

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

Committee:	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 October 2024
Subject:	Annual GwE Report - Anglesey 2023/24
Purpose of Report:	Scrutiny of GwE's Annual Report
Scrutiny Chair:	Councillor Dylan Rees
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Dafydd Roberts
Head of Service:	Marc Berw Hughes
Report Author:	Marc Berw Hughes
Tel:	07969324329
Email:	MarcHughes@anglesey.gov.wales
Local Members:	Relevant to all Council Members

25

1 - Recommendation/s

The Committee is requested to:

R1 Offer comments on the annual report and propose suggestions on the effectiveness of the offer to Anglesey schools.

R2 Come to a judgement on the scrutiny arrangements in relation to the Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework for the future.

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

Direct link to the Council Plan.

The Council Plan includes an ambition to work with the people of Anglesey, their communities and with partners to ensure that the best possible services are provided to improve the quality of life for everyone across the island. One of the 3 aims of the Plan is “creating the conditions for everyone to achieve their long-term potential”, and GwE's work contributes to this aim.

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

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]

3.6 The potential impacts the decision would have on:

- protected groups under the Equality Act 2010
- those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions)
- opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

[focus on equality and the Welsh language]

4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

1. How do we know what the standards are in Anglesey schools?
2. To what extent has GwE's work had an impact on standards in the county's schools?
3. What are the main challenges for Anglesey schools and the Learning Service in moving forward?
4. In light of the new Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework, what are the best approaches to education scrutiny?
5. What plans are in place for April 2025 when GwE as an entity comes to an end?

5 – Background / Context

1. During 2023/24, GwE, on behalf of the Learning Service, has provided support on teaching and learning, leadership, professional learning, curriculum planning and developing the Welsh language for schools.
2. To update members of the committee about GwE's work, the Annual Report for 2022/23 is attached and includes 1 appendix. The appendix includes a report on:
 - Progress and impact in:
 - Leadership
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Curriculum and Provision
 - Progress of Learners and Standards
 - Support and Challenge for Schools Causing Concern
3. In the annual report, the following is noted:
 - The quality of senior leadership is generally good across the school sectors.
 - There is a good number of practitioners who have followed the National Leadership Programme, which develops leadership capacity on all levels.
 - Most schools show improvements in specific aspects of pedagogy.
 - Nearly all schools take appropriate steps to strengthen pedagogy and raise standards further.

- In nearly all schools, the curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences to satisfy the needs and interests of pupils.
- All Anglesey schools have ensured time for professional learning opportunities so that staff can develop their knowledge and understanding of Curriculum for Wales frameworks.
- In the secondary, self-evaluation processes show that many pupils make suitable progress over time.
- In most secondary schools, effective progress tracking systems are used.
- Many of the pupils in the secondary show positive aspects and enthusiasm when completing their work.
- Developing writing skills has been a great priority in many secondary schools during the past year.
- Many secondary pupils apply their reading skills appropriately and across the curriculum, and pupils are making appropriate progress in numeracy skills.
- In the primary, standards and progress made by pupils are good in most schools and very good in some schools.
- In the primary, the pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills are progressing well in most schools.
- Learners' Welsh language skills are developing strongly in many of the schools and learners listen, speak and communicate more confidently in the language.
- There is a clear schools causing concern strategy in place.

In the report, the following have been identified as main priorities to develop further in the secondary schools' improvement plans:

- Continue to strengthen leadership on all levels in the secondary sector, with a specific focus on refining self-evaluation processes and planning improvement so that it has a positive impact on the standards of pupils.
- Further developing the ability of senior leaders and middle leaders to lead effectively on teaching and learning.
- Further strengthening the quality of teaching to reduce the variation in and across schools.
- Ensure that there is an appropriate challenge level for the ability range across each subject and Area of Learning and Experience.
- Ensure that the feedback given to the pupils is suitable and leads to progress in the learning.
- Review and evaluate the new curriculum for years 7 and 8 and prepare appropriately for teaching the new curriculum to year 9 in September 2024.
- Further develop strategies to ensure that pupils make progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that each primary/secondary cluster implements effective transition schemes that meet statutory requirements.
- Ensure progress in skills.
- Further improve Welsh oracy.

- Improve linguistic accuracy and the standard of grammar in both languages.

The following have also been identified among the most common priorities to develop further in the primary schools' improvement plans:

- Continue to ensure that the evaluation processes of each school identify specific and sharp improvement priorities.
 - Develop leadership and teacher collaboration roles between schools.
 - Successfully respond to the requirements of the new Accountability Framework.
 - Continue to develop Welsh language provision, promoting high standards and developing the learners' motivation to use the language consistently in the classroom and beyond.
 - Continue to give intentional attention to developing independent learners and responding to work.
 - Continue to hold discussions about learner progress with the learners themselves, school staff and staff of other schools.
 - Further develop the ability of learners to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum.
4. In September 2023, new guidance was issued by Welsh Government, i.e., School Improvement Guidance. This year, the guidance is statutory. The guidance strengthens accountability systems, with schools being held directly accountable for the quality of provision and the progress of learners by the governing body and Estyn. In addition to this, the guidance clearly notes that each partner is a part of the process, with clear accountability on the support services such as the Learning Service and GwE.
 5. As part of the regime, schools will be required to publish a summary of their school development plan on their websites, noting their high-level improvement priorities, the planned actions to fulfil these priorities and the relevant milestones. The summary will note the support available to the school by the Local Authority, GwE and other external partners to realise the priorities. Schools will be expected to publish a report on progress against the priorities of the previous year, including the support's effectiveness.
 6. As the new improvement guidance comes into force, committees will be in a strong place to:
 - Scrutinise the Council's work to support schools.
 - Scrutinise how effective the collaboration is between Anglesey Local Authority and the consortia.
 - Monitor and scrutinise the use of statutory powers to support and improve schools that cause concern.
 - Consider the impact of decisions to modernise schools on school improvement.

7. A review of the 'middle tier' roles and responsibilities of the education system in Wales was undertaken between July 2023 and December 2023. The review was led by Professor Dylan Jones. It looked at the role of the regional consortia, local authorities and the National Academy for Educational Leadership, with the aim of clearly identifying their roles and responsibilities. In addition to this, the funding streams for the middle tier were also considered.
8. In January 2024, a statement was issued by the Minister which included a letter from Professor Dylan Jones. The Minister noted that the first step will include a new focus and clear expectations in terms of fulfilling:
 - i. Supporting work between schools on a local level (local)
 - ii. Supporting collaboration and networking between schools across local authorities and on a national level (higher-local)
 - iii. Supporting the work of school improvement on a national level (national)
9. It has been noted that there will be a move away from existing arrangements for regional support to partnerships between local authorities that allow for more local approaches. In light of this, GwE will come to an end as a service from the 1st of April 2025.
10. As the new arrangements come into force, committees will need to scrutinise:
 - i) Transitional arrangements for 2024/25 and ensuring that schools and establishments receive suitable support during this period
 - ii) The new arrangements from the 1st of April 2025 and ensuring that schools and establishments receive the appropriate support in the future.

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

6.1 Potential impacts on protected groups under the Equality Act 2010

N/A

6.2 Potential impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (strategic decisions)

N/A

6.3 Potential impacts on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

N/A

7 – Financial Implications

During a period of financial uncertainty, you are asked to consider whether GwE provides value for money up to April 2025.

8 – Appendices:

1. GwE's Annual Report for Anglesey 2023/24

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

Welsh Government – School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability

GWE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24 ANGLESEY

The report notes progress against five key areas as well as the next steps along the improvement journey:

- Key Area 1 - Leadership
- Key Area 2 - Teaching and Learning
- Key Area 3 - Curriculum and Provision
- Key Area 4 – Standards and Progression of Learners
- Key Area 5 - Support and Challenge for Schools Causing Concern

LEADERSHIP

The quality of senior leadership is good overall across the schools' sector. Almost all schools take steps to further strengthen leadership in their school focusing on fine tuning and improving evaluation and improvement planning processes at every level. Nearly all schools prioritise guidance and support to develop the capacity of senior and middle leaders to lead and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning effectively. This needs to be further developed and reinforced in some schools. Uptake on high-quality leadership development training and programmes has increased. An increasing number of schools have senior leaders who are trained peer reviewers and improvement facilitators and who are actively involved in peer review activities.

The Authority and GwE provide a rich array of professional learning to develop leadership at every level, together with targeted focused support for schools as required. In addition, there are robust arrangements in place in Anglesey where school leaders collaborate to support one another in primary clusters and secondary alliances and take ownership and increasing accountability for each other's improvement journeys. However, there is still a need to strengthen collaboration and ensure that all Head teachers are committed to the principles of collaboration. Additionally, there is scope to develop collaboration so that leaders at all tiers fully engage and partake in the activities.

A good number of practitioners in Anglesey have followed the National Leadership Programmes developing leadership capacity across the Authority at every level. This includes middle leaders, senior leaders, new head teachers and experienced head teachers.

Over the last five years, twenty practitioners from Anglesey have reached the standard to receive NPQH qualification. The number of aspiring head teachers with the qualification is positive and suggests a healthy future in terms of school leaders.

GwE and the Learning Service work effectively together to support new head teachers and acting head teachers. The programme consists of a rich array of regular training throughout the educational year to equip head teachers to be able to successfully undertake their work as head teachers in Anglesey, including briefing sessions on areas such as finance management, safeguarding, site safety amongst other managerial elements. All new heads have access to a local mentor and Leadership Coach - experienced and successful head teachers, to provide firm support on leadership and managerial matters in relation to their work as head teachers in Anglesey and beyond. This means that new heads in Anglesey receive timely and punctual support and that they have access to several sources of support, as required, as well as good opportunities to develop their knowledge and deepen their skills in the role.

An inclusive training programme is in place to support Governors' development. The programme has been put together partly in consultation with Governors in response to their specific developmental needs. Feedback from governors on the programme has been positive. GwE has a diverse training provision to enrich the training offer of the Learning Service. Also, at the request of some schools and in alignment with their Support Plans, bespoke support has been provided for Governors.

A rich provision is available to support the professional development of teaching assistants via the national programmes, namely the Teaching Assistants Learning Pathway (TALP). TALP includes 'Induction', 'Practising Assistants' and the 'Aspiring HLTAs' programme, leading up to HLTA status assessment. In the same manner as the Leadership programme for teachers, these programmes encourage individuals to become reflective practitioners who evaluate their practice against the 'Professional standards for assisting teaching'. A good number of practitioners in Anglesey have followed and successfully completed these programmes.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING

Summary of main findings, engagement, and impact

There has been an increasing focus on ensuring support and guidance to improve teaching through networks for leaders of teaching and learning, networks for core subjects and the direct work of Link Advisers with their schools via individual Support Plans. All SIAs support their schools to monitor teaching and learning through a range of activities including scrutiny of work, learning trails, and listening to learners and staff. This enables school leaders to fine tune their monitoring and self-evaluation processes to identify, focus and develop areas for improvement and focused improvement planning. SIAs provide first-hand guidance, signpost practitioners to relevant professional learning or alternatively support schools to access support from various sources. This enables every school to access targeted support. As a result, most schools are demonstrating improvements in specific aspects of pedagogy. However, the pace and scale of improvement needs more attention in some schools.

Almost all schools are taking appropriate action to strengthen pedagogy and raise standards further. High-quality targeted subject-specific support for pedagogy has resulted in improving standards of teaching and learning in the core subjects at secondary, and across the AoLEs in the primary and improving depth and breadth of understanding. Nearly all schools have appropriate literacy and numeracy interventions in place and they can show the progress made by small groups of pupils. The quality of teaching is generally good across most schools in every sector and purposeful steps are taken to tackle areas causing concern and to minimise variations within schools. Generally and in order to improve further, it needs to be ensured that challenge is pitched appropriately for the ability range and consistency ensured in the quality and impact of feedback on work.

The Learning Service, in partnership with GwE, has been taking positive steps to support leaders and teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In a training session for the senior leaders of all secondary schools on the island, a presentation and a workshop were run by GwE Advisers, focusing on how to lead teaching and learning effectively. The content and quality of the training was very well-received. However, there is variation across schools in how they have responded to the guidance in said training, and further work remains to be done by some schools to strengthen leadership in the area even further.

In one primary school causing concern and in Estyn Special Measures on the island, a pedagogy recommendation following an inspection has resulted in specific and incisive improvement steps. There is additional support in place also for a few schools identified as requiring improvements in pedagogy. Support includes training for all staff on reviewing the

main principles of Assessment for Learning; opportunities to observe successful practice and targeted support for scrutiny, learning trails and lesson observation.

CURRICULUM AND PROVISION

Summary of main findings, engagement, and impact

In almost all schools, the curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences to meet the needs and interests of pupils. There is a suitable curriculum for pupils including a wide range of choices for KS4 and sixth form. Anglesey schools are working very well in partnership with schools and colleges in the local authority and beyond to ensure a very wide range of subjects for pupils.

All Anglesey schools have ensured time for professional learning opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales frameworks. Staff across the authority also have opportunities to collaborate with teachers within AoLEs, alliance partners and primary clusters to design the curriculum. Secondary schools delivered the Curriculum for Wales to year 7 and 8 pupils in September 2023. Work is ongoing to evaluate quality alongside planning for the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales to year 9 in September 2024. At best, robust leadership and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales by SLT members in schools have ensured a thorough and creative approach to planning by middle leaders and teachers. In these schools, the SLT place a strong emphasis on ensuring that staff have a deeper understanding of progression and that they plan for progression in learning. Over the last year, GwE has been inviting the best practitioners from schools within the authority to share their successful practices with other schools in the region.

GwE supports all secondary schools in Anglesey to further develop their provision for literacy, numeracy, and digital competence skills. Leaders in most schools continue to develop their strategies to ensure that pupils make progress in their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills across the curriculum. In those schools where skills have been planned effectively, there is a positive impact on pupils' standards. However, further work remains to be done in a few schools to plan the skills across the curriculum focusing on progress and progression. Similarly, further work remains to be done in some clusters to ensure that planning for progression and continuity in skills from primary to secondary is more coherent and builds on previous learning.

SIAs continue to support every cluster to develop their transition plans. This support will lead to better consistency in the quality of curriculum design within and across schools.

LEARNER PROGRESSION AND STANDARDS

Secondary Schools

Joint self-evaluation processes between school leaders and GwE SIAs have shown that many pupils are making appropriate progress over time. In most schools, effective tracking systems are used to identify pupils who are under performing and to plan interventions and ensure appropriate support for pupils.

Many pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and enthusiasm when completing work. They listen attentively and show respect towards their peers and adults. The majority communicate effectively and contribute positively to group and classroom discussions. Nevertheless, the confidence of a minority of pupils when contributing to group and classroom discussion is low, and almost all schools have put strategies in place to develop oracy skills. Nearly all schools

in Anglesey have been implementing 'Ein Llais Ni' strategies to improve Welsh oracy this year, and these will need to continue to be developed to ensure further improvement.

Developing writing skills has been a priority in many of Anglesey's schools over the past few years. Many pupils write effectively with suitable accuracy. However, some make basic errors often in their writing, especially spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors. Many pupils make effective progress with their writing skills, where suitable scaffolding or planning activities have been provided. Opportunities for pupils to develop extended writing skills in subjects across the curriculum continue to be the focus in many schools. However, in some instances, further work remains to be done to ensure that the principles of disciplinary literacy are at work.

Many pupils apply their reading skills appropriately. They can locate facts and information from texts successfully. They highlight and annotate a range of texts appropriately across the curriculum such as relevant information and vocabulary when reading texts. Many schools have identified the need to provide more opportunities for learners to develop their higher-order reading skills.

Across the curriculum, pupils make appropriate progress in numeracy skills. For example, many have robust number skills and can apply these in other subjects. Anglesey schools continue to plan more opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills. There are good examples in schools of pupils being able to use their digital skills to enrich their work in subjects across the curriculum.

Primary and Special Schools

Overall, pupils' standards and progress are good in the majority of primary schools, and very good in a few schools. Assessment and data are used effectively and efficiently to target the progress of individuals and to plan for future improvement in many schools.

Pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills are developing well and are being applied across the curriculum in most schools.

Pupils' Welsh language skills are becoming strong in many schools and learners listen, speak, and communicate with increasing confidence in the language. Oracy, reading, and writing are being addressed appropriately in improvement plans and intervention programmes in schools.

Most schools have established arrangements to identify pupils' baseline upon entry, to identify the progress pupils will make.

SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE FOR SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

Summary of actions and impact

There is a clear strategy for schools causing concern and all identified schools have a support plan which clearly notes the nature and intensity of the support required.

The increasing focus on supporting schools to improve the quality and consistency of leadership and pedagogy has resulted in improved standards across almost every school. Improvement needs to gather more pace in a few schools.

At present, there is one Post-Inspection Improvement plan for one primary school on the island. One school is in Special Measures. Support from GwE and Local Authority officers underpins this plan. Progress against outcomes is measured continuously by the school and SIA. Regular reports on the progress of these schools are given at Meetings of the Multi-agency Support Board and County Quality Boards.

In the school in Special Measures, there are robust processes in place to support the school via the urgent improvement plan which closely aligns with the Post-Inspection Action Plan. The Urgent Improvement Board established consists of representation from the LA, GwE, school and Governing Body and meets on a half termly basis. Estyn will be visiting the school before the end of the summer term.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

SECONDARY

Improve Leadership

- continue to strengthen leadership at all levels in the secondary sector focusing on further improving self-evaluation and improvement planning processes in order to have a positive impact on pupils' standards.
- further developing the capacity of senior and middle leaders to lead effectively on teaching and learning.
- further strengthen accountability processes across schools to ensure robust and timely interventions to tackle underperformance.
- strengthen alliance collaboration to ensure mutual support and increased accountability for one another's improvement journeys.

Improving Teaching and Learning

- further strengthen the quality of teaching to minimise variation within and across schools.
- ensure an appropriate level of challenge for the ability range across every subject and AoLE.
- ensure that feedback given to pupils is suitable and leads to progression in learning.

Curriculum and Provision

- review and evaluate the new curriculum for Years 7 and 8 and prepare accordingly for teaching the new curriculum to year 9 in September 2024.
- further develop strategies to ensure that pupils make progress in their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills across the curriculum.
- ensure that every primary/secondary cluster operates effective transition plans that meet statutory requirements.

Standards of Learners

- ensure progression in skills
- develop pupils' confidence to contribute to discussions
- further improve Welsh oracy
- improve language accuracy and standards of grammar in both languages.

PRIMARY

Improving Leadership

- Continue to ensure that evaluation processes in all schools identify specific and focused improvement priorities.
- Develop teacher leadership roles and collaboration between schools through the Schools' Partnership Programme and establish Professional Dialogue Networks.
- Respond successfully to the requirements of the new Accountability Framework
- Continue to develop leadership at all levels and create self-improving organisations.

Improving Teaching and Learning

- Continue to ensure time for teachers to share aspects of excellent teaching across the cluster
- Continue to develop the provision for the Welsh language promoting high standards and developing learners' motivation consistently in classes and beyond.
- Continue to focus on developing independent learners and responding to work.

Curriculum and Provision

- Continue to conduct discussions regarding learner progression with learners themselves, school staff and staff in other schools.
- Continue to review the curricular provision against the requirements of Curriculum for Wales adapting and fine tuning accordingly

Standards of Learners

- Further develop pupils' ability to use and apply their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills across the curriculum.
- Develop 'Professional Dialogue' processes across the cluster including the secondary school.