



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

22 September 2021

Report by: Arwyn Thomas - GwE Managing Director

Subject: Evolving regional structures and processes to support schools causing concern

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Share information with members of the Joint Committee about evolved regional structures and processes to support schools causing concern.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2019/20, Welsh Government and Estyn piloted a multi-agency support approach with ten secondary schools across Wales. The schools were a mixture of schools in Estyn statutory category (special measures or significant improvement) and those identified by local authorities and regions as being at risk of causing concern. Two regional schools were asked to participate in the trial. For each school, a multi-agency panel was formed to work together to support the school, identifying and agreeing its issues and needs, formulating a bespoke support plan for the school, monitoring the impact of that support and determining what improvement should look like over a set period of time. Due to the challenges presented by the Covid pandemic the trial was suspended mid-term. However, Welsh Government and Estyn considered that there had been sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the multi-agency approach was likely to be an effective way to support schools'
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progress and improvement longer term. As a consequence, in moving forward, it was decided that it would be beneficial to roll out the multi-agency approach to those schools that need the support the most – specifically secondary schools in special measures. As a result, four regional schools will now be participating in the revised approach.

- 2.2 In response to the above mentioned national approach, GwE Management Board deemed it timely to review regional processes for supporting, monitoring and challenging all schools which are causing concern or which are demonstrating early signs of decline.
- 2.3 The aim is to ensure that all identified schools move along the ‘desired’ line of trajectory at the required pace and that a consistent approach to challenge and support is applied across the region. However, it is recognised that progress, in some schools, will not always be demonstrated by a simplified linear progression.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1 The report outlines the main actions and developments undertaken by the regional *Task and Finish Group* established by the GwE Management Board to oversee the work.
- 3.2 To ensure that we moved away from the stigma and terminology of the now abolished national categorisation system, it was decided to define all establishments as being on a continuum of autonomy towards becoming a self-improving school. The greater majority of our regional schools will be schools who are either consistently strong with minor areas requiring improvement or generally strong with some areas requiring improvement. These schools are generally identified within a trajectory model as the strongest performers or the rapid and steady improvers [Appendix 1 - Trajectory Model]. These schools have no need for intense, specialist targeted support - improvements are usually addressed through peer collaboration, generic universal GwE/LA Professional Learning Programme, actions and professional learning programmes as identified in the School Development Plan and via bespoke GwE Support Plans.
- 3.3 A smaller percentage of schools will require targeted support on their self-improvement journey. These are the schools who will be supported by the multi-agency approach as they emerge and develop on their journey to become self-improving establishments. Some of

these schools may demonstrate some strong elements but significant areas require improvement. In some schools there will be numerous areas requiring improvement. These schools are generally identified within the trajectory model as either rapid decliners, slow decliners or improver decliners. A minority will be identified as weakest system performers and most will be in an Estyn statutory category

- 3.4 Within the revised regional structure [Appendix 2] a multi-agency group will be established within each local authority. Membership will comprise of senior officers, lead officers from the relevant services and the GwE Core Lead.
- 3.5 To ensure a consistent application and approach by each group, behaviours and values were discussed and agreed upon, in addition to a regional set of thresholds and triggers which will be applied when identifying and planning support for those schools causing concern [Appendix 3 Values and Behaviours]. Training for all officers and advisors to ensure a common understanding of values, behaviours and how to consistently apply thresholds will be planned and delivered during the Autumn Term.
- 3.6 Where a school is identified as ‘causing concern’, the lead officer and the Core Lead will work with the leadership team to develop a holistic 360 support plan around the school. The plan will ensure a more comprehensive approach to driving improvements at the required pace.
- 3.7 The multi-agency group will undertake responsibilities for ensuring the delivery of the plans and the monitoring process. Plans will be regularly reviewed and adapted to address on-going requirements. Where concerns arise around lack of progress or pace of progress, action will be escalated to the Local Quality Board which will be chaired by the Director of Education/Head of Service [Appendix 4 Escalation of Concerns]. It will be at the discretion of the Director of Education/Head of Service as to whether executive statutory powers will need to be applied when concerns have been escalated.
- 3.8 The evolved structures and processes will be applied regionally from the Autumn Term 2021 onwards to ensure a more comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting schools

causing concern. A joint approach between GwE and the LA services will be taken to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the revised approach.

4.0 Recommendations

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

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within current financial resources.

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 took place with GwE Management Board and senior officers from all of the six local authorities were actively engaged in the development of the model. A further consultation with head teachers will be undertaken at each local authority level during the first half of the Autumn Term.

9.0 Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Trajectory Model
 - Appendix 2 - Revised Regional Structure
 - Appendix 3 - Values and Behaviours
 - Appendix 4 – Escalation of Concerns
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OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I note that part 5.1 of the covering report confirms that there are no financial implications arising from the decision sought here, and that GwE will operate within their current financial resources.