

MEETING	Gwynedd Council Cabinet
DATE	July 12, 2016
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Gareth Thomas
OFFICER	Arwyn Thomas
ITEM	Principles of an Education System that will be Fit for Purpose

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

1.1 Authorise the Cabinet Member to consult with Governors and schools on the suitability of principles that will provide the foundations for a future education system for Gwynedd.

Approve the report on Leadership as a basis to promote discussion on a fit for purpose education system.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Cabinet Member for Education wishes to consult with Governors and schools to establish agreed principles that will be the foundation for a fit for purpose education system. Following the Cabinet and Education Scrutiny Committee's increasing and serious concerns following consultations with schools, the report on Conditions of Leadership noted several issues:

- that a considerable number of our secondary and primary schools are too small to be able to allocate enough time for headteachers, senior managers and middle managers to enable them to provide effective leadership.
- the conflicting demands on many primary headteachers where they have a substantial commitment to teaching classes alongside their management and leadership functions.
- difficulties in recruiting senior management leaders and middle managers at secondary schools.
- difficulties in recruiting headteachers for primary schools.
- lack of candidates from outside the local authority area.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Our vision is to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd achieve the highest standards in order to maintain the language, culture and economy locally.

In order to promote this vision we need to look at our present infrastructure. The three key principles to consider as outcomes of any decision to reorganize individual schools are:

1. Will the leadership situation strengthen?
2. Is the quality of education as good or is there an improvement?
3. Is the quality of the learning environment and buildings at least as good or an improvement?

It is recognized by Estyn and specialists in the educational field that good leadership is the principal factor that promotes education of the highest quality. These objectives could address the greatest challenge that the primary sector faces, namely headteachers without adequate time to lead and teachers at very small schools who have to teach a broad range of pupils of various age-groups and abilities in the same class. In some instances, teachers at small primary schools teach three or four year groups in a single class and it is difficult to ensure that the work meets every pupil's requirements due to the wide range of ability that may be found across four years of learning age-groups. Likewise in the secondary sector, leaders and middle managers have very little non contact time and teachers have to increasingly teach their second and third subjects which can be outside their field of expertise. The third factor is the need to make the best use of resources in order to improve the learning environment and buildings so that we can offer the best conditions for teachers to teach and pupils to achieve the best standards.

Having an opportunity to consult on the principles will provide an opportunity for our Governors and the staff in our schools to express a view on the suitability of the principles. This will lead to establishing a policy that will plan better conditions for securing better quality in our schools.

The principles will be considered alongside the School Organisation Code 2013 which gives statutory guidance that will form the basis for any specific proposal. Any specific proposals will of course have to be produced and evaluated addressing and respecting consultative processes and impact assessments when coming to a conclusion.

4 CONTRARY COMMENTS OR OBSERVATIONS

4.1 None

5 NEXT STEPS AND TIME-TABLE

5.1 Consult with Governors, schools and the Scrutiny Committee before reporting to the Cabinet in November

6 VIEW OF LOCAL MEMBER/S

6.1 Not a local matter

7 VIEW OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Chief Executive:

“The report is based on an analysis of the challenges facing the education system in Gwynedd and is consistent with numerous messages that have been received by governors, head teachers, parents and Scrutiny Committee. The report seeks to outline basic important principles which will be the basis for future discussions.”

The Monitoring Officer:

“When moving to establish the specific principles for addressing the school organisation framework in Gwynedd it is essential that these are created and implemented within the framework and requirements of statute and the School Organisation Code 2013.”

Head of Finance:

“ There is a need for agreed principles as a solid foundation to shape the education system for the future. We know that further savings must be identified in the medium term. Therefore, the Council will need to rationalise in order to realize these principles”.

A FIT FOR PURPOSE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR GWYNEDD

THE VISION

Children and young people of Gwynedd achieving the highest standards in order to support the language, culture and economy locally.

PURPOSE

Ensure that the schools and the provision equip the children and young people to achieve the highest standards and nurture the qualifications and skills that enable them to reside and prosper within the locality.

MEASURES

By 16 years of age:

- Every pupil will leave education with a suitable qualification and/or qualifications appropriate for their ability;
- Gwynedd will perform amongst the best counties in Wales across the range of key indicators.

FEATURES OF AN APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In a fit for purpose system, we will wish to see:

- An excellent professional workforce and leaders at every level who collaborate, assist and challenge one another;
- Excellent schools that have a viable future; and
- A collaborative management structure at a catchment and area level that will free up time for headteachers to provide effective leadership and teachers to focus on teaching.

MODERNIZING THE SYSTEM

When planning a new leadership structure, consideration must be given to creating structures that facilitate the concept of what our expectations are and the ideal of 'Ysgol Gwynedd'.

THE PRINCIPLE OF YSGOL GWYNEDD

Planning a new leadership structure is central in considerations for change and forms the basis for the 'Ysgol Gwynedd' model. In practice, it involves providing resources that have been funded and

developing the understanding of leaders that they are responsible for, and are part of, a wider school system, and not only their particular school.

A successful school system in Gwynedd will exist through having a mature, open partnership between schools, LEA officers and GwE, based on an agreed understanding of functions, system level performance and development needs. Leaders should have the time, and they are expected to, work at their school and across the 'school system' in a structured manner that has been planned to create a robust 'Ysgol Gwynedd' rather than a series of individual schools working in isolation.

The structure of such schools, if done constructively, could be regarded as gold standard with a higher status of professionalism. That should include identifying, nurturing and continuous development for the county's education leaders. An effective 'Ysgol Gwynedd' system will support this model and the LEA should also try and create partnerships amongst academic, private and other public sector bodies to add to that function. Responsibility for ensuring a very skilful leadership function will be the LEA's key success criterion and the LEA should be solely responsible for that.

When following the 'Ysgol Gwynedd' method, changes will be required in governance, and a similar method should be used where governors also have governance system responsibilities that encompass a school and system.

To achieve this, the following will be required:

- develop future leaders that have a specific focus on leading establishments;
- consider retaining the secondary sites but reduce the number of schools to six or seven at most;
- create a series of hubs or viable schools that serve as collaborative units;
- place leaders across a broader geographical area and have responsibilities across schools;
- develop unique leadership programmes in order to tie in with the new schools structure in Gwynedd;
- ensure that an appropriate and reliable IT infrastructure is implemented so as to develop leaders' responsibilities to work over more than one site and across the education system;
- review job descriptions and responsibilities of the LEA's officers when responding to any changes to the education system;
- schools appraise the services that they have received from the LEA, GwE and others.
- Careful planning and support when considering governors role in the new schools system.

The principles will be considered alongside the School Organisation Code 2013 which gives statutory guidance that will form the basis for any specific proposal. When evaluating proposals the outcomes of consultation processes and impact assessments will have to be dealt with appropriately before coming to a conclusion . . .

DEFINITION OF YSGOL GWYNEDD

General Principles

The three key principles to consider following any decision to reorganise individual schools:

1. Does the leadership situation strengthen?
2. Is the quality of education as good or is there an improvement?
3. Is the quality of the learning environment and buildings at least as good or an improvement?

Primary

The proposed education arrangements for the primary schools have been assessed on the basis of general principles, namely conditions of leadership that aim towards providing 80% non-contact time for the headteacher and try and ensure that schools have classes of no more than two age-groups. These objectives could address the greatest challenge that the primary sector faces, namely headteachers without adequate time to lead and teachers at very small schools who have to teach a broad range of pupils of various age-groups and abilities in the same class. In some instances, teachers at small primary schools teach three or four year groups in a single class and it is difficult to ensure that the work meets every pupil's requirements due to the wide range of ability that may be found across four years of learning age-groups.

Therefore, when considering any change in the catchment-area's arrangements to achieve sustainable schools with the headteacher being non-contact for 80% of his/her time, the question is asked – is there a neighbouring school with an adequate number of places for the pupils? In instances where the school size does not allow for that, appropriate consideration should be given to establishing a multi-site school so as to provide conditions of leadership that aim to offer the headteacher 80% of non-contact time.

When considering aiming towards having classes consisting of no more than two age-groups, the question is asked – is there a school or other neighbouring schools with an adequate number of places in which to transfer pupils to

If so, the school under consideration should be closed, with the pupils transferring to the other neighbouring school or schools.

If that is not possible, the other option is to consider the suitability of adapting a school or schools to allow that to happen or establish a new area school that has been purposefully planned. The objective of these options would be to offer classes of no more than two age-groups.

Secondary

When considering ideal models for the secondary sector, it is proposed that the current sites should be retained, but, in addition, ensure arrangements that would create a structure of six or seven schools at most. It will be crucial that the structure for secondary schools enable horizontal leadership across schools, provision of a broad curriculum and promote consistency of high quality teaching and learning across all schools in the county. So as to achieve that, the following features will be required:

- ideal size – leadership arrangements for headteachers to be responsible for around at least 900 pupils;
- give due consideration to the options regarding post-16 educational provision;
- provide staff with adequate time to provide leadership at every level;

- viable and robust departments and faculties;
- a broad and enriching curriculum;
- create a collaborative self-improvement system throughout schools;
- an effective strategy and governance system;
- pupil number based leadership.

Report to Gwynedd LEA on

Leadership and conditions of Leadership

Summer 2016

Introduction:

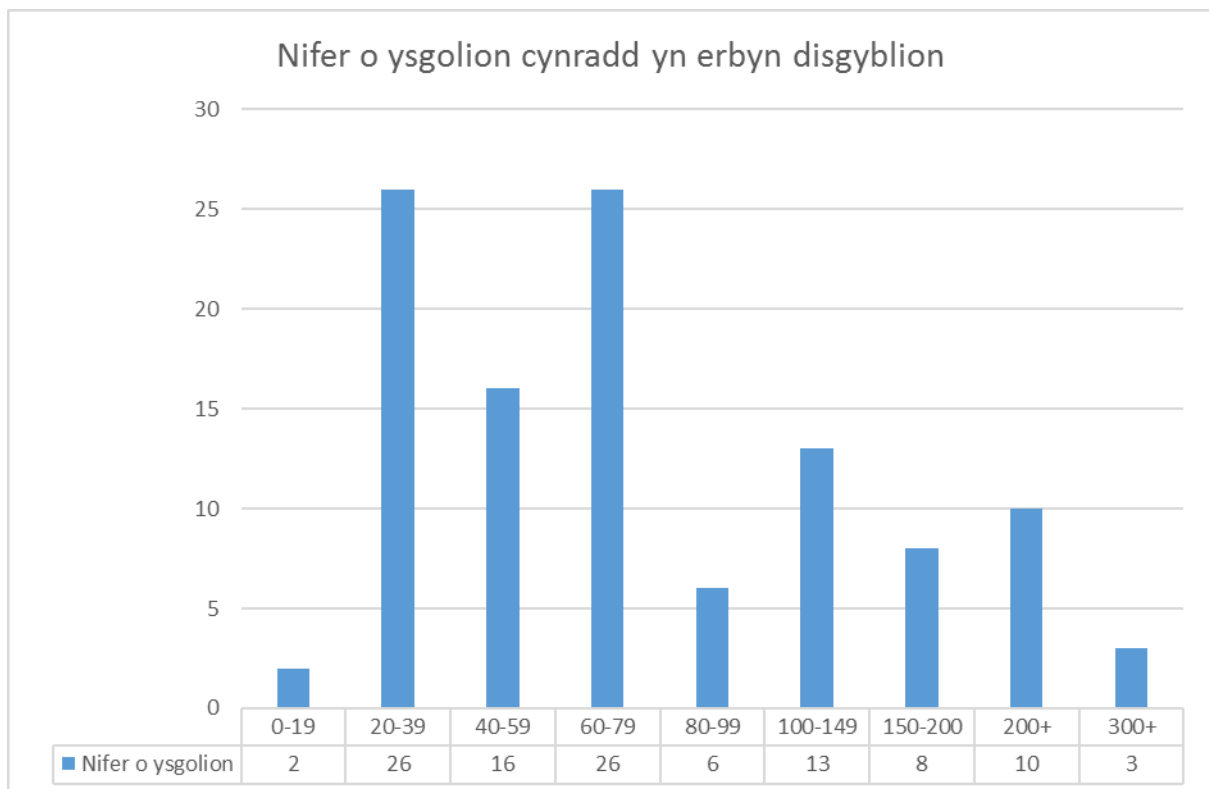
In summer, 2015, two education advisers, Leyton Jones and Alun Morgan, were commissioned by the Head Of Gwynedd Local Education Authority (LEA) to review the conditions for school leadership and school arrangements and structure within the LEA. Increasing and serious concerns raised by the LEA Cabinet and the Education Scrutiny Committee following consultations with schools had led to the review. Several issues were noted:

- that a considerable number of our secondary and primary schools are too small to be able to provide sufficient time for headteachers, senior managers and middle managers to provide effective leadership,
- the conflicting demands on many primary headteachers where they also have a substantial commitment to teaching classes alongside their management and leadership functions,
- difficulties in recruitment of senior management leaders and middle managers at secondary schools,
- difficulties in recruitment of headteachers for primary schools,
- a lack of candidates from outside the LEA area.

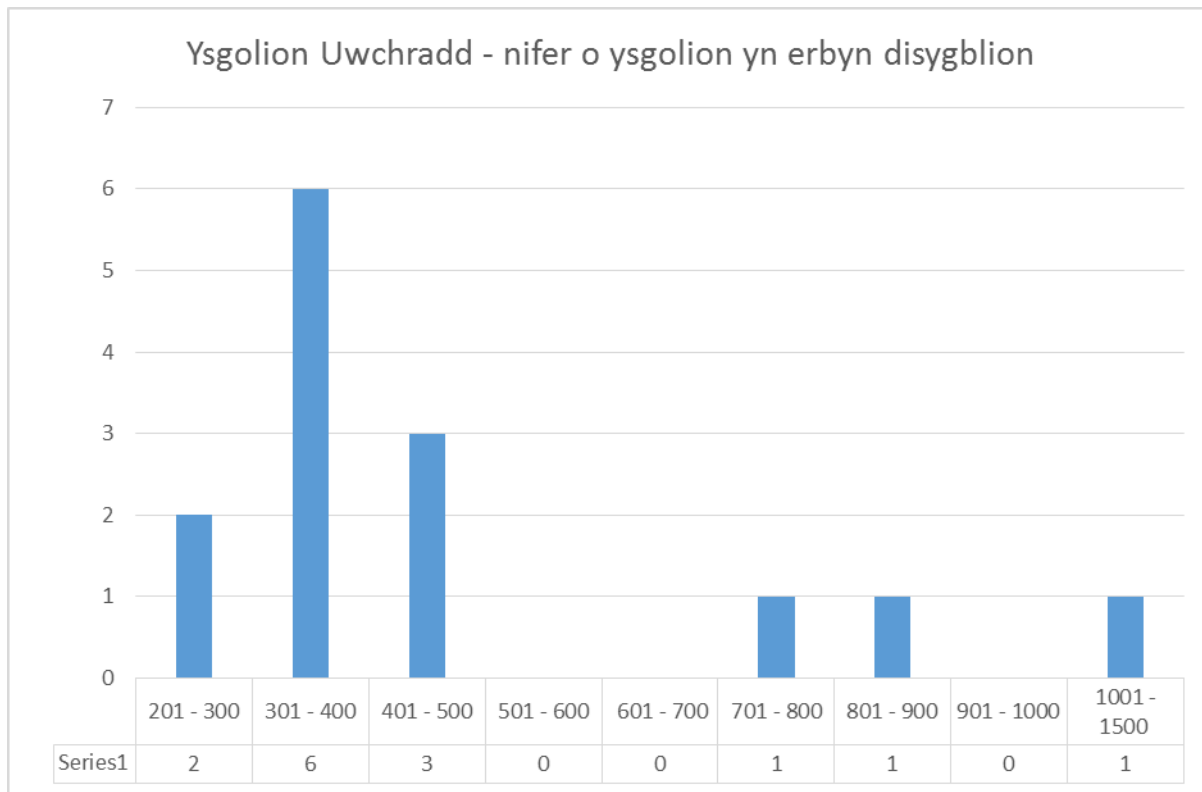
Context:

There are 95 primary schools, 14 secondary schools and two special schools in Gwynedd.

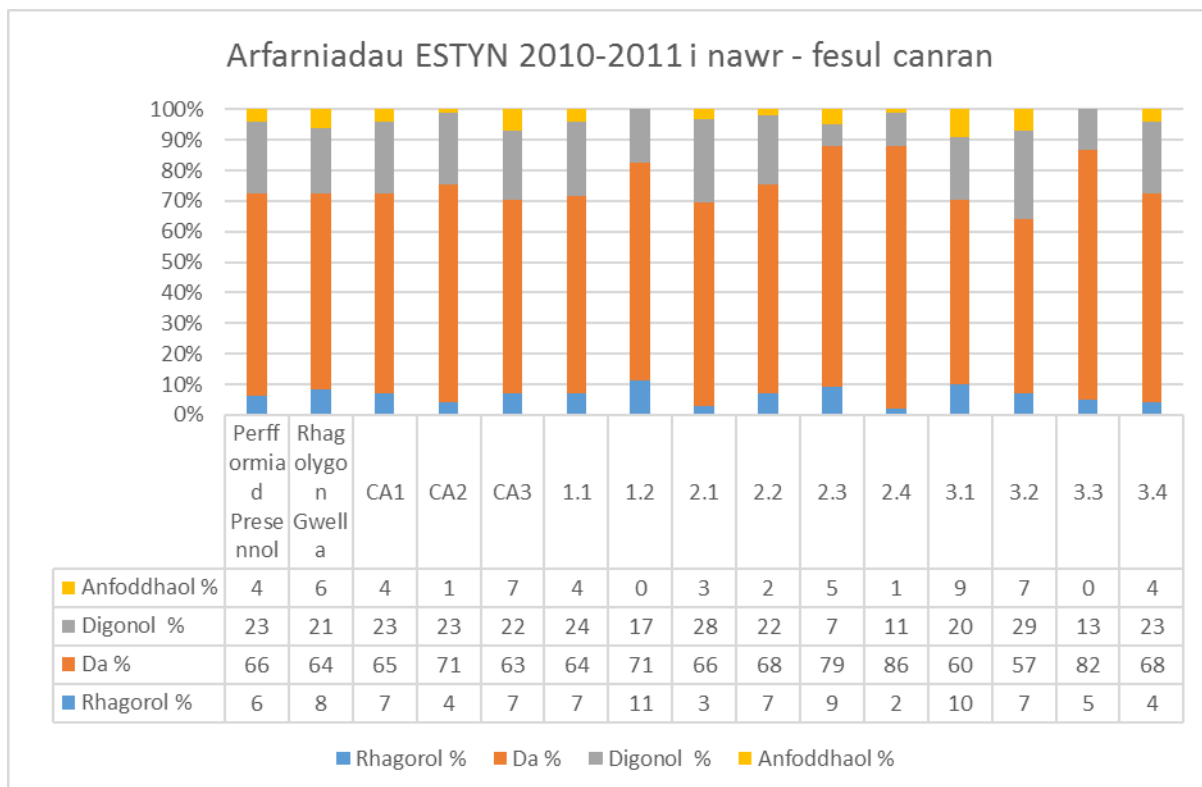
The numbers attending primary schools fluctuate as follows:



The numbers attending secondary schools fluctuate as follows:



Performance review across **all sectors**



Between June and November 2015, the two advisers undertook the following activities:

- LEA data analysis
- analysis of inspection reports on schools in Gwynedd from 2010 - present
- meetings with LEA officers and North Wales Education Consortium, GwE
- meeting with Gwynedd LEA Chief Executive
- meeting with Gwynedd LEA Council Leader
- meeting with Cabinet Member for Education
- meeting with two members of Gwynedd LEA Education Scrutiny Committee
- visits to three primary schools
- visits to nine secondary schools
- meeting with primary/special school Headteachers Focus Group
- meeting with Focus Group of secondary school headteachers with fewer than 500 pupils

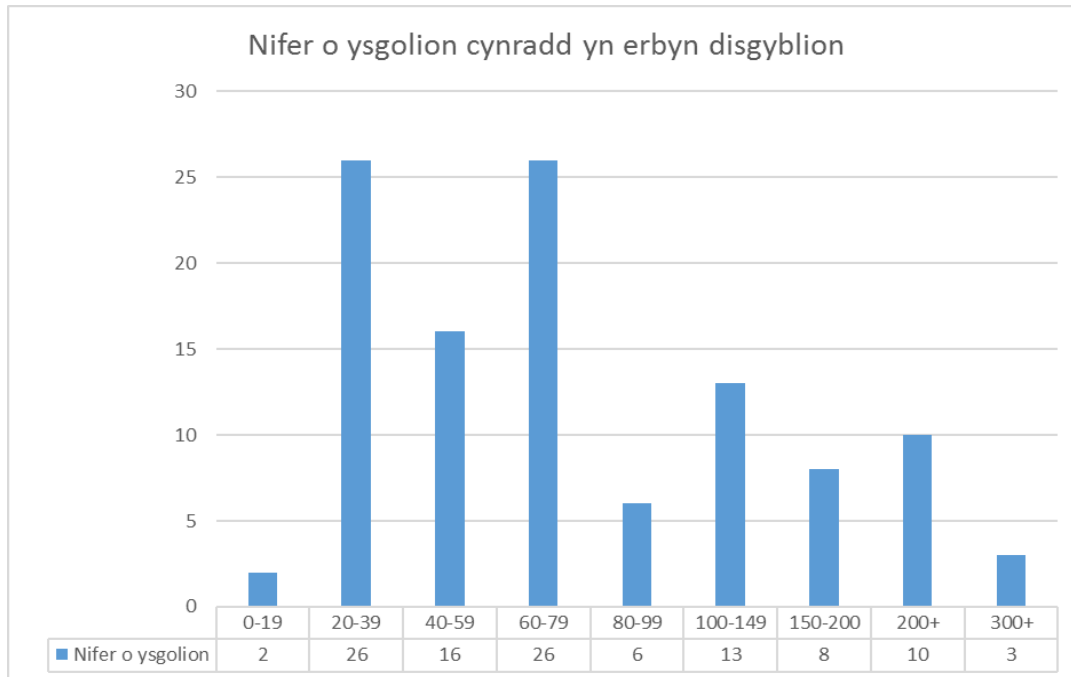
Main Findings

1. There is much good practice and some excellent leadership practice throughout the LEA's schools. Whilst recognizing that, leaders performance across the LEA varies quite considerably.
2. Recent decisions and discussions held at an LEA level focus more on school leadership and structure issues and a recognition that a significant change is required.
3. There is a clear commitment to collaboration across the LEA's school system. There is a lack of a strategy approach that encompasses all aspects of the current arrangements for collaboration and they could be substantially enhanced in accordance with the recommendations outlined in this report.
4. The current arrangements for educational provision in schools in Gwynedd are no longer appropriate and measures need to be taken to immediately address the situation. The arrangements are no longer sustainable and the view is clearly voiced of a need for change. An increasing workload, reduction in resources and higher expectations of individuals accountability and learners results have created a strong consensus that change is required.
5. The number of school leaders in comparison with number of learners in the LEA is unequal and varies across the authority.

6. Learners and parents in Gwynedd would benefit from improved provision and if the LEA structured its education expenditure around creating fewer registered schools and developed a leadership system that focusses on working across sites.
7. Many schools, especially the primary, but also some secondary, do not act as effectively as they should. Staff have to undertake too many tasks and responsibilities that they do not have the time to do to the best of their ability.
8. As the pre-conditions for effective school leadership do not exist in many schools, a considerable number of school leaders are put under considerable pressure, their morale and well-being gives cause for huge concern.
9. The LEA needs to improve its performance in identifying, nurturing and developing its current leaders.
10. There is a lack of clarity in specific aspects as to who has responsibility between schools, the LEA and GWE, (Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales), and that, in some fields, has led to confusion and a lack of ownership. There have been many recent changes and it appears that practitioners are uncertain. There is greater clarity regarding accountability but confusion remains in certain fields as to whom is responsible for which aspect. Above all, there is uncertainty amongst leaders regarding support and development systems.
11. A substantial reduction has occurred in the number of central education department staff and subsequently, in the full capacity to fully cater for the requirements of the schools they serve. That is recognized by everybody who contributed to this report.

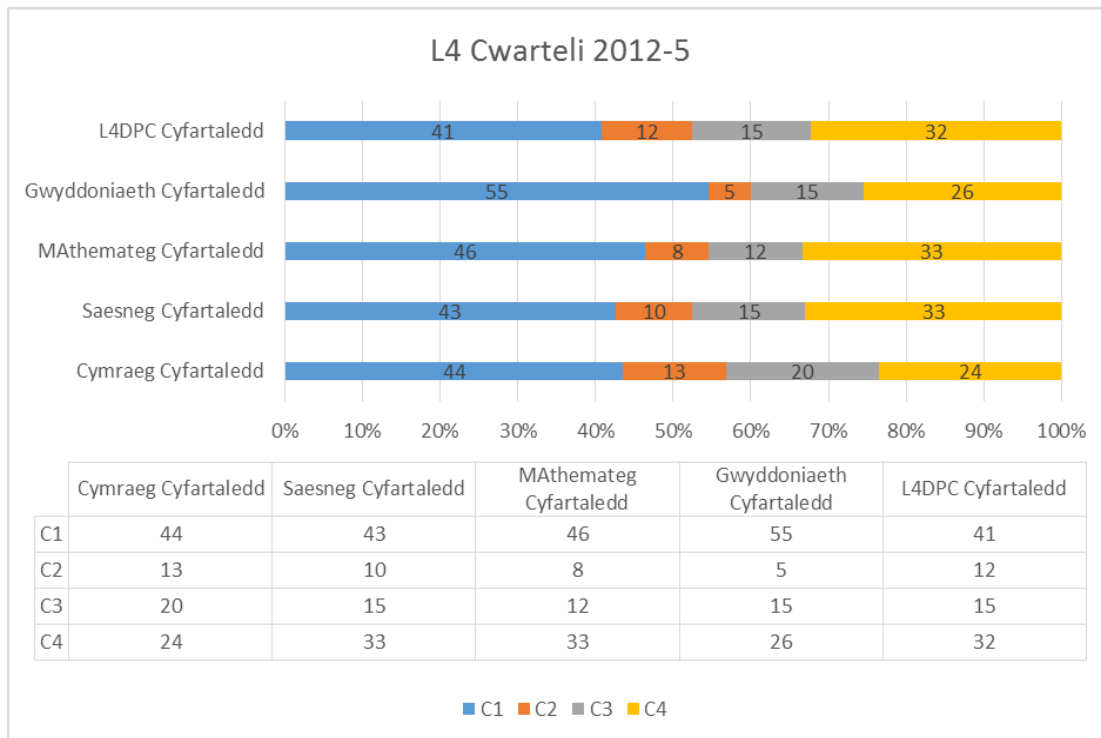
Primary Schools

The Local Authority's (LEA's) most recent data {September 2014} indicates the following:



There are fewer than 100 pupils in 69% (76 schools) of the schools.

Recent Performance – summary of performance over the last three years

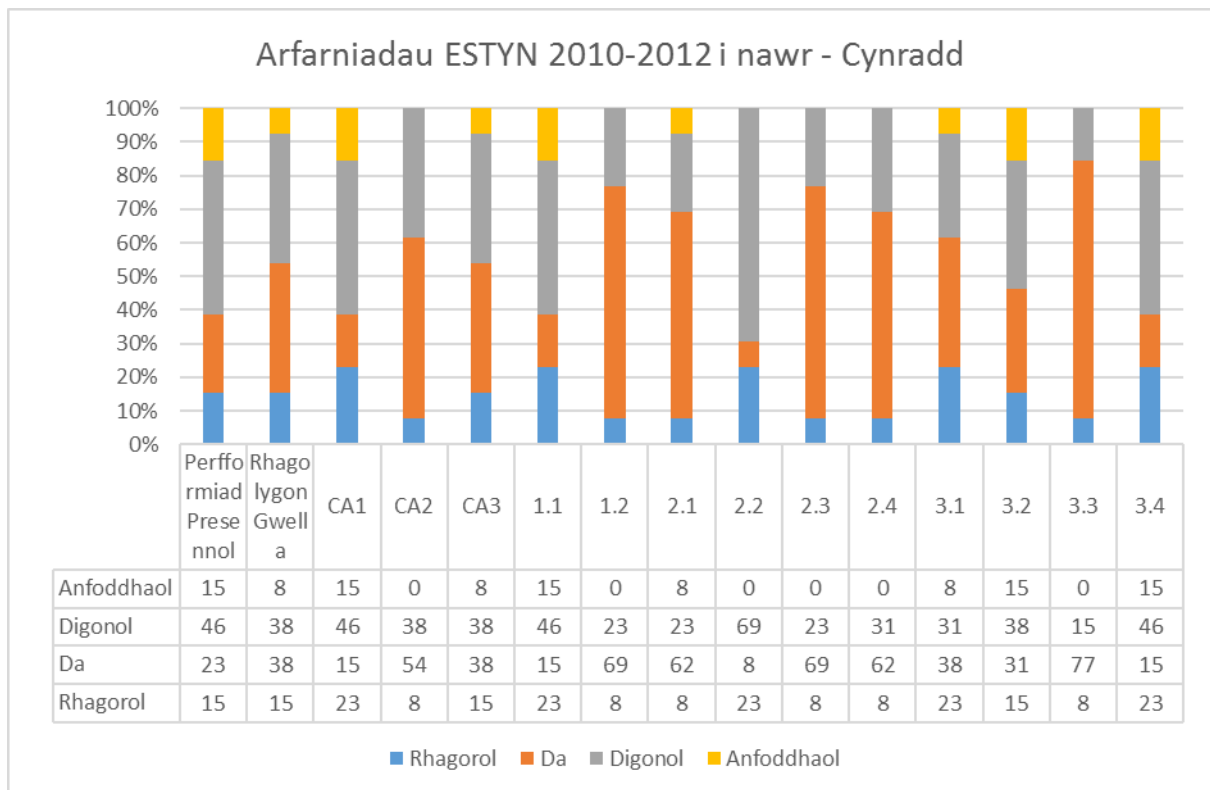


This chart indicates primary schools performance data for the last three years. The quartile level of performance of every school was calculated and converted into a percentage. For example, in Science, 55% of the quartile indicators across three years was amongst the highest 25% of similar schools (154 C1 out of a possible 282 in Gwynedd)

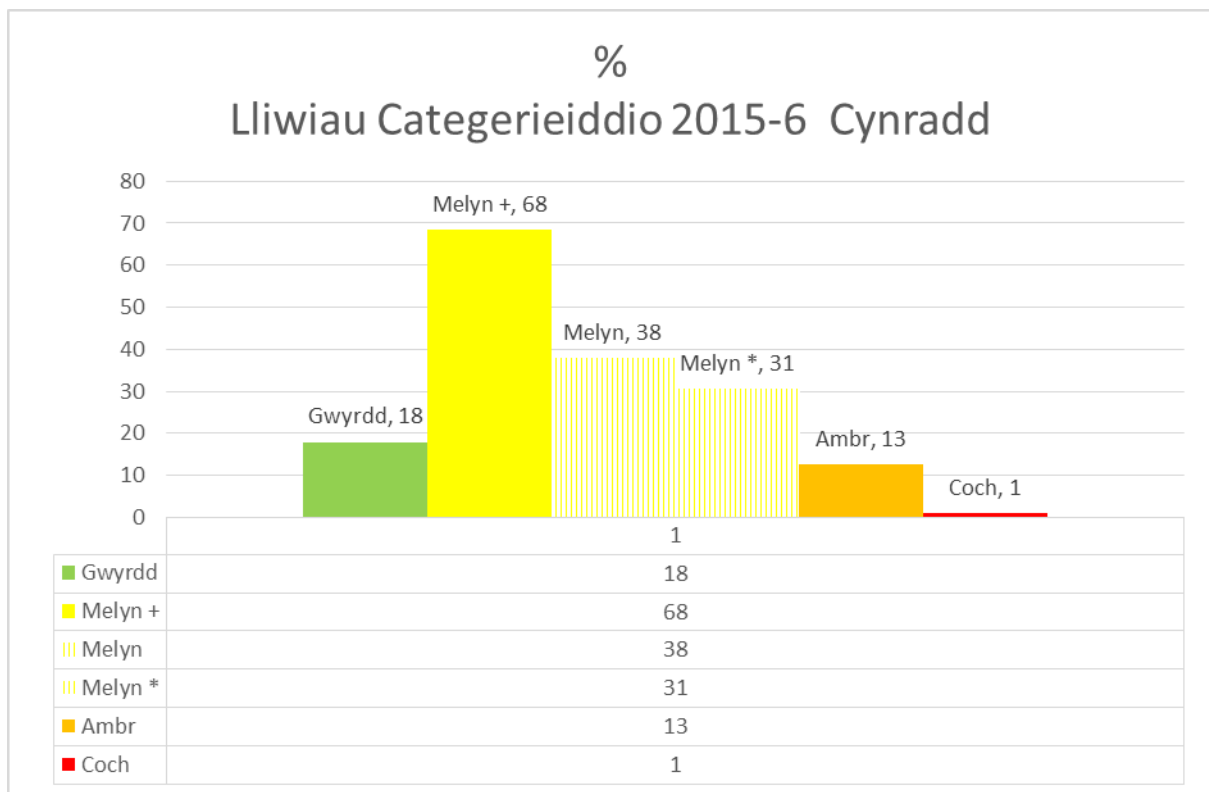
Consistent levels of performance are in quartile 1 across each of the four core subjects and Core Subject Indicator Level 4 are notable items of the chart. Note that these are not the same learner groups but, they are nevertheless, an interesting comparison.

The annex contains additional charts for further details on this aggregate.

Survey Results of % since 2001/11 up to the present



Data according to Categories



Management and Leadership in Primary Schools

In Gwynedd, there is now a range of leadership models for primary schools. These include:

- headteacher in charge of a school without full-time teaching commitment
- headteacher in charge of a school teaching a little
- headteacher in charge of a school teaching almost full-time
- headteacher in charge of two schools without any teaching commitment
- headteacher in charge of two schools teaching a little

Recently, the local authority (LEA) have been pro-active when utilizing circumstances to amend format of leadership, and sometimes at very short notice. These circumstances often arise following a headteacher's retirement or resignation and/or a reduction in pupil numbers at a school that creates doubts as to its future as a stand alone viable establishment. Occasionally, interim arrangements are made, and at other times, the aim is that they be more permanent arrangements. There is strong evidence that pupils well-being is the main driver of the LEA's decisions. There is also a clear effort to avoid the concept that there is a one size fits all solution that is suitable across the county, and, instead, the local circumstances and context receive detailed consideration.

It should also be noted that many of the changes under consideration are fairly recent or very recent. As a consequence, it is difficult to arrive at firm conclusions as to their impact on quality and standards. This is especially the case when looking at standards; this is made more complex by the small number of pupils who are often associated with this from one year to the next and the fluctuations in data that may stem from that.

Model Analysis:

1. headteacher in charge of a school and not teaching full-time

This is the school leadership traditional model, and remains common, although less so in Gwynedd than in most other authorities in Wales. To a large extent, that is due to the model being very difficult to implement in schools where there are less than 200 pupils. It has been planned so that the headteacher has adequate time for day to day management of the school and also to undertake important leadership functions such as self-evaluation, develop partnerships, entrepreneurship, an in-depth response to new opportunities in the curriculum and strategically planned improvement. The conditions also enable headteachers to widely disseminate curriculum and assessment responsibilities amongst staff. It is quite possible that this model can provide and maintain the level of effective leadership that is required in order to promote and maintain improvement.

2. headteacher in charge of a school with a teaching commitment of .5 or less

In this model, that has often been planned for schools with around 100-150 pupils, the post holder fulfils two functions that have many requirements, namely being a class teacher and manager and leader. The headteacher will also undertake a substantial range of curriculum and assessment responsibilities. Securing a good level of administrative and clerical support is often a crucial factor in reducing the inevitable pressure that stems from combining these two roles. That support is not always available. There is some risk, due to the pressure associated with the role, that it does not ensure the regular effective leadership or, to a lesser extent, the consistent high quality teaching that achieves improvement.

3. headteacher in charge of a school with a teaching commitment amounting almost to full-time

In this mode, that has often been planned for schools with fewer than a hundred pupils, the post-holder undertakes two functions that have many requirements, namely being a class teacher and manager and leader, without much time spent outside the classroom and with only a little administrative and clerical support. The headteacher will also have a demanding workload as regards curriculum and assessment responsibilities. These arrangements often lead to headteachers using the time before and after the designated school day to do administrative work and often the evenings and weekends are spent in lesson planning and marking. There is a high risk due to the pressures of the role to ensure effective level of leadership or, to a lesser extent, the consistently high quality of teaching that leads to success.

4. headteacher in charge of two schools with little or any teaching commitment

In this model, the headteacher, whose teaching time is reduced or has no teaching time, is required to collaborate with two governing bodies, be directly involved in two in service processes (INSET), collaborate with two groups of parents, implement two sets of performance management programmes and be involved with two calendars of school events and activities. This kind of leadership provides a good opportunity to provide and maintain an effective level of leadership and consistently high quality of teaching that ensures success. But there are also risk factors associated with accountability and the responsibilities of the day to day running of those schools.

The pressures felt by many primary school teachers was evident in a survey and report that was commissioned by the LEA in 2013*. 85% of headteachers responded to the survey. It was found that 48% of headteachers felt that the workload was very demanding and 43% saw it as difficult. When they were asked if the work pressures affected their health, 49% of headteachers replied that it did, and 88% said that there had been a substantial increase in the workload over the previous three years. In addition, 84% felt that the work pressure affected their ability to effectively run their schools. During the period since this survey was held, there is no evidence of a reduction in work pressure; indeed, as a consequence of the criteria used by the Welsh Government to set national categorization of schools, the pressures have almost certainly increased. This is especially true of the criteria that looks at school 'self-evaluation' of its capacity to improve leadership and teaching and learning' and 'assessment of the school's self-evaluation as regards its capacity to improve leadership and teaching and learning' and 'assessment of the school's self-evaluation through challenging advisers in the regional consortia, that is agreed with the local authority'. Whilst these are wholly valid and important expectations, the capacity of a primary school headteacher who teaches, to meet them, is, at best, limited. Another consideration is that the very recent development by the Consortium of a peer evaluation programme for those schools who perform better, will contain audit and report requirements and closing dates that will certainly place considerable additional pressures on the headteachers of those schools. It appears that the method is based on having unrealistic expectations in terms of time and capacity of that which headteachers could be expected to achieve. At a meeting held between advisers and a cross-section of primary headteachers in early October, 2015, there were clear indications that the concerns raised in the 2013 report had, if anything, intensified. Amongst some of the views expressed during the meeting were:

- the balance between responsibilities and the time available, make it difficult to achieve them
- the LEA's capacity to provide support is not as strong as was previously the case
- demands are increasing whilst a reduction is occurring in resources and capacity
- the Welsh Government, the Consortium and the LEA expect that much can be achieved in a short period with no end in sight
- ventures are introduced with little if any consultation or necessary resources

- a headteacher summed up the general feeling: “ few wish to apply for the post and those who are in the post wish to leave”.

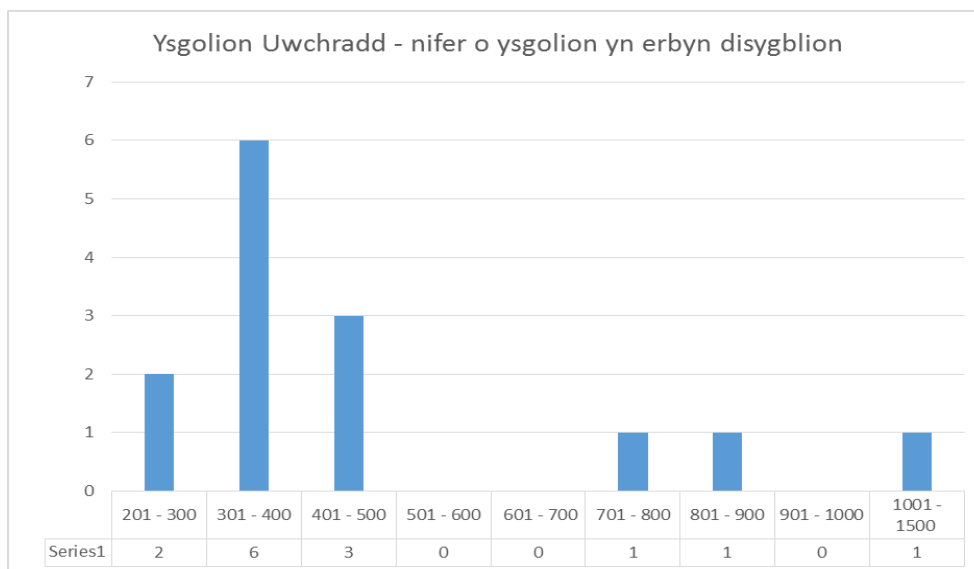
Headteachers work hard and give of their best. However, the problem in many schools, is capacity as regards the increasing demands of the post. It is very evident, with the very intensive difficulties that often stem regarding primary headteachers recruitment, and the increasing pressures on those in the post, that the current situation is unsustainable, even in the short term. The LEA therefore needs to further develop strategies to ensure that there are fewer primary headteachers but that those headteachers have the capacity to effectively fulfil their various and designated functions. That can be achieved through several ways and every suggestion should take account of local circumstances. The best way to proceed is to create collaborative Schools in the form of ‘hard’ federations¹ of schools led by a non-teaching headteacher and a single governing body. The schools within this collaborative group would retain their individual identity and every teacher would have Assistant Headteacher status with responsibility for day to day business and administration. They, together with the Collaborative School Headteacher, would be the Senior Management Team. A headteacher’s teaching commitment should not exceed half a day a week.

*** Report on Workload
Federation of Gwynedd School Headteachers (September 2013)**

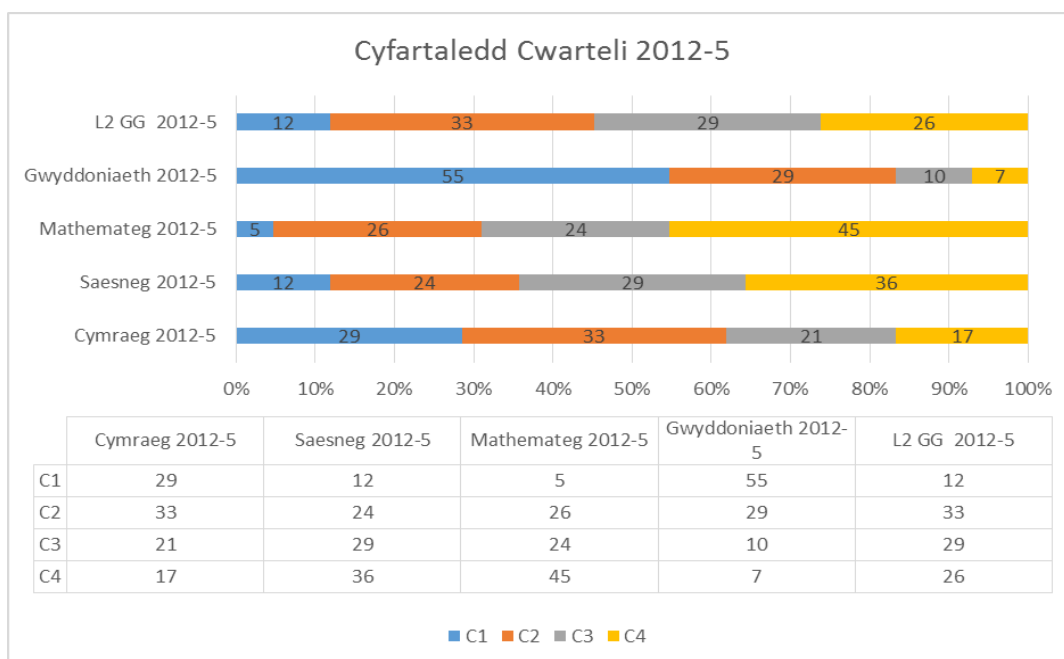
¹ The term federation describes a formal and legal agreement where a number of schools (between two and six) share governance arrangements and have a single governing body. The schools would keep their identity, their name, their ethos, their character, their budget and their own school uniform, but they could share resources, facilities and good practice. There would be strategic overview and a governing body would make decisions for the benefit of all of the schools, staff and pupils within that federation.

Secondary Schools

There are fourteen secondary schools with almost 7000 pupils. Almost 2000 of these attend two schools with the remaining pupils attending small or very small secondary schools. There are ongoing developments for reorganisation of education in the Dolgellau and Bala areas to create schools for 3-16 year olds on several sites. These are appropriate responses to a reduction in pupil numbers and surplus places in these areas.

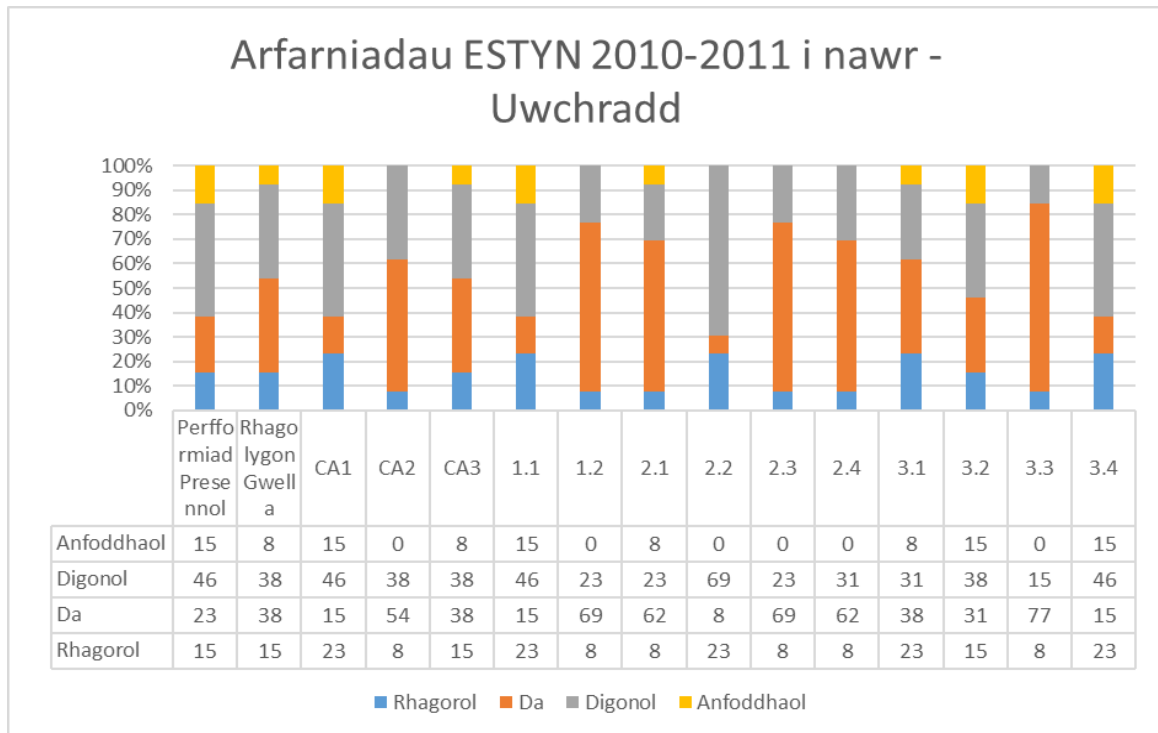


Recent performance at KS4 – summary of performance across the last three years

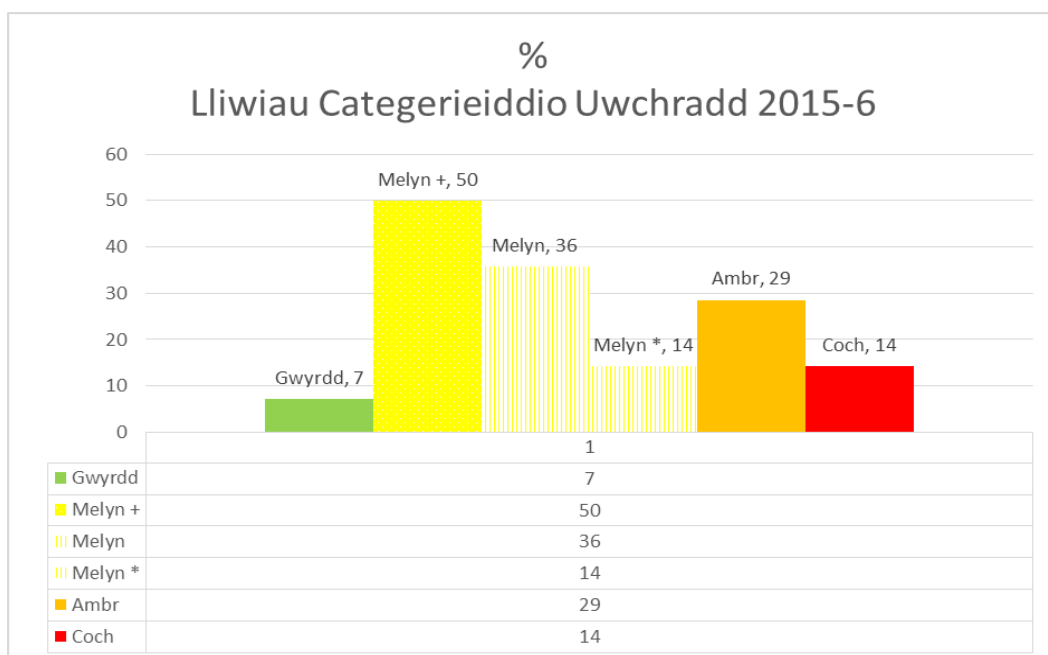


This chart shows data on how all 14 schools have performed across the past three years. The schools quartile level performance has been calculated and converted into a percentage. Notable aspects of the chart are higher quartile levels of performance in English, Mathematics and the L2 Inclusive Indicator. Of the 14 schools across three years of performance data, only twice did a school in Gwynedd feature amongst the highest 25% of similar schools in Mathematics. Neither English nor L2 Inclusive indicator of 12%, fare much better.

Survey results in % terms since 2010/11 up to the present



Categorization Data



Headteachers and the other members of their senior teams work very hard and give of their best. However, the problem encountered in many schools is capacity as regards increasing demands in both scale and complexity, of the post. The smaller schools, in particular, face a range of challenges that are difficult to surmount. In essence, they are to do with coping with a reduction in pupil numbers and increasing budgetary pressures. This often leads to the following outcomes:

- staffing reductions
- reduction in class numbers
- increase class size
- increasing use of non-specialists, including core subjects (particularly in English)
- loss of additional teaching posts such as behavioural support and young people engagement officers
- re-allocate functions and responsibilities amongst a fewer number of staff, and subsequent time and resource demands
- difficulties in developing medium term and long term planning
- LEA has less capacity to provide administrative support and administrative, legal and technical advice that is easily accessible e.g. HR/Finance
- reduce pupils options to select from to study at Key stage 4
- reduce or get rid of enrichment programmes

In addition, secondary schools voice concerns about the LEA and Consortium capacity to support them during a period of rapid change and increasing challenge. Senior managers and middle managers are strongly of the view that support and advice is not so easily available as before. One consequence is that there is very little subject linked support available for foundation subject teachers. An obvious reduction has occurred since the previous survey and since the support service, Cynnal was replaced by GwE, the School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales. This is a particular problem at smaller schools where often there is only one who specializes for every Foundation subject and he/she teaches most of or all the classes. These concerns are further voiced with a new GCSE specification presentation in core and Foundation subjects and implementation of the new Wales curriculum.

Undoubtedly, the current and new demands and requirements on Schools, alongside a continual reduction in funding and centralized support, poses a very strong threat to schools effective leadership. It is obvious that the traditional model of every small school, led by a different individual, is not viable. Difficulties are frequently encountered in recruitment of senior managers and middle managers, especially headteachers. In addition, despite the good collaboration

between schools and examples of well planned co-ordination between schools, and between schools and further education providers, these are not either systematic enough or adequately maintained so as to provide firm foundations for systematic improvement.

Other than the current re-organization developments in two areas, the options regarding current structures is either closure or merger. Gwynedd's demography and geography pose very difficult logistic issues when the closure of any current secondary school is under consideration and it is not an option that appeals to pupils, parents or the communities involved. The 'soft'² federation option is more acceptable but it may over-extend a senior management team's capacity to develop effective self-evaluation and plan medium-term and long-term improvement strategies on this basis.

Structures need to be forged that enable leaders to lead, teachers to teach and focus on learning in accordance with ambitious school improvement strategies. The most effective way forward is through direct reference to Donaldson principles to consider merger of the ten schools with fewer than 1000 pupils and that do not currently form part of re-organization plans.

'Ysgol Gwynedd'

Planning a concept of new leadership has a central role in deliberations for change and forms the basis for 'Ysgol Gwynedd' model. In practice, it involves providing resources that are funded and developing an understanding amongst leaders that they are responsible for, and are part of a wider school system, than their particular school.

A successful school system in Gwynedd will exist through nurturing a mature, open partnership between schools, LEA and GwE officers, based on an agreed understanding of functions, system level performance and development needs. Leaders should have the time, and they are expected to work at their school and across the 'school system' in a structured manner that has been planned to create a robust 'Ysgol Gwynedd' rather than a series of individual schools working in isolation.

Such a structure, if it were constructively built, could be deemed as being of a gold standard and have a higher status of professionalism. That should include identifying and nurturing leaders and continuously develop them. An effective *Ysgol Gwynedd* system would support this model and the LEA should also try and forge partnerships amongst academic, private and other public sector bodies to add to that function. The New Deal can provide much of this service but in accordance with our initial recommendation, responsibility for ensuring a highly competent leadership will serve as the LEA's success criteria, and for which the LEA should be wholly responsible.

Any new development would add to the 'Ysgol Gwynedd' method, where colleagues would work together across the system and meet various leadership programme requirements. The following examples show how that could be achieved, establishing foundations for a school self-improvement system.

- Create a shared self-evaluation, multi-school document as a means to promote integrity, note strengths and fields to develop and enable school leaders to make commissioning decisions that encompass the entire system.

² A soft federation is when one headteacher leads two or more schools but each school still has its own governing body.

- Likewise, place responsibility for how more able and gifted learners perform at Key Stage 2 in Welsh on a group of Welsh subject leaders who would monitor progress and provision.

When pursuing the 'Ysgol Gwynedd' approach, Gwynedd LEA will need to make changes in the system of governance, and an approach undertaken whereby governors also have governance responsibilities that encompass a school and system.

Recommendations

1. The LEA and its schools are committed to collaborate across GwE so as to meet local, regional and national business aims. However, the LEA and its schools need to ensure that their clear business needs are met at a local level and that regional and national developments coherently integrate with planning and actions at a local level.
2. As a general principal, the number of leaders in the Gwynedd school system, should reflect pupil numbers rather than the number of school buildings.
3. The number of registered schools should be reduced to the lowest viable number required so as to create sustainable, successful learning environments. That should be ensured through a combination of Cooperative Schools in the guise of hard federations at primary and secondary levels.

At a secondary level, it is recommended that the total number of schools be reduced to six or seven at most.

At a primary level, it is recommended that the majority of the current schools are retained and create a series of cooperative schools.

4. In accordance with the reduction in school numbers, the number of leaders should be centralized to reflect the structures of the new schools and business requirements and the business needs of the broader 'school system'.
5. Learning models should be planned to reflect the new 'school system's' requirements and in many cases, leaders should expect to be placed across broader geographical locations and have responsibilities across the school system.
6. When planning a new leadership structure, the authority should create structures that facilitate the 'Ysgol Gwynedd' method where the pre-conditions for a practical, meaningful school to school support or a self-improvement education system are naturally embedded.
7. There will be a need to plan and provide continuous support for governors' role in the reformed school system.
8. The LEA and schools, in accordance with the new school structures, should plan leadership programmes that are specifically tailored for serving as a leader at a school in Gwynedd.
9. As school leaders become increasingly responsible for more than one site and for work across the school system, the authority should ensure that the necessary ITC tools are

available and work reliably all the time. It will be crucial to have effective systems in place to promote real time Communication, as well as systems that remain rapid and explain schools' strengths and areas to develop.

10. If the LEA opts to reorganize its schools system as outlined in these recommendations, its managing change programme requires careful consideration. Relevant external support should be added to internal resources and critical audit should be a factor in the process. This is a project that could bring huge rewards but has substantial associated risks.
11. LEA officers job-descriptions and portfolios should be re-vamped in accordance with any changes to the school system. Officers should have clear functions that tally with the school system's agreed business requirements and they should have sufficient time to prudently undertake these. They should collaborate with school leaders who should have the time and should know exactly what their functions are in supporting work across the school system.
12. Schools should be more evaluative of the services that they receive from the local authority, GwE and other providers. Schools should not tolerate or accept a service or a service that is too slow or ineffective. Underperformance at a school is unacceptable and this mindset should permeate through all aspects of schools work.
13. Although this report has not focussed on curricular matters, we take the curriculum strategies that Prof Donaldson support into consideration and integration plans will interphase intelligently with our recommendations.