

ERW

Ein Rhanbarth ar Waith
Education through Regional Working

Submission to National Assembly for Wales: Children and Young People Committee (School Improvement and Raising Standards)

December 2019

Cynghrair o 6 awdurdod lleol yw ERW a reolir gan gyd-bwyllgor cyfansoddiadol cyfreithiol.
Y nod yw gweithredu strategaeth a chynllun busnes rhanbarthol cytunedig a chefnogi gwelliant ysgolion.

ERW is an alliance of 6 local authorities governed by a legally constituted joint committee.
Its aim is to implement the agreed regional strategy and business plan to support school improvement.



ERW Submission to The National Assembly for Wales's Children, Young People and Education Committee: School improvement and raising standards

1. A brief summary of:

- Your approach to school improvement in your region, including how this is informed by the school categorisation process.

The ERW region has worked since its conception in 2014 to provide a consistent and effective approach to delivering school improvement support services on behalf of the six constituent local authorities (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Swansea).

To achieve this, the local authorities and ERW central team work in close partnership and more effectively recently, to deliver an agreed and collaborative strategic direction and clear moral purpose as set out within our ERW Business Plan. These activities are designed to respond directly to the expectations and needs of our school communities via the provision of a high quality service.

The ERW governance structure and strategic planning processes are key enablers within this work, along with a relentless focus on our agreed aims to:

1. Improve the quality of **leadership** and its impact on outcomes.
2. Improve the quality of **teaching and learning experiences** and its impact on outcomes.
3. Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment, support vulnerable learners and **ensure all learners reach their potential**
4. Deliver **high quality and bespoke support**, challenge and intervention to schools
5. **Communicate** effectively with all stakeholders

In addition, ERW has developed a range of defined strategies and approaches to secure ongoing improvement across its schools. These include a wholly integrated approach to delivering our Business Plan content which reflects national, regional and local needs. This work is therefore delivered through the work of our six 'ERW Strategy Groups' focusing on:

- i) Professional Learning and Research
- ii) Leadership
- iii) Curriculum
- iv) Health and Wellbeing
- v) Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Learning
- vi) Welsh

The composition of our recently implemented ERW Strategy Groups is specifically designed to engender an open and transparent regional dialogue in support of the delivery of our agreed school improvement priorities.

ERW Strategy Group composition:

- 1 x ERW Lead Officer
- 1 x Local Authority Director
- 2 x Local Authority Officers
- 3 x Headteacher / Outstanding Practitioner

ERW Operations Group (Senior Challenge Advisers & ERW Senior Leadership Team members):

The ERW Operations Group draws Senior Challenge Advisers from each local authority and centrally based ERW Senior Leadership Team members together to focus on a wide range of school improvement issues. In particular, the group employs a specific focus on ensuring:

- achieving accurate and supportive national categorisation of all ERW schools
- brokerage of bespoke provision support for all schools (as a direct outcome of the above process)
- ongoing support via monitoring and review of individual school progress
- ensuring effective and relevant professional learning for all challenge advisers (CAs)

The Operations Group also focuses on ensuring all our schools receive the relevant number of support days as defined by their individual national categorisation process. The nature of such support is discussed, thus enabling us to deploy our resources according to need and in the most effective and efficient manner.

ERW School Performance Team:

The ERW School Performance Team meets on a half-termly basis to monitor, review and evaluate school progress and evolving needs within each local authority in turn. The locally based Senior Challenge Adviser meets with senior ERW officers with the aim of ensuring appropriate support provision is in place. This strategy ensures a focus on the delivery of appropriate and supportive provision. These meetings also facilitate numerous elements of cross-region working with CAs from different local authorities collaborating on specific improvement projects and school-based activities.

ERW Professional Learning Offer:

Our ERW Professional Learning Offer seeks to provide all schools with a range of professional learning opportunities. ERW fully recognises the role and impact of such activities on practice implemented within the classroom and therefore the enhanced learning experiences our children and young people will enjoy. We share full details of our 'offer' on the ERW website and highlight the broad variety of opportunities via our weekly ERW Head teacher Newsletter email communication.

ERW Key Stage 4 Subject Specialists:

The Key Stage 4 Subject Specialist Team is led by our Key Stage 4 Curriculum & Examinations Lead. This team of fourteen practitioners provides specific subject expertise and guidance across the region. Their work promotes the key themes of whole school improvement whilst focusing on subject area specifics too. Recent discussions with local Secondary Head teacher networks have evidenced the value and impact of the team's work on progress and achievement. Our lead officer attends the Operations Group on a regular basis which further cements the collaboration underpinning this work.

ERW 'Rhwyd' and National Categorisation:

ERW 'Rhwyd' is an electronic reporting system which is used by all CAs across the region to capture and present the findings of their Core Support Visits to schools. The system has been designed to ensure a consistent approach towards this aspect of our work and in doing so, aids numerous key activities in a practical and efficient manner. Our ERW Core Support Visit One, undertaken during the Autumn Term, embraces the National Categorisation model process. We would emphasise that identification of a school's needs is an ongoing process and not restricted to one annual event. Our CAs are in contact with schools and therefore able to respond to changes in circumstances in a rapid and responsive manner. During the Autumn Term visit, two CA reports are generated. The first report demonstrates the rationale and agreement for each school's 'support category' (based on the Welsh Government template) with the second report providing additional regional information which includes evaluating the use and impact of grant funding such as the Pupil Development Grant.

This process paves the way for appropriate and accurate brokering of support for each school. In addition, CAs and advisory staff are also able to present additional documentation via the ERW Support Form at any time throughout the academic year. This resource is also encompassed within the 'Rhwyd' mechanism. Rhwyd also facilitates the highlighting of effective practice and contains a built in quality assurance model. ERW supports 474 schools and settings. Through this system, we are able to monitor, evaluate and provide support for school improvement in a wholly relevant and equitable manner.

- **How you work with your member local authorities to ensure synergy and no duplication in your school improvement work.**

Our revised ERW Governance Structure (draft) and Business Plan set out with clarity the pathways and processes for effective collaborative working across the ERW region. The Business Plan articulates the role of schools, local authorities and ERW to ensure clarity for all partners. Another feature is the supportive role and beneficial impact of ongoing evaluation and guidance provided through the ERW Management Board (Directors of Education & ERW Managing Director), meeting on a monthly basis. These meetings provide the platform for a wide range of school improvement discussions, review and evaluation. They enable ERW to progress its key agendas in accordance with local, regional and national priorities.

Our focus on securing the best possible support provision for our schools ensures that we avoid any level of duplication across our school improvement work. All elements of support provision are monitored closely with a particular emphasis on a clear understanding of the specific agents and resources involved. In cases where staff employed by a local authority undertake such provision, this is transparent and agreed by all. In the vast majority of cases, this takes place as a direct result of specific linguistic needs to provide support through the medium of Welsh for core elements of literacy, numeracy and ICT or support for the non-maintained sector. There is a constant level of collaboration and communication across this work to ensure clarity and impact. Our Operations Group plays a central role within this aspect of provision brokerage for all schools. We celebrate the fact that this approach adds much expertise and valuable capacity to our work.

ERW Governance Structure (draft):

- The **Joint Committee** meets termly to agree the strategy and business plan, agrees and monitors budget and performance
- The **Advisory Board** reviews and challenges progress once a term
- The **Management Board** (Directors of Education and ERW Managing Director) meets monthly and has a strategic decision making role – decisions will be reported to the Joint Committee
- The **Strategic Groups** meet monthly to monitor the implementation of the business plans and oversee funding delegated to the strategic groups
- The **Headteacher Reference Group** meets half termly to inform regional strategy and advocate on behalf of schools
- The **Trade Union Reference Group** meets half termly to discuss and inform regional policies relating to HR issues, and where relevant make recommendations to policy development
- The **Scrutiny Councillor Group** meets bi annually to monitor performance, contribute to policy development and review and investigate matters which affect the Councils they represent (another function of the Scrutiny group is holding the Joint Committee to account by examining and questioning their decisions)
- The **SLT** develops draft strategies and approaches to meet WG priorities and grant requirements (SLT report to each authority's Scrutiny Committee at least annually with an annual performance report)
- The **Operations Group (Senior Challenge Advisers & ERW SLT)** meets half termly with a focus on operational performance and strategy

ERW Business Plan 2019-20:

Our ERW Business Plan clearly describes all levels of activity and accountability across its broad range of priority content. Our priorities focus tightly on the content of 'Our National Mission' aligning all work in a coherent and manageable manner for school leaders. We have shaped their content and delivery methodology through practical co-construction with our partners and stakeholders. As a result, schools, local authorities and ERW are fully aware of the actions required by each party and subsequent responses to expectations and levels of accountability.

ERW Roadshows 2019:

The Autumn Term, 2019 witnessed a series of ERW Roadshows undertaken across the six local authorities. The content was wholly designed to provide our schools with an update and overview of the recent ERW reform work. This included confirmation of the revised team's composition and its role within school improvement (as outlined in our 2019-20 Business Plan). Specific reference was made to 'avoidance of duplication' to ensure clarity and confidence for school leaders. In addition, the ERW Business Plan is structured in a manner which further reinforces our approach and purpose. The series also provided a detailed overview of 'Schools as Learning Organisations' emphasising its value and relevance to current reform. This key element served to reinforce and celebrate work already implemented successfully by schools across our region via school led 'cameos' of activity.

This approach has highlighted the effective collaboration in place between ERW, local authority officers and schools in support of our children and young people. We will continue to engage with schools and senior leaders in this manner as curriculum reform and practice and moves forward.

ERW improvement priorities 2019-20:

- Developing and delivering a transformational curriculum
- To develop a high-quality education profession
- To develop inspirational leaders and to facilitate them working collaboratively to raise standards
- To develop strong and inclusive schools that are committed to excellence and wellbeing
- To develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability processes that support a self-improving system

2. Details of funding you are responsible for spending in 2019-2020, to include:

2.1 How much funding you are receiving in 2019-20 from each local authority for your school improvement services.

ERW is funded on an annual basis from two main sources: LA core contributions and grants from Welsh Government and EWC. A total of £250,000 is received from the six local authorities to fund our core and administrative activities. No funding is received directly from the local authorities at ERW for our school improvement services as the CAs are located with the local authorities. A detailed spending plan accompanies the Business Plan which is linked to all actions contained within it.

2.2. How much in Welsh Government grants you are responsible for distributing in 2019-20, including a breakdown between the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant and the Pupil Development Grant, as well as details of how much is delegated to schools and how much is administered / spent on a regional basis.

There is a legal agreement in place between the local authorities and ERW that details the process that must be followed for the agreement and distribution of all regional grants. The Education Improvement Grant is distributed on a common regional formula across each local authority.

<u>Overview of grants 2019/2020</u>			
Grant Name	Grant Total £	Delegated** to Schools (Budget) £	Budgeted Delegation** Rate %
School Improvement Grant (SIG)			
Education Improvement Grant (EIG)*	36,682,247	31,420,732	86%
Other grant initiatives	6,369,729	1,774,443	28%
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)			
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)	23,255,850	23,247,600	100%
Looked After Children Pupil Development Grant (LAC PDG)	1,133,900	877,358	77%
Lead Regional PDG Adviser	100,000	37,404	37%
Education Workforce Council	505,000	505,000	100%
Total	68,046,726	57,862,537	85%

*Includes the match funding requirement £3,189,510

** Delegation refers to funding which gives freedom of choice to a school in how it is used. It must however be spent in accordance with, and in the spirit of, the core purpose of the grant and the individual school development plan priorities. The following circumstances are not classed as delegation:

- Staff seconded from the local authority or the consortium to a school(s) or a cluster(s).
- Staff working wholly or partly in schools and paid for from a local authority or consortium retained budget.
- Staff or services that form part of a service level agreement, this type of activity will be classed as non-delegated.
- Monies delegated from the consortium to a local authority.

Our 'Rhwyd' system also identifies a school's use of grant monies. This derives from discussions between CAs and school leaders with regard to the effective and efficient use of grant funding

3. A summary of Key Stage 4 and A/AS Level examination data for 2019 and previous years in your region, plus any analysis you wish to provide.

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 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.”

Consortia will adhere to this guidance when reporting on performance .

3.1 Reporting on Key Stage 4 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. The data provided regionally for individual school and LAs will also 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. The table below shows the new interim measures and the methodology used for calculating. It also demonstrates the key differences with previous years.

Interim Measure	How it is calculated	Differences from previous years, and why comparisons cannot be made
Capped 9	<p>The Capped 9 Points Score is a performance measure calculating the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual pupils in the cohort, capped at a specified volume of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.</p> <p>Three of the nine slots require the awards of specific subjects and qualifications in order to contribute any points towards the measure. These slots are each one GCSE in size, specifying requirements in literacy, numeracy and science GCSEs only.</p> <p>The best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs can contribute towards the literacy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs can contribute towards the numeracy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from a science GCSE can contribute towards the science slot (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications currently available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award).</p> <p>The remaining six qualifications will include the pupil's best performance in either GCSE and/or vocational equivalent.</p>	<p>✓ Only a pupil's first entry will count</p> <p>✓ WJEC Science GCSE only</p>
Literacy measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a pupil.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count, with Literature also accepted within this measure
Numeracy measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a pupil	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count
Science measure	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from a science GCSE awarded to a learner (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count

	available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award) - these are identified as being able to contribute towards science measures.	
The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure	Calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.	Reported separately as a main indicator for the first time in 2019

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 now 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.

Key Stage 5:

KS5 provision across the region has continued to witness positive outcomes for our young people. Our focus remains firmly on ensuring the highest level of progression and achievement for each individual learner. Understandably, it is crucial to view all analyses and statistics within the context of each cohort. The information shared below is based on performance within our schools alone.

In 2019, every local authority recorded specific levels of improvement across a range of indicators (based on provisional WJEC data), including:

- All local authorities recording an overall pass rate (A* - E) between 96.7% and 97.9%
- All local authorities recording pass rates for A* - A grades between 22.0% and 28.4%

Ongoing support for Key Stage 5 is provided via our Post 16 & Welsh Baccalaureate specialist. We enjoy beneficial collaboration with schools, WG and our Consortia partners across a wide range of activities in support of enhanced provision, outcomes and opportunities for our young people.

4. A summary of PISA 2018 results in your region (if available), plus any analysis you wish to provide.

A regional analysis is not available. However, Wales has witnessed an improved performance based on 3,165 pupils from 107 schools participating. The biggest improvement was in maths, while science is also now close to the international average.

The number of high-performing students in Wales rose from 4% to 7%.

There was also no significant gender gap for the first time.

5. An update on progress to tackle the attainment gap in your region:

5.1 Between eligible for free school meals (eFSM) pupils and other pupils;

Increasing the regional focus on improving use and understanding of the PDG has been our primary focus over the last two years. We have worked to improve pupil attainment through improved teaching and learning, creating opportunities for schools and learners to undertake new professional learning, share up

to date research and guidance, share effective practice, provide one to one support, facilitate school to school working and develop strategic support where necessary and possible.

Specific actions and outcomes:

Increased understanding and awareness of the PDG:

- a new Strategic Adviser / Regional Coordinator is in place to provide direct support to schools and develop regional strategy
- extensive engagement with school leaders, local authority officers and school staff to discuss and challenge best use of grant funding and how it is being both targeted towards individuals and used to support whole school approaches to wellbeing
- engagement with clusters via attendance at Cluster meetings to ensure support and awareness raising in an ongoing manner across the region along with direct, one to one interaction with schools
- developed strong relationships with LA PDG, PDG LAC Leads and CAs to ensure understanding and knowledge of local context and key information

Increased opportunities for Professional Learning:

- new professional learning communities set up to give schools regular opportunities to share effective practice and learn from others
- regional training opportunities provided around Attachment and Trauma, Parental Engagement and improving attainment strategies from the Education Endowment Foundation
- PDG Effective Practice Network launched to provide school staff with local access to bite size sessions on specific research and what works etc.
- increased opportunities made available for 2019-20 and beyond that will include – Supporting Adopted Learners, Attachment and Trauma within the context of Curriculum 2020+, Empowering Disadvantaged Learner through Creative Learning, Designated LAC Leads Training and regional conference on supporting all learners (with specific focus around wellbeing and inclusion).

Increased opportunities for School to School working:

- numerous opportunities have been put in place for schools to learn from each other and share effective practice
- 'Peer Review' pilot set up with three Welsh medium secondary schools to explore use of the PDG grant and wellbeing provision within schools, the intention is to roll out the programme further following evaluation of the pilot and development of template documents
- support brokered for schools through CAs where appropriate (based on analyses of use of funding)

Additional funding provided to schools and clusters:

- to support specific ideas and pilot projects we have provided schools and clusters with additional funding through the PDG Ideas Fund (this was from additional money provided to the region on top of the PDG*). This has allowed schools to consider projects that could support attainment locally and allow them to pilot ideas and collaborations. Some excellent examples of spend have been witnessed including, PRU Wellbeing Conference with over two hundred PRU staff attending from across the region, projects to support literacy and numeracy, aspirational programmes and projects to support more able and talented learners and engaging external specialist organisations to support schools with specific issues and strategic priorities. Much of this work will continue to evolve and develop in support of schools' needs.

*40 schools received funding in 2018-19 with a wide range of projects delivered, including:

- Family Engagement - increased engagement with harder to reach families, direct one to one support provided for some families and increased engagement with families supporting reading and literacy programmes;
- A range of entrepreneurial projects set up in partnerships between schools. FSM pupils working directly with external artists and community leaders to produce and sell products;
- A range of literacy and numeracy programmes developed and delivered with improvements seen across the schools and clusters;
- Professional Learning events developed and delivered – improving and increasing staff awareness around trauma and attachment, resilience and strategies for improving pupil wellbeing;
- New projects such as 'Empathy Lab' introduced to schools supporting increased engagement around reading;
- Pupil enrichment and aspiration programmes developed and delivered across numerous schools across the region, offering FSM pupils the opportunity to undertake new and exciting activities;
- Implementation of a Restorative Practice pilot;
- Schools utilising the money to develop pupil wellbeing through activities such as yoga and mindfulness in the classroom. Schools report clear improvements in behaviour and engagement from pupils as a result of this work.

Developed Online Resources:

- we have developed a focussed online Hwbsite to store research, effective practice examples, links to online professional learning programmes and key guidance documents (initiated as an ERW resource but now opened up to include resources and information for all Consortia to provide all schools with access to Wales wide resources and examples of effective practice)

Strengthened our work with all four Consortia:

- we have developed very strong links and working relationship with other Consortia and Welsh Government (collaborating to identify strategic areas of development, equal access across Wales to resources, joint training for CAs and understanding of what works across the UK and around the world)

Ongoing priorities and our next steps:

The information provided above is focussed around use of the PDG with a great deal of work being delivered to ensure progress. As a region, we would now benefit from developing a further agreed strategy that would strengthen our work in the following areas:

- How do we support schools and LAs to reduce the 'Impact of Poverty' on attainment of eFSM learners?
- How do we increase focus on / support schools and LAs to prioritise eFSM Literacy and Numeracy?
- How do we increase focus on attainment of eFSM pupils in the secondary sector?
- How are we going to take advantage of the Curriculum for Wales to raise attainment of eFSM learners?
- How do we support schools and LAs to do more with eFSM learners who are More Able and Talented?
- How do we better support schools to develop their pedagogical approaches so that eFSM learners are better supported?

5.2 & 5.3 Between ethnic minority groups at risk of underachieving and other pupils & Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, and other pupils;

WG grant funding in support of these pupils is provided directly to local authorities. The six local authorities within ERW have continued to deploy their varying levels of resource in the most beneficial and productive manner over time. Their strategies to ensure progress and achievement for these pupils include:

- Utilisation of funding to provide centrally based staff and school-cluster based models along with material resources for schools
- Engagement with the Language Acquisition model
- Provision of guidance, policy documentation and materials electronically to support school provision

- Enhancing training for schools to engender greater self-sustainability and impact
- Analysis of survey data to identify specific needs and appropriate targeting of resources
- Securing participation and representation within key groups e.g. Youth Council
- Consultation with pupils to glean their 'voice' with an emphasis on 'learning styles'
- Strengthening awareness and understanding of cultures and expectations through training, workshops and partnership activities

Local authorities are reviewing their practice and delivery service models to ensure longer term effectiveness and sustainability.

5.4 Between Looked-After Children and other pupils (and any work to identify and improve the attainment of adopted children compared to other pupils).

Our region works in close collaboration with colleagues supporting Look-After Children across the six local authorities. We have focused in particular on the following key elements in support of improved outcomes for all Looked-After Children (LAC) across our region:

Combining of Strategic Adviser for PDG role with PDG LAC Coordinator role:

This was undertaken as a part of the ERW reform and review programme. It is intended to strengthen the work and support available for the PDG as a whole, providing one clear point of contact. This also ensures continuity with different leads and teams across the region in both local authorities and schools.

Reorganisation of the PDGLAC:

For 2019-20 the grant has been devolved directly to clusters. This has brought ERW in line with other Consortia. It will enable schools and clusters to work together to identify strategic spending plans in line with both Consortia and local authority priorities. For 2019-20 ERW has identified Adopted Learners as a priority area and a range of professional learning opportunities have been developed with Adoption UK to improve understanding of the issues they face and the support that can be put in place.

Developing relationships with LA PDG LAC Leads:

We are developing strong working relationships with local authority leads to ensure joint working, clear responsibilities and opportunities for strategic development. Regular meetings have facilitated and agreed that we will develop a 'Regional PDG LAC Framework' to develop commonality across the region, strengthen use of the grant, provide specific strategic support to each local authority where needed and provide continuous professional learning opportunities for all schools.

The numbers of LAC pupils within our local authorities can vary greatly. The supportive work provided by local authority services for pupils and schools continues to witness positive impact and progress as a result of an emphasis on the following aspects:

Pupil focused activities:

- Annual celebration of achievements
- DDP therapy and sexual abuse counselling
- Designated support from a range of professional services including, Educational Psychology advice and Theraplay practitioners
- Regular and wide ranging consultation and participation group activities
- Pupil involvement in staff recruitment processes

School focused activities:

- Detailed support and guidance on adopted children (cross-departmental approaches including LACE officer engagement and expertise) for all partners (social workers, foster carers, youth workers, adopters, contact workers, project workers, Careers Wales etc)
- Personal Education Plan (PEP) engagement and guidance
- Attachment and Adverse Childhood Experiences awareness training
- Emotion coaching
- Trauma informed practice
- Nurture Network training

6 An update on how you are challenging and supporting schools that participated in schools challenge Cymru. We would be particularly grateful to know how you have ensured that, where schools' performance improved during the programme, this positive momentum has continued.

Across the ERW region, four schools participated in the Schools Challenge Cymru programme. In the main, all schools have continued to demonstrate encouraging levels of progress and achievement across a range of school performance areas.

These include:

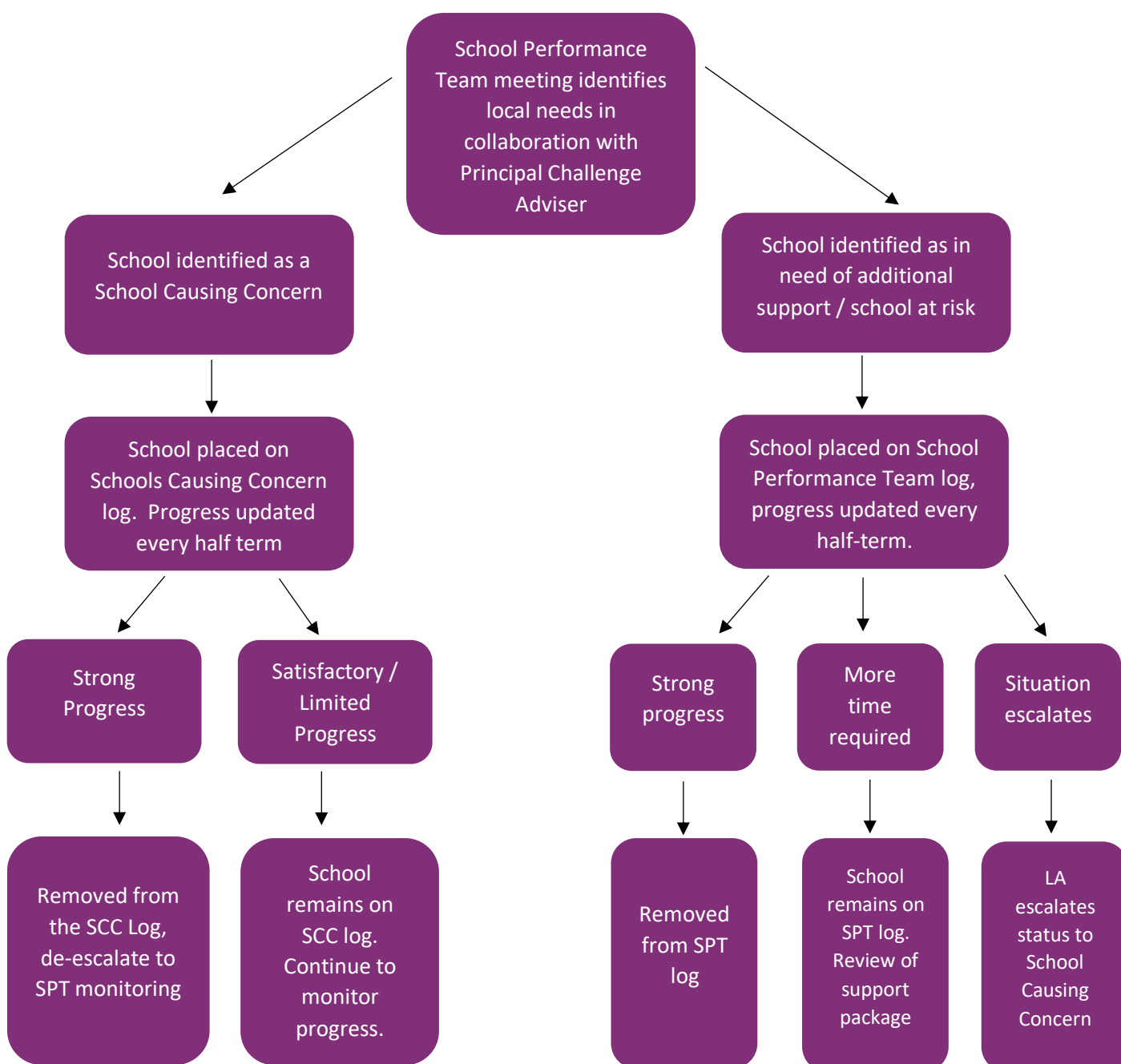
- strengthening strategic planning and effective self-evaluation processes
- embedding enhanced pedagogical approaches
- enhancing leadership capacity across the school
- progressing from 'Red' towards 'Green' levels of support within the National Categorisation model
- achieving higher levels of attendance
- achieving higher levels of performance outcomes

Over time, the region has continued to ensure the appropriate level of bespoke support and guidance through its programme of secondary school improvement strategies, including:

i) School Performance Team Meetings and Protocol:

As noted in section 1, we undertake 'School Performance Team Meetings' on a half-termly basis. All six Senior Challenge Advisers meet separately with ERW central officers to share an overview of each school's specific needs. These meetings also facilitate an evaluation of any previous elements of support provision. The protocol below arose out of discussions with Senior Challenge Advisers and a range of ERW officers over time. It serves to ensure clarity and clearly defined pathways to support schools experiencing specific levels of challenge and need.

The graphic below demonstrates the protocol in clearer detail:



ii) Secondary Support Group (SSG):

Our ERW Secondary Support Group continues to provide bespoke support for identified schools across the region. The Group's activity is always brokered in a detailed manner via discussions between the school, ERW officers, senior LA officers, Senior Challenge Adviser and any additional, appropriate officers. The focus of need and following support provision is always tailored to the individual case and setting to ensure effective impact and progress.

iii) Key Stage 4 Subject Specialists:

Our team of Key Stage 4 Subject Specialists supports a wide range of varying needs within schools across our region. Their work provides a valuable input of specialist expertise to support and progress an individual element of provision swiftly. In addition, their integral involvement in our Secondary Subject Networks provides effective guidance and reinforcement of some central priorities for all our schools, namely:

- high expectations for all learners
- whole school responsibility and accountability for individual learner progress and raised standards

Summary:

This work has supported the embedding of processes and cultures for ongoing self-improvement and sustainable success across our schools. In addition, we have placed much emphasis on developing 'school-to-school' support as an integral element of any school's journey. We are confident that this approach benefits our schools greatly, underpinning the key aim of attaining a self-improving system across Wales.

7 Any comments you have on current and future school accountability arrangements and the impact of these on school improvement.

The ERW region welcomes the ongoing national focus on ensuring appropriate and purposeful accountability arrangements for schools as outlined within current documentation focusing on:

- clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for schools, local authorities, Consortia and Welsh Government
- revised self-evaluation and improvement planning mechanisms within our schools
- a broader range of performance measures focused on progress and achievement for all learners
- the collegiate development of the Curriculum for Wales
- the collegiate development of support and resources for crucial areas of provision such as learner and staff wellbeing, school leadership and professional learning, excellent pedagogy etc

We welcome the previously mentioned (Section 3) Welsh Government, Estyn and WLGA letter on Evaluation and Improvement Arrangements (dated 16 July, 2019) and opportunity to share greater detail with Elected Members and Education Directors during the forthcoming Evaluation and Improvement seminars to be held in January 2020.

The clear intention of Welsh Government to drive significant system and cultural change across all educational tiers in transparent partnership is central to our thinking as a region. We are working closely with all of our partners in direct support of each aspect of the current reform programme.

8 Any other comments you wish to make on the school improvement and raising standards agenda.

The ERW region welcomes all collaborative activity occurring nationally in support of achieving the content and goals of 'Our National Mission.' The ongoing work to enhance the clarity of the role of the 'middle tier' is to be welcomed, along with the support of Estyn for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. We are committed to improving learning experiences and outcomes for all our children and young people in partnership with all stakeholders. We look forward to contributing further across all aspects of the national reform journey.