

Response to the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee

Future of School Improvement Arrangements

Our school improvement strategy has been significantly shaped by the Welsh Government's review of the middle-tier of education. We already collaborate closely with headteachers to ensure alignment but have a forward work plan in terms of professional learning for our school leaders over the next 12-18 months. The new School Improvement Partnership programme is further enhancing our efforts by fostering closer collaboration between schools and the local authority, developing system leadership as we seek to create a self-improving school system.

Challenges remain, particularly in addressing outcomes for groups of learners. There is a need for targeted interventions to support disadvantaged individuals and pupils with additional learning needs. Whilst our focus on integrated support for vulnerable learners and trauma-informed practices has been beneficial, there is much work left to do to close attainment gaps whilst schools face increasingly difficult financial challenges.

Several factors impact educational progress in Anglesey:

1. Pupil Absence: Attendance is a critical issue, with higher absenteeism rates among disadvantaged pupils (this is reflective of the national picture);
2. Deprivation: Socio-economic challenges persist, including low-income households and poor housing conditions in certain areas of the island;
3. Funding: Financial constraints still pose challenges, particularly in maintaining and improving school facilities. Furthermore, the number of school-age pupils is falling (and is projected to continue to do so) and our schools are facing an increasing number of learners with additional needs who require support. This contributes additional pressure to school budgets as well as uncertainties;
4. Workforce Capability, Capacity and Experience: Ensuring a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff is essential to support our learners. Recruiting and retaining bilingual teaching staff, particularly in core subjects, is a challenge if we are to maintain workforce capacity;
5. Role of the Local Authority: Effective collaboration, strong leadership, and robust governance arrangements between the Learning Service and school leaders

are vital to driving sustained school improvement across Anglesey, particularly in addressing key factors that impact educational progress such as learner well-being, socio-economic challenges, professional learning for staff, inclusion, additional learning needs, and curriculum innovation.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion and look forward to continued collaboration to achieve the highest standards of education for all learners in Anglesey.