

## **REVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATION PARTNERS IN WALES AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Draft Terms of Reference**

#### **Context**

Our national mission is that by working together we will achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner to be healthy, educated and enterprising citizens. Realising this shared ambition depends on all parts of the education system continuing to work collectively and resolutely to best effect; building on progress already made, learning from effective practice, and ensuring that the knowledge and resources available are targeted to deliver the outcomes we all want to see.

Our public and equitable education system is a source of national pride and confidence. We reject selection and writing off places and people. But we also know that there is too much variation between schools and between geographical areas. This is a collective challenge and one we will tackle as a shared endeavour. That means all parts of the system pulling together – the improvement needs of schools being met through access to high-quality support tailored to their needs, with schools also increasingly drawing on other schools for support. A truly self-improving system, based on a spirit of collaboration not competition, and with learner progression and wellbeing as a mainstay.

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 we should evolve and develop school improvement arrangements is proposed. This review should show how we can best support our common purpose and shared goals within the context of a self-improving system.

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.

Over the past ten years, ways of working across the middle-tier have developed as expectations and requirements have evolved to deliver reforms in our education system. Delivery models have changed but the collective and shared purpose of the middle-tier has remained as:

“Using their knowledge of schools and research to facilitate and support the sharing of best practice and collaboration to improve learner outcomes, within a self-improving school system.”

#### **Rationale**

Our ambition to achieve high standards and aspirations for all requires that we continuously improve standards in our education system. We have already commenced this journey through rolling out the new curriculum, the publication of new school improvement guidance to frame evaluation, improvement, and

accountability arrangements and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation programme. The review will consider what more we need to do to achieve further progress so that we can realise our ambitions.

The overarching purpose of school improvement is to help schools give learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes, whatever their background or circumstance, in order to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Under the [Curriculum for Wales](#), a fundamental part of this will be ensuring that schools support every learner to make progress, contributing to [the four purposes of the curriculum](#).

## Aims

1. To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the organisations and partners currently termed the middle-tier; identifying areas of shared endeavour and any gaps in provision and providing unambiguous descriptions of responsibility and accountability for each organisation and partner.
2. To ensure that the school improvement arrangements in place in the Welsh education system are designed to best enable all learners to realise their potential within a system that achieves both excellence and equity.
3. To agree and clearly set expectations for school improvement arrangements for the Welsh education system which build upon current effective practice, reflect international evidence in this area and respond to current and future challenges.
4. To ensure that the work of the organisations and partners involved in school improvement in Wales are closely aligned and complementary, so that the maximum benefit can be achieved for teachers, school leaders, support staff and ultimately learners.
5. To consider how the current reform programme - particularly in relation to the Curriculum for Wales, changes to school improvement guidance and the ALN transformation programme - are effectively supported through revised/ remodelled school improvement arrangements, to ensure what is needed is delivered effectively.

## Objectives

1. To establish in clear terms the individual roles and responsibilities of each of the partner organisations (referred to sometimes as the 'middle-tier') in the broadest sense, and where they have roles and responsibilities in supporting the improvement of education in Wales' schools and settings.
2. To consider how best the following organisations within the Welsh education system, in particular, can work together collaboratively and on a sustainable footing to support learners, educational professionals and leaders in achieving our national mission:
  - Local Authorities

- Regional Consortia and Partnerships
  - The National Academy for Educational Leadership
  - Higher Education Institutions.
3. To set out what an effective school improvement service and self-improving system should look like for the future. Consideration should be given to:
- a. The vision and ambitions for education in Wales
  - b. International best practice and policy developments in other education systems alongside exemplars from within Wales
  - c. Scaling-up effective practice that has already been identified by Estyn
  - d. The role of school-to-school learning, clusters, federations and other forms of collaboration which enhance capacity in schools to develop and improve
  - e. System leadership, and opportunities to enhance that further through collaboration
  - f. The specific areas of improving learning, teaching and leadership practices
  - g. The scope and scale of external catalysts to support improvement, including the importance of contemporary, leading and applied research and intelligence/ insights gathered through Estyn activity
  - h. Ways in which effective early interventions could take place to avoid schools entering into statutory categories, and the efficacy of current arrangements
  - i. Approaches to embedding and sustaining school and system improvements following initial progress
  - j. Engaging school leaders and practitioners across the system to identify how school improvement arrangements might best evolve to meet their needs and support improvement journeys.

### **Issues to explore**

In addition to identifying what an effective future school improvement service would look like - reflecting the matters identified in objective 3 above - consideration will also need to be given to other matters in the review. These could include:

- How the Welsh Government's vision for successful schools under the Curriculum for Wales - as articulated in the school improvement guidance - might be better realised through arrangements and ways of working
- The extent to which there is consistency of understanding and language used in relation to 'school improvement' and 'a self-improving system'
- How current school improvement arrangements help schools with effective self-evaluation and whether changes would help strengthen this and the shared ambition for a self-improving system
- Identifying what support schools require in terms of improvement services, how their needs are identified and addressed, and any gaps in current provision and how these could be met
- Looking at the unique role each organisation plays (if any) in the middle-tier - with specific reference to school improvement - including current

responsibilities, perceived expectations and any contested space between organisations resulting from ambiguity or other factors

- Identifying what future role each organisation could play, if any, in the delivery of school improvement arrangements, including an expectation to collaborate and any perceived barriers to doing so
- The extent to which the pandemic has impacted on, and should contribute to thinking in relation to, school improvement arrangements.

### **Sources of information to inform the review**

There are different ways in which the review could be undertaken, and a key requirement from the outset will be to scope and assimilate information which enables robust and objective findings and recommendations. As a minimum, sources of information and evidence will include:

- Current published roles and responsibilities
- Existing policy and guidance documents, and Estyn inspection information
- Local Authority arrangements with Regional Consortia and Partnerships
- Regional Consortia and Partnerships
- Welsh Government arrangements with every organisation
- Latest research relating to school improvement services
- School/ practitioner experiences and insights
- Views of/ evidence from key partners from within the Welsh education system
- Local, regional, national and international good practice.

### **Timing**

The review could commence in the summer term with initial findings in the autumn and final report in the Spring term of 2024. NB. timings will depend on the approach taken to the review.

### **Outcomes and deliverables**

- A published 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
- A vision for school improvement services and a self-improving system in Wales and the scope/ need for changes to support a shared understanding for the future
- Identification of shared endeavours, gaps and duplication with a clear pathway to resolve these.