

# SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS JOINT-COMMITTEE

## Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 29 January 2013

**PRESENT:** Councillor R.Dylan Jones(Isle of Anglesey County Council)  
(Chairman)  
Councillor Caerwyn Roberts(Gwynedd Council)(Vice-Chairman)

### **Gwynedd Council**

Councillors Elin Walker Jones, Beth Lawton, Peter Read,  
Eirwyn Williams

### **Isle of Anglesey County Council**

Councillors Mrs Fflur Hughes, G.O.Jones, Clive McGregor,  
G.O.Parry, MBE, Peter S.Rogers

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Principal Educational Psychologist (Mr Gareth Payne)  
Director of Lifelong Learning – Isle of Anglesey County Council (Dr  
Gwynne Jones)  
Senior Education Manager (Pupils and Inclusion) (Mrs Delyth  
Molyneux) (Gwynedd Council)  
Senior Education Manager (Resources) (Mr Owen Owens) (Gwynedd  
Council)  
Committee Officer (ATH)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Annwen Hughes (Gwynedd), Eric Roberts (Anglesey)  
Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Free Churches) Mr Dewi Jones (Head of  
Education) (Gwynedd Council)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr Trebor Roberts (Interim Chief Executive of Cwmni Cynnal) Mr  
Elfyn Vaughan Jones (Cwmni Cynnal Senior Advisor)

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The Chairman extended a warm welcome to all who were present to this special meeting of the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee.

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declaration of interest was received.

### **2. ENGAGEMENT IN RESPECT OF THE ESTYN INSPECTION 2013**

The Gwynedd Council Self-Evaluation Summary Document in preparation for the Estyn Inspection in 2013 was submitted for consideration.

The Senior Education Manager (Resources) of Gwynedd Council set the context for the submission of the Gwynedd Council self-evaluation summary document by reporting that the Education Services of Gwynedd Council would be the subject of an inspection by Estyn in the week beginning 11 March 2013. The inspection would entail interviewing relevant officers and elected members, as well as visits to verify evidence. Estyn will have a particular interest in the role of the County Council and the quality of the leadership provided in the area of education and the way in which it engages and works with partners including the Special Educational Needs Joint-Committee. The Officer reported that the Self-Evaluation is currently being fine-tuned and that the above report comprises a summary of some of the main quality indicators under the three key questions, and particularly the quality indicator that

relates to the Joint-Committee. The Senior Education Officer (Resources) reminded the Joint-Committee of the three key questions in the Common Inspection Framework relating to outcomes, provision and leadership, and clarified that there was a series of quality indicators under the three key questions with a number of sub-indicators supporting the main indicator. The inspectors are able to award one of four grades of opinion in relation to the key questions, namely – outstanding, good, adequate and unsatisfactory, There are also two summative conclusions they note in relation to the provider's current performance and the prospects for improvement.

Mr Elfyn Vaughan Jones, the Principal Secondary Advisor for Cwmni Cynnal proceeded to elaborate on the contents of the summary document in connection with the main quality indicators under Key Question 1 (How good are Outcomes) relating to standards; standards achieved by learner groups; skills and the Welsh language, together with the quality sub-elements supporting the main indicator. In the case of every sub-element, the self-evaluation summary document contains a reference to the observations made in the previous Inspection in 2009 where applicable, evidence for the forthcoming inspection in 2013 together with further actions. The Principal Secondary Advisor explained that Estyn would be considering the absolute performance of the Authority and would subsequently place the performance in hierarchical order with the other authorities in Wales. It would also look at performance against a benchmark and against a Free School Meals indicator. Gwynedd is fourth in respect of Free School Meals which suggests that it should also be 4<sup>th</sup> or better in terms of its performance. Estyn also considers the performance of individual schools within the Authority's general performance and particularly those schools in the free school meal quartiles, with a view to identifying whether any schools have been in the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile for a sustained period. In terms of absolute performance, evidence shows that Gwynedd's performance in KS1, KS2, KS3 and KS5 is good and robust in KS4. However, absolute performance in KS4 conceals a polarization amongst individual schools with an excessive gap between the best schools and the weakest. The self-evaluation acknowledges the delay in addressing some of the weakest schools. Due to the underperformance of some schools, the self-evaluation opinion on Performance Indicator 1.1 is Adequate. The officer subsequently proceeded to go through the same clarification process for each of the other sub-elements for the Standards Quality Indicator under Key Question 1 and noted the evidence and opinion to which the evidence leads in the self-evaluation.

The Senior Education Manager (Resources) reported that the intention in pausing at this section of the self-evaluation is to highlight the function of the Joint-Committee as a partner within the wider picture and to demonstrate that it is a fruitful partnership. This is relevant to the function of the Authority in the context of leadership.

The Interim Chief Executive of Cynnal referred the Members to Key Question 2 relating to how good the provision is and to quality indicator 2.2 which explores the support provided for Additional Learning Needs and Educational Inclusion together with a number of sub-elements under this indicator as follows –

- 2.2.1 Work to meet its statutory responsibilities towards children and young people with additional learning needs
- 2.2.2 Work to raise standards for children and young people with ALN
- 2.2.3 Provision for children and young people with ALN, including provision that is commissioned and/or provided by other agencies with them
- 2.2.4 Work with parents and carers of children and young people with ALN

The Interim Chief Executive of Cwmni Cynnal and the Senior Education Manager (Pupils and Inclusion) of Gwynedd Council elaborated on the highlighted evidence supporting the opinion that the Authority had reached for each of the above sub-elements and referred to the following points –

- In relation to 2.2.1, the low number of cases that have been referred to the SEN tribunal; the stability of the percentage of statemented pupils and the fact that the percentage of SEN children educated in the mainstream is higher than the Welsh average.
- In relation to 2.2.2, the performance of children and young people with ALN had improved in most indicators; restructuring some of the central support services has led to raising standards and an improvement in pupils' access and achievements and the changes, following a review of the inclusion provision and basing most of the human resources with the secondary schools, had led to a considerable reduction in the number of specific exclusions this year.

- In relation to 2.2.3, the findings of the questionnaire for heads of primary and secondary schools show that it is believed that the curricular guidance for schools is good or outstanding when establishing effective provision and intervention in every SEN area; the Authority identifies ALN learners at an early stage by means of a partnership between health, social services, Derwen (Specialist Children Services), the SEN Joint-Committee and the Authority; that 73% of SEN funding has been devolved to schools in Gwynedd, which is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in Wales and that expenditure per head has stabilized and, in addition, the Authority collaborates effectively with the school improvement service, the SEN Joint-Committee and other partners such as health, social services, SNAP and charities such as Autism Wales, NAS and Afasic to target resources appropriately.
- In relation to 2.2.4, that the Authority works well with parents and carers by offering good quality support according to the findings of the support services questionnaires completed by parents, together with data received annually from SNAP; SNAP has been commissioned to consult with parents and other stakeholder groups for some years when reviewing the structure of services; that the Derwen Specialist Children Service includes an education liaison officer who serves as a strong link between parents /carers; establishing a Together Team as a front line prevention service to support vulnerable families; forums for parents of children with specific language difficulties and joint workshops / clubs between charitable partners and health for the parents of children with sensory impairments; promoting the Early Support scheme.

The Senior Education Officer (Resources) referred briefly to Key Question 3 (Leadership) and to the relevance of this section for the Joint-Committee in that there is a formal agreement with the Joint-Committee as a partner and that the Joint-Committee receives regular progress reports on activities and developments in the field.

The Members of the Joint-Committee were given an opportunity to question the officers on the contents of the self-evaluation summary documents and in the subsequent discussion the following matters were raised –

- Reference was made to the national emphasis on raising standards of literacy and it was stated that it must be ensured that children with ALN are included in the drive to improve attainment in English and Welsh.
- In the context of devolved funding for schools, clarification was sought of the actions available to a school that has several pupils with ALN and whose needs have to be met, and whether that school would be expected to reallocate funding from one heading to the other or apply for additional funding centrally.
- The bulk of evidence reflecting the scale and quality of the drive to meet the needs of children with ALN in a proportionate and appropriate manner was welcomed, particularly plans to seek to address problems at an early stage through partnership – the importance of early intervention and support was particularly emphasized for the development of children with ALN.
- In the context of multi-agency work, reference was made to the importance of ensuring that there are suitable homes and houses for families in the context that the suitability of the home can influence the progress made by children and impact on social problems.
- Reference was made to the possible impact of reforming the welfare system on vulnerable families.
- In the context of the increasing move to deliver services on a regional basis, it was enquired as to the long term prospects for the Joint-Committee's partnership and whether there were any concerns.
- Reference was made to the concept of a Together Team and clarification was sought of the work of this team and its role in the network of provisions for children with ALN.
- It was noted that the strategic review commissioned by Gwynedd Council in relation to Additional Learning Needs could have a side effect on the future terms of reference of the Joint Committee. It was agreed that it would be useful for members of the Joint-Committee to receive information on the status of the Review and an update with regard to Stage 1.
- Information with regard to the intention to build a new SEN centre of excellence to serve the Dwyfor and Meirion areas and that would also offer innovative bilingual respite provision with the potential to serve a wider area was welcomed.

The officers responded to the points raised by providing further clarification as appropriate. In closing the meeting, the Chairman, on behalf of the members of the Joint-Committee, thanked the officers for the self-evaluation summary document and the clarifications thereon.

**It was resolved to accept the Gwynedd Council Self-Evaluation Summary Document and to note its contents.**

**ACTION POINT ARISING: Members of the Joint-Committee to receive information on the Gwynedd Council Strategic Review of ALN, its current status and an update on Stage 1.**

**Councillor R.Dylan Jones  
Chairman**

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