



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT, DOCUMENT

Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements: terms of reference

Our commitment to review roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales. Includes the delivery of school improvement arrangements.

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Background

Our **national mission** is that by working together we will achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner. Realising this shared ambition means building on progress already made, learning from effective practice, and ensuring that the knowledge and resources available are targeted to deliver the outcomes we all want to see, learners across Wales having the best possible learning experiences and outcomes, whatever their background or circumstance.

Our public and equitable education system is a source of national pride and confidence. But we also know that there is too much variation between schools and between geographical areas. This is a collective challenge and one we tackle as a shared endeavour and moral imperative. That means all parts of the system pulling together resolutely and to best effect, a system, based on a spirit of collaboration not competition, and with learner progression achievement and wellbeing and the wellbeing of people working within the system, as a mainstay.

The recently published school improvement guidance sets out how the approach should evolve over coming years to support the new curriculum: the 8 factors in the guidance provide a national framework to help the system focus on a shared set of priorities, with local flexibility, and the guidance emphasises the importance of collaboration to achieve these. This is also embedded in the Shared Understanding of Progression. Our future approach should prioritise collaboration, both within and between clusters, to deliver a consistent approach to learner progression across Wales, and collaboration towards the same set of national improvement priorities. Efforts across all parts of the system which impact on school improvement need to evolve to achieve this focus and simplicity. Alongside this, we need to ensure foundational elements of curriculum support are consistent across Wales to create the platform for engagement and national coherence. Our partnership working with Regional Consortia and

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Partnerships and Local Authorities on curriculum design, progression and assessment are developing to support schools.

Within this context, and recognising that the education system is complex with partners having differing statuses, functions, priorities and alignments, there is a commitment to review the future direction and roles and responsibilities of partners, and further develop collaborative school improvement arrangements to support our national mission. This will provide the means to consider in a collective, timely and transparent way what the system needs as we look to the future.

Goals

- To explore the features of the current system, identifying what works well and less well, and how improvements might be made.
- To understand the breadth of views and experiences from across the system, sensitive to the pressures and of day-to-day activities continuing.
- To identify how capacity, collaboration and ways of working can be improved for the benefit of learners and all those who support learners across Wales.
- To help shape thinking so that there is a clear approach going forward, an approach which we can be confident is fit for the future.

Purpose and scope

The review will include, but not be limited to the following:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of **organisations and partners in the education system** ^[footnote 1], identifying areas of shared endeavour and any gaps in provision and providing unambiguous descriptions of responsibility

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and accountability for each.

- Consider how best organisations and partners in the education system, given their respective roles and areas of responsibility (as they relate to schools and sixth-form age provision) can work together collaboratively and on a sustainable footing to support learners, educational professionals, leaders and the wider workforce.
- Consider, within context of the wider, established reform journey, CTER, and the Welsh Language Education White Paper, in particular, how all partners in the school improvement system can work together to support collaboration within and between clusters to deliver shared priorities.
- Set expectations for school improvement arrangements for the Welsh education system which build upon current effective practice, reflect evidence and experiences from within Wales and internationally in this area, and respond to current and future challenges, including in relation to workload, funding requirements, impact and value for money, and developing policy.

Delivering on these requirements will involve consideration of many and varied sources of information and areas of likely interest. Scoping and agreeing these will be an important first stage of the review. Annex A identifies a variety of possible considerations.

[1] Those previously described as the 'middle-tier' in '[Education Wales: action plan 2017 to 2021](#)', and also including the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) and the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), which becomes fully operational from April 2024.

Timing

The review will report in March 2024.

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Governance

- The Review will report to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language.
- The Review will be independently-led, and supported by a secretariat within the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Welsh Language.
- The Review will work closely with partners and organisations across the education system to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the landscape.

Outcomes and deliverables

A published documents outlining:

- roles and responsibilities for each partner or organisation
- a consideration of how these roles need to evolve to meet our future expectations of collaboration towards improved schools
- identification of shared endeavours, gaps and duplication with a clear pathway to resolve these

Annex A

Possible issues to consider

These could include:

- The wider context of reforms in Wales' education system as the backdrop to this review, with learner progression and wellbeing as a mainstay.
- How the Welsh Government's vision for successful schools under the

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Curriculum for Wales, as articulated in the school improvement guidance, might be better realised through arrangements and ways of working.

- The Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO) initiative and the SLO approach as a means of understanding any issues and opportunities.
- The extent to which there is consistency of understanding and language used in relation to 'school improvement' and 'a self-improving system', and whether there are perceived challenges to realising 'a self-improving system'.
- How current school improvement arrangements help schools with effective self-evaluation and whether changes would help strengthen this and the shared ambition for a self-improving system, the school perspective.
- Whether any changes are needed to ensure there is a common vision and a clear and strong basis for ongoing and effective collaboration in relation to school improvement.
- Identifying what support schools require in terms of improvement services, how their needs are identified and addressed, and any gaps in current provision and how these could be met.
- The extent to which services and support provided by partners, broader than education, plays a role in supporting improvement and learners, for example consideration of factors affecting learner attendance.
- Looking at the unique role each organisation plays, including current responsibilities, organisation status, perceived expectations and any contested space between organisations resulting from ambiguity or other factors.
- How the commitment to working collaboratively, which is at the heart of how we deliver against the objectives set out within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, could be best realised within the context of this review.
- How best the following organisations in particular, given their respective roles and areas of responsibility, can work together collaboratively and on a sustainable footing to support learners, educational professionals and

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leaders:

- Local Authorities
 - Regional Consortia and Partnerships
 - The National Academy for Educational Leadership
 - Universities
 - CTER
- Consideration of how Estyn's role as an arm's length civil service department is distinct from the roles and responsibilities of other organisations.
 - Consideration of the support provided through Governing Bodies and Diocesan Authorities, and their relationships with partner organisations.
 - Consideration of structured leadership support and development, leadership development programmes, and professional learning separately from support targeted at school improvement and individual settings.
 - Identifying what future role each organisation could play, if any, in the delivery of school improvement arrangements, including an expectation to collaborate and any perceived barriers to doing so.
 - How implementation of the ALN Code and reforms could be best supported through future arrangements and ways of working, through the implementation of the ALN reforms there is an aim that schools support learners with ALN to have their needs identified and responded to.
 - Potential funding and resource requirements in relation to school improvement arrangements.
 - How well organisations, particularly in relation to school improvement services, evaluate the impact of their activities to support value for money.
 - Opportunities to address unnecessary workload and support staff wellbeing, for example in relation to data or information collection and requirements.
 - The extent to which the pandemic has impacted on, and should contribute to thinking in relation to, school improvement arrangements.
 - Consideration of the CTER in relation to maintained school sixth forms (securing and funding duty), given the introduction of post-compulsory education reforms through the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 and the CTER becoming fully operational from April 2024, including its

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role and relationships in relation to a system-wide approach to school improvement and a sustainable self-improving system.

- Consideration of how the education system might be described according to the different statuses, functions and alignments of partner organisations to aid understanding and clarity.
- Exploring and defining what an effective school improvement service and self-improving system should look like for the future, through considering:
 - The vision and ambitions for education in Wales, including in relation to the Welsh Language Education: white paper (and subsequent Welsh Language Education Bill), and the creation of the CTER.
 - Effective practice and policy developments in other education systems, including internationally, and within minority language contexts, alongside exemplars from within Wales.
 - How Estyn's statutory role interacts with the responsibilities of other organisations in the Welsh education system, and in particular how parts of the system operate and interact pre, during and post inspections.
 - Scaling-up effective practice that has already been identified by partners across the system, and how this might be best achieved.
 - The role of school-to-school learning, peer to peer support, mentoring and coaching, clusters, federations and other forms of collaboration which enhance capacity in schools to develop and improve.
 - System leadership, and opportunities to enhance that further through collaboration, reflecting effective practice identified by partners.
 - The specific areas of improving learning, teaching and leadership practices.
 - The scope and scale of external catalysts to support improvement, including the importance of contemporary, leading and applied research and intelligence or insights gathered through the activities of partners across the system.
 - Ways in which effective, proactive and early interventions could take place to avoid schools entering into statutory categories, and the efficacy of current arrangements and support mechanisms.

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- Approaches to embedding and sustaining school and system improvements following initial progress, and how this might be achieved without creating a bureaucratic burden on schools.
- Understanding any perceived pressures, challenges, weaknesses with current ways of working and arrangements.
- The views of school leaders and practitioners across the wider education system to identify how school improvement arrangements might best evolve, reflecting the breadth of views.

Possible sources of information to inform the review

There are different ways in which the review could be undertaken, and a key requirement from the outset will be to scope and assimilate information which enables robust and objective findings and recommendations. As a minimum, sources of information and evidence will include:

- current published roles and responsibilities
- the future statutory role and responsibilities of CTER
- existing policy and guidance documents, and Estyn information
- Local Authority arrangements with Regional Consortia and Partnerships
- Regional Consortia and Partnerships
- Welsh Government arrangements with every organisation
- latest research relating to school improvement services, arrangements and approaches
- school or practitioner experiences and insights, including support staff and the wider workforce, reflecting the breadth of views, ‘the school experience’
- views of or evidence from key partners from within the Welsh education system
- local, regional, national and international good practice

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- previous external reviews relating to the Welsh education system

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