



**REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

**27 JANUARY 2016**

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**Report by:** GwE Assistant Director

**Subject:** Key Stage 4 Level 2+ Progress towards 2016 targets

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**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To update Joint Committee members on progress towards 2016 targets (Key Stage 4 Level 2+)

**2.0 Background: Context and rationale**

2.1 The performance of secondary schools across the region in the key indicator of Level 2 threshold including Mathematics and English or Welsh First Language [L2+] showed only a slight improvement in 2015. This was significantly less than the improvement seen on a national level [+2.5%]. Some individual schools have seen significant improvements. However, there has been significant underperformance in individual schools which had strong historical performance. The majority of schools across the region have seen oscillation in performance over a three year period. This is a cause for concern and especially so in schools with large cohorts. In many of the schools there has been a significant difference between targets, final estimates and actual performance.

2.2 In this current academic year, there will be a systematic centralised collection of progress data. Assessment, recording and reporting systems will be probed and tested in terms of the accuracy of the assessment and reporting processes. It is vital that this data is checked for accuracy so that GwE and the local authorities are confident in the veracity and validity of the information which is received. It is the role of the Challenge Advisers and the Senior Challenge Advisers to check that all schools have robust tracking systems in place. A specific additional Challenge Adviser visit has been arranged for the Spring Term to challenge Key Stage 4 targets and 2016 projections. The work within and between the two key departments of Maths and English is crucial as is the role of Senior Leaders in challenging the assessment and reporting process of each department. GwE has appointed Subject Challenge Advisers on secondment to challenge and support Maths and English Departments with this important area.

The flowchart in Appendix 1 summarises the strategy that has been implemented to improve the regional L2+. This report provides an update on the current progress of the region's secondary schools towards their 2016 target for the L2+.

### 3.0 L2+ Progress Update

**Target:** set by the school based on specific performance measures (such as FFT estimates, CAT test scores, national test results, TA data, progress information, local and national benchmarks).

**Projection:** the projected outcome at the end of the KS4 based on current assessment and tracking data.

Autumn Term: 2016 Aggregated School Targets and Projections									
Authority	L2+			Maths			English		
	Target	Projection	Diff.	Target	Projection	Diff.	Target	Projection	Diff.
Anglesey	67.8%	62.7%	-5.0%	73.6%	69.0%	-4.7%	73.6%	68.6%	-5.0%
Gwynedd	70.3%	67.6%	-2.7%	73.4%	70.4%	-3.0%	77.4%	76.1%	-1.3%
Conwy	65.1%	61.0%	-4.1%	72.8%	68.1%	-4.7%	74.3%	72.5%	-1.8%
Denbighshire	65.5%	61.9%	-3.6%	73.8%	66.1%	-7.7%	74.0%	69.5%	-4.5%
Flintshire	68.1%	66.4%	-1.7%	73.2%	72.4%	-0.8%	74.5%	72.9%	-1.6%
Wrexham	62.4%	59.4%	-3.0%	69.2%	66.1%	-3.1%	70.6%	67.4%	-3.2%
GwE	66.5%	63.4%	-3.1%	72.6%	68.8%	-3.8%	74.1%	71.5%	-2.6%

The next centralised collection of progress data will be at the end of February and subsequently at the end of April 2016.

#### Anglesey

According to December projections, Anglesey is -5.0% below target [-4.7% in the case of Maths; -5.0% in English and -4.4% in Welsh]. This would result in a TL2+ performance for summer 2016 of 62.7% - a figure that would be +6.1% above 2015 performance. Very challenging targets have been set by two schools in particular (Ysgol A 80.0% and Ysgol B 73.0% - +19.0% and +14.6% higher than those set by the schools in 2015), but they have been challenged on the propriety of these targets. However, both Head teachers have clearly stated their wish to increase challenge levels in the school and see these aspirational targets as a means of assisting them to do so.

Ysgol C's initial targets were also challenged, and in this case the school has revised and set a much more realistically attainable target [69.8%]. The targets for Ysgol D and Ysgol E are realistic and attainable, but it was questioned whether there was an appropriate level of challenge for Ysgol D. In December 2015 the progress against target was reported by the 5 schools, and the projections are very close in the case of Ysgol A, especially so considering the level of challenge set. The school has reported on several occasions that this particular year is a prosperous one, and they have very detailed tracking procedures and processes in place which are led by the Head teacher. On this basis, it must be accepted that the prediction received is close to the mark. However, we will be in a better situation to report on the situation following the additional monitoring visit that will be held in February.

The difference between projection and target is higher in the remaining schools. In the case of Ysgol D there is concern regarding English performance [-6.7% below target]; Maths [-7.0% below target] and Welsh [-12.3% below target] and the TL2+ is -7.7% lower. Maintaining standards in English and Maths has been targeted here. There is cause for concern regarding target-setting and tracking procedures in Ysgol C since they reported in December that the TL2+ projection was -6.0% below the revised target of 69.0% [after setting an original target of 80.0%+]. English is -13.2% below the target set by them, and is receiving support by the Challenge Adviser. There is also cause for concern regarding the precision and suitability of the predictions received from one school since they reported that everyone was on target.

We will be further operating with these two schools. In the case of Ysgol E, it was reported in December that English and Maths were -8.0% below target. The projections for FSM learners are notably lower than the target in each case except Ysgol B where the projection once again suggests performance on target. However, it must be remembered that this cohort of learners is relatively small in number and that consequently the +/- in terms of percentage is exaggerated. Discussions on performance and individual learner interventions have taken place with the schools.

*Maths A\*-C:* each school has introduced learners early for the Maths GCSE. The introduction pattern varies considerably in each school but currently, from the county cohort, 51.5% have attained C+. The highest success % thus far is in Ysgol A with 60.4% of the cohort having passed. For the LA to attain last year's figure [64.4%], it must be ensured that an additional 80 learners succeed, and to reach the 70.0%+ threshold an additional 33 learners must succeed.

### **Gwynedd**

According to December predictions, Gwynedd is -2.7% below target [-3.0% in the case of Maths; -1.3% in English and -4.4% in Welsh]. This would result in a performance for summer 2016 of 67.6% - a figure that would be +4.5% higher than 2015 performance. 11 of the 14 schools have set TL2+ targets above 70.0% in response to the challenge and expectations of the Head of Education. 2 of the schools which have set targets of +65% are larger schools, and the level of challenge is appropriate [Ysgol A 65.5% and Ysgol B 67.0%. The target set by the other school [Ysgol C] is 69.7%. According to December 2015 predictions, performance across almost all schools is close to target [difference is between -2.0%>5.0% in most (-9.0% in Ysgol D) but the figure corresponds to only 3-7 learners in the schools in question]. In 4 schools, the prediction corresponds exactly to the target [Ysgol E, Ysgol F, Ysgol G, Ysgol A]. The same is to be seen for the individual core subjects in these schools. This again raises the question of the reliability and precision of the assessments that were used to form the projections. As in the case of Anglesey, the projections for FSM learners is considerably below target in several schools, but it must be remembered that this cohort accounts for a very small number of learners in many Gwynedd schools, and that as a result the +/- in terms of percentage is exaggerated. Discussions on performance and individual learner interventions have taken place with the schools. On the level of core subjects, the biggest gaps between performance and targets are as follows: -7.0% English and Welsh Ysgol H; -10.9% Maths and Welsh Ysgol D. Therefore, the accuracy of the data in many schools in Gwynedd will need to be challenged.

*Maths A\*-C:* all schools with the exception of two (Ysgol F and Ysgol I) have introduced learners early for the Maths GCSE. The introduction pattern varies considerably in each school but currently, from a county cohort of 1,248, 50.4% have attained C+. 2 schools have a success % of over 60.0% thus far [Ysgol E 61.4%; Ysgol J 65.4%]. For the LA to attain last year's figure [66.5%] it must be ensured that an additional 200 learners succeed, and to reach the 70.0% threshold another 70 learners must succeed. Specific operation is now taking place to identify the exact learners in the different schools.

### **Conwy**

Three Conwy secondary schools have set targets for the TL2+ in the first quarter while the remaining four have set targets in the second quarter. All seven Conwy schools have set targets considerably higher than last year's results.

The first progress against target figure provided by schools was collected in December 2015. Four schools have predicted that their outcomes will be at least 5% less than their original target (Ysgol A -6%, Ysgol B -5.3%, Ysgol C -5.5% and Ysgol D -9.1%) while three schools are on track to obtain or succeed their original target. The December prediction has shown as a fall of 4.1% against the combined school's target of 65.1%. However it is still 2% above the official Conwy LA target set for 2015/16.

More concerning is the progress against the Local Authority's FSM target with four schools (Ysgol A – 20%, Ysgol B -10%, Ysgol D -8% and Ysgol C -10%) predicting to be significantly below their original target. These predictions leave the LA prediction 1.4% below the LA target of 39% and 7.6% below the original combined target set by schools during the autumn term.

There has been continued discussion with all schools over targets set and progress towards achieving these. These have taken place in Head teacher strategic forum meetings, core subject heads of department meeting and within individual schools with Challenge Advisors.

A detailed analysis of recalled papers from Conwy and Denbighshire schools took place in December looking at how English, Welsh first language and Maths papers were answered. Three separate papers were published giving a detailed question by question analysis and recommendations on how to strengthen teaching and exam preparation. Three schools also provided individual learner information for Maths so that a detailed breakdown of school's strengths and weaknesses for each paper. Five of the seven school's Head teachers and SLT (Ysgol E, Ysgol D, Ysgol C, Ysgol F and Ysgol A) visited Earle's Academy in Halesowen with a view to see good practice in improving the TL2+, tracking and intervention and improving FSM outcomes. This link will be further established.

Three schools have received sustained targeting and support due to poor results last year (Ysgol E, Ysgol A and Ysgol D). GwE KS4 subject advisors are working with these three schools giving intensive support and arranging intervention for Year 11 pupils. Two schools (Ysgol E and Ysgol A) are receiving intensive English support while two schools (Ysgol E and Ysgol D) will receive intensive Maths support. This support will include moderating pupils standards against their predicted targets so as to ensure targets are aligned to probable outcomes.

All schools are currently planning intensive intervention activities for Year 11 pupils. Challenge Advisors are collecting information of what is happening externally in all schools and this information will be shared so that good practice can be disseminated. The seven schools are also looking at pooling resources to target borderline individuals during the spring term and Easter holidays. This will be part funded by GwE, LA and the schools.

### **Denbighshire**

Six secondary schools have set targets for the TL2+ in the first quarter while the remaining two have set targets in the second quarter. All eight Denbighshire schools have set targets considerably higher than last year's results.

The first progress against target figure provided by schools was collected in December 2015. Four schools have predicted that their outcomes will be at least 5% less than their original target (Ysgol A - 6.8%, Ysgol B -10.3%, Ysgol C -14.1% and Ysgol D -8.9%) while the remaining four schools are on track to obtain or succeed their original target. The December prediction has shown as a fall of 3.6% against the combined school's target of 65.5%. However it is still 0.9% above the official Denbighshire LA target set for 2015/16.

More concerning is the progress against the Local Authority's FSM target with three schools (Ysgol A - 19.9%, Ysgol B -21.3% and Ysgol C -8.7%) predicting to be significantly below their original target. These predictions leave the LA prediction 0.2% below the LA target of 41% and 6% below the original combined target set by schools during the autumn term.

There has been continued discussion with all schools over targets set and progress towards achieving these. These have taken place in Head teacher strategic forum meetings, core subject heads of department meeting and within individual schools with Challenge Advisors.

A detailed analysis of recalled papers from Conwy and Denbighshire schools took place in December looking at how English, Welsh first language and Maths papers were answered. Three separate papers were published giving a detailed question by question analysis and recommendations on how to strengthen teaching and exam preparation. Three schools also provided individual learner information for Maths so that a detailed breakdown of school's strengths and weaknesses for each paper.

Three schools have received sustained targeting and support due to poor results last year (Ysgol E, Ysgol F and Ysgol C). GwE KS4 subject advisors are working with these three schools giving intensive support and arranging intervention for Year 11 pupils. Two schools (Ysgol E and Ysgol F) are receiving intensive English support while three schools (Ysgol C, Ysgol E and Ysgol A) will receive intensive Maths support. This support will include moderating pupils standards against their predicted targets so as to ensure targets are aligned to probable outcomes.

All schools are currently planning intensive intervention activities for Year 11 pupils. Challenge Advisors are collecting information of what is happening externally in all schools and this information will be shared so that good practice can be disseminated. The seven schools are also looking at pooling resources to target borderline individuals during the spring term and Easter holidays. This will be part funded by GwE, LA and the schools.

### **Flintshire**

Eleven of the twelve schools have set targets for the L2+ above their FSM benchmark median. The remaining school (Ysgol A) has set a target just below the median, but that would still represent a significant improvement on last year's performance. Two schools set a target that was slightly lower than last year's results, but in both cases this was because last year's results were at high level for the school and this year's cohort are not quite as strong (Ysgol B and Ysgol C). Therefore, in the case of all schools, the targets that have been set are realistically aspirational.

The aggregate target for the LA from all schools is 68.1%, which would represent a significantly higher performance than the L2+ figure for 2015, which was 60.0%. In December a projection against the target was reported by all schools and this aggregated to 66.4% for the LA.

For 8 out of the 12 schools the projections appear to represent a realistic picture after one term of Year 11, although two schools (Ysgol D and Ysgol E) gave projections that appeared a little low at 70% against targets of 75%. However, after the Mathematics results in January, both schools now report that they are on target. Two schools have set targets and have projections that are very aspirational on the basis that to maintain last year's level of performance with current more challenging cohorts would represent a very good performance (Ysgol F and Ysgol C).

Therefore, on the basis of the most up to date information from all schools, the projection of performance for the LA of 66.4% appears realistic. However, for the LA to have greater confidence in being able to reach the target would take more secure information, such as good results on the English module papers that were taken in January with results due in March.

The FSM target at L2+ was 52.2%. However the projection in December was 46.0% which seems much more in line with expected outcomes as last year's LA figure was only 35%.

One of the schools (Ysgol G) is part of Schools Challenge Cymru and therefore receiving support through a designated Challenge Adviser working as part of the national programme. The remaining eleven schools are each supported by one of GwE's own Challenge Advisers. Four of these schools (Ysgol H, Ysgol A, Ysgol I, Ysgol C) are receiving support that includes an allocated Challenge Adviser and access to

additional specialist support, for example in English and mathematics. In the cases of the first three of these schools, this support also includes a more intensive level of input from their Challenge Adviser that reflects concerns about a lack of progress with GCSE results last summer.

The remaining schools have a track record of good performance and are being supported to share their good practice in small groups of partner schools within the LA and three neighbouring LAs, as well as having access to specialist support as appropriate. Two of these schools are also providing more intensive support to partner schools in a neighbouring LA (Ysgol D and Ysgol B).

All schools are currently planning intensive intervention activities for Year 11 pupils, sometimes in line with previous practice, and in some schools as a result of advice provided by GwE advisers. No school in the LA is currently in any form of statutory post-inspection follow-up by Estyn.

### **Wrexham**

All nine schools have set targets for the L2+ above their FSM benchmark median, with four in the top quartile. In all cases the targets have been set above last year's results and in all cases are regarded as realistically aspirational.

The aggregate target for the LA from all schools is 62.4%, which would represent a significantly higher performance than the L2+ figure for 2015 which was 51.5%. In December a projection against the target was reported by all schools and aggregated to 59.4%, slightly below the target.

For 7 out of the 9 schools, the projections indicate being on track to achieve the target and represent an encouraging picture after one term of Year 11. Two schools gave projections that were a little more than 5% below the target. However, after the Mathematics results in January both reports that a revised projection means they are now on target (Ysgol A and Ysgol B).

Therefore, on the basis of the information from all schools, the current projection of performance for the LA of 62.4% appears to be achievable, even though this is significantly higher than last summer. This is because all schools are reporting an encouraging set of mathematics results in January, and one school (Ysgol A) is already on track to record a rise in their L2+ performance of at least 20%. However, for the LA to have greater confidence in being able to reach the target would take more secure information, such as good results on the English module papers that were taken in January with results due in March.

The FSM target for L2+ from schools was 40.9%, which appears highly aspirational. The projection in December was 32.5%, which seems more in line with expected outcomes as last year's LA figure was just under 20%.

Three of the schools (Ysgol C, Ysgol B and Ysgol D) are part of Schools Challenge Cymru and therefore receiving support through a designated Challenge Adviser working as part of the national programme. The remaining six schools are each supported by one of GwE's own Challenge Advisers. Four of these schools (Ysgol E, Ysgol F, Ysgol G, Ysgol A) are receiving support that includes an allocated Challenge Adviser and access to additional specialist support, for example in English and mathematics. In the cases of the last of these schools this support also includes a more intensive level of input from their Challenge Adviser that reflects concerns about a lack of progress with GCSE results last summer.

The remaining schools (Ysgol H and Ysgol I) have a track record of good performance and are being supported to share their good practice in small groups of partner schools within the LA and three neighbouring LAs, as well as having access to specialist support as appropriate. In the case of the first school there is also the challenge of addressing a dip in performance in 2015, but for the second school

a promising set of mathematics results indicates the potential for a record GCSE performance this summer.

All schools are currently planning intensive intervention activities for Year 11 pupils, sometimes in line with previous practice, and in some schools as a result of advice provided by GwE advisers.

After a successful re-inspection at one school (Ysgol B) late in the autumn term, this means that no secondary school in the LA is now in a statutory Estyn follow-up category.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **6.0 Equalities Impact**

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

#### **7.0 Personnel Implications**

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

#### **8.0 Consultation Undertaken**

8.1 Members of the GwE Management Board have been consulted during the development of the document.

#### **9.0 Appendices**

9.1 Summary of strategies implemented to improve the regional L2+

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### **OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS**

**Monitoring Officer:** No observations in relation to propriety

**Statutory Finance Officer:** Observations will be made, as appropriate, in the meeting