

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 25 th September 2018
Report Subject	Self-Evaluation of Local Government Education Services
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council undertakes an annual self-evaluation of its education services for its children and young people.

This report has a three key purposes. The first is to review the process and purpose of self-evaluation and how it is at the core of improving services.

The second purpose is to advise Cabinet that from September 2017 a new framework has been issued by Estyn for the inspection of Local Government Education Services. This framework will be used for the inspection of education services within local authorities on a five year cycle between 2018 and 2023. This report provides an overview of the new inspection arrangements.

The final aspect of the report, attached as an appendix, is to present the current self-evaluation report of education services in Flintshire, based on the new Estyn framework, to Cabinet for their consideration and approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet notes the new Estyn framework for the inspection of education services within Local Authorities in Wales.
2	That Cabinet approves the Self-Evaluation Report of Education Services in Flintshire.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE SELF EVALUATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES
1.01	<p>The prime purpose of self-evaluation is to lead service improvements to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people supported by the Education and Youth Portfolio. Only by robustly evaluating the strengths of the current provision and identifying areas for further improvement can the portfolio continue to refine the manner in which it delivers services to secure better outcomes.</p> <p>Self-evaluation needs to be a process which involves all stakeholders rather than senior managers working in isolation. This report is being shared with a range of stakeholders including portfolio officers, headteachers, elected members, partner organisations and learners themselves. This will allow them to contribute their evidence on how successfully education services for children and young people are being delivered and identify further areas for improvement.</p>
1.02	<p>Estyn defines self-evaluation as a process not a one-off event. At the heart of self-evaluation are three questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well are we doing and what impact are our services having?• How do we know?• How can we improve things further?
1.03	<p>The process of self-evaluation should be continuous and an embedded part of the work of the Local Authority. It will be a cycle which includes planning for improvement, undertaking improvement activity, monitoring the actions taken and most importantly, evaluating the impact they have had – the ‘so what?’ question. The emphasis should always be focused on the impact of each aspect of provision on the outcomes achieved by learners and of their wellbeing.</p>
1.04	<p>Self-evaluation is based on a wide range of information about the strengths and areas for improvement and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of data from assessments, tests and national examinations at an individual learner, subject, departmental and school level as well as at a whole local authority level• Evaluations of the quality of educational support services being offered to schools and their impact on learners by the local authority’s core team• Evaluation of the challenge and support being provided to schools by the regional education improvement service, GwE• Evaluation of inspection evidence in relation to schools, non-maintained commissioned settings and other related services• Reviewing progress against strategic improvement plans e.g. Council Improvement Plan, Education Portfolio Plan, Public Service Board Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing how well the local authority is implementing national policies • Evaluation of the challenge provided to the service through the Education & Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee • Auditing practice against policies and procedures e.g. Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Financing of Schools, Admissions etc. • Sampling the views of key partners and stakeholders on the quality of educational services being delivered.
1.05	For the any inspection of local government education services by Estyn, the starting point will always be the self-evaluation report and so it is a critical document.
1.06	<p>From September 2017 Estyn introduced a new framework for the inspection of local government education services. All local authorities in Wales will be inspected over the following 5 years with 1 LA per region per annual cycle. Local authorities will receive eight weeks' notice of inspection. Estyn will also gather additional information from other bodies e.g. Welsh Audit Office (WAO) and the Care Standards Inspectorate (CSI) prior to inspection.</p> <p>2-3 weeks prior to the inspection, the team will make preliminary visit to the LA to meet with range of stakeholders to gather evidence which supports the development of their lines of enquiry e.g. heads, chairs of governors, leaders/managers from partner organisations such as GwE, other statutory bodies, FE institutions, training providers, voluntary organisations, private companies etc. They will also meet with GwE staff who support schools in the authority and children/young people's representative groups.</p>
1.07	<p>The inspection areas in the new framework focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcomes 2. Quality of Education Services 3. Leadership & Management <p>The inspection team will make a judgement on a four point scale:</p> <p>Excellent – Very strong, sustained performance and practice</p> <p>Good – Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement</p> <p>Adequate and needs improvement – Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement</p> <p>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement – Important weaknesses outweigh strengths.</p> <p>Follow up activity will be considered if one or more inspection areas are judged to be UNSATISFACTORY or if all inspection areas are judged to be ADEQUATE. This will involve Estyn working with the local authority and undertaking a monitoring visit within two years.</p>
1.08	Attached as an appendix to this report is the most recent self-evaluation report of education services. The report provides a detailed analysis of the

	portfolio's performance against the main quality indicators in the Estyn framework under the three inspection areas – Outcomes, Quality of Education Services and Leadership & Management.
1.09	The self-evaluation report demonstrates that the local authority knows its schools very well. It provides them with robust and appropriate challenge, support and intervention through its effective commissioning of services via the regional school improvement consortium, GwE. Performance is monitored rigorously and schools are targeted with individual support packages to facilitate their school improvement journey. This is evidenced by a positive profile of learner outcomes across all key stages and also the very few numbers of schools in categories of Estyn follow up. Pre-inspection reports submitted to Estyn invariably match the final outcome of the inspection, confirming that the local authority has an accurate picture of each school's performance and priorities for improvement.
1.10	<p>Learner outcomes match or exceed expected benchmark levels in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and this has been sustained in recent years. Performance is above the Welsh average and compares positively to the other North Wales authorities.</p> <p>Performance at Key Stage 4 is more difficult to compare year on year due to the number of changes within the examination structures since 2015 but shows an improving performance over the last few years and compares positively across the region and is generally above Welsh averages. Improving performance at the higher than expected level across all phases shows that the most able pupils are being more effectively challenged to achieve their potential.</p>
1.11	Providing high quality professional development opportunities to improve the skills of the education workforce is a strength of the authority. This is delivered in a variety of ways e.g. through the professional offer now developed by GwE which supports teachers from their first year through all levels of leadership to headship; through direct training sessions delivered by LA teams; by the careful commissioning of external providers and through local clusters and networks.
1.12	The local authority provides direct support to schools for some key areas including finance, employment services, school modernisation, governance health and safety, staff well-being, early years, safeguarding, integrated youth services and play. Feedback from schools is positive about the quality and impact of this support.
1.13	<p>Support for vulnerable learners and those with additional learning needs is a high priority for the authority but is also identified as a risk because of the increasing levels of demand within a context of financially reducing resources. Trends show an overall improvement in outcomes for pupils with identified additional learning needs in Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. However, performance on Key Stage 4 indicators for pupils with ALN is not as positive and remains a key area of focus for the portfolio.</p> <p>A significant factor in this is the challenge of pupils who struggle to stay in mainstream school, particularly in the final year of statutory schooling (Yr 11). The local authority continues to develop a range of alternative provision</p>

	<p>for pupils Educated Other than at School (EOTAS) and those in danger of becoming 'Not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET)'. Flintshire traditionally has had one of the lowest rates for NEETS in Wales. Additional European funding streams are being used effectively to broaden the range of vocational courses. These are often better suited to some learners to maintain their engagement in the learning process and achieve some appropriate qualifications.</p>
1.14	<p>Ensuring the safeguarding of children and young people is a priority of the local authority and is delivered very effectively through regular training, model policies and procedures, curriculum support, safer recruitment practices and effective joint working between the Education and Youth Portfolio and Children's Services.</p>
1.15	<p>The delivery of services to young people is managed effectively through an integrated model of Youth Services and Youth Justice Services and is enhanced through innovative partnerships with voluntary and statutory services. In a time of reducing resources, the Integrated Youth Provision is constantly challenged to make the best use of its limited funding streams to meet the growing needs being presented.</p> <p>Levels of engagement through youth clubs and other models of delivery is high and this enables the service to respond to emerging threats to the safety and well-being of young people as well as trying to develop services that they want. However, the uncertainty over future funding levels and challenges in the recruitment of qualified youth workers means that maintaining a sustainable model of youth provision across the whole county is a risk and a challenge.</p> <p>Through its Enhanced Case Management and Trauma Informed Practice, the Youth Justice Service has a strong track record in reducing reoffending rates of young people within the criminal justice system in Flintshire. It is also steadily increasing the level of access to education, employment and training to this cohort but this remains an area for improvement.</p>
1.16	<p>The local authority has a strong track record in strategically managing its school estate through its own resources and through the effective use of grant funding streams e.g 21st Century Schools. The Council has made difficult decisions in relation to school organisational change in recent years to achieve a more efficient and effective model of educational provision to protect front line delivery in the classroom. New school buildings have been built on time and within budget. The repairs and maintenance backlog has been reduced from £35m in 2010 to £19m in 2017 but this remains a risk to manage.</p>
1.17	<p>Flintshire County Council benefits from highly effective leadership at all levels of the organisation. There is strong corporate support for the Education and Youth Portfolio and education priorities are very clear. This is evidenced in the Council Improvement Plan and other strategic documents. The needs and priorities of children and young people have been both supported and challenged by Officers and Elected Members and this has delivered consistently good outcomes for learners.</p>
1.18	<p>The Self Evaluation Report clearly identifies strengths as well as areas</p>

	<p>identified for improvement but does not shy away from the risks faced by the Council, particularly in relation to reducing funding for local government services and the uncertainty over grant funding which underpins a considerable proportion of educational delivery.</p> <p>Maintaining the delivery of high quality education services with reducing resources is the most significant challenge facing the Council at the current time and is highly dependent on the skill and resilience of its leaders within the Council, within the Education and Youth Portfolio and within its schools and settings.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The self-evaluation document outlines the perceived strengths along with key areas for improvement and the risks to be managed. The resource implications of these will be defined in the revised Portfolio Improvement Plan which builds on the self-evaluation report.
2.02	The budget for the Education and Youth Portfolio, including delegated budgets to schools, is one of the largest in the Council. In the current financial climate with the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant for 2018-19 and cuts to a number of education grant funding streams from Welsh Government, the funding of educational services remains under significant pressure.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	This report has been co-constructed with input from local authority officers, and GwE partners and is now in a wider consultation phase with elected members, school representatives and a wide group of key partners and stakeholders.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The self-evaluation process feeds into the Education & Youth Portfolio Improvement Plan and the overall Council Improvement Plan, both of which outline associated risks and mitigating factors.
4.02	<p>Areas of risk identified through the self-evaluation process include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding pressures on delegated schools budget resulting in reduced staffing levels and interventions for learners which may undermine standards • Funding pressures on core LA support teams e.g. Inclusion, Youth Services, Youth Justice Services potentially reducing expert support for vulnerable learners and putting preventative programmes at risk • The uncertainty over the sustainability and levels of grant funding and inflexible grant conditions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly complex needs of learners and the cost and accessibility of appropriate provision for those educated other than at school (EOTAS) which may impact on outcomes achieved The ability of regional partnership arrangements to deliver effective school improvement services whilst offering value for money The ability of the local authority to respond effectively to the proposed Additional Learning Needs legislation against a backdrop of reducing budgets The Council's financial capacity to deliver an ambitious programme of school modernisation Resilience of central teams and workload levels Availability of suitably qualified and experienced leaders to take on headship roles.
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Estyn Framework for the Inspection of Local Government Education Services
5.02	Appendix 2 – Self-Evaluation Report 2018

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Claire Homard Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Telephone: 01352 704190 E-mail: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Estyn – the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales</p> <p>HMI – Her Majesty's Inspector (employed by Estyn)</p> <p>GwE – Regional School Improvement Service for the North Wales region commissioned by Flintshire County Council</p> <p>EOTAS – Education other than at school applies to children and young people who do not access their education within a maintained school setting. Examples may include home education, pupil referral units and independent schools.</p>