

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE INQUIRY PANEL 25 September 2017

IMPACT REPORT: SCRUTINY INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Purpose	To help the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to assess the impact of their report into School Governance
Content	This report deals with three questions related to the impact of the inquiry: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet? 2. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented? 3. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?
The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the contents of the report • Reach conclusions about the impact of the inquiry
Lead Councillor(s)	Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning
Lead Officer(s)	Nick Williams, Chief Education Officer
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1. Introduction

1.1 The School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook an in-depth inquiry in 2015/16. The resulting final report is attached at Appendix A. The Cabinet Member response and action plan are attached at Appendix B.

1.2 The reporting timeline of the inquiry is as follows:

Commenced	26 May 15
Agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Committee	11 January 16
Presented to Cabinet	17 March 16
Cabinet Response agreed	16 June 16

1.3 The final stage of the scrutiny inquiry process is the follow up. It is at this point that the original panel reconvenes in order to assess the impact of the work.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to assist the panel as it seeks to answer the following three questions, each of which will be dealt with in detail below:

- What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?
- Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?
- What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?

2. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?

2.1 Since the inquiry concluded the following changes have taken place.

The Welsh Government consultation exercise on the Reform of School Governance: Regulatory Framework attracted far more response in the public consultation than anticipated. Therefore, Welsh Government decision making on the reform of school governance has been held up. This has had an impact on two objectives which are outlined in the attached action plan but with specific relevance to:

2.1.1 Undertake a review of information provided to school governors with ERW and Governors Wales with a view to ensuring a shared approach that avoids duplication.

2.1.2 Undertake a campaign to promote the role of governors targeted at private sector employees and partners in the public and third sector.

2.2 The Governor Support Unit has historically experienced difficulty in the limitations of the database to support school governance. Following a review, particularly in light of limited funding, the decision was taken to implement a new database. This was not an easy decision to make as it required a great deal of work and effort to set up the new system and transfer data. The risk was assessed in relation to the potential for loss of data in order to provide a more effective support mechanism for the Governor Unit and governing bodies also. This has proven to be a beneficial decision. Governing bodies will receive more user-friendly versions of documents and records in future.

2.3 This has taken time to undertake and has had an impact upon some aspects of performance delivery particularly:

2.3.1 Develop an online learning log that governors can use to self-manage their training and development. A date has been set for Elected Members to undertake e-learning training on 25 August 2017 and this will equip Elected Members who are governors to adapt to e-learning when it is developed.

2.4 The use of the skills matrix as part of governor self-evaluation is proving to have a positive impact with governing bodies. The Local Authority will continue to raise the profile of using the skill matrix to gradually influence governing bodies to adopt an annual self-evaluation process.

2.5 The revised School Issues forum for Local Authority senior managers and Challenge Advisers to confidentially discuss issues arising in different schools is in the early stages of development. However, there is evidence to indicate that this is proving effective in raising awareness to early warning signs for schools and governing bodies in need of support

2.6 A Team Around the School approach has been devised to support schools in need of support and in situations where this has been implemented support for the governing body has also been put in place.

3. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?

3.1 In responding to the inquiry an action plan was drawn up showing what steps would be taken to implement all of the scrutiny recommendations agreed by Cabinet (Appendix B).

3.2 The table at Appendix C shows progress against each recommendation and specifically:

- the Cabinet decision in respect of each recommendation
- the action taken / proposed to implement the recommendations
- the responsible officer(s)
- timescales involved

4. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?

4.1 The inquiry has helped Scrutiny members to clarify understanding of mandatory governor training. The Local Authority offers a range of governor training but only new governor, new chair, new clerk to governor and data training are the mandatory elements of governor training. Governors and clerks can be removed if they fail to attend the mandatory elements of governor training within the required timescale. Governors attending other training is good practice only and no penalty can be imposed for governors who fail to attend the additional training. Governing bodies need to be more proactive in identifying governors to attend additional governor training and raise the expectation of governors who take on specific roles e.g. LAC Governor to attend the specific training provided by the Local Authority.

4.2 The inquiry has provided a useful opportunity to reflect upon support for school governance. It has supported the need for the Governor Support Team to work more closely with ERW Challenge Advisers. This is proving beneficial in helping schools and governing bodies to improve. Challenge Advisers attend all meetings of governing bodies for red and amber schools.

4.3 The Governor Support Unit has always adopted a pro-active response to governor support and training. The Governor Support Officer has always been a member of the ERW and national Governor Support Officers groups where ideas and documents have been shared. Swansea has always paid a significant role in both these groups and has been at the forefront of governor development. This is evidenced by the joint governor conferences with Swansea and NPT for 2015 and 2016. No other hub or local authority has provided this opportunity for governors in the ERW region.