

TERMS OF REFERENCE & *MODUS OPERANDI*

EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL

PART I – BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Scrutiny of Education

Education accountability and Member scrutiny of the wider education system is a critically important role and one that requires the Local Authority and its partners to work together effectively. Following changes to how schools operate and with more reform on the horizon¹, there is a potential risk for much less clarity and understanding of who is accountable for what and who has the overview of local education systems. Recent Welsh Government guidance provides a new point of reference. The School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability² outlines the Government's expectations of all stakeholders in contributing to sustainable school improvement.

It is therefore opportune to reconsider the question of what the role of Elected Members is in this system. There needs to be clear and structured local oversight and leadership in order to ensure checks and balances outside of individual schools' own governance systems on how the overall education system is operating at a County level. To this end, the Education Scrutiny Panel has an important contribution to make. Ensuring meaningful and robust scrutiny of education is a key element of the leadership role of Scrutiny Members. Effective scrutiny should add value and enhance improvement, accountability and transparency.

Scrutiny of education is about holding the Executive Member and education service providers to account, and at a strategic level:

- Looking at / scrutinising how all the components work together eg how local partners coordinate activities
- That all efforts are having a positive impact on learner outcomes.

Education scrutiny is much more than adding value to the decisions of the Executive alone. It is about ensuring that a proper scrutiny process forms part of the planning, implementation and follow-up on key decisions that have an impact on taxpayers and local communities. As such, effective scrutiny can:

- Challenge effectively
- Hold decision-makers to account; and
- Assist the Executive to make robust decision for future generations.

Our Local Arrangements

Scrutiny of schools has evolved and developed since the Schools' Progress Review Panel was established in 2012³. The role of the Panel until 2022 focused on improving performance of all

¹ Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 – creates a legislative framework to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision;

Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 – establishes the Curriculum for Wales in law.

² School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability. Welsh Government January 2021

³ The Schools' Progress Review Panel was established in November, 2012 by the former Education and Leisure Scrutiny Committee. It arose from recommendations made by Estyn at the time on the quality of education services for children and young people on Anglesey.

schools by providing robust challenge on individual schools' performance; encouraging the sharing of good practice between schools, taking on board lessons learnt and individual schools' experience; enhancing local Members' knowledge of key performance drivers and challenges facing schools on the Isle of Anglesey; evidencing that school performance was being monitored by Elected Members. The scrutiny work carried out by the former Schools' Progress Review Panel during the past decade has been a positive development, having an impact on schools' performance by:

- Development of a model focusing on a smaller group
- Members developing a level of expertise
- Encouraging good attendance and teamwork.

Our local Education Scrutiny Charter (at **Appendix 1**) provides an overarching summary bringing together the Council's commitment and values underpinning Elected Member scrutiny of matters which are of strategic importance to the Local Authority.

PART II – PANEL REMIT AND SCOPE

REMIT

It is a **natural next step** to further develop Member scrutiny of education ensuring a broader scope to its work, with the following key benefits:

- Further develop a model of working in Education which focuses on a smaller group to enable Members to be more involved, to develop a level of subject expertise and to encourage good attendance and teamwork
- Further strengthen the capacity of Members to challenge the quality and impact of the services provided to schools
- Forum to discuss information around Service risks as a basis to inform the forward work programme of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
- Forum to develop a group of Members with the expertise and ownership to lead discussions on Education matters in the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

What Estyn expects to see in terms of political leadership and scrutiny

Elected Members have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the education provision to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively:

- 1. Standards – challenge performance in order to raise standards around outcomes**
- 2. Quality and effectiveness – an understanding of the breadth and quality of education provision**
- 3. Leadership – understanding of the effectiveness of education leadership at all levels in the County.**

SCOPE

Topic	Work programme Focus	Timeline
Effective Scrutiny	Induction of Panel members – workshop format. Aim: Member familiarisation of revised scope and terms of reference	24 June, 2025
Skills	Skills set - training & development inputs to ensure clarity of role and subject knowledge to enable effective scrutiny eg Estyn, service area leads.	Delivery throughout the municipal year ensuring alignment with Panel scrutiny work
Self-evaluation	Self-evaluation – Member critique of own performance to enable review, reflection & learning. Objectives: i. Stock take ii. Review, evaluate and reflect iii. Establish foundation for next period iv. Confirm Member ownership.	Annual – to be determined by Panel members
Theme 1: Transition	Effective Transition – readiness to learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve Member understanding of the importance of effective transition on learners Identify how schools are supported to ensure effective transition 	Theme introduction at Panel Meeting → 24 June 2025 Fieldwork in 3 schools → September 2025 Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → 24 September 2025
Theme 2: Attendance	Good Attendance in Schools – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of “improving school attendance” strategy How effectively schools are supported in helping to raise attendance 	Theme introduction at Panel meeting → 24 September 2025 Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → 17 December 2025
Theme 3: Curriculum for Wales	Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 - Curriculum for Wales → career and work-related experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve member understanding of Career and 	Theme introduction at Panel meeting → 17 December 2025 Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc

Topic	Work programme Focus	Timeline
	<p>Work-Related Experience (CWRE) within the Curriculum for Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review how effectively are schools supported in developing CWRE within the curriculum and what opportunities are there for learners? 	<p>Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → 19 March 2026</p>
Theme 4: Schools' Self-improvement	<p>Self-improvement journey for schools –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve member understanding of self-improving schools, and where schools on Anglesey are up to on their own self-improvement journey Consider how effectively schools are being supported by the Learning Service in becoming self-improving. 	<p>Theme introduction at Panel meeting → 19 March 2026</p> <p>Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc</p> <p>Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → June 2026</p>
Theme 5: Welsh Language	<p>Welsh in Education (10-year focus)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise / monitor delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for the Isle of Anglesey Monitor local performance against national performance indicators on an annual basis 	<p>Theme introduction at Panel meeting → June 2026</p> <p>Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc</p> <p>Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → September 2026</p>
Theme 6: Inclusion	<p>Improve Members' understanding of "school inclusion"</p> <p>Consider how effectively schools are supported within the Inclusion service area</p>	<p>Theme introduction at Panel meeting → September 2026</p> <p>Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc</p> <p>Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → December 2026</p>
Theme 7: Impact of Poverty	<p>Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise Members' awareness of the expectation on schools to 	<p>Theme introduction at Panel meeting → December 2026</p> <p>Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc</p>

Topic	Work programme Focus	Timeline
	<p>consider how they reduce the impact of poverty on learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how effectively schools reduce this impact, and the support they receive to help achieve this. 	Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → March 2027
Theme 8: NEET	<p>Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve member understanding of NEETs Consider how effectively the Local Authority and schools support 	<p>Theme introduction at Panel meeting → March 2027</p> <p>Fieldwork in 3 schools → details tbc</p> <p>Self-evaluation / reflections at Panel meeting → Post local authority elections 2027</p>
Voice of the Learner	Each focus area ensures that Members consider learner experience through learner voice. This is an integral part of the education provision on the Isle of Anglesey and forms a golden thread running through the work of the Panel.	TBC – discussion with Panel members

PART III – GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Governance / Panel Membership

- The scrutiny panels have been established to undertake work streams on behalf of the parent scrutiny committees and as such are working groups without decision-making powers
- Panel membership will be subject to political balance principles and rules⁴.

The core membership of the Panel will include:

- Elected members** - 4 Elected Members from both scrutiny committees and based on the political balance formula of the Council
- Portfolio Member for Education** – as an observer, with no vote
- Officers** – Director of Education, Skills and Young People, Scrutiny Manager.

From time to time, the Panel's work will require the attendance of other Elected Members (e.g. members of the Executive) and / or officers from other service areas.

⁴ The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 sets out the main principles governing political balance of local authorities

2. Frequency of Meetings and Quorum

- **Frequency of meetings** – the panel has been established as a standing panel to ensure accountability, oversight and scrutiny of the education system on Anglesey, as summarised in the table above. The panel will meet in accordance with the timeline for the submission of progress reports on education scrutiny to the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as follows:
 - i. 4 hybrid meetings of the Panel each civic year – June, September, December and March
 - ii. Small group thematic fieldwork in schools between each meeting of the Panel in order to scrutinise and monitor impact on learners. Fieldwork to focus on key priority themes aligned to the Council Plan 2023/2028
- **Quorum** – this will not apply to the panel.

3. Recording Meetings and Reporting Arrangements

- The panel will be run in the format of a business meeting. The Scrutiny Unit will collate and distribute any papers in preparation for each meeting and provide a list of action points following each meeting
- **Reporting arrangements** - regular reporting by panel members to the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

[10/07/2025, 21/08/2025 & 26/08/2025)