

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date:	20 September, 2021
Subject:	School Progress Review Panel
Purpose of Report:	Progress Report on the work of the School Progress Review Panel
Scrutiny Chair:	Cllr Gwilym O Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr R Meirion Jones
Head of Service:	Rhys H Hughes, Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Report Author:	Sioned Rowe, Scrutiny Officer
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Local Members:	Not Relevant

1 – Recommendation(s)

The Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel is requested to:

A1 Note:

- The progress to date with regard to the work of the School Progress Review Panel in terms of achieving its work programme which includes to robustly challenge the performance of individual schools.
- The areas of work that were given attention through the new arrangements made as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A2 Recommend that the Committee come to a conclusion regarding the robustness of the Panel's monitoring work to date.

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

Direct link to Council Plan / transformation priorities. The Council's Plan includes the ambition to work with people of Anglesey, their communities and with partners to ensure that the best possible services are provided which will improve people's quality of life across the island. One of the Plan's 3 goals is to "create the conditions that will enable everyone to reach their full potential." The work of the Panel is key to supporting schools and the Council in achieving that aim.

3 – Principles as a Guideline for Scrutiny

To assist Members when scrutinising the topic:-

3.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities **[focus on customer/citizen]**

3.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality **[focus on value]**

3.3 A look at any risks **[focus on risk]**

3.4 Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role [**focus on performance & quality**]

3.5 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- Long term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement

[focus on wellbeing]

4 – Key Scrutiny Questions

At the request of the Panel:

1. To what extent is the Scrutiny Committee satisfied with the work undertaken by the Panel to date?
2. To what extent is the Panel's actions to date sufficiently robust and is the pace of work appropriate?
3. What suggestions does the Committee have to further strengthen the work of the Panel?
4. What other areas does the Panel need to scrutinize?

4 – Background / Context

1. CONTEXT

As previously reported, Members will be aware that scrutiny has developed during the last two years through the work of the 3 scrutiny panels. This report summarises the progress made so far in relation to **School Progress Review Panel**.

Panel Governance Arrangements

Members will be aware of the robust governance arrangements which are in place as a basis for the work of the Panel¹ and it is intended to continue to hold monthly meetings of the Panel in the future. A quarterly process to report progress to the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee has been established by Cllr. Gwilym Owen Jones, Chair of the Panel.

The membership of the Panel remains as reported to the Committee during the last quarter²:

¹ Meeting of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 20 April and 27 June, 2017

² Meeting of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 9 April, 2019

Councillor	Scrutiny Committee
Gwilym O Jones (Panel Chair)	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Margaret M Roberts	
Kenneth P Hughes	
Vaughan Hughes	
Alun Roberts (Vice-Chair)	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
John Arwel Roberts	
Richard Griffiths	
Co-opted Member of the Scrutiny Committees	
Mr Keith Roberts	Corporate Scrutiny Committee

2. WORK FOCUS – SCHOOL PROGRESS REVIEW PANEL

The Panel's meetings were postponed from March due to the pandemic, and the Panel's work program was put on hold for the time being. It was decided to introduce a temporary program during the pandemic with the initial focus on scrutiny of the Learning Service's response to Covid 19 and the arrangements put in place during the emergency period. This progress report includes 2 references to the School Progress Review Panel's last meeting which covers **April→ May, 2021**.

Monitoring the Standards of Individual Schools – The work to monitor the standards of individual schools is well established, and continues to develop. Following a discussion in October, 2019 regarding the program for monitoring standards in individual schools, there was strong evidence of implementation of the decision to further develop scrutiny.

However, this work stream has currently been set aside as a result of the pandemic, and the Panel is keen to resume these visits when conditions permit.

3. Update on the Welsh Language within Anglesey's Education System

A verbal report was given by the Primary Senior Manager on the Welsh Language within the Education System in Anglesey, and the following points were noted in particular. Reference was made to the 10 Catchment Area Coordinators (5x Primary Coordinators and 5x Secondary Coordinators). It was noted that the Coordinators are responsible for leading cluster plans and supporting the catchment areas, and contributing to Authority meeting, which includes GwE and Siarter Iaith officers. Cluster plans were drawn up in December 2020, and the Welsh Government distributed £ 7,000 to each cluster for the period January-July 2021.

It was noted that it is the responsibility of the Catchment Area Coordinators to draw up plans for the region, and disseminating expertise across the wider region, and monitoring the Welsh language situation. It was noted that there is close collaboration between GwE officers and Welsh Language Charter officers. Reference was made to the regional plans and structures which support the Welsh Language, namely the Regional Working Group, the Welsh Language Fast Track Plan, the Welsh Language Charter Pilot Project and the Caru Iaith (Love for the Language) Microsite.

Reference was made to the pilot work taking place in 4 schools which focuses on language recovery through a unique scheme in collaboration between the Learning

Service, schools and the Siarter Iaith (Welsh Language Charter) officer. The scheme is now available online to all Anglesey schools. The schools receive appropriate resources in order to develop the spoken language recovery provision. It is the intention of the four schools to share their experiences and plans by training other teachers on the Island in order to focus on language recovery on the playground and more widely across all schools.

The Learning Service's contribution to Anglesey's language profile and participation in a consultation on categorizing schools was also noted.

Reference was made to the two language centres on the Island. It was noted that the centres have now been able to welcome children back for face to face learning, with virtual lessons also continuing on Google Classroom. Reference was made to the waiting list for attending the Centres and it was noted that these individuals are able to access lessons and the provision on Google Classroom, and that the priority currently is to finish with the current class of students and welcome a new class in May 2021.

3.1 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

Reference was made to the fact that the WESP is now required to be a 10 year plan rather than a three year plan. The 7 outcomes of the plan were outlined:

1. More children at nursery age/three years old being educated through the medium of Welsh.
2. More children at reception class age/5 years old being educated through the medium of Welsh.
3. More children continuing to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to the next.
4. More learners studying for qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and other subjects through the medium of Welsh.
5. More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in various contexts in school.
6. Increase in the provision of Welsh medium education for students with additional learning needs in accordance with the duties prescribed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
7. Increase in the number of teaching staff which are able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

3.2 The Panel expressed concerns with regards to the challenge of recruiting teachers who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh for some subjects, however the plans in place to collaborate on a sabbatical scheme with Canolfan Bedwyr to develop teachers' Welsh language skills were outlined. Reference was also made to an E-School scheme, which ensures that subject provision through the medium of Welsh is available through online provision in areas where there is no Welsh medium provision. One of the Members referred to the shortage of Welsh teachers in some subjects in Secondary education and referred to the lack of continuity from primary to secondary and that this needs to be addressed.

4.0 Self-Evaluation of the Panel's work

4.1 A self-evaluation exercise was undertaken with Panel Members, and a number of key points were identified which will assist in further developing the Panel's contribution. It was noted that the Panel was having a very positive impact, and reference was made to expertise that the Panel had developed. It was felt that the Panel held schools to account and challenged constructively. However, in terms of the Panel's responsibility to challenge and hold to account, although the primary aim is to assist schools in their

continued development and improvement, there is a responsibility to highlight weaknesses and areas for development.

4.2 In terms of the Panel's strengths, it was felt that the Panel was getting a genuine representation of individual schools' situations recently rather than only hearing about the positive aspects. Furthermore, the existence of the Panel proves that there is accountability and a clear structure in terms of reporting, with the Panel having the opportunity to challenge and ask a series of questions. The Panel has convinced Head teachers that they are critical friends.

4.3 In terms of the areas for further development, it was felt that adequate follow up did not occur after Panel Members visited individual schools. It would be advisable to arrange a follow up visit approximately six months after the original visit to see if any developments or improvements have been implemented. It was noted that the Panel's expertise could be shared with Elected Members who are not members of the Panel.

4.4 The Panel was asked what has worked well and what can be further developed as a result of the pandemic, and noted that there are benefits to meeting virtually in terms of better use of Member and Officer time, which facilitates the process for external officers such as GwE and Heads of Schools who can join remotely without having to travel. Therefore, in summary, the virtual medium was identified as needing further development, and the hybrid model should be taken advantage of.

5.0 The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

A verbal report was given by the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Senior Manager, focusing on the implications of the act locally, with input from two Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators from two primary schools.

5.1 It was noted that the final code was received at the end of March 2021, with the Service looking at what needs to be implemented immediately. The extensive engagement work undertaken with schools and Governors was outlined with presentations provided on the content of the new Code and legal requirements. References were made to the preparatory work that has been going on for years, with the Individual Development Plans (IDPs) being produced since 2013, and that the authority has an advantage in that regard compared to some other authorities which are experimenting with these for the first time. The main changes were outlined in that the age has now extended from 0-25 years, and that there is a 7 week period to determine whether an individual has Additional Learning Needs, which is much sooner than the requirements of the previous act. Authority staff will need to support the school in any tribunal cases.

5.2 The legislation requirements of the code were outlined, and a comprehensive overview of these was given:

- i. A duty to favour mainstream education and a right for individuals to remain locally educated.
- ii. A duty to provide support bilingually, which is already happening locally, but which will prove challenging for some other authorities.

5.3 There is a transition period of three years, so there are areas where there will be a period of delay before the legislative requirements need to be implemented. There will be a delay in the post-16 period, as further discussions are needed in relation to funding this aspect. The requirements with regards to the early years will be implemented more gradually. It was highlighted that school age period will be addressed primarily during the first year of the transition period.

5.4 Reference was made to the innovative work in that the Council has an IDP system, with every school on the Island having access to the system, which means that the data is live and current. It was noted that Anglesey and Gwynedd are the only two counties in Wales that have such a system, and therefore lead the way in that regard. It was noted that advocacy work in the catchment areas is being described as innovative, with advocates working together across the Island which has led to consistency across the county.

5.5 Developments

The Panel learned of the appointment of the Regional Transformation Officer who is employed by the Welsh Government. Reference was made to the positive collaboration work which exists with the Health Board, and in particular, with the Designated Lead Clinical Officer for Education (BCUBH) who has been in their role since January 2021. An ALN lead has been appointed within each hospital department for children's services. There is very positive joint working with the local Health Board.

5.6 Challenges

Reference was made to the challenges that exist in implementing the new Act, and a comprehensive overview was given:

- i. The scope of the Act is now much wider, particularly in the pre-school and Post-16 phase.
- ii. Educational Psychologists are to be consulted in relation to each Individual Development Plan
- iii. Specialist staff need to be trained and it is required to consult with Educational Psychologists in relation to each Individual Development Plan.
- iv. It was noted that there is a need to pressure the Welsh Government to train Welsh psychologists in North Wales.
- v. It was noted that the authority has sent a letter to the Welsh Government to express concerns that there aren't any Welsh Psychologists from North Wales training currently, which will lead to a staff shortage in the years to come. This is a concern as there is a need to consult with a Psychologist for every IDP, and the role of an Educational Psychologist is a statutory role.

5.7 Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Coordinators

Input was received from two Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators, and the following points were noted in particular:

- Coordinators responsible for the ALN and Inclusion systems in the schools.
- Catchment Area Co-ordinators have been identifying the priorities of the new code. A logic model has been created to identify the need and how to work towards the criteria, and has been shared with all schools to feed into school development plans.
- During the second year, it is intended to prepare learning journeys, so that all schools reach the same point at the same time.
- Regular self-evaluation has been undertaken during the past year in order to share good practice between schools and to support each other.
- It was noted that the collaboration between catchment areas is unique, and that this work is not seen in other counties.
- It was noted that teachers who take on the roles of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Co-ordinators and Leaders are under pressure, and often have to be released from class and work beyond their usual hours in order to maintain the service.

5.8 The Panel was assured that the Learning Service is planning appropriately to fully address the requirements of the legislation. The Panel will receive regular updates to monitor progress against the requirements of the Act.

6. MATTER TO BE REFERRED TO THE PARENT COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION

The following matter is referred for consideration by the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee:

6.1 The Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee is asked to reach a conclusion on the robustness of the Panel's monitoring to date.

6 – Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]

Not Relevant

7 – Financial Implications

Not Relevant

8 – Appendices

9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

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Cllr. Gwilym Owen Jones
Chair of the School Progress Review Panel
Date: 23/07/2021