

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19TH FEBRUARY 2014

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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NATIONAL MODEL FOR REGIONAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WORKING IN WALES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update members on developments in relation to school improvement services and to approve the new national model for regional working on school improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Agree to adopt the National Model for Regional School Improvement Working.
- 2.3 Agree to transfer the additional services listed in the Model to Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES), in phases, subject to the business case for the transfer being presented to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Robert Hill Review set out a number of options for improving the delivery and structure of education services in Wales. One of the key options was that there needed to be greater consistency in the delivery of school improvement services via the regional education consortia. This view was endorsed by local government through the WLGA response to the Hill Review in September 2013.
- 3.2 A subsequent key commitment on the part of local government has been to co-construct a National Model for Regional Working on School Improvement (hereafter referred to as the Model) with the Welsh Government. The aim of the Model is to bring consistency and stability to the local authority regional school improvement services which is in line with the WLGA response to the Hill Review.
- 3.3 The work to develop the Model took place during November 2013 with representatives of local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Education, Directors of Finance and Directors of Human Resources closely involved in the process. In order to achieve this deadline a number of working groups were established, involving local government officers, education experts and Welsh Government civil servants. These groups have worked on different aspects of the model including clarity over the definition of school improvement, governance and commissioning, budgets and business planning for regional services.

- 3.4 The Model was agreed by the Minister and the WLGA Coordinating Committee in late November 2013. There has been a very tight timescale to undertake this work but it has been genuine co-construction. Inevitably there have been concessions on all sides.

4. THE NATIONAL MODEL

- 4.1 The Model outlines a consistent approach to school improvement activities, such as how to undertake school-to-school support, which is a key part of moving towards self-improving schools. The Model aims to encourage schools to take more responsibility for their own improvement.
- 4.2 The Model also looks to clarify issues such as what activities could usefully be undertaken at a local authority level and what activities are best addressed regionally. In particular, the scope of consortia services is to be consistent across the four consortia. In addition to the functions currently undertaken by the CSCJES, work to align 14-19 strategy; governor support services, training; and advice; and specialist HR advice dealing with performance and capability issues; would transfer from the Council.
- 4.3 Other functions, referred to in the Hill report, including SEN provision, education welfare services and business support services would remain with the Council.
- 4.4 A key section of the document covers the governance arrangements in relation to regional collaborative school improvement services. The current statutory position is retained and responsibility for school improvement rests with the individual local authorities. The Model suggests that governance is best placed in a Joint Committee and in line with the legal requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 members of the Joint Committee would be appointed by the constituent local authorities. This group would be supported by an executive board which would cover more operational issues in relation to the regional service.
- 4.5 The membership of the Executive Board would consist of a representative of the Joint Committee, a Welsh Government nominee, a lead director of education and no more than five experts, including at least one local headteacher, from a pool assembled by WLGA and Welsh Government.
- 4.6 Local authorities will consider the progress of schools within their area through their member-level scrutiny arrangements. The model includes no reference to joint scrutiny arrangements. The Model stipulates that the Council's Scrutiny committee for Education services will meet at least once a year to consider performance and progress in local schools. Senior employees of the regional consortia will attend these meetings and answer questions.
- 4.7 As part of the new arrangements, it was agreed that a common business plan template was required to enable consortia to clearly identify their key priorities for the year and the expected outcomes. The Minister for Education and Skills will use the plans as the basis of an outcome agreement with consortia, and will formally accept (or not) the plans on an annual basis. The process of submitting and signing off a business plan should be completed by the end of March of each year.
- 4.8 Through regular Review and Challenge events (formerly stock takes), Welsh Government will monitor progress against and hold consortia and local authorities to

account for their performance against the priorities and outcomes noted in the business plans. The plans must be:

- focused on strategic outcomes;
- dovetail effectively with the outcomes identified in statutory local authority plans;
- deliver national and local priorities to impact on outcomes for learners;
- used to inform democratic accountability arrangements; and
- informed by effective data analysis and need.

- 4.9 It is envisaged that consortia will have, within the guidance set out in the Model, other bespoke arrangements for effective strategic planning, governance and decision making, clear performance management and accountability arrangements internally and to constituent local authorities, self-evaluation, quality assurance, local authority level implementation action plans, managing risks and robust financial planning.
- 4.10 Estyn will undertake a remit on the progress being made by consortia from late summer 2014 for publication in spring 2015. Inspections of consortia will begin in autumn 2015 through to autumn 2016.
- 4.11 The National Model describes the key roles of the Managing Director of each consortium which include the publication of an annual report as part of the following year's business plan. Welsh Government will have the opportunity to observe the appointment process for a Managing Director and to comment on the proposed appointment. CSCJES is currently seeking to recruit a Managing Director.
- 4.12 The aim of the Model is to transition through the next months in order to implement the model by 1 April 2014: Business plans will set out which school improvement services will be delivered regionally by April 2014 and which will transfer from councils and will be delivered by April 2015.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In October 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills issued a written statement outlining his acceptance of the proposal from local government to protect school improvement funding within the local government budget settlement and to jointly construct a National Model for Regional Working.
- 5.2 The agreement replaces the proposal, in the Hill Review, to fund regional school improvement services through a transfer out of the Revenue Support Grant. Local authorities across Wales have to increase their contributions, in total, by £1.9m, which equates to a £335k increase for Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 5.3 This additional resource includes the cost of the functions that will also transfer to the Consortium such as Governor Support Services. The development of business cases that will set out the range of functions to be delivered consistently across the Consortium will highlight the extent of any possible shortfall of resources to be transferred to the Consortium. Any shortfall of resources after the transfer of

functions to the Consortium will be met from existing Council education department school improvement budgets.

APPENDIX A

National model for regional working in Wales

Section 1: The mission, values and principles of effective school improvement

The vision and the purpose

Wales needs for its future success in the world young people who are clever, skilled, happy and healthy, and an educational system that helps to produce them. Our proposals in this agreement are designed to generate this through supporting reform to the way that local authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government work together to support school leaders, governors and teachers and, through this process, helping to create excellent learning, in excellent classrooms in excellent schools.

The Hill review will help to shape Wales' education reform programme and the national model for school improvement is an integral part of that. The development of the national model is a shared endeavour between schools, local authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government. It recognises the important role each tier has to play in improving outcomes for children and young people. The national model can create the structures and define the framework within which this partnership will function but it will require a shared commitment and moral purpose for the system as a whole to deliver the improvements in education and life chances that all children in Wales deserve.

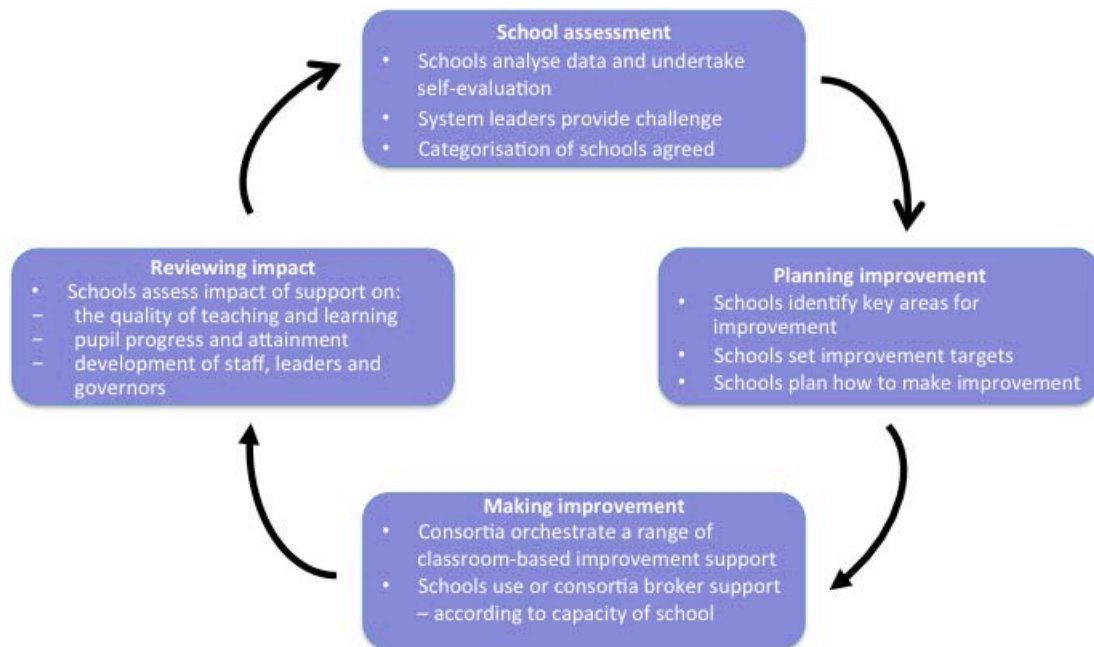
Local authorities retain the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement. The national model is based on a vision of regional school improvement consortia working on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and education of young people. The prime mission and purpose of regional consortia is to help those who educate our children and young people. So, in future, their non-negotiable job will be to support schools and local authorities in their efforts to:

- improve learner outcomes for all young people;
- ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning; and
- support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools.

Model and key principles of school improvement

Schools are at the heart of this new national model. It is the job of governors, school leaders, teachers and other staff to set high expectations of pupils, constantly seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning, raise standards, share good practice and learn from one another through genuine partnerships and school-to-school support arrangements. Figure 1 describes an annual cycle of school improvement, which we believe should be adopted by all schools. It is a model that many schools will recognise and already follow.

Figure 1: Annual cycle of school improvement



1. Step1: School assessment

Schools need to know themselves and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Assessment is a constant process for both teachers and school leaders based upon self-evaluation and school categorisation.

School self-evaluation

Once a year the annual self-evaluation, involving all departments and aspects of a school's life, should provide a systematic trigger for a school auditing how it is performing for all its learners. We need to ensure that schools have the capacity to do this and that clear systems of core, simple and powerful data are available to support this process including benchmarking data so that schools can compare themselves against both the best schools and those within their family of schools. The more that schools can 'own' this process, with help as necessary, the better it will work, and the more 'inspection ready' every school can be. Challenge advisers within consortia will, as their name implies, provide challenge and assure the integrity of the process – particularly for those schools who need support or that have serious weaknesses.

National school categorisation

Each consortium has developed its own system for categorising schools. However, as part of the work on the national model, each consortium has agreed to work towards and implement a national system for categorising the schools which will be in place from 1st April 2014. This national approach will support the school in its self-evaluation assessment.

Step 2: Planning improvement

Schools should use their self-evaluation and the strengths and weaknesses it reveals, to work out what to change in what they do. These ideas will often naturally

come from schools and teachers themselves, but the process can be facilitated by making available 'good practice' from other schools. Schools, which are struggling, will receive the support they need to do this from challenge advisers.

Schools should set targets by which they can measure their improvement. The targets should cover both improvement in process – for example, the quality of teaching and learning, marking of books or feedback – and outcomes in terms of improvements in attainment and progress. The job of challenge advisers will be to challenge headteachers and governors to set aspirational targets that ensure high levels of motivation and significantly improved pupil attainment.

Step 3: Making improvement

Enabling and supporting schools to access, share and use a range of proven and new classroom-based approaches should be at the heart of securing the improvements that schools need to make. This will include development programmes that align training for teachers with them working in groups to observe and coach each other on implementing improved practice, and the deployment of Lead Practitioners. Every school also has within itself good practice that can be used as the basis for 'within school' transfer and school-to-school improvement activity. More schools will be in federations and still more in clusters. Executive headship will grow to maximise the value and potential of our best school leaders. Local authorities may also see benefits of such changes in organisational and governance terms as part of school improvement.

Consortia will facilitate and orchestrate this collaboration. There will also be programmes at consortia level that will draw on the expertise of the best practitioners and schools in the region. There will be help from the private sector the voluntary sector and indeed local communities that can be matched with the needs of schools and their teachers. The higher and further education sectors will also possess many individuals and courses that can help teacher and school development. Whatever the source of the help, it is essential that is tailored to the social, linguistic, cultural and social context of every school.

Schools that have the capacity to do so should be encouraged and empowered to lead their own improvement and deploy their own resources accordingly. For those schools that are struggling or underperforming it would be the job of the consortia to help match and broker the support needed to the support available.

School leadership at all levels should be nurtured and developed through training programmes, coaching, assigning mentors and providing opportunities for emerging leaders to be seconded to other schools.

Step 4: Reviewing impact

Schools, teachers and consortia should consider the effects of their actions on the achievements of all their children, and then decide what changes to make in their plans and their future actions. Consortia will broadly follow a similar philosophy in terms of the planning and review cycle as advocated for schools within Figure 1 above. The annual cycle of school, departmental, individual, local authority and consortium level plans that align all parts of the system together.

The role of regional consortia in implementing this model

The delivery of consortia services should be based on co-construction with schools with a move to common/shared data systems and underpinned by excellence of expertise in analysing and challenging schools' improvement needs. The delivery of consortia services should not be based on employing large numbers of full time staff – rather a core staff should draw on the skills of the best headteachers in their regions along with other school improvement experts and should use budgets flexibly to commission the support schools require.

Relationships and lines of accountability between local authorities and regional consortia should be clear so that everyone in the education system understands who is responsible for what.

The implementation of this model will change over time. As schools and teachers develop over the next two to three years, and as they gain knowledge and confidence, they will expect more independence, autonomy and space to make their own decisions. The measure of success for regional consortia will be that they cease to exist in their present form over time because their job is done.

Section 2: The scope of regional consortia

The scope of consortia services

It is important that there is clarity about the scope of the functions and services that regional consortia will provide and what schools and local authorities can expect of them. Regional consortia services will include:

- school improvement – which is defined as intervention, challenge and support strategies delivered by regional consortia that improve the teaching and learning in classrooms and lead to improved pupil attainment and progress at all levels and all contexts, including closing gaps in attainment, and addressing specific needs (such as the needs of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or More Able & Talented (MAT) Learners);
- data collation, analysis and application – which is defined as collating from local authorities and schools the data on school and pupil performance and progress across each region (based on the core data sets established by the Welsh Government and Fischer Family Trust projections), using that data to benchmark and challenge school performance and, with schools, set challenging targets for improvements;
- supporting the development of school leadership at all levels – which includes developing opportunities for emerging and senior leaders to develop their experience and expertise by having assignment and secondments in other schools, in addition to commissioning, and co-ordinating the provision of training and development programmes;
- supporting and promoting the development of school improvement linked to learner well being, including issues such as behaviour and attendance;
- ensuring that the delivery of the national Literacy and Numeracy frameworks is effective across all schools and co-ordinate and quality assure the provision of training and development to achieve this;
- providing challenge to the performance and delivery of Foundation Phase settings and assess the need for and then commission, co-ordinate and quality assure provision of training and development support;
- aligning national and local 14-19 strategies across the wider consortium area to help raise standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics, ensure high quality courses offer relevant training for pupils and contribute effectively to regeneration strategies;
- working with local authorities to ensure that their plans for developing and implementing strategies for 21st Century schools go hand-in-hand with plans for school improvement;
- enabling the aims of the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES) to be delivered by ensuring the alignment of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans(WESP) and the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG) across each of the local authorities within the regional consortia, so that there is consistency in the development of excellence in pedagogy not only across both the Welsh-

medium and bilingual sectors, but also in the delivery of Welsh as a second language;

- commissioning, coordinate and quality assure delivery of high quality governor training and advice services including the requirements for mandatory training for governors; and
- providing specialist human resources advice to support headteachers and governing bodies in dealing with performance management and capability issues.

All children are important. Schools and colleges have a duty to deliver appropriate curriculum and personal support for pupils with additional learning and special educational needs. As part of their school improvement function consortia will, therefore, help schools to deliver high quality education to these groups of pupils, drawing on the expertise of the best special schools, and good practice and systems adopted by the best mainstream

. Consortia procedures protocols and business plans should demonstrate that they are giving full attention to children who have SEN and data systems should be designed to demonstrate the progress they make. They may also need to draw on expert support from local authorities where that is appropriate.

The delivery of specialist services, the statementing of pupils and the legal procedures that safeguard the welfare and rights of children with special needs remain the responsibility of the LA and Consortia should ensure that their services and LA services for pupils with SEN are closely aligned.

Local authorities will also continue to be responsible for delivering – either by employing their own staff or by working in partnership with another local authority – the organisation of schools and school places, special educational and additional learning needs, school transport, school meals, safeguarding services, education welfare, behaviour and attendance and employees' pay and conditions of service. In some cases local authorities in a region may choose to commission these functions from their consortium and such arrangements could strengthen the consortia's prime responsibility to deliver school improvement. But it is implicit in the national model that school improvement must be at the forefront of regional consortia's efforts and activity.

The sections that follow explain in more detail how regional consortia and local authorities will discharge their respective functions and work together to develop an integrated system that supports schools and avoids duplication.

Section 3: Delivery of respective regional consortia and local authority functions

The responsibilities of regional consortia

In relation to school improvement regional consortia will **provide challenge** through:

- monitoring the work and performance of schools, using all-Wales standardised data sets, Fischer Family Trust projections and in-school and in-year data on pupil progress and the quality of classroom teaching and learning, to categorise a school's performance and development needs in accordance with the nationally agreed categorisation model;
- examining with school leaders and chairs of governors performance and provision at **whole-school level and for different subjects, year groups and sub-categories of pupils**, in order to compare the progress of individual and or groups of pupils with progress made in other comparable schools and to identify areas of underperformance and achievement gaps;
- confirming with headteachers and chairs of governors the priority areas for improvement and the strategies to be deployed to secure improvement;
- agreeing stretching targets that will raise expectations, set the standard for improving the quality of teaching and learning and provide the success criteria by which pupil attainment and progress will be judged. Where agreement cannot be reached [in respect of schools that are in an Estyn category or monitoring] the consortium will advise the local authority so that in accordance with current legislation the local authority can determine the appropriate targets;
- assessing for schools that are in special measures, require significant improvement, are subject to Estyn or local authority monitoring or otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern, whether governors and school leadership teams have the capacity and will to lead school improvement – and making appropriate recommendations as necessary; and
- advising of those situations where statutory intervention is required and the form(s) that intervention might take – whether federation with another school, the deployment of an executive headteacher, the establishment of an interim executive board or another appropriate measure.

These functions will be applied proportionally – that is to say those schools most in need of support will be monitored most closely. Conversely where schools are performing strongly monitoring will be light-touch in nature. These functions, rather than the delivery of school improvement programmes and initiatives, will be the main focus of challenge advisers' activity.

Challenge advisers may be employed full-time by a consortium or be bought in on a part-time basis. Challenge advisers will have the following attributes:

- experience of leading in a successful school¹;

¹ This could include being a member of a senior leadership team.

- expertise in analysing and using school improvement data;
- an understanding and experience of how to implement school improvement; and
- strong interpersonal skills.

This will represent a significant shift in the roles and skills needed. Challenge advisers should be credible in their challenge role and command respect from schools. Welsh Government will provide national training for those undertaking the role of challenge advisers as a matter of urgency. Consortia will, therefore, need to facilitate this training and also secondments to help make the transition to this new role wherever possible. Consortia will have the responsibility of identifying staff to participate in training, and will need to ensure strong performance management of those undertaking the role of challenge advisors. Consortia executive boards and the managing directors will need to urgently assess the capability of their staff to meet the new requirements and discussion with unions that represent them so that headteachers and school leaders are challenged and supported by high quality advisers.

Regional consortia will share monitoring information with local authorities on a termly basis and more frequently in relation to schools that are in special measures, require significant improvement, are subject to Estyn or local authority monitoring or are otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern (see below).

Regional consortia will also **co-ordinate, broker and provide improvement support** for schools. These activities will be co-constructed with headteachers and teachers. The brokerage and improvement support will be differentiated in relation to a school's capacity to improve and commission/broker its own improvement support. Where a school is assessed as performing well or having the capacity to secure its own improvement it will be free to use its budgets to draw down and use the services as appropriate to its circumstances and improvement needs. Where, however, a school has low attainment and poor pupil progress – and/or lacks the capacity to promote improvement in general or in a specific area – the consortium will arrange the necessary improvement support on behalf of the school in consultation with the headteacher and governing body and, where charged-for services are deployed, charge the school accordingly. The objective will be to build up the capacity of all schools to take responsibility for organising their own improvement.

Consortium's brokerage and improvement activities will include:

- facilitating the use and interpretation of data as part of this process to support forensic school self-evaluation and identify gaps in attainment;
- publishing anonymised benchmarking data on the performance and progress of comparable groups of pupils in different subjects and phases to encourage and enable schools to learn from each other;
- supporting school leaders to broker appropriate support from other schools, consortia-commissioned programmes and other sources, where a school has the capacity lead its own improvement;
- overseeing the implementation of a support programme, including the deployment of headteachers of Lead Practitioner schools and other headteachers

capable of acting as executive heads, in those schools that are in special measures, require significant improvement, are subject to Estyn or local authority monitoring or otherwise identified through the categorisation process as causing serious concern;

- commissioning and quality assuring a range of predominantly classroom-based training and development programmes to support improvements in teaching and learning and subject knowledge;
- working with headteachers and other leaders through joint lesson observations to develop a consistent understanding on what constitutes excellent teaching and learning;
- identifying excellent departments and lead practitioners using nationally agreed criteria who can be deployed to support other schools for part of their working week;
- providing mentoring support for headteachers and school leadership teams that need support in leading improvement²;
- encouraging, incentivising and steering schools to work on school improvement together through local clusters of schools;
- providing access to evidence of 'what works' in terms of closing gaps in attainment and support schools to implement and assess the impact of targeted intervention strategies;
- supporting the formation and development of federations and interim executive boards where this is agreed as a way to effect school improvement;
- facilitating the development and work of Professional Learning Communities, lesson study and other means for teachers to work together within and across schools to review and improve their pedagogical practice;
- working with university education departments to provide access to knowledge about teaching and learning and to support research projects based in schools; and
- co-ordinating support and training for teaching assistants and newly qualified teachers.

In relation to supporting the **development of school leadership** regional consortia will, in partnership with leading headteachers:

- commission from schools, universities and other specialist providers development and training programmes for middle leaders to better equip them to analyse and use data, assess the quality of classroom learning and coach other colleagues – reflecting the work of the National Leadership Development Board as it develops;
- support succession planning by working with local authorities to aggregate data on projected turnover and retirements of senior school leaders;

² This support should come from a serving headteacher (and the wider leadership team) of a strongly performing school – for example, a Lead Practitioner school

- commission from schools, universities and other specialist providers development and training programmes for emerging senior leaders – reflecting the requirements and work of the National Leadership Development Board as it develops;
- commission programmes that will empower and enable effective heads to support other schools through leading a Lead Practitioner School, acting as an executive headteacher, leading a federation or working for part of the week as a system leader;
- encourage and co-ordinate opportunities for emerging leaders to have access to leadership secondments in other schools; and
- ensure that every new headteacher in their first year of headship shall have access to an effective headteacher mentor.

Through the challenge process regional consortia will assess the general and specific needs of schools in each local authority area with regard to the specific **literacy and numeracy** training and development they require. In consultation with headteachers and the Welsh Government's contractor for literacy and numeracy training, consortia will commission and facilitate the delivery of a strategy that will deliver the range of support required at classroom level.

Early Years Foundation Phase support will involve providing challenge to leaders of Foundation Phase settings and liaising with headteachers and other providers to audit training needs and commission and quality assure an appropriate range of programmes.

The consortia will co-ordinate and quality assure the delivery of the aims of the **Welsh-medium Education Strategy** by ensuring the alignment of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) and the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG) across each of the local authorities within the regional consortia, so that there is consistency in the development of excellence in pedagogy, and the meeting of agreed targets, not only across both the Welsh-medium and bilingual sectors, but also in the delivery of Welsh as a second language.

Co-ordination of the regional dimension of the ICT Strategy will include school ICT self-evaluation, leadership and planning of ICT for learning; safeguarding, emerging technologies, virtual learning environments, learning technology and the national literacy and numeracy framework, running networks for heads of departments and ICT co-ordinators, support for pedagogy and curriculum development (with reference to the Learning and Digital World Strategy).

Strategic overview of the regional **14-19 offer**, including allocation of resources to programmes in line with Welsh Government priorities, will include:

- support for planning the use of grants;
- ensuring school and provider provision is in line to deliver the expected impact inherent in these grants;

- working with local authorities to provide a strategic overview to challenge and support all providers, including FE Colleges and private training providers, to ensure equality of access to the development opportunities;
- administering the relevant grants and co-ordinating and supporting bids for emerging grant opportunities.

Regional consortia will commission and quality assure delivery of **governor support services** and training for governors including the mandatory training programmes required for new governors, training for chairs of governors and, in respect of understanding and applying data effectively for all governors. Consortia will also encourage and facilitate governor networks, enable governors to observe each other's meetings and deploy able chairs of governors to mentor other governing bodies that are struggling to undertake their role effectively. Consortia will jointly develop, in consultation with local authorities, governors and headteachers a performance data template for headteachers to use to report to governors on a termly or half termly basis a school's in-year performance on:

- pupil attendance;
- pupil exclusions;
- staff sickness absence;
- quality of teaching (as assessed through classroom observations); and
- progress and attainment data relative to targets.

Consortia will also identify a pool of able candidates that are willing to serve on governing bodies where there is weak governance.

In exercising these roles account will need to be taken of funding for governor support being delegated to schools in some authorities.

Specialist human resource advice for schools would typically include training for headteachers and chairs of governors on performance management and advice on managing those occasions when a teacher's performance is such that the capability procedures have to be invoked or a teacher's absence or sickness record is such that it requires serious action to be considered. Welsh Government recognises that consortia may need to move to this model in stages during their first year of operation where currently the specialist resources to deliver this requirement do not exist.

Regional consortia and local authorities will not duplicate the work of each other.

Regional consortia will consider urgently recommendations on statutory school interventions from local authorities and unless there are exceptional circumstances, local authorities will implement them.

The responsibilities of local authorities

Local authorities will retain statutory accountability for school performance together with the responsibility for the exercise of statutory powers of intervention and organisation of schools.

Local authorities will designate a lead officer ('an intelligent client') to act as the main point of contact with the regional consortium, in accordance with the arrangement described below.

Local authorities and regional consortia will have open discussions together about their plans which should be clear about the respective roles, functions and intended actions of each. These processes will remove any risk of regional consortia or authorities duplicating effort. In particular local authorities should share with regional consortia information on their proposals and decisions in relation to:

- the overall vision and social and economic development priorities for their area, having particular regard to issues that are likely to affect schools;
- school organisation, including plans for federations, amalgamations, closures and delivery of their 21st century school strategies;
- supporting the delivery of those having special educational and additional learning needs;
- the organisation of behaviour support and education welfare services;
- their youth engagement strategy;
- safeguarding arrangements for children and young people; and
- arrangements to promote effective procurement and the development of business support services within schools.

Local authorities will provide regional consortia with access to relevant data systems, including anonymised data sets on pupil performance where this is held at local authority level, and other information to facilitate their work.

Local authorities will not duplicate the work or activity of regional consortia.

The development of secure local authority and consortia relationships will mean that both parties will consider urgently and jointly recommendations on statutory school interventions from any source and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, agree to implement them. Local authorities and consortia will follow the jointly agreed 'escalation' protocol that is currently being developed.

Local authorities will consider the progress of schools within their area through their member-level scrutiny arrangements, having regard to the procedures described below.

Section 4: Governance and accountability

Joint committees

The work of regional consortia will be overseen by a joint committee³ of the constituent local authorities or an arm's length company, depending upon the form which best suits a region's requirements in order to carry out the functions and to deliver the outcomes set out within this report. The form is less important than the capacity and drive to deliver improved outcomes and the ability to have the consortia functioning in the way agreed by 1st April 2014. The joint committee will have responsibility for approving the consortia budget (including remuneration), business planning and performance management of the consortia

The membership of a joint committee or a board will comprise the leader of each constituent local authority (or as outlined below this function may be fulfilled by a nominated deputy of the leader)⁴. They will be supported by the lead chief executive. The membership of the company board, where the arm's length company option is adopted, should reflect these arrangements.

For the remainder of this section, the focus will be on joint committee governance, given the expectation that three of the four regional consortia are likely to follow this model. The expectation is that if the arm's length company model is adopted/retained, then the principles articulated below will apply equally to a company structure in as far as they are able too.

The joint committee will normally meet no more than once a school term to oversee the work of the consortium. The autumn meeting will focus on considering and agreeing the draft business plan and the accompanying budget. The business plan will also include a report from the consortium's managing director on the consortium's outcomes (based on the factors as outlined at page 14). The spring and summer meetings will focus on scrutinising progress with delivery of the plan. These meetings may also pick out particular themes or aspect of the consortium's work – such as closing gaps in attainment or leadership development – for more detailed scrutiny. The managing director of the board and a lead chief executive shall, after consultation with the chair of the committee, agree the agenda and papers to be prepared for each joint meeting.

Meetings of joint committees will be open to the public.

The executive board

Joint committees (and arm's length company boards) will delegate the operational oversight of the consortium to an executive board whose role will be to oversee, support and challenge the work of the consortium⁵. The membership of the executive board appointed by joint committees will comprise:

³ Sections 101 and 102 of the LGA 1972 (and in the case of Executive Functions sections 19 and 20 of the LGA 2000 and relevant Regulations made under these sections) enable the work of authorities to be discharged through a variety of internal arrangements, and, in this context, external arrangements involving, and working with, other authorities. In particular these powers include the ability of two or more authorities to discharge any of their functions jointly, and where this occurs, to do so via a joint committee, and/ or by their officers.

⁴ Where a leader is unable to attend he or she would nominate a named deputy.

⁵ The legal provisions referred in footnote 4 above also provide for joint committees to delegate their functions in whole or in part to sub committees. The executive board would be

- one representative of the joint committee who will also act as the champion of the consortium in the region;
- a nominee of Welsh government;
- a lead director of education; and
- no more than [five] individuals who will be appointed, with the approval of the joint committee, for their expertise in school improvement drawn from an approved pool of individuals assembled by the WLGA and Welsh Government. Those nominated shall include at least one serving headteacher drawn from a school within the consortium area.

The executive board will have delegated responsibility for the implementation of:

- strategy – executive board members will constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy to enact the organisation achieving its goals;
- business planning – executive board members will consider and recommend an annual business plan to the joint committee;
- budget – executive board members will ensure that the business plan agreed is in line with the budget;
- performance – executive board members will scrutinise the performance of management in meeting assigned goals and objectives and monitor the reporting of performance;
- risk – executive board members will satisfy themselves that financial information is accurate and that the financial controls and systems of risk management are robust;
- people – executive board members will recommend to the joint committee appropriate levels of remuneration for the managing director and top team and have the prime role in appointing/removing the managing director.

The chair of the executive board shall come from one of the nominees nominated for their expertise in school improvement. The role of the chair will be to:

- set the agenda for the executive board in conjunction with the managing director and ensure that the board operates effectively;
- ensure the provision of accurate, timely and clear information for other executive board members;
- ensure that the executive board operates effectively in all aspects of its role;
- ensure the provision of accurate, timely and clear information for other executive board members;

constituted as a sub committee of the joint committee where authorities chose to operate through this option. Where they chose to operate through an arm's length company the executive board would be constituted as a subcommittee of the main board.

- support effective communication with constituent local authorities and Welsh Government; and
- facilitate effective contributions from all executive board members and ensure appropriate relationships between executive board members and between executive board members and officers.

The managing director and chair of the executive board shall attend meetings of the joint committee/company board.

An illustration of the governance model can be found in Annex A.

The overall consortium business plan

Each regional consortium will produce an annual business plan, using a standard template that will set out:

- a summary of the consortium's strategic objectives;
- a report summarising the performance of the schools in the consortium over the previous 12 months and an analysis of the main areas of strength and weakness within the consortium;
- the priorities for improvement – both in terms of particular schools and cross-cutting issues;
- the work programmes to be undertaken over the following 12 months, supported by budget costings; and
- the measurable improvement in school performance to be achieved over the 12 months.

The draft business plan will be submitted to the joint committee which will approve it. The managing director will report to the joint committee the outcome of discussions on the draft plan with individual local authorities and schools, which will take place as set out below. The business plan as agreed by the joint committee will be submitted to the Welsh Government for confirmation by the Minister for Education and Skills by February of each year.

The process of submitting and signing off a business plan should be completed by the end of March of each year.

A business plan for each local authority

Alongside the overarching business plan regional consortia will produce draft annexes for each respective local authority within the consortium. The draft annexes will explain what the overarching business plan means in terms of schools, school improvement priorities, school improvement services and school improvement targets for each constituent authority.

Each local authority will provide for their consortium a statement of any changes they propose to make over the coming 12 months in school organisation and their planned arrangements for delivering services for special educational and additional learning

needs, behaviour support and education welfare and wider children services that could relate to schools.

The annex and the statement will be discussed individually with each authority through a meeting with the lead officer/intelligent client and the elected member with responsibility for children's and education services.

The business plan annex will need to dovetail with other local authority corporate plans and the Single Plan.

Any local authority concerns or requests in relation to the content of the draft business plan that cannot be agreed between the managing director and a constituent authority will be reported to the joint committee as part of their consideration of the draft plan.

The business plan annex for each local authority will, once it is agreed, form a Service Level Agreement, between the consortium and the local authority.

Scrutiny and liaison between local authorities and regional consortia

Regional consortia will nominate a senior system leader/member of staff to liaise with the each authority's lead officer/intelligent client. It shall be for the respective officers to agree on the scope and frequency of their meetings, with contact being more intensive the greater the number of schools in the authority that come into one of the categories of concern. A note of meetings, recording issues discussed and decisions agreed, will be made.

In addition to the meeting in the autumn term to discuss the draft consortium business plan as it relates to their area, the authority's scrutiny committee for children's and education services will meet at least once a year to consider performance and progress in their schools. Senior employees of the regional consortia will attend these meetings and answer questions.

Local authorities undertake to be reasonable in their expectation of consortia staff and resources and ensure that senior leaders are not required to spend a disproportionate amount of their time on reporting and scrutiny work.

Accountability and relations with Welsh Government

The Welsh Government, through the Minister for Education and Skills, will be responsible for approving annual consortia business plans.

The managing director of each consortium will meet jointly with lead officials of the Welsh government on a half-termly basis in the spirit of co-construction, to

- review progress against consortia business plans;
- exchange information on consortia working;
- identify factors that are enabling or holding back progress on school improvement; and

- liaise on the implementation of government programmes and initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy programme or the work of the School Leadership board.

Stocktakes

The current round of stocktakes will be replaced by challenge and review sessions. The initial intelligence gathering process will include drawing together the performance data, Welsh Government and Estyn intelligence on each region. These findings will then inform a discussion with all four Managing Directors building on the region's self-knowledge and the expertise available regionally. This will then lead to a challenge and review event with each consortium, the scope and regularity of which will vary according to need and risk but as a minimum will be twice a year.

Furthermore, once a year the Minister for Education and Skills will chair a challenge and review session for each consortium to review progress on school improvement in each region. The annual report of the consortium's Managing Director will form part of this process. The consortium will be represented by the chair of the executive board, the managing director and the joint committee.

Priorities and action agreed as a result of these challenge and review sessions will be actioned by consortia and local authorities as appropriate and be reflected in the business plan for the next 12 months.

The Minister for Education and Skills reserves the right to make alternative arrangements for school improvement and consortium functions, in consultation with the Joint Committee, where a consortium clearly lacks the capacity or will to deliver its functions.

Relations with schools

Each consortium will establish two panels to consult respectively with school leaders and school governors. The purpose of the panels will be to discuss plans and proposals for developing school improvement and to receive feedback on the quality of service received in respect of both consortia's' challenge and support functions.

The panel shall include representatives of primary, secondary and special schools.

These user panels will meet at least termly and the meeting in the autumn term will consider the draft business plan for the coming year. Significant concerns from school leaders and governors regarding the content of the draft business plan will be reported to the joint committee as part of their consideration of the draft plan.

Consortia should also make arrangements for collecting systematic feedback from participants on their programmes and this information should be collated and presented to the user panels.

Estyn inspection

Estyn has agreed with the Minister for Education and Skills that it will undertake a remit on the progress being made by consortia. This remit will begin in late summer 2014 and be published in spring 2015.

The inspection of consortia will begin in late autumn 2015 through to autumn 2016. Estyn will focus primarily on the impact of consortia upon the standards that learners

achieve, the quality of service provided to schools and on the quality of leadership and management of consortia.

Estyn has an Advisory Forum on the inspection of regional consortia with which it consults representatives from SOLACE, ADEW, four consortia, DfES and Wales Audit Office (WAO) about the development of its inspection framework.

Estyn is working jointly with WAO about their role in the inspection of consortia as part of Estyn's inspection team.

By the end of November 2013, Estyn will have carried out an inspection of local authority education services for children and young people in all 22 local authorities. Between 2013 through to 2016, Estyn will continue follow up activity through the monitoring of authorities in the category of Estyn monitoring, in need of significant improvement or special measures. However Estyn reserves the right to re-inspect any authority that causes significant concern. Estyn will take particular account of how effectively a local authority uses its regional consortia to address school performance issues in the authority's schools.

Estyn's framework for the inspection of local authority education services from 2016 through to 2022 will need to take account of the outcomes of the Williams Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, as well as the future development of regional consortia and the statutory functions of local authorities not being delivered through consortia or other collaborative arrangements.

Section 5: The organisation and operation of consortia

The central organisation of the consortium

Consortia may decide, because of the geographical size of the region or the need to reflect cultural and language differences, to organise delivery of their services through hubs. That will be a matter for executive boards to determine. However, all consortia should ensure that they retain sufficient expertise at the centre in order to manage the following functions on a cross-consortium basis:

- data collation, analysis and application – which is defined as collating from local authorities and schools the data on school and pupil performance and progress across each region (based on the core data sets established by the Welsh Government and Fischer Family Trust projections);
- planning and coordination of the improvement service, quality assurance of the challenge function and performance management of its effectiveness in delivering improved outcomes;
- strategic leadership of key strands of work such as leadership development, literacy and numeracy and Welsh medium;
- business planning including management of financial resources, risk assessment, human resource management of consortia staff and commissioning of services;
- commissioning, coordinating and quality assuring delivery of high quality governor training and advice services including the national requirements for mandatory governor training; and
- specialist human resources advice to support headteachers and governing bodies in dealing with performance management and capability issues.

The role of the managing director

The key roles of the managing director will include:

1. Strategic relationship management and collaborative leadership – the managing director will need to navigate the development of increased autonomy for schools alongside reporting to and working with constituent local authorities (which retain statutory responsibilities for education and school improvement), liaising with the Welsh Government and reporting to an executive board. The complexity of the arrangements will mean that the managing director will need to be able to build strong personal relationships while staying focused on delivering the highest standards and performance for the region.
2. Ability to analyse data rapidly, read situations, understand and interpret different local and political contexts and communicate well. In addition, the managing director must guide and lead innovation, seek and take advantage of opportunities and take calculated risks in order to strive for continuous improvement.
3. Leadership of school improvement services – the managing director will provide the strategic leadership and delivery of a sharp and well-defined model of diagnosis and support for schools. This includes, but is not limited to, leading a

high performing team to work alongside school leaders, teachers and others engaged in education service delivery in the rigorous challenge and support for improvement activity based on strong analysis of data and evidence. The impact of this work can be seen by the sharp and sustained improvement in outcomes and in the range of appropriate services included within the consortia.

4. Development of system wide school-to-school capacity building measures – we believe that in the long-term the capacity for system-wide improvement rests within and across schools. The managing director must be capable of galvanizing and leading outstanding heads, middle leaders and teachers and, more broadly, to design a system of school led capacity building and improvement.
5. Development of and engagement with an improvement service which is flexible and meets the needs of its stakeholders – in line with the changing demands and needs of schools and local authorities, the managing director will lead the development of a flexible approach to procuring school improvement services. The role will require a commercial sensitivity and an ability to construct a mixed economy of high quality expertise on which schools will be able to draw.
6. Leadership and management of a lean and dynamic central organisation – the managing director will provide visible and inspiring strategic leadership and management of the consortium. This will require recognition of the history and achievements of the organisation to date, whilst reviewing the staffing and delivery model to ensure it is as efficient and effective as possible and compliant with Welsh Government and Estyn expectations. Critical to this is sound and effective people management skills providing high quality professional development for staff as well as effective brand management, communication management of resources and building relationships with stakeholders. In addition, the managing director must guide and lead innovation, seek and take advantage of opportunities and take calculated risks in order to strive for continuous improvement.
7. The Managing Director shall produce an annual report of performance in the following year's business plan.

The skills and experience needed to be a managing director will, therefore, be of a senior strategic leader, with a strong track record of making an impact in leading a school improvement organisation that has significantly improved educational outcomes. He or she will be ambitious for schools to improve, capable of providing and managing challenge and willing and able to lead and steer a coalition of school leaders, staff and local authorities through school improvement.

The salary and conditions will be set by the joint committee and the line management and accountability will be to the chair of the executive board.

Where managing directors are appointed (including those about to be appointed) regions will enable a representative of the Welsh Government to observe the appointment process and the opportunity to comment on the proposed appointment. Where the Welsh Government does not support the proposed appointment, no appointment offer shall be made until the chair of the joint committee) has met with the Minister for Education and Skills to discuss the matter.

Where a managing director is already in post, the chair of the executive board shall advise the joint committee on the fitness of the post holder for the post, as described

above, and the joint committee will notify the Minister for Education and Skills accordingly.

Funding and finance

Regional consortia will obtain their funding from three sources:

1. It has been agreed that the school improvement element within the RSG will be identified separately and ring fenced. Local authorities have given a commitment⁶ to protect this funding and transfer it directly to the consortia. Local authorities have signed up to this agreement formally and this agreement has the same status as other agreements such as the Simpson Compact and the delegation rates targets of 80 per cent and 85 per cent. The quantum identified will be based on the methodology and funding identified in the papers submitted to the Distribution Sub Group and Finance Sub Group (see Annex B). For 2014/15 this sum amounts to a minimum of £18.6 million core funding for the four regional consortia in Wales.

From 1st April 2014 the transferred funding will be lodged with the lead financial authority on behalf of the consortium and made available in full to the consortium. Further financial resources would be added if further functions were transferred into the consortium.

For future years lead financial officers from each consortium will each December calculate the figures in line with the agreement between the WLGA and the Welsh Government. The level of funding that is proposed to be transferred to consortia will also be subject to consultation with Welsh Government.

2. Dedicated funding for schools and school improvement routed through consortia by the Welsh Government. The major Welsh Government grants and associated Local Authority match-funding will be passported via the lead authority to the consortium, apart from those elements that are delegated directly to schools. Centrally retained elements of the major grants issued on a regional basis will be passported in full and retained by the consortium.

All funding intended to be delegated to schools must be delegated to schools. Where schools require additional guidance and support in spending the funding efficiently, consortia will provide that guidance and support.

3. Funding generated by consortia as a result of charging for some of the programmes and interventions that they commission – i.e. some services may be traded and charged to schools. There should be clarity about traded services and a forecast over three years of how this will be developed as more schools manage their own budgets.

The consortia will identify the full financial quantum to be utilized in the delivery of their services. The total funding, apart from those elements which are delegated to schools, will be made available to consortia. The consortia will be expected to demonstrate openness and clarity in the use of all elements of funding, using the business plans as a vehicle for agreeing the full budget breakdown and the

⁶ This commitment refers to the national agreement reached between the WLGA, the 22 leaders of local authorities and the Minister for Education and Skills.

Managing Director's annual report to clearly and transparently report on how funding was spent⁷.

Timescales

The aim in order to begin to deliver improved outcomes is to transition through the next few months to the Consortia arrangements set out in this report by 1st April 2014.

However we recognise that some of the school improvement services contained in this model will not be able to be delivered by 1 April 2014 due to timing and/or legal constraints. Therefore, as part of the business plan and to provide an element of flexibility, consortia will need to clearly show what will be delivered by April 2014 and what by April 2015, along with a clear rationale as to why.

⁷ Consortia will be expected to provide a full breakdown of funding as part of the business plan and updates for scrutiny by the Executive Board, the Joint Committee and in the six-monthly meetings with the Minister for Education and Skills.