The future delivery of education services in Wales

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Review undertaken by Robert Hill Consulting 2013

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Preface

As I have travelled round Wales I have been struck by the shared commitment to improve standards of education in Wales. Teachers, school leaders, governors and all those supporting school improvement want to feel pride in the achievements of Welsh schools. One e-mail I received from a headteacher captures this collective spirit:

> '*I am pleased to be able to support you in any way possible, particularly as I fully support what you're doing and know it is absolutely the right way forward for Welsh education.*'

This is a key moment in the improvement journey for schools in Wales. There are some parts of the system that are demonstrating outstanding practice and others where performance is poor. Overall the system might be said to be fair. Many participants recognise the need for change and want to be in the vanguard of improving outcomes and life chances for young people in Wales. They want to see the pathway for taking Welsh schools to a level where they are acclaimed as forming a great system. This report and the options I have set out will, I hope, contribute towards this objective.

Earlier reforms

My report builds on the work of earlier reforms. The School Effectiveness Framework, the Improving schools programme and the Minister for Education and Skills' '20 priorities to tackle underperformance' have created the essential foundations to carry forward the education revolution in Wales. The National Literacy and Numeracy Programmes, the Welsh in Education plans, mandatory training for governors, the implementation of a digital learning platform, the introduction of a Masters' programme for newly qualified teachers, the reform of the qualification for headship and the creation of a School Standards and Delivery Unit are just some of the many changes that have been put in place. In particular the Minister's determination that the Welsh education system confronts its weaknesses has been a key driver in generating the wider momentum for reform and improvement.

I have also been able to draw on the work of the Independent Task and Finish Group, chaired by Vivian Thomas, on the structure of education services in Wales. Its report was published in March 2011 and its analysis and findings provided me with an essential benchmark against which to assess progress over the past two years.

Review process

The terms of reference for this review were drawn widely (see Appendix A). I have tried to address all the issues identified by the Minister but have seen supporting effective teaching and learning in school – including teaching in the Welsh language – as the main focus of attention. I have commented on and put forward options relating to both the Foundation Phase and post-16 where they relate to an issue under discussion. So, for example, I am proposing that the remit of all regional consortia be confirmed to include

providing support for improving outcomes in these areas. In addition I have proposed changes to the performance measures for post-16 providers and opened up the possibility of further education colleges playing a greater role in formal school partnerships.

At the outset of the review I invited submissions based around three questions (see Appendix B for full consultation letter):

• what measures would contribute most to improving the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom in school in Wales?

• what measures should be taken to enable, empower and equip school leaders in Wales to lead significant and sustainable improvement of the school system?

• how can schools in Wales best be held to account and supported in improving outcomes for children and young people?

I received 30 responses and the list of respondees is shown in Appendix C. I am grateful to all those individuals and organisations that took the time and trouble to submit their views. The submissions helped me to understand the aspirations and frustrations of those involved in education in Wales and provided a counterpoint to the analytical material that the Welsh Government made available to me. My report draws on a number of the comments and ideas received.

I was also privileged to visit 20 primary, secondary and special schools across Wales to hear at first hand of the progress that was being made. I have included short case studies from some of these schools in my report. School leaders were also able to share with me their frustrations about how the system was currently working and provide me with ideas about how they could be better supported in their task of raising achievement. A full list of the schools visited appears in Appendix D.

The other indispensable source of evidence came from meetings (and, in some cases, telephone interviews) with a wide range of individuals and organisations. They are listed at Appendix E but include the teacher trade unions, leaders of local authorities, officials in the Department for Education and Skills, Her Majesty 's Chief Inspector of Education and Training , directors of education, governors' representatives, leaders of the regional consortia and last, but by no means least, the education spokespeople for the political parties represented in the National Assembly. I am grateful to all those who made time to see me and share their analysis and thinking with me. Of course, the views expressed in the report are mine and not theirs.

Structure of the report

I have organised this report into six chapters.

Chapter 1 takes the form of an executive summary. It provides an overview of the key themes and includes a summary of the options grouped into two categories: shorter-term more immediate options; and medium-term options.

Chapter 2 addresses what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Chapter 3 considers options for strengthening the development and role of school leaders in the education system.

Chapter 4 sets out options for increasing autonomy for schools, including funding issues, in the context of many more schools working together through formal partnerships such as federations, trusts and other hard cluster arrangements.

Chapter 5 provides options for reforming the school accountability system and provides clarity about who is responsible for what.

Chapter 6 tackles the issue of the respective roles and responsibilities of the local authorities, regional consortia and national government. This is the area where there is the greatest urgency for decisions and action on the options for reform that I have identified. In writing this chapter I have been conscious of the Welsh Government's decision to conduct a more general review of the governance and delivery arrangements of public services in Wales.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have helped me to undertake this review. I would particularly like to thank the Minister for Education and Skills for encouraging me to go wherever the evidence took me and to propose the options that I thought were right for Wales. In addition the civil service team of Sarah Corfield, Julie Webster and particularly Neil Welch, who has driven me many hundreds of miles, have been unstinting in their support. Steve Vincent has been an invaluable guide as I have navigated my way round the Welsh education system.

Final thought

At the end of the report I suggest a test for evaluating how worthwhile this review exercise has been. I suggest that the test should not be whether all the options in this report are adopted. I believe that the review will have been worth undertaking if it leads to a clearer sense among teachers, school leaders, governors, local authorities, regional consortia and government policymakers of how to improve teaching and learning and raise standards in classrooms in Wales. If it does that and if there is a combined will to

turn that sentiment into action then there will be no stopping the rate of improvement and progress that schools and young people across Wales can achieve.

Robert Hill, April 2013

Chapter 1: Executive summary

Improving teaching and learning

The only way for schools in Wales to raise standards of achievement is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. It is the quality of teaching that is the strongest within-school effect on pupils' achievement.

The story so far

Progress is being made. In 2012 the test and exam results for young people at ages 11 and 15 showed continuing improvements being made, using the key benchmarks set by the Welsh Government. The gap in performance between England and Wales, as measured by the proportion of children achieving five good GCSEs, including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, closed slightly – even before the regrading of the English GCSE exam papers in Wales.

Despite the progress very considerable challenges remain. There is still a significant performance gap between pupils in Wales and their counterparts in England at GSCE and A level. The performance of pupils on free school meals (FSM) at Key Stage 4 is 33 percentage points below that of their non-FSM peers.

Estyn reports that around half of all primary and secondary schools require a follow-up visit following an inspection. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training has highlighted significant problems with writing, phonics and the quality of Welsh-language teaching. Around a quarter of primary schools need to raise numeracy standards and in half of secondary schools planning for progression in mathematical skills is weak.

The Welsh Government has taken steps to improve teaching and learning. They include new incentives to attract the best graduates into teaching, higher standards for those training to be teachers and a Masters in Educational Practice programme for newly qualified teachers.

For existing teachers increased support embraces training and resources to back up the introduction of the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, the launch of Hwb (the all-Wales digital learning platform), expert providers to help secondary schools raise attainment in English and mathematics at GCSE and programmes to improve standards of Welsh first and second language teaching. Twenty-one Lead Practitioner Schools have been designated to enable excellent schools to support those that are struggling.

Options for the future

The efforts to attract the best graduates into teaching need to be extended and the training of new teachers linked to the professional development of existing teachers – for example, initial teacher education needs to ensure that the demands of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework are fully understood.

Schools must take responsibility for their own improvement and foster a culture of open classrooms where teachers can observe and learn from each other's practice as a matter of course. The role of school leaders should be focused not on meetings and administration but on instruction and supporting improvement in the classroom.

Professional development programmes should increasingly be based on coaching that improves classroom practice rather than going on training courses. School-to-school working should become the norm with schools and teachers collaborating to share lesson planning, lesson study, learning walks and other action research approaches.

Key short-term options	Key medium-term options
Use high-quality schemes of work from excellent schools to help weaker schools plan and implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework.	Increase the numbers of teachers trained and deployed in partnership with Teach First.
Provide access to a sufficient range of materials and resources in Welsh to support the application of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework across the curriculum.	Expand employment and school-based routes into teaching as Lead Practitioner Schools, federations and clusters develop.
Ensure that literacy and numeracy training is focused on improving classroom teaching, including effective teaching of phonics, reading recovery, writing and numeracy skills, and that delivery is closely coordinated with regional consortia.	Use the curriculum reviews at Key Stages 2 and 4 to ensure that the curriculum prioritises key areas of knowledge and skills. Extend use of video technology to support classroom coaching. Invite the review of Welsh second language teaching, that is already under way, to consider:
Introduce a standardised tracking system for literacy and numeracy for all pupils in years 2 to 9 across Wales.	• extending the use of immersion groups and secondments to Welsh-medium schools to boost the language skills of teachers teaching Welsh as a second language • whether functional skills in Welsh should form part of the core requirement.
Make extensive use of the Improving Teacher Programme (ITP) and Outstanding Teacher Programme (OTP).	Increase the number of Lead Practitioner Schools without comprising on quality, and ensure that special schools and Welsh-medium schools play a full role in the programme.
Set up a nationally approved list of schools from inside and outside Wales to provide classroom and whole-school support and make the list available for consortia and schools to use.	Delegate resources from local authorities to federations and hard clusters of schools (that include Lead Practitioner Special Schools) to be responsible for education welfare services and the provision of additional learning needs.
Promote the Education Endowment Foundation toolkit on closing gaps in attainment and link it to using the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG).	Use Estyn inspections to assess how well schools are deploying their Pupil Deprivation Grant funding and closing gaps in attainment.
Identify and train Lead Practitioners and Lead Practitioner departments to maximise the skills of the best teachers.	

Strengthening school leadership

The quality of leadership in a school is second only to teaching in its impact on student outcomes. Wales has some brilliant school leaders but it is not making as much use of them as it should do – nor are there enough of them.

The story so far

In its 2011/12 report Estyn judged school leadership and management to be 'excellent' in a fifth of secondary schools – though in two-fifths it was only 'adequate' or 'unsatisfactory'. The corresponding figure for primary schools was only six per cent – though in nearly three-quarters of primary schools leadership was assessed as 'good'. Senior leaders in primary schools were failing to focus enough on pupils' standards and were not being sufficiently robust in tackling mediocre and barely adequate teaching. In three-fifths of secondary schools leaders were found to be not focusing sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has been redesigned and since September 2011 it has been awarded on assessing candidates' practice against nationally designated Leadership Standards. However, there are still concerns about the robustness of the qualification which are underlined by there being no clear leadership progression pathway and no nationally commissioned development and training programmes linked to the national Leadership Standards. In particular there is a notable absence of a structured professional development programme or qualification for middle leaders in schools.

The lack of support for aspiring and emerging leaders is all the more acute because leaders are coming to headship too late in their professional careers and around a third of headteachers are due to retire over the next five to ten years.

There are few programmes to support serving headteachers, although Estyn's peer inspection scheme, that enables deputy and assistant heads as well as headteachers to be full members of an inspection team, is widely valued.

The introduction of Lead Practitioner Schools and the growth in the number of executive headteachers represent important steps forward in the developing of school-to-school support. However, executive and school-to-school leadership is seriously underdeveloped. The practice of using the best schools to lead and support weaker schools and empowering schools to share expertise and improve together is far from being the norm.

Options for the future

Teachers should be seen as leaders from the start of their career. Whether it is leading learning in the classroom, becoming a middle leader or aspiring to be a senior leader,

teachers should be aware of the options for exercising their leadership roles and how they can progress to different leadership responsibilities.

Programmes should be put in place to support and develop leaders at every stage of their career. These programmes should combine formal accredited training with undertaking practical whole-school improvement assignments, exercising leadership responsibilities in a different school and being coached by an experienced headteacher.

The leadership qualification structure should be redesigned to provide a stepping-stone qualification to becoming a head and making NPQH the culmination of a development process. Serving heads should be able to access development opportunities and in particular have support for leading whole-school improvement. School leaders should be empowered to play a key role in developing and implementing the school leadership strategy.

Key short-term options	Key medium-term options
Establish leadership development boards, comprised of school leaders, at national and regional level to lead a step-change in the development of school leadership capacity.	Review the NPQH application and assessment procedures as the leadership development framework and stepping-stone qualification to headship is put in place.
Draw up a leadership development pathway agreed with the national leadership development board.	Allocate a coach to all those working towards their NPQH accreditation.
Agree with the national leadership development board the framework for a leadership development curriculum – including the outline of a stepping-stone qualification to headship.	Consider introducing a scholarship scheme to help applicants cover the cost of all or part of the training involved in moving from the stepping-stone qualification to headship to full NPQH accreditation.
Advertise for and accredit providers nationally to develop and deliver leadership development programmes based on the agreed framework, in partnership with Lead Practitioner Schools.	Regional leadership development boards to draw up leadership succession plans.
Regional leadership development boards to commission their best schools and external organisations to provide training for middle leaders – particularly on the use of data, performance management and coaching.	Consider turning the national leadership development board, as it becomes established, into a teaching and leadership academy or foundation – independent of government but receiving some grant funding to support its remit.
Regional consortia to draw on the best schools inside and outside Wales to provide whole-school improvement programmes to support serving heads.	
Regional consortia to work with Lead Practitioner Schools and other federations and	

hard clusters to organise leadership placements across schools within the consortia.	

Increasing school partnership within a context of greater autonomy

Greater autonomy for schools does not on its own result in school improvement. However, giving schools greater control over managing staff, the curriculum and budgets can help boost performance – provided that school leaders are supported, do not get distracted from improving teaching and learning and are subject to clear accountability for their performance. Federations and other types of formal school partnerships provide a strong platform for both increasing autonomy and raising school attainment.

The story so far

Autonomy for schools in Wales is increasing. In 2012/13 the average level of funding delegated by local authorities to schools reached 81 per cent and is due to increase to 85 per cent from April 2014. However, a considerable amount of funding is still being held centrally by local authorities. Some local authorities are encouraging greater autonomy by delegating services to clusters of schools and building up their capacity to manage resources effectively. But in many areas governing bodies are actively discouraged from seeking to procure support services from outside the local authority and too few authorities are doing enough to build up business management expertise within schools.

Parts of the school system are characterised by a local authority dependency culture – particularly in the primary sector. Schools are overly reliant on the local authority for school improvement support to the extent that governors and heads do not feel accountable for the performance of their school. The position is not helped by the variable quality and skills of school governing bodies.

Partnership between schools is growing. However, much of the partnership culture is relatively shallow. In many schools there is a reluctance to share or exchange leaders and outstanding practitioners with another school (or schools) for even one day a week – despite all the evidence pointing to both schools gaining hugely from the experience

There are over 400 primary schools in Wales with fewer than 100 pupils, yet there are only 20 federations covering around 50 schools. It is also surprising that the formal partnering of stronger schools with weaker schools is not being more widely used, given the number of schools that need significant improvement support. An inflexible governance framework is in part contributing to the low number of federations.

Options for the future

There is no one-size-fits-all model for how schools should work together – many schools will be part of more than one partnership at the same time. But there is a strong case on both educational and cost-effectiveness grounds for the majority, and potentially all, of schools in Wales to be part of a formal federation or hard cluster with shared governance

that is led by an executive leader. The federation or cluster might be a primary-to-primary or secondary-to-secondary federation of schools. It could include a cross-phase grouping of schools or be an all-though cluster providing education for pupils aged 3 to 19. Schools should be able choose from a range of models, including federations and trusts, when deciding how to organise and govern their partnership. A two-tier governance arrangement should be introduced that distinguishes between the overall accountability for a group of schools which would be undertaken by a small group of governors recruited for their skills and expertise, and the operation of individual schools that would be overseen by governors representing parents, staff and the local community. This would improve the quality of governance overall while enabling each school within a federation or hard cluster to retain its identity.

A range of measures to incentivise the rapid growth of formal partnerships should be considered – alongside plans to increase school autonomy.

Key short-term options	Key medium-term options
Set out clear direction of travel for schools to work together through formal partnerships.	Amend regulations and legislate as necessary to facilitate a broader range of organisational models for hard clusters of schools, based on the Co-operative Trust Model.
Use headteacher retirements and the implementation of 21st century school strategies to facilitate an increase in the number of federations.	Delegate a higher level of specific grants to schools working through a federation or hard cluster with the expectation that all such funds were paid through federations and hard clusters.
Use the forthcoming guidance on statutory intervention on schools causing concern to indicate that federation with a high performing school should, wherever feasible, form the core of a recovery programme.	Allocate schools capital funding through federation and hard clusters rather than to individual schools.
Establish a funding incentive for high performing schools to assist weak schools.	Consider giving schools in a federation or hard cluster, particularly where they include a special school, the right to provide education welfare and additional learning needs services.
Review the draft regulations on federations to consider how they might be amended to facilitate the proposed two-tier governance model.	Adjust the accountability and inspection system to recognise the added value generated by federations and hard clusters, as well as that by individual schools.
Invite the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to lead the delegation of business and financial management to federations and clusters of schools, based on the Denbighshire County Council model.	Identify a distinct standard spending assessment block for statutory local authority duties and functions such as school transport that cannot sensibly be delegated – separate from a block for schools' spending – and delegate the vast majority of the schools' block to schools.
Delegate schools' allocation of School Effectiveness Grant (SEG), Welsh in Education Grant (WEG) and Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) to schools that are 'good' or better, without requiring them to supply plans for	

Introduce a national template for service level agreements between local authorities and schools.	Commission a detailed study on the potential implications of a national funding formula.

Improving accountability

Accountability regimes that put too much emphasis on high-stake tests and inspections can result in a narrowing of the curriculum, shallow learning and gaming by schools and teachers. But a weak or confused accountability framework means schools end up being secret gardens with parents, the public and policymakers not knowing how effective they are. Schools have no basis for benchmarking and learning from each other and little incentive to improve performance. Accountability systems need to balance these factors.

The story so far

The past two years has seen a number of positive changes. The assessment at the end of the Foundation Phase and the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate ensures that broader skills and learning, and not just attainment in tests, are being valued and assessed. The introduction of a Common Inspection Framework has brought consistency to how schools, colleges, early years providers and local authorities are inspected and judged.

The introduction of banding for secondary schools is helping to challenge complacency by focusing on the progress that schools are making each year. The new National Reading and Numeracy Tests that are, from May 2013, being taken by pupils at the end of each year from Years 2 to 9, will help schools in assessing pupils' standards of reading and numeracy. The My Local School website opens up access to schools' data for parents/carers and others with an interest in their local school.

There are, however, serious accountability challenges to deal with. Assessment and moderation at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 are weak. This is significant because the new annual tests that form part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework do not cover writing and oracy – and so teacher assessment will still be required. Besides the six-yearly Estyn inspection there is no reliable way to hold primary schools to account.

There are concerns about how aspects of the banding system are operating for secondary schools. Schools are receiving much better performance data but the number and use of different data sets is causing some confusion. In addition, post-16 performance measures for schools and colleges are not aligned, the timing of school inspections is too predictable and the systems for dealing with persistently underperforming teachers and headteachers are cumbersome to operate.

Options for the future

The options for improving accountability do not represent wholesale change: they seek to build on existing strengths while addressing the challenges. The options presume that a

school's performance should take account of its absolute level of pupil attainment but should also reflect its progress as assessed against:

- its projected level of achievement and the actual value added – having regard to the prior attainment of pupils and the performance of the highest and the lowest attainers

- its context, as measured by the proportion of FSM students and the number of students with a statement of special educational needs

- its progress in closing gaps in attainment between FSM and non-FSM pupils

- its performance compared with other schools with a similar cohort of students, with assessment being common to all types of providers for the age group in question; and

- broader measures of performance, including rates of attendance and levels of pupil and parental engagement and satisfaction.

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- its performance compared with other schools with a similar cohort of students, with assessment being common to all types of providers for the age group in question; and

- broader measures of performance, including rates of attendance and levels of pupil and parental engagement and satisfaction.

Key short-term options	Key medium-term options
Link the proposed all-Wales system for tracking pupils from Years 2 to 9 to the National Reading and Numeracy Tests to provide an overall assessment of a child's progress. Introduce a bank of standardised tasks (not tests) at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 to help teachers assess pupil progress in writing (including proficiency in spelling, punctuation and grammar) and oracy more consistently.	Introduce an annual balanced school report card that summarises for every primary school their performance and progress. Use the planned changes to the GCSE and vocational qualifications system that are being introduced from September 2015 onwards as the basis for considering a move to a balanced scorecard for secondary schools. Review the operation of the inspection model to ensure that it is appropriate for schools

Continue with school banding but discuss with secondary school leaders their concerns about its detailed operation in order to build greater consensus and ownership.	working as part of federations, trusts or other hard clusters.
Simplify and consolidate the various data sets so that schools, local authorities, regional consortia and Estyn all use the same data sets and work to and interpret data in the same way.	Provide a separate inspection assessment of post-16 provision in schools linked to the use of common performance data.
Assess the performance of post-16 students in all settings using standardised completion, attainment, success and destination data.	Carry out a fundamental review of the inspection criteria for local authorities to reflect the transfer of school improvement functions to regional consortia.
Inspect schools on a more proportionate and less predictable basis and reduce the notice for inspection to two or three working days.	Monitor the impact of the new governor training arrangements.
Publish procedures to ensure that heads and governors can address in a timely way the capability of staff and headteachers that have had the opportunity and support to improve, but whose performance remains inadequate.	Enable outstanding chairs of governors to act as Lead Practitioners and so support improvements in governance at other schools. Work with CBI Wales and other employers to develop a register of aspiring and serving business leaders willing to serve as school governors in each region.
Provide a standard school performance data template for governors.	

Organising school improvement functions

There is an economy of scale to the expertise and resources needed to coordinate school improvement support and so it makes sense to organise this function at a regional, city or sub-regional level. The current arrangements in Wales are profoundly unsatisfactory. However, there is a widespread recognition that things cannot continue as they are.

The story so far

Five of the local authorities inspected by Estyn under the Common Inspection Framework have been assessed as good – including some which had previous struggled. However, six have only been judged 'adequate' (with four authorities in Estyn monitoring) and seven have been assessed as 'unsatisfactory' (with six authorities in special measures and one in need of significant improvement).

The fact that there are so many small local authorities is a major contributory factor. Despite this there has been a reluctance by local authorities to consider joint appointments of directors of education services and/or merging services. The Welsh Local Government Association has itself recognised that 'the system is underperforming and that is unacceptable and unsustainable'.

Four regional educational consortia are now up and running. An initial review in late 2012 found some encouraging signs of progress and indications of the potential benefits of the new arrangements. However, the performance of regional consortia is too variable. The system leader arrangements are not working properly. In part this is because the wrong people have been recruited into the role, and in part there is confusion about what the job is about. A disproportionate share of the budget is going into funding these posts rather than commissioning whole-school improvement programmes.

Other serious issues of concern include no shared understanding on the scope of activity that consortia should be undertaking, unnecessary inconsistencies in how they are operating, weak organisational structures and executive leadership in some consortia, insufficient urgency and action regarding the schools that are most in need of support and a lack of a coherent delivery chain for supporting the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

Some local authorities are inhibiting the development of the regional consortia and duplicating their functions. There is a lack of clarity about which body is responsible for what – particularly when it comes to intervening in failing schools.

The options for the future

Democratic accountability is a vital principle. In an ideal world Wales would have local authorities with a passion and vision for young people growing up to be highly educated and skilled. Authorities would ensure that there were enough places at a range of good schools and colleges. They would support parents to make choices on their children's schooling. They would know what was happening in their schools and would help to develop school leadership, build school-to-school capacity and expect heads and governors to be responsible for school performance – though they would intervene where necessary. Authorities would broker federations and hard clusters between schools. As these partnerships took root they would devolve budgets and services. It is a model based on enabling and empowering schools to support each other in a coordinated way. It will take time to achieve and it does not require there to be 22 separate local authority education services.

In the medium term a complete reorganisation of local authority education functions and boundaries is required, as part of the more general review of the governance and delivery arrangements of public services in Wales, in order to realise this strategy. However, in the short term reorganisation would be a distraction. The focus must be on bringing clarity to the existing system, consolidating the number of education services and ensuring that all the consortia are operating as effectively as possible as quickly as possible. There is real urgency on this issue.

Key short-term options	Key medium-term options
Cut the number of local authority education services by a third by April 2014 either by voluntary mergers or the Minister for Education and Skills using his powers to	Include education in new slimline elected local authorities that: • reflect Wales' city regions and economic

intervene following unsatisfactory Estyn inspections.	sub-regions to support how an authority's education vision linked to a region's skills, enterprise and employment agenda
Local authorities to stop providing school improvement services.	• integrate key public services and functions and operate on a co-terminus basis to reduce duplication and maximise synergies between functions
Fund regional consortia directly by top-slicing Revenue Support Grant subject to:	
• all consortia covering a standard set of key functions	• reflect the new slimmed-down commissioning role of local authorities and focus on supporting the development of a self-sustaining, school-led improvement system; and
• consortia obtaining Ministerial consent for their organisational structures, annual business plans, outcome targets and appointment of their director	• locate political responsibility for education with a named elected member, supported by a named education lead officer.
• consortia governance being vested in a board of local authority leaders, a Ministerial appointee, an education improvement expert and three headteachers (one primary, one secondary and one special school)	Consider relatively minor consortia boundary changes to secure greater coherence with the footprint of how other public services in Wales are organised.
• attending a twice-yearly stocktake with the Minister for Education and Skills	Strengthen the School Standards and Delivery Unit so that it has sufficient expertise to:
• moving as quickly as practicable to a core staffing model, supplemented by buying in a range of school improvement expertise.	• contribute to leading-edge teaching and learning practice, and leadership of school improvement
Use reserve powers to bring in other providers where consortia fail to deliver.	• support and challenge the plans and work of consortia in preparation for the proposed twice-yearly stocktakes; and
Establish written protocols between regional consortia and local authorities regarding intervention in schools causing concern.	• act as an expert link into education policy making within the Welsh Government.

Chapter 2: Options for improving classroom teaching and learning

Introduction

'High performance requires every child to succeed'. That research finding highlighted by the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) in its evidence to this review demonstrates exactly the level of ambition required of pupils, parents, teachers and policymakers if education standards and achievement in Wales are to rise. The GTCW also picked out two other key conclusions from research[1].

- 'The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.'
- 'The only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction.'

If the goal is for Wales to have a high-performing education system and for its young people to be among the best educated in the world then improving the quality of what happens in the classroom is fundamental to achieving this objective. There can be no educational transformation until and unless all Welsh schools – irrespective of whether they are English-medium, Welsh-medium or bilingual – are characterised by consistently high-quality teaching and learning. As the Welsh Local Government Association stated in its submission to the review:

> *'The learning of all children in their classroom is the most important factor that all education policies must concentrate and impact upon.'*

So this chapter addresses that part of my terms of reference that require me 'to identify the strategies that are most likely to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools in Wales'. Figure 2.1 provides a framework for considering this by summarising the key insights and lessons that research suggests could help translate the vision for high-quality teaching and learning into a reality.

Figure 2.1 – Key research findings on improving teaching and learning

In terms of the effect that schools can have on student achievement it is the quality of teaching that has the strongest impact. Students placed with high-performing teachers can progress up to three times as fast as those placed with low-performing teachers. Developing teachers makes the biggest contribution to student learning outcomes.

Variations in the quality of teaching are as great within schools as they are between schools.

Attracting the most able graduates into teaching not only broadens and deepens the skill base but enhances the status of the profession.

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[1] Barber and Mourshed (2007)

The best-performing countries have moved initial teacher education programmes towards a more classroom-based model with teachers being supported to:

• diagnose student problems swiftly and accurately and to use data effectively

• draw from a wide repertoire of possible solutions to meet student's needs.

Initial teacher education, induction and ongoing professional development need to be interconnected to create a learning and development continuum for teachers.

Teachers need to be viewed as 'knowledge workers': the best way to foster this approach is through school-based teacher professional development that links teacher inquiry and development with school improvement.

In those parts of an education system that are 'poor to fair' interventions should focus on supporting students in achieving essential literacy and numeracy skills and equipping and coaching low-skilled teachers to use high-quality frameworks and teaching materials to deliver effective lessons.

Institutionalising improved practice (i.e. ensuring the consistency and quality of teaching across the system) does not come from leaving classroom practice up to each individual practitioner, but is best achieved by encouraging, equipping and empowering teachers to plan lessons together, observe each other's practice and assess in a disciplined way the impact of teaching and learning innovations.

The best systems identify leading practitioners and relieve them of some or all of their teaching duties so that they can model practice, provide instruction to their peers, coach other colleagues on a district, provincial and even national scale.

Engaging teachers in school improvement programmes and building professional trust is important but needs to be developed alongside effective and rigorous management of teacher performance.

Sources: Barber and Mourshed (2007); Barber et al (2010); Hanushek and Rivkin (2012); Mourshed et al (2010); OECD (2005); OECD (2011a)

Recent progress

It is important to record and celebrate the progress that pupils and schools in Wales are making. The most recent test and exam results indicate that in 2012:

• four in five pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase achieved the expected outcomes in all the mandatory areas of learning

- 82.6 per cent of pupils achieved the core subject indicator (English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science) at Key Stage 2 at age 11, and 72.5 per cent at Key Stage 3 at age 14. These results represented increases of 2.6 and 4.5 percentage points respectively since 2011

- 51.1 per cent of 15-year-olds at Key Stage 4 achieved A*–C grades in five or more GCSEs or their equivalents, including English or Welsh first language and mathematics. This was one percentage point higher than in 2010/11 and 6.7 percentage points higher than in 2006/07

- the gap in the level of achievement between free schools meals (FSM) pupils and other pupils narrowed at Key Stage 1 and stabilised at Key Stage 4

- the gap in performance between England and Wales, as measured by the proportion of children achieving five good GCSEs including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, closed slightly – even when the regrading of the English GCSE exam papers in Wales is disregarded.

Challenges to be addressed

Despite the progress that has been made very considerable challenges remain. For example, using the measure of five or more A*–C grades including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, there is still a significant performance gap at Key Stage 4 of over eight percentage points between the performance of pupils in Wales and their counterparts in England. Only six percent of students taking an A level exam in 2012 achieved the highest pass mark of A* – nearly two percentage points lower than the corresponding figure for England.

Girls continue to outperform boys at each key stage. Although the performance of pupils from the most deprived backgrounds (as measured by entitlement to FSM) has improved, and although they have narrowed the gap in the core subject indicators at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, the gap between FSM pupils and their peers at Key Stage 4 still stands at 33 percentage points.

But test results only describe part of the picture. The annual reports from Estyn[2] reveal some of the deeper problems with the quality of teaching and learning in Welsh schools that lie behind these headline figures.

In 2011/12 Estyn reported that performance was 'excellent' in only three per cent of primary schools inspected and the prospects for improvement were only 'excellent' in six per cent. Nearly half of all primary schools inspected were identified for follow-up visits because of concerns about inspection outcomes.

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[2] Estyn (2012) and Estyn (2013)

Estyn found proportionately more (14 per cent) 'excellent' secondary schools but also more 'satisfactory' ones – in two-fifths of secondary schools performance is only 'adequate', in 14 per cent it is 'unsatisfactory' and over half require follow-up visits from inspectors.

Standards of writing 'remain a concern across all school sectors' and in both English and Welsh first language schools. At Key Stage 2:

> '*A minority of pupils have weak writing skills and do not transfer the grammar and spelling skills they have learnt in language sessions to their writing in other subjects without the teacher's support.*'
> Estyn (2013)

In the 54 per cent of secondary schools where standards are either 'inadequate' or 'unsatisfactory' pupils' writing is:

> '*Often short, features a narrow range of styles and purposes and contains too many errors in spelling punctuation and grammar. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length for different purposes in subjects other than English/Welsh first language. Neither are they given enough opportunities to benefit from helpful marking practice.*'
> Estyn (2013)

These are pretty damning indictments on basic pedagogical issues. Nor is Estyn's criticism limited to writing standards. In 2010/11 Estyn described the use of phonics as 'patchy' and in 2011/12 found that there were 'unacceptable degrees of variability in pupils' reading scores between schools and between local authorities' – particularly for FSM pupils. Pupils are making excellent progress in acquiring Welsh second language skills in fewer than one in ten primary schools.

Around a quarter of primary schools need to raise numeracy standards – with pupils lacking confidence in basic number skills such as division and working with fractions. In these schools and in half of secondary schools planning for the application and development of mathematical skills across the curriculum is weak.

The quality of formative assessment, highlighted as part of the problem with writing standards, seems to be deeper and wider. In around half of secondary schools:

> '*Marking does not give clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their work Teachers do not make sure that pupils review and respond to their marking, particularly to improve the accuracy of their written work.*'
> Estyn (2013)

The introduction of the Welsh Government's National Literacy and Numeracy Framework – coupled with the annual tests in reading and numeracy, provide an excellent and essential basis for focusing on and tackling these issues. However, as Her Majesty's

Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales says in the foreword to her 2011/12 report, teachers from Years 2 to 9 will also need:

> '*Guidance, exemplification of standards and training on what is in effect a re-calibration of their curriculum if we are to see a step-change in outcomes. We need to build teachers' capacity to deliver the improvement that we want to see in national external assessment and in international tests like PISA.*'
> Estyn (2013)

If providing more support forms one part of the challenge then taking action to address poor-quality teaching is the other. Estyn reports that while most primary school leaders tackle the poor performance of individual teaching where it is unsatisfactory they are not robust enough in addressing mediocre teaching. In three-fifths of secondary schools there is not a sharp enough focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.

The reluctance of some headteachers to challenge the quality of teaching and learning may be related, suggested Torfaen County Borough Council in its submission to the review, because the processes available to them are 'complex, cumbersome and time consuming'. This is an issue I return to in Chapter 5.

Delivery options for reform

Improving teaching and learning requires action in two areas:

- increasing the calibre and capacity of the teachers joining the profession and coming into classrooms in Welsh schools
- and improving the skills of teachers currently teaching.

I address each of these areas in turn.

Delivery options for recruiting and training higher-quality teachers

The Welsh Government has already instigated a range of actions to get the best graduates into Welsh classrooms. For example, it has:

- introduced training and tuition grants to attract graduates in key subjects – such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, modern languages, ICT and Welsh

- set the grants at a level to incentivise graduates with the best degrees to join initial teaching training (ITT)

- raised, from 2014/15, the minimum entry standard for acceptance on to an ITT course from a GCSE grade C in English and mathematics to a GCSE grade B

- toughened up the requirements for monitoring and checking that trainee teachers possess the necessary skills in literacy and numeracy

- formed a partnership with the education charity Teach First. Building on the model that has proved effective in England for attracting high-quality graduates into schools in areas of disadvantage, the first 40 outstanding Teach First graduates are being recruited in Welsh schools from June 2013 and

- set up a review of initial teacher education by Professor Ralph Tabberer that will focus on the quality and consistency of teaching, training and assessment in ITT.

In addition to these measures I would recommend that the government considers, alongside the recommendations in the report from Professor Tabberer, a number of further options.

First, given the track record of Teach First over the last ten years in attracting outstanding graduates and enhancing the reputation of teaching as a profession, the Welsh Government should consider expanding the numbers of new teachers recruited and trained through this route.

Second, as Lead Practitioner Schools, federations and clusters develop (see Chapter 4) the Welsh Government should expand employment and school-based routes into teaching. The best teacher training provides a good balance between theoretical learning and classroom practice under the guidance of experienced academic tutors and expert coaches with current classroom experience. From my visits to schools it is clear that schools assessed as excellent and special schools both feel that they have much to add to the process of recruiting and training the next generation of teachers. Lead Practitioner Schools in particular should have – or be able to develop – the capacity to play a larger role in training the next generation of teachers.

Third, the professional development for teachers within schools needs to be closely aligned with initial teacher education. In particular it is vital that teacher trainees coming into their first post in a Welsh school are knowledgeable about and equipped to teach the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

Delivery options for improving the skills and performance of existing teachers

As with initial teacher education the Welsh Government has taken a number of important steps to support the development of teachers in schools. In particular it has:

- provided a wide range of planning guidance, training packs and exemplar materials via the Learning Wales website to support schools as they plan to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework

- commissioned the education charity CfBT Education Trust to deliver a major four-year literacy and numeracy training programme, starting in June 2013, that will provide support for every school

- commissioned Education London to run workshops and provide support for secondary schools to raise attainment in English and mathematics at GCSE

- introduced a Masters in Educational Practice open to all newly qualified teachers as part of their induction and early professional development. The qualification is focused round the Welsh Government's three priority areas – literacy, numeracy and the impact of attainment on poverty – and provides accreditation based on action research and other practically focused research activities

- launched Hwb, the all-Wales digital learning platform. Hwb is designed to encourage, support and prepare teachers to operate in an increasingly digital environment and to share their digital practice. Hwb also provides a national repository for creating, storing and sharing digital resources, which can be accessed anywhere, anytime and from any device

- made available PISA inset training materials to helps schools and teachers develop as part of everyday learning pupils' meta-cognitive skills and their ability to apply their knowledge in a range of contexts; and

- encouraged the development of professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs involve a group of practitioners working together in a structured and disciplined way to test and refine a particular aspect of their teaching practice in order to improve learner outcomes and so raise school standards.

Effective education, more than almost any other profession or occupation, relies on the effective use of human capital – on the motivation and skills of the teachers and support staff who work with them. The key to achieving a step-change in the quality of classroom teaching and learning is therefore to improve the skills of teachers. The following proposals provide a range of complementary options for helping to achieve this objective.

Embedding an open culture

In some of the discussions and meetings I have held there has been a tendency to view the classroom as a teacher's private domain. This is not, I believe, the predominant view and in most of the schools I visited I was told of good examples of open and collaborative learning between staff. Figure 2.2 provides a description from a Welsh-medium school of what good collaborative working looks like

Figure 2.2 – The use of peer learning and lesson observation in Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen

Lesson observation has played a crucial role in the school's self-evaluation systems for many years. All teachers are observed annually as part of the system. At the end of the lesson it is discussed orally and a written report is produced as soon as possible using Estyn's grades and definitions.

Over the years, most of the observation has been done by the senior management team but in recent years advisors from Cynnal (the school advisory service) have been part of the system, together with heads of department and, more recently, the other teachers. This can very often mean that two or three people are in a class observing the same lesson. The subsequent discussion between the observers is one of the strengths of the system and has raised all the teachers' awareness of the characteristics of good learning and teaching.

All teachers now both observe and are observed by a fellow teacher as part of the formal self-evaluation process. This is one of the strengths of the school's system and it offers opportunities for disseminating and developing best practice.

When the first round of lesson observations was held under the new framework in January 2011, not one lesson was judged to be 'excellent'. During the following two self-evaluations the school focused on trying to raise the standard of the 'good' lessons to become 'excellent.'

As part of the feedback on these lessons, constructive discussions were held between a member of the senior management team, an advisor from Cynnal and the heads of department or another teacher. This was very often the first time that some teachers had observed colleagues and taken part in a wider discussion on that lesson. This proved to be excellent in-service training, leading to useful professional discussions amongst the teachers, both formal and informal. This process has led to better consistency regarding planning good and excellent lessons throughout the school.

After these periods of lesson observation a staff meeting is always held to discuss the strengths of the lessons observed and the matters needing improvement. This dissemination of good practice is always very valuable. Staff meetings are also held to discuss the characteristics of excellent lessons and to look at examples of excellent lessons.

A particular strength of the lessons that are excellent in the school is the pace of the lessons and the detailed plans that state the activities of the pupils and the teachers within specified times. This ensures the engagement of the most difficult pupils so that they are always 'on task'. The other characteristic element of the teaching that is good or better is the feedback that the pupils receive on their work, and the method of responding using 'two stars and a wish' is another outcome of the joint observation.

In November 2012 Estyn inspected Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen and assessed it to be an 'excellent' school with 'excellent prospects for improvement'. Inspectors noted that the quality and consistency of teaching as being one of the school's strengths, with half of the lessons observed being 'excellent'. The aim of the school in the future is to try to ensure that the teaching is good or excellent in every lesson.

Source: Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen

Creating an open classroom culture is not some side issue. As the Torfaen submission argues there is a need to develop:

> '*A culture of* '*open classrooms*' *in schools where visitors being in the classroom is a commonplace event and observation of practice to improve professional development a regular and frequent occurrence…[with] all teachers having the opportunity for feedback on their delivery from their line managers, their peers and their pupils.*'

Nor is this issue just one for the Welsh Government – though, as Chapter 5 explains, there are steps that the government can take to support its development. Governors, school leaders, teachers and professional organisations also need to embrace and foster an open way of working – and involve pupils in the process of how to improve teaching and learning. In its submission to me Estyn describes the culture and practice that should be prevailing in all schools:

> '*At school levels leaders and managers need to identify excellent and underperforming teachers, through systematic assessment observation of lessons and monitoring of learners*' *work. They then need to support other teachers to improve by arranging for them to see best practice and be coached and mentored as necessary.*'

Being open to learn and improve practice is at the heart of what it means to be a professional.

Developing an appropriate professional development model

Too much professional development has in the past been in the form of 'going on courses' or participating in 'show-and-tell' best practice visits. Initiatives such as this are not without value but the research tells us that they are not the most effective ways of building up the skills, repertoire and learning of classroom teachers. As the GTCW explains in its submission the best professional development comes through practitioners sharing their practice. External training is much more likely to be effective if it is linked to joint lesson planning, joint lesson study, joint learning walks, peer lesson observation and evaluation, coaching or being coached or participating in a professional learning community. In other words the emphasis is on applying the learning and improving classroom practice. Ideally the joint learning takes place across schools as well as within schools.

Some of the consortia are trying to develop school improvement approaches that reflect this approach. For example, the Learning and Innovation Network for Schools (LINKS) (that is run at arms' length from the Central South consortium) is deliberately trying to move away from a reliance on what it refers to as 'training-type' programmes that were run by the predecessor school improvement service. It is starting to develop 'school-to-school working that moves intelligence around the system'. Examples include:

- supporting 15 primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan and three secondary schools that are working in a cluster to improve teaching approaches to reading and oracy

- working with a Welsh-medium school to embed numeracy skills across the curriculum and facilitating the use of the materials and the associated learning by other schools.

Given the Estyn analysis of pedagogical weaknesses one approach that has proved very effective, and builds on a model of teachers learning and practising together, would be to expand the use of two initiatives developed by Ravens Wood School in the London borough of Bromley as part of London Challenge: the Improving Teacher Programme (ITP) and the Outstanding Teacher programme (OTP) – see Figures 2.3 and 2.4. Many schools in England and some in Wales (including LINKS referred to above) are now using these programmes. There is the potential for many more Welsh schools to do so. The design and delivery of these programmes could provide a means to improve the pedagogical practice of a substantial number of teachers within a relatively short timescale. The programmes would sit alongside the use of headteacher-led whole-school improvement described in Chapter 3.

Figure 2.3 – The Improving Teacher Programme

The ITP provides teachers assessed as 'satisfactory' with a set of skills and strategies that enable them to become consistently good. It is open to teachers with the potential to deliver consistently good lessons. The programme runs over one half-term. It is delivered by accredited facilitators through face-to-face taught sessions, classroom observations and learning walks within the host school.

What are the aims?	What does it involve?	What is the commitment?
- Develop a common language to discuss teaching and learning. - Deepen understanding of key aspects of good teaching and learning and how to deliver them consistently in practice. - Raise performance in the classroom, by encouraging more thorough planning and challenging and engaging every student in lessons. - Respond to being coached in order to enhance performance.	The initial stage of the programme poses the question 'what makes a good teacher?' Each session then has a different teaching and learning focus including engagement, challenge, starters, plenaries, questioning and differentiation. Participants will be expected to complete post-session tasks back in their own school, to consolidate ideas from each session and apply them to their own context.	The programme works best if schools are able to send three teachers on the same course, as practical school-based tasks are based on groups of three. However, it is still viable if a school cannot release three teachers at the same time, as it is possible to create a triad across different schools.

Figure 2.4 – The Outstanding Teacher Programme

The OTP provides teachers assessed as 'good' with a set of skills and strategies that enable them to become consistently and sustainably outstanding. It is open to teachers with the potential and drive to deliver consistently outstanding lessons. It is delivered by accredited facilitators.

What topics are covered?	What are the eligibility criteria?	What is the commitment?
- What does outstanding teaching look like? - Classroom pedagogy, including new learning on differentiation. - Coaching and mentoring. - Auditing strengths and weaknesses of in-school practice. - Developing success criteria. - Using effective questioning? - Understanding assessment. - Action planning and evaluation. The programme includes practical tasks back in a participant's own school along with observation in the host school.	Candidates must: - be 'Good' with the potential to achieve 'Outstanding' - have at least three years' teaching experience - be a highly respected, inspiring professional who demonstrates high order interpersonal skills - have a commitment both to continuing their professional development and that of other staff.	Each programme comprises nine sessions over nine weeks. The programme works best if schools are able to send three teachers on the same course, as coaching takes place in triads. However, it is still viable if a school cannot release three teachers at the same time, as it is possible to create a triad across more than one school.

A further option that would help increase the pool of expert training and development expertise would be for the Welsh Government to invite and approve a list schools from inside and outside Wales that were accredited to provide classroom-based and whole-school support and interventions. Regional consortia and schools would draw on this list to meet their specific school improvement needs.

Some schools might argue that this approach to CPD is all very well in theory but not deliverable in practice because of insufficient resources and staff time. First, such an approach is no more expensive than sending staff on conferences and courses – and will almost certainly provide much better value for money in terms of the knowledge gained and progress made. Second, the development of staff is core business and needs to be considered as part of schools drawing up their core budget – not some optional add-on. However, the proposals in Chapter 4 that propose new arrangements for schools to work in clusters and federations and the option to increase the level of delegation to schools provide a context that will support this agenda.

Making the most of the literacy and numeracy training and support programme

It is absolutely vital that the substantial investment the Welsh Government has made in training and development for literacy and numeracy is used effectively. The training should focus on building up the skills of both classroom practitioners and teaching assistants. Training and effective deployment is key to teaching assistants adding the greatest value in the classroom, as Unison pointed out in its submission.

I would expect to see the bulk of the training and development resource and effort being deployed in providing classroom coaching and effective teaching of phonics, reading recovery, writing and numeracy skills. The training will be a major missed opportunity if it just focuses on action plans and sending curriculum leaders on courses. The training should be bespoke to the needs of each school and be based around improving lesson planning, classroom practice and formative assessment – in particular the provision of effective feedback.

This will require regional consortia and the company awarded the training contract, CfBT, to pool their resources and work very closely with each other and with headteachers and coordinators in schools. Efforts should be targeted on schools and staff identified through visits made by system leaders. The aligning of intelligence and deployment of high-quality school-based training is essential if the aspirations for making gains in literacy and numeracy are to be realised. The new framework represents what Estyn refers to as 'a recalibration' of the curriculum. The research evidence is overwhelming on the need for intensive support and capacity building if new curricula are to achieve their objectives.

Developing curriculum support to facilitate the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework

A further issue that needs urgent consideration is the development of curriculum support, schemes of work and assessment practice to help those primary and secondary schools that currently do not have strong leadership and/or are not performing adequately. Estyn assessed around a quarter of primary schools in 2011/12 as being either adequate or unsatisfactory. The research suggests that such schools – many of which may be very small – will struggle or fail to adapt to implement the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework effectively if they are left to their own devices.

One option that would be relatively straightforward to implement, and would also help to strengthen leadership of the system by schools, would be for the Welsh Government and/or the regional consortia to identify schools that have developed effective curriculum plans to meet the needs of the new frameworks and use the Learning Wales website and networking sessions to share this work with other schools.

Simplifying the curriculum and assessment demands

During my visits to schools and discussions with school leaders there has been widespread support for the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and the inclusion of new GCSEs to support the framework. However, school leaders have also said that the curriculum now needs to be reviewed and, as one headteacher put it to me, "de-cluttered", in order to provide a clear focus on improving literacy and numeracy. This is not to advocate a 'Gradgrind'[3] approach to learning since, as Estyn has highlighted, an essential part of effective literacy and numeracy is the application and practice of these skills in other curriculum areas and subject contexts. It is more a question of securing mastery of key concepts and skills to support development and understanding in other subject areas.

School leaders also highlight the need to remove most of the national curriculum assessments required at the end of Key Stage 2 which they consider overlap with the demands of the end of year reading and numeracy tests.

The Minister for Education and Skills is already acting on this agenda. On 1 October 2012 he announced a review of assessment and the national curriculum in Wales. The review aims to streamline and simplify assessment arrangements and consider the national curriculum core and other foundation subjects at each stage to ensure that expectations of content and skills development are suitably robust.

At Key Stage 4 the new GCSEs that are planned in English language and Welsh first language and the proposed two new mathematics GCSEs covering numeracy and mathematical techniques reinforce the need to consider the breadth of the requirements arising from the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009[4] that schools are required to offer. A Task and Finish Group chaired by a headteacher has been established by the Minister for Education and Skills to look at simplifying the Key Stage 4 requirements on schools and colleges. It will report to the Minister by September 2013.

Tracking the progress of every child in a consistent way

Effective teachers tailor their teaching content to enhance the progress of their pupils. They know how well each of their pupils is progressing – the areas where they are strong and where they need support. Using assessment to inform teaching and provide effective feedback to pupils are essential teacher skills. A majority of primary schools in Wales are using a programme developed by a not-for-profit organisation called Incerts that provides an online tool that helps teachers assess, monitor and report on the progress of every child.

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[3] Mr Gradgrind is the headmaster in Dickens's novel *Hard Times* and is associated with someone who is predominantly concerned with cold facts and numbers.
[4] The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 currently enables all pupils at Key Stage 4 to choose from a minimum of 30 course choices, of which five must be vocational.

The Incerts programme is currently designed to support the national curriculum but is being revised to support the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

A strong option is to introduce a standard formative assessment tool, whether it is Incerts or any other programme, that would be used by all schools in Wales to support the roll-out of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. Such an option should also be adopted by secondary schools for Years 7 to 9 so that there was continuity and focus on literacy and numeracy for the whole of the age group covered by the new framework. This would also help to address the problems identified in the 2011/12 Estyn report regarding the weaknesses and inconsistencies in how information on pupil progress is being transferred and used between primary and secondary schools.

This approach was advocated by a number of the organisations submitting evidence to the review. For example, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru proposed that 'a national data tracking system…be deployed in every school'. The sub-group of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) that specialises in management information for school improvement argued that:

> '*Establishment of common assessments (including Regional assessments) to supplement National Assessments/tests would enable early identification and better tracking and target setting leading to improved school performance.*'

Of course, any tracking system however consistent or helpful will be of limited value unless teachers and middle leaders become proficient in how to use data to target appropriate support to each child and can plan their lessons and curriculum progression to reflect what the data tells them.

Expanding Lead Practitioner arrangements

A key element of the terms of reference for this review was to 'develop the capacity of the school system to support its own improvement'. Extending Lead Practitioner arrangements are at the heart of meeting this objective.

The Welsh Government has recently designated 21 Lead Practitioner Schools. Their role is to use their leadership expertise as high-performing primary and secondary schools to support those schools which have made efforts to improve performance but thus far with limited success. It is important for the integrity of this initiative that only schools that are really outstanding and have the understanding and capacity to support other schools are designated as Lead Practitioner Schools – and their designation should be kept under review if their performance starts to slip back. These schools will also need support to grow into their new role. Subject to these constraints it should be the aim to increase the number of Lead Practitioner Schools year- on-year. In addition the Welsh Government, working with regional consortia, could invite applications for and designate on the basis of rigorous nationally determined criteria:

- Lead Practitioner departments – there are some schools that will not necessarily have the strength in depth to qualify for overall Lead Practitioner status but may have high-performing departments – or for primary schools areas of curriculum practice – that contain expertise which could help to support development in specific subject areas. Accrediting these departments would provide a specialist resource to support other schools and which, as Chapter 4 explains, would also benefit the host school

- Lead Practitioners – Chapter 3 describes how school leadership needs to embrace the concept of leadership in the classroom. Schools in Wales need to recognise and maximise the skills of expert classroom practitioners. Developing a nationwide system of accredited Lead Practitioners with the skills to model high-quality teaching and coach other teachers for one or two days a week would provide a straightforward and timely boost to the capacity of the Welsh schools system to support its own improvement. The idea would build on and incorporate the planned identification and use of outstanding teachers of literacy and numeracy.

Both the above options would require regional consortia to commission programmes to ensure that teachers were equipped to model excellent practice and to coach their peers. Developing an extensive network of teachers with strong coaching skills is going to be fundamental to improving teaching and learning in the classroom. Figure 2.5 explains the role of teacher coaches.

Figure 2.5 – Understanding the role of teacher coaches

Coaching in schools is based round a professional dialogue between a skilled and experienced practitioner (the coach) and a classroom teacher (the coachee). The purpose is to aid the coachee to develop specific professional skills to enhance their teaching repertoire. The coach may model specific elements of a skill, will observe the coachee, provide structured feedback and provide opportunities for reflection and problem solving.

The focus of the coaching may be selected by either the coachee or may arise from a development need that has been identified following discussion between the coachee and his or her line manager.

Coaches are not normally in positions of line management in relation to their coachee.

Source: Adapted from Lofthouse et al (2010)

There would also need to be a recognition that host schools might need some initial pump priming funds to backfill for that part of a teacher's time that they were supporting other schools – though one would expect other schools to contribute towards the cost of any coaching or professional development support they received. So in steady state scenario one would expect a school hosting a Lead Practitioner department and/or a Lead Practitioner to be able to generate the resources necessary to provide proper cover for school-to-school support.

An indication of the potential effectiveness of these programmes comes from South West and Mid Wales regional consortium. Working with headteachers and other leaders the consortium carefully selected and trained schools leaders to undertake interventions to support other schools. The interventions included carrying out a concentrated two-day school review, modelling management behaviours, systems and strategies and acting as a leadership mentor, reviewing and improving additional learning needs provision, supporting improved behaviour and classroom management and developing strategies to take schools out of an Estyn category.

The evaluation commissioned by the consortium found that the schools that had been supported experienced improved attainment outcomes with particular schools being removed from an Estyn category. In addition the evaluation reported that the leaders providing the support also found the experience positive and beneficial. The value of the partnership was two-way – reflecting the evidence of what thousands of schools in the UK and across the world have found about releasing or sharing staff with other schools. Schools over time gain as much as they give from working with and supporting other schools – as Chapter 4 confirms.

Given the geographical constraints in some part so Wales it would be sensible to increase the use of video technology to help provide coaching and development support to teachers in the classroom. There are a number of specialist systems on the market and the schools that have embraced this approach have found it to be extremely valuable.

Improving the teaching of the Welsh language

The Welsh-medium education strategy and the Welsh second language Action Plan supported by the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG) provide a sound framework for developing practice and improving standards and attainment in Welsh. The options below build on this framework.

- System leaders to use assessment data to identify and target those schools with the poorest practice.

- Welsh-medium schools to have full and appropriate training to implement the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework through being supported by sufficient skilled Welsh-speaking coaches and trainers.

- Access to a sufficient range of materials and resources in Welsh to support both the application of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework across the curriculum and the teaching of other subjects.

- Welsh-medium schools to work in clusters or federations wherever practical to support each other (see Chapter 4) – including joint appointment or deployment of teachers across the primary–secondary divide.

- Lead Practitioners and Lead Practitioner Welsh-medium Schools to be identified as a means of supporting other Welsh-medium schools – working more on a regional consortia than local authority basis so reducing the isolation of those Welsh-medium schools that may be the only such school in their authority.

- Welsh-medium and English-speaking schools to work extensively together on professional development programmes that foster generic pedagogical skills and learning across the respective types of school.

The Minister for Education and Skills has set up a separate review to consider what changes should be made to the teaching and assessment of Welsh as a second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 in order to enable more learners to use the language. Based on the discussions and ideas I have received the review may wish to consider:

- extending the use of immersion groups and secondments to Welsh-medium schools to boost the language skills of teachers teaching Welsh as a second language

- the role that Welsh language skills should play in the Welsh Baccalaureate, including whether or not functional skills in Welsh should form part of the core requirement.

Improving the teaching and learning of pupils with additional needs

In January 2012 there were 43 special schools in Wales. For the last two years Estyn has found that in nearly all of the special schools it inspected performance and prospects for improvement were either 'good' or 'excellent'. A key theme of this chapter has been the need to build the capacity of schools and the education system as a whole to support its own improvement. Given the performance of special schools it would make sense, therefore, to optimise their strengths and options for doing this include:

- designating excellent special schools and their best teachers as Lead Practitioner Schools and Lead Practitioners to provide a resource for assisting mainstream schools with meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and behaviour management problems

- using Lead Practitioner Special Schools to provide outreach services to help mainstream schools manage the needs of pupils with additional learning needs and/or behaviour problems effectively

- delegating resources from local authorities to federations/clusters of schools (that include Lead Practitioner Special Schools) for education welfare and additional learning needs. Under this option clusters would take responsibility for providing and/or commissioning the services and the support necessary to meet the additional needs of pupils – with the exception of those with very specialist and intensive needs. School clusters and federations might even have the 'right to provide' additional and alternative provision subject to certain conditions. These options are further explored

in Chapter 4 and the consequential implications for the accountability regime are discussed in Chapter 5.

Improving teaching and learning for pupils from deprived backgrounds

A key objective of the Welsh Government is to break the link between poverty and educational attainment and close gaps in attainment between FSM and non-FSM pupils. This is a complex challenge requiring action and intervention on a number of fronts – both within and outside school. However, in its 2011/12 report Estyn identified that although there was overall a correlation between deprivation and performance, schools facing similar levels of challenge performed very differently. In some schools the proportion of pupils achieving five A*–C grades including English or Welsh first language and mathematics was significantly higher than that of other schools with similar numbers of FSM pupils – as Figure 2.6 illustrates.

Figure 2.6 – Percentage of 15-year-olds achieving the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh first language and mathematics in 2012
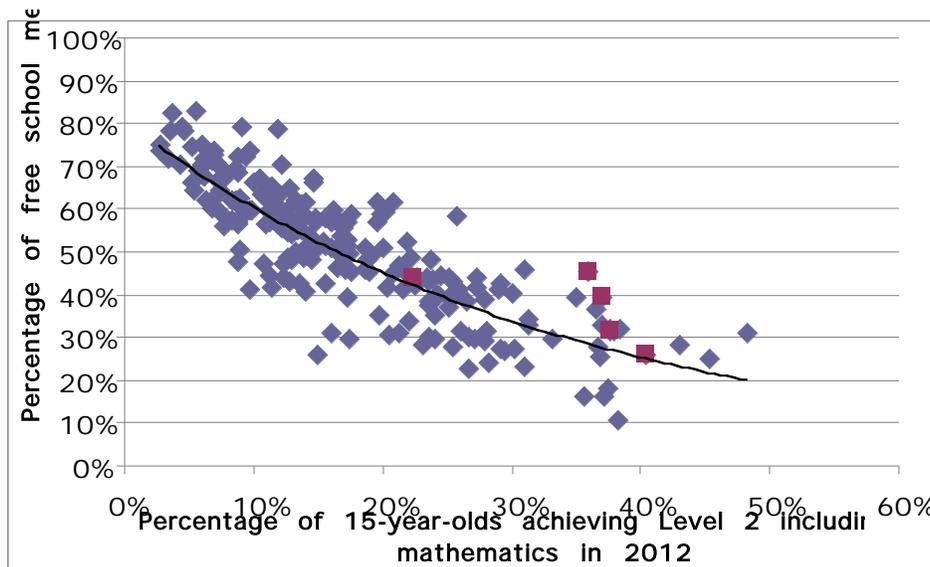
Blue diamond = Secondary schools in Wales
Red square = Secondary schools identified in case studies from Estyn's "Poverty and disadvantage" thematic report, 2012
Note: The schools indicated by red squares represent school case studies commissioned by Estyn describing the practical actions and interventions that can be made to close gaps in attainment.
Source: Estyn (2013)

In 2012/13 The Welsh Government committed £32.5 million to fund a Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG), paid to schools at the rate of £450 for each of their FSM pupils. The additional funding is aimed at supporting efforts to offset the impact of poverty and close gaps in attainment.

The Welsh Government is also working with the Education Endowment Foundation to consider how best to extend the application and take-up of the Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit[5] to schools in Wales. The toolkit summarises the relative effectiveness, impact and cost of a range of possible interventions that can be taken by schools to close gaps in attainment. Given the strength of this evidence base, one option would be for Estyn inspections to assess the extent to which schools are using evidence to inform their strategy and actions for using their PDG allocation and improving the performance of the most deprived pupils.

Conclusion

The options for improving teaching and learning described in this chapter are aimed at increasing the capacity of schools to support their own improvement – while maximising the resources, support and programmes being funded centrally by the Welsh Government. Figure 2.7 charts the way that support and funding flows, and could potentially flow at a higher level of delegation, to schools in order to support a professional development model based on teachers planning, observing, coaching, supporting and learning from each other and from high-performing schools in particular.

Figure 2.7 – Option for delivering improved professional development
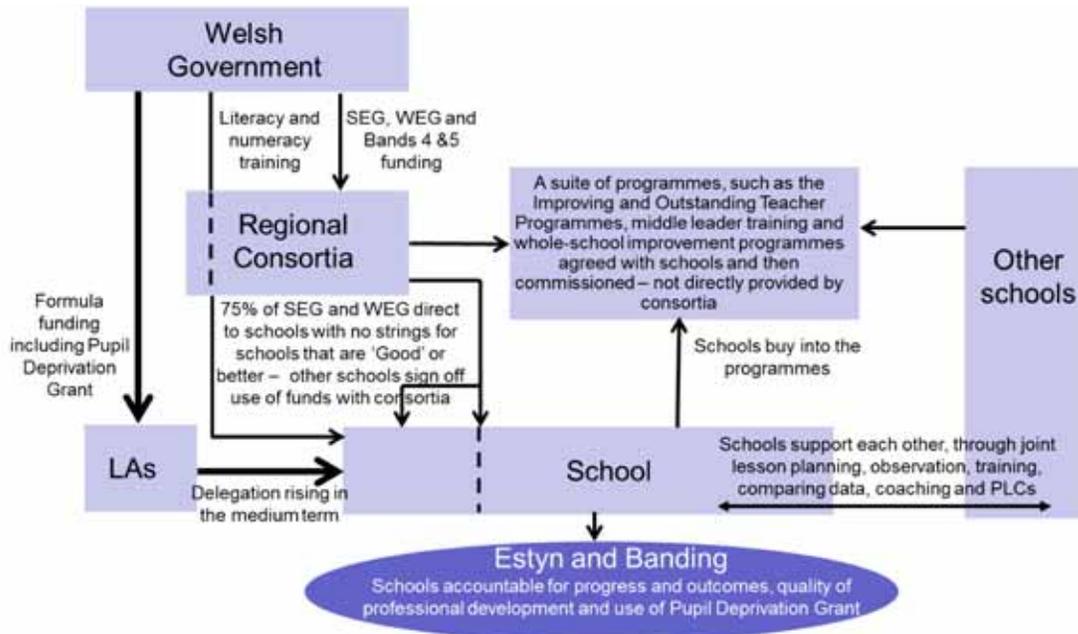
The model envisages knitting together three sources of support. First, the design and delivery of the training and development programme that is accompanying the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework would provide an important source of development

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[5] The Sutton Trust-Education Endowment FoundationEEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit can be viewed at www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit

support for all schools. Second, schools would have the option of buying into programmes commissioned by their regional consortia – including programmes such as the Improving TeacherITP and Outstanding Teacher programmesOTP. Third, an increasing share of professional development would come as schools extend and deepen their work with and support for each other.

Aspects of the delivery model are further explained in later chapters – including the potential arrangements for delegated funding and allocating the School Effectiveness Grant and the WEG. However, the intention is to maximise the funding going to schools and link this to schools taking much greater responsibility and ownership of their own school improvement journey.

The impact of more effective professional development should, over time, be evident in the form of improved levels of attainment. However, Estyn inspections – and in particular inspectors' assessment of the quality of a school's provision and its prospects for improvement – would also provide a check on how well school leaders were developing an approach towards professional development that reflected the needs of their schools and the evidence on how best to organise professional development practice.

Chapter 3: Options for strengthening school leadership

Introduction

The quality of leadership in a school is second only to teaching in its impact on student outcomes. It is heartening to report, therefore, that as I have travelled around Wales I have been privileged to visit and talk with some outstanding school leaders who are achieving tremendous things in their schools. Significantly many of the meetings have not just been with a single inspirational individual but the headteacher has wanted me to have a conversation that involves other key members of the leadership team. Leadership has been a shared endeavour. Strong school leadership is not a question of finding what are sometimes referred to as 'hero heads' but developing and supporting leaders with a passion and vision who engage and empower others to help them deliver the vision in their school – and contribute to improvement across the wider school system.

However, my judgement is that this model of leadership is not as well-embedded across Wales as it needs to be. I also met with heads who were weighed down by a variety of pressures and who did not feel empowered or equipped to deal with the challenges they faced. Other leaders, at both middle and senior level, were quite open in telling me that they had received insufficient leadership support and that this was holding back their potential contribution to the school system. It also became very clear to me that Welsh education is not utilising as well as it might the strengths and resources of the high-quality leaders and leadership teams it does possess. As the submission from Denbighshire County Council states:

> '*There has also got to be a recognition that many of the best solutions are already operating within schools, developed by effective and inspirational teachers and leaders.*'

One of the key aims of this review is to develop and strengthen the leadership of schools and to propose models of leadership that will contribute most to improved education standards across Wales. Figure 3.1 below summarises the learning from school systems around the world about the nature of effective school leaders, school leadership and leadership development.

Figure 3.1 – Key research findings on school leadership

The most effective school leaders:

- have high expectations, are emotionally resilient, optimistic and flexible

- define a vision which raises expectations and develop a strategy and systems to realise their aims

- create the right infrastructure for teaching and learning by improving the physical learning environment and ensure that effective behaviour management avoids classroom teaching being disrupted

- redesign leadership roles and responsibilities to promote a focus on improved

Sources: Barber et al (2010); Chapman et al (2011); Day et al (2010); Hargreaves (2012), Leithwood et al (2004); Pont et al (2008); Matthews et al (2011)

Recent progress

There is a subtle but important distinction in the quality of school leadership between the secondary and primary sectors. Estyn judges school leadership and management to be 'excellent' in one-fifth of secondary schools and provides a pen picture of what that excellent leadership looks like in practice.

> '*Schools with excellent leadership have a very effective senior leadership team. They undertake their roles as line managers very well, have a clear focus on improving standards and teaching, and communicate effectively as a team and with other members of staff... They analyse data rigorously to monitor performance and to target underperformance in order to improve attainment, behaviour and attendance. In these schools, there is also consistency in the quality of middle leaders. Middle leaders are held fully to account for their areas of responsibility and work within a culture of trust and high expectations.*'
> Estyn (2013)

In primary schools, reflecting the overall assessment of their effectiveness described in Chapter 2, there are just 6 per cent of primary schools where leadership and management is 'excellent' – though primary schools have a broader swathe of schools (73 per cent) where leadership was assessed as 'good' in 2011/12.

Unlike in England it remains mandatory for all practitioners moving to their first headship post in Wales to hold the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH. Since September 2011 the NPQH has been awarded on the basis of a practice-based assessment against the nationally designated Leadership Standards. NPQH is no longer a taught course but candidates have to go through a three-stage selection process – see Figure 3.2. Around three-quarters of applicants are successful in getting through the assessment centre. In its submission to the review the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) considered that the move to the new NPQH model had been 'largely regarded as positive'.

Figure 3.2 – NPQH selection process in Wales

NPQH is open to any practitioners who believe that they meet the national Leadership Standards. Prospective candidates are required to complete an application form, endorsed by the applicant's headteacher (or chair of governors where the applicant is an acting headteacher). The application form also requires a second endorsement by a designated person from his/her local authority. The application is then assessed by a regional selection panel. Those selected are assigned a local authority support officer and are required to:

- participate in workshop days
- submit a data and evidence pack for assessment
- attend an assessment centre that tests the candidates' suitability for headship.

In terms of the availability of other leadership development support there have been three other significant developments. The Masters in Educational Practice for newly qualified teachers includes modules in the third year – on action research and self-evaluation – that help to provide a preparation for leadership.

Second, the Welsh Government has developed a leadership self-review tool to help prospective leaders understand more about what school leadership involves and identify the areas where they need to develop their skills and expertise[6].

Third, the peer inspection scheme developed by Estyn received frequent and widespread praise from the heads that I met. This scheme invites senior leaders (i.e. deputy and assistant heads as well as headteachers) to be full members of an inspection team. The peer inspectors undertake a wide range of inspection activities from observing sessions, listening to learners, scrutinising samples of work, leading on a key question, examining quality indicators and writing sections of the inspection report. School leaders say that the experience helps them to improve their school improvement analytical capacity as well as giving them ideas to bring back to their own school.

The other area where there has been an important step forward has been the development of school-to-school support. Earlier in 2013 the Welsh Government invited schools with a strong and sustained track record over the past three years in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 (primary), or in Level 2 including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, to apply for Lead Practitioner School status. Twenty-one such schools[7] were designated and have been paired with schools that need support. The intention is for Lead Practitioner Schools to use their leadership and expertise to support another school – in other words the programme draws on not just the skills and leadership of the headteacher but also on the resources of other staff.

The Welsh education system is also beginning to see the development of executive headteachers – experienced and able heads who are able to take on the strategic leadership of more than one school. Executive heads normally work within a framework of having overall leadership responsibility for a federation of schools, with a head of school in place for each individual school within the federation. The role of the executive head is to develop, support and guide the heads of school and the wider leadership team and ensure that each school is implementing a robust school improvement strategy.

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[6] See
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/schoolfundingandplanning/trainingdevelopment/leadershipandmanagement/lpheadteachers/supportforheadteachers/?lang=en
[7] The 21 schools comprise 11 primary and 10 secondary schools and include faith and Welsh-medium schools

Challenges to be addressed

Mirroring its findings on overall primary school performance the Estyn annual report for 2011/12 found that leadership was excellent in only a 'very few' primary schools and in a third of them self-evaluation was no more than adequate with senior leaders failing to 'focus enough on pupils' standards'. As Chapter 2 highlighted primary headteachers are not being as robust as they need to be in tackling mediocre and barely adequate teaching.

Although there is a stronger and broader cadre of effective leaders in the secondary sector, in three-fifths of secondary schools improving quality was only adequate. Estyn found that in these schools secondary leaders, just like their primary colleagues, were not focusing sufficiently on the impact of pupils' progress in lesson observations and as a result self-evaluation reports and improvement plans were not giving enough attention to the range of issues that needed attention. Leadership of resources management was also a concern with just over a quarter of secondary schools having a deficit budget and 14 per cent having a 'significant deficit'.

Three other issues have come to the surface during my visits to schools and discussions with stakeholders.

First, it is clear that leaders do not always feel empowered to lead their school in the way they feel is right. In part this is down to a lack of confidence or experience which leadership development, as discussed below, can help to address. But in part it reflects the constraining nature of some of the grant systems and employee relations regulations. These issues are discussed in Chapter 5.

Second, although the culture has started to change there is insufficient use made of the best school leaders. The pace of change needs to be accelerated. Some of the structural options in Chapter 4 to develop federations and hard clusters of schools will help in this regard but later parts of this chapter also put forward options designed to strengthen cross-school leadership more generally.

Third, it can be too cumbersome and difficult to remove a seriously underperforming headteacher who is holding back the progress of a school and its pupils. A history of poor, patchy performance management of headteachers, a lack of clarity about governors' and local authorities' respective accountabilities, cumbersome capability procedures and a lack of determination to tackle hard cases are all contributory factors. Chapters 5 and 6 put forward options for addressing this issue.

Underlying all these challenges is what one local authority submission refers to as a lack of:

> 'A *leadership and development pathway that equips would-be headteachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to establish and sustain high levels of performance within their schools.*'

Such a leadership progression pathway or continuum should enable and encourage teachers, from the moment they enter the profession, to understand different leadership roles and to see the different leadership routes that are open to them. But for young teachers who should be aspiring to be leaders of learning there is not, argues the National Union of Teachers Cymru (UCAC):

> 'enough emphasis on identifying and nurturing leadership skills among teachers early enough…We do not recognise or encourage and support those skills in an organised and decisive [way]'

The aim should be to build a culture where, as the GTCW put it, schools 'nurture good leaders' and develop the leadership role of all teachers – irrespective of the formal leadership roles staff may hold or aspire to.

Middle leadership in schools, as the GTCW points out, is essential in schools to 'drive improvement and supply the system with future headteachers'. But there is an absence of a structured professional development programme or qualification for teachers in their middle years that could be a 'natural precursor' to for NPQH. As Estyn points out in its submission:

> 'There is no mandatory qualification for middle managers, so teachers apply for NPQH even though they do not intend to progress to headship.'

So I agree with the conclusion of Governors Wales that:

> 'greater emphasis on training middle leaders at school level still needs to be developed.'

The lack of development support is particularly evident when it comes to preparing leaders for headship. There are no nationally commissioned leadership development programmes or modules linked to the Leadership Standards and the NPQH assessment criteria. As a result an 'assessment only' route into NPQH is not providing the system of support that prospective headteachers need, says the GTCW. Estyn shares that analysis:

> 'The NPQH does not have the intended impact on middle leadership or leadership at the highest levels (headship).'

Some individual local authorities and other organisations are filling the vacuum and providing leadership development opportunities. For example, iNet Wales provides a course to support the development of outstanding middle leaders for schools in north Wales. However, the range and quality of the support that is available will depend on the school or the part of Wales where a teacher or leader may be working.

Linked to this issue is the question of whether the NPQH assessment process is itself rigorous enough. Several governors, local authorities and serving headteachers expressed concerns to me about the calibre of the applicants being called to interview for vacant

headship posts. In part this may be because there is no time limit on the validity of NPQH accreditation and some applicants may be holding a NPQH accreditation that they received five or more years ago.

The need for development support does not stop when heads are appointed – it just moves into another phase. The GTCW recognises the value of the arrangements that enable all new heads to have a mentor. It can also see the potential value heads will gain from working with system leaders. However, the GTCW suggests that more should be done to provide structured development programmes and organised opportunities for serving heads to work with and learn from each other. Other respondents highlighted the need to improve the organisation of business support functions so that heads were freed up to focus on the leadership of teaching and learning – an issue that is addressed in Chapter 4. Moreover if, as I argue below, there is a case for expanding executive leadership in schools that too will require development support.

The need to address leadership development becomes all the more pressing when set against the backdrop of the age profile of serving headteachers. The charts below (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5) reveal two key findings:

- just under a third of all serving headteachers will be retiring during the next decade. This equates to around 325 primary headteachers and 70 secondary headteachers that will need to be replaced and requires serious attention to be given to succession planning. Even if the new school organisational models and options described in Chapter 4 are introduced, a huge succession planning challenge still remains. UCAC report that there is already a shortage of heads for Welsh-medium schools. NUT Cymru also says that:

    '*there are some serious recruitment issues to leadership positions in smaller schools and as many schools have deleted deputy headteachers posts from their staff structures, there are fewer opportunities for potential leader to gain practical experience.*'

- it is taking far too long for aspiring leaders to move into headship in the secondary sector – and to a lesser extent in the primary sector. In 2012 there were just six headteachers in Wales that were under 40. With the right support and development a far higher proportion of heads should be taking up headship positions much earlier in their career.

In short the challenge is to develop leadership capacity at every level of the school system in Wales and, learning from the best effective school systems, to involve school leaders in shaping and delivering that strategy.

Figure 3.4 – Age profile of primary headteachers in Wales, 2004 and 2012
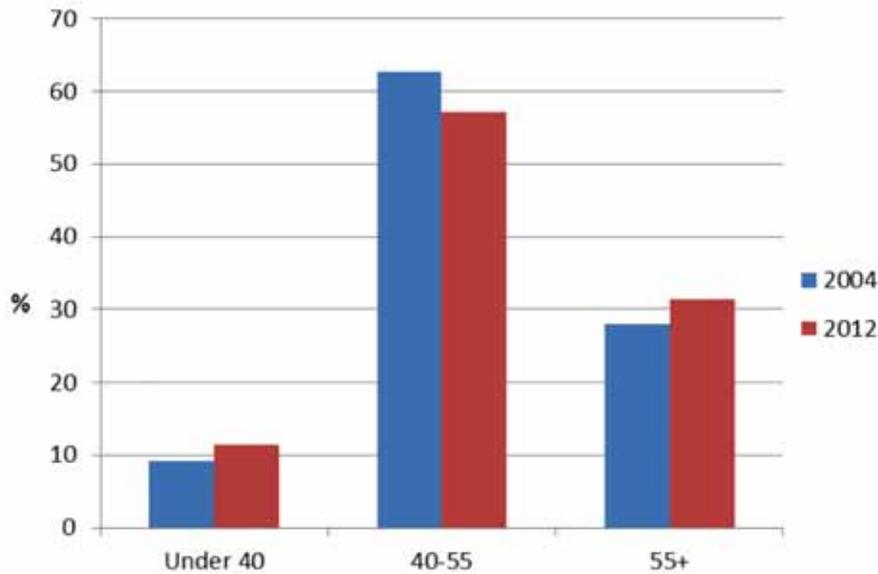
Source: General Teaching Council of Wales

Figure 3.5 – Age profile of secondary headteachers in Wales, 2004 and 2012
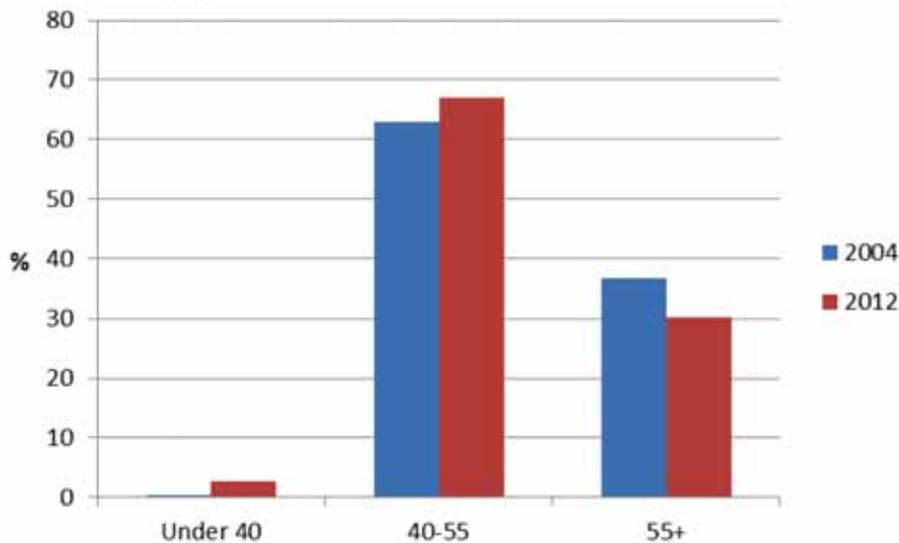
Source: General Teaching Council of Wales

Delivery options for reform

A strategy for developing stronger school leadership needs to start with a shared vision for how leadership within and across schools needs to develop. Leadership is not something separate from teaching – it is inherent in being a teacher. Teachers are leaders

responsible for managing learning in the classroom: leadership is an everyday practice for them. A wealth of education research indicates that, in addition to having good subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise and thorough lesson preparation, teachers also need to be able to motivate their pupils, engage their interest and empower them through activities and strategies that build their knowledge, stimulate their appetite for learning and develop their skills. That requires leading in the classroom. Good classroom leaders have the confidence and ability to constantly reflect on the effectiveness of what they are doing and to adjust strategies and plans in the light of developments. Many schools increasingly use and foster student and pupil leaders to help them understand how to be more effective leaders of learning in the classroom.

The Masters in Educational Practice recently introduced by the Welsh Government includes content that focuses on teacher leadership. This emphasis should form an essential part of the ongoing professional development support for classroom teachers. One option may be for NQTs to be able to undertake the Masters a little later in their professional journey or extend it over a longer period so that they are able to reflect and learn at a deeper level in the light of having had greater classroom experience.

Signposting leadership options

Teachers should also be aware from early on of the different contexts and options for exercising their leadership roles. Figure 3.6 shows the different leadership roles within schools and how teachers might take on or progress to different leadership responsibilities during their careers. The framework is not dissimilar in concept to an approach adopted by the education system in Singapore – one of the highest-performing school systems in the world.

Figure 3.6 – Options for pathways into school leadership
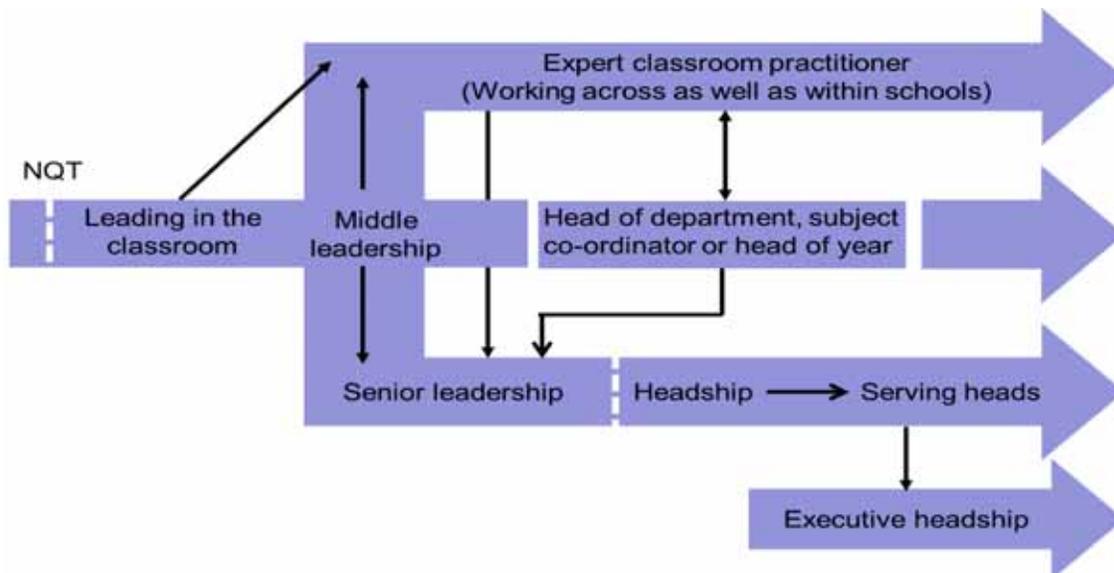
Welsh schools need excellent teachers and leaders who want to stay in the classroom and are willing and eager to share their passion and expertise with other colleagues – that is the concept behind the Lead Practitioner role described in Chapter 2. The system also needs teachers who are prepared and equipped to lead departments and faculties or act as pastoral leaders. Some middle leaders may wish to stay engaged with their subject and committed to building up departmental excellence. They may aspire to head up a Lead Practitioner department that will support other departments and staff both within their own school and other schools. However, many middle leaders will aspire to be part of a school's leadership team and to become headteachers in their own right. Furthermore as federations and other hard clustering options develop, the school system will need more leaders who are prepared to take on the leadership of more than one school.

Providing an overarching school leadership development programme

Creating a leadership culture within schools and setting out a clear leadership pathway should help to provide the basis for attracting and inspiring more teachers and middle leaders to want to move into senior leadership and headship positions sooner in their careers. However, while a clear pathway and set of options are a necessary part of the solution they are not by themselves a sufficient or complete answer to the problem. Arrangements for supporting and developing leaders at every stage of their career are also required. Given the strategic importance of high-quality school leadership relying on individuals, schools and local authorities to organise training and development to meet the NPQH, assessment criteria is too hit and miss. A more strategic and systematic approach is necessary.

Figure 3.7 describes a framework for thinking about an all-Wales approach towards school leadership development. The three circles in the figure set out three broad domains where aspiring and emerging school leaders should be receiving development support. The headings for each circle are borrowed from the NPQH modular curriculum that has been developed in England. However, the bullet points that define the content of a leadership development programme reflect the content of the Leadership Standards applicable in Wales. Key elements of the programme would be mandatory but others might be optional with participants selecting modules according to the context in which they expected to work.

As important as the content of a curriculum is the nature of the development and training. The evidence summarised at the start of this chapter suggests that the best leadership development programmes for school leaders comprise the following aspects, shown in four corners of Figure 3.7:

- formal accredited training and study on school leadership topics that might be provided by a higher education institution or college

- undertaking whole-school improvement assignments to ground the formal training in the practice of leadership

- opportunities for exercising leadership responsibilities in a different school so broadening the range of experiences available to emerging school leaders. This could take the form of a being a shadow member of another school's leadership team, taking on a leadership assignment in another school for a term or year or leading a cross-school improvement project

- being coached and supported by an experienced headteacher that has been trained and accredited to undertake this role.

Figure 3.7 – A curriculum to support school leadership development in Wales

Providing support for different stages of leadership development

The leadership development framework described above is not just a better-supported route for obtaining the qualification necessary for headship, but one that sets the context for school leadership development overall. Programmes and support would reflect the principles and content of the framework but would be adapted and tailored to be applicable to teachers and leaders at each stage of their development. Figure 3.8 describes how this might operate in practice and the types of leadership development that should be available at different stages of a teacher's career.

Figure 3.8 – Appropriate leadership development support for school leaders at different stages of development

Stage of leadership	Type of leadership development programme
NQTs	• NQT induction programmes include guidance on progression routes and opportunities. • Masters in Educational Practice.
Developing practitioners	• Programmes to support leadership of learning – as described in Chapter 2.
Lead Practitioners	• Training to be effective classroom coaches – as described in Chapter 2. • Support in developing research skills and leading professional learning communities • Use Lead Practitioner departments and schools to build links with universities to develop subject knowledge professional development for Lead Practitioners.
Middle leaders	• Middle leadership development programmes for clusters of schools based round and delivered by Lead Practitioner Schools. • Programmes such as Teaching Leaders (see below).
Senior Leaders	• Introduction of a qualification or accreditation that provides a stepping stone to full NPQH accreditation. • Participation in Estyn peer inspection programme • Federations, Lead Practitioner Schools and other school partnerships provide opportunities for short-term leadership assignments.
Aspiring headteachers	• Participation in formal training delivered by accredited providers that builds on stepping-stone accreditation and prepares participants for NPQH assessment. • Federations, Lead Practitioner Schools and other school partnerships provide opportunities for short-term leadership assignments. • Regional consortia accredit experienced heads to act as coaches for aspiring heads. • Participation in Estyn peer inspection programme • Formal NPQH assessment.
Serving headteachers	• Every new headteacher to have an experienced and able head as a mentor. • Joint training on leading school improvement for heads and chairs of governors. • Participation in Estyn peer inspection programme • Introduction of improving and outstanding school programmes.
Executive headteachers	• Introduction of all-Wales development programme for executive headship.

In addition to an overarching leadership development curriculum there are several other signal features of the proposed programme that would require change.

- A much stronger emphasis on developing middle leaders – Figure 3.9 provides an example of how one secondary school, deemed 'excellent' by Estyn and recently designated as a Lead Practitioner School, has implemented a programme for developing its middle leaders. Significantly it is linking training with the practice of middle leadership – overseen by senior leaders. Some of the regional consortia are already offering training in this area but by commissioning Lead Practitioner Schools to lead or be involved in this work there is a stronger base to link training to practical leadership assignments. Alternatively there are programmes such as those offered by Teaching Leaders[8] that provide excellent middle leadership development support.

Figure 3.9 – Development of middle leaders in St Joseph's RC High School

St Joseph's RC High School is a voluntary-aided mixed 11–18 school in the city of Newport. It has 1,480 pupils from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including 320 students in the sixth form.

The school recognises that middle leadership is a key driver in improving standards. Over the last three years, St Joseph's has been committed to supporting and developing over 30 experienced, recently appointed and aspiring middle leaders as part of its school improvement journey.

The school's initial aim was to provide a training package to middle leaders who were new to their role. While they generally had strong subject and/or pastoral expertise, they had less experience of leading and managing other people. So in 2010 a cohort of 15 teachers participated in a programme that included school-led twilight sessions on the role of middle leaders, tracking pupil progress, the effective use of data, lesson observations and the role of pupil voice in self-evaluation. The in-house development was complemented by an external two-day middle leader training event. This focused on leadership and management skills and included sessions on providing effective feedback, team development, coaching and mentoring.

The success of the programme led to the development of a second cohort of 15 teachers in 2011/2012 with many of this cohort being teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) postholders or those aspiring to middle leadership positions. In 2012/2013 the school is looking to develop a bespoke programme for heads of year and would like to provide further training opportunities for teachers looking for senior leadership roles in the future.

In addition to the training the senior leadership team has worked very closely with middle leaders to develop departmental self-evaluation and improvement planning. This has involved using heads of department meetings to look at filmed lessons and discussing the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils in lessons. The common language of effective teaching and learning that has been developed collaboratively has led to the construction of new lesson planning and lesson observation forms. All

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[8] Teaching Leaders is an education charity, specifically focused on developing outstanding middle leaders. It was developed in 2008 in partnership with four of the UK's most forward-thinking educational organisations: the National College, ARK, Teach First and Future Leaders.

departmental reviews are now undertaken collaboratively. Senior leaders alongside heads of departments and TLR postholders undertake lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and 'listening to learners' exercises. The evidence from these reviews and the cycle of self-evaluation undertaken by departments feeds directly into very high-quality departmental self-evaluation reports and improvement plans.

This developmental work with middle leaders is aligned to half-termly link meetings between senior leaders and middle leaders. A department's improvement plan, progress against actions and its impact is a standing item on the agenda at these meetings. The headteacher attends each of these meetings providing a quality assurance (QA) role and gaining an overview across all subject areas.

The quality of middle leadership has now become an outstanding feature of the school and has been a key factor in helping the school to deliver a high level of performance on a range of key performance indicators across all key stages.

The senior leadership team has worked hard to develop a leadership culture in the school. Not only has this contributed to improved learner outcomes but has also resulted in the promotion of a number of staff to key leadership positions within the school and to leadership positions in other schools in Wales.

Source: St Joseph's RC High School

- The introduction of a new qualification to provide a stepping stone to full NPQH recognition – in England, for example, the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) is aimed at school leaders who not only lead a team, but are also involved in leading a range of issues that affect the whole school, whether as a head of a department, year group or key stage, as a special educational needs coordinator or as an assistant head. Participants may not be aspiring to headship at this stage in their career but looking for professional development and recognition to support the significant leadership role they are playing in their school. The programme consists of online and workplace project-based learning, reading and reflection and group tutorials under the supervision of a facilitator. In a Welsh context, completing such a qualification could count towards completion of some of the modules necessary for the NPQH assessment. The qualification might also be appropriate to those who undertake the role of a head of school within a federation – as discussed in Chapter 4.

- The use of federations, Lead Practitioner Schools and other school partnerships to provide opportunities for practical leadership assignments. Some governors and school leaders may be reluctant to lose an energetic and aspiring leader from their school for all or part of a school year, but such an arrangement would be reciprocal, meaning that they would host leaders who would in turn bring fresh ideas to the school. In addition leaders returning to their home school would bring back experience and learning that would support development and improvement of their school. Facilitating temporary leadership postings would accelerate leadership

development, enable the whole Welsh school system to become more dynamic and push learning around schools more quickly.

- The allocation of a coach to all those working towards their NPQH accreditation. This in turn would require regional consortia to recruit, train and accredit sufficient experienced heads as leadership coaches.

- A review of the NPQH application and assessment procedures and processes to reflect the revised arrangements. It would be logical for the proposed stepping-stone qualification to act as a gateway for those leaders who wanted to progress headship. Those applying for NPQH would normally be expected to have undertaken the senior leading training prior to participating in programmes supporting full NPQH accreditation. The NPQH assessment process would provide the culmination to this process and provide a means to validate an applicant's understanding and ability to apply the learning and knowledge gained.

- The introduction of improving and outstanding school programmes – Figure 3.10 describes how these programmes would work and the areas they would cover. They would be led and delivered by the high-performing schools on the approved list described in Chapter 2. The programmes would complement the Improving Teacher and Outstanding Teacher programmes described in that chapter and would support serving headteachers in leading whole-school improvement.

- Developing an all-Wales programme to support the growth and practice of executive headship – as envisaged in the proposals set out in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.10 – The Improving and outstanding school programmes

The Improving schools programme	The outstanding school programme
Designed for schools that need to move from 'adequate' to 'good'.	Designed for schools that want to move from 'good' to 'excellent'.
• Groups of schools work in threes with the programme facilitated by the head of a Lead Practitioner or other outstanding school.	Key inputs would include: • an action plan based around a school's self-evaluation with identified areas for improvement
• Ideally the schools in each triad are close to each other geographically and one of the schools is good or better and has an effective leader.	• access to bespoke diagnostic reviews by system leaders and/or HMIs • access to bespoke seminars and masterclasses for middle and senior leaders focused on improving specific areas of the school's performance
• Heads identify areas to work on jointly to improve attainment (based on their respective school self-evaluations).	
• Heads draw up an action plan covering inputs such as developing the literacy and	• a working partnership and/or being part of a professional learning community with an

numeracy curricula; improving teachers' skills in providing feedback, using data, providing external coaching; joint lesson observations; joint lesson planning and delivery across subject areas; and middle leadership development. • The action plan is reviewed by the facilitator. • Schools are allocated a modest budget to help with providing cover to release staff to work with each other to support the programme. • Heads come together in half-termly sessions to review progress, offer and receive peer challenge and benefit from external experts.	excellent school covering an area of practice where the school needed to make improvement • support from a leadership coach • access to Lead Practitioners and Lead Practitioner departments with expertise in particular curriculum areas.

Conclusion: delivering more effective school leadership development

There needs to be clarity about who is responsible for what if the proposals described in this chapter are to be implemented effectively and if they are to make an impact. Each part of the school system needs to understand how to play its part. Figure 3.11 summarises the respective roles that would need to be undertaken at school, regional and national level. At the heart of this delivery plan is an option to give headteachers much more of a stake in leading the design and delivery of leadership development and whole-school improvement programmes. It is proposed that leadership development boards are established at both regional and national level to lead, help design, approve, steer and assist with implementing a step-change in the development of school leadership capacity. If there were primary and secondary co-chairs of the four regional leadership development boards then they – along with a head from a special school – might comprise the national leadership development board.

It is possible that over time the development of a national leadership development board could lead to the creation of a teaching and leadership academy or foundation – independent of government but receiving some grant funding to support its remit.

Figure 3.11 – Responsibilities for delivering leadership development

National level	Leadership development board comprising co-chairs from each consortia to: ■ Develop and agree leadership pathways and development strategy ■ Review operation of NPQH application and assessment process ■ Commission development programmes and accredit providers ■ Provide scholarship fund open to emerging leaders ■ Oversee implementation	Over time this might evolve into a teaching and leadership academy or foundation
Regional consortia	Leadership development board for each consortium co-chaired by an 'Excellent' primary and secondary head with responsibility to: ■ Identify leadership talent and leadership succession strategy ■ Commission senior and middle leadership programmes from accredited providers and strong schools to meet leadership development needs ■ Take responsibility for growing school-to-school leadership capacity ■ Establish network of accredited leadership mentors and coaches	Work with local authorities and governors to address schools where there is weak leadership
School or federation	Schools and federations to: ■ Identify leadership talent and development needs ■ Place emerging leaders on appropriate development programmes ■ Enable emerging leaders to exercise leadership in new contexts ■ Support network of accredited leadership mentors and coaches	

Regional leadership development boards, supported by regional consortia, would have the task of developing succession planning strategies for their region based on an analysis of the profile of serving and potential headteachers and senior leaders in their area. Consortia would also, as described in Chapter 6, have the responsibility in tandem with local authorities for addressing those situations where weak leadership was contributing to a school's poor performance or holding back its ability to make progress.

At school and federation level schools would be expected to be much more proactive about identifying and nurturing leadership talent and supporting the development of emerging leaders. This would include facilitating access to training and opportunities to learn and practice leadership in a variety of contexts.

In terms of funding the pathway to NPQH, schools and individuals might share the cost of obtaining any stepping-stone qualification, since schools themselves will gain from experience of having stronger senior school leadership teams. The cost of the programme supporting a move from the stepping-stone qualification to full NPQH accreditation might come from the Welsh Government making scholarships available to cover all or part of the fee. Award of the scholarships could be linked to the revised NPQH application process.

Chapter 4: Options for increasing school partnership within a context of greater autonomy

Introduction

The terms of reference for this review require me to:

- come forward with proposals for models of school leadership, governance and funding which will contribute to improved educational standards

- examine funding models which promote ownership of the school improvement journey.

This is complicated territory. Many school leaders – including a number of those that I have met – would say that the single greatest step that would enhance ownership of the school improvement journey would be for them to have more control of more funding. They would use it, they say, to fund professional development and improve teaching and learning. They also favour getting rid of the requirements to submit plans for the use of specific grants and argue that this would free up time that would be better spent on improving teaching and learning.

On the other hand there are also school leaders – sometimes the same ones – that are worried about the increased autonomy that would result from such a course of action. They see this autonomy, and the increased outcome-based accountability measures that would inevitably accompany such a move, as leading to greater competition between schools, an undermining of a collaborative culture and potential fragmentation of the system.

The position is further complicated by the research evidence and the reality of what is happening in on the ground in Wales. As Figure 4.1 explains greater autonomy can be an asset given the right support framework but does not automatically equate to improvements in school performance. As for the potential risk to school-to-school collaboration, the scale of effective partnership working in Wales is not as great as I had expected to find.

This chapter is my attempt to pick my way through this minefield. My basic thesis is that greater financial freedom, empowerment of school leaders and stronger governance are best developed within structured or hard partnership working between schools. The options that are outlined below flow from this analysis.

Figure 4.1 – Key research findings on school partnership and greater autonomy

Quasi-market policy mechanisms[9] and giving schools greater freedoms are unlikely on their own to lead to a substantial impact on classroom practice. However, there is a positive correlation between schools having greater autonomy (in the areas of hiring and managing staff, defining their curriculum and assessment practice and managing their budget) and higher student performance, provided that:

- data from external tests and exams at key points is published and that enables schools to be held accountable for their decisions and practices

- school leaders have access to training and that schools receive support in the form of tools, techniques, frameworks and guidance to help them to use their autonomy to innovate in a disciplined and effective way

- school leaders exercise distributed leadership, particularly in respect of managing the business operation of schools, in order to stay focused on educational or instructional leadership and avoid the role overload that increased autonomy might otherwise generate.

The accountability system needs to balance the tension between competition and collaboration which is inherent in a more autonomous system. Measures may be needed to ensure that schools serving disadvantaged students are not adversely affected by greater autonomy and choice.

Several aspects of the autonomy and choice agenda are also associated with improved outcomes in areas such as higher student morale and commitment, less non-disruptive behaviour and a better disciplinary climate.

Partnership between schools takes time to mature but if organised in a structured fashion brings benefits to participating schools – even where some schools are seemingly contributing more than receiving services to the partnership.

Federations have a range of positive impacts.

- Student outcomes are higher when higher-performing schools partner lower-performing schools, though there is a time lag of two to four years between when a federation is formed and when its performance overtakes non-federated counterparts – the outcomes are higher in both types of school.

- Other benefits include improved teaching and learning, pupil behaviour and stronger governance.

- Secondary school federations outperform looser school collaboratives, especially

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[9] This might include emphasising a school's position in performance tables and encouraging schools to compete for pupils and parents to choose a school for their child based on performance table rankings.

where they have executive leadership.

- Rates of improvement in attainment in sponsored multi-academy trusts have been greater than in stand-alone academy trusts, though being part of a federation or multi-academy trust is not guaranteed to bring success nor is it proof against under-performance.

- Federations bring greater resources and capacity for change – including additional services that schools would not be able to afford by themselves. Economies of scale arise from restructuring leadership posts, jointly providing continuing professional development, sharing posts and reducing expenditure on supply cover.

'Permission' for federations and trusts to expand, by taking on additional schools, should be carefully regulated and related to their performance and capacity.

Sources: Glatter, R, (2009); Hill (2008); Hill et al (2012); Jensen and Clark (2013); Lubienski (2009); OECD (2011a); Ofsted (2011); Pearson and RSA (2013); Peltason and Raymond (2013); Todman et al (2009); Wöbmann et al. (2007)

Recent progress

Autonomy for schools in Wales is increasing. In 20102/13 the average level of funding delegated by local authorities to schools reached 81 per cent and is due to increase to 85 per cent from April 2014. The Front Line Resources Review[10] resulted in there being fewer ring-fenced funds for schools. Three-quarters of the Schools Effectiveness Grant (SEG) and half of the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG) are being delegated to schools.

Some local authorities are encouraging schools to be autonomous by delegating services to clusters of schools and building up their capacity to manage resources effectively. Figure 4.2 below provides an example from Denbighshire County Council.

Figure 4.2 – Delegation of financial management to clusters of schools in Denbighshire

The trigger for Denbighshire's action was an Estyn report that identified school financial management as ineffective. Recognising that it was beyond the capacity of the county council's central finance team to resolve this issue on its own, the local authority worked with schools to develop a solution. A pilot scheme involved placing a finance manager in a school that had a budget deficit. The manager was directly employed by the governing body but received training from and worked closely with county council staff. The pilot was successful and a robust financial recovery plan was in place within six months of the project going live.

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[10] In July 2010 the Minister for Education and Skills launched the Front Line Resources Review, a one-year programme to shift education resources from back office support functions to front-line services.

The next stage was to draw up proposals for placing a finance manager and a business manager in each cluster of schools within the county. The aim was to build capacity in schools while reducing the administrative burden on headteachers and so allow them to focus on the leadership and management of their schools. It took over six months of work with headteachers and governors to consult, plan and prepare for what the model could look like in each of the clusters, recognising that one size doesn't fit all.

By April 2012 the new arrangements were in place and all clusters now have a variation of a business manager and finance manager or a business/finance manager. The managers are employed and based within the secondary school but provide support to all schools within the cluster.

Financial management has been delegated to the finance managers – with some exceptions where necessary. At the same time the county council's schools finance team was disbanded with only the management of the funding formula now being controlled from the centre. The project has been funded by delegating to schools some new funding from centrally held budgets along with the funding already delegated to schools that they had previously been using to buy into the centrally provided service.

The next phase of the model is to recruit a human resources (HR) manager to each cluster to continue to build capacity where it is needed most. This is in place in two of the clusters and the benefits became apparent almost immediately with a reduction in the sickness absence at one of the schools.

Source: Denbighshire County Council

Another way in which the platform for greater autonomy is being strengthened is through the mandatory training for new governors, chairs and clerks of governing bodies that is being introduced from September 2013. This, along with the training on understanding and using school performance data, should result in governing bodies being more able to undertake their role effectively.

Consistent with the research evidence the moves towards increased autonomy have coincided with a greater emphasis on the accountability of schools. The introduction of a revised Common Inspection Framework, banding for secondary schools (discussed in Chapter 5) and the forthcoming end of year National Reading and Numeracy Tests for pupils in Years 2 to 9 is providing a sharper basis for holding schools to account.

Partnership working between schools is also growing. In each of the four regional consortia that I visited I talked to school leaders and teachers engaged in partnership working with other groups of schools in their area. This is taking different forms in different areas. Partnership works covers holding shared insets; running joint training for newly qualified teachers; meeting with other schools in families of schools; supporting the post-16 curriculum offer; and developing joint work on literacy and numeracy across the Key Stage 2/3 divide in order to make the transition from primary to secondary school more effective.

Estyn has encouraged the partnership process by only according the judgement of 'excellent' to a school if it can demonstrate sector-leading practice. Estyn's definition of that term includes an expectation that leading schools are working with other schools.

> *'It is difficult for provision to be leading the sector if the sector knows nothing about it. So, inspectors need to ask whether the provider has already shared the practice they have seen with others, in networks of professional practice, both internally and externally.'*
> Estyn (2010a)

There are also signs that the number of federations is beginning to grow as local authorities become more proactive in using federations to help restructure school provision and, by pairing higher- and lower-performing schools, tackle the challenge of underperforming schools. Figure 4.3 provides an example of an initiative taken by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Cardiff Council is similarly using federations and an Education Improvement Partnership (EIP) as key features of its school improvement strategy. The new power under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 that enables local authorities to require a weak school to collaborate or federate with another school or a further education college, is likely to result in more partnership partnership-working of this kind.

Figure 4.3 – The formation of the Upper Afan Valley Federation

There are five schools in the upper Afan Valley, four primary and one secondary. Pupil numbers attending the schools had been falling, putting pressure on the governors and staff to deliver high-quality teaching and learning in the context of reduced budget allocations and increased surplus capacity. The geography of the upper Afan Valley (a collection of separate valleys with distinct communities) made school rationalisation difficult; although one small primary school had been closed.

In addition to falling rolls, Neath Port Talbot council considered that there were school improvement issues that needed to be addressed. It saw a partnership approach to teaching and learning as being fundamental to bringing about an improvement in standards.

The first step was to establish a partnership improvement board to oversee joint working and to develop common practices for curriculum delivery. This had the support of the school governors who committed to exploring every opportunity to maintain primary and secondary education in the upper Afan Valley.

Steered and supported by the local authority, Pen Afan Primary School and Cymer Afan Comprehensive School then led the way by appointing one headteacher to manage both schools. The collaborative working practices introduced at these schools represented the first tangible steps towards a formal federation. The 'shared headteacher' arrangement was later extended to include Cymer Afan Primary School; and there were plans in place

for Glyncorrwg Primary School also to be included. However, before this could be put into effect an opportunity arose for all five upper Afan Valley schools to federate.

For the respective governing bodies and the school communities that they represent, the decision to federate was taken only after a great deal of discussion and deliberation as it represented a radical change to established practice. The governors sought reassurance as to the short- and long-term benefits of federation and looked to the local authority for support in developing a federation model appropriate to their circumstances.

The federation comes into effect in September 2013 and will bring:

- a single governing body with responsibility for the five schools

- a shared vision, ethos and values and the alignment of school improvement priorities

- a single headteacher and a new distributed leadership structure

- common policies and procedures, and the coordination of planning, curriculum delivery and support across the primary and secondary phases

- common systems of assessment, monitoring, tracking and reporting of pupil progress

- opportunities for a broader range of staff expertise to be deployed appropriately and flexibly between the schools combined with increased opportunities for staff development

- opportunities for governors to develop skills and knowledge in cross-phase school management.

In anticipation of formal federation, the upper Afan Valley schools have agreed a shared senior leadership team comprising one headteacher supported by two senior leaders – one with expertise in primary education and the other with expertise in secondary education. Based at each school there will be a senior member of staff, a leader of learning who will take responsibility for day-to-day matters. Under this structure there will be eight senior staff with the necessary skills and experience to ensure all five schools are fully supported. Also included in the leadership team will be a finance and resources manager.

Source: Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Challenges to be addressed

The challenge facing the school system can be summarised in a single sentence. There is both a need and the scope to extend school autonomy but the systems and structures necessary to support that autonomy are not yet in place.

Parts of the school system are characterised by a local authority-dependency culture – particularly in the primary sector. By that I mean schools are overly reliant on the local authority for the provision of school improvement and support services to the extent that governors and heads do not feel accountable for the performance of their school. One example of the imbalance in the relationship between schools and local authorities is the nature of the service level agreements (SLAs) between local authorities and schools. SLAs set out the terms and charges by which authorities will provide a range of support services for schools. They should be properly negotiated and be competitive with the cost of securing the services from other suppliers. However, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) Cymru in its submission states that SLAs:

> '...are not subject to best value considerations and that redress (as one would legitimately expect for a paid-for service) when services are poor, is hard, if not impossible to secure'.

NAHT Cymru also reports that governing bodies are actively discouraged from seeking to procure support services from outside the local authority.

In addition to the services schools are buying back from councils via SLAs, a large amount of education funding is still being held by local authority education departments. In 2012/13 the total spending on schools in Wales was budgeted to be nearly £2.5 billion[11]. Local authorities delegated 81 per cent of this total direct to schools – this equated to just over £2 billion. Schools used some of this funding to buy back services from local authorities.

With the 19 per cent of schools funding they retained – equivalent to £474 million – local authorities budgeted to spend £109 million[12] on services supporting schools such as peripatetic music services, Welsh language teachers and school library and museum services, £104 million on school transport, £97 million on additional learning needs and £48 million on ensuring that every child had access to a school place.

In addition local authorities planned to spend £26 million on monitoring school performance and improvement and £60 million on the 'strategic management of education services in schools'. In relation to the latter figure the fact that there are so

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[11] The statistics are taken from Statistical Bulletin SB 51/2012 (R) *Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools: 2012-13*, July 2012 and www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Local-Government/Finance/Revenue/Education/BudgetedEducationRevenueExpenditure-by-Authority-Service, accessed March 2013.

[12] This sum is likely to include some school improvement support but the budget out-turn figures for 2012/13 were not available at the time of writing this report.

many education services in Wales means that, as Chapter 6 highlights, these sums are inevitably indicative of diseconomies of scale.

Local authorities are also missing opportunities to devolve funding and services to groups of schools which can potentially result in a more effective and efficient way of delivering services. For example, federations and/or clusters of schools could be commissioned to play more of a role in providing education welfare services and services for pupils with additional needs including behaviour problems.

School leaders don't feel trusted or empowered. For example, the requirements to draw down delegated funding from SEG and WEG are considered onerous. As Denbighshire County Council argues there is a need to:

> '…allow leaders of effective schools to be freed from too much prescription and be allowed to flourish on the basis of positive outcomes.'

Another aspect of the lack of empowerment is, as described in Chapter 2, the lengthy and cumbersome procedures that headteachers have to negotiate when dealing with teacher capability issues. Nearly every headteacher I met raised this issue with me. Chapter 5 identifies options for addressing the situation.

However, the absence of a more autonomous culture is in some respects not surprising given that the building blocks needed to support a more autonomous system are not in place.

Too few authorities are, for example, proactively developing business and financial management capacity within the schools in their area – along the lines of the Denbighshire example described above. One submission that I received from a school governor with 25 years of experience as a school administrator, argues for the development of better administrative support for school leaders in order to free them up to spend more of their time and effort on 'monitoring teaching and learning and raising standards'. UCAC makes a similar point, suggesting that estate management should be located in school clusters.

School governance is, to borrow the term used by Estyn in its submission, 'variable'. In the best schools governors are playing a strong role in shaping a school's future direction and engaging in 'robust and challenging dialogue' about standards of pupil achievement. But, says Estyn, in around a quarter of schools governors have:

> '…limited knowledge of the school's performance data or do not make comparisons with similar schools, and rarely challenge or hold leaders to account.'

The School Governance Task and Finish Group, established by the Minister for Education and Skills, also identifies a number of problems with the current model of school governance. In its evidence the Task and Finish Group recognises that there is a

general trend towards decentralisation of school governance and supports the principle of giving governing bodies greater autonomy over their schools. But it points out that there are major issues to be addressed and questions whether governors of primary schools have the capacity to undertake increased responsibilities. That leads the Task and Finish Group to conclude that there needs to be:

- more of an emphasis on the skills governors need to discharge their responsibilities rather than who they represent

- increased training and support for governors. This point is reinforced by the growing number of number of calls to the Governors Wales confidential hotline. In 2011/12 over 860 queries (an increase of a third on the previous year) were received, covering issues such as headteacher appointments, school disciplinary and complaints procedures and procedures for meetings

- greater clarity about the roles and accountabilities of governing bodies – an issue that is considered in Chapter 5

- consideration of alternative forms of governance – which is discussed below.

A further weakness is that although the number of federations is increasing, this is from a very low base. As of March 2013 there were only around 20 federations in the whole of Wales and they only encompassed around 50 schools. This is surprising at two levels.

First, there are a large number of very small schools in Wales. A one-form primary school with 30 pupils per year from the reception year to Year 6 has around 200 pupils. As Figure 4.4 shows in 2012 well over half of all the primary schools in Wales were below that size. Over 400 primary schools had fewer than 100 pupils, 184 fewer than 50 pupils and 51 had 25 pupils or less.

These schools may be providing a good education but they are relatively expensive to maintain, and often struggle to recruit headteachers. NAHT Cymru points out that many of these schools 'are led by headteachers who have a considerable teaching commitment' as well as having to undertake administrative tasks. As a result these heads have insufficient time and resources to support their staff, focus on school improvement and manage education changes such as the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In addition these schools are often isolated, not just geographically but in terms of being able to share and work with other teachers. Local authorities have closed some of the smallest schools[13] that are no longer viable but greater federation would also appear to be an obvious way forward.

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[13] There were 29 fewer schools with 100 pupils or less in 2011/12 compared with 2010/11.

Figure 4.4 – Numbers of primary schools in Wales, by number of pupils
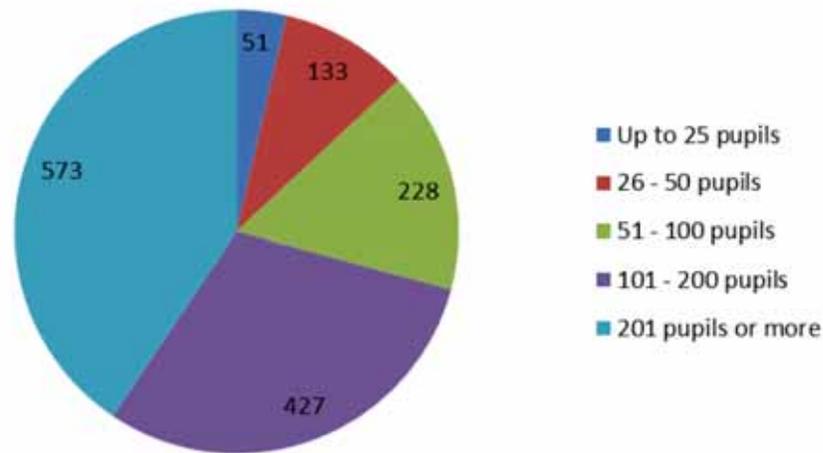
Source: Welsh Government School Statistics Compendium, 2012

Second, given the evidence on the value of matching low-performing schools with those that are high performing in a federation led by an executive headteacher, local authorities have been tardy in utilising the strengths and resources of their best schools. The practice is beginning to change but federating weak schools with strong ones should be adopted wherever possible as the proven and cost-effective way to turn round schools with serious performance problems.

One of the reasons that federations are not being used more widely may be because the regulations on governance structures for federations are not sufficiently flexible. When schools federate governing bodies have to be reconstituted and the governance embraces all the schools in the federation – i.e. individual schools no longer each have their own governing body. Some schools may accept the need or want to be part of a federation but are reluctant to subsume their whole identity within a merged structure. As the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru explains in its submission:

> '*Federation can be seen as weakening a sense of ownership on the part of school leaders and parents.*'

Some federations work their way round this constraint by having an overarching governing body for a federation, but then establish a governors' committee for all or some of the schools within the federation. However, this device is not universally used and there is a case for establishing a new more fit-for-purpose model of federation governance.

The federation structure is also inflexible in three other ways. First, a governing body of a federation has to be reconstituted if and when another school decides to join the

federation. This is cumbersome and provides an unnecessary obstacle to developing the scope and impact of federations.

Second, the federation regulations enacted in 2010 provide for federation governing bodies to have a minimum of 15 governors and a maximum of 25. The consultation conducted earlier in 2013, in the wake of the legislation passed in 2011 that permitted larger federations, does not propose to amend these numbers. It does, however, provide for alterations in the composition of the numbers. In my view a body of 15 to 25 people is an unwieldy number to provide an efficient fit-for-purpose governance vehicle. The size is driven by having to accommodate different stakeholder interests on governing bodies. However, it would be better to consider an alternative governance model that made provision separately for effective oversight on the one hand, and stakeholder representation and accountability on the other.

Third, it is difficult if not impossible, for maintained schools to be part of the same federation with foundation and voluntary-aided faith schools. This is because the latter are legally constituted as charities, and short of dissolving, the trust/charity cannot under charity law be part of a formal integrated governance structure with a non-charity[14]. Some schools in England have found ways around this constraint but it is extremely complex. So there is a need for a new form of governance to facilitate hard clusters of schools[15] that could encompass maintained, voluntary aided and/or foundation schools.

The final challenge relates to the extent and depth of partnership working between schools. As highlighted above there is a positive trend in terms of more schools committing to working with and supporting each other but overall the partnership culture is still relatively shallow and insular. Too much of the partnership working is of the 'come and see what we are doing' variety, rather than being based around leaders and teachers sharing data and then working jointly to improve learning. Even where schools are working in a really deep way with each other they would not expect their partnership commitment to oblige them to challenge a school and intervene to support it if they saw it was getting into difficulties.

It is also evident that there are clear limits as to how far many schools will go in working with others. Many headteachers and governing bodies are reluctant to contemplate letting a bright and energetic emerging leader go to another school for a term or a year to support their development. They feel their school would lose out – even though it could be viewed as an opportunity to promote an aspiring leader from within the school or gain a reciprocal leader from another school who could bring in fresh ideas.

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[14] In its response to the draft regulations giving local authorities the powers to establish federations of maintained schools, the Charity Commission advised the Welsh Government that it was 'legally impossible for an entity to be partly charitable in law, or simultaneously a charity and not a charity. This would be the position if a local authority dissolved the governing bodies of a mixture of voluntary and/or foundation and community schools and constituted a single governing body for this mixture of schools'.

[15] By 'hard cluster' I mean groups of schools working together within a single governance structure but not necessarily using the federation regulations. Options to facilitate this model are described below.

Similarly I found in my discussions a wariness about sharing outstanding practitioners with another school (or schools) for even one day a week – even though all the research evidence points to both schools gaining from the experience.

However, as Professor David Hargreaves has described (see Figure 4.5) there is a link between schools increasing the depth of their joint work and developing formal governance and accountability structures. Most schools start off towards the bottom left of the grid shown below. What characterises mature school partnerships is how over time they move towards the top right of the grid – formalising and hardwiring the arrangements for how they work together as they deepen their joint activities to improve teaching and learning. This in turn provides the proper basis for increasing school autonomy and building a school-led improvement system.

Figure 4.5 – Relationship between depth and structure in inter-school partnership
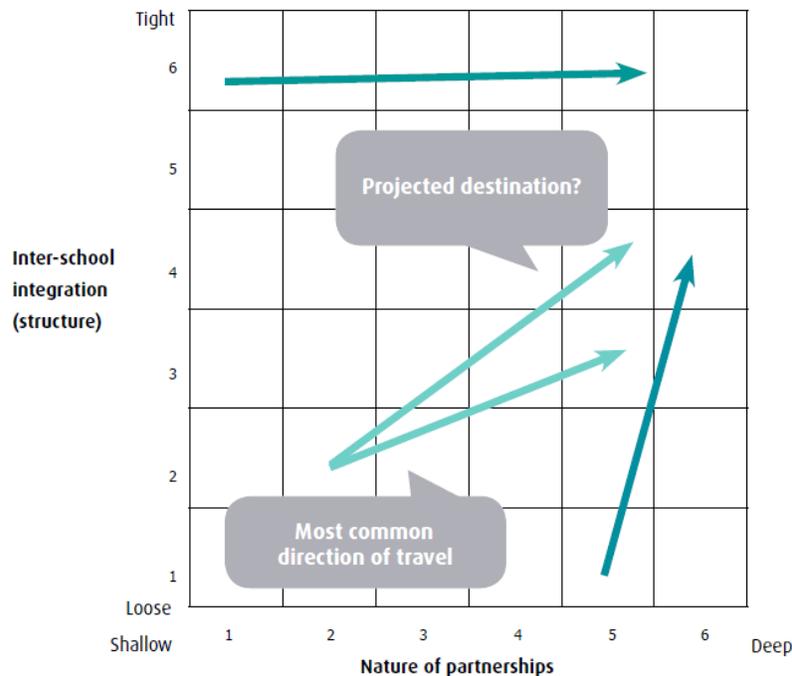
Source: Hargreaves (2012)

Delivery options for reform

Given the argument that has run throughout this chapter it makes sense to look first at the options for strengthening the collective capacity of schools before considering options for enhancing autonomy.

Options for federations and partnership working

There is no one-size-fits-all model for how schools should work together – and indeed many schools will be part of more than one partnership at the same time. For example, a

primary school could be working with its local secondary school on issues relating to the transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7 while also being part of wider primary-to-primary federation or cluster. However, I consider there is a strong case on both educational and cost-effectiveness grounds for the majority, and potentially all, of schools in Wales to move to being part of a formal federation or hard cluster that is led by an executive leader. The federation or hard cluster might take the form of:

- a primary-to-primary or secondary-to-secondary group of schools

- a cross-phase group of schools involving primary, secondary and special schools

- an all-though group of schools providing education for pupils aged 3 to 19 – this might take the form of a federation or could be conceived of a single school spread over several sites.

Schools, local authorities and diocesan bodies should work together to develop appropriate clusters and federations. The building blocks in the form of existing links and partnerships already exist in many areas. However, it would be absolutely vital to ensure that each cluster or federation contained sufficient school improvement expertise to make formalising the partnership worth the effort. There would be little point, in school improvement terms, in clustering mediocre schools with mediocre schools. There needs to be sufficient school improvement DNA in the partnership. So I would expect that at least one of the schools in the hard cluster or federation to be classified by both Estyn and its regional consortium as 'good' or better. Where because of geographical constraints it was not possible to ensure the presence of at least one good school then it would be vital to secure the leadership of an outstanding executive headteacher to lead the hard cluster or federation.

The clustering should be sufficiently flexible to allow for schools that shared key values or characteristics to be part of the same grouping. So faith schools should be able to partner with other same-faith schools and Welsh-medium schools with other Welsh-medium schools – though the new model of governance described below would help to protect the distinctive identity of a school where it was part of a mixed federation or cluster. Where schools were placed in an Estyn category or were otherwise identified as 'causing concern' their ability to determine the hard cluster or federation to which they belonged would be removed.

As for the size of such hard clusters and federations this would depend on a variety of factors such as geography, size of schools and scale of the challenge within the schools in the partnership. However, I would not expect such federations or clusters to normally comprise any more than five or possibly six schools since otherwise the span of control for a single executive head would become too great. However, if larger federations and hard clusters were to be formed then it would be advisable for the federation to group schools into sub-clusters within the federation – with each sub-cluster having its own executive leader.

Options for governance of federations and hard clusters

Just as there is not a one-size-fits-all way for schools to work in partnership so there should not be a single fixed governance model for all school partnerships. I agree with the WLGA that there should be:

> '…*more flexible models of constituting governing bodies, for example, clustering federation or shared governance arrangements*'.

There are three main governance models that I am putting forward as options. Each of them has at its heart a concept considered by the School Governance Task and Finish Group and is similar to a proposal suggested by ASCL Cymru. In essence the idea is to have a relatively small inner board with governors recruited for their skills and a stakeholder group focused on support and scrutiny. In the context of a federation the board, as shown in Figure 4.6, would have overall and ultimate accountability for the performance and management of all the schools in the federation. The WLGA suggested a similar idea, arguing for 'experienced expert non-executive members and senior management teams…which could be shared across a number of schools'.

However, in addition to an overarching small board each school would also have its own head of school (who would be the key point of contact for parents) and its own local governing body or parents' council to consider pastoral and community issues, support the life of the school and scrutinise performance and progress.

Figure 4.6 – Potential new governance model for school federations

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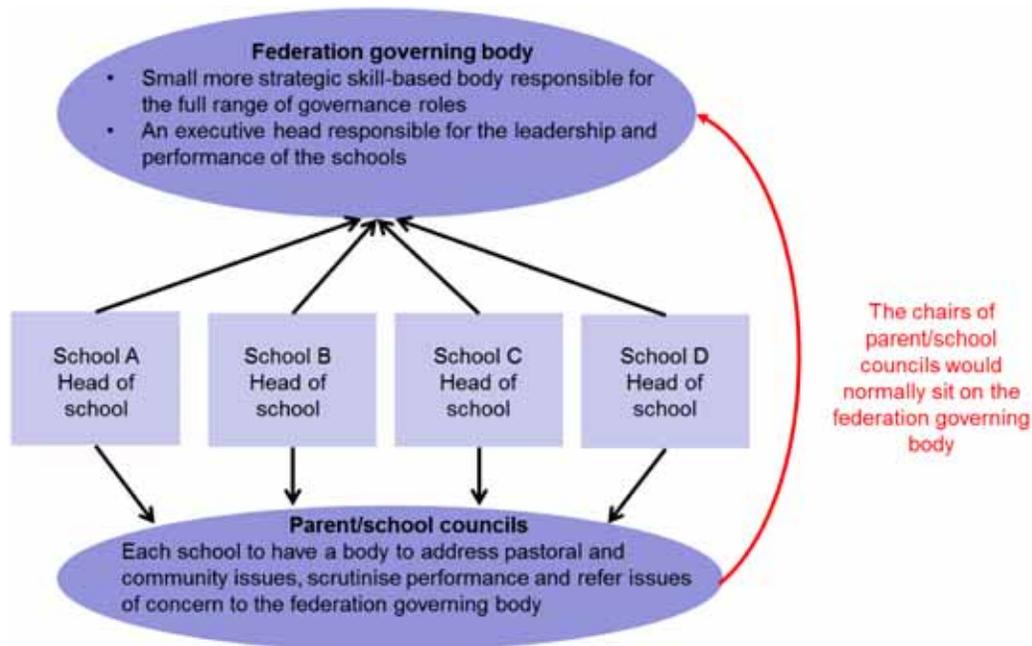
The links between the roles of the two bodies would be secured by setting out formally the respective responsibilities of each and arranging for the chair of each of the parents' councils to also be a member of the overall governing body or board.

The model is not dissimilar to that used by multi-academy trusts in England where it has brought greater strategic direction and insight to the work of governors and reflects the way that some federations in Wales are starting to evolve. The model has two other potential benefits:

- each school within a federation would be able to preserve its distinct identity – for example, the school or parents' council could help ensure that the ethos of a school was not just preserved but developed within the context of a broader partnership with other schools

- the maximum size of the federation governing body could be reduced from 25 – the number proposed under the draft federation regulations issued in January 2013. As argued above this is an unwieldy number for a governing body and does not support efficient governance. The two-tier model addresses this issue by focusing stakeholder representation at school rather than federation level. As a consequence the overarching federation board could and should be much smaller and focus on the strategic development and performance of the federation.

Until such time as regulations or legislation could be introduced to provide for this federation model of governance, federations could set up and use parents' committees for each school to achieve some of the features and benefits of the model described above.

The second option is very similar but, as Figure 4.7 illustrates, it adapts the two-tier governance concept and shows how it could work in the context where local authorities might wish to bring several existing schools together to create a new 3–19 learning institution for a locality. In this scenario there would be one school operating across several different campuses. The governance model helps to ensure that parents and the community have a point of reference for the particular campus which their child attends, while ensuring there is strong strategic governance for the school as a whole. The other merit of this model is that by there being a single institution it becomes possible for Estyn to inspect all the campuses that form the school at the same time[16].

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[16] It would also be theoretically possible for Estyn to change their inspection schedules in order to inspect all the schools in a federation concurrently.

Figure 4.7 – Potential new governance model for a multi-campus 3–19 school
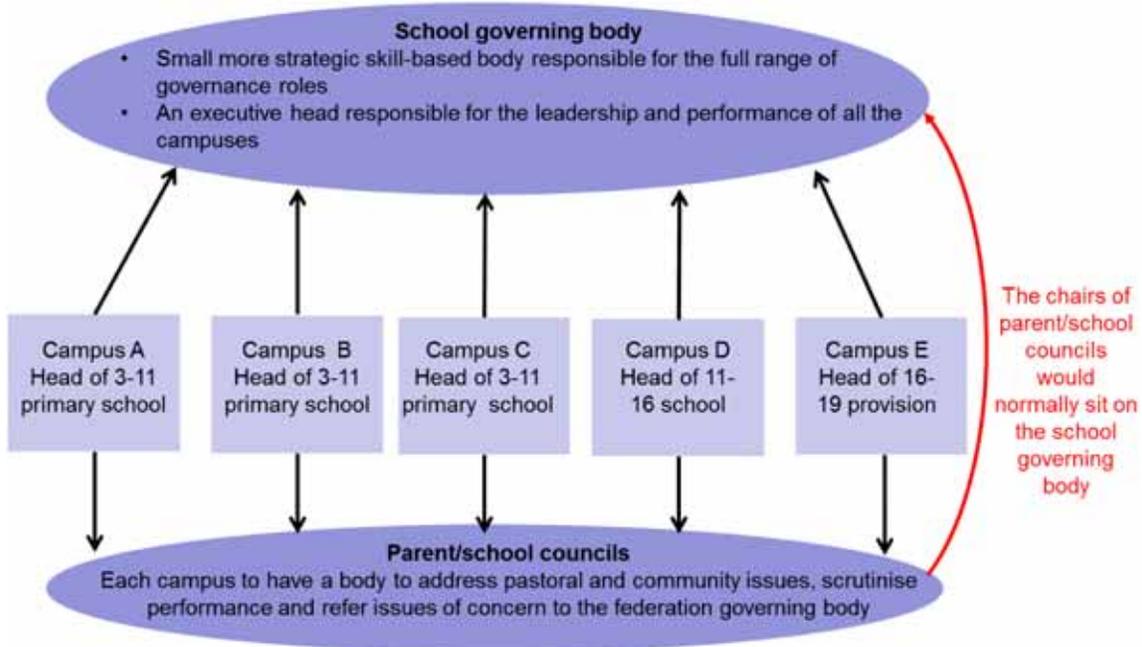
The third option again uses a two-tier governance model but borrows ideas from the Co-operative School Trust approach that has proved popular in England[17]. Another way of looking at this model is to see it as an extension of the foundation school approach but applied to groups of schools – rather than individual schools[18]. In this model, which is described in Figure 4.8, a trust (or a charity) is formed that holds the land and assets of the schools in the trust and employs all the staff employed – as in foundation and voluntary-aided schools. The trust might bring in strategic partners – such as universities, FE colleges, charities, organisations with educational expertise and local employers – to add expertise in specific areas. ColegauCymru argued, for example, that FE colleges had:

> '*[a] pool of expertise [that] could provide assistance to senior managers and leaders in schools…[and] could, where necessary, support failing schools through providing specialist advice and support in a wide range of areas*'.

A trust would also be configured to provide an opportunity for parents, pupils and staff of the schools to form a members' council that would elect some of the trustees. This would provide them with a stake in the operation of the schools. The trustees would nominate some of the governors – and they along with the chairs of the parents' councils would be accountable for the operational performance of the schools.

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[17] For further information on Co-operative Trust Schools see http://www.co-op.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Co-operative-Trust-Schools-brochure.pdf

[18] The Welsh Government understandably stopped the development of foundation schools in their original form as they risked promoting autonomy within the context of individual schools and risked fragmenting the system.

Figure 4.8 – Potential new Co-operative Trust-based governance model
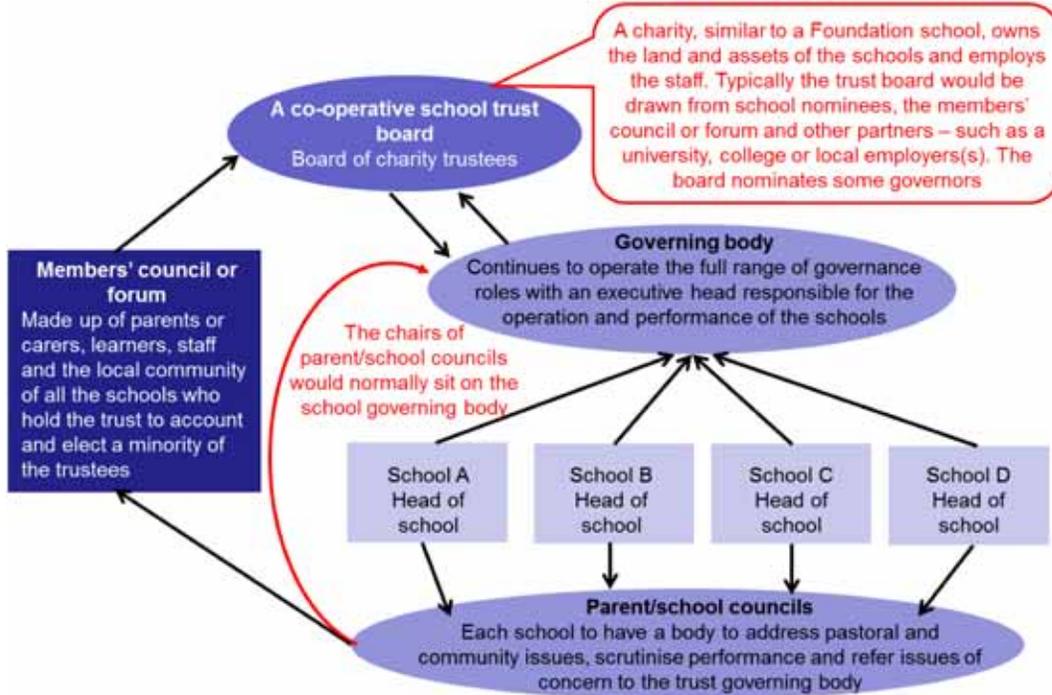
The merit of this approach is that it provides schools with the option of greater autonomy but does so within the framework that promotes partnership, maintains links with the community and supports more effective governance. This approach could provide a helpful structure for 14–19 joint working between schools, colleges and employers. The model should also provide a framework whereby it is legally possible for foundation and voluntary-aided schools to be part of a hard cluster with maintained schools – although for voluntary-aided schools the form of governance at individual school level might need to be enhanced to ensure that the faith dimension and interests were protected.

There are two other governance options that might also be considered. Education improvement partnerships (EIPs) provide a looser means for schools and other key stakeholders to work together to deliver school improvement and, through service-level agreements with their local authority and other agencies, coordinate delivery of other children's services. Education companies that are run on a not-for-profit basis are a further means for schools to take collective responsibility for delivering shared services. Such a vehicle is normally used where schools are providing traded school improvement services to other schools.

Structures are not the 'be-all-and-end–all' – for example, shared values, mission and trust are also vital ingredients of partnership working. That can be achieved just as well through looser forms of collaboration as through more formal partnerships. However, my experience of working extensively with school partnerships is that in the long run if a partnership is to be of substance and to endure then formal governance is inevitably needed. It comes back to the David Hargreaves' analysis (see Figure 4.5): the governance

has to be robust enough to encompass the growing scale and depth of collaborative effort and to ensure that there is clarity about where responsibility for school improvement lies. While, therefore, I accept that EIPs, school companies and other informal school collaboratives achieve much of value and should be encouraged, I do not think they offer a strong enough platform on their own for making school-led improvement more systematic or for extending autonomy.

Options for incentivising hard clusters and federations

If the argument in favour of strong partnership working between schools through federations, trusts or other hard clusters is accepted then the next question is how to move from where the system is now to where it needs to be. It would not be right or necessary to move wholesale to a new set of structural arrangements for schools. That would be disruptive and distract from the key priority of improving teaching and learning in the classroom. But neither should the situation be left as it is. Rather I propose that the Welsh Government sets a clear direction of travel by indicating that it expects schools to move towards working in federations or other forms of hard clusters. As the WLGA put it, 'federation and partnering should be the norm rather than the exception'. Progress towards this objective could be made by:

- federating schools as headteachers retire – as we have seen from Chapter 3 we can expect this to include a considerable number of schools over the next few years

- local authorities working with schools and communities to implement 21st century school strategies. The expectation would be that as schools are reorganised and new schools built they would form part of a federation or hard cluster

- using the forthcoming statutory guidance on statutory intervention under the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to indicate that federation with a

  high-performing school should form the core of a recovery programme, wherever feasible, when a school falls into an Estyn category of requiring serious improvement, special measures or is otherwise deemed to be 'causing concern'

- using the new regulations under the Education (Wales) Measure 2011 that provide local authorities with powers to establish federations of maintained schools in Wales.

Other options that could incentivise schools to move to a federation or hard cluster might include:

- local authorities being expected (or required) to devolve business and financial management to federations and hard clusters of schools along the lines of the Denbighshire County Council model described in Figure 4.2. The WLGA could be invited to identify a small team of local authority officers, school business managers and headteachers to lead this work and ensure that this approach is implemented across Wales by 2014/15

- financial incentives for excellent schools to take on the leadership of a struggling or seriously under-performing school. This could be achieved by, for example, channeling the additional funding that has been provided for bands 4 and 5 secondary schools through high-performing schools. This action would be linked to a requirement that the best schools supported and worked with schools in the bottom bands – as agreed through regional consortia

- schools in a federation or hard cluster, particularly where they included a special needs school, to be given the right to provide education welfare and additional learning needs services for pupils. Under this model the local authority would act as commissioners of this provision

- a higher level of delegation of specific grants for schools working through a federation or hard cluster with the expectation in the medium term that all such funds were paid through federations and hard clusters

- moving to allocate schools capital funding through federations and hard clusters rather than to individual schools

- adjusting the accountability and inspection system to recognise the added value generated by federations and hard clusters as well as that by individual schools – Chapter 5 provides more detail on this option.

At the same time as moves towards federation and hard clustering are being encouraged it might also be sensible to move to using standard data management information systems for all schools across Wales. This would help guard against fragmentation of the system and avoid each federation and cluster having to commission and procure its own systems in order to have standardisation across its group of schools. It would, however, be important that if this approach were adopted that schools were fully consulted and involved in the design of the systems and that they were flexible enough to enable federations and clusters to tailor them to the specific requirements that they might have.

Options for enhancing school autonomy

Many of the options described above will have the effect of enhancing school autonomy within a context of schools supporting and working with each other. However, this framework also provides a platform for extending autonomy in other areas. I support the 'guiding principle' set out in the Independent Task and Finish Group report chaired by Vivian Thomas (Welsh Government, 2011) that 'funding goes directly to the level where delivery and performance lies'.

A combination of moving functions down to federations and hard clusters of schools, consortia taking on school improvement functions and a rapid consolidation of education services (see Chapter 6) means that it should be possible to increase the level of funding delegated to schools over and beyond the 85 per cent target to be reached by 2014.

However, a more logical basis for constructing a new target would to be to identify a distinct standard spending assessment block for statutory local authority functions and other functions that cannot sensibly be delegated – such as school transport and the coordination of admissions – separate from the block for spending on schools (including spending on special needs). The presumption would be that the vast majority of the funding associated with the schools funding block would be delegated to schools – with central retention of funds very much being the exception rather than the rule (though school forums might agree that some areas of expenditure should be retained centrally). This would provide for a more transparent system and also help pave the way for direct funding of schools, should that option as discussed below be considered the right way forward.

There may also be a case, as proposed by ASCL Cymru, for introducing a national template for SLAs between local authorities and schools. This would provide clarity and consistency of performance standards, performance monitoring and indicate levels of penalties for underperformance. However, in my view this should only be an interim arrangement. The longer-term solution lies in federations and hard clusters building up their procurement expertise so that they have the capacity to test the market and ensure that they receive the best value for money for the services for the schools in their cluster. Where local authorities continue to provide the best offer they will continue to buy into that service but where the authority is expensive and/or the quality is poor they will look elsewhere.

There is also an option to provide greater autonomy in respect of specific grants. As a more immediate prelude to higher levels of specific grants being delegated to federations and hard clusters (as described above) I also suggest that for schools categorised by their consortia as 'good' or better they should be paid their allocation of SEG, WED and Pupil Deprivation Grant without having to submit plans for how they will spend the funding. Schools should be held to account for the effective use of the funding but it makes more sense to do this through focusing on pupil progress and improvements in attainment. The system already has arrangements for doing that through a combination of banding, Estyn inspections and system leader visits and I see little merit in leaders of schools that are 'good' or better having to complete and submit plans. For schools that are not yet 'good' then regional consortia should continue to steer and sign off how specific grant funding is to be used.

Autonomy could be further enhanced by funding schools directly. This would provide greater transparency and predictability of funding and would change the nature of the relationship with their local authority. NAHT Cymru sees that 'there may be merit in a model where schools are centrally funded'; ASCL Cymru would like a 'national core funding formula'; and the Catholic Education Service believes that 'equalised formula funding' by age grouping should be introduced across all local authorities.

However, NAHT Cymru also advise some caution given the high number of small schools and the capacity of headteachers at present to manage the change and the

increased responsibility – though it accepts that federation and clustering could over time address this issue.

The experience of England is that it is far from straightforward to standardise funding arrangements for schools. Inevitably any change to funding formulae creates a series of winners and losers. For example, there is a difference of £1,000 per pupil between the average level of secondary school funding in some authorities in Wales compared with others. I also consider that with a lot of other changes happening in the education system a radical reform of school funding could provide a major distraction from schools' core business of improving teaching and learning. Indeed schools that lost out from the new arrangements would almost certainly use the funding changes as an excuse for not making more progress on performance. In addition the high number of very small primary schools makes it very difficult to calibrate a national formula that reflects their circumstances.

However, I do not think that the challenges preclude there being any change. I am, therefore, proposing two options to prepare for and inform longer-term thinking.

First, there is a strong case for the Welsh Government to work with local authorities to move to there being a greater standardisation of funding formulae. One way to achieve this would be to raise the proportion of funding that has to be allocated on the basis of pupil numbers from 70 per cent to a higher figure. In other words a sensible first step towards a national funding formula would be to see greater convergence in terms of the funding formulae applied across all local authorities.

Second, the Welsh Government could commission a detailed study of a possible pathway towards and examine the implications of adopting a national funding formula. The study might result in the production of a number of scenarios and address how a transition to a new system might be accomplished. The study should factor in the potential to fund schools by federations and hard clusters (this potentially could help resolve the issue of very small primary schools) and build in to one of the scenarios the option of there being substantially fewer education authorities and services in the medium term – as outlined in Chapter 6.

Conclusion: moving to increased partnership linked to greater autonomy

Figure 4.9 sets out what I have called a roadmap for using partnership to help boost school-led school improvement and enhance school autonomy in Wales. Most schools in Wales are operating towards the left-hand side of the chart – i.e. they see school improvement as an issue to be tackled predominantly within their institution, though they are open to and may be collaborating with other schools on aspects of teacher and school development. The middle section of the diagram represents those schools working in more organised partnerships that are either focused on delivering improved business support for schools and/or are formalising partnership working on school improvement.

However, the challenge for the Welsh education system is to move most schools to working within a model described on the right-hand side of Figure 4.9. Not only would this provide a much stronger basis for developing a self-sustaining school improvement system it would also establish the right supportive framework for increasing autonomy.

Figure 4.9 – A roadmap for using partnership to help boost school-led school improvement and enhance school autonomy
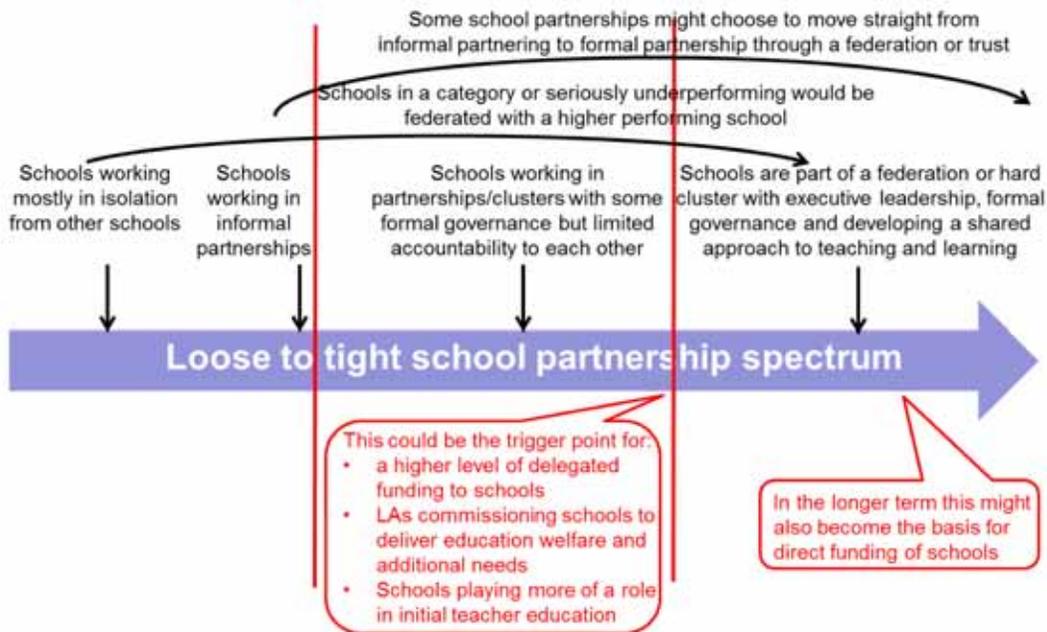
Chapter 5: Improving accountability

Introduction

Developing effective school accountability arrangements is no easy task and many education jurisdictions have struggled to get this right. As Figure 5.1 explains, there is on the one hand the danger of an over-reliance on high-stakes tests. That can result in a narrowing of the curriculum, shallow learning and gaming by schools and teachers. It can also contribute to school leaders and teachers being alienated from school reform strategies and disinclined to share their learning with other schools that they see as competitors.

On the other hand an absence of a clear accountability framework means schools tend to be secret gardens with parents, the public and policymakers not knowing what is going on and how effective performance is. There is no basis for schools being able to benchmark and learn from each other and little incentive to improve performance. The challenge, therefore, is to develop an accountability system that:

- is clear about the key educational outcomes it is striving for – and which levels of the system are responsible for which outcomes

- equips schools and teachers with the information, tools and support to improve pupil performance in the classroom on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis

- balances improvement in attainment with progress in broader learning outcomes

- enables parents, pupils, schools, the public and policymakers to compare on a range of criteria the performance of schools and assess the relative progress they are making

- provides incentives for schools to improve attainment and achievement by working with each other.

My conclusion in this chapter is that the accountability system in Wales does include many of these features but that there are options for reform that could be made to further strengthen the arrangements.

Figure 5.1 – Key research findings on school accountability

Accountability based on student test results can be a powerful tool for changing teacher and school behaviour, but it can also bring perverse consequences such as teaching to the test, manipulating test scores and making schools with high scores complacent. The best accountability systems are designed to also include broader student learning objectives and to encourage schools to remain aspirational.

Student test results need to be valid and reliable if they are to inform and improve classroom instruction. Evidence from PISA research suggests that the public release of

student results has a positive impact upon student performance.

The higher the stakes attached to test results, the more sophisticated the data needs to be to provide a complete and balanced picture of performance.

Teachers and schools should only be accountable for factors that are within their control – using value-added measures as part of an accountability system is a good way of helping to achieve this.

No single assessment can meet the information needs of all stakeholders. An assessment that is valid for one purpose is not necessarily valid for another. For example, a yearly assessment designed to hold schools accountable may be of little help to teachers in improving their daily classroom practice. The design of each aspect of an accountability system should reflect its purpose and the various aspects should fit together.

Accountability needs to be linked with giving schools and staff information about how to improve – for example, schools and teachers need the capacity to interpret and use student test results.

Top-down government performance targets and expectations need to be combined with bottom-up capacity building for schools. Accountability systems are more likely to lead to improvement if they focus attention on information relevant to teaching and learning, motivate teachers and schools to use that information to improve practice.

Economic and cultural factors, cumbersome contractual procedures and a lack of training and skills are the issues most likely to inhibit school leaders in holding staff to account.

Sources: Donaldson (2011); Elmore (2008); Faubert (2009); OECD (2011b); O'Day (2002); Rosenkist (2010)

Recent progress

The past two years has seen a number of positive changes that are helping to shape the development of a more mature accountability system in Wales. For example, the assessment at the end of the Foundation Phase and the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate ensures that broader development, knowledge, skills and learning – and not just attainment in tests – are being valued and assessed. The introduction of grading into the Welsh Baccalaureate at A level, as recommended by Estyn, for courses starting from September 2013 will help to provide a fairer reflection of student achievement.

The introduction of a Common Inspection Framework has brought consistency to how schools, colleges, early years providers and local authorities are inspected and judged. The use of follow-up inspections is also helping struggling education providers to know how well they are progressing in making improvements.

The revised performance management arrangements for teachers and headteachers that came into force at the beginning of 2012 have the potential to empower headteachers and governors to align school improvement and staff performance. The publication of the all-Wales core data set has gone a long way to ensure that there is a common language for analysing and interpreting the performance and progress of schools.

The introduction of banding for secondary schools[19] is helping to challenge complacency in the system by focusing on the progress that schools are making each year, by looking at pupil attainment levels relative to their prior attainment and by incentivising schools in the bottom bands to improve their performance. In 2012, 61 out of the 79 bands 4 and 5 schools saw improvements in the percentage of young people achieving five good GCSEs including English or Welsh first language and mathematics. On the same measure the overall level of increase for bands 4 and 5 schools was respectively 4.8 and 5.8 percentage points.

The commitment to improving standards is being reinforced by introducing a new, stronger gatekeeping process for vocational qualifications to ensure that public funding is only approved for qualifications that have quality, rigour, relevance and value.

The My Local School[20] website opens up access to schools' data and enables parents and others with an interest in their local school to see how they are performing. The site contains a wealth of data on pupil numbers and characteristics, school staffing, funding, attendance and performance. The performance of a school is also set within its context. For example, schools are benchmarked against schools with similar levels of FSM and compared with schools within the same 'family' (groups of schools facing a broadly equivalent level of challenge).

The new National Reading and Numeracy Tests that will from May 2013 be taken by pupils at the end of each year from Year 2 to Year 9 will help schools in assessing pupils' standards of reading and numeracy. The reading test will be available in two parts. There will be a statutory 'core' test. This will generate data that will both help teachers understand where their pupils are in terms of reading ability and enable parents and others to judge the overall progress in reading proficiency that pupils in the school are making, compared with other schools. In addition and reflecting the principles of a good accountability system, there will also be a suite of non-statutory test materials designed to be more formative, supporting teachers to identify the needs of individual pupils and groups of learners. The numeracy test has been split into two papers: numerical procedures and numerical reasoning; both papers will be 30 minutes.

A further area where progress has been made is in clarifying the roles and consolidating the respective powers of intervention of local authorities and Welsh ministers in relation to schools that are causing concern. The recently enacted School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides a clear framework covering the grounds for

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[19] Banding uses the performance of schools on a range of measures to group them into one of five bands – from band 1, schools which are performing well, to band 5 schools which need to improve.

[20] The My Local School website can be viewed at www.mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/

intervention, the process for intervention, the point at which intervention can take place and specifying what can be done by way of intervention.

All governors are to receive mandatory training in using and interpreting data to assist them in their role of holding schools to account.

Challenges to be addressed

Some of the accountability challenges to be addressed relate to particular sectors while others apply to all schools.

In the primary sector the summative end of key stage assessments by teachers are not robust enough. In 2010 Estyn found that teachers' assessment of pupils' work at Key Stage 2 were not consistent or accurate enough between different schools and reported that 'assessment is one of the weakest areas of work in schools' (Estyn 2010b). In its 2010/11 annual report Estyn described the end of Key Stage 2 outcomes of teacher assessment in language as being 'generally overgenerous'. I found a widespread lack of confidence in the teacher assessment and moderation arrangements – a view confirmed by the provisional findings of an external review commissioned by the Welsh Government (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2013). This indicated that the root of the problem lies in:

- a lack of understanding by schools and teachers of the assessment system, the related guidance and the level descriptors of the national curriculum

- pressure on teachers and schools to inflate judgements because the results were being used as the basis for comparison with other schools

- incompatibility between primary and secondary school tracking systems

- weak internal standardisation and moderation practices within primary schools linked to ineffective external cluster moderation.

The introduction of the tests in reading and numeracy will provide a much more robust framework within which to apply teacher assessment. But that still leaves areas such as writing, speaking and listening skills (oracy) and science where sound assessment is still needed. These changes are needed in order that parents, local authorities, Welsh Government and the public can have reliable information on which to assess the overall performance of each child and each primary school.

In the secondary sector I encountered two separate but related matters. The first issue is related to the banding system. Some school leaders I met strongly supported its impact – even where their school had moved down a band. Other leaders were concerned about the detailed statistical calibration of the basket of measures that are used. ASCL Cymru, for example, considered that a reliance on annual data was resulting in 'unhelpful and significant year to year fluctuations' in some schools' positioning in the bands.

Carmarthenshire County Council argued that banding was potentially undermining inclusion by 'skewing' the performance of these schools that had a large number of pupils with significant learning difficulties or had a large special needs unit. Many of these pupils, the county council claimed, were 'unable to aspire to level 2 inclusive or metrics such as capped or wider points score' and this in turn was having an adverse effect on how such schools appeared in the banding reports.

Banding is, as explained earlier in this chapter, having a positive effect in terms of motivating and supporting improvement in secondary schools. However, by definition banding is limited to ranking schools and benchmarking them against each other. If the ambition is for schools in Wales to match the performance of other high-performing education systems then the challenge will be to consider building in a more objective benchmark alongside comparisons with other schools in Wales. In other words banding in the longer term will need to be criterion-referenced as well as norm-referenced.

The data underpinning the banding system is one of a number of data sets that schools receive. There is the all-Wales core data set issued by the Welsh Government, data from the Fischer Family Trust (FFT), separate data relating to added value and the summary of secondary school performance data (that has to be included in reports to parents). In addition I heard of examples where local authorities are also sending out their own data sets. Headteachers also find it frustrating that different definitions are used in different data sets – for example, the application of FSM bands varies from one data set to another. There are also some differences in how Estyn and the Welsh Government respectively use data to analyse school performance.

In the post-16 sector the accountability position is unnecessarily confused because there are different accountability arrangements for school sixth forms and FE colleges. FE colleges are assessed on completion, attainment and success rates. The success rate combines completion and attainment into a single overall measure: reporting on how many of the learning activities that were started were successfully completed and achieved. In schools, success or achievement is just assessed as a proportion of the student cohort entered for an exam – and there is no assessment of completion rates. The net result is that:

> *'This means that we cannot compare the success rates of post-16 courses, such as the Welsh Baccalaureate, A-level and vocational courses, in sixth forms and further education institutions…[and] learners and parents cannot make fully informed choices about what and where best to study.'*
> Estyn (2013)

In addition to these sector-specific challenges there are three generic accountability challenges:

- inspection is too predictable – schools are currently inspected on a six-year cycle and they are given 20 working days' notice of inspection. This means that that 'providers

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can predict, with a high degree of certainty, when they are due for inspection' (Welsh Government and Estyn, 2013)

- the systems for dealing with persistently underperforming teachers and headteachers are, as described in earlier chapters, cumbersome to operate

- different stakeholders in the system – heads, governors, local authorities and consortia – are not clear about each other's respective accountabilities. NAHT Cymru says that despite the attempts of various reviews to establish where the responsibility for the delivery of education services lies, 'clarity has thus far not been achieved'. This was a message I heard many times during my conversations and visits. For example, the School Governance Task and Finish Group suggested that there was a lack of clarity about whether governors are there to be responsible for the conduct and standards of the school or whether their role is to be more of a critical friend to the headteachers – offering support and constructive advice.

Delivery options for reform

The options I am putting forward for improving accountability do not represent wholesale change. Rather they try and build on existing strengths while seeking to address the challenges identified above.

Options for improving accountability Key Stages 2 and 3

As Chapter 2 argued there is a strong if not overwhelming case for introducing a national assessment and tracking system from Year 2 to Year 9, along the lines of the Incerts approach. This would help develop consistency in the way that teachers practised formative assessment and recorded data on each pupil's progress in meeting the outcomes set out in the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. The approach would also assist with:

- facilitating analysis by class, year group and FSM grouping as well as enabling teachers and school leaders to pinpoint where progress is lagging

- helping teachers to manage their workload – a consistent concern of the teacher trade unions

- provide a common language and vocabulary for teachers to use when discussing progress under the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework – and provide continuity as teachers moved from one school to another and pupils moved from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

- provide evidence to inform end of year assessments. In the case of reading and numeracy this information would be placed alongside data from the annual tests. For writing, oracy (speaking and listening) and science – areas which are not included in

the annual end of year tests – the tracking system would generate an end of year summative report.

However, being clear about progress in writing, speaking and listening is as important as it is for reading and numeracy. I would recommend that for these areas (and also possibly for science), the option of making available a bank of standardised tasks (not tests) at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 which teachers would use during an agreed two- or three-week window towards the end of the key stage. The tasks would reflect the descriptors and outcomes described in the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework for Year 6 and Year 9 pupils respectively, and should (as the new English language GSCE will do) also include tasks that help assess performance and progress in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The main writing task might be akin to a controlled assessment in that it would need to be undertaken within a set time and assessed on the basis of a pupil's first draft. Structuring tasks in this way would help teachers to address the fundamental weaknesses identified by Estyn of pupils having too few opportunities to write independently and at length. In oracy it might be appropriate for some of the tasks to be group as well as individual tasks.

Teachers would require clear guidance on how to assess the written and oracy tasks. They would form an overall assessment of pupils' proficiency in these areas based on a combination of pupils' progress as measured by the tracking system and informed by performance in the tasks. Although there would still be an element of subjectivity to the assessment process the combination of the reports from the national assessment and tracking system and using standardised tasks should provide a much more robust basis for reaching judgements. This approach would need to be reinforced by adopting the key recommendations from the ACER report on strengthening standardisation and moderation practice to ensure consistency of approach across schools. A further option would be for the School Standards and Delivery Unit to oversee the sampling of five per cent of schools nationally in order to ensure a consistency of standards in which the whole school system in Wales could have confidence.

Options for reforming and extending banding

Before explaining potential options for adjusting the secondary school banding system and considering whether and how to extend banding to the primary sector I want to explain the principles that have informed my thinking. The principles draw on the research findings at the beginning of the chapter.

• A school's performance should take account of its absolute level of pupil attainment but should also reflect its progress as assessed against:

  – its projected level of achievement and the actual value added – having regard to the prior attainment of pupils and the performance of the highest and the lowest attainers

- its context, as measured by the proportion of FSM students and the number of students with a statement of special educational needs

- its progress in closing gaps in attainment between FSM and non-FSM pupils

- its performance compared with other schools with a similar cohort of students.

- For small schools the data could form part of a three- or four-year rolling average.

- The relative value attached to qualifications should be clear (for example, in terms of vocational qualifications or the particular value assigned to threshold qualifications such as gaining a grade C or better pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics) and included in a way that as far as possible avoids perverse incentives (such as focusing disproportionately on C/D borderline students or encouraging students to collect large numbers of GCSEs).

- Assessment of performance should include rates of attendance, levels of pupil and parental engagement and satisfaction (both of which can now easily be relatively easily assessed using standardised online surveys) and, as the arrangements for grading come into force, performance in the Welsh Baccalaureate.

- Assessment should be common to all types of providers for the age group in question.

Using a range of measures inevitably translates into having a basket of measures that are weighted – not dissimilar in principle to how secondary school banding is constructed. However, another way of calibrating overall performance using a basket of measures is to adopt a balanced school scorecard for each school – that would be linked to the My Local School website. Figure 5.2 below describes in summary how a balanced scorecard framework operates in schools in New York city.

Figure 5.2 – Use of schools progress reports in New York city

In 2007 the New York department of education introduced a progress report to evaluate and communicate the performance and progress of all the city's public schools to parents and the wider public. There is one version of the progress report for elementary and middle schools and another for high schools. Each school receives an overall ranking in the form of an overall letter grade: A, B, C, D or F. The grading is determined by schools' performance in four areas:

- school environment – based on school attendance (five per cent of the total score) and survey data from students, parents and teachers (10 per cent)

- student performance – based on the percentage of students reaching defined levels in either state exams or tests used for college entry. In the first year this element accounted for 30 per cent of a school's total score but was reduced to 25 per cent in later years

- student progress – based on the progress students make within a school year. The exact details have varied during the operation of the progress report but in 2010 an assessment was made based on two indicators: the median added value percentile for all students in the schools and the median added value percentile for the bottom third of students relative to their performance the year before. Added value progress was defined by reference to state exams. This factor accounts for 60 per cent of the total score (up from 55 per cent originally)

- additional credits – schools are awarded additional marks for raising proficiency levels by half a level or more for students in the lowest third of performance citywide.

A school's score for the first three factors is weighted to take account of how schools are performing compared with all other schools in the city and with a group of 40 peer schools with comparable students. The additional credits are then added to provide a total score out of 100.

In the first year schools were allocated an overall letter grade (A, B, C, D or F): the top 15 per cent scores receiving an A, the next 40 per cent Bs, the next 30 per cent Cs, the next 10 per cent Ds and the bottom five per cent Fs. In subsequent years the grade thresholds have been raised slightly to provide an incentive for schools to keep pushing for improvement.

Note: This description covers the structure of the progress reports between 2007 and 2010.
Source: Childress et al (2011)

For primary schools, where the introduction of a banding system is under consideration, I recommend that serious consideration be given to the option of introducing a balanced scorecard. It would fit well with the emphasis that the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework places on progress – while also building in recognition of other factors relating to attendance, pupil and parent engagement. The balanced scorecards would be used by schools to inform their self-evaluation, discussions with governors and conversations with system leaders on what they needed to do to build on their strengths and address areas of weakness.

For secondary schools I consider that it would be premature and disruptive to make fundamental changes to the banding system at this point. However, the Welsh Government should continue to discuss and engage with school leaders regarding their concerns about the detailed operation of banding with the aim of building greater consensus and ownership about the operation of the system. Given the relatively high level and increasing proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds in Wales that are not in education, employment or training (around 12 per cent[21]), it would be advisable to include within the banding system data on students' destination at the end of Year 11.

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[21] See www.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16education2013/young-people-neet-30-sept-2012/?lang=en

I would also propose that the various data sets be simplified and consolidated so that schools, local authorities, regional consortia and Estyn all use the same data sets and work to and interpret data in the same way. A small group involving statisticians from Welsh Government, Estyn and school practitioners should work urgently on this task. Given the creation and role of My Local School it might also be an opportune moment to review and abolish the need for schools to have to send out to parents a secondary school summary report.

In the medium term the secondary school banding system will need to be revised to take account of the introduction of the new GCSEs that are planned in English language and Welsh first language and the proposed two new mathematics GCSEs covering numeracy and mathematical techniques. Potentially, added value and pupil progress might in the future be measured through literacy and numeracy rather than through English or Welsh first language and mathematics. As this more fundamental review takes place this should act as a trigger for considering the option of moving to a scorecard approach in the secondary school sector.

Options for reforming other performance measures

In addition to reforming the banding system there are two other options for making the accountability system operate in a more intelligent fashion.

- As the role of federations and hard clusters grows, consideration should be given to reporting the performance of federations and trusts alongside that of individual schools.

- Common measures for assessing and reporting performance across the board in post-16 settings should be introduced. All providers (schools, FE colleges and workplace-based providers) should be assessed on completion, attainment and success rates. In addition destination data (i.e. the proportion of students who go to higher or further education, training or work) should also be included in a standardised reporting framework. This would then provide the basis, as described below, for Estyn to inspect and report on schools post-16 provision in a way that was comparable with other providers.

I also considered including an option that would have involved conducting tests for a small sample of pupils in the years that fall between the PISA tests in order that policymakers could track the overall progress of the Welsh education system. However, recruiting sufficient schools and pupils to participate each and every year could be a challenge and undermine support for participation in the PISA process. I have, therefore, not formally included this idea as an option. However, if school leaders felt that it would be helpful and were prepared to commit to sampling up to five per cent of 15-year-olds each year in order to gauge progress over time then it would be worthwhile pursuing this option.

Options for amending the school inspection system

I strongly support the option, outlined in the consultation document produced by the Welsh Government and Estyn, for inspection of schools to take place on a more proportionate and less predictable basis. This would mean that better performing providers might have longer-than-average intervals between their core inspections but would free up resources for lower-performing schools to be inspected sooner than otherwise would be the case. In order to ensure that previously high-performing performing schools did not 'disappear off the radar' there could be an option for Estyn to use the proposed consolidated and agreed data sets to identify whether any of these schools were slipping or falling behind in their performance. If there appeared to be cause for concern in this regard Estyn would insert the school back into its inspection schedule.

I also support a move to reducing the length of notice a school is given of an impending inspection. I see no reason why this need be any more than two to three working days – though I accept that some consequential changes would be needed because of the current regulations for consulting with parents. However, increasingly such consultations can be conducted online. The important principle to establish is that inspection should see and experience schools as they really operate on a day-in and day-out basis – rather than how schools perform (following extensive preparation and rehearsal) for a few days every six years. Schools should work on an inspection-ready basis all the year round rather than an inspection-panic basis in reaction to being notified of a forthcoming Estyn visit.

Other options for amending school inspection arrangements, so that they are consistent with other options proposed in my report, include:

- incorporating within inspections an assessment of how effectively a school is using the Pupil Deprivation Grant having regard to the evidence on its progress in closing gaps in attainment and the extent to which it is spending the resources on interventions known to be effective

- reviewing the operation of the inspection model to ensure that it is appropriate for schools working as part of federations, trust or other hard clusters

- providing a separate inspection assessment of post-16 provision in schools linked to the use of common performance data, as described above

- carrying out a fundamental review of the inspection criteria for local authorities to reflect the transfer of school improvement functions to regional consortia – Chapter 6 discusses the background to this issue in more detail.

Options for addressing staff capability

Chapter 2 affirmed the role of teachers as professionals and Chapter 3 reinforced the importance of their leadership role in the classroom. My report has also laid great stress on supporting the development of teachers and school leaders. However, the school

system also has to be able to deal with, in a fair and timely way, those practitioners whose performance is persistently not up to standard. It is wrong that a class of pupils or a group of young people do not receive the quality of education they deserve because they have a poor teacher or a headteacher who is failing to tackle weaknesses in a school. Nor is it fair to the other members of staff or the reputation of a school to carry on a long-term basis a teacher or leader who is incapable of adequately carrying out their professional role. There are three options that would help to address the concerns that numerous headteachers have expressed to me on this issue.

- The Welsh Government should publish clear guidance on the developmental value and practice of classroom observation and affirm the role of headteachers in being able to 'pop in' and monitor classroom practice. I see no case whatsoever for placing some artificial limit on the number of formal observations that should be conducted during the course of year. Headteachers and senior leaders should be free to take the action they consider is necessary to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom in their school is the best it can possibly be.

- The Welsh Government should publish procedures and guidance to ensure that heads and governors can address in a swift and timely way the capability of those staff and headteachers who have been given the opportunity and support to improve, but whose performance remains inadequate. School leaders (or, in the case of headteachers, governors regional consortia and local authorities) should of course work in a developmental fashion with staff whose performance is not satisfactory in order to support improvement. Resorting to capability procedures should be a last not a first resort. However, once the procedures are formally invoked it should take no more than a term at the most to go through the formal procedures – including any appeal.

- Locate specialist human resource advice either in clusters of schools and/or in regional consortia to support leaders and governors in discharging their obligations as employers. Schools should be able to access swift and sound expert advice that is relevant to the particular context or issue.

Options for improving the operation of school governance

The two-tier governance system for federations and hard clusters described in Chapter 4 should, over time, provide a much stronger school governance framework. The School Governance Task and Finish Group will be resuming its work following the publication of my report and they will consider in detail what further measures might be taken to strengthen the operation of school governance. In some schools, as the case study in Figure 5.3 describes, governance is already strong and governors understand how to interpret and use data. However, this picture is far from universal. Accordingly I would commend to the Task and Finish Group the following options for consideration:

- monitoring the impact of the new governor training arrangements to ensure that they are of high quality and support more effective governance in practice

- agreeing with regional consortia a template of what an effective governance support service looks like

- providing a standard school performance data-reporting template for governors. The My Local School website provides a data set that gives governors an excellent overview of how their school is performing. But governors should also be receiving in an easy-to-read format data charts that summarise on a termly or a half-termly basis the real-time position within the school in relation to pupil attendance, pupil exclusion, staff sickness absence, quality of teaching (as assessed through classroom observations), and progress and attainment data against targets for each year group

- enabling outstanding chairs of governors to act as Lead Practitioners and so support improvements in governance at other schools

- working with CBI Wales and other employers to develop a register of aspiring and serving business leaders willing to serve as school governors in each region. Supporting such a venture would not only be a means of a company discharging its corporate social responsibility duties but could also form part of a leadership development programme for its staff.

Figure 5.3 – Governance in Crickhowell High School

Crickhowell High School is an 11–19 co-educational comprehensive school with around 750 pupils in south-east Powys. The governing body is very effective in supporting the school because it has a clear understanding of its key roles and responsibilities and there is a constant focus on school improvement. The governors work as a team, ably led by the chair and vice-chair and supported by the chairs of committees. Communication is open, frequent and transparent between the governing body, the headteacher and the leadership team.

The governors have a clear understanding of the vision of the school and how it is to be achieved and work as a strategic partnership to support the school in honing and refining that vision. They are frequent visitors to the school, not just for meetings but linking with departments and having regular meetings with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. They are a conduit for problem solving, sharing good practice and bringing new ideas to the school. Governors have a clear understanding of their role as a critical friend of the school and their accountability for standards.

As part of Crickhowell's quality assurance (QA) calendar the governing body's QA group go through all benchmarking data such as school banding calculations, the all-Wales core data sets, and FFT D targets at regular points – such as when modular exam results are received. The data manager explains and updates governors at each stage and the full governing body receives presentations to ensure they fully understand the data. Governors then use the all-Wales core data and the school's own FFT D-based targets to challenge achievements across each key stage and each subject area.

In September 2012 Crickhowell was inspected by Estyn and assessed as 'good' with 'good prospects for improvement'. In its report Estyn commented that:

> *'The governing body has a good understanding of the challenges the school faces and its key priorities. Governors are well-informed about the school's performance and have a secure appreciation of its strengths and areas for development. Governors offer effective support and constructive challenge to the school, where appropriate.'*

Conclusion: bring clarity to accountability

These options for reforming accountability should, along with the other changes I am proposing, bring much greater clarity as to who or which layer of governance is responsible for what. In the next chapter I address in more detail the issue of the respective accountabilities of local authorities and regional consortia. However, in broad outline I envisage that the Welsh school system should be moving to position where responsibilities are distributed as shown in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 – Summary of key accountabilities of the respective layers of education governance
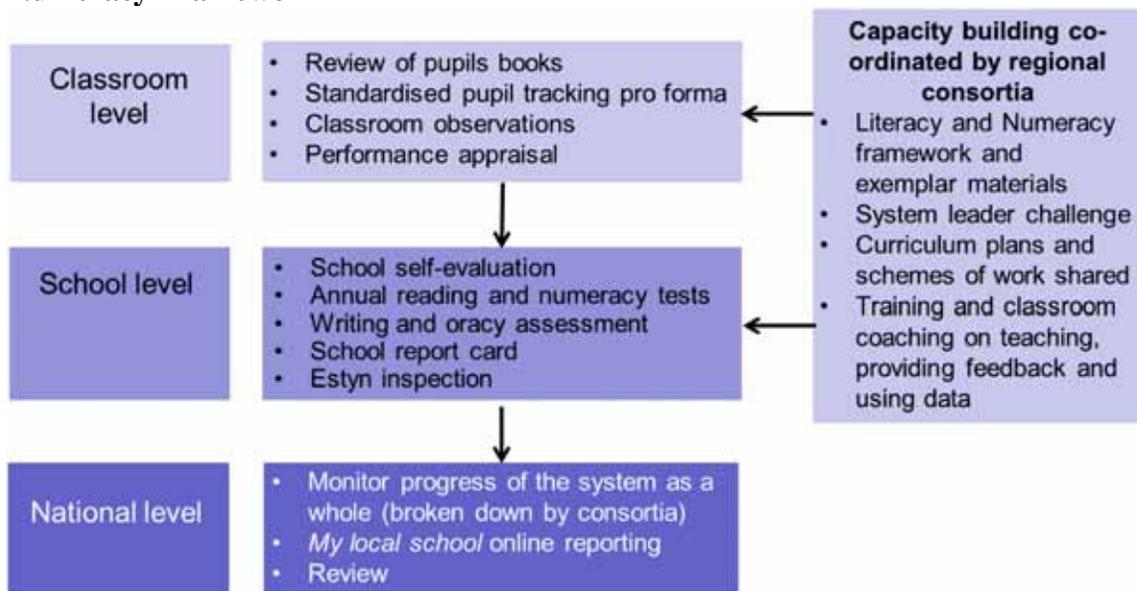
Headteachers	• Appoint and performance manage staff • Lead improvement of teaching and learning • Draft school development plan, improvement priorities/ targets and present to governors • Draw up budget, present to governors and take responsiblity for implementation • Monitor school 's progress, lead self -evaluation and report to governors
Governors	• Appoint headteacher and performance manage head • Hear appeals on disciplinary issues • Agree school development plan, review performance and provide ch allenge • Set budget and monitor expenditure • Report to and engage with parents, pupils and the local communit y
Local Authorities	• Ensure sufficient school places, co -ordinate admissions and allocate funding • Promote school partnerships/federations & commission services fr om groups of schools • Issue warning notices and intervening (including setting up Inte rim Executive Boards and closing/federating schools) when advised by Estyn or regional co nsortium of performance problems
Regional Consortia	• Know, track and challenge the performance of every school • Broker support for underperforming schools • Commission development programmes and build up school -to-school capacity • Co-ordinate delivery of national training programmes • Report to local authorities where a school requires a formal int ervention
Welsh Government	• Set accountability framework and priorities for improvement • Approve and monitor performance of regional consortia • Take action where consortia and LAs are failing to discharge their duties properly • Commission national training programmes

Some of the submissions to this review have argued for local authorities to be given more control of schools – in terms of appointing headteachers and overseeing governors. I do not think that is the right way forward. We need to develop the structures, the systems

and the support so that schools (and groups of schools) know that they are responsible for their own improvement – and can exercise that role responsibly. It is the role of regional consortia to help to build the necessary capacity. Local authorities will assist by brokering partnerships and intervening when things go wrong. It will take a little time to move to this new world but I have no doubt that it provides a more sustainable model for building long-term school improvement.

Figure 5.5 shows how this system might work in terms of accountability for the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. Formative assessment is exercised by teachers through reviewing pupils' books and providing feedback and using a national tracking and assessment system. Summative assessment comes through end of year tests and, for writing and oracy, teacher assessment. Regional consortia coordinate capacity building to support improvement and Estyn provide analysis and feedback as they inspect schools. A school report card linked to My Local School provides feedback to parents and the wider public. The Welsh Government reviews progress as a whole and commissions support and policy changes as implementation unfolds.

Figure 5.5 – Summary of accountabilities for delivering the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework

Classroom level	• Review of pupils books • Standardised pupil tracking pro forma • Classroom observations • Performance appraisal	**Capacity building co-ordinated by regional consortia** • Literacy and Numeracy framework and exemplar materials • System leader challenge • Curriculum plans and schemes of work shared • Training and classroom coaching on teaching, providing feedback and using data
School level	• School self-evaluation • Annual reading and numeracy tests • Writing and oracy assessment • School report card • Estyn inspection	
National level	• Monitor progress of the system as a whole (broken down by consortia) • *My local school* online reporting • Review	

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Chapter 6: Options for organising school improvement functions

Introduction

I have deliberately left the vexed issue of how best to organise school improvement functions until the end. This is not because it is the least important – far from it – but because form needs to follow function. By that I mean the future role and work of local authorities and regional consortia should flow from what needs to be done to support the strategy for improving teaching and learning, building up school-to-school partnerships and strengthening school leadership. There needs to be an understanding of how schools are likely to develop, how they will work together and what support they need, if we are to design and develop effective structures that can help them in their future work.

Figure 6.1 describes the characteristics of those education systems that have been successful in working with their schools to secure significant improvements in school and student outcomes. Although the context varies some clearly identifiable features are to be found in how they have gone about organising and pursuing school improvement.

The current arrangements in Wales are profoundly unsatisfactory and fall short of this good practice. The good news is that I found a widespread recognition among just about everyone I met that things cannot continue as they are. In this chapter I set out the immediate and urgent steps that need to be taken to bring coherence and quality to school improvement support. In addition I place the short-term measures in the context of considering more far-reaching options for reform in the medium term.

Figure 6.1 – Characteristics of the organisation of school improvement in high-performing school jurisdictions

School improvement is best coordinated at a regional, city or sub-regional level – there is an economy of scale to the expertise and resources needed.

Strong political leadership is needed to champion education reform and improvement based round a small number of ambitious yet achievable and well-grounded goals.

Successful school improvement strategies:

- engage and win support from leaders at different levels of the system to build a 'guiding coalition' for reform and improvement

- empower effective executive leaders, deploy high-quality cadre of school improvement experts and make efficient use of dedicated resources

- raise the expectations of students, leaders, teachers and parents and prioritise improving all schools and success for all students

- combine hard interventions (replacing school leaders, setting up interim executive boards and federating schools) and soft interventions (coaching and mentoring, training and development programmes). Struggling schools should be targeted with bespoke improvement packages

- use an outcomes-based accountability framework supported by data tracking and comparative data in order to monitor overall progress, evaluate the impact of interventions, diagnose schools and groups of pupils with specific problems and facilitate schools to learn from each other

- build the capacity of the system to support itself. Reforms should empower and develop the capacity of middle and senior school leaders to support, work with and learn from each other and lead improvement

- align priorities, strategies, policies, leadership, teacher development, structural reforms, accountability, inspection and resources around a shared vision. Programmes and interventions reinforce each other to improve the quality of teaching and learning – they all need to pull in the same direction

- are sustained over time and over more than one electoral cycle.

Reform strategies move through different phases – as performance starts to improve reforms become more empowering of those at the frontline.

Sources: Hill (2012); Hutchings et al (2012); Levin (2012); Mourshed et al (2010)

Progress to date

Five of the local authorities inspected by Estyn under the Common Inspection Framework have been assessed as good – including some which had previous struggled. For example, in late 2007 the Welsh Government established an Independent Education Recovery Board following adverse reports on Denbighshire County Council's education and youth services. By May 2010 Denbighshire was judged to be making sufficient progress for the recovery board to be disbanded. In January 2012 Estyn assessed the county's education and youth services as being 'good' and with 'good prospects for improvement'.

Cardiff Council provides another example of the sort of educational leadership that local authorities should be providing – although the authority knows that it still has a long way to go before both its schools and its services are performing at the standard they should be. In January 2011 the council's performance was described by Estyn as 'adequate'. In May 2012 a new administration was elected and found that in three of its 20 high schools fewer than 20 per cent of pupils were achieving five A*–C grades including English or Welsh first language and mathematics. In three high schools the proportion was under 30 per cent and in a further four the figure was under 40 per cent.

In discussion with schools the city council has been using federations and an Education Improvement Partnership in order to maximise the expertise of its best schools to provide stronger school-to-school support. As well as instigating structural changes – which also included closing schools and removing surplus places – the council has published an annual report setting out school bandings and consortium gradings of all schools in the city. Heads and chairs of governors of all schools in an Estyn category, in bands 4 and 5 (along with schools that have slipped down a band or two) and in the two lowest consortium grades have been invited on a school-by-school basis for a meeting with the cabinet member for education and senior education officers. The meetings have worked through the issues that schools need to address to improve.

Progress has also been made in establishing regional consortia as Figure 6.2 describes. The potential benefits of moving to consortium working were seen as:

- better value for money through economies of scale and efficiencies, enabling greater devolution of funding to schools

- more opportunities to share good practice between local authorities and break down silo-working

- enabling the best leaders of education to influence and support schools across a wider geographical area

- facilitating schools to support the improvement of other schools.

Figure 6.2 – Background to the establishment and operation of regional education consortia

In February 2011 the Minister for Education and Skills set out 20 priorities for rapidly transforming standards of achievement in Wales, in response to declining relative performance in the PISA international assessments. One of the priorities he identified was the structural management and leadership of education in Wales and he included the following direction to local authorities:

> '*We will expect local authorities to participate in consortia arrangements, including shared consortium services, or suffer financial penalties, including the withdrawal of Better Schools Funding. The consortia will identify system leaders, who will support and challenge the professional learning communities, which will have a focus on literacy and numeracy.*'
> 'Teaching makes a difference', 2 February 2011

Local authorities in Wales have organised themselves into four consortia as shown in Figure 6.2a. The grouping is based in part on previous joint working between authorities. While this is understandable it does mean that two of the four consortia have boundaries that are not coterminous with what is referred to as the 'public services footprint' – i.e. how other public services in Wales are organised.

Figure 6.2a – Map of local authorities in Wales by regional education consortia
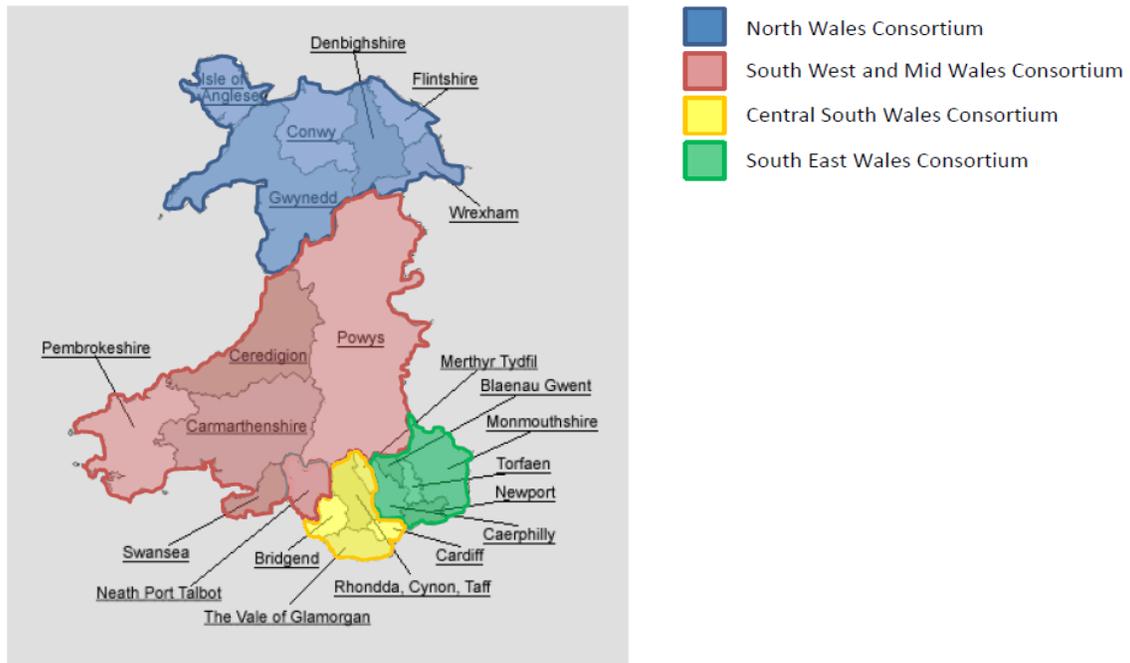
The Central South Wales Consortium and South East Wales Consortium are geographically compact whereas the other two consortia serve schools dispersed over a much larger area. As a result both North Wales Consortium and South West and Mid Wales Consortium (SWAMWAC) have adopted a 'hub and spoke' model of operating. The consortia have adopted different approaches in terms of their scope of their services and the extent to which local authority services have been included in the remit. Some have focused on a narrow understanding of school improvement while others have included a much broader range of functions, as Figure 6.2b demonstrates.

Figure 6.2b – Range of functions undertaken by regional consortia

	North Wales	South West and Mid Wales	Central South Wales	South East Wales
Strategic management	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓
Back office and admin	✓	✓	✓	✓
School effectiveness*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Literacy and numeracy	✗	✓	✓	✓
Other specialist subjects	✗	✗	✗	✓
ICT for learning	✓	✗	✓	✓
Support for 14–19	✗	✗	✗	✓
Support for early years	✗	✗	✗	✓
Governor support	✗	✗	✓	✓
HR support for schools	✓	✗	✓	✓
SACRE	✗	✗	✓	✓
Monitoring NQT training	✗	✗	✓	✗

* School effectiveness includes core services for monitoring and challenging schools, whole-school intervention, system leader roles, leadership and self-evaluation support, headteacher performance management, and support for closing the achievement gap.

The organisational form and governance of the consortia also varies reflecting their diverse context and range of roles. In the North Wales and Central South Wales Consortia, functions and staff are delegated by each local authority to a joint committee with membership from all local authorities. In SWAMWAC the school effectiveness work is part of a broader regional school improvement strategy that is overseen by a partnership board which is chaired by a council leader and sponsored by a chief executive. In the South East Wales Consortium a company, Education Achievement Services, has been formed to undertake the consortium role and is contracted and funded by the local authorities to undertake agreed areas of work.

The funding for the consortia currently comes from:

• school improvement funding transferred from local authorities

• some or all of the non-delegated elements of the specific grants, such as the School Effectiveness (SEG) and Welsh in Education (WEG), allocated by the Welsh Government

- income from providing charged-for or traded school improvement services (such as courses and in-school programmes) to schools.

The consortia are broadly undertaking two key roles:

- employing system leaders who in dialogue with a school and based on an agreed data set analyse and challenge school performance and broker bespoke interventions to support its achievements

- building up school improvement capacity through commissioning or providing professional development and leadership development programmes, coordinating delivery of support for the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and brokering school-to-school support.

In short it might be described as a 'pressure and support' model.

Each of the consortia has a four-level system for categorising their schools and providing differentiated support according to how well are they performing. The consortia have arrived at different conclusions as to how much support is necessary for schools as Figure 6.2c shows.

Figure 6.2c – Range of differentiated supported provided by regional consortia

	All schools – universal offer	**Additional targeted support for schools**	**Intensive intervention for schools**
North Wales	6 days per year	6–16 days per year	32 days per year
South West and Mid Wales	3 days per year	12.5 days per year	17.5 days per year
Central South Wales	3.5–5 days per year	5–8 days per year	15 days per year
South East Wales	5 days per year	10 days per year	20–40 days per year

Source: The Isos Partnership Summer 2012, with additional material

In December 2012 the Isos partnership conducted an initial review for the Welsh Government of the progress that consortia were making. The review concluded that even though it was early days, there were encouraging signs of progress and indications of the potential benefits of the new arrangements. Each consortium was identified as having at least one strength from which the others could learn:

- Central South Wales Consortium had the best functions in place for the commissioning of support via LINKS

- South East Wales Consortium had the best function in place for the 'system leader' autumn term visits

- South West and Mid Wales (SWAMWAC) has the most effective performance management system for schools

- North Wales Consortium was implementing the most ambitious integrated regional school management information system.

Challenges to address

There are three serious challenges that need to be addressed as a matter of some urgency – the poor performance of local authorities, the variable operation of the regional consortia and the confusion of roles and accountabilities between the two sets of bodies.

Too many poorly performing local authorities

The position in relation to local authorities has been well-rehearsed. As of the end of March 2013 the performance in nearly three-quarters of the local authorities inspected under Estyn's Common Inspection Framework was either borderline or not acceptable. In addition to the five authorities assessed as good:

- six had been judged 'adequate' (with four authorities in Estyn monitoring)

- seven had been assessed as 'unsatisfactory' (with six authorities in special measures and one in need of significant improvement).

The quality of support for school improvement is a particular concern. Of the eight authorities inspected in 2011/12 school improvement was only good or better in two, adequate in four and unsatisfactory in one.

A number of strategies have been adopted in order to support and turn round the performance of weak and failing authorities – including the use of recovery boards and the appointment of commissioners. However, progress in improving local authority performance has been slow. For example, Pembrokeshire County Council was inspected in June 2011 and its performance was found to be 'unsatisfactory' with 'unsatisfactory prospects for improvement'. The authority was re-inspected in the autumn of 2012 and still found to be 'unsatisfactory' on both counts and placed in special measures by Estyn. Torfaen County Borough Council has followed the same pattern and three of the four local authorities in the South East Wales Consortium are now in special measures.

The Estyn judgements are not just based on an authority's performance in relation to school improvement. However, in inspection reports it is not uncommon to find comments such as:

> *'The authority's arrangements for supporting and challenging schools are not robust enough and have not had enough impact on improving outcomes.'*
> *Estyn inspection report on Pembrokeshire County Council, October 2012*

> *'The school improvement service is inadequate.'*
> *Estyn inspection report on the Isle of Anglesey County Council, May 2012*
>
> *'Support for school improvement and additional learning needs (ALN) is*
> *unsatisfactory.'*
> Estyn inspection report on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, May 2011

The fact that there are so many small local authorities is a major contributory factor. Local authorities with overall responsibility for just four, six or eight secondary schools and their feeder primary schools are always going to struggle to attract the calibre of staff and provide sufficient resources to lead strategic school improvement. Again Estyn has powerfully described the problems arising from the current fragmented structure:

> *'Because of their size, small authorities cannot benefit from economies of scale.*
> *They have fewer officers to fulfil the range of duties that they need to deliver. A*
> *lack of depth in specialist expertise constrains the scope of advice and support.*
> *This means that officers will tend to deal at a more general and superficial level*
> *with the range of demands that they face. By comparison, in a larger authority*
> *economies of scale enable a higher degree of expertise of specialisation, more*
> *distinct job roles more focused expertise in the advice and support provided to*
> *schools.'*
> Estyn (2013)

This analysis is not confined to Estyn. In its submission NAHT Cymru states:

> *'The current 22 local authority model is not sustainable. Many local authorities*
> *are too small to deliver the range and quality of services that a modern education*
> *system needs, others have diluted provision to such an extent that schools have*
> *become frustrated by the delivery.'*

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) Wales makes the same point:

> *'ATL has long and consistently argued that the current structure of education*
> *services, largely configured around the topography of 22 local authorities was*
> *wasteful, ineffective and unsustainable. Current budget pressures have only*
> *strengthened that view.'*

As the research evidence summarised at the start of this chapter indicated, school improvement is best coordinated and steered at a sub-regional level. The problem with the number of small local authorities in Wales has been accentuated by the reluctance of local authorities to consider joint appointments for directors of education services and/or merged services – despite being urged by the Minister for Education and Skills to explore this option. The result has been high overheads, the fragmentation of expertise and too many ineffective services. Nor is the picture likely to change: the creation of regional consortia means that local authorities have a reduced level of school improvement expertise to carry out residual functions – including managing interventions. In addition

there will be pressure to make further reductions in central education services as budget delegation to schools rises and public spending constraints continue The WLGA has itself recognised that 'the system is underperforming and that is unacceptable and unsustainable'.

There is another and even deeper dimension to the local authority challenge. Most local authorities do not understand what their role in education now is. Some accept that they are simply out of their depth. The reaction of others to the problem of school performance is to demand more power over schools, governors and the appointment of headteachers. Besides the fact that it would be very odd to give a struggling sector more control it is not a sustainable way to build school improvement. As democratically elected bodies there is an important role for local authorities in education but, as later parts of this chapter argue, it does not lie in micromanaging how schools work.

Variable performance in the development of regional consortia

A number of the submissions to the review make the point that, as Governors Wales put it, 'regional consortia…need time to settle in and become fully established'. At one level that is fair but given the urgency of the situation the dilatoriness of some consortia in making key executive appointments is inexcusable. It is also true that there continue to be changes and developments in how the consortia are working. However, even allowing for consortia operations being 'work in progress' there are a number of fundamental issues that need to be addressed – though there is much greater cause for concern in some consortia compared with others.

First, the system leader arrangements are not working properly. In part this is because the wrong people have been recruited into the role. Being able to diagnose a school's strengths and weaknesses and work with school leaders to agree a robust development plan requires a particular skill-set based on the experience of having led schools and delivered school improvement or transformation. In some of the consortia system leaders have been transferred from pre-existing local authority school improvement services. Some of these individuals may have had particular subject expertise but have not necessarily been equipped to lead school improvement. As Estyn commented there has been 'uneven progress' in identifying, training and using system leaders (Estyn, 2013).

The South East Wales Consortium did recognise the need to recruit high calibre applicants to its system leader posts and was prepared to go outside Wales in order to achieve this. In addition several of the consortia have recognised the quality of system leadership as being an issue and are now trying to recruit and train some of the best headteachers from within their respective regions to play a role as system leaders on a part-time or contracted basis. The best school improvement experts really help schools to move forward but those without the proper skills just consume resources without adding value – and may even do harm by providing a bureaucratic drag anchor on improvement.

There is also confusion about the system leader's role. In particular there is lack of clarity about the extent to which, when a school's development needs are identified, the role of

the system leader is to broker in support or whether it is to intensify their own engagement with the school to try and effect improvement.

I also visited schools that were not yet receiving regular school improvement visits – even though this was into the second term of consortia operations – though it should also be noted that some schools did comment favourably on the value of having had a positive engagement with their system leader.

I also consider that the consortia are operating an inappropriate business model. A disproportionate share of the budget in at least two of the consortia is going to employing and funding system leaders. In one of the consortia the employment of system leaders and the associated overheads are accounting for around 90 per cent of the budget and in another it is 85 per cent. That is leaving far too small a share of the available funding for commissioning whole-school improvement programmes and building school-to-school support, activities that will actually help to turn schools around and build the capacity of the system. In short the school improvement model is imbalanced: there is too much emphasis on challenge and not enough on providing support. The model also presumes that system leaders have the appropriate expertise to address a school's particular problems.

Becoming an employer of a significant number of staff has also been a distraction from another perspective. NAHT Cymru recognise that 'many meetings' were held by regional consortia to engage schools in the development of a new school improvement model but that 'much of the initial energy was, understandably perhaps, taken up with resolving staffing issues'. As a result the opportunity to agree the shape of a strategic vehicle to support schools to raise standards was missed and, say NAHT Cymru, 'negative experience currently outweighs positive responses' in terms of the added value consortia are providing. The Isos review of the consortia confirmed this view finding that two consortia had not put in place the 'feedback loops' to listen to schools about the quality of implementation.

Other serious issues of concern that I found included:

- no shared understanding on the scope of activity that regional consortia should be undertaking – as Figure 6.2b above described

- weak organisational structures in some consortia resulting in a lack of capacity to deliver key functions. This includes a lack of executive leadership, central capacity and overall performance management in those consortia using 'hubs' to deliver their school improvement service

- inconsistencies in how the four consortia are applying the four-level categorisation of performance to schools in their area, meaning that there is no common vocabulary being used across Wales

- insufficient urgency and action regarding the schools that are most in need of support. I visited one school that had been judged by Estyn as in need of 'significant improvement'. The school also had a new head for whom the post was a first headship. One would expect in those circumstances that the consortium would have been brokering substantial support to both the head and to the school – whereas it was receiving virtually no help, apart from informal support from another nearby school. All the consortia have a considerable number of schools that require significant levels of support. Figure 6.3 shows the number of secondary schools in bands 4 and 5 in each consortium as at March 2013. Figure 6.4 summarises inspection outcomes for the period between September 2010 (when Estyn's Common Inspection Framework came into force) and March 2013. The figure shows, for example, that while South East Wales Consortium has proportionately fewer primary schools where performance and prospects are unsatisfactory and inadequate, it has proportionately more secondary schools in these categories.

Figure 6.3 – Number of schools in bands 4 and 5, by regional consortium

Consortium	Number of band 4 schools	Number of band 5 schools	Total
Central South Wales	20	9	29
South East Wales	14	7	21
South West and Mid Wales	11	6	17
North Wales	15	2	17

Source: Welsh Government

Figure 6.4 – Proportion of inspection outcomes between September 2010 and March 2013 where performance and prospects were either 'unsatisfactory' or 'inadequate', by regional consortium
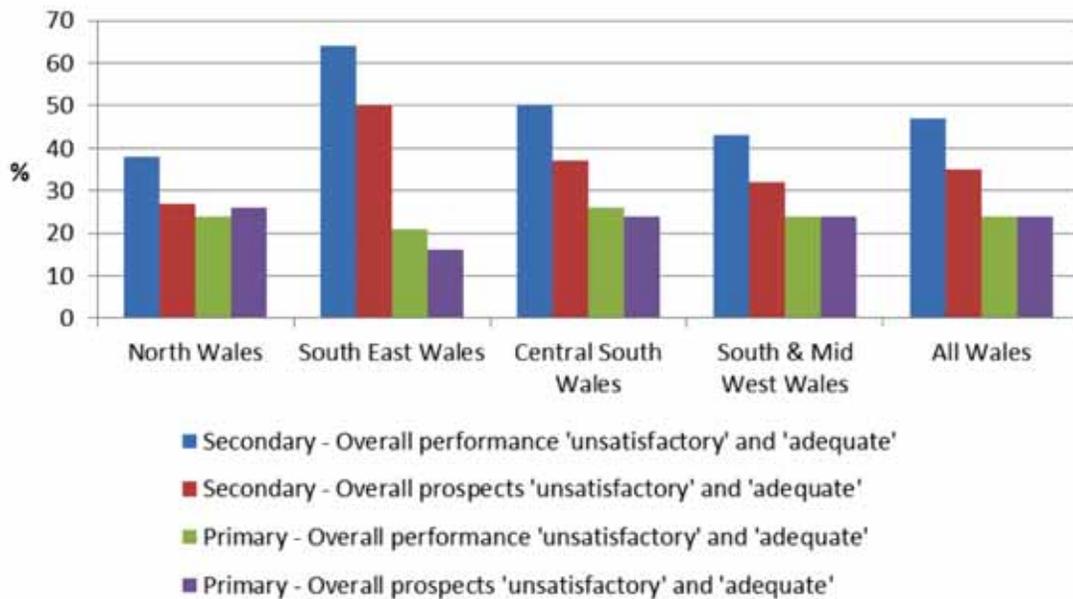
Note: Number of primary inspections = 579 and number of secondary inspections = 92
Source: Estyn

- a lack of a coherent strategy and delivery chain (integrated with CfBT) in all but one of the consortia for supporting the roll-out of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework

- insufficient focus on implementing proven interventions such as recognised coaching programmes for improving teaching and learning, such as the Improving and Outstanding Teacher programmes .

Confusion about local authorities' and regional consortia's respective responsibilities

There are a number of aspects to this problem. In some parts of Wales authorities and consortia are duplicating what the other is doing. Because the system leadership approach has been slow to get going some authorities have decided to retain their own school improvement staff to visit and oversee schools' improvement. Their argument is that as they will be held accountable by Estyn for the performance of the schools in their authority they are not going to leave it to another body to assure progress. I also came across an example of an authority organising its own school improvement courses and interventions because it did not rate what the consortia was providing.

This is an absurd state of affairs – not least because until now local authorities have been the commissioners of consortia activity. So if the consortia are acting weakly local authorities have only themselves to blame. But rather than address this problem a

growing number of directors of education are in effect trying to rebuild a smaller scale school improvement service within their authority alongside the consortium function and offer. Sometimes these are referred to as 'home-based' improvement services. One consortium has even gone as far as writing into its consortium arrangements a provision for authorities to employ their own school improvement staff over and above the regional model. This is not only costly but also adds another layer to the system and results in confusion among schools as to whom they should be contacting for what.

There is also a fudginess in the governance and accountability arrangements between local authorities and consortia in terms of what happens when a school moves to requiring intervention as well as support. The question of who triggers such action and who is responsible for what has been made more complex by there being two sets of players involved: regional consortia as well as local authorities. The system is not understood by schools.

Underlying these problems is something more fundamental. It was clear from the various discussions that I had with consortia leaders, directors of education and council leaders that local authorities saw the consortia as 'their' body. A consortium was there to do what the local authorities commissioned it to do. This was inhibiting consortia at a practical level – for example, having to spend time negotiating agreements with authorities on budgets and the distribution of specific grants. In fairness to council leaders I think this is more of an issue of directors of education not being prepared to let go of a function they previously controlled. They have been unwilling to give consortia the space and freedom to develop their respective agendas.

Delivery options for reform

There are two dimensions to resolving the problem of creating a coherent delivery structure to support schools. In this section I have not shied away from putting forward radical options for medium- or long-term solutions. Inevitably these will require consideration and consultation and, if accepted, legislation and implementation. This would all take some time to complete. However, such is the urgency of the need to sort out some of the current confusion that I am also proposing options that I consider should be put into effect as soon as possible.

Options for a longer-term local authority structure to support schools

There needs to be clarity about the future role of local authorities in education for the longer term as the basis for creating an enduring structure. Local democratic accountability is a vital principle but the fact that a council has statutory responsibilities does not mean that it has to directly deliver all the functions itself. In the 21st century it is much more likely that in any given area of public service activity there will be all sorts of players, agencies and organisations involved in delivering services to the public. The local authority may have some essential regulatory roles that only it can carry out. But overall its role is now much more about creating a vision for a service and

coordinating, commissioning and supporting service providers to deliver services to meet that vision. An authority's role will also include ensuring that the public knows the level of service it can expect, enabling service users to choose and access a diverse range of services and scrutinising overall performance and value for money on behalf of the community. Councils will also have a special duty of care in respect of vulnerable individuals and may at times have to intervene when service quality is at risk.

Figure 6.5 describes how this scenario applies to education services. We need authorities in Wales with a passion and vision for how their communities and young people should grow up expecting to be highly educated and skilled – aspiring to join the best universities and professions and employers. Authorities would ensure that there were enough places at a range of diverse good schools and colleges to help translate this vision into reality and support parents to make choices on their children's schooling. Councils would know what was happening in their schools. They would work with school leaders to develop and support leaders, build the capacity of schools and colleges to constantly improve, foster school-to-school support and expect schools to take responsibility for their own improvement – though they would intervene where necessary.

Figure 6.5 – Future role of local authorities in leading education and supporting schools
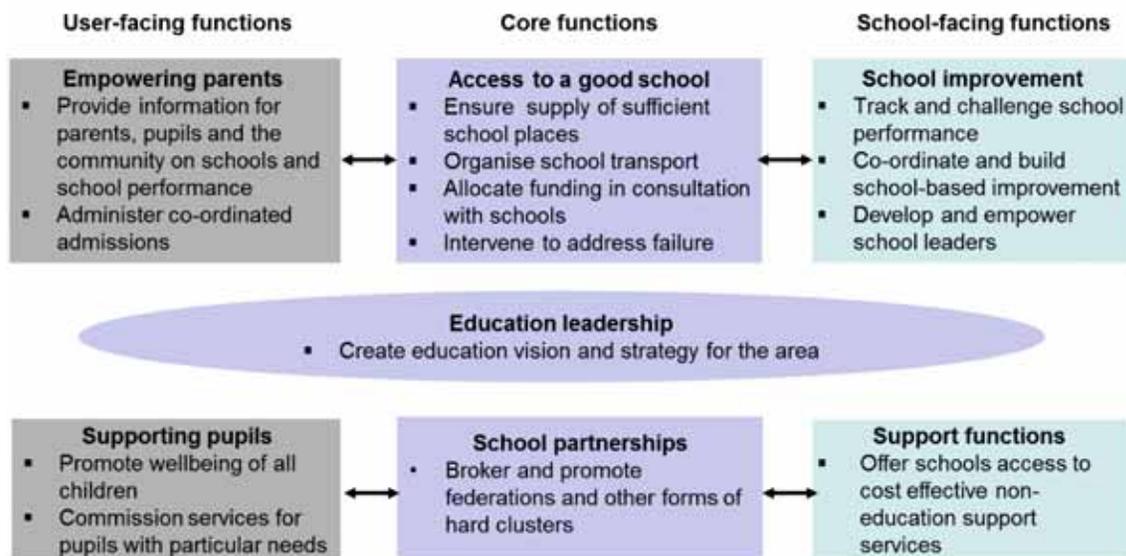
Authorities would broker federations and hard clusters between schools. As these partnerships took root they would devolve budgets and commission from these groups many services for pupils with additional needs. Councils might offer to provide support functions, but clusters of schools would buy in the services that best met their needs – whether this was from the local authority or elsewhere.

It is a model based on enabling and empowering schools to work with and support each other in a coordinated way. It will take time to achieve but it is a model for developing a school system that can continually improve itself. As such the model does not require 22 local authorities to exercise education functions. The option I propose would see a move

in the medium-term to education being part of reconstituted slimline elected local authorities that:

- were based on Wales' city regions and economic sub-regions in order to facilitate an authority's education vision being linked to the region's skills, enterprise and employment agenda

- integrated key public services and functions and ensured that they operated on a coterminous basis to reduce duplication and maximise synergies between functions

- reflected the new slimmed-down commissioning role of local authorities

- focused on supporting the development of a self-sustaining school-led improvement system

- located political responsibility for education and learning with a named elected member, supported by a named education lead officer. The calibre and capacity of these two individuals will be vital to ensuring that any new structure is effective.

However, I do not see any advantage in formally reorganising and reconstituting stand-alone education services based on this framework ahead of the more general review of the governance and delivery arrangements of public services in Wales that is to be undertaken for the Welsh Government by a separate commission[22]. That would create a degree of disruption, upheaval and confusion as well as the existence of parallel sets of elected members (one group for education and one for other functions). It would also almost certainly act as a distraction from the core business of improving schools. As the submission from Denbighshire County Council put it:

> *'Effort, energy and resources should be concentrated on improving outcomes not changing structures.'*

However, I do see the longer-term framework as providing a guide as to how some shorter-term changes might be made.

Options for short-term local authority arrangements to support schools

For the next few years it seems likely that 22 elected bodies with responsibility for education will remain in force. But that does not mean there have to be 22 local authority education services – especially as regional consortia will be undertaking the school improvement role. Given the analysis described in the earlier part of this chapter there would be every merit in taking steps to merge education services to increase capacity and bring a closer alignment to the public services footprint. We are beginning to see the first moves in this direction. As from the beginning of February 2013 Newport and Blaenau Gwent now share a chief education officer.

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[22] See Welsh Government (2012) *Programme for Government: Annual Report May 2012*

Ideally the WLGA would provide the leadership and drive to accelerate this approach. However, should that not be forthcoming in the next few months then I would propose that the Minister for Education and Skills, exercising his powers to intervene in local authorities following unsatisfactory Estyn reports, takes steps to consolidate the number of education services. He has already proposed a move in this direction in relation to Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff.

In some cases mergers may make geographical sense and help to achieve an economy of scale, but none of the constituent local authorities involved may have a service that is sufficiently strong to lead the work. In these cases the Minister will have no option but to continue with the approaches he is already deploying: bringing in commissioners or appointing recovery boards. However, the revised arrangements I propose below to strengthen regional consortia should potentially provide commissioners and recovery boards with an enhanced resource to ensure high-quality school improvement and, where necessary, intervention.

Vigorous action on mergers could see the number of education services cut by at least a third by April 2014.

Options for reforming regional consortia – core functions

As with local authorities there needs to be clarity about roles and functions. Until such time as there may be a larger-scale local government reorganisation, regional consortia are responsible for the tasks shown in the red box in Figure 6.6. However, as we have seen some consortia are interpreting the scope of their functions broadly and some more narrowly. In addition, some consortia are performing more effectively than their peers; there is confusion between their remit and that of local authorities; and their boundaries do not match those of the public service footprint. All these issues need resolving urgently.

Figure 6.6 – Roles of regional consortia
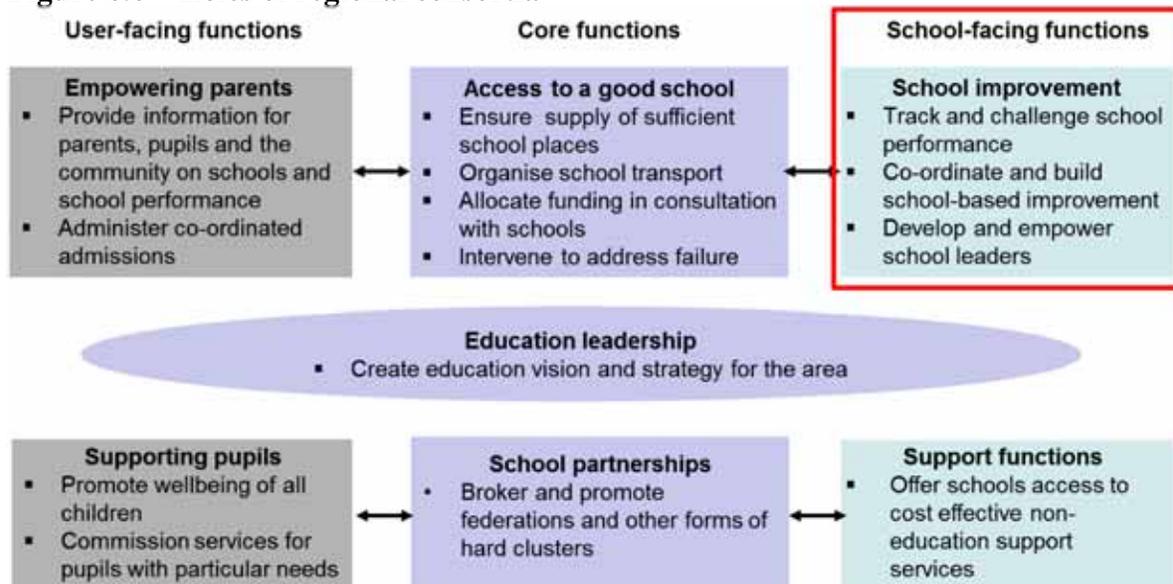
In terms of clarifying the key functions of regional consortia Figure 6.7 provides what I have a called a job description of their core functions. These are the generic tasks on which all consortia should be focused.

Figure 6.7 – Job description of regional consortia's key tasks

Having a strategic overview of the school improvement priorities for the area.

Using data, visits and intelligence to know and track the performance of every school.

Brokering the support needed in schools that are struggling or underperforming and 'guiding' schools to that support – or securing it for them.

Building school-to-school capacity by:

• using benchmarking to enable schools to use data effectively and learn from each other

• linking higher- and lower-performing heads and schools through maximising the use of Lead Practitioner Schools and working with local authorities to broker federations and other hard clusters led by executive leaders

• undertaking leadership succession planning including commissioning development programmes for middle and senior leaders and serving heads

• training, accrediting and building up networks of Lead Practitioners and Lead Practitioner departments

• commissioning (or brokering the supply of) professional development programmes

> designed to improve classroom practice – for example, the Improving Teacher and Outstanding Teacher Programmes
>
> - commissioning whole-school improvement programmes from the best schools from within and outside Wales
>
> - coordinating delivery of training and development in support of key national initiatives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework.
>
> Advising and working with local authorities where structural solutions are needed – for example, federating a school, removing a head or installing an interim executive board.

Consortia should apply this framework to five key areas: the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, support for Welsh language teaching, Foundation Phase support, 14–19 learning and ICT for learning. They may, by working in partnership with schools, also commission professional development programmes in other subject areas such as science but this should not be at the expense of losing the focus on the five main areas of activity.

This template of tasks and areas of activity should provide one of the key yardsticks by which to assess consortia's contribution to school improvement.

As part of clarifying the remit of consortia I would also recommend including support for and oversight of the performance appraisal process as this is so closely linked to the school improvement agenda. This would necessitate consortia having a core human resources (HR) function specialising in employee relations issues within schools. This, along with more everyday HR services that might be delegated to school clusters, should ensure that heads and governors receive the support they need to be effective as employers in handling grievance, disciplinary and capability issues.

For the same reason – namely the link to school improvement – I would suggest that the consortia also have responsibility for governor training and support. This should provide greater consistency of practice across the regions.

Options for reforming regional consortia – achieving greater consistency of performance

My judgement is that we are unlikely to see the consistency and quality of performance needed from regional consortia unless fundamental changes are made in how they operate. Accordingly the option I propose envisages that from April 2014 at the latest:

- funding, equivalent to the sums being allocated by local authorities to consortia for school improvement, is top-sliced from the Revenue Support Grant and, along with specific grants such as SEG and WEG, paid direct to consortia functions. This will ensure that consortia have the certainty and freedom to plan without having to negotiate their funding with local authorities

- regional consortia should be required to obtain Ministerial consent for their organisational structures, annual business plans and outcome targets. The organisational arrangements should be such that the director of the consortium has the direct responsibility for the performance management of all system leaders and other staff, including the power to terminate employment where performance is unsatisfactory

- the governance of regional consortia should be vested in a board comprising local authority leaders within the consortium boundaries, a Ministerial appointee, an education improvement expert and three headteachers (one primary, one secondary and one special school). The board should be chaired by one of the local authority leaders

- the director of the consortium should be an appointment subject to approval by the Minister. This role is so fundamental to the success of the consortium's work that it is vital to ensure that a high-quality appointee with expertise in school transformation is in post

- regional consortia should move as quickly as practicable to adopt a core staffing model – i.e. having fewer permanent employees. The core complement of staff would be supplemented by buying in school improvement expertise, including from those with recent inspection experience within and outside Wales, commissioning (not delivering) a range of school-based development programmes from inside and outside Wales and building up school-to-school support

- regional consortia should agree a common approach to interpreting the core data set, banding outcomes and Estyn judgements and achieve a common understanding on how to apply a four-level categorisation to school performance. The focus on the categorisation should essentially be for developmental rather than accountability purposes

- regional consortia should have a twice-yearly stocktake chaired by the Minister to review progress

- the Minister should have reserve powers to make other arrangements where consortia fail to deliver. This would mean bringing in other providers if consortia were unable to put in place adequate delivery arrangements, if they were seriously adrift of delivering their business plan objectives, or if Estyn judged their performance to be unsatisfactory.

My understanding is that the Minister would have the powers to introduce these arrangements by virtue of being able to attach conditions to the allocation of the top-sliced Revenue Support Grant. However, in the event that his powers were not sufficient to achieve these outcomes I would recommend consideration be given to introducing urgent and immediate legislation. These changes need to be made as soon as possible.

Options for reforming regional consortia – clarifying the respective roles of local authority and regional consortia

The arrangements described above establish clearly that regional consortia are in the lead in knowing and tracking school performance and providing school improvement services. Local authorities should not attempt to duplicate these roles – they should stop providing school improvement services. However, local authorities retain important statutory responsibilities for intervening in failing schools and have powers to require collaboration and partnership. There does, therefore, need to be a clear understanding as to how these respective roles would work and fit together. For example, local authorities can hardly be expected to exercise their powers if they do not have the intelligence on which to act. Figure 6.8 describes a basis for establishing the relationship between regional consortia and local authorities. The key will be agreeing clear procedures or protocols which are written down and formalised in order to minimise the potential for buck-passing and schools falling into a gap between consortia and authorities.

Figure 6.8 – Understanding the respective roles of regional consortia and local authorities in intervening in failing schools

| Regional consortia		Local authorities
• Know the performance of every school and provide challenge • Broker support for schools that are struggling and/or underperforming • Develop school-to-school support and linking of higher- and lower-performing schools • Build capacity, coordinate literacy and numeracy training and commission leadership and school development programmes	⟷ • Share information, data and forward plans • Agree protocols for how consortia will trigger a request for a formal local authority intervention and how consortia and local authorities will then work together ⟷	• Restructure school provision to remove surplus places and reorganise poor or non-viable provision – pre- and post-16 • Promote and broker school federations and hard clusters • Issue warning notices • Use intervention powers, including power to require a school to collaborate or federate with another school, appoint additional governors or request an interim executive board

Where a regional consortium recommends that a local authority formally intervene with a school because of its poor performance but the authority declines to act promptly on the advice, the regional consortium would be under a duty to notify the Minister for Education and Skills of the advice that it had provided.

This model, as highlighted in Chapter 5, would require Estyn to rethink fundamentally its approach to inspecting local authorities since it would be clearly inappropriate for local authorities to be held to account for school improvement in the way they have been thus far. A remit letter from the Minister to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training would seem to be the most sensible option for triggering this review.

Options for reforming regional consortia – securing greater consistency with the public sector footprint

The most important priority at this juncture is to secure the effective operation of all the regional consortia and to avoid distracting considerations. However, the terms of reference for this review require me to consider the issue of whether and how to secure greater alignment with the overall regional public service footprint for Wales – an objective supported by several respondents to the review. Figure 6.9 sets out the collaborative framework for public services adopted by the Welsh Government.

Figure 6.9 – Footprint for public service collaboration in Wales
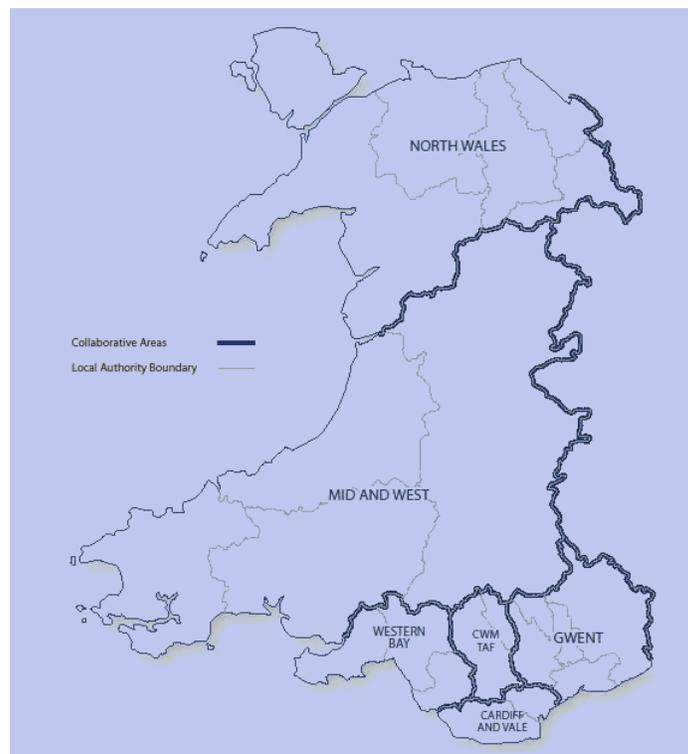
Source: Welsh Government

It would be possible to secure greater alignment of the regional education consortia with this footprint. The simplest option would be, at an appropriate point when SWAMWAC was recognised as working strongly and effectively, to move Bridgend schools from their current home in Central South Wales Consortium to SWAMWAC. However, that would result in SWAMWAC being even bigger and more unwieldy than it is at present.

The alternative would be to establish a fifth consortium based on the Western Bay area. This would involve bringing together school improvement services from Bridgend, currently in the Central South Wales Consortium, and Neath Port Talbot and Swansea, that are currently part of SWAMWAC. This option would also entail rethinking the operation of SWAMWAC, but in my view this consortium does in any event need to have a much clearer and stronger organisational structure. The five- rather than four-consortium model would also reduce the level of disruption if the public services collaborative footprint were to be used as the basis for the more general review that is to be conducted of the governance and delivery arrangements of public services in Wales.

Whichever option is adopted I would suggest that the existing Central South Wales Consortium (and LINKS) continue to serve the four authorities that comprise the Cwm Taf and Cardiff and Vale public footprint service areas. In other words, one regional education consortium would cover the boundaries of two of the footprint areas. It would seem unnecessarily disruptive to break up Central South Wales Consortium at this point.

Options for central government

Many of the options I have put forward have implications for central government – for example, the potential changes in accountability arrangements and the revised structure and governance of regional consortia. In addition I was asked to consider the option of creating a national education service. There was little if any support argued for this approach in the submissions that I received. Typical comments included:

> *'A national education service would be costly in time and resources, and unproven.'*
> ATL Wales

> *'We are not persuaded that a 'national education service' has merit nor is it practical. The necessary knowledge to apply effective and appropriate support and challenge could not sustainably be delivered by the centre.'*
> NAHT Cymru

> *'The Welsh Government should set strategic direction but should not be involved in direct delivery of services.'*
> General Teaching Council for Wales

However, ASCL Cymru noted that 'the Standards Unit has had significant impact in raising the quality of data collection and analysis in Wales'. ASCL Cymru went on to recommend the School Standards and Delivery Unit having a greater role in overseeing a

national pupil data tracking system – an issue discussed in earlier chapters. I consider a strong option would be to build on the reputation of the Unit in another way and extend its remit to provide challenge and support to regional consortia on behalf of the Minister.

In order to carry out this function the unit would need increased school improvement and curriculum expertise, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy. In addition it would need to incorporate capacity with regard to teaching in Welsh-medium, ICT for learning, 14–19 learning and the Foundation Phase. The School Standards and Delivery Unit (following the model advocated for regional consortia) should appoint a core group of experts that it supplements by using secondments from schools and by buying in other expertise as required. The purpose of this additional expertise would be to equip the unit so that it could:

- contribute to leading-edge pedagogical practice in schools and to the leadership of whole-school and school-to-school improvement

- add value to the work of consortia as the Unit reviewed plans and outcomes and advised the Minister at the proposed twice-yearly stocktakes

- act as an expert link into education policy making within the Welsh Government.

Conclusion

As I have drafted this chapter I have been very aware of the competing pressures underlying this review. On the one hand there has been a need to bring clarity and tackle entrenched problems – particularly the existence of 22 local authorities. On the other hand there has been the danger of being ensnared in reforming structures and losing focus and momentum on school improvement while the organisational deckchairs are reorganised yet again. There is no easy answer to this dichotomy.

What I have tried to do is put forward options that aim to deliver four objectives.

First, I have mapped out a roadmap of what local authorities should look like in today's society given all that we know about how to bring about sustainable school improvement. I have also indicated the basis on which they should be organised to become agencies fit for the modern world of public service delivery.

Second, given that now is not the right time for a comprehensive reorganisation of all local government functions I have proposed changes to how education functions are organised that should provide better support for schools, while being compatible with the longer-term direction of travel. The reduction in the number of education services, the stronger framework governing the operation of consortia and the possibility of a fifth consortium are the key options in this respect.

Third, I have provided much greater clarity on the respective roles and functions of local authorities and regional consortia.

Fourth, I have proposed how to strengthen the education delivery chain at local authority, regional consortia and national government level.

Whether or not all the options in this report are adopted is not the litmus test of whether this review has been worthwhile. This review will have been worth undertaking if it leads to a clearer sense among teachers, school leaders, governors, local authorities, regional consortia and government policymakers of how to improve teaching and learning and raise standards in classrooms across Wales. If it does that and if there is a combined will to turn that sentiment into action then there will be no stopping the rate of improvement and progress that schools and young people across Wales can achieve.

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Appendix A: Terms of reference – future delivery of education services in Wales

Introduction

Leighton Andrews AM, the then Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning published a report entitled the '*Review of the cost of administering the education system in Wales – Phase 1*' on 18 May 2010*.* This report suggested 10 areas (hypotheses) to pursue in order to achieve a shift of funding from support functions to service delivery: the education 'front line'. These hypotheses were taken forward through the Front Line Resources Review. The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning established a Structure of Education Services Task and Finish Group to work in parallel with the Front Line Resources Review, linking with it and drawing heavily upon the activity which was already under way. The group considered the case for change to existing service structures and governance arrangements and, in particular which education services:

- should be provided at national level;
- should be provided at regional consortia level;
- should be provided at local authority level;
- should be devolved to providers, including schools or clusters of schools;
- should be provided on another organisational basis.

The Review of Education Structures report was published in March 2011. The report made 33 recommendations which were accepted by the Welsh Government in June 2011. One particular recommendation was that an in-depth review should be conducted in the autumn of 2013 to determine whether there is need for further structural change to deliver the best possible education in Wales. On 20 November 2012 the Minister for Education and Skills announced that he has brought the forward the in-depth review which will commence in January 2013.

Aim of the Review

The primary aim of the review will be to review the effectiveness of the current education delivery system, at the school and local authority level, and to consider what should be undertaken at school, local authority, regional and national level and the options for delivery with a focus on:

- Improving school performance
- Raising standards and improving learner outcomes at all ages
- Better support and challenge to schools to improve standards
- Developing and strengthening the leadership of schools and the quality of teaching and learning
- Ensuring value for money and effective use of resources
- Bringing about coherence and strong links between all areas of the education system, including post -16 provision and the wider children's services agenda.

Principles

The approach to the review will be based on the following principles:

- School improvement must be at the core of service delivery
- Focus on outcomes for learners and what high quality, effective service delivery looks like
- Evidence-based and objective, including best practice on system reform from around the world
- Builds on the current direction of travel – not starting from a blank sheet of paper
- Considers implications of implementing any changes, managing implementation dips and the cohorts of learners caught-up in any future changes
- Develops the capacity of the school system to support its own improvement
- Considers the wider post-16 provision links and the alignment with broader cross-government strategy
- Recognises the need to achieve organisational coherence in the delivery of services within and between organisations, a high level of effectiveness with strong governance and clear lines of accountability including democratic accountability for outcomes.

Process

- Minister sets the terms of reference and appoints the reviewer and receives the report
- The reviewer seeks any additional support from key experts/stakeholders, leads the review and is responsible for the process
- The reviewer is independent but will receive some civil service secretariat support
- The reviewer gathers evidence on the scope questions, make links to broader strategy across government and propose a range of options
- Range of options published as a consultation document along with stakeholder engagement sessions
- Responses to consultation collated and analysed.
- Recommendations to be considered by Minister/Cabinet

Outcome objectives

Schools

- to propose models of school leadership, governance and funding which will contribute to improved educational standards.
- to identify strategies that are most likely to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools in Wales
- to examine funding models which promote ownership of the school improvement journey

School Improvement Services

- to propose options for the delivery of effective school improvement that are in the best interests of learners and the urgent need to raise standards in Wales while also having regard to the legal, democratic and financial implications.

Local authorities
- to consider whether, and if so how best, wider education functions can be delivered separately and viably from school improvement roles
- to consider whether local authorities should continue to exercise all of the education responsibilities which they currently hold
- to consider whether existing local authority structures can deliver effective strategic and operational services in education

Regional Consortia
- to consider whether the current responsibilities of regional consortia should be extended to cover other areas
- to consider whether the regional consortia should become agencies of Government
- to examine other potential regional delivery models and foot prints

Government
- to examine current funding models of local authorities and schools
- to propose options on the role of government in terms of delivery, accountability and intervention in response to underperformance
- to consider whether there should be a National Education Service

In addressing these objectives, the review will take account of the impact on other services delivered by local government, and the financial and other consequences of any changes to local government. It will consider value for money in terms not only of cost, but also continuing improved efficiency and effectiveness together with good practice.

Outputs
It is anticipated that the outputs of the review will include:
- Research, analysis and comment on the current delivery of education services and structures;
- A range of options (not recommendations) for the future delivery of education functions and services and the impact on local authorities;

Timescale
Review to be completed Spring 2013

Appendix B: Letter to stakeholders

Education Stakeholders

<div align="right">January 2013</div>

Review of Future Delivery of Education Services in Wales

I am writing to seek your views about key issues that I will be considering as part of the review commissioned by the Minister for Education and Skills into the Future Delivery of Education Services in Wales.

On 9 January 2013 the Minister issued a Written Statement to the National Assembly for Wales the review of the Future Delivery of Education Services in Wales and that he had appointed me, to undertake that review. A copy of that Written Statement is attached.

The Minister has asked me to look at the effectiveness of the current education delivery system, at the school and local authority level, and to consider what should be undertaken at school, local authority, regional and national level and the options for delivery with a focus on:

- Improving school performance
- Raising standards and improving learner outcomes at all ages
- Better support and challenge to schools to improve standards
- Developing and strengthening the leadership of schools and the quality of teaching and learning
- Ensuring value for money and effective use of resources
- Bringing about coherence and strong links between all areas of the education system, including post -16 provision and the wider children's services agenda.

The review will not make any recommendations but report on a range of possible delivery options for education services and will be completed during Spring 2013. The intention is to publish this report and undertake a full consultation on the options from May to August 2013.

We are therefore inviting you to comment on your views focussing on the following 3 questions;

What measures would contribute most to improving the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom in school in Wales?

How can schools in Wales best be held to account and supported in improving outcomes for children and young people?

What measures should be taken to enable, empower and equip school leaders in Wales to lead significant and sustainable improvement of the school system?

We do not wish to be prescriptive in the format of your response. However, since it is possible that the Minister may wish to publish some or all of your responses, we invite you to limit the length of your response, or to provide an executive summary of no more that four pages of A4 paper.

We may also ask you to meet with us to discuss your evidence. Should this be necessary, you will be contacted about availability.

I would be grateful for your response by **19 February 2013**. Please send it to educationservicereview@wales.gsi.gov.uk who are acting as secretariat for the review. It is our intention to invite as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. I am aware that you are frequently called upon to respond to various matters concerning education and that it is difficult to find time to respond. This review may lead to recommendations for fundamental changes to the structure of school governance in Wales and your views will be of vital importance if we are to make recommendations that will deliver the best possible outcomes for our learners.

I look forward to hearing your views in due course.

Robert Hill

Appendix C: List of respondees to stakeholder consultation

ASCL Cymru

Aspect

ATL Wales

Carmarthenshire County Council

Catholic Education Service

Councillor Richard Thomas

ColegauCymru

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg

Denbighshire County Council

Diocese of Menevia

Estyn

Gareth Jones

General Teaching Council for Wales

Governors Wales

Gwynedd Council

Irene Cameron

Maes-y-Morfa Primary School

Management Information for School Improvement (MISIG ADEW Q&A subgroup)

NAHT Cymru

NASUWT Cymru

NUT Cymru

Richard Parry

Sheelagh McCool

School Governance Task and Finish Group

Torfaen County Borough Council

Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

UNISON

University and College Union

Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Appendix D: List of schools visited

Alun School, Flintshire County Council

Ashgrove School, Vale of Glamorgan Council

Brecon High School, Powys County Council

Brynteg County Primary School, Wrexham County Borough Council

Crickhowell High School, Powys County Council

Cwmtawe Community School, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive School, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Duffryn Junior School, Newport City Council

Glyn Derw High School, Cardiff Council

Llanedeyrn Primary School, Cardiff Council

Mary Immaculate High School, Cardiff Council

Ogmore Vale Primary School, Bridgend County Borough Council

St Joseph's RC High School, Newport City Council

Whitchurch High School, Cardiff Council

Ysgol Bryn Elian, Conwy County Borough Council

Ysgol David Hughes, Isle of Anglesey County Council

Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Gwynedd Council

Ysgol Hen Felin, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd, Denbighshire County Council

Ysgol y Borth, Isle of Anglesey County Council

Appendix E: List of meetings and interviews with individuals and organisations

The following include telephone interviews.

Welsh Government

Deputy Director, Curriculum

Deputy Director, Further Education and Apprenticeships Division

Deputy Director, Schools Management and Effectiveness

Deputy Director, School Standards and Delivery Division

Deputy Director, Transformation Programme Management Division

Deputy Director, Youth Engagement and Employment

Director General, DfES

Director, Local Government and Public Service

Director of CYPSE Group

Head of ICT Strategy

Head of Leadership Branch

Head of Planning Branch

Head of Practice Review and Development

Head of School Information and Improvement Branch and Head of ICT Unit

Head of School Standards Unit

Head of Support for Learners

School Governance Officer

School Revenue Manager

School Effectiveness Programme Manager and Head of Branch

Senior Development Manager (Training)

Senior Manager Local Authority Reform

Senior Schools Governance Manager

Senior Team Leader: School Revenue Funding

External individuals and organisations

Sandra Aspinall, Caerphilly County Borough Council

Chris Bradshaw, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Simon Brown, Strategic Director, Estyn

Angela Burns AM

Ian Budd, Flintshire County Council

Elwyn Davies, Interim Chief Officer of GwE (Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service)

John Davies, Head of Lifelong Learning, Wrexham County Borough Council

Steve Davies, Education Achievement Service

Professor David Egan

Jayne Edwards, Head of Service, LINKS

Karen Evans, Head of Education, Denbighshire County Council

Colin Everett, Flintshire County Council

Bethan Guilfoyle, Ministerial Advisory Group

Improving Schools - Raising Standards in Welsh Education Conference, 18 March 2013

Geraint James, Conwy County Borough Council, Lead Director North Wales Regional Consortia

Nick Jarman, Cardiff Council

Bryan Jeffries, Central South Consortia

Dewi R. Jones, Head of Education, Gwynedd Council

Dr Gwynne Jones, Director of Lifelong Learning, Isle of Anglesey Council

Ann Keane, HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, Estyn

Leaders of local authorities in Wales

Chris Llewelyn, Director of Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Information, WLGA

Councillor Julia Magill, Cardiff Council

Glyn Mathias, Chair of Task and Finish Group on School Governance in Wales

Jane Morris, Governors Wales

Karl Napieralla, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Lead Director SWAMWAC

Representatives of:

ASCL Cymru; ATL Wales; NAHT Cymru; NASUWT Cymru; NUT Cymru; Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

Professor David Reynolds, University of Southampton

Aled Roberts AM

Meilyr Rowlands, Strategic Director, Estyn

School Practitioner Panel

Councillor Aron Shotton, Flintshire County Council

Prof Ralph Tabberer

School Governance Task and Finish Group

Councillor Ali Thomas, Spokesperson for Education and Workforce, WLGA

Simon Thomas AM

Anwen Williams, North Wales Education Consortium Strategic Coordinator

Councillor Eryl Wyn Williams, Denbighshire County Council