

Report to: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: November 28th 2019

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Lead Member for Education/Karen Evans, Head of Education

Report Author: Julian Molloy, Principal Education Manager

Title: School performance and provisional L2 examination results

1. What is the report about?

The unverified performance of Denbighshire schools and draft external examinations results at Key Stage 4. The report also provides draft results against national information and performance

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information regarding the performance and monitoring of Denbighshire schools in the 2019 and Estyn inspections.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That members review and comment on the performance of schools and identify any potential areas for improvement.

4. Background and context

The Welsh Government alongside several partners and experts has undertaken a fundamental review of the accountability system for schools in Wales. Findings highlighted that the existing system and its use of performance measures has many negative unintended consequences, such as:

- narrowing curriculum choice;
- disproportionate focus on particular groups of learners;
- the way in which benchmarking is used driving competition between schools rather than encouraging collaboration;
- an increased and unnecessary workload for teachers and others in the system, without the necessary impact or benefit for learners; and
- an aggregation of data for *accountability* purposes where it was designed for *improvement* purposes.

As a result, schools have heard conflicting messages from the various parts of the system about what matters. This has often diverted effort from learning and teaching and moved us towards a culture of compliance and bureaucracy.

A joint communication from Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Estyn to Chairs of Scrutiny, Cabinet Members, Directors of

Education, Chief Executive Officers, and Managing Directors of Regional Education Consortia, published on 16 July 2019 stated that:

“It is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures. It is not in the interest of school improvement and risks undermining the ongoing change in culture that we are working together to achieve. We expect local authorities and regional consortia to support schools to make appropriate decisions about their curriculum to avoid narrowing choice for learners.

Collectively, we have agreed that this is the right approach to take and strongly advise you to use a broad range of un-aggregated data and information to enable you to discharge your duties when reporting on school performance. Evaluating the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level will be more helpful to supporting and challenging individual schools with their improvement.” This report on performance across North Wales will adhere to this guidance.

5 Reporting on KS4 results

New interim KS4 measures have been introduced for 2019 as part of the significant education reform programme in Wales. National data capture for individual schools will be based on first entry results. JCQ/WJEC have published their data and press release based on the ‘best outcome’ obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series. There will be differences between first entry and best outcome data. As a result, across several indicators, it will not be possible to compare 2019 figures with previous performance.

Appendix 1 shows the new interim measures and the methodology used for calculating. It also demonstrates the key differences with previous years. In this context, the data should be analysed on a local level and as a starting point to question local priorities.

Although 2019 data is currently available on historical performance measures (L1, L2, L2+ and 5A*-A), comparison with previous years is not valid because of the first entry counting rather than best outcome.

6 Scrutinising Individual School Performance

Regular fortnightly Quality Board meetings are held between the LA Officers and GwE Core Leads. Any schools causing concern are discussed and any strengths and areas for improvement are noted. This links to the regular meetings held by the core lead with Supporting Improvement Advisers to discuss school progress. The regular communication between the LA and GwE officers ensures shared intelligence about the capacity to improve of schools, and where concerns are identified that all parties work in partnership to review the standards and provision in the school and to set and monitor clear targets for improvement.

The LA has its own monitoring processes to scrutinise the performance of individual schools. This includes the use of ‘Accelerated Improvement Boards’ for school’s causing concern.

Schools 2019 Level 2 Results (Key indicators)

	No of pupils on roll in January 2019	% achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh First Language or Literature and maths	% achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh First Language and maths	Achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-A or equivalent	Capped 9 measure
Rhyl High School	140	39	45	9	348
Prestatyn High School	209	54	56	11	346
Ysgol Glan Clwyd	143	61	62	18	374
Denbigh High School	94	40	46	6	346
Ysgol Dinas Bran	172	51	58	16	374
Ysgol Brynhyfryd	156	61	69	33	398
Blessed Edward Jones	54	30	31	6	266
St Brigid's	53	74	75	25	401
PRU	8	0	0	0	116
Tir Morfa	18	0	0	0	61
Plas Brondyffryn	9	0	0	0	57
EOTAS	75	0	0	0	n/k
Denbighshire	1,131	47	51	51	334
Cymru	-	50	54	54	353

7 Estyn inspections 2018-19

The Denbighshire Estyn school inspections profile for 2018 is very good (Appendix 1) with 6 out of 10 schools inspected receiving excellent judgements. All these schools received Excellence awards at the Estyn provider awards event. Ysgol Plas Cefndy is the only Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to receive an excellent inspection in Wales and the first for many years to be judged excellent for all aspects of the inspection.

8 Schools Causing Concern

All schools are on an improvement journey and thus require differentiated and appropriate support and challenge to varying degrees. A few schools require more intense targeted intervention. The label 'schools causing concern' is very wide ranging and in its broader term has not been clearly defined in national guidance.

Denbighshire and the GwE region have an overall good track record in effectively supporting schools and specifically those causing concern. All secondary schools have a bespoke 'Support Plan' which ensures that local authority and GwE support is closely aligned with their SDP priorities. This allows for more effective deployment of resource, regional expertise and best practice.

Local Quality Standards Board meetings are held on a regular basis between the LA and GwE senior officers and used to share information around school performance and progress and to agree on any required adaptations to support plans. Interim Accelerated Improvement Boards provide challenge and intervention to those schools in serious categories of concern.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

This report contributes to the Young People Corporate Priority which aims to ensure that every child achieves the expected standard at the end of their statutory education journey and have the skills for life and work. Members need to be aware of the performance of schools and the LA against national benchmarks.

10. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

N/A

11. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment? The completed Well-being Impact Assessment report can be downloaded from the website and should be attached as an appendix to the report

*A prosperous Denbighshire
A resilient Denbighshire
A healthier Denbighshire
A more equal Denbighshire
A Denbighshire of cohesive communities
A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
A globally responsible Denbighshire*

12. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

N/A

13. Chief Finance Officer Statement

N/A

14. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- The LA and GwE will continue to challenge Headteachers and managers in schools to ensure that schools are taking appropriate action to improve standards. To reduce any risks to school support and challenge in Denbighshire schools, Education Officers within the Authority monitor and assess the quality of the regional education service (GwE).
- Ensuring improvement in external examination results.
- Ensure continued improvement against the reduction in 14-19 Learning Pathways Grant and ESF TRAC funding.

15. Power to make the Decision

Scrutiny's powers with respect to reviewing performance and policy objectives is outlined in Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution.

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