools.
- (i) That 10 secondary schools out of the 14 in Gwynedd within the banding system were to be praised, however, the performance of 4 schools had deteriorated which of course was a matter of concern.
- (j) The head teachers of secondary schools with a lower number should have a thorough knowledge of pupils and know them well. It was added that small schools were more changeable and there was no volatility in the banding

system. There was strength in the model of appointing a Strategic Head for the Ysgol y Moelwyn and Ysgol y Berwyn and that it was a way to move forward and be much more systematic. It would be much better to attract a good Head teacher for two schools and to implement a strategic plan in order to improve the quality of education.

- (k) It was necessary to ensure that good practices were spread to schools; identify competent school leaders; present small grants to support schools. Reference was made to the challenge in Manchester under leadership of Professor Mel Ainscow where significant funding had been invested to improve the results of underperforming schools, improve the attainment of deprived pupils and to create a school of exceptional quality. Schools should be encouraged to apply for grants in order that they may expand their school management teams.

Whilst accepting and agreeing with the above points, the Members of the Investigation noted that some created difficulties:

- (i) It was difficult to recruit Mathematics teachers who were experts in their subject.
- (ii) It was difficult to dismiss teachers who were not up to standard because of employment regulations etc.
- (iii) Whilst accepting that a system of appointing Strategic Heads for two schools would work successfully in towns, there was a fair distance to travel between secondary schools in Gwynedd and therefore it was difficult to implement this effectively.
- (iv) That there were too many changes in education policies and procedures by the Welsh Government compared with other countries that are left alone such as Finland where schools perform well.

To conclude, following a request to Dr Pugh from his experience of interviewing Head teachers /teachers and school visits, to outline three recommendations that would in his view be valuable in terms of implementation, he stated the following:

- (1) Build confidence in teachers in the primary sector to be good numeracy teachers.
- (2) Nurture the ability to develop leadership by middle managers to Heads.
- (3) Have an aspiration to move from what is good in Wales i.e. have an attainment level of more than 85%.

He added by noting that it would be an idea for the Scrutiny Investigation, stemming from the results of the investigation to suggest a model to the Education Cabinet Member as a starting point for the future.

### **Reference and further research**

Professor Ben Levin – Toronto University : <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/magazines/features/ben-levin-on-leadership/>

Michael Fullan: Educational Change:  
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/w/x/wxh139/Fullan.htm>

Robert Hill: Role of the Local Authority as a commissioning authority