

Report to: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 28th June 2012

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Education/
Head of Education

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and Planning and Performance Officer (Business Planning and Performance)

Title: The post inspection action in response to the Estyn inspection on the quality of local authority education services for children and young people in Denbighshire.

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 To consider the action plan drawn-up in response to the recommendations of the recent inspection on the quality of the Council's education services for people and young people

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 Effective monitoring of the action plan's implementation will ensure that any weaknesses identified will be addressed and provide for a better quality service and better outcomes for pupils

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 To review the appropriateness of actions and timescales in the post inspection action plan in response to the recommendations from the Estyn inspection (Appendix 1) and comment accordingly.

4. Report details.

- 4.1 The main findings of the Estyn inspection report show that the Local Authority achieved for:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? Was judged as Good.

Key Question 2: How good is provision? Was judged as Good.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management? Was judged overall as Good

- 4.2 All other aspects were also judged to be good except for Leadership which was judged as Excellent.
- 4.3 “Elected members and senior officers in Denbighshire make education services for children and young people a high priority. They have a clear vision and high aspirations for the authority and communicate these very well. The coherent and effective leadership means that the council’s approach to becoming a ‘high performing council, closer to the community’ is already making a positive difference.”
- 4.4 “The council has reorganised its scrutiny arrangements into three committees for partnerships, communities and performance and all services report different aspects of their work to the relevant committee. As a result, scrutiny members have a better overview across the whole council and a wider range of members understand education issues. Members are now able to compare and challenge services more effectively and make better informed decisions. In addition, cross-party involvement in scrutiny means that all members can work towards a common goal in improving services for children and young people.” Estyn 2012.
- 4.5 **Overall judgement: Good - Current performance is good because:**
- performance has improved in all key stages, particularly in key stage 4;
 - performance has improved against the Welsh Government’s expected benchmarks based on free-school-meal entitlement;
 - attendance in primary and secondary schools is good and compares well to that of similar schools elsewhere;
 - the number of exclusions has reduced and the overall number of days lost to exclusion is the lowest in Wales;
 - the authority has very good arrangements to support and challenge schools and knows its schools very well;
 - support for school improvement, additional learning needs and social inclusion are all good;
 - the number of Denbighshire schools requiring follow-up after an inspection is among the lowest in Wales;
 - the authority has made good progress in delivering its Modernising Education programme;
 - the culture of very strong leadership from elected members and senior officers has driven significant change and improvement at a good pace; and
 - value for money is good in education services.

However:

- teacher assessments of the core subjects in key stage 3 are not moderated precisely enough to make sure they accurately reflect learners’ standards.

4.6 **Capacity to improve: Good - Prospects for improvement are good because:**

- effective and coherent leadership from senior officers and elected members working together has already driven significant change and improvement in education services and in outcomes for learners;
- performance data is used rigorously to evaluate the quality and impact of services, identify underperformance and plan for improvement;
- a culture of accountability and continuous review, with a consistent focus on achieving progress against priorities, is firmly embedded throughout the authority's services;
- scrutiny arrangements are highly effective in challenging underperformance and holding officers and schools to account;
- priorities for education and aspirational targets are clearly linked through strategic and operational plans; and
- the authority has already achieved significant efficiency savings and focused resources on its key priorities.

However

- the authority does not gather and analyse enough data to measure and evaluate performance of combined partnership work.

5. **Estyn's Recommendations**

5.1 In order to continue to improve, Denbighshire County Council needs to:

5.2 **Recommendation -1:** improve the accuracy of teacher assessments at end of key stage 3; and

5.3 **Recommendation -2:** identify all services for children and young people in Denbighshire and establish an effective system to measure the impact of these services to help the authority and its partners know whether these offer good value for money.

5.4 In response to the Estyn Inspection Denbighshire County Council has produced an action plan to show how it will address these recommendations. The plan has been completed within the within 70 days (50 working days) stipulated by Estyn. (Appendix 2)

6. **How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

6.1 It supports key aspects of the Big Plan, service business plans as well as contributing to Modernising Education as a corporate priority.

7. **What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

7.1 No specific costs have been identified for the inspection or post inspection action plan. All activity is supported by service budgets and schools delegated budgets.

8. What consultations have been carried out?

8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the secondary headteachers and partners that support education within the authority and supporting organisations.

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

9.1 The reputational and political risks to the authority are minimal as the outcomes from the inspection are good.

10. Power to make the Decision

10.1 No legal requirements but local authority inspections are mandatory.

10.2 Article 6.3.2 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that scrutiny committees may ensure that actions indicated in action plans are carried out.

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