

TITLE OF COMMITTEE	Services Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	31 July 2012
TITLE OF ITEM	Scrutiny Investigation into Quality of Education [at the Cabinet Member's request]
CABINET MEMBER	Sian Gwenllian

The Background/Context

As a member of the Education Cabinet and Lead Member for Children and Young People of Gwynedd Council, I have commenced the task of highlighting the principal strategic matters that will require attention between 2012 – 2017 and I aim to collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to achieve a situation whereby all pupils in Gwynedd achieve their potential. The work will mainly focus on the child and his family, so as to:

- provide children/young people and families in Gwynedd to have an opportunity to experience a better quality of life
- improve progress along the individual's life pathways irrespective of background/circumstances
- track progress so as to identify and remove obstacles
- provide the highest possible quality of education so as to create well-rounded individuals who have a strong sense of belonging
- provide our young people with the relevant life and workplace skills
- develop and promote Welsh-medium and bilingual education with Welsh being the language spoken by children and young people of Gwynedd within a social context
- prioritise children's safety, protection and well-being
- report on achievements through the eyes of the children/young people/families
- involve children and young people when creating change and listen to their views

To achieve the above, we have to :

Ensure consistency in the quality of experiences gained by children and young people in our schools [bridge the gap between pupils, between schools and between classes within the same school] :

- improve low standards and disseminate good practice
- raise standards of literacy and numeracy
- focus on schools rolling performance (over 3 years)
- focus on the individual's experience and progress through agreeing on work programmes

- develop appropriate training for the entire workforce
- develop leadership skills and leaders and teachers capacity to inspire pupils
- develop governors skills to be critical friends
- place an emphasis on the entire work of the early years
- fully utilize the Regional Education Improvement Service

Create an educational system that will thrive in future:

- hold a budgetary review [compare Gwynedd education expenditure with other counties and ensure consistency if required]
- primary and secondary schools re-organization
- fulfil the re-organization work that has already been approved
- create a re-organization Priorities Plan following new circumstances in response to exceptional circumstances/emergencies e.g. small numbers, condition of buildings, leader recruitment problems
- focus on education arrangements in Meirionnydd
- develop nursery education at our schools
- conduct a full review of future requirements
- develop a post-16 education with a suitable curriculum

Give particular focus to children [and their families] who require additional support to fully develop [including ALN field] :

- bridge the gap in performance between pupils, between schools and between classes within the same school
- proceed to create a centre of excellence for special education (a new Hafod Lon)
- continue to make adjustments to cater for the needs of pupils with additional learning difficulties and behavioural problems (Inclusion Strategy)
- develop appropriate programmes (including Multi-Agency) that have clear targets that avoids duplication
- preventive activities
- support families to obtain the best service
- early intervention
- nurture parenting skills and financial skills
- Early Years/Flying Start
- Support families through the *Gyda'n Gilydd* scheme; Plas Pawb/Caban Bach
- support children/young people who have or who are on the verge of becoming disaffected : Break the Circle/ Amdani; Learning Facilitators In schools; Potential Scheme
- support children in care and young carers

Specify the Purpose of the Investigation. Why do you wish the scrutinizers to Investigate the matter?

The rolling performance of several schools across KS4 range of indicators is fragile and this is highlighted in the work done by the Principal Officers for self-evaluation of the proposed inspection. This was also mentioned in the recently held mock inspection and in the follow-up discussions with the Link Inspector, Betsan O'Connor. It is against the principal indicator TL2+ that the situation is most fragile [*learning equivalent to five GCSE's grades A* to C including Welsh as First Language or English and Mathematics*] and I wish to draw the matter to members attention so that we can proceed to deal more effectively with the level of challenge. It is specifically requested that the investigation focus on the following matters [note that these matters will also feature in the Estyn work programme]:

- i. why do extremes occur in schools performance at KS4?
- ii. standards of achievement in Mathematics and its impact on the TL2+ indicator
- iii. why are quality of standards and provision at KS3 robust overall throughout the LEA's schools?
- iv. nurture a fuller grasp of FSM pupils performance and the extent to which this group's achievement impacts performance at KS4
- v. impact of leadership on schools performance and how leadership skills are nurtured and developed

What will be your criteria for evaluating the Investigation's success or shortcomings?

Aspects identified and matters for attention have been identified.

Have you got a specific period in mind? (An Investigation will require a 2 month period to establish and will be held over a period of approximately 6 months)

It is requested that the investigation be held within the time frame of preparation for the proposed inspection and presentation of the service Annual Report. The initial part of the report will be available before the end of September, with a further up-date in December/January once KS4 national comparisons have been validated and released to schools and Authorities.

Specify any contractual, legal or other obstacles or constraints that may impact the Investigation.

None

Appendix 1

In comparison with the national figure, rolling performance [performance over a 3 year period] in Gwynedd at Key Stage 1 [KS1], KS2, KS3 and KS4 has been consistently robust with the Authority outperforming the national average across the vast majority of the indicators. In comparison with position regarding Free School Meals [Gwynedd is in the 5th position nationally], the Authority's performance has also been consistently robust over a rolling period and the profile draws favourable comparison with the profile of several other Authorities in the northern region.

It is fair to say, that the Authority's overall profile conceals variations in performance across schools within the Authority and this was highlighted to members in the Education Department's annual report that was presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in September 2011.

However, since the introduction of the amended Inspection Framework [September 2010], Estyn has placed an increasing focus on schools rolling performance in Free School Meals national benchmarks [FSM].

As regards the Secondary, for example, every school is placed in a family based on the rolling % of FSM pupils in the establishment [not the year sitting an examination].

Family	% FSM	Distribution of Gwynedd Schools 2011
C1	0-10%	Ardudwy; Berwyn; Brynrefail; Botwnnog; Tywyn; Eifionydd
C2	10.0%-15.0%	Dyffryn Nantlle; Friars; Gader; Glan y Mor; Moelwyn; Syr Hugh Owen; Tryfan
C3	15.0%-20.0%	Dyffryn Ogwen
C4	20.0%-30.0%	None
C5	Over.0%	None

Results of KS3 teacher assessments and subsequent KS4 external examinations in every school who are in the family, are listed in order of merit for every indicator, and divided into 4 quartiles :

- highest 25% : quartile 1
- highest 50% : quartile 2
- lowest 50% : quartile 3
- lowest 25% : quartile 4

In individual school inspections and LEA inspections, it became evident that there is much more detailed scrutiny of schools performance in national FSM benchmarks and that they have a significant impact on the overall opinions of Key Question 1

[Standards] [*there are 3 Key Questions in the new Inspection Framework : Key Question 1 – Standards; Key Question 2 – Provision and Key Question 3 - Leadership*].

Whilst there is scope to improve the performance of several primary and secondary schools in the above-mentioned FSM quartiles, the overall profile is robust across KS1, KS2 and KS3. In the Core Subject Indicator [*% of pupils who achieve the expected level in English or Welsh as First Language, Mathematics and Science combined*] for example, only 3 schools have featured in the lower quartile for a three year period between 2009-2011 at KS1 and 10 schools in the lower quartile over the past two years. At KS2, 2 schools have been in the lower quartile for three years and 7 schools in the lower quartile for the past two years. At KS3, no school has featured in the lower quartile for 3 consecutive years and only two schools have been in the lower quartile for the past two years.

The situation across KS4 range of indicators is more fragile and this is highlighted in the work of the Chief Officers in completing self-evaluation for the proposed inspection. The matter was also referred to in the recently held mock inspection and in the follow-up discussions with the Link Inspector, Betsan O'Connor.

The situation is more fragile set against the main indicator TL2+ [*learning equivalent to five GCSE grades A* to C including Welsh as First Language or English and Mathematics*] and I wish to draw this to members' attention so that we can deal more effectively with the level of challenge.





It is fair to say, however, that almost 50% of schools in Gwynedd [a high percentage] fall into the FSM C1 category [between 0-10%] and that does not, in every instance, recognize the rural deprivation that exists in the catchment-areas. The relevant officers have regularly tried to highlight this deprivation and that a position within the most deprived FSM family [C1], does not always wholly accurately reflect the nature and composition of the school catchment-area eg *anecdotal* evidence suggests that several local families, on account of self-respect, do not claim the benefits etc that they are entitled to.

This undoubtedly, is a prominent feature of several catchment-areas in Gwynedd and bodies and agencies such as Estyn need to consider these when analysing an authority's performance.

It should therefore be borne in mind that Gwynedd schools who are in category C1, are compared with schools in more deprived areas and with prescribed Welsh medium schools. The challenge to perform to the expected level within this FSM family, is a substantial one.

It is therefore no coincidence, that a high percentage of our schools who have been in the lower quartile over an extended period, belong to the FSM C1 family. The significant challenge that the Authority faces is to improve this performance.

For information purposes, the profile of the 14 secondary schools against the main KS4 indicators are listed below:

	Quartile 1
	Quartile 2
	Quartile 3
	Quartile 4

School	2009					2010					2011				
	TL1	TL2	TL2+	CSI	CPS	TL1	TL2	TL2+	CSI	SPC	TL1	TL2	TL2+	CSI	CPS
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															
13															
14															
TL1	Threshold Level 1 : learning equivalent to five GCSE grades D to G.														
TL2	Threshold Level 2 : learning equivalent to five GCSE grades A* to C.														
TL2+	Threshold Level 2+ : learning equivalent to five GCSE grades A* to C including Welsh as First Language or English and Mathematics.														
CSI	Core Subjects Indicator : : % of pupils who achieve the expected level in English or Welsh as First Language, Mathematics and Science combined.														
CPS	Capped Points Score : points average of the eight best results from all the qualifications approved to use														

The above profile clearly indicates the extremes that occur at KS4 – i.e. a percentage of schools in Gwynedd perform robustly over the rolling period but a high number’s performance features too regularly in the lower quartiles. These extremes have been discussed during our recent discussions with the Links Inspector.