

MEETING	Services Scrutiny Committee
DATE	11 April 2013
SUBJECT	Scrutiny Investigation - Quality of Education
PURPOSE	To submit an update to the Services Scrutiny Committee on the Scrutiny Investigation into the Quality of Education
AUTHORS	Councillor Chair of the Investigation into the Quality of Education
	Vera Jones Lead Officer of the investigation

1. Background

- 1.1 The Services Scrutiny Committee requested an update on the work that has been undertaken by the Investigation and what remains on the work programme.
- 1.2 To remind the Committee – The Cabinet Member who is responsible for the Education field submitted an application to the Services Scrutiny Committee in July 2012 to establish a scrutiny investigation into the education field, and submitted evidence of the matters that needed to be addressed. The scrutiny members agreed and established an investigation commissioned by the Cabinet member.
- 1.3 A copy of the Cabinet Member’s original application can see seen as part of the papers of the Scrutiny Committee in July 2012.

2. The Work

- 2.1 Part 1 – understanding and analysing the data. As the Committee can imagine, the field of the investigation is quite broad, therefore there was a lot of work for the members of the investigation to gain an understanding of the field and to be able to analyse the data correctly in order to enable them to identify the further work programme.
- 2.2 It was decided to consult with experts in the field, specifically the Head of Education Department and the Secondary Advisor / Senior System Leader to secure a clear understanding of the field to enable the members of the investigation to establish an accurate and realistic work programme to undertake the work.
- 2.3 Although this took a considerable amount of time, it was essential in order to ensure the correct way forward. This work led to deciding that three different categories of secondary schools existed in Gwynedd in the context of the performance of Key Stage 4 (KS4). The categories identified are as follows:
 - Schools where the performance is good
 - School where the performance has / is changing significantly
 - Schools where there is under-performance in the core subjects indicator

- 2.4 The first part of the work has been completed, but the members of the investigation continue to receive regular updates and challenge any additional information that comes to hand during the course of the investigation. For example, Appendix B in this report is a copy of the Education Service's Annual Performance Report that will be addressed by the Investigation in due course. However, having completed the first part of the work of understanding and analysing the data, the remainder of the investigation was established into three further parts.
- 2.5 Second part – challenging at grass roots level. The second part of the investigation is to challenge and truly understand what is happening at grass roots level. In other words, question those who are affected and take the users / customers' perspective. In order to be able to achieve this element successfully, the members of the investigation decided that it was necessary to consult with the following groups in order to identify good practice.
- School head teachers
 - School pupils
 - Parents of pupils (by meeting with parent governors)
- 2.6 A number of meetings with school head teachers have already been held, with one or two other meetings to be rearranged as a result of the availability of the members of the investigation or the Heads. Two schools were identified per category, and it was ensured that the six schools identified represented every area across Gwynedd in order to ensure the best possible representation across the whole of Gwynedd.
- 2.7 The same six schools will be used for meeting with pupils and parents/governors. As expertise is needed to question the pupils in the most accurate way, experts in the field will be doing this on behalf of the members of the investigation.
- 2.8 At present we are arranging a meeting with the parents/governors.
- 2.9 Third part – independent experts in the field. Throughout the work of the investigation the members of the investigation have identified and met with independent experts in the education field – especially in the field of literacy and numeracy to ask for their opinion on how to improve the quality of education and ensure consistency, as well as challenge them for evidence of introducing and achieving an improvement in quality.
- 2.10 Fourth part – draw up and submit evidence based recommendations to the Cabinet Leader. Throughout the work in all the stages noted above the members of the investigation collect evidence and challenge different witnesses in order to lead to stage 4, namely drawing up recommendations to be submitted to the Cabinet Leader.

3. Schedule and what is left to be achieved

- 3.1 As noted above, there is still work to be achieved in the second and third part in order to enable the investigation to submit recommendations in part 4. It is

also noted that an ESTYN inspection is ongoing at present and that it is necessary for the investigation to consider ESTYN's findings jointly with the findings of the investigation. At present it is noted that the schedule for publishing the report by ESTYN has been noted as 11 July 2013.

- 3.2 Therefore it is anticipated that the investigation will be in a situation to complete the work and report to the Cabinet Member and to the Services Scrutiny Committee on 3 October 2013.

4. Changes to the Membership of the Investigation

- 4.1 The members of the Scrutiny Investigation also wish to note that there has been a change to the membership of the Scrutiny Investigation. They wish to thank Councillor Dewi Owen for chairing the initial meetings of the investigation and for his input into all the work.
- 4.2 Following the aforementioned change to the membership of the investigation, the Scrutiny Committee or the Investigation will be required to select a member to chair the investigation, probably from amongst the Members who are part of the investigation because of the need for background in the field. The current members of the investigation are Councillors Dyfrig Siencyn, Liz Saville Roberts, Alwyn Gruffydd, Sion Wyn Jones and Reverend Roberts Townsend.
- 4.3 The resignation of Councillor Dewi Owen leaves a vacancy on the investigation and, although it will involve a considerable amount of work to catch up, it is suggested to fill the vacancy on the investigation. Bearing in mind the importance of geographical balance, the Committee is asked to formally confirm that Councillor Beth Lawton should be asked to join the investigation.