



North Wales Governors Conference Report Thursday 5th November 2009 Venue Cymru, Llandudno

Theme: *The Effective Governing Body*

The theme for the conference was agreed with the North and Mid Wales LEA Governor Support Officers at the Regional GSO meeting in March 2009, following the success of The Effective Governing Body three-part guide issued early in the year.

120 people from across North Wales and Powys attended the event.

Mrs Carol Sayce, Chair, Governors Wales, chaired the conference and introduced the keynote speakers: Dr. Bill Maxwell and Mr. Richard Parry Jones.

Dr. Maxwell spoke of the importance of governors and leadership teams recognising what the school does well and what needs to be improved. He said that provided self-evaluation was robust and an honest reflection of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, then all that was required was a 'light touch' from external inspection. However, where there was a discrepancy between self-evaluation and inspector observation, it would require more detailed investigation and follow-up activity.

He gave 4 key ingredients of an effective national quality improvement system:

- **high quality performance data** - national benchmarking data on key inputs & outcomes
- broader framework of **national quality indicators** - with support for use in self-evaluation
- a professional workforce of **reflective practitioners**
- robust **external evaluation and review**

Three Key Questions to be asked during self-evaluation and inspection:

How good are leadership and management?

- Leadership • Partnership working • Quality Improvement • Resource management

How good is provision?

- Learning experiences • Teaching • Care, support and guidance • Learning environment (physical and social)

Leading to:

How good are learner outcomes?

- Standards • Well-being

He stressed the importance of the new Inspection framework and the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) being seen as inter-dependent and not 'stand-alone'.

He concluded by outlining the next steps, leading to implementation of the new framework in September 2010:

- Piloting of new inspections from this Autumn
- Finalisation of models in early 2010
- Training in Summer term 2010
- Publication of guidance for schools on new inspections and how to self-evaluate using the new Common Inspection Framework
- Work with the SEF team to provide an in-depth 'toolkit' building up a set of jointly-badged developmental audit tools on key aspects of leadership and management.
- First new inspections start September 2010

Mr. Richard Parry Jones spoke of the LEA role in working with governors and other partners in developing school effectiveness. A brief summary is provided below:

Mr Parry Jones outlined the general principles as:

1. Aspiring to create a first class education system for Wales
2. Putting the learner at the centre with entitlement to equality of opportunity, attainment and well-being as the main aim
3. Needing to recognise, develop and disseminate good practice through effective partnerships
4. Supporting school-based staff to develop effective pedagogy should become prime objective
5. Developing effective champions and advocates for the most vulnerable learners should be central to partnerships

He outlined five key objectives to be achieved:

1. Create a consensus regarding policy direction and the strategy for its delivery
2. Set consistent and common expectations based on the use of core data sets and national and local PI's
3. Accept and implement appropriate competences for leadership, support and monitoring performance at all levels
4. Develop a common framework for quality assurance which delivers accountability for learner attainment and well-being
5. Create a system to sustain and support classroom practitioners through continuous professional development and strategies for dissemination of good practice

Mr Parry Jones said that there was currently a wide variance in performance between educational establishments operating in similar socio-economic context He

also suggested that a wide variation in external support available to schools, as well as national and local variations in funding.

There is also inconsistency in interpretation of roles, responsibilities and accountability.

The School Effectiveness Framework presents an opportunity for WAG, the LEA, Headteachers, Teachers, Governors and others to form partnerships that will shape and develop agreed education policy and strategies to deliver the five objectives above.

The LEA contribution to promoting and sustaining the local partnership is achieved through:

- developing and strengthening the quality assurance support and challenge teams through collaboration within regional consortia to increase capacity, strengthen specialisms, and creating cost-efficiency in delivery
- Ensuring collaboration and buy-in of all local partners who have a role and influence in the attainment and well-being of learners within the context of the CYPP;
- Developing and promoting opportunities for establishments to support each other through the period of transformation;
- Acting as champions for the rights of the most vulnerable learners;
- Protecting and securing resources for front-line services to enable classroom practitioners to function effectively
- Contributing to the drive for consistency in terms of practice and performance through effective system leadership

Governors chose two workshops to attend from the following four:

Child Protection (facilitated by Orina Pritchard and team from Gwynedd)

Complaints management (Steve Gullick, All Wales Centre, Swansea MU)

School Effectiveness Framework update (Richard Matthews, DCELLS)

Estyn Inspection (Jeff Jones, Estyn)

All workshops attracted good attendance and discussion as well as excellent feedback.

The conference concluded in a plenary session with a panel of workshop facilitators, answering questions put forward by governors.

Copies of slides are available on: www.governorswales.org.uk