



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2023

Report by: Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director

Subject: Consultations

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To share information with Joint Committee members regarding upcoming very pertinent consultations, namely:

- Welsh Government - Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements
- Estyn - Local government education services inspections 2024
- Welsh Government – Welsh Language Education Bill: White Paper

2.0 Background

2.1 Welsh Government Review: Welsh Government have proposed to undertake a 'Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements'. All education partners at every level have a role to play in supporting schools in achieving our national mission. Within this context, a review of the future direction, roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales - the 'middle-tier' - and how they should evolve and develop school improvement arrangements is proposed. The review should show how education partners in Wales can best support the common purpose and shared goals within the context of a self-improving system.

2.2 The middle-tier includes the Local Authorities, Regional Consortia and Partnerships, Diocesan Authorities, Estyn, Qualifications Wales, the National Academy for Educational

Leadership, the Education Workforce Council, further and higher education and examination boards.

2.3 Estyn: Estyn are currently consulting on key proposals in relation to Local government education services (LGES) inspections 2024, where there will be two guidance documents for 2024: 'What we inspect' and 'How we inspect'.

2.4 Welsh Language Education Bill: The White Paper proposals outline the direction for the following areas:

- Focus on linguistic outcomes so that all pupils leaving statutory education can speak Welsh confidently
- Strengthen the system for planning growth in the number of Welsh-medium schools, and the number of pupils attending those schools
- Over time, increase the requirements in terms of the portion of each week devoted to provision by language category
- Increase our Welsh language workforce in the education sector

3.0 **Matters for consideration**

3.1 Welsh Government Review: Attached is a copy of the draft Terms of Reference outlining the context, rationale, aims and objectives (Appendix 1) of the review. In addition to identifying what an effective future school improvement service would look like, consideration will also need to be given to other matters in the review (refer to terms of reference).

3.2 It is proposed that the review could commence in the summer term with initial findings in the autumn and final report in the Spring term of 2024. A document outlining roles and responsibilities for each organisation, with clear definitions for organisations previously termed the 'middle-tier' and identification of areas for possible action will be published.

3.3 At their meeting on 22 November 2022, Joint Committee members permitted GwE to move forward to review the current operating arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that statutory and accountability duties are met and that it meets Welsh Government and Regional direction in going forward. In light of this, the external team who will be undertaking the review will ensure the Welsh Government and GwE reviews are closely aligned and complementary.

3.4 Estyn: Attached (Appendix 2) is a copy of the key proposals by Estyn, outlining the steps as follows:

- Consult on the proposals – Summer Term
- Training peer inspectors – Autumn term
- Pilot – Spring Term
- Final tweaks to the guidance following feedback – Summer term 2024.

3.5 The Welsh Government is consulting on proposals upon which the Welsh Language Education Bill will be based. The Bill will take steps to enable all pupils in Wales to become confident Welsh speakers through the statutory education system. Key proposals include:

- Reflecting the target of a million Welsh speakers in law
- Creating a single Welsh language skills continuum to describe skill levels so that learners, teachers, parents and employers have a common understanding of the journey towards learning Welsh
- Establishing a statutory system of categorising maintained schools according to language-medium
- Over time, enhance Welsh language provision in maintained schools that are not already designated Welsh-medium schools
- A requirement for the Welsh Ministers to create a statutory National Plan for the acquisition and learning of Welsh, and review it in each Senedd term
- Reform how local authorities plan Welsh language provision in schools in order to meet targets set by the Welsh Ministers
- Requirements on local authorities to proactively promote Welsh-medium education, including late immersion provision; and
- Providing specialist support for schools with Welsh language learning

Responses to the consultation are requested by 16 June 2023.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note the consultations, and for GwE and Local Authority officers to prepare a response on behalf of the Joint Committee.

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 Consultation with usual key stakeholders.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Welsh Government Review draft Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – Estyn key proposals

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

No comments to add to the report from the perspective of financial propriety