

Owen Evans

Dirprwy Ysgrifennydd Parhaol / Deputy Permanent Secretary

Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Education and Public Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay AM
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

15 June 2017

Dear Nick

Further to my attendance at the Public Accounts Committee on the 15 May and in response to your letter dated the 22 May please find attached information from the regional education consortia which indicates the extent to which school to school working is taking place across the regions. Each region has provided a high level overview of their school to school working and I attach these at (Doc 1).

I also agreed to share with you the percentage improvement in the key GCSE subjects for Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) schools compared with non SCC schools. I have attached these at (Doc 2).

The Committee also requested further information on the use of Moodle. Moodle is a private sector initiative and therefore the Welsh Government does not prescribe which services schools should procure and therefore we do not collate any information on usage or sign-up. Through the Learning in Digital Wales programme, Welsh Government provides a range of centrally funded digital technologies for all maintained schools across Wales. Through the wide range of digital resources and tools available via the Hwb platform, teachers are able to embed the appropriate use of technology to support the transformation of their classroom practices. The tools available are able to offer schools similar functionality to Moodle. Use of the Hwb platform has steadily increased since its launch in August 2014, and the site is now experiencing in the region of 28,000 logins per day and over 3.2m page views monthly. Over 84% of schools across Wales are registering 10 or more logins per month.



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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Committee were also keen to hear more about our recent visit to Finland. I have attached the key headlines from our visit at (Doc 3).

In your letter of the 22nd May you requested further clarification on the role of the regional education consortia in the leadership academy. Currently the consortia are represented on the Shadow Board of the Academy by one of the consortia MDs – Debbie Harteveld of the Education Achievement Service (EAS). We are at an early stage in the development of the Academy as announced by the Cabinet Secretary on the 16th May. As outlined, a vision for the Academy has been developed by the Shadow Board and they have made a recommendation to the Cabinet Secretary that the Academy should be established as a company limited by guarantee.

This will enable a flexible governance structure which can better accommodate sector representation, have a legal form favoured by the Charity Commission, and employ staff in its own right. The Cabinet Secretary has agreed this recommendation and has asked officials to start scoping the timescale and resources needed to establish the Academy, in spring 2018, as a company limited by guarantee. The expectation is that the Academy will be a small and agile organisation with a small strategic board, led by a chief executive. Our aim is to continue to consult on the full role and remit of the Academy and test the timescales for the next steps. There will therefore be a series of regional roadshows during the week commencing 12th June. It continues to be our intention, based on the advice of the Shadow Board that the Academy will: broker and quality assure a range of programmes; have a role in ensuring provision across regions; support leadership at all levels; and work with others to identify and support current and future leaders. It is too early in the scoping of the Academy to fully describe the future role that Consortia may play within the organisation.

As the work progresses and the full range of functions for the Academy are determined we will be in a better position to describe how the Academy and key stakeholders such as consortia may interrelate. However, we and the Shadow Board are committed to the Academy working closely with stakeholders to ensure that it plays its role in ensuring coherence within the system. As we move forward and the Academy proper is formed, with the appointment of its formal company board and CEO, it will be for them as an independent organisation to determine many of these matters. The Cabinet Secretary has committed to keep Assembly Members updated.

I note your concerns about a perceived limited cohort of qualified and experienced challenge advisers. Whilst there is further work to do, I believe all four regions continue to make progress here and have strengthened their proposals. These proposals have been developed in view of our aim for a self-improving education system which requires a shift from dependence on central support for improvement towards a by-schools-for-schools model which builds capacity for collective improvement.

In this context, for example:

- Central South Joint Education Service (CSC) are reviewing their challenge adviser deployment and giving consideration to including more secondments from headteachers and deputies of effective schools. They are actively recruiting to their workforce and strengthening challenge adviser training going forward
- The Education Achievement Service (EAS) are continuing to build capacity to provide support and challenge, ensuring stability in deployment of challenge advisers to schools and embedding training and development to focus on key skills required of the role. Independent schools' surveys within the region show real improvements in

the work of challenge advisers and the support given to schools to help them improve.

- The Education through Regional Working (ERW) consortium has secured commitment across their local authorities to ensuring a full complement of Challenge Advisers who meet the required National Standards and adhere to ERW's Code of Conduct. In addition they are strengthening approaches to reduce variability in the work of individual challenge advisers, providing focused training, rolling out challenge adviser self-evaluation and reviewing their challenge adviser handbook and guidance to ensure a focus on the core competencies required of the role.
- The Gwasanaeth Effeithiolrwydd (GwE) consortium are similarly strengthening approaches to securing the capacity and quality of their challenge advisers, with a robust evaluation plan in place to assess the impact of their challenge and support programme, informing their approach going forward.

Consortia are working collaboratively and planning in partnership to learn from one another, sharing expertise and resource where appropriate. Their collective progress towards ensuring the quality and quantity of challenge advisers will remain a focus for review by Welsh Government, through the delivery of their business plans and during Challenge and Review meetings.

I am confident that consortia have the capacity and capability to deliver at a strategic level and we will continue to support their challenge advisers through a range of national training support.

With regards to your point about attributing outcomes to consortia, it is first important to recognise that improved outcomes are usually the collective result of all partners in the system. Furthermore, defining attribution to a single institution, in any evaluative model, is rarely achievable. Nevertheless, the role of consortia in supporting schools to improve, I feel, can not be understated or ignored. You heard that consortia are all strengthening their approaches to evaluating the impact of their work and I would argue that sufficient space and time is needed for these efforts to bear fruit. We will be monitoring their progress.

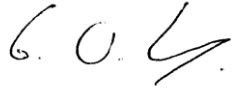
Regarding a perceived lack of clarity over the role of consortia, more must be done but this is an improving picture across Wales. The consortia need to keep doing more of what they are doing – increase their engagement with the sector. We know that they are doing this through a number of ways, including surveys, face to face discussions, events, newsletters, and social media. Each of them also have well-established Head teacher groups and school improvement networks that can be built on and extended to other parts of the profession. These steps will help improve branding and awareness of the work of the consortia within each region.

On the part of Welsh Government, and where there is remaining confusion over roles, responsibilities, and accountability, then the rewrite of the National Model and the fundamental review of our accountability systems present an opportunity to provide greater clarity. This will be done in collaboration with stakeholders at all tiers of the system.

In the meantime though, there are several mechanisms through which the public can access data sets in relation to the performance of schools within each region. These include Welsh Government sources such as MyLocalSchool, StatsWales, Statistical Releases, and bespoke data requests and through individual consortium websites.

May I thank you again for the Committee's interest and hope this provides the information requested.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "O. Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Owen Evans

High level overview of school to school working

Region: GwE

ASPECT	EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL TO SCHOOL MODELS EMPLOYED
<p>School Improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Evaluation Report and School Development Plan (SDP) workshops linked to new ESTYN framework and National / regional / Local Authority priorities. Headteacher's and Senior Leadership Teams in good practice sharing session and co-construction of documentation workshops. • Secondary School supporting primary school ESTYN post inspection action plan priorities i.e. Ysgol Bryn Elian with Ysgol Hen Golwyn and Ysgol Swn y Don. • Headteachers seconded / commissioned to work with Headteachers needing support i.e. Ysgol Trefriw Headteacher working a day a week with Ysgol Llanddoged / Ysgol Ysbyty Ifan Headteacher on school improvement issues. • (Group of Yellow Category schools) : Yr Hendre, Y Gelli, Cymerau, Dolbadarn. See Leadership below. This included the use of monitoring reports and strategic planning.
<p>Curriculum Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted sharing of school staff – identified individuals secondments into schools needing support i.e. Ysgol Bodafon deputy seconded into Ysgol Swn y Don to lead on Teaching and Learning / Behaviour. Teacher swap between several strong schools – sharing expertise. • Co-planning of schemes of work and implementation of literacy and numeracy framework i.e. Dyffryn Conwy and cluster schools. • Targeted intervention and support by identified practitioners or middle leaders with schools requiring improvement.
<p>Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HT collaborative partnerships i.e. cross LA coastal alliance for schools looking at coastal town deprivation – linked to Blackpool academy chain. • Cluster collaborative working i.e. Rhyl Learning Community – CA part of group. Action Research based projects. • Collaborative PRU leadership group to look at school development, pedagogy and behaviour

	<p>strategies. Combined action plan to access common support needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross LA Headteacher collaborative groups i.e. PDG tracking and evaluation of interventions – good practice sharing and creation of PDG tracking tool. • Mentoring of new SLT staff by established effective SLT members i.e. Rhyl High / Brynhyfryd • (Group of Yellow Category schools) : Yr Hendre, Y Gelli, Cymerau, Dolbadarn. Facilitated by CAs and based on: general SDP priorities – developing leadership. Meetings and tasks back at the school to improve leadership, monitor quality, reports etc. Governors included. • Various Development Programmes establishes school to school partnerships focusing on peer to peer leadership support networks.
<p>Teaching and Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted assessment and planning groups. Primary schools co-assessing pieces of work to aid standardisation and to co-plan next steps. This taken place in Maths, English and Welsh. • Several action research collaborative groups meeting regularly to discuss interventions i.e Safmeds, headsprout, positive behaviour strategies. • Teaching Assistant collaborative project. OLEVI OTAP programme. TAs reciprocal visits and school based projects and inter-school presentations. • Outstanding Teaching collaborative projects. Reciprocal visits and school based projects and inter-school presentations. • Church School collaborative group looking at co-planning of literacy and numeracy in RE in church aided schools. • (2 schools) : Ysgol yr Hendre, Ysgol y Gelli: CAs facilitating close co-operation on a teaching and learning quality improvement project with specific focus on Assessment for Learning. • (Group of Green - Yellow Category schools) : (Eifion Wyn, Y Traeth, Bro Tryweryn, Talsarnau, Cefn Coch, Maenofferen). Activities, meetings with focus on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (Group of Green - Yellow Category schools) (Bryngwran, Y Ffridd, Goronwy Owen, Ffrwd Win, Parc y Bont) Activities, meetings with focus on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning / provision in the FP. Each school has held open days for visits from other members of the group. Follow on meetings to discuss the visits and to decide on action needed back in the individual schools.• Various Development Programmes establishes school to school partnerships focusing on peer to peer teaching and learning support networks. |
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High level overview of school to school working

Region: ERW

ASPECT	EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL TO SCHOOL MODELS EMPLOYED
<p>School Improvement</p>	<p>Formal Partnerships, pairing schools for critical support. High-level, longer term, formal partnerships focused on driving school improvement involving senior leaders and middle leaders.</p> <p>Lead schools are high performing resilient schools supporting schools causing concern. All secondary schools causing concern engaged. Impact good, on both outcomes and capacity building in school.</p> <p>Formal, medium level collaborative improvement on raising standards led by ERW Professional Learning Schools.</p> <p>Lead Schools have key strengths in identified areas. Schools are funded to provide insets, training days, and support to other schools. Professional Learning Schools (PLS) are identified specifically in areas where ERW has limited capacity and identified need. The impact is mixed, as take up is variable.</p> <p>DOLEN is a knowledge tree style one-stop shop of effective practice and practice worth of sharing with is online for schools to access. It is a directory, which covers curriculum and teaching as well as leadership.</p>
<p>Curriculum Support/ Teaching and learning</p>	<p>Leaders of learning programme use credible current practitioners in schools to provide core subject support for all secondary schools.</p> <p>Same model used for science in Primary.</p> <p>Formal, medium level collaborative improvement on raising standards led by ERW Professional Learning Schools.</p> <p>Lead Schools have key strengths in their identified areas. Schools are funded to provide insets, training days, support to other schools. PLS are identified specifically in areas where ERW has limited capacity and identified need.</p> <p>Networks of support for all core and non-core subjects. All supported by Hwb based joint working areas and resources.</p> <p>DOLEN – see above</p>

	<p>Focused pairing of department and schools for subject level or departmental level collaboration is highly effective. This is especially true for those more isolated schools and teachers.</p>
<p>Leadership</p>	<p>Formal, medium level collaborative improvement led by ERW Professional Learning Schools (This will be a key area for increasing capacity in 2017-2018 in line with ERW Menu of Support.)</p> <p>The whole of the ERW middle and senior leadership training offer is led and facilitated by schools. Current school leaders designed and deliver the whole set of programmes for developing and aspiring groups. Impact is good and the feedback excellent, because of the credibility of effective leaders sharing current practice and real experience</p> <p>The design and delivery of HE modules for school leaders e.g. on Curriculum Design for SF. Similarly, also HR and performance management.</p> <p>ERW HT Board – part of the governance structure of ERW.</p> <p>DOLEN – see above</p> <p>Cross-region collaboration for 3-18 schools facilitates this key growth area. Schools are leading to ensure that all learning is coordinated and facilitated together.</p>

School to School Overview

Central South Wales Challenge	The Central South Wales Challenge is a partnership of over 400 schools that are working together to develop a self-improving system. The Central South Wales school improvement model is based on improvement being driven for schools by schools. In this model, central resources will, increasingly, be concentrated on more vulnerable schools while others will drive their own improvement and will be held to account for the impact of their work.	
School Improvement Groups (SIGs)	All schools are in cross local authority improvement groups. The purpose of SIGs is to work together to identify best practice, develop and share it across all schools in a way that benefits all schools in the SIG. Each SIG is composed of schools from different local authorities, in different places on their learning journey and with different socio-economic intakes.	
Pathfinders	Pathfinder pairs are brokered partnerships between two schools where one school supports another to improve. Improvement impact on both schools is measured. They are more intensive pairings of schools who are developing a specific area.	
Peer Enquiry	A team of three senior school leaders – two headteachers and a senior leader – visit a host school for 2 days, celebrate effective practice and suggest 2 or 3 prioritised lines of enquiry linked to school improvement to help take the school forward. The enquiry is undertaken with a spirit of critical honesty and support.	
Improvement Hubs	Professional Learning Hubs	<p>The role of professional learning hubs is to engage with the milestones of the professional learning continuum regarding learning and teaching and leadership. Areas of focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Teacher Education (ITE) pedagogy programme (delivered in lead schools, badged by higher education institutes (HEI)) • NQT induction programme • Developing/refining practice • Future middle and senior leaders • Headteacher programmes • Core learning and teaching programmes • Core whole school improvement programmes • Strengthening links with Donaldson’s Pioneers
	Curriculum Hubs	<p>To work in partnership to develop and deliver aspects of regional need within a curriculum area. Areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research groups on areas of regional need • Facilitation of leadership groups • Participation in curriculum development groups • Support for departments in red and amber schools • Network meeting hosts • Strengthening links with Donaldson’s Pioneers
	Lead Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead practitioners are non core practitioners that have a proven background in their curriculum area and wish to deliver support to other teachers in the region • Lead practitioners are commissioned by the Consortium’s Strategic Adviser to support other schools in improving their provision, practice and outcomes in the subject • Lead practitioners host network meetings for schools in the region to facilitate networking, subject updates and opportunities to share practice. • Facilitation of enquiry led learning • Supporting leadership development • Participation in/facilitation of curriculum development groups • Support for departments/teachers in red and amber schools • Network meeting hosts/contributors • Exploring links with Donaldson’s Pioneer Schools

High level overview of school to school working

Region: Central South Consortium

ASPECT	EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL TO SCHOOL MODELS EMPLOYED
<p>School Improvement</p>	<p>Pathfinders: 42 schools involved in supporting 46 schools in cohort 4 partnerships focussed on specific areas of development. Cohort 5 is pending</p> <p>Peer Enquiry: 100 schools have had a peer enquiry</p> <p>Hubs: as part of their SLA hubs have provided over 170 days of support to red/amber schools</p>
<p>Curriculum Support</p>	<p>Curriculum Hub: 94 professional development opportunities offered by 43 schools.</p>
<p>Leadership</p>	<p>Leadership programmes offered by CSC ‘hub’ schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Future Middle Leaders (Welsh medium primary) - Leading and Managing Change (early & middle leadership programme, cross phase) - Middle leadership development programme (secondary) - Aspiring Future Middle Leaders (secondary) - Existing middle Leaders (secondary) - Future Senior Leader Programme (secondary) - Getting to Good and on to Excellent - senior and middle leaders. (secondary) - Distributed Leadership – Building Capacity – for HT / SLT. (primary) - Aspiring Headteacher - Future Leaders - Primary - Future Leaders in Special Schools <p>Special/schools & PRUs operate as a single group to identify areas of effective practice in their sector; preparing learning/training programmes to offer to all schools (including mainstream)</p> <p>Gyda’n Gilydd Welsh medium secondary school hub. All region’s WM secondary heads agree sector development needs (based on data and other intelligence); identify and fund school/practitioners with best practice to devise & deliver professional learning programmes which are then offered to all schools.</p> <p>‘Gyda’n Gilydd’ model to be piloted with 11 WM primaries</p>

	<p>in 17/18.</p> <p>CSC Peer Enquiry programme (enquiry process led by headteachers in colleague schools) 24% of CSC schools (100 schools) have hosted a peer enquiry. Follow up by enquiry team of host school one year after original enquiry.</p>
<p>Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Professional Learning Hubs: 13 primary (some are in partnerships), and 12 secondary professional development opportunities have been offered by CSC schools. These support the development of pedagogy as well as the leadership of learning and teaching. The schools facilitate networks within this role.</p> <p>Professional Learning Pioneers: There are 14 primary and 9 secondary. These are piloting elements linked to Successful Futures, most notably the Professional Standards and Schools as a Learning Organisation. They also provide professional learning opportunities through the hub system to develop pedagogy. They facilitate various networks within this role.</p> <p>Lead creative Schools: There are 64 schools participating in the Creative Schools programme; a further 43 have been granted funding for the next academic year. These schools are engaged in exploring the use of creative processes and pedagogy, including engagement with external artistes, to deliver multi-disciplinary themes.</p>

Strategies that address a number of the above aspects:

School Improvement Groups (SIGs): 322 primary schools are involved in 32 SIGs, and 68 secondary schools are involved in 6 SIGs. They are focusing on a range of national and local priorities which include literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, successful futures pedagogy, DCF. These groups are cross LA and include schools from different context. At secondary level, they are also focusing on preparation for the new curriculum and the ensuing qualifications changes.

High level overview of School to School working

Region: Education Achievement Service (EAS) for South East Wales

ASPECT	EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL TO SCHOOL MODELS EMPLOYED
School Improvement	<p>Secondary Headteachers and SLTs all engaged in leadership development networks</p> <p>Primary Leadership Networks and Peer Review activity</p> <p>School Mentor Partnerships linked to specific school need</p> <p>All Clusters (including PRUs and Special Schools) have agreed plans for the development of key strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, delivery of the new curriculum</p> <p>Primary Headteachers fulfilling the role of Challenge Advisers across the region.</p>
Curriculum Support	<p>56 Lead Network schools/practitioner support other schools in the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Literacy (English and Welsh medium), Numeracy, Science, STEM, Wellbeing and Equity, Foundation Phase • Secondary: All core subjects and many non-core subjects, Equity and Wellbeing, Global Futures and STEM • Welsh Baccalaureate support programme delivered by schools • The development of support for new GCSE qualifications <p>Curriculum Pioneer Schools supporting the roll out of the Successful Futures Agenda across the region.</p>
Leadership	<p>Bespoke mentoring and coaching provided by leaders for leaders (including Chairs of Governors)</p> <p>Professional Learning schools facilitate, design and deliver almost all leadership programmes for the region</p> <p>Peer support programmes as required</p>
Teaching and Learning	<p>Bespoke mentoring and coaching provided by teachers for teachers</p> <p>Professional Learning schools facilitate, design and deliver all teaching programmes</p> <p>Professional Learning schools facilitate, design and deliver programmes for teaching assistants (newly introduced)</p> <p>Collaborative best practice sharing events</p>

- Over 70% of the Professional Learning Offer for the region is delivered by schools for schools
- The above are examples of school to school activity. During 2016/2017 over 1500 activity strands took place between schools.

Percentage achievement of Mainstream secondary schools for key subjects, by

Based on pupils in year 11 for 2015/16, previous years are based on those aged 15 at the start of the academic year
Core Subject Indicator: A* to C in English or Welsh first language, Mathematics and Science

Year	Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in English		Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in Welsh		Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in Maths		Percentage achieving an A* to C in Science
	SCC schools	Non SCC schools	SCC schools	Non SCC schools	SCC schools	Non SCC schools	SCC schools
2014	56.1	70.7	56.3	74.2	51.3	66.0	79.8
2015	59.2	73.3	55.0	75.6	54.0	68.7	81.4
2016	61.5	74.2	68.2	75.7	59.2	71.6	78.1
Percentage point improvement between 2014 and 2016	5.5	3.5	11.9	1.5	7.9	5.6	-1.7

Percentage achievement of FSM pupils in Mainstream secondary schools for key

Year	Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in English		Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in Welsh		Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in Maths		Percentage achieving an A* to C in Science
	SCC schools	Non SCC schools	SCC schools (a)	Non SCC schools	SCC schools	Non SCC schools	SCC schools
2014	34.5	43.7	40.0	48.8	28.9	38.5	67.0
2015	38.2	50.0	40.0	51.8	32.9	43.6	70.1
2016	41.2	51.3	40.0	51.0	40.1	46.7	68.1
Percentage point improvement between 2014 and 2016	6.7	7.6	0.0	2.2	11.2	8.2	1.1

(a) Take care when interpreting these figures as they are based on small cohorts (between 5 and 10 schools)

School Challenge Cymru (SCC) status.

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Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in the Subject Indicator	Percentage of pupils achieving the Core Subject Indicator	
	Non SCC schools	Non SCC schools
86.3	41.7	57.6
88.3	43.4	60.0
87.0	46.9	62.8
0.7	5.2	5.2

Source: Welsh examination database

by subjects, by School Challenge Cymru (SCC) status

Percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C in the Subject Indicator	Percentage of pupils achieving the Core Subject Indicator	
	Non SCC schools	Non SCC schools
76.1	21.2	30.1
79.7	23.3	33.2
76.0	26.8	36.5
-0.1	5.7	6.4

Source: Welsh examination database

students)

Headlines of Study Visit by Welsh Government officials to Finland 18-20 January 2017

The education system was planned as follows:

0-5 Early Childhood Education and Care – provided in a mix of public and private Child care settings with a focus on learning through play. The curriculum is loose but includes developing children so they are ‘ready to learn’. This includes building concentration, team work, resilience, confidence as well as basic numbers, letters etc.

6 Pre-primary education – more intense preparing to learn but still with no formal reading/writing and maths. It is widely understood, however, but both parents and schools that children are generally expected to be able to read, write and count to some degree before they start basic education.

7-16 Basic Education – delivered through primary and lower secondary settings. Formal education begins at 7 years old. Differentiated learning is strong and there is a real emphasis on not letting any children fall behind. Social services, Health and the schools work closely at a school level and involve parents significantly where a child is at risk. Use is also made of the local Universities, who provide basic courses in certain subjects for parents of under performing children to be able to master the topics so that they might assist their children. No official testing occurs until children are 15, at which point they sit a matriculation exam to decide what form of upper secondary education to pursue. The vast majority of children enter the upper second level (post 16). At sixteen, children, depending on their academic performance or abilities, have the option to take an additional year of basic education. Again, people do not leave school without the ability levels required.

Post 16+ After the matriculation examinations, children move on to upper secondary schools (academic) or to the equivalent of further education colleges. At these technical colleges they will study vocational qualifications and gain work experience (similar to our apprenticeship approach). Children from both sides of the educational split then have the option to continue to University (all free) either to study at academic or Universities of Applied Sciences. Both types of university have degree awarding powers but only the academic universities have the ability to undertake doctoral training.

Key aspects of the Finnish Education System

The performance of Finnish students in the international PISA assessments has been high in comparisons with other countries for the last 3 cycles. As a result the country has attracted considerable interest. The key features the Finnish National Agency for Education set out as contributing to these successes are:

- A very strong focus on equity - in relation to both access and quality
- A strong early years programme – Kindergarden

- Teaching is seen as a very attractive profession (only 10% of applicants are accepted)
- Teachers are all highly trained (Masters level and commitment to ongoing research with HE), which allows for decreased accountability.
- Focus on learning rather than testing – no school rankings sampling of achievements at national level.
- Instruction time is low compared to other countries – space for teachers' preparation and planning
- Curriculum Framework with little prescription and local flexibility
- Flexible groupings with very low levels of setting by ability
- A very flat management structure with few middle leader roles in schools
- Relatively very low levels of teaching assistants
- Every child has a school lunch
- Class sizes ranging from 20 to 24 in both primary and secondary.
- Annual expenditure per student is below the UK in all phases
- Well-being is emphasised through support programmes in all phases

Finnish teachers have a strong commitment to equity and encouragement, individual student support, strengthening pupils' thinking skills, and developing pupils' self-confidence, tolerance and resilience. In the OECD international survey of teachers (TALIS 2013) 90% are satisfied in their job and 70% would choose teaching again. Whilst pre primary teachers have lower salaries than the UK in Primary and secondary schools salaries are higher in Finland.

Particular application of findings to our Welsh education reform journey

- The level of flexibility that needs to be maintained in our new curriculum.
- The importance of innovation/research and collaboration and the critical role of higher education.
- The impact that the absence of assessment for accountability at school and teacher level has a marked impact on teachers' attitudes and well being but is based on stronger academic requirements.
- The strength of our Foundation Phase matches the Kindergarden experience.
- We need to review the practice of teaching assistants.
- We need to continue to strengthen our focus on pupils' well being.