

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 31 st January 2019
Report Subject	Learning from the School Performance Monitoring Group
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update to the Education & Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG). The purpose of the SPMG is to challenge schools which are underperforming and to ensure that the resources of the Local Authority and the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales (GwE) are being appropriately directed to schools in order for them to make progress and improve outcomes for their learners.

The group provides elected members with the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of the performance of individual schools in both the primary and secondary sector and actively work alongside officers in providing the necessary challenge and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members receive the report on the work undertaken by the School Performance Monitoring Group.
2	That members endorse the School Performance Monitoring Group to continue to work in the same way with targeted schools.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP																								
1.01	<p>Membership of the group for the academic year 2017-18 was as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Cllr Ian Roberts</td> <td>Lead Member for Education & Youth</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr David Healey</td> <td>Chair, E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Dave Mackie</td> <td>E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Marion Bateman</td> <td>Vice-Chair Flintshire County Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Dave Hughes</td> <td>E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr David Hytch</td> <td>E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr Bernard Stuart</td> <td>E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mrs Becky Stark</td> <td>E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Claire Homard</td> <td>Interim Chief Officer, Education & Youth</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vicky Barlow</td> <td>Interim Senior Manager – School Improvement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GwE Senior Core Lead for Primary or Secondary</td> <td>Depending on which school in SSMG</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser</td> <td>Depending on which school in SSMG</td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Ian Roberts	Lead Member for Education & Youth	Cllr David Healey	Chair, E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Dave Mackie	E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Marion Bateman	Vice-Chair Flintshire County Council	Cllr Dave Hughes	E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Mr David Hytch	E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Mr Bernard Stuart	E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Mrs Becky Stark	E&Y Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Claire Homard	Interim Chief Officer, Education & Youth	Vicky Barlow	Interim Senior Manager – School Improvement	GwE Senior Core Lead for Primary or Secondary	Depending on which school in SSMG	GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser	Depending on which school in SSMG
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1.02	<p>The criteria for monitoring schools is based on two main factors – those schools which are categorised as being in an Amber or Red support category by the LA & GwE as part of the national categorisation model and those in an Estyn follow up category i.e. Estyn Review or the statutory categories of In Need of Significant Improvement or Special Measures.</p>																								
1.03	<p>The Headteacher and Chair of Governors of the identified schools are invited to a minimum of two meetings per academic year – the first is to establish the context for the school’s current performance and strategies for improvement; the second, usually within two terms, is to measure the impact of those strategies on pupil outcomes. Where the level of intervention required is high, meetings are held on a termly basis. Headteachers are invited to bring any documentation that exemplifies the work they are doing e.g. School Improvement Plans, data profiles, pupil tracking documents, samples of pupils’ work.</p>																								
1.04	<p>Wherever appropriate, outcomes of Estyn inspections or revisits are included in these discussions. The meetings provide the opportunity for the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to demonstrate their strength of leadership in tackling the issues faced by their school and outline progress in the implementation of the school’s Post Inspection Action Plan. Officers are also able to consider appropriate interventions and support needed by the school in order for them to work effectively towards their improvement targets. Support is mostly provided by Supporting Improvement Advisers within GwE but some support is still provided by Local Authority services eg, Welsh Language Support, Integrated Youth Provision, Finance, Governance and Human Resources.</p>																								

1.05	The GwE Flintshire Core Lead for Primary or Secondary and the Supporting Improvement Adviser attached to the school are invited to attend the meeting. Their termly reports and verbal contributions to the meeting on progress being made at the school provide a very useful source of evidence. They can also ensure that GwE resources are being appropriately directed to support the school's improvement plan in a timely manner.
1.06	At the end of each meeting action points are agreed and a summary report produced which is shared with SPMG members and the school.
1.07	It is the decision of the SPMG as to whether a school can be removed from the scrutiny of the panel because it has made sufficient progress or whether it needs to remain because there are still outstanding performance issues to be addressed.
1.08	During the academic year 2017-18, there were 3 primary schools and 6 secondary schools subject to monitoring by the SPMG. Following evaluation of progress in relation to standards and the school's 'Capacity to Improve', all 3 primary schools and 3 secondary schools were removed from the SPMG panel during the year.
1.09	<p>The SPMG continues to identify common themes in relation to effective school improvement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The strength of the leadership provided by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team through effective self-evaluation and targeted improvement planning. - The strength of the Governing Body in understanding the school's position, their role in monitoring the school's performance and their ability to act robustly to hold the school to account. - The effectiveness of pupil tracking systems to quickly identify those pupils at risk of under-performing. - The use of appropriate intervention strategies delivered by well-trained staff. - Rigorous target setting processes that set high aspirations for Individual performance, based on effective data analysis and accurate teacher assessment. - Effective use of the Regional Improvement Service through the input of the Supporting Improvement Adviser, appropriate specialist support within GwE and local authority services to improve the skills of staff to support individual learners. - A strong commitment by the leadership team to ensure all staff have access to high quality, ongoing professional development. - The degree to which the school has a model of distributive leadership e.g. using other senior and middle managers effectively to ensure the success of the improvement journey. - The degree to which the whole Governing Body is aware of the school's position in terms of categorisation, preparation for any Estyn visit, the strategic plans produced to secure improvement and the progress in their implementation so that leaders and managers are held properly accountable.

1.10	Feedback from Headteachers and Chairs of Governors continues to confirm that while the process of involvement in SPMG is challenging, it is also very constructive, enabling them to reflect on their current performance, receive the support they require, which, in turn, enables them to improve. They very much appreciate the focused additional support provided by the LA and by GwE which assists them to address their school improvement priorities / inspection recommendations.
1.11	Through the work of the SPMG panel members and officers have reflected that the process continues to be very successful in contributing to an improvement in primary and secondary school outcomes over time, particularly in schools where there are significant and long term challenges.
1.12	The Education and Youth Portfolio has an aspiration that the School Performance Monitoring Group will cease to function in the future because all of the authority's schools are performing at the optimal level.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer and Elected Member time. • Resources within the Education & Youth Portfolio to provide specific short term interventions to support an improvement priority. • Resources funded by GwE as part of the Service Level Agreement.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None required.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Poor performance places an individual school at risk in a number of ways e.g. it develops a poor reputation within the local community; it is more likely to have a poor Estyn inspection outcome; there is a potential for a drop in pupil numbers which then impacts on funding levels. These issues can all have a major outcome on the long term sustainability of a school.
4.02	Having a number of schools performing badly with low pupil outcomes and poor Estyn judgements, places the Council and GwE at risk. Poor school performance is one of the main criteria used by Estyn and the Welsh Audit Office to make judgements about the quality of these organisations and their ability to effectively deliver core educational services.

4.03	The key focus of the work undertaken by the SPMG is that schools are quickly identified, challenged but also supported if there are concerns about their performance which could adversely impact on outcomes for learners. The regular and effective communication between LA officers and the GwE Senior Core Leads for Flintshire mitigates against this risk. This risk is identified and tracked through the Council's performance monitoring processes and reported on a quarterly basis.
4.04	The SPMG has a strong track record of identifying schools at risk and providing the appropriate levels of challenge and support to enable the school to accelerate its own improvement journey. This has resulted in the Council having to make only limited use of formal powers of intervention.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p><i>Schools Causing Concern Guidance document no: 222/2017</i> https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/schools-causing-concern-statutory-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities.pdf</p> <p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow , Senior Manager - School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704019 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>SPMG – School Performance Monitoring Group established in the Education and Youth Portfolio comprising officers and elected members</p> <p>Estyn – Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education & Training in Wales</p> <p>GwE – Regional School Improvement Service for North Wales</p>