

SCRUTINY: December 2016

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Phased Inquiry – The effectiveness of school governing bodies in improving the educational attainment of their pupils

REPORT OF Director of Education & LLL

PORTFOLIO: Education and Lifelong Learning

1. Reason for this report

- 1.1 To provide a progress report to The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the phased inquiry into the effectiveness of school governing bodies in improving the educational attainment of their pupils.

2. Background and context

- 2.1 The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a phased inquiry into Local Authority School Governors in November 2014. The second meeting of the Task Group, held on 18 June 2015, investigated the support and training of school governors to help improve the effectiveness of the Governing Bodies to improve the educational attainment of their pupils.
- 2.2 This report will focus on the current situation and progress made in the last 12 months against each of the recommendations.
- 2.3 A copy of the outcome of the inquiry and the Cabinet Member's response is contained in Appendix 1.

3. Progress since June 2015

Recommendation 1

That the Cabinet and Central South Consortium (CSC) work together to develop, and implement a process, whereby the effectiveness of Governing Bodies are reviewed at least annually. Members suggested that the Challenge Advisers would be best placed to undertake this task.

- 3.1 During the course of the annual cycle of school visits, Challenge Advisers make judgements about the quality of school leadership, including the effectiveness of governing bodies. The annual Challenge Adviser's School Improvement report includes

a statement about governance. Feedback arising from these judgements is shared with officers and disseminated through formal meeting mechanisms in the Local Authority.

- 3.2 Governance is also a feature of the Control Risk Self-Assessment (CRSA) provided by the Local Authority's Audit Team. The CRSA is a self-assessment tool which schools and governing bodies use to identify strengths in financial administration and areas where improvements are needed. It covers four key areas and includes governors' responsibilities. The areas covered are similar to those tested during a routine audit. A summary of the findings are reported regularly to the School Budget Forum.

4. **Recommendation 2**

That the Cabinet ensures that all school governing bodies are encouraged to undertake a skills audit of their members and a self-evaluation exercise on the effectiveness of the body. Members suggested that the National Governors Association's skills audit and Merseyside and Cheshire Area Partnership's Self Evaluation Tool for school governing Bodies could be used.

- 4.1 The new Local Authority Governor appointment process has been successful in matching applicants with schools where their skills and experience are needed. The Chair of Governors and Headteacher are consulted on the skills that they require when matching applicants to vacancies in governing bodies. This approach aligns with the recently announced Welsh Government's proposals to revise the legislative framework for school governance and to place a stronger focus on skilled governing bodies.
- 4.2 Since implementing this process, Local Authority governor vacancies have decreased from 7.95% to 6.91% in the last 12 months. The quality of applications has been consistently high.
- 4.3 The Governors' Wales skills matrix is recommended to governing bodies when they carry out skills audits.
- 4.4 The Governors Wales Bronze Award Quality Mark came to an end on 31st December 2015, with 11 schools successfully completing it. The schools that began working towards the Bronze Award are able to use this material towards the national self-evaluation template produced by Governors Wales. This was launched in the summer term 2016.
- 4.5 The national self-evaluation template is designed to both support and challenge governing bodies across Wales and
- Improve governing body effectiveness;
 - Implement, assess and review approaches to achieve this improvement; and

- Show how effective school governance leads to improving standards in education and wellbeing.

Within the template, there is also a 'quick' evaluation process and governors may wish to complete this as a precursor to the more detailed version.

5. **Recommendation 3**

That the Cabinet ensures that communication across all stakeholders is reviewed to ensure that the roles and responsibilities, advice and support provided by each stakeholder is clearly documented and understood by all school Governing Bodies.

- 5.1 Further revisions to the Local Authority's Service Level Agreement will be explored for the next academic year to support governors and clerks in their role.
- 5.2 Regular communication takes place with Headteachers, Chairs and Clerks in key areas such as governor appointments and mandatory training and detailed advice is provided on a wide range of issues. This work is being further developed with colleagues across the Local Authority and good practice guides are being developed in a number of areas.

6. **Recommendation 4**

That the Cabinet explores whether there would be benefits from the Governor Support Services being transferred fully to the Central South Consortium (CSC).

- 6.1 The Governor Support Officer attends regular meetings with CSC officers to develop training and support for governing bodies. In the spring term 2016, plans were agreed for the delivery of mandatory training across the region. Cardiff's current governor training programme was reviewed and gaps in provision highlighted.
- 6.3 During the summer term 2016, a programme of training to be delivered by CSC was agreed. Following this, two Governing Body Development Officers were appointed to CSC to administer and deliver the mandatory training programme for all governors across the region. This is providing a more consistent approach to mandatory training. CSC is also providing additional training in areas such as school improvement/support and challenge/being Estyn-ready to complement Cardiff's current training programme.
- 6.4 The new programme has been publicised to governors and support provided with new booking arrangements. Governor Support is working with CSC to monitor uptake of courses and the quality of provision.

7. **Recommendation 5**
That the Cabinet undertakes a review of the capacity, support and advice provided to Governing Bodies, by the Authority and Central South Consortium, to ensure that it meets the needs of Governing Bodies to undertake their responsibilities.
- 7.1 Further changes will be explored to the Service Level Agreement to maximise the support provided to Governing Bodies.
- 7.2 Capacity within Governor Support Services has increased in the last 12 months through further recruitment to the Business Support Team. A review of roles and responsibilities is underway to create additional capacity for developmental work.
- 7.3 The Local Authority will continue to work with CSC to ensure that Governing Bodies are supported. Consultant governors have been appointed by CSC and are deployed where the need is identified, either by the Challenge Adviser or Governor Support Services.
8. **Recommendation 6**
That the Cabinet ensures that the Authority and Central South Consortium makes school Governing Bodies fully aware of the development and implementation of school improvement strategies and school improvement groups.
- 8.1 The Director and Senior Officers from the Education Directorate hold a termly briefing meeting for Chairs of Governing Bodies. The format of the meetings has been revised to ensure that they are interactive and enable governors to discuss and share issues and good practice.
- 8.2 CSC continues to run termly briefing sessions on a range of topical issues. These are interactive sessions that allow governor discussion and provide opportunities to network. A governor conference is also planned next year.
- 8.3 The governors' newsletter is being re-launched to ensure regular communication with all governors. Governors are also able to sign up for regular newsletters provided by CSC.
- 8.4 Chairs of governors are communicated with regularly and guidance is sent through to Chairs, Headteachers and Clerks on a range of issues.
- 8.5 Plans are being developed by CSC to put in place governor improvement groups across the region. These will mirror school improvement groups.
- 8.6 Robert Hill delivered a governor briefing session on the Self Improving School system. Feedback on this session was positive and further training opportunities are being provided by CSC on the Self Improving School System to governing bodies across the region.

9. **Recommendation 7**
Members considered the minimum standards guide developed for Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School, could be a useful model to be used for Cardiff schools needing improvement. Best practice like this should be more effectively shared.
- 9.1 The Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School model was shared with Chairs of Governors at a briefing session in June and the presentation was distributed to all Chairs of Governors.
- 9.2 The Chair of Governors of Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School is a consultant governor for CSC and will continue to share this best practice through this role.
- 9.3 Central South Consortium has appointed consultant governors to transfer best practice across schools. Demand for consultant governors across the region has been high and positive feedback received. Governor Support Services are able to submit requests for consultant governor support through the Senior Challenge Adviser. Regular reports are received on deployment.
10. **Recommendation 8**
That the Cabinet ensures that all Governing Bodies undertake the mandatory training and also develop, through a variety of training models, such as cluster training and whole school training, training to help school Governing Bodies to become fully effective.
- 10.1 The training programme for governors was revised this year with a number of new courses being provided to support governors in their role, including: Data Protection, Equalities, Minority Ethnic Pupils and Pupils with English as an Additional Language, Governors Role in Support and Challenge and Managing Staff Attendance.
- 10.2 Delivery of mandatory training has been transferred to CSC this year and attendance remains high at each of the courses offered. Governors have been supported with changes in delivery and the new booking system.
- 10.3 The implementation of on-line training has been successful with 795 governors registering for this service since it was launched in September 2015. As at October 2016, 150 governors have completed mandatory training in this way. Each training module is available bi-lingually.
- 10.4 Attendance at mandatory training is monitored and supportive action continues to be taken to ensure that governors are compliant with the regulations.
- 10.5 Different models of training are available and bespoke training is provided to those schools where governance is identified as a priority in red and amber schools. Cluster training is also available to Governing Bodies.

11. **Recommendation 9**

All school governor training and clerking training should be professionally quality assured and fit for purpose.

- 11.1 Provision of mandatory training has been transferred to CSC this year. The training will continue to meet the requirements of the training programmes commissioned by the Welsh Government.
- 11.2 An evaluation form is completed following each training session and the contents of this are shared with trainers. Dip sampling to quality assure training will take place and an evaluation report produced termly.
- 11.3 Take-up of training decreased slightly from 30% (2014-2015) to 27% (2015-2016). However, evaluation of training remains positive with 97% of governors in 2015-16 judging the courses as being good or better and 65.5% of governors judging the courses as being very good. 2.5% of training was judged as being adequate and the feedback in these evaluations have been followed up on. No training was judged as being poor.

12. **Recommendation 10**

That the Cabinet and Central South Consortium ensures that the clerking of all school Governing Bodies is undertaken at the highest standard supported by effective training.

- 12.1 Mandatory training for clerks has been transferred to CSC this year. The training will continue to meet the requirements of the training programmes commissioned by the Welsh Government.
- 12.2 Support for new clerks is provided through Governor Support Services. New and existing clerks are able to meet with Governor Support Services staff to discuss role. Support with general enquiries is provided through the governor mailbox and detailed advice is provided for more complex queries.

13. **Next Steps**

In order to improve the effectiveness of governing bodies further, the following actions are being taken:

- 13.1 Guidance notes on key issues, highlighted by either the Challenge Advisers or through the findings of the CRSA, are being developed and will be shared with governing bodies. These include areas such as governor attendance, committee structures, membership and terms of reference.

- 13.2 Guidance and support will be provided to governing bodies in preparing for the implementation of the new legislation, arising from Welsh Government's proposals to revise the legislative framework for school governance. This will include the issuing of clear guidance on the use of skills audits and support in drafting new Instruments of Government.
- 13.3 Further revisions to the Local Authority's service level agreement with governing bodies will be explored to support governors and clerks in their role. Developments being considered include: an electronic package for clerks to store and update their governing body's details, key documents and meeting management, an on-line booking system for governor training and further development of on-line training provision.
- 13.4 A good practice guide on appointing a Governing Body Clerk is being developed and will be commended to Governing Bodies. This will include the self-evaluation tool for clerks.
- 13.5 Guidance notes are being developed for clerks and chairs on key areas of the role. The first of these was sent to Clerks, Chairs and Headteachers at the start of the autumn term. Further documents will be developed for the spring and summer terms.
- 13.6 The establishment of a clerk's network/steering group will be explored to enable clerks to meet to discuss and share issues and good practice.