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Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ann Jones AM,  
Chair,  
Children and Young People Committee

20 October 2015

Dear Ann

## **Children, Young people and Education Committee – Regional Education Consortia**

Following my appearance at committee on Wednesday 30 September 2015, I agreed to provide further information on the summer review and challenge events. These events were held with the four regional consortia between 25 June and 3 July 2015.

The National Model for school improvement sets out consistent arrangements for the regional delivery of school improvement services for all local authorities across Wales. The implementation of the National Model is monitored throughout the year and formally reviewed via review and challenge sessions held three times per year.

In April 2015 with agreement from the Consortia representatives, we moved from separate stand-alone review and challenge events to a cycle of sessions. Whilst the sessions will continue to be held three times per year, each will have a clearer focus. Spring will focus on the consortia headline business plans and self-assessment; summer will focus on the detailed business plans, risk management along with the Estyn remit and Wales Audit Office recommendations; autumn will have a clear focus on learner outcomes and impact. A series of common headline business plans, one per region, have been submitted and are in place which set out key priorities for each consortium for the year along with their expected outcomes.

Regular review and challenge sessions are used to monitor progress made by consortia and local authorities in their delivery of the priorities and outcomes noted in the headline business plans, and against the agreed National Model and national priorities.

The focus for the summer 2015 session was based on a collective approach to address the recommendations detailed in the Estyn Remit report and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) reports published on 3 June 2015

Overall, a key theme was to gain assurance in relation to both the strength of governance and delivery of outcomes as defined within the individual consortium headline business plan and to provide a collective national response to both reports.

The summer challenge and review sessions identified a number of similar themes: All consortia have responded positively and have taken swift and early action to address the recommendations presented by both reports and all have integrated the relevant recommendations and actions into their reporting and monitoring processes. It was agreed that all four consortia should work together to further share good practice between consortia, the rigour of constituent Local Authority scrutiny functions regarding consortia decision making and business plan implementation should be further developed and further work needed to refine the measuring and demonstration of value for money. Furthermore we agreed that each consortium should continue to monitor the implementation of the WAO and Estyn remit recommendations through its business planning and reporting systems.

In addition to these common themes we also agreed a number of monitoring points for each consortium:

### **ERW**

The consortium should continue to enable schools to build their detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching over time to better inform self-evaluation and continue to measure the impact of school to school to working.

### **GWE**

The consortium should further develop and embed their data management system to support and inform the business planning process and further develop its scrutiny function to support consistency without added duplication. In addition the consortium should review and re-broker the current service level agreement with local authorities and monitor the capacity for school to school support.

### **EAS**

The consortium should continue to monitor and review the impact and effectiveness of its school to school support programmes and ensure the JEG meets later on in July 2015 and update the Welsh Government accordingly.

### **CENTRAL SOUTH**

The consortium should continue to develop and implement a common scrutiny programme to be used across the local authority areas, continue to support elected members in their understanding of the consortium's role and functions', continue to develop innovative ways to support and tackle underperformance in specific areas, share good practice in relation to head teacher recruitment models and introduce consistent HR work streams across all local authorities.

Challenge and reviews are a two-way processes and I have actively encouraged consortia to provide constructive feedback on how my Department can support them. As a result of this I agreed a number of actions for my officials: to jointly develop an outcomes based framework to support the Education Improvement Grant, to undertake a review of the current challenge and review events in 2016, to work jointly to review, develop and embed the National School Categorisation System consistently across Wales, to collectively refresh the National Model for Regional Working and to continue to promote, support and

encourage co-construction and early engagement of stakeholders in policy development. I can confirm that all of these actions have been completed and that work will start on the review and challenge events in the New Year.

I trust that this information is helpful and I look forward to receiving a copy of your report.

Best Regards  
Huw

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