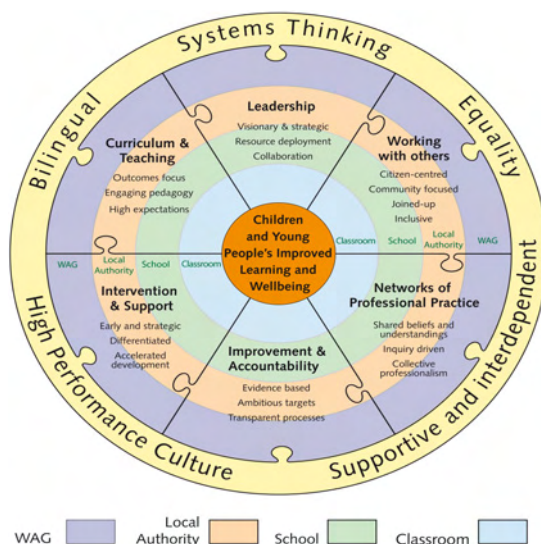


The Pilot Programme

Introduction

As part of the overall drive for school improvement in Wales, the Assembly Government has published a School Effectiveness Framework. This Framework's development has involved the Assembly Government, local authority partners, headteachers, academics and a range of national stakeholders.

The School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) vision for improving outcomes in learning and wellbeing for the children and young people of Wales. The main ideas of the SEF are captured in the diagram below. It consists of five "themes" in the outer circle and six "elements" in the segments of the circle, each of which is further sub-divided into three or four "aspects".



The Consortium Approach

Through consortium working we have developed a model that builds upon the existing work of schools and local authorities and on current Assembly Government initiatives, and which will be appropriate to the context and circumstances of all schools across the Consortium. A key principle is that the model will be developmental in that it seeks to support the individual journey each school makes towards becoming more effective in adding value to the learning of all pupils in the school. The model is about helping good schools get better through building upon and making the most effective use of resources available to the school – at school, local, regional and national level.

It will build on existing good practice within individual authorities and schools through effective support and challenge, embracing parallel developments such as community-focused schools, LEA/Schools Partnership Agreements and integrated delivery of services for children, young people and families. If the model is to enable schools to achieve improved effectiveness that impacts positively on standards it should focus on the deeper characteristics and values, including raising the aspirations of the whole school community.

The Pilot Programme

The Pilot Programme for the school-level model of the effectiveness framework will take place during the academic year 2008-9. The approach developed by the South West and Mid Wales Consortium has five distinct phases as follows:

- Phase One Understanding the School Context
- Phase Two Agreeing Themes for Improvement and Barriers to Effectiveness
- Phase Three Action Planning
- Phase Four Implementation
- Phase Five Review and Planning for Sustainability

Phase One: Understanding the School Context

This is a school-led process using existing evidence from school self-evaluation processes and Local Authority Support and Challenge Frameworks. These ongoing self-evaluation systems provide a great deal of evidence that is directly relevant to the consideration of the core themes and key elements of the School Effectiveness Framework. This new framework is designed to look deep into the life and work of the school and focus upon those key systems and values that are central to sustained school improvement.

Schools are asked to convene a collaborative review process that will enable them to consider this existing evidence against the evaluation criteria within the School Effectiveness Framework. This focuses upon six key elements of school effectiveness, which are:

- Leadership
- Curriculum and teaching
- Working with others
- Networks of professional practice
- Intervention and support
- Improvement and accountability

Schools are responsible for managing this first stage of the process, based upon their individual circumstances and ongoing systems for self-evaluation and review. Schools, however, will be encouraged to ensure that their review process does reflect best practice as identified by Estyn in terms of the leadership and management of self-evaluation.

The use of the school effectiveness framework may provide some schools with the first opportunity to formally review their current work against some of the criteria and to reflect upon areas which they may wish to improve. Schools will wish to consider how they would like to manage the collaborative review process, in terms of who to involve, how to gather relevant evidence together, how to review each of the six key elements in turn and how to record their deliberations and summarise the outcomes.

It should be noted that many of the criteria within the framework are qualitative; they involve making informed judgements about the characteristics of the school. It appears that schools can only be evaluated effectively against this framework if they ensure a high level of stakeholder involvement that provides feedback on their perceptions of the school and its effectiveness.

A key feature of the school effectiveness framework is its recognition that there are areas where the school will share responsibility with other agencies and organisations to provide for the learning and wellbeing of children and young people. Schools are therefore encouraged to consider how they can involve representatives from these organisations in their review process.

This phase also marks the start of the school's developing relationship with an Improvement Facilitator. Each Facilitator will work with a network of schools to provide guidance and support to individual schools as they work on selected elements of the SEF. During this phase the Improvement Facilitator will make an introductory visit to the school, analyse performance data and documentary evidence provided by the school, and support the school through the self-evaluation process if needed. The Improvement Facilitator will also liaise with the school's Local Authority Link Adviser. The phase concludes with the school's submission of a completed 'School Effectiveness Profile'.

Timescale:

In the pilot programme schools will begin the self-evaluation process in September 2008 and complete the self evaluation by the end of October.

Phase Two: Agreeing Themes for Improvement and Barriers to Effectiveness

The next phase in the cycle is for the school to have a dialogue with the Local Authority Link Officer and an Improvement Facilitator on the self-evaluation and agree the 'Themes for Improvement', 'Key Strengths' and 'Barriers to Effectiveness'.

This is an opportunity for the school to present its self-evaluation findings and improvement proposals to the Improvement Facilitator. This discussion will be based upon prior scrutiny of written outcomes of the 'School Effectiveness Profile' and relevant supporting evidence.

The guiding principles for this discussion are that it should be:

- A developmental and constructive process, based upon professional dialogue;
- Focused directly upon pupils' learning and well-being, and the complex factors that influence this;
- Informed by both quantitative and qualitative evidence related to the key elements of the school effectiveness framework;
- Based upon respect for the school's achievements and its right to determine appropriate directions for school improvement

The Improvement Facilitator will conduct a further visit to the school to discuss the 'School Effectiveness Profile'. The school's Link Adviser may also take part in the visit, subject to the agreement of the school. During the course of the visit, they will review the evidence compiled by the school, verify this through a series of 'strategic conversations' with key stakeholders, and hold a discussion with school leaders about the six key elements of the School Effectiveness Framework. This will lead to the identification and agreement of key Themes for Improvement.

These key themes will reflect the priorities for development across the school, and will focus upon those areas that are most likely to lead to sustained development in its performance. Each school

will agree a small number of key Themes for Improvement based directly on the six key elements in the School Effectiveness Framework. It is anticipated that each school will identify themes that cut across at least two of the key elements of the School Effectiveness Framework.

These themes will be primarily concerned with 'capacity building', that is, they will be focused on the development of new systems, networks and cultures that will enable the school to become more effective over time. The themes will also be directly related to desired outcomes in terms of pupils' achievements and well-being. Themes for improvement will be expressed as a series of objectives, and the wording of these will be agreed during the discussion.

There will also be discussion of the key strengths that the school has identified through its self-evaluation process. Part of the approach that is being piloted is the facilitation of advice and support from schools that have a proven effective practice in a particular area. Each school will work as part of a network to provide peer support and challenge, sharing expertise based on the key strengths they have identified. During the pilot, the consortium will compile a register of schools' identified key strengths, so that other schools may contact them for advice and support in these specialist areas.

During the discussion, the Improvement Facilitator will also work with the school leaders to review the barriers to effectiveness which the school faces. The identification of barriers to effectiveness concerns internal school barriers and issues beyond the school that may need to be addressed locally. This is an important theme within the school effectiveness framework, and focuses upon those systems beyond the school that may act as barriers to change. The framework recognises the levels of interdependent activity at school, local and national levels that may need to be addressed if improvement for children and young people is to be secured and sustained.

The identification of barriers to change in effect provides Local Authorities and Regional Consortia with an agenda of issues that schools and headteachers believe to be important. This may lead to further discussion, consultation and action to remove barriers, secure improvement or develop new arrangements at Local Authority level. In some cases, resolving perceived barriers to change may involve representations to the Welsh Assembly Government, to suggest policy reforms or areas of action that could lead to system-wide improvements. Mechanisms at local and regional level will be required to consider 'barriers to effectiveness', centrally involving headteachers in consultation processes about potential changes.

By the end of the discussion, participants will have agreed the school's priorities for development and expressed these as a series of objectives; they will also have identified perceived barriers to change for consideration locally.

Timescale:

In the pilot phase the dialogue meeting will take place by the end of October.

Phase Three: Action Planning

The School Effectiveness framework places a strong emphasis upon schools working together in a network of schools to support collaborative development. This is linked directly to the concept of 'system-building' and the need to promote networks that will work together to identify good practice and share this across schools. Once 'Themes for Improvement' have been prioritised and agreed by each school, networks will be created of small groups of schools.

The composition of the network will be flexible: they may be made up of schools with the same or similar Themes for Improvement, they may comprise of schools of a similar size such as small primary schools or it may be that families of schools may work together on the self-evaluation and form a 'self-selected' network. The impact of working through these networks will be evaluated in the pilot to inform the further development of the School Effectiveness Framework.

Each network will be supported by an Improvement Facilitator who will work initially with each school, and then across the network, to devise action plans based upon the agreed themes. The role of the Improvement Facilitator is to support the schools in developing an Action Plan, supporting the change process and facilitating the professional network. This will include brokering support from other practitioners, the local authority, consortium and WAG as appropriate.

The first stage of this process is for the Improvement Facilitator to work with leaders in each school to draft an action plan that comprises: the key objectives for development, the actions steps to be taken to achieve each objective, the timescales and milestones for development activity, key roles and responsibilities, resources required, and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

The second stage of the process is to involve the network of schools in a dialogue to refine these draft action plans and establish a way of working collaboratively to provide peer challenge and support in securing each school's objectives. In preparation for this, each school will be asked to identify:

- The key areas in which they would benefit from challenge and support from another school (or schools);
- The key areas in which they feel they could challenge and support other schools, on the basis of existing good practice in their own school;
- The ways in which they would like to work collaboratively with other schools.

A meeting will be convened by the Improvement Facilitator involving leaders from each of the schools in the network to share draft action plans and agree collaborative working arrangements. Each network of schools will also receive delegated resources (approximately £5,000) to support their developmental activities and will need to agree a spending plan, based on eligible areas of expenditure.

Timescale

In the pilot phase the Action Plans will be completed during November and December 2008

Phase Four: Implementation

Schools will then work with others in their network and with the support of the Improvement Facilitator to implement their action plans. In doing so, they will draw upon other sources of support that are available locally, regionally and nationally

The key element of this phase is the empowerment of the school to achieve effective change that will contribute to improving standards of all pupils. During this phase, the Improvement Facilitator will work both with schools on a one-to-one basis and with the network as a group. The Improvement Facilitator's role will include acting as a coach to the headteacher and as a critical friend in supporting the whole school community in achieving the planned change.

The Welsh Assembly Government has specifically identified the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) both in individual schools and across the networks of schools as a key enabler of change; as such, supporting the development of these PLCs will be an important aspect of the Improvement Facilitator's role.

During Phase Four, the Improvement Facilitator will convene a mid-term review with the headteacher and others to review progress against the agreed action plan.

Timeframe

In the pilot phase the Implementation Phase will be from January 2008 to June 2009.

Phase Five: Review and planning for sustainability

During the final phase, the Improvement Facilitator will work with the school to help it prepare a summative report on the progression made through the pilot. A key aspect of this work will be the repeated completion of the 'School Effectiveness Profile', enabling the school to demonstrate progression made through the pilot.

The Link Adviser and Improvement Facilitator will make a final visit the school. During the course of the visit, they will review the evidence the achievements of the school and the Improvement Facilitator will lead a final review of the school's involvement in the pilot. The purpose of the review is to provide a forum that will enable the school and IF together to look back at what has been achieved though the programme and identify lessons learned that can inform the further development of the School Effectiveness Framework.

The review will include a focus on the work of the network of schools and the development of professional learning communities. Effective practice identified at the review will be fed back locally, regionally and nationally so that it can form part of the support available for the next cycle and for all schools across the region.

Timeframe

In the pilot phase the Final Review will take place in July 2009 by the end of the Summer term.