



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

6 JULY 2016

Report by: GwE Lead Director / Chair of the Management Board & Managing Director

Subject: A report on the quality of school improvement services provided by the North Wales Consortium.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To update Joint Committee members on the report on the quality of school improvement services provided by the North Wales Consortium.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Welsh Government asked Estyn to report on the progress being made nationally by consortia in improving schools. Estyn's report was published in June 2015. While it does refer to individual consortia where relevant, the report was a primarily a report on national progress. The Auditor General for Wales asked Wales Audit Office to report on progress on the consortia too, and a separate report was published at the time. Estyn and Wales Audit Office worked closely together in producing their reports.

2.2 The Welsh Government then asked Estyn to follow-up their report by inspecting and reporting on each consortium individually with a timescale of completion by 31 July 2016.

2.3 The National Model for Regional Working sets out the government's expectations about the role and responsibilities of consortia and the relationship they have with local authorities. All

statutory responsibilities for education remain with local authorities. Estyn's approach to inspecting consortia is based on the relevant aspects of the Common Inspection Framework.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 The Estyn Regional Inspection took place during the two weeks commencing 18 April 2016.

3.2 At the end of the on-site part of the inspection at the end of week 2, the reporting inspector and a small number of the team provided oral feedback to the Consortium.

3.3 Following the formal feedback at the end of the two week inspection process, discussions have taken place in various boards (North Wales Leadership Board, GwE Management Board & Advisory Board) and activity has begun in order to respond to the findings & draft recommendations as discussed. A formal Post Inspection Action Plan is in the process of being prepared & is proposed to be presented to the Joint Committee at its meeting in September.

3.4 Estyn will publish the report within a maximum of six weeks from the inspection – for GwE it is due for publication on Thursday 30 June 2016.

3.5 The structure of the consortia inspection reports are based on those aspects of Estyn's Common Inspection Framework that apply to regional consortia, which are covered by six quality indicators. Estyn will not make overall judgements on current performance and prospects for improvement and neither will Estyn make overall judgements on key questions. . Inspection reports will take the following forms:

Context

Summary

- How good are standards?
- How good is the support for school improvement services?
- How good are leadership and management?

Recommendations

Main findings

How good are standards?

How good is the support for school improvement?

How good are leadership and management?

- Leadership
- Quality improvement
- Partnership working
- Resource management

Appendices

- Key performance data
- Perception survey results

3.6 The report will include recommendations that cover the main areas for improvement. Estyn will not place any consortia in a category of follow-up activity. Estyn will, however, follow-up all consortia inspections after approximately 12 months to review the progress they are making in addressing their recommendations. This review will involve a small team, and may include Wales Audit Office, that will visit for no more than a week. The review will result in a letter to the consortium with an evaluation of progress to date for each recommendation and, if relevant, further or amended recommendations.

3.7 When the report has been published, the reporting inspector or Estyn's regional coordinator, whoever is available, will arrange to meet with a representative group of scrutiny committees from the relevant local authorities to discuss the report. If the region has a formal joint scrutiny arrangement then Estyn will work within this process if possible. If individual councils request, and subject to availability, the reporting inspector or regional coordinator will attend a full Council meeting to present the key messages and recommendations from the report. As the text of the report will have been published by this stage, this will not be an opportunity to reopen previous debates, but will afford an opportunity to explain and amplify the report's findings.

3.8 Estyn does not anticipate any further follow-up with consortia after the initial review. Any remaining areas for improvement will be monitored through Estyn's regional coordinator and will be picked up where appropriate through local authority inspections.

3.9 Estyn is currently planning to begin a new cycle of core inspections of all local authorities from September 2017, although this is subject to change depending on Welsh Government policy. The focus for local authority inspections from 2017 will include school improvement services, and issues relating to consortia will be covered by these inspections.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note the content of the report & consider the Post Inspection Action Plan at its September meeting.

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 Appendices

8.1 A report on the quality of school improvement services provided by the North Wales Consortium (to follow).

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

This report is introducing the report following the recent Estyn inspection & identifies a suitable way forward to ensure the approval of the Joint Committee in agreeing on the response.

Statutory Finance Officer:

A meeting was arranged between Estyn inspectors / WAO and the statutory finance officers from the 6 Councils; another meeting was arranged with the relevant accountants and in addition relevant information on finance and governance was provided for Estyn / WAO. Despite this, I did not see a draft version of the specific Estyn / WAO inspection report on GwE and did not have an opportunity to provide comments on the accuracy of the contents before the final version of the report was published. Unfortunately, it is not known whether there will be any financial implications arising from the recommendations of Estyn inspectors / WAO.