

APPENDIX 2

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION QUALITY INVESTIGATION

OBSERVATIONS AND SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THE HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

The Headteachers of six secondary schools were questioned as part of the investigation. Here is a summary of the main conclusions of the questioning:

General

- A good Headteacher is key to the success of a school. A good Headteacher sets ambition, a vision and motivates.
- A Strategic Headteacher can focus on improving the quality of education by not having to spend time on the administrative activities that arise from day to day.
- More relevant training is required for Headteachers. The NPQH qualification is not enough preparation for being a Headteacher. Training must teach a Headteacher how to run a school as a business, and in terms of finance.
- The relationship between the Governing Body and the management team is all important. There is a duty on the Headteacher to ensure that the governing body challenges and obtains the correct information so they are able to do their work properly.
- A good and challengingly constructive relationship between the Headteacher and teachers can motivate teachers to teach better.
- The quality of education is dependent on completely practical factors and on internal systems in the school to ensure and maintain the quality of education.
- Effective pupil tracking is essential.
- Differences between KS3 and KS4 results because KS3 is an internal assessment.
- Good teachers mean a good education.

- Teachers who have a vision and who inspire get better results.
- Teacher tracking – namely visiting and observing lessons, looking at the marking leads to improvement.
- Teaching unions express concern regarding observation of lessons.
- Standardising the marking and homework processes within the school leads to improvement.
- Need to gain the parents' interest and engage with them effectively. This will encourage parental effort and participation to ensure the success of their children.
- To nurture a good relationship with parents, you must do more than just hold parent-teacher evenings; you must hold activities that make them a part of the community and the school.
- Asking the views of parents about the education in the school is a way of obtaining an understanding of what can be done to improve.
- It is important that parents understand the targets of the pupils, the tracking system and the information given to parents about their children.
- A good relationship between the parents and the school improves attendance levels.
- The school ethos and environment assists with improving attendance.
- Teachers teaching outside their specific subject is problematic.
- Difficult to obtain supply teachers.
- A small school in terms of numbers can mean that the Headteacher and teachers are better acquainted with pupils.
- Schools that have followed BTEC courses get better results – therefore, there is pressure on other schools to follow this procedure to get better results. However, this could be an example of prioritising results to the detriment of the quality of education.
- Some primary schools over-mark pupils. Primary marking should be better reconciled, because pupils can reach the secondary with their attainment standard lower than what it is in reality. This affects the ability of secondary teachers to teach them effectively.

- Pupils must reach the secondary schools with the basic skills - having mastered grammar and times-tables. Lack of mastery in basic literacy and numeracy in the primary affects the standard of learning in the secondary.
- Basing so many school performance measures on free school meal families can mislead, as a change in a small number of children can affect in which family the school is placed. This is particularly true in schools with fewer pupil numbers.
- Current performance measures over-emphasise core subjects at the expense of the other subjects.
- Although Welsh Government initiatives and intervention can be welcomed in the education field, these are increasingly numerous and the speed of change has considerable effect on the workload of teachers and school Headteachers, thus affecting the day to day teaching.
- A school will only succeed to raise and maintain standards through the continuous efforts of the Headteacher, the management team and teachers.

The Education Authority

- The Authority has not provided enough support in terms of providing advice on disciplinary steps, and how to implement an effective disciplinary procedure.
- Training for Headteachers and governors on disciplinary procedures would be useful.
- The Authority could challenge schools better.
- The Authority provides very little support to newly appointed Headteachers. More contact between the Authority and a newly appointed Headteacher would be good.
- CYNNAL is praised, in particular the role of subject advisor. However, possibly there is over-dependency on CYNNAL at the expense of support from the Authority.
- Mathematics is a problem; however, the Authority has not had a strategy to improve this.

Mathematics

- No planning on a strategic and/or regional level in the subject.
- The standard of teaching by an individual teacher is core to the success of pupils in the subject.
- Factors influencing the results of Mathematics include the quality of teaching during the primary education period. Pupils must be versed in basic numeracy principles, e.g. times-tables before reaching the secondary.
- Attracting Mathematics teachers is a problem, in particular in the secondary schools in the rural areas of Gwynedd.
- There is improvement in the attainment standard in Mathematics when the subject is taught in a practical way.
- Observation workshops and after-school Mathematics lessons can improve standards.

Examples of good practice

- If there is a gap between the attainment of boys and girls, creative working with boys e.g. choosing suitable books, more modern novels that are more likely to appeal to boys, could work.
- Cross-departmental pupil tracking.
- Not allowing any department to underachieve – monitoring and intervening early if there is a problem.
- Keeping Year 11 in school until the end of the examination period.
- Originality and flexibility in terms of the timetable, e.g. banding Mathematics and Science together.
- Creating a partnership between primary and secondary schools to develop numeracy and literacy.
- Using 6th form pupils to read with Year 7.
- Holding additional teaching and revision sessions – at the end of the school day and on weekends.

- Collaboration between schools can result in experiences being shared, although the travelling distance between some schools can disrupt the ease of this.
- Improving marking consistency – Management Team scrutinising pupils' books every half-term by selecting a sample from the year. Heads of Department to scrutinise every month.
- Thematic teaching.
- Sampling the pupils' work on a monthly basis.
- Establishing regular and formal procedures that are known to everyone within the school.
- Regular procedure of internal tests and examinations.
- Parent workshops/activities – informal sessions so that the school get to know the parents and for the parents to get to know the school. Better acquaintance of the parents leads to forming a relationship that promotes the parents' contribution to the educational success of their children.