Transforming schools: a discussion paper

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Estyn

Rhagoriaeth i bawb ~ Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

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- secondary schools;

- special schools;

- pupil referral units;

- independent schools;

- further education;

- adult community-based learning;

- youth support services;

- LEAs;

- teacher education and training;

- work-based learning;

- careers companies; and

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Introduction

1   This discussion paper aims to engage all those who have a stake in improving education in Wales. It sets out the current situation, why we need to change and many of the main challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. It builds on ideas about transforming schools set out in Estyn publications over recent years, particularly in 'Excellent Schools: A vision for schools in Wales in the 21st century'.

The standards achieved by learners

2   Schools in Wales have achieved a great deal over the last two decades. During this time, the quality of education they provide has improved and standards have risen. We have seen the introduction of the National Curriculum, the development of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the growth in Welsh-medium education and a greater range of youth support services[1]. Because of these and other factors, many more learners benefit now from an education that leads to recognised qualifications and have better prospects as a result. Learners have gained a wider range of skills and increasing proportions have achieved good standards in public examinations. Over this time, fewer and fewer pupils have left school with no qualifications.

3   Despite these improvements, there are many challenges facing our schools. At a time when there are very limited job opportunities for unskilled workers, about 3% of young people in Wales still have no recognised qualification when they leave full-time education and this proportion increases to about 5% in some local authorities. Over almost a decade, the number of pupils achieving five A* - G grades at GCSE has increased by only around four percentage points from 82% to 86% in 2006. The options for young people with few or no qualifications are severely restricted once they leave school.

4   Girls do much better than boys at all stages of their education. In Wales, boys gain fewer GCSEs or their equivalent than elsewhere in the United Kingdom (UK)[2]. Overall, in recent years, in Wales (and England), the gap between what girls and boys are attaining is widening. By the age of 14 a very significant minority of boys do not keep pace with much of the work at school and experience an increasing sense of frustration and failure.

5   There are also still considerable inequalities in achievement and attainment between advantaged and disadvantaged areas. Not all groups of pupils have the same chances to learn and do as well in their education as others. The link between low

[1] Extending entitlement: Support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales Direction and Guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002)

[2] The Well-being of Children in Wales (University of York for Save the Children, 2005)

attainment and economic and social disadvantage, especially for older pupils, is well established.

6 Lifestyle indicators for children in Wales rank low in comparison with other countries.[3] It is acknowledged that the achievement gaps by socio-economic group, economic region and ethnicity are worrying. The lowest achievers need to achieve much more than they do at present. The Narrowing the Gap task group found that[4]:

"…low educational attainment, poor basic skills and limited opportunities for employment had often combined to create a spiral of failure and low self-esteem for families and communities over several generations…"

7 At present, too many young children are unprepared for the start of their school life. By the time children are three years of age, there can already be great differences in their learning and development. Indeed it may take the whole of childhood and adolescence to even out these differences in which social and communication skills play a major role.

8 The impact of these inequalities is that there is a higher proportion of adults with a relatively low knowledge and skills-base in Wales, compared with many of our European neighbours. There is evidence that around half a million adults in Wales have very real difficulties with reading, writing and with basic mathematics. Research over the past twenty years, has shown that poor basic skills and low educational achievement can make it difficult for individuals to find a job, play a full and active part in society and avoid crime[5].

The social and economic context

9 The challenge that Wales faces is to equip all children, young people and adults with the skills needed in a rapidly changing and competitive world. Society in the 21st century is set in a fast-moving and complex technological and social landscape. Access to the internet, together with better telecommunication systems and affordable travel are continuously widening our views of the world. As a nation, Wales, like the rest of the UK, faces competitive, economic pressures from Europe and from growing

[3] The Well-being of Children in Wales (University of York for Save the Children, 2005)

[4] Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools (DfTE Information Document No: 029-02 National Assembly for Wales, 2002)

[5] Basic Skills and Political and Community Participation (The Basic Skills Agency, 2002)

economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China.

10 In almost all areas of work and leisure, there have been significant changes to traditional practices. There are now far more flexible lifestyles and different working practices than even 10 years ago. People expect services and information that are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Recent research into employment patterns suggests that, by the time our primary-school-aged children finish school, around a half of them will be employed in jobs that have not yet been created. It will not be uncommon for children currently at school to experience an average of around 19 changes in employment during their adult working lives.

11 There is an increasing demand for skilled, adaptable workers who have the ability and aptitude to train and re-train in response to changing economic demand. Across Wales, up to one in five employers are currently experiencing skill shortages[6]. Given the projected reduction in the proportion of the population that is of working age, this shortage is set to worsen. In order to compete in the global economy of the future, our education and training system has to perform well against international comparators. To achieve economic benefits, more of the young and adult population need to develop economically valuable skills at higher

levels than are currently achieved. This means attaining competency or expertise in generic, transferable skills in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communications technology as well as achieving specific, technical occupational skills in growth areas of the economy.

12 However, although more young people have achieved accredited competence at a level that was formerly only achieved by a minority of pupils, many young people still drop out of education or training. Around one in five of 19 to 24 year-olds and about one in eight of 16 to18 year-olds are not in education, or training, or in a job.

Transforming schools

13 In all public services, there is now an even stronger emphasis than in the past on meeting individual needs and improving the quality of the services provided to the citizen. The broad issues that arise from multi-agency working, shared service delivery and information standards in the wider public service also apply to schools. If the learning needs of pupils are to be met, then changes must be based on ideas of what schools should be like at best. Consulting more with pupils about their needs, and enabling pupils to participate more in decision-making, are vital aspects of this increasing customer focus.

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[6] Future Skills Wales Sector Skills Survey (2006)

14 Although standards have risen over the years, simply being better than we were before will not be enough to help all young people to become effective in an increasingly open Europe and wider world. We will need to keep pace with the best world wide. There are major challenges in making schools fit for purpose in every sense. Tinkering with an educational model that is a product of the 19th century will not be enough to meet these challenges. Schools have to be transformed, so that they can be more innovative and better able to respond to the demands of the 21st century.

15 In 'Excellent Schools: A vision for schools in the 21st century', Estyn argued that we need to 'break the mould' in order to take schools forward.[7] There has been acknowledgement from schools, LEAs and policy makers of the need for change, as well as some amendments in the use of schools. However, there has been little change to features that emerged many years ago for reasons that are no longer relevant. Features that need to be reviewed more widely include:

■ school opening hours for limited parts of the day and year;

■ the rigid subject-focused basis of curriculum structure and organisation;

■ the time structuring of lessons;

■ the secondary school timetable, with its frequent changes of subject and classroom;

■ a disruptive transition from primary to secondary school, which is related to age rather than stage of learning;

■ the three-term pattern, starting in the autumn, that does not match either the calendar or the financial year; and

■ the long holiday period in the summer, which can affect the momentum in pupils' learning and is often problematic for parents working in a very different environment from the agrarian calendar on which the current organisation of the school year is based.

16 Education and training providers will need to question the traditional concept of the 'school'. For example, we see more and more providers of early years education acting as host to a wide range of agencies on one site. Schools providing for the 14-19 age range also will need to cooperate increasingly with other schools, colleges, training organisations and work settings in the same locality to ensure that wider option choices are available to young people.

17 The narrow institutional interests of all concerned will have to be set aside if a genuinely collaborative and strategic approach to flexible learning pathways is to be built and thrive. Leaders and managers will need to have the vision, energy, skills and capacity to anticipate and respond to rapidly changing needs and be less protective of their current roles and status.

[7] Excellent Schools: A vision for schools in the 21st century (Estyn, 2002)

Ways forward

18 High quality delivery of education has the capacity to transform Wales and its future prosperity. There are of course major challenges in transforming schools so that they deliver the best for young people. In this section of the discussion paper we set out some of these key challenges and identify good practices that offer ways forward.

Learning and teaching

19 One of the most difficult challenges schools in Wales face is making sure that all learners engage in the learning process. To improve standards reached by all learners, schools need to transform the way they work so that learning is better tailored to each individual's needs. Improving the ways

in which learning and teaching meet individual needs will help more pupils realise their full potential. Pupils need to develop basic and key skills that will help them develop their self-esteem and achieve as well as they possibly can. Pupils need to learn skills that will enable them to prepare confidently for the future and to contribute to the local and national economy, through employment and entrepreneurship. Pupils also need to develop the wider personal and interpersonal skills that are fundamental to living in and sustaining a more harmonious society.

20 Inspection evidence shows that where teachers set tasks which require pupils to solve problems and to work with others, pupils achieve more and usually understand the work better. In these circumstances, pupils also understand how they need to improve and what they need to learn next. Currently not enough lessons regularly include these features.

21 Young people tell us that they most enjoy learning that is exciting, challenging, risk-taking and creative. However, these approaches to learning are not common enough, either as established practice by all the teachers in individual schools, or across all schools and sectors.

22 Educational research is also giving us more and more insight into the best conditions for learning, which can help improve our schools. There is clear evidence that pupils benefit from programmes that teach them how to think, such as 'Let's Think' and 'Philosophy for Learning'[8].

23 Recent initiatives in some schools have benefited pupils by helping them to learn about the process of learning as well as learning about subject matter. In such schools, there has been a marked improvement in pupils' attitudes to learning, their engagement and motivation. In these schools, teachers have improved their understanding of pupils' learning and are better able to match tasks to meet pupils' individual needs.

Ways forward: Learning and teaching

To improve learning and teaching, the schools of the future will need to build on good practice in:

➜ the way that pupils are challenged to develop their understanding through exciting, creative and practical tasks that allow them to work out things for themselves;

➜ providing learners with opportunities to work together purposefully in teams, inside or outside the classroom and use a wide range of skills;

➜ how teachers explain the learning process to pupils and use assessment processes with a much stronger emphasis on assessment for learning;

➜ the range of teaching methods used that create different opportunities for pupils to understand and use information, including visual materials and ICT; and

➜ the use of the full range of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning and teaching styles.

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[8] Changes in the Teaching and Learning Programme promoted by the Aiming for Excellence Programme (Estyn, 2006)

The skills curriculum

24 The knowledge base within our society is expanding at an unprecedented rate. Even if teaching today were only concerned with transmitting a body of knowledge to learners, it would not be possible to keep up with its rate of expansion. Schools today must enable young people to 'learn how to learn' so that they can take advantage of new knowledge and different ways of learning throughout their lives. In our most effective schools, there is already a focus on developing pupils' learning and thinking skills alongside improving their subject knowledge and understanding.

25 Each child starts school with a unique set of experiences gained at home and in the community. Children entering school do not all begin at a common starting point and may not have the same advantages as others in terms of family and economic support. Early experiences provide the foundation for children's future educational and social development. New approaches to the education of very young children are being introduced in the Foundation Phase for 3-7 year olds. In this phase, the emphasis is on learning through experience of structured activities that focus on the individual pupil and their stage of development. This type of approach offers many advantages but also presents considerable challenges in terms of securing the right accommodation, planning a new curriculum and training appropriate staff to implement the programme. Getting the balance right between adult-directed activities and those chosen by the learner is proving difficult for practitioners, particularly those in the non-maintained sector.

26 Young learners who will have experienced good Foundation Phase education are likely to leave that stage with a different and higher set of aspirations and expectations than they do at present. There is need for a curriculum for 7-14 year olds that will enable pupils to build successfully on their learning during their Foundation Phase.

27 From age 7, the primary curriculum focuses on the development of pupils' skills through the core subjects of Welsh or English, mathematics and science, while a range of other subjects are often taught in an integrated way. This approach focuses particularly on continuity and progression in thinking, communication, number, and information and communication technology for learners and includes study of the content specified in the National Curriculum subject orders. The balance between covering content and acquiring skills is too heavily weighted towards content at present and not enough towards the acquisition of
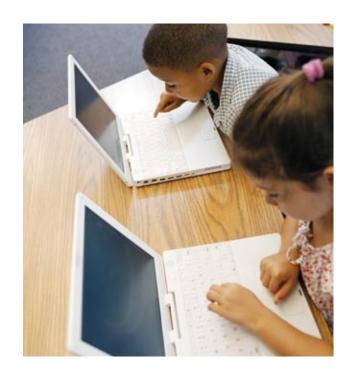
generic skills across the curriculum. Although key skills of literacy and numeracy are firmly embedded into the experience of all learners across most aspects of their learning, generic skills of learning to think and learn, of finding, analysing and synthesising information, working with others and solving problems creatively are not sufficiently in focus in cross-curricular projects.

28 Even so, the primary curriculum succeeds better than the secondary school curriculum in this respect. The main issue in key stage 3 (for 11-14 year olds) is that curriculum delivery is fragmented into segments of discrete subject-based study, all taught by different teachers who have only limited contact time with classes and therefore get to know their pupils and their learning needs far less well.

29 In key stage 3, teachers also do not always pitch work at a level that will help all pupils to access the content of lessons. Literacy levels of a significant minority of pupils on entry to secondary schools make it difficult for them to engage with the language and therefore the content of lessons. This is a particular problem for boys. In addition, many secondary teachers are not sufficiently aware of what pupils do know and can do when they arrive in secondary schools at the start of Year 7 and repeat work pupils have done before or cover work at an inappropriate level. This can lead to boredom.

30 Pupils' continuing success as they transfer from primary to secondary school is dependent on good planning for continuity and progression in their learning between key stages. Failure to enable pupils to make suitable progress on transfer to secondary school can lead to underachievement, misbehaviour and poor attendance. The failure to engage pupils at key stage 3 too often also means that they become seriously disaffected and often only re-engage, if they do so at all, later on in their lives. Whilst rates of participation for learners over the age of 25 are quite healthy, participation rates for 16-19 year olds are too low. We are therefore not doing nearly enough to meet learners' needs as they progress beyond the primary phase in order to retain them throughout their secondary school education and to the age of 19.

31 Where transition arrangements in secondary schools are effective, the teaching and learning builds on good primary schools practice. Teaching in these schools has been reinvigorated by giving attention to how pupils learn. This approach has brought about significant improvements for pupils in key stage 3. Teachers have learnt more about the process of learning and plan more interesting and varied learning activities for pupils. However, these initiatives are not usually part of a consistent whole-school approach. Only a few schools have trained all staff in these methods.

Ways forward: Skills

To improve pupils' skills, the schools of the future will need to:

➜ improve continuity in learning and applying skills as pupils progress between key stages 2 and 3;

➜ introduce a focus on skills as part of a whole-school approach which involves all teachers in joint and holistic planning of the key stage 2 and 3 curricula;

➜ develop pupils' thinking and learning skills and make them central to planning all lessons;

➜ look for ways of strengthening skills of gathering, analysing and synthesising information across the curriculum;

➜ do more to help pupils most at risk of not making progress, particularly boys and those with poor basic skills; and

➜ ensure that pupils continually develop key skills by:
  • tackling weaknesses in pupils' communication, numeracy, and ICT skills;
  • using assessment criteria more effectively in lessons and in oral and written feedback so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve their work; and
  • monitoring pupils' progress in developing their key skills over time.

Collaboration and the needs of the 14-19 age range

32 The introduction of the National Curriculum and of GCSE syllabuses has raised expectations and made the curriculum more consistent and accessible for generations of pupils. Examination results have improved as a result and now over half of learners gain good grades in five or more GCSEs. However, the rate of improvement has slowed over recent years and a significant minority of pupils in the 14-19 age range have not been fully engaged by the mainstream curriculum on offer. Although many schools have introduced alternative arrangements to make pupils' learning more relevant to them, the curriculum has not done enough to motivate and meet the needs of a significant number of learners in the 14-19 age range. In particular, there are groups of pupils of this age that often do not do as well as they should, including many boys, those with additional learning needs, the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and vulnerable groups such as looked-after children.

33 It is also the perception of some young people that their learning is too narrow. They say that they want to develop a wider range of skills and undertake more vocational work and gain skills that they perceive will help them take up employment or apprenticeships. Undoubtedly, for some pupils of this age, school is not enjoyable or seen as relevant to their perceived needs. As a result, they can become disaffected, disruptive or drop out of education.

34 There are artificial barriers that lead to a lack of parity of esteem between the different choices pupils can make at key stage 4 and later. Having a prescribed National Curriculum has reinforced a view already prevalent in society that certain types of learning have more status and value than others. At present, the learning that takes place in a classroom has a higher-status than learning that takes place in a work-based setting. This view restricts opportunities for young people to take more balanced options to gain knowledge, understanding and skills in a wider range of practical contexts, some of which may be outside the classroom. There is considerable evidence that, when offered these kinds of options, many learners, especially boys become more positive about their work.

35 Many schools are beginning to offer more vocational routes for 14-19 learners, either alone or in partnership with others. However, there are not enough vocational qualifications for key stage 4 pupils at foundation and intermediate levels (levels 1 and 2) to cater for the learners who are most at risk of disengagement from education and training. Too many young people currently choose education and training

routes which are not right for them, while others drop out. It is important that there are enough suitable vocational courses leading to qualifications at various levels, so that learners have more appropriate choices.

36 The Welsh Assembly Government initiative, Learning Pathways 14-19, is intended to address these issues and enable pupils to choose more varied routes and combine occupational and general subject study with community and work-focused experience. Greater choice of qualifications and credits should allow young people to negotiate individually the pace and direction of their learning. For some young people, wider choice could mean that learning takes place in one or more of a range of venues, including a school, a further-education college or a training company.

37 The implications of the Learning Pathways 14-19 agenda are far-reaching for schools. Developing option choices and flexible pathways for 14-19 year-olds will mean that many learners will no longer study exclusively at one institution. Instead, learners may study at several schools, colleges and work settings with one institution taking the role of the

'lead learning setting'[9]. This approach should give learners far greater flexibility and choice about what and where they study and could also include the use of information and communication technology for e-learning.

38 Providers will need to share course and assessment information, ensuring they provide a coherent learning experience for those who participate, making certain at all times that the best interests of learners are at the centre of their decision-making. Helping young people gain the most benefit from this choice and opportunity, will require a wider variety of teachers, trainers, learning coaches, mentors and other youth support service staff than at present. Schools will need to work more closely with youth and career services to co-ordinate work for learners.

39 The Learning Pathways 14-19 programme will require fundamental changes and much greater flexibility of schools, colleges, local educational authorities and others. Success will depend largely on the willingness of providers to collaborate more effectively than is currently the case.

[9] Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance II (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006)

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Ways forward: Collaboration

To collaborate effectively, the schools of the future and their major partners will need to:

➜ establish a common vision and direction;

➜ forge an ethos of mutual trust and respect;

➜ build on existing partnerships and respond to local opportunities and needs;

➜ increase the sharing of expertise between providers; and

➜ develop shared strategic and operational plans, pool resources and accept joint accountability.

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The values curriculum

40 The schools that are most effective at promoting positive values in young people have strong leaders who provide a clear sense of direction about the values they want to foster and teachers who act as good role models for pupils. These schools recognise that pupils' social responsibility develops best when what they learn in the classroom is complemented by values that pervade all aspects of school life.

41 Schools already play a major role in helping to support pupils' personal and social development by preparing pupils for the 'opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Guidelines on promoting and supporting pupils' personal and social development recognise[10]:

"…the challenges schools face in a diverse developing society and changing democratic framework… in empowering pupils to be active, informed and responsible citizens aware of their rights and committed to the practices of participative democracy and the challenges of being a citizen in Wales and the world."

42 Empowering pupils so that they have a say in the way that the school meets their needs is vital to the future success of schools. Establishing a school council in every school in Wales has been a valuable step towards enabling more young people to understand the role they can play in democratic processes. Some school councils already feed into local-authority-wide forums and into Funky Dragon, the national young people's parliament for Wales. These wider links with

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[10] Personal and Social Education Framework Key Stages 1 to 4 in Wales (ACCAC, 2000)

the community need to be more widespread so that young people can be more effectively prepared for their role as young citizens.

43 Schools also have a role to play in helping to educate pupils and young people about sustainable development and global citizenship. The Welsh Assembly Government[11] has confirmed this a key priority in a previous publication:

"Young people today are growing up in a world where prosperity and technological progress exist alongside mass poverty and an environment under threat. Children and young adults deserve to know that their fate is inextricably linked to, and affected by, the lives and decisions of others across the world. They have a right to understand the crucial issues facing the planet and know how they can personally play a part in helping shape the future."

44 Work in this area is developing, but only in about one in ten schools are these aspects embedded in their ethos and way of working. At present, schools lack clarity about the definition, the purpose and the benefits of sustainable development and global citizenship, which makes it difficult for them to tackle the complex issues surrounding these areas. Relevant learning experiences from National Curriculum subjects, religious education and personal and social education as well as broader aspects of school and community life, need to be brought together and joined up to form a more coherent programme for learners.

Ways forward: Values

To promote positive values in young people, the schools of the future will need to:

➔ involve all stakeholders, including pupils, in an explicit consideration of the values the school should promote;

➔ provide training to develop teachers' understanding of how social responsibility, respect and values can be developed and promoted through all subjects;

➔ build on the potential of education for sustainable development and global citizenship and other initiatives to promote social responsibility;

➔ use a wider range of qualifications and award schemes to credit the skills pupils' learn in courses that promote social responsibility; and

➔ track and evaluate more effectively pupils' personal and social development and the extent of their participation in decision-making.

Bilingualism

45 Since the 1950s, the Welsh-medium or bilingual sector has emerged and grown in Wales. Demand from parents as well as strategic planning in some local education authorities has led to the gradual increase in the number of schools offering Welsh-medium education. In Welsh-speaking parts of Wales, especially in the north and west, many schools are fully bilingual. In the south and east of Wales, there are some wholly Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools. Roughly, a quarter of schools in Wales now offer a Welsh-medium education. However the supply of places in Welsh-medium or bilingual schools does not always meet local demands. A few local authorities continue to rely on neighbouring authorities to provide Welsh-medium secondary education for their pupils. As a result, some local authorities are limiting parental choice and pupils' opportunities to attend Welsh-medium provision locally.

46 'Iaith Pawb'[12] identifies a target to increase the number of Welsh speakers by five percentage points by 2011. Several new initiatives to increase the number of staff who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh have been developed. These training initiatives include a training programme for early years practitioners, pilot projects for the intensive teaching of Welsh for

[12] Iaith Pawb (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003)

primary school pupils and a sabbatical programme to improve the Welsh of qualified teachers, lecturers and training providers. However, at present, there are insufficient bilingual staff to fulfil the aspirations of Iaith Pawb.

47 The new Foundation Phase provides a unique opportunity for the next generation of Welsh pupils to become fully bilingual, whether they attend Welsh-medium schools, bilingual schools or English-medium schools. However, the current shortage of fully bilingual early years practitioners may impede its full introduction.

48 Since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1990, schools have made considerable progress in teaching Welsh as a second language to younger pupils, but few achieve fluency by the end of key stage 4 and the numbers entered for GCSE are low. It remains a cause for concern that standards of bilingualism are good or better in only 40% of secondary schools. The percentage in primary schools is 70%.

49 There will need to be better co-operation between secondary schools and colleges to offer shared teaching and facilities for some courses, notably vocational Welsh-medium courses. There is potential, through the Learning Pathways options menu for 14-19 year old pupils, to pursue their education and training, at key stage 4 and later,

in Welsh. This is because sharing pupil numbers and staff expertise across a wider geographical area could make the provision more viable and enable qualified staff to work with more learners. The success of this mechanism depends on the willingness of partner institutions to collaborate unselfishly and to pool resources.

50 Overall, the number of pupils and students who continue to use Welsh as a medium for their education and training at secondary and tertiary levels is low. There is a lack of linguistic continuity in post-16 provision for pupils who studied Welsh, or through the medium of Welsh. These pupils often do not have the opportunity to use the language in further and higher education courses. There are too few vocational qualifications available in Welsh. These things need to change to meet employers' demands for good Welsh and bilingual skills and to ensure Wales becomes a more bilingual nation.

51 Welsh teacher-training institutions are not training enough bilingual teachers to enable people to work across Welsh, bilingual and English-medium schools, with a view to increasing the quantum of bilingual learning. The bilingual workforce that exists at present does not work across different learning organisations so as to support, promote and drive the development of bilingualism.

Ways forward: Bilingualism

To meet the Iaith Pawb targets:

➜ there needs to be more trained bilingual Foundation Phase teachers and playgroup leaders;

➜ local authorities need to plan more co-operatively and strategically to cater for the increasing numbers of pupils who wish to opt for Welsh medium education;

➜ schools and initial teacher training institutions need to develop better staff expertise in the Welsh language and in the related pedagogy in order to improve the teaching of Welsh as a second language and teaching through the medium of Welsh;

➜ schools need to improve progression opportunities to secure better continuity in Welsh-medium education especially between key stages 2 and 3, by planning transition more carefully across schools;

➜ colleges of further education need to develop marketing strategies to encourage more students to opt for Welsh-medium or bilingual courses in further education; and

➜ colleges of further education need to increase the number of teachers in further education who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh or bilingually by training existing Welsh speakers on the staff to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Meeting the needs of the community

52 In the few years since Estyn published 'Excellent Schools: A vision for schools in Wales in the 21st century'[13], there have been some changes to traditional working practices. Schools and their partners are beginning to work more closely together. For example, some schools are opening their doors to the community and building practical and productive links with families. These schools recognise that pupils' learning works best as a partnership between parents and teachers. A small number of schools have created a base for services that support families as well as children. The work of the Young People's Partnerships is already extending the range of partners that schools can work with in a local authority area.

53 Community-focused schools can offer education and a wide range of services to learners of all ages, inside and outside traditional school hours. Creating locally-based or regionally-based school systems with pooled resources could better meet the needs of learners from three to nineteen years of age. Of course, giving proper attention to young people's safety and well-being in these kinds of establishments is essential.

54 Schools have always contributed to the wider social welfare of the nation by helping to tackle issues of health and well-being. However, in spite of much good work by teachers and youth workers to help young people make informed choices about relationships, health, drug taking and teenage pregnancy, the unhealthy lifestyles of some young people are still growing concerns.[14]

55 In Wales, the number of teenage pregnancies and the proportion of young people with sexually-transmitted diseases are increasing. A comparative study across the UK, found that Wales has the highest teenage conception rate with 35 live births per 1000 women under 20, compared to a rate in England of 28 live births per 1000. Rates of smoking and alcohol consumption are high among young people. The rates of young girls experiencing problems due to alcohol or drugs in Wales are higher than for boys in Wales and for young people in England. Research[15] indicates that 50% of young girls in Wales have experienced problems due to alcohol and drugs, compared to 39% of boys in Wales. The comparable figures for young people in England are 43% of girls and 39% of boys. Underage drinking has become commonplace in our parks and street corners. Young people are able to obtain alcoholic drinks cheaply in their local areas. The medium to long term health implications of this behaviour are worrying. Schools play a key role in helping young people

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[13] Excellent Schools: A vision for schools in Wales in the 21st century (Estyn, 2002)

[14] See 'Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries' (UNICEF, 2007) for a comprehensive overview

[15] The Well-being of Children in Wales 2005 (University of York for Save the Children)

to understand the benefits of healthier lifestyles. They can also help young people to develop and use the personal and social skills needed to avoid peer pressure which can lead to inappropriate alcohol drinking and associated health threatening and anti-social behaviour. Working more closely with partners and other agencies would enable schools to contribute more effectively to this work.

56 Far too few children and young people, eat a diet designed for long term health. In a comparison of 35 countries, Wales has one of the worse records of fruit and vegetable consumption by young people. Increasing numbers of young people are overweight or obese,[16] despite the advantages of regular exercise being well known. Recent developments, such as the PE and School Sport initiative (PESS) have shown encouraging outcomes. The Development Centres have improved sports opportunities for young people and had a positive impact on the behaviour and attitudes to learning of pupils who participate. While the curriculum in schools includes physical education, the time usually spent on this subject during school hours is short. In schools across Europe and in schools in other sectors, such as independent schools, the teaching day is usually organised so that it provides more opportunities for exercise and sport during and after traditional school hours. Some modern expensive sports facilities are under-used because of limited opening hours and access. Children, young people and the

community could use the facilities outside the regular school hours and benefit from the advantages those facilities offer for a healthier life-style.

57 Developing community-focused education means that schools in the future will need to work even more closely with their key strategic partners, in shaping and managing the pattern of local services and offering educational resources to the whole community. Across Wales, a number of schools are already involved in this way. For example, some primary schools have a growing relationship with social support agencies and organisations that work with families. Many primary and secondary schools are developing their provision to meet the needs of the wider community through family-learning programmes. There is also an encouraging increase in the number of schools co-operating with families and community agencies to provide care before and after the school day, as well as opportunities for pupils to study in homework centres. Some secondary schools are working with other schools and colleges of further education to help broaden the curriculum on offer to young people. Within a community-focused approach, there is also scope for maintained and independent schools to forge links and work closely together in all sectors.

[16] The Well-being of Children in Wales 2005 (University of York for Save the Children).

58 The logical extension of the trend for community-focused schools is the re-structuring of schools as a base for meeting many of the needs of families, especially in areas where there is a high demand for social and health services. Notwithstanding the considerable challenges for schools and other service providers, the Narrowing the Gap Task Group recognised the impact of the community dimension in raising standards when they looked at the gap in the performance of secondary schools.

This group found that[17]:

"…the focus on community provision...brings potential for multiple benefits for learners, schools and their communities... encouraging adults back into learning...changes the culture by raising the profile of learning…"

59 Bringing communities together through engagement in learning raises the collective self-esteem of the whole community. Higher aspirations and a greater determination to progress from school to further education or training and employment have a direct impact on pupils' attainment. The follow-up work of the Narrowing the Gap Task Group on the performance of primary schools also endorsed this finding.[18]

Ways forward: Community-focused schools

Community-focused schools of the future will need to:

→ work even more closely with parents to show that learning is desirable to people of all ages and learning alongside adults can motivate and inspire younger learners and vice versa;

→ work more closely with key strategic partners, such as the health and social services, to encourage healthier life-styles;

→ ensure better use of their resources, such as sport facilities, to become a centre for social interaction; and

→ enhance the reputation of the school within the community, helping to inspire confidence more widely in the value of educational opportunities.

[17] Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools (DfTE Information Document No: 029-02 National Assembly for Wales, 2002)

[18] Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools Project: Phase 11 Primary Schools (DfTE Information Document No: 048-05 Welsh Assembly Government, 2005)

Small schools

60 Many schools in Wales are in rural areas and many of these are small schools. There is no direct link between how well pupils do and the size of the school they attend. However, the responsibilities and workload demands on teachers in very small schools are considerable and the financial resourcing of these schools is substantial and demanding on limited budgets.

61 Different models of school organisation can operate very successfully, including models such as clustering and area schools. Information and communication technology can help staff in these type of organisations operate more effectively and efficiently. Across Wales, learners in rural areas, particularly in 14 -19 education and in post-16 education and training routes, need to have similar choices, opportunities and access as their peers in cities and towns, although the mechanics for achieving this aim may be different, for instance, involving distance learning through the support of technology.

62 In some parts of Wales, schools are organised into federations whereby arrangements for governance and management are shared. This arrangement has provided a way out of a dilemma for those who want to preserve the strengths of small schools and yet protect them from their isolation. Federation can both reflect local needs and gain the commitment of the local community. In fact, the federation model usually receives support from small schools and their communities because using it can be a means of avoiding the closure of small schools. While communities are proud of and value their independence, they recognise the need to be inter-dependent.

Ways forward: Small schools

Small schools of the future will need to collaborate so that they:

➜ maintain the 'family' ethos that characterises small schools, whilst achieving greater efficiencies through cross-site management and administration;

➜ share expertise and resources and improve opportunities for specialist teaching;

➜ provide a wider range of learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities; and

➜ secure wider social benefits for pupils from isolated rural areas.

School design

63 Over recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the role that good building design plays in successful education. Pleasant surroundings tend to improve pupils' self-esteem and this in turn can lead to improved educational standards. However, too many of our school buildings are unattractive and uncomfortable. They do not meet the standards that we expect from public buildings today. Inspection has shown that up to a third of primary schools and around a fifth of secondary schools have shortcomings in their accommodation.

64 There are many schools in Wales that are over a hundred years old and many schools that were built more recently which require high maintenance. Many of these schools need constant costly repairing and upgrading and are often difficult to make fit for purpose, for example for the Foundation Phase, with its emphasis on indoor and outdoor learning. In a significant number of schools, pupils do not have ready access to comfortable communal areas or leisure services, high-quality sports facilities, or even adequate toilet facilities. Overall, too few pupils and staff enjoy well-designed and purposeful accommodation: they work in buildings, designed for formal class teaching, which lack the flexibility for the teaching and learning approaches required in the 21st century.

65 There is also a growing problem of managing the impact of falling birth rates. If it were possible to reduce the number of schools to match the number of pupils, around 275 average-sized primary schools (17% of the total) and 26 average-sized secondary schools (11% of the total) would close. In addition, population movements mean that schools that were originally built to serve a particular community may no longer be needed, while new schools are required for newer residential centres. It is a major financial and strategic challenge to remove surplus places, build schools to serve new communities and improve the condition of existing school buildings. Local authorities across Wales have found it difficult to plan for all their schools to be fit for purpose by agreed target dates.

66 There are some excellent examples of innovative design in various parts of Wales. Some local authorities have carried out imaginative remodelling of individual schools that suit learning well. Any vision for schools of the future must include planning and designing schools in a way to that meets 21st century aspirations.

67 In particular, young people need to be able to express their views and influence school design and planning. Important issues for them include having accessible, safe personal lockers

so that they do not need to carry heavy bags throughout the day. This measure alone could help limit the risk to young people of developing posture and joint injuries in the future. Young people also should be able to enjoy pleasant social facilities such as cafés and have access to a range of youth services.

68 In addition, the local environment should be such as to encourage pupils, parents and staff in urban areas to use public transport or walk or cycle to school with designated safe walkways and cycle ways. In rural areas, it will be important for schools and local authorities to promote environmentally-friendly forms of transport as well as shared-transport systems.

69 There is also now a greater realisation of the importance of emphasising sustainability and minimising energy consumption. Most recently, new legislation such as the National Environment and Rural Communities Act places a duty on public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation and this requirement has implications for strategic planning, development projects, funding streams and land and property management.

70 As plans and budgets for new builds are prepared, artificial age breaks and existing models should not restrict or overly influence designs. From inception, new schools should consider breaking the mould of what has gone before.

Ways forward: Buildings and facilities

The schools of the future should have:

➜ attractive accommodation and modern buildings that use sustainable sources of materials in keeping with the best of local architecture and building traditions and are energy and resource efficient;

➜ sufficient, well-designed, high-quality accommodation that can be used flexibly for teaching and learning using a range of approaches;

➜ first-class facilities in which pupils can enjoy healthy meals;

➜ suitable clean modern provision for toilets and personal hygiene;

➜ buildings that are accessible to the whole community and have suitable facilities for disabled learners;

➜ up-to-date facilities, such as IT centres, laboratories, workshops and libraries, for use by pupils, staff, parents and members of the community;

➜ safe, well-lit and sheltered communal areas and grounds for play and relaxation, encouraging wide-spread community use so that users can take pride in caring for their locality;

➜ indoor and outdoor sports and play facilities that are available both to pupils and the community; and

➜ community services, where pupils and their families have access to a wide range of support, including health and social services.

Schools and technology

71 Advances in the use of information and communications technology present opportunities for schools to be creative and work in different ways. Challenging the way schools use technology and exploit technological advances could provide greater benefit to pupils' learning by providing more opportunities for learning choices, engaging interest and motivation and giving wider access to online study. While most pupils use technology extensively in their leisure time, schools are not yet using up-to-date ICT to its full potential.

72 The internet can extend personalised activities in the classroom to homes and libraries. Technology has made it possible for pupils to log on and receive on-line tuition from home or elsewhere. Pupils can receive lessons where they can see and hear the teacher and ask questions as well as gain personalised feedback on their work. With new technologies, it is possible, in a cluster of schools, for each school to develop different areas of expertise in order to share the teaching and planning load.

73 Greater use of technology could help to share teaching and learning across schools, particularly in small schools. Pupils in rural areas can remain in their local schools but have access to a broader range of subjects and resources via e-learning. The use of ICT also presents opportunities to benefit learning through the medium of Welsh and other languages. It enables the wider and more immediate sharing of best practice across all areas. Advancing and improving the provision of information, advice and guidance across a whole range of sectors and partnerships could transform the integration of online services, and enable contact with hard-to-reach groups to be vastly improved.

74 The high costs of providing ICT equipment in schools have not brought a good enough return in terms of the benefits these facilities have to offer. Too often, expensive school resources are not available for learning and teaching for large proportions of the school day. Opening up schools for more frequent, regular community use could be a more efficient and effective use of these resources and bring wider benefits for the community.

75 New technologies can be highly motivating and provide rich learning resources. They can generate interactive and imaginative responses from pupils and offer learning in a range of ways and times.

Ways forward: Use of technologies

The schools of the future will need to build on the benefits of new technologies by:

➜ using the opportunities presented by distance and off-site learning;

➜ providing access to ICT equipment for each learner, which links learning at home and school;

➜ giving online support, including lesson notes and research material with facilities for setting work from school and sending assignments from home;

➜ extending the school classroom via video-conferencing, email and webcam facilities;

➜ making greater use of distance-learning packages, with work supported by school mentors; and

➜ providing access to different learning pathways at different learning sites and through interactive facilities.

Staffing

76 In all walks of life, the way that specialists work together is changing. Many schools in Wales are meeting the immediate challenges of remodelling. But too many schools and society in general still see school staff as either teaching or as non-teaching. Remodelling the workforce has brought an increase in the number and range of adults in school and has meant that leaders manage more people. For many schools, this has meant focusing teachers' time on teaching and learning and using suitably qualified professionals from outside to take on other roles.

77 As a greater variety of staff contribute successfully to learning, there will be changing perceptions of teaching and support provision. Using the skills of people such as counsellors, learning coaches, youth workers, therapists, sports coaches, dance instructors and artists to support vocational and extra-curricular learning adds an important dimension to pupils' experiences, learning and achievement and flexibility to the management of learning within the school. In addition, the skills and talents of volunteers and others in the community can extend pupils' learning opportunities and provide further enrichment to learning.

78 Beyond schools themselves, many local authorities are beginning to see that services for care and education need to be much more joined-up, if they are to meet the needs of all young people and avoid duplication of effort and resources. Services such as housing, social services, education, and transport have operated in the past too independently without enough thought for the clients' holistic needs. Having single education plans and community-based schools which require joint agency planning should enable agencies to work together more effectively than has been the case.

79 All schools should be able to benefit from such multi-service specialist provision. Pupils and staff can benefit from working with staff in other sectors, such as the police and youth support services.

80 A number of forward-thinking schools have already recognised how the skills of different groups of practitioners can contribute to the work of the school. In these schools leaders see the benefits of working across traditional boundaries. These schools have worked hard to ensure that they have placed the right people in the right job. Involving a wider range of adults in working with learners will help

schools be more innovative in their use of different types of organisational provision to bring about learning and improvement in different sorts of ways.

81 As teachers use various methods to assist learning and they work with different groups of practitioners and volunteers, including parents and carers in and beyond the classroom, there will be a requirement for greater flexibility from teachers and school leaders. This was acknowledged in the recently published Professional Code for Teachers[19] which recognises teachers' contribution to the wider development of the school and the way that teachers work with and manage different groups of highly skilled adults.

82 Further, the involvement of a wider range of specialists contributing to learning will bring with it the opportunity for more flexible staffing models and working arrangements. This should make better use of many more people's skills and help them achieve a better work-life balance. There is not a one-model-fits-all for schools but thinking imaginatively and flexibly is key to making successful changes in how the workforce can be used. As a result, staff in schools could benefit more from a flexible work-pattern, which could include negotiating their hours of work and holidays to suit learners' needs and their own circumstances.

Making sure that pupils have the widest range of learning provision to meet their interests, aptitude and needs, as well as extending that provision to other groups of learners in community-focused schools, should not necessarily mean further demands on staff. Rather, it should lead to different ways of organising the use of all human resources in schools.

83 The statistical profile of teachers in Wales[20] also seems to suggest that greater flexibility in staffing models is required if schools are to retain, develop and sustain the almost 40% of all registered staff in Wales, and the over 65% of headteachers, who are in the 50+ age group.

84 Changes in teachers' roles and the way that teaching and learning will take place in the future will require new approaches to initial teacher education and in-service training. These new approaches have already been recognised as necessary in a recent review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales[21], which states:

"…Initial Teacher Training has an important role in supporting these changes because it is concerned with the preparation of the 'teachers of tomorrow'…"

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[19] Professional Code for Teachers (General Teaching Council for Wales, 2004)

[20] Annual Statistics Digest (General Teaching Council for Wales, 2006)

[21] Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales: A Report to the Welsh Assembly Government (2006)

85 Specifically, the development of personal, leadership, managerial and team skills has not featured strongly in the initial training of teachers in the past. The review report notes this and refers to a growing expectation of cross-profession working, which will extend traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers could benefit from training alongside other practitioners working with young people, which may broaden new teachers' knowledge and understanding of issues affecting young people. Providers of initial teacher training have an important contribution to make to the agenda for change and improvement in schools. Increasingly, they will need to adapt their provision and make certain that they have the capacity to meet these challenges.

practice and raise standards of pupils' achievement. At the same time, arrangements for the in-service training and development of the wider staff in schools are still not much more than at an embryonic stage.

86 If we move beyond recruitment and initial training to retention and development of staff, proposals for a Professional Development Framework for Teachers in Wales have highlighted that there has been no structured planning, co-ordinating, recognising and quality-assuring development over the entirety of the teacher's career[22]. Many schools and individual teachers are already making substantial use of development activities to transform

87 Performance management is a key tool in improving the performance of individual staff and more generally in workforce development and planning. Regular, intensive and honest, one-to-one discussions about performance should be linked to planning development and training opportunities and focus increasingly on the ability of individual members of staff to collaborate with, manage or lead other professionals.

[22] Professional Development Framework for Teachers in Wales (General Teaching Council for Wales, 2005)

88 Making changes in staffing arrangements is a bold step towards a vision of greater diversity in school staffing where teachers work on a more flexible basis as part of multi-disciplinary teams. Achieving this vision requires accredited professional development for the workforce that begins with each individual's initial training and continues throughout his or her career. Further workforce remodelling should include a commitment to reviewing roles, improving conditions and ensuring greater flexibility and accountability. An enterprising change of this sort would truly support multi-agency working and community-focused schools.

Ways forward: Staffing

The schools of the future will need to:

➜ re-think staffing structures in terms of fitness for purpose;

➜ manage diverse staff roles to support pupil achievement;

➜ develop staff networking and negotiating skills to support partnership working;

➜ develop and nurture staff through effective performance management and professional development systems; and

➜ support new and student entrants in their pre- and post-qualification programmes.

Leadership and management

89 Common good features can be identified in the leadership and management of the best schools in Wales to-day. The most significant features of good leadership are a strong sense of direction, a clear focus on teaching and learning and a relentless emphasis on raising standards. Despite the improvement in leadership and management in recent years, there is no room for complacency. Tackling the shortcomings in the quality of leadership and management in a minority of schools in Wales is a major challenge to bringing about and embedding change that will transform the performance of our schools.

90 New challenges such as: championing new approaches to teaching and learning; implementing arrangements for workforce remodelling and performance management; preparing for the Foundation Phase and Learning Pathways 14-19; supporting national policy for improving children's life chances through joined-up services; collaboration with other providers; and providing better value for money; require new approaches to the leadership of schools. These new approaches set a higher value on skills of networking and negotiation in a management model of distributed leadership rather than on continuing the traditional management style of single-institution hierarchies. For the new approaches to succeed, it will be necessary to overcome the obstacle of an education and training system based on delegated budgets and authority in which one of the main drivers for leaders is that of protecting corporate autonomy in a competitive environment.

91 Already, some schools have adapted their structures and their leadership style, to ensure a better fit with new and changing needs and requirements. Inspection evidence provides an account of how some leaders and staff have worked collectively in complex and demanding environments. In broad-based, community-focused schools leaders are responding to the challenges of multi-agency provision.

92 For schools to promote lifelong learning and community development, leaders at all levels will require vision and the ability to raise expectations and inspire and motivate others. Leaders will need to work more flexibly in different kinds of management roles. Planning will always require co-operation with outside agencies, including health and social services as well as other education providers such as adult learning.

93 In schools, staff will need to deliver responsive education and training in different venues and different ways to provide support, mentoring and coaching to learners as well as take on wider responsibility for working effectively across the skills and values curriculum pathways.

in schools '...sets a framework for teachers and their team leaders to agree and review priorities and objectives in the context of schools' development plans...'[23].

94 As a culture of rigorous self-evaluation becomes an established part of school practice and drives continuous improvement, it is reasonable to expect schools to become even more accountable for their own improvement. Schools are already getting better at setting goals in the light of the feedback they receive from their customers and stakeholders. Future improvement will depend upon on the success of leaders and managers in extending a self-critical culture in order to be more responsive to learner and community needs.

95 The recent implementation of a performance management process for schools is a positive development. However, there is scope for improving this process so that it can contribute more to developing a culture of continuous corporate improvement. At present, performance management

96 Across many private and public work sectors, there is a broader concept of performance management. In these sectors, performance management is a sharper strategic tool, linked to wider issues, such as bringing about and managing change as well as corporate planning and people management. Importantly, the process should engage all staff in the concept that managing people and being managed are constants.

97 Performance management should optimise the day-to-day effectiveness of people's work, contribute to higher levels of success and sustained improvements in organisational performance and help achieve the management of change in terms of strategic direction and organisational culture[24].

98 In recent years, schools have gained more autonomy over their budgets and this independence has helped staff to align their budgets and priorities for improvement more effectively within their institutions. However, in future, schools need to be confident that funding streams will support their work in the medium-term and long-term and provide them with the means to take forward improvements, especially in

[23] Performance Management Guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002)

[24] An evaluation of performance management arrangements in schools and the contribution of the arrangements to raising standards (Estyn, 2006)

partnership working. In conjunction with their local authority, schools will need to be able to plan and allocate budgets on the basis of agreed priorities across sectors. While there may still be a need for service level agreements between schools and their local authority, greater clarity is needed about funding streams, including better alignment between the 14-16 funding regime and the regime for post-16. Schools will have greater need for people with well-developed business-planning skills if they are to make the most of any increase in financial flexibility and changes to the financial environment.

99 Similarly, governing bodies will need more varied expertise in their membership, with the energy and capacity to make the most of the opportunities available and to develop schools in ways that meet pupils' and community needs. For example, the implications of multi-agency working may require a different composition and size of the governing body responsible and accountable for the effective and efficient running of the school on behalf of the community it serves. At present, governors tend to offer good support but too little challenge. Their services do not always meet the demands being made on modern school governance. There is scope for reconsidering the role of governors along the lines of the role of non executive directors in the best public sector practice.

100 It is possible to see that the role of the most senior leader in this kind of highly flexible and wide-ranging organisation may be similar to that of a chief executive in commerce or industry or a principal in a college of further education. There are also similarities to the new role and responsibility of the senior leader in some local authorities where all services relevant to children's well-being, including education, health and social services, are the responsibility of one director. Such a wide range of services requires strong strategic leadership to properly manage and successfully integrate services. This model could apply to schools that in turn would need to recruit talented leaders, from teaching and other backgrounds, who have the flair to oversee a diverse team and ability to manage a wide range of activity in a new kind of establishment, providing a variety of functions. Developing this kind of senior role would allow other staff in leadership groups to focus their skills, expertise and energy more properly on their core roles of leading the teaching and learning while someone else takes over the roles of strategic and corporate governance. If change is to be sustainable, it will take energy, time and team-work and a more affiliated approach to management across traditional institutional boundaries.

Ways forward: Leadership and management

School leadership and management of the future will need to:

➜ transcend organisational boundaries to understand and work effectively with a wide range of partners who contribute to all aspects of pupils' learning, health and well-being;

➜ improve teaching and learning through motivating and influencing pupils and staff in a changing situation;

➜ use people's time, resources and accommodation in more ambitious and creative ways;

➜ provide greater flexibility in distributing responsibility amongst staff;

➜ give priority to performance management and to developing all the people who work in schools in accordance with organisational priorities; and

➜ develop and nurture management teams that work effectively across sectors.

Conclusion

101 If schools are to become fit for the 21st century, then they must be transformed. Any change must be right for the learners of that community; no one model for the school of the future will fit the needs of all learners and all areas. Across Wales, schools are at different stages of this transformative process and further progress will need to be the result of careful consideration, deliberation and consultation. Tackling the challenges set out in this discussion paper will need energy and commitment from all concerned. While success is outside the control of any one organisation or individual, all have a responsibility to engage in this debate and process.

Estyn welcomes comments and feedback on this discussion paper.

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