

Sector summary

Local government education services

2022-2023

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Outcomes and education services

What's going well

- Where the quality of school improvement partners' work and processes for supporting school improvement is well developed, local authorities are working well in partnership with their school improvement services / regional consortia to support their schools to improve.
- Three of the four local authorities are suitably prioritising improving pupils' attendance.
- School transformation programmes are generally working well, with appropriate links to the local authorities' Welsh in education strategic plans in three out of the four local authorities inspected.

What needs to improve

- The quality of support to schools is too variable in two of the four local authorities we inspected. In one case, despite intervention from the local authority, the regional consortium had not improved its work rapidly enough.
- Support for secondary schools is generally not as effective as support for primary schools. In addition, in a few local authorities, the progress of schools causing concern remains too slow.
- Two of the four local authorities need to improve the provision for pupils with ALN.
- There has been an increase in the number of pupils being referred to EOTAS provision and waiting times have increased. In addition, too many pupils remain at EOTAS providers for too long.

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Leadership and management

What's going well

- Three of the four local authorities have a clear vision that is well understood by elected members, senior leaders and officers.
- Two of the four local authorities we inspected have effective strategic leadership and planning.
- In general, local authorities maintain positive relationships with their providers.
- Local authorities are improving their approaches to mitigating the impact of poverty on pupils' attainment. In the best examples, service areas work together well, and support was well coordinated.
- There are limited processes in place in nearly all local authorities to evaluate and improve the curriculum offer for pupils in EOTAS.

What needs to improve

- Evaluation and improvement planning processes are not sharp enough in helping local authorities identify key areas they need to improve. For example in one local authority, improving pupils' attendance was not identified as a priority.
- Strategic planning and leadership are not effective enough in two of the four local authorities.
- There has not been enough impact on improving attendance. This remains a challenge for all local authorities.

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Overview of recommendations from inspections

4

Four local government education services were inspected during 2022-2023

2

Two local authorities received a recommendation focused on improving strategic leadership. These generally focused on ensuring that leaders have clear oversight of their work, including risk management.

4

All four of local authorities received a recommendation to strengthen evaluation and improvement processes. In one local authority, this focused more specifically on the monitoring of attendance.

1

One local authority was given a recommendation to accelerate improvements in their secondary schools.

1

One local authority was given a recommendation to strengthen school improvement services, particularly in secondary schools.

2

Whilst improving attendance remains a challenge in all local authorities, two were given recommendations that focused on improving attendance in all schools or settings.

1

One local authority needed to strengthen their approaches to Welsh-medium education.

1

One local authority needed to strengthen their support for those young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs.

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Reflective questions

Questions to help local government education services **reflect on self-evaluation and planning for improvement**:

The Welsh Local Government Association has published [helpful guidance](#) for local authorities to support them with the requirements of The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Act requires each council in Wales to keep under review, through self-assessment, the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements' and to publish a report setting out the conclusions of these assessments in each financial year. This guidance can be found [here](#).

Our local authority education services inspections continue to identify that, generally, local authorities do not evaluate the work that they carry out in their service areas robustly enough or plan for improvement precisely enough. The following questions will help local authority officers to consider the effectiveness of their processes for evaluating the impact of their work and to identify and plan for improvement.

- Are your evaluation processes well planned and understood by all officers and leaders?
- How well does your cycle of evaluation support officers and members to consider a broad range of evidence to arrive at an accurate view of strengths and areas for improvement?
- How well do leaders and officers at all levels engage in the evaluation process?
- How well do leaders and officers at all levels challenge each other about their evaluations?
- How well do you focus on the impact your work has on improving outcomes and experiences for young people?
- How well do leaders and elected members understand the strengths and areas for improvement across the education directorate?
- How well is improvement planning informed by robust evaluation and first-hand evidence?
- When planning for improvement, how well do you set clear and measurable success criteria at the outset?
- How well do officers and leaders understand what the intended impact of any planned work is and how well do you go about measuring this?
- How well does your evaluation focus on any intended outcomes?
- If work is not effective, how well do you consider carefully how to change or improve this aspect of your work?

We recognise the challenges facing schools, PRUs and settings in relation to attendance. We also recognise that local authorities are adapting and improving the way they support this aspect of work.

Attendance rates in Wales remain low following the COVID-19 Pandemic and in a few cases schools and local authorities have not maintained a strong enough focus on continually improving this aspect of their work.

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Questions to help local authorities reflect on when improving support for attendance:

- Are all schools, settings and PRUs fully aware of the local authorities' policies and the support available?
 - Do leaders in the local authority place sufficient emphasis on evaluating the attendance of children and young people?
 - How well is attendance data used intelligently to monitor and support all groups of young people to improve their attendance?
 - Does the local authority have a clear escalation procedure for attendance that causes concern? How well is the escalation procedure used?
 - How well do school improvement officers work with schools, PRUs and settings to improve attendance?
 - How well do officers support schools to understand the link between high quality teaching, curriculum and attendance?
 - How well do officers and leader evaluate the impact of strategies to identify those that are most effective?
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Effective practice

To read about individual providers that are working effectively in specific aspects of their work, visit our [effective practice summary page for 2022-2023](#)