



04 March 2024

To: Jayne Bryant MS
Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee
Jayne.Bryant@senedd.wales

Dear Jayne,

As you know, the statement issued by Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, on the 31st of January, refers to new arrangements that are to be implemented in relation to school improvement. This statement was released into the public domain alongside the letter to the Minister from Professor Dylan Jones in order to “share these messages transparently with the sector”.

The Minister announced the next phase of the review which essentially requires exploration of how school to school collaboration and cross LA working may occur in a move away from the current wider regional model.

This is a far-reaching statement, the importance of which cannot be underestimated. The language and assertions made within Prof Dylan Jones letter are strong, making direct reference to “concerns about quality of support”. This represents a direct evaluation of the performance of our workforce in GwE, and it is not one that we accept, and it is also not one that we believe should have been placed in the public domain in this way.

Whilst members recognise that education and school improvement is necessarily an evolving process, indeed many of us have been through various cycles of change, this is not an example of positive change management by the Minister. We question both the motivations and methodology of the ‘Middle Tier’ review and the subsequent communication of its findings.

We believe that the statement from the Minister has left the system in disarray. Having had their work publicly judged, our members are left unsure about their future, made even worse given the current information vacuum.

Our members within the regional consortia are particularly frustrated and disappointed that there has been no formal consultation with stakeholders about the recommendations. In addition, there was no advance indication that such a far-reaching statement was to be released publicly on the afternoon in question. In fact, many of our members were working within schools that afternoon and they were informed of the intention to move away from the regional model through teachers and school leaders. This is completely unacceptable and extremely unprofessional and has caused severe distress to many of them.

Prospect – Doncaster Room 6 & 7 - 4th Floor, 19 South Mall, Frenchgate Shopping Centre, St Sepulchre Gate, Doncaster DN1 1LL

As a result, we are asking you to call in and scrutinise the Ministerial Statement to:

- Establish that the original Terms of Reference of the review have been adhered to.
- Understand the methodology and veracity of the evidence gathered.
- Understand the rationale for changing the timelines of the review mid-way through.
- Understand the implication of the recommendations.
- Investigate how confident we can be that proposed arrangements will provide better support for schools.
- Find out if an impact assessment has been undertaken to assess the potential impact of these changes on areas such as the Welsh Language, equality, work load, finance etc.
- Investigate how much this significant change in policy will cost in difficult budgetary times as there is no financial information available – this should include staff redundancy costs and closing down liabilities for current arrangements for LAs and set up costs for any new arrangements. This should also include the financial cost to release school staff to address the recommendations proposed.
- Seek to understand the contradictions in the Chief Inspector finding in this year’s Annual Report and findings of the Middle Tier Review, especially around schools’ ability to self-evaluate and effectively plan for improvement.
- Seek clarity on the rationale to accelerate the findings of this review which seems to date back to mid-December (rather than the March 2024 date initially agreed for publication).
- Evaluate the extra workload on schools and Headteachers in particular to implement the first recommendation regarding collaboration, joint working and school to school improvement.
- Understand how the third recommendation will allow Local Authorities to undertake their statutory responsibilities.
- Seek clarification and understand the veracity of the evidence base used to give the committee confidence that schools are best placed to self-regulate their own improvement.

Our members would like you to robustly scrutinise the evidence base so that you can be confident that any changes that are recommended will result in a sustainable school improvement model which will be cost efficient and improve on the current arrangements.

We can assure you that our workforce has the best interests of learners at its heart. We are committed to school improvement. We are committed to supporting schools and learners; working collaboratively and with compassion in support of the National Mission. We will not however have our professionalism, expertise, experience, and commitment cast aside in such a careless manner.

Yours Sincerely

Adam Flanders & Jane Lancaster
Prospect Officers Education & Childrens services.