



**Report of the Head of the Education Improvement Service
18 October 2017**

**Annual Update on Education Improvement Service (EIS)
Performance**

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| Purpose: | Annual update on Education Improvement Service. |
| Content: | Information requested by the panel on performance, priorities and capacity of education improvement service. |
| Councillors are asked to: | Consider the information provided and make their views known to the Cabinet Member via a Conveners Letter |
| Lead Councillor: | Councillor Jen Raynor, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Lifelong Learning |
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Purpose of written submission

Elected members have requested information on the performance, priorities and capacity of the education improvement service.

Background and summary

Consortia in Wales currently deliver school improvement services. Swansea Council's school improvement service is integrated within the ERW (Education through Regional Working) consortium. ERW operates as a six local authority alliance in compliance with the National Model for Regional working. ERW has a business plan to deliver school improvement. The latest plan runs from 2017-2020 and is aligned to local priorities in Swansea Council. The ERW business plan contains school improvement actions,

governance arrangements and corporate improvement actions. All priorities are linked to measurable outcomes in schools, where appropriate. In addition, qualitative feedback by service users is considered in order to refine the service provided.

The education improvement service (EIS) in Swansea delivers regional strategies for school improvement and takes account of local priorities, as itemised in the annexe to the ERW business plan and operational plans within the service. School improvement officers in Swansea council have clear priorities for supporting and challenging schools to improve and seek out qualitative feedback from teachers and leaders in order to meet client needs and improve service provision. There is a developing engagement with the Education through Regional Working (ERW) central team in order to maximise professional learning opportunities for staff in schools. However, not all schools have received the support promised in meetings with challenge advisers. A recent headteacher survey shows that not all schools received the right type of support at the right time. It was also reported that the challenge on school performance overbalanced the bespoke offer of support to schools. Further work is required to serve schools sufficiently. The capacity of the school improvement team is suitable but not stable enough. Since November 2015, the education improvement service in Swansea sits within three units. Units consist of the Primary Phase Unit, the Secondary Phase Unit and the Curriculum Phase Unit. Third tier managers are responsible for operations and resource within their units. The Hub Head of Education delivers regional strategies across Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. All units have seen new managers during the last academic year. In addition, there has been considerable staff changes during the same period. All units are working well with ERW to deliver a regional school improvement service on behalf of Swansea Council and each Head of Unit is taking responsibility for working in alliance with the ERW central team. All operational plans for the units in Swansea align to the regional business plan 2016-2019 and 2017-2020.

Lines of enquiry

1. What are the key indicators for success in this area? Are you meeting the targets set last year?

There were ten key objectives across three Education Improvement Service operational plans for 2016-2017. Success is rated in relation to improved outcomes (impact) and qualitative feedback (quality control).

| Objective | Outcome | Further Work |
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| Improve outcomes in Foundation Phase (FP) | Slight improvement on FP outcome indicator. | Reduce gap in performance free school meal pupils. |
| Improve outcomes in mathematics/ numeracy | Improvement seen across all phases apart from key stage 4. Changes in national qualifications has had a similar impact across Wales. | Ensure further support for mathematics at secondary level. |
| Improve outcomes in English/ literacy | Improvement seen across all phases apart from key stage 4. Changes in national qualifications has had a similar impact across Wales. | Ensure further support for English at secondary level. |
| Improve outcomes in Welsh/ literacy | Improvement is consistent. | Ensure continued support for Welsh second language at secondary level. |
| Improve provision for Digital Competence | Build on requirement of new Digital Competence Framework. | Ensure adequate staffing |
| Provide support for additional learning needs | Good capacity building provision. | Sustain and embed the provision to secure impact |
| Monitor and evaluate schools effectively | Difficult to get an honest dialogue with a few schools. | Stabilise staff to ensure consistency and explore new methods |
| Broker support effectively | Disproportionate support in a few cases. | Greater clarity on support available and brokerage power of challenge advisers |
| Build leadership capacity in schools | Good range of provision afforded to develop staff in schools. | Ensure that provision is in line with new National Academy for Leadership |
| Facilitate school to school collaboration | Facilitation for all of the objectives above | Continue to promote |

2. How has the service developed and improved over the past year?

The service has improved and developed by engaging fully with regional partners to provide a clear professional learning prospectus and menu of support to schools. The breadth of leadership training available to schools has also improved. The strategic opportunities for schools to work with others have increased. Although there is no overall ERW strategy, several methods have been employed to ensure that schools connect for a reason. A greater understanding of the design stages for a Curriculum for Wales: A Curriculum for Life is shared with all schools. A more mature response to support schools with low capacity to self-improve has been co-ordinated in Swansea. An appreciation of the workload of teachers has translated into close monitoring of marking policies. As a result, a better understanding of efficient strategies to provide feedback to children is evolving. Closer monitoring of schools with high support needs has developed to ensure pace of progress. There are clear strategies taking root to increase Welsh speaking in all schools. The use of lead practitioners from schools to provide training to other schools is now a minimum expectation. There is now support for schools to develop self-evaluation of their own special/ additional needs provision. The service has worked with regional partners to ensure that we have support in place for self-evaluation under the new inspection arrangements in schools. As a whole, the service is becoming more agile at delivering national policy at a local level through collaboration, utilising best practitioners and meeting the needs of more vulnerable learners.

3. What has been the progress with improving teaching and learning across Swansea?

The service supports improvement in the teaching of Welsh, English, mathematics, additional learning needs and digital competence. There is also well-co-ordinated support for newly qualified teachers. Additional support at a secondary level is brokered via the ERW central team. Support for science, humanities, attachment awareness and modern foreign languages is also brokered from the central ERW team. All training provided aims to stimulate higher quality teaching and learning. Evaluative summaries of support provided to improve teaching and learning by the service places the overall satisfaction rate for of good or better at around 75%. The target is to achieve a 90% positive feedback on training events provided. However, the impact of the support provided may take longer to measure and realise.

In 2016-2017 challenge, advisers in Swansea monitored a national priority on effective marking and reducing teacher workload. Their work contributed to the development of nationally agreed joint guidance for teachers. The guidance provides a clear rationale for eradicating ineffective assessment techniques.

Good support for leaders in schools to improve key areas of teaching literacy, numeracy, Foundation Phase, foundation subjects in secondary schools, attachment awareness and special needs has been sustained in 2016-2017 through either local delivery or engagement with regional staff.

The use of HWB has been promoted by officers to improve collaboration across schools. As a result, teachers have better access to useful resources, networks and training materials. The ability of practitioners to self-serve has been enhanced. This is part of the capacity building work encouraged across the service area.

Over half of Swansea schools have received valuable support to understand the barriers to learning faced by vulnerable pupils through the regional Attachment Awareness training.

Support for governors with performance management and the recruitment of senior leaders in schools has been useful to governing bodies.

3. What has been the progress with improving consistency of teacher assessments across Swansea?

The consistency of teacher assessment has been facilitated by attendance and guidance from officers at cluster moderation events. Schools have been encouraged to develop electronic learner profiles and there has been continuation in Foundation Phase moderation (although this was not required). There is generally greater consistency and accuracy in teacher assessment. However, the publication of standards groups by Welsh Government appears to drive an increased fixation on end of stage outcomes and less emphasis on the child as an individual. The tension in national policy between standardisation of teacher assessment and the published standards group cannot be underestimated. In 2017-2018, both elements have disappeared as new accountability measures are developed. There is now greater emphasis on the progress of individual pupils and it is likely that future performance measures will place greater emphasis on

children rather than data. It is imperative that the service provides clear guidance on the assessment of children in reception (compact profile).

4. What are the barriers to further improvement?

In terms of service delivery, barriers include uncertainty and lack of clarity about the role of ERW in delivering a school improvement service on behalf of Swansea. The lack of clarity may create unhelpful tension and misconception for employees and service users.

Unstable staffing levels hamper continuity and progression in the service provided to schools.

The publication of National Categorisation outcomes works against the trust and rapport required for schools and challenge advisers to work in a collaborative way.

The pace of change for schools does not always provide time and space for self-improvement. The effect on the wellbeing of headteachers continues to be a concern.

The over-use of data may be an impediment to schools and challenge advisers in knowing what individual pupils can and cannot do. Too much time analysing the performance of children who have left schools detracts from helpful consideration of the performance children in schools, for example, vulnerable pupils.

The regionally agreed core visits to schools are perceived to be creating a workload issue for headteachers and this is at odds with reducing workload. Schools generally spend too much time preparing for their core visits. There is work to be done to simplify school improvement methods.

The simple act of monitoring a school is becoming less authentic as a result of electronic systems that cannot compete with real time. This will be added to the risk register.

5. How are you working with regional partners to develop and improve the service provided to schools?

There are clear benefits from working within the ERW alliance, for example shared expertise, a wider range of support available than what Swansea

council could provide alone and higher expectation for school improvement than four years ago. The Chief Education Officer attending the executive board achieves the integration with the central ERW team and then he is represented in all priority board meetings and sub-groups by officers from Swansea. There is regular contact to ensure compliance with the National Model for Regional Working. Lead challenge advisers ensure that teams comply with regional strategies that are agreed by Directors or at strategy group level. Centrally employed consortium staff in ERW deliver support, largely for secondary schools and this has been useful. More importantly, school-to-school support is facilitated to develop a self-improving school system. A teaching and learning network model is emerging in order to help prepare schools for A Curriculum for Wales: A Curriculum for Life 2022. There is also greater co-ordination of professional learning schools so that schools in Swansea can influence in other authorities. Equally, Swansea schools have received support from outside the local authority to help build their capacity to self- improve.

7. Is the school improvement service adequately staffed and resourced?

School improvement officer capacity, including challenge advisers, in Swansea Council is currently at the optimum level of 12 core funded full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Challenge advisers support, challenge and intervene in schools, according to the national categorisation system. However, not all support is directly delivered by challenge advisers and there is a requirement to broker support. For example, Swansea Council employs performance specialists to deliver support. The capacity of the challenge adviser team has been increased from five FTE in 2013 to 9.8 FTE in 2017. Challenge adviser capacity (quantity) forms part of Swansea Council's minimum contribution of 12 FTE towards regional working as set out in the National Model for Regional Working. The remaining core funded FTEs provide support from the Curriculum Support Unit in Swansea Council.

8. How are you progressing with the support and challenge to services for children and young people who are not educated in mainstream school?

Support and challenge for the pupil referral unit and both special schools in Swansea is progressing well with a dedicated challenge adviser and performance specialist working in this field. Client feedback suggests that

the support and challenge is valued. A good balance of support and challenge is currently available. The challenge adviser has facilitated collaboration between the special schools in order to improve leadership capacity.

9. What are your priorities for the coming year?

The education improvement service has four key priorities for the next year:

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| Improve the quality of leadership and its impact on outcomes |
| Improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences |
| Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment |
| Deliver high quality and bespoke support, challenge and intervention to schools |

The operational plans for each unit within the Education Improvement Service support the four key priorities for the service. The service will continue to improve the ten objectives set for 2016-2017. There will be additional focus on collaborative work with sixth form providers and increased provision to support better outcomes in science and technology. In addition, an increased focus on vulnerable learners will permeate the work of the service, for example, challenging exclusion and supporting inclusion. Closer monitoring of specialist provision will also be a key focus in 2017-2018.

Service Risk Management

There is a correlation between optimum capacity of challenge advisers and the ERW school improvement risk register for Swansea. For example, if challenge adviser capacity falls below optimum, there is a heightened risk of schools falling into Estyn follow-up categories because of weaker monitoring and evaluation of schools. In turn, this may place greater demand on the service. In addition, the quality of challenge adviser work must be maintained through professional training and regular quality assurance of

their work. All inherent risks are recorded and considered regularly with the Chief Education Officer and Managing Director of ERW, on a six weekly cycle. The Cabinet Member for education is invited to these meetings and is aware of the risk management process.

List of Background Papers

ERW Business plan for Education Improvement

<http://www.erw.wales/about-us/governance/business-plans-and-strategies/>

<http://www.erw.cymru/amdanom-ni/llywodraethu/strategaethau-a-chynlluniau-busnes/>

National Model for Regional Working

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?lang=en>

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?skip=1&lang=cy>

ERW Risk Register for School Improvement (available on request)

Education Improvement Service (EIS) operational plans (available on request)

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