



11/10/2022

Annwyl Weinidog,

Ysgrifennwn atoch ar ran Cyd-Bwyllgor GwE, sydd yn cynnwys y chwe deilydd portffolio addysg ar draws Gogledd Cymru, i'ch hysbysu o'n pryder a'n consyrn am y pwysau cynyddol sy'n disgyn ar arweinwyr a staff ein hysgolion ac yn enwedig felly wrth i Estyn ail-gydio yn eu cylch arolygu.

Rydym yn croesawu yn fawr yr hyn gaiff ei amlygu yn y *Canllaw Gwella Ysgolion* newydd ac yn arbennig felly tōn a naws y ddogfen. Mae'r cynnwys yn gosod cyfeiriad a disgwyliadau clir i ni oll ac yn amlygu'n ddeheuig a chywrain y diwylliant a'r ymddygiad y dylid ei arddel gan bob partner a rhanddeiliad sydd yn gweithredu oddi fewn i'r gyfundrefn addysg. Mae'r canllaw yn sicr yn cynnig cam cadarnhaol ymlaen.

Rydym hefyd yn croesawu yn fawr y cyfeiriad y mae Prif Arolygydd ei Fawrhydi yn ei osod ar gyfer y corff rheoleiddio. Roedd hi'n chwa o awyr iach cael ei glywed yn rhannu ei weledigaeth hefo ni yn ein cynhadledd i arweinwyr yn Llandudno diwedd Medi.

Byrdwn ein neges yn yr ohebiaeth hon ydy tynnu eich sylw at y risg y mae cylch arolygu newydd yn ei gyflwyno i weithredu a gwreddu llawer o'r camau cadarnhaol y mae'r canllaw yn ei ofyn ohonom ac yn enwedig felly os na ellir sicrhau bod gweledigaeth a deisyfiadau y Prif Arolygydd yn cael eu rhoi ar waith ymhob arolygiad ar draws pob sector.

Dear Minister,

We are writing to you on behalf of the GwE Joint Committee, which includes the six portfolio holders for education across North Wales, to inform you of our concern about the increasing pressures on the leaders and staff of our schools and especially so as Estyn resumes its inspection cycle.

We very much welcome what is highlighted in the new School Improvement Guidance, especially the tone of the document. The content sets clear direction and expectations for us all and skilfully highlights the culture and behaviour that should be espoused by all partners and stakeholders who operate within the education system. The guidance certainly offers a positive step forward.

We also welcome greatly the direction His Majesty's Chief Inspector is setting for the regulatory body. It was a breath of fresh air to hear him share his vision with us at our conference for leaders in Llandudno at the end of September.

The thrust of our message in this correspondence is to draw your attention to the risk that a new inspection cycle presents to the implementation and realisation of many of the positive steps that the guidance requires of us and especially so if it cannot be ensured that the Chief Inspector's vision and requests are implemented in every inspection across every sector.



Dros y ddwy flynedd diwethaf, mae prosesau a gweithdrefnau gwerthuso a gwella mewn ysgolion wedi gorfod cael eu haddasu a'u cymhwys o i ymateb i'r sefyllfa oedd wirioneddol heriol yr oedd y sectorau yn eu hwynebu. Diau, ymhob ysgol, y gorfu i uwch arweinwyr saernio ffocws ac egni ar reoli risg ac ar sicrhau diogelwch a lles eu dysgwyr a'u staff.

Ystyrier yr her i arweinwyr fod yn gwerthuso ansawdd ac effaith y dysgu a'r addysgu oddi fewn i batrwm gwaith:

- pan am gyfnodau helaeth o'r flwyddyn roedd pawb adref ac yn gweld ei gilydd ar sgrin yn unig.
- ble am gyfnod roedd y plant mewn swigod ac yn methu cyd-weithio'n effeithiol yn y dosbarth mewn parau a grwpiau.
- pan fo pawb am gyfnod yn gorfod gwisgo mwsgwd neu orchudd wrth gyfathrebu.
- pan fo'r athro am ran o'r flwyddyn yn gorfod gweithredu tu ôl i sgrin blastig ym mhent blaen y dosbarth.
- pan nad oedd modd i athro gyflwyno adborth ysgrifenedig ar bob llyfr a thasg.
- pan fo angen cadw llyfrau am dros 72 awr cyn mynd ati i'w craffu.
- pan oedd hanner y plant yn bresennol yn y dosbarth ond yr hanner arall yn gorfod gweithio o adref.

Enghreifftiau yn unig o senarios ydy'r uchod, wrth gwrs, ond maent oll yn amlygu'n glir pa mor anodd oedd cynnal prosesau hunan-werthuso cadarn a phwrpasol a fyddai'n fecanwaith ar gyfer gwella. Mewn rhai ardaloedd mwy difreintiedig, roedd yr heriau i arweinwyr yn sylweddol ddwysach wrth gwrs.

Pan yn arolygu ysgolion a lleoliadau mae gweithredu Estyn yn ddarostyngedig i ofynion y Fframwaith Arolygu – a honno yn fframwaith sydd brin wedi newid o ran gofynion a disgwyliadau ers y cyfnod cyn Covid.

Over the past two years, schools' evaluation and improvement processes and procedures had to be adapted and applied to respond to the really challenging situations that the sectors were facing. Undoubtedly, in every school, senior leaders had to re-direct focus and energy on risk management and on ensuring the safety and well-being of their learners and staff.

Consider the challenge leaders face in evaluating the quality and impact of learning and teaching within a work pattern:

- *when, for large periods of the year, everyone was at home and only saw each other on screen.*
- *when, for a period, the children were in bubbles and unable to work together effectively in the classroom in pairs and groups.*
- *when everyone, for a period, had to wear a mask or face-covering when communicating.*
- *when the teacher, for part of the year, had to teach behind a plastic screen at the front of the class.*
- *when it wasn't possible for a teacher to provide written feedback on each book and task.*
- *when books needed to be kept for over 72 hours before they were scrutinised.*
- *when half the children were present in the classroom but the other half had to work from home.*

Of course, the above are only examples of scenarios, but they all clearly highlight how difficult it was to carry out robust and purposeful self-evaluation processes that would be a mechanism for improvement. In some more deprived areas, the challenges for leaders were, of course, significantly more intense.

When inspecting schools and locations, Estyn's work is subject to the requirements of the Inspection Framework - a framework that has hardly changed in terms of requirements and expectations since the pre-Covid period.



Yn y tymor byr, mi rydan ni yn pryderu am pa mor barod ydy llawer o'n hysgolion i fod yn gallu ymateb yn hyderus i'r gofynion a'r disgwyliadau sy'n cael eu hamlygu yn y fframwaith a'r risg sy'n deillio o hynny.

Prin yw'r ysgolion sydd wedi cyrraedd man lle maent yn gallu gweithredu gyda'r un hyder a'r un miniogrwydd â'r hyn welwyd cyn y pandemig. Mae ein trafodaethau gyda phenaethiaid rhanbarthol yn amlygu'n glir y sefyllfaoedd wirioneddol heriol maent yn eu hwynebu ers Medi ac ymhlið y prif gonsyrn fynegir ganddynt gellir rhestru:

- dysgwyr yn ei chael yn anodd ymgysylltu hefo'u dysgu
- ymddygiad yn fwy heriol nag y bu erioed
- presenoldeb yn anghyson
- problemau iechyd meddwl ar gynnydd ac ar daflwybr wirioneddol bryderus
- dysgwyr mwyaf bregus, ac eraill, wedi colli gafael neu lithro'n ol mewn sgiliau sylfaenol megis llafaredd a darllen
- trosiant sylweddol mewn arweinyddiaeth - a phenaethiaid ac arweinwyr newydd wedi dod i mewn i'r gyfundrefn ond hefo fawr ddim profiad o weithredu yn y rôl tu hwnt i'r gweithredu 'gweithredol' 'welwyd dros Covid.

Pan fo Estyn yn ymweld ag ysgol, oddi fewn i Faes Arolygu 1 byddant yn canolbwytio ar safonau a chynnydd mewn dysgu ac yn benodol felly yn y medrau. Ymhob ysgol bron, mae yna bryder am y cynnydd hwnnw oherwydd effaith andwyol dwy flynedd o bandemig.

Oddi fewn i Faes Arolygu 2 byddant yn edrych ar les dysgwyr a'u hagweddau at ddysgu. Rydan ni eisoes yn gwybod bod hyn yn destun pryder ar draws nifer uchel o ysgolion.

Oddi fewn i Faes Arolygu 5 byddant yn mesur pa mor effeithiol y mae arweinwyr wedi bod

In the short term, we are concerned about how prepared many of our schools are to be able respond confidently to the requirements and expectations that are highlighted in the framework and the risk that results from that.

There are few schools that have reached a point where they can operate with the same confidence and sharpness as what was seen before the pandemic. Our discussions with regional heads clearly highlight the truly challenging situations they have been facing since September and among the main concerns expressed by them are:

- *learners find it difficult to engage with their learning*
- *behaviour is more challenging than ever*
- *attendance is inconsistent*
- *mental health problems on the rise and on a truly worrying trajectory*
- *the most vulnerable learners, and others, have lost their grasp or slipped back in basic skills such as oracy and reading*
- *significant turnover in leadership - new headteachers and leaders have come into the system but have little experience of acting in the role beyond the 'operational' actions which were required of them during Covid.*

When Estyn visits a school, within Inspection Area 1 they will focus on standards and progress in learning and specifically in skills. In almost every school, there is concern about this progress due to the adverse effects of two years of pandemic.

Within Inspection Area 2 they will look at the well-being of learners and their attitudes to learning. We already know that this is a cause for concern across a large number of schools.

Within Inspection Area 5 they will measure how effectively leaders have been maintaining high



yn cynnal ansawdd uchel neu'n gwella agweddau gwan yn y ddarpariaeth. Eto, mae'n hysbys i ni oll, ymhob ysgol bron, mai llithriadau yn hytrach na chynnydd sydd i'w weld ar draws sawl agwedd.

Yn ychwanegol i hyn, nid oes unrhyw arweiniad wedi'i gyflwyno gan Estyn o ran sut bydd cyd-destun ysgol yn cael ei gymryd i ystyriaeth pan fo gweithgareddau arsylwi a chraffu yn digwydd ganddynt mewn arolygiad. Mae hwn yn fater o wir bryder i ni oll ac yn gosod yr ysgolion hynny sydd yn gweithredu oddi fewn i'r ardaloedd mwyaf difreintiedig o dan anfantais sylweddol. O leiaf gyda'r model hanesyddol o ddadansoddi data cyflawniad, roedd modd edrych ar berfformiad ysgol yng nghyd destun ysgolion tebyg. Nid felly pan fo craffu ac arsylwi yn digwydd a'r tebygorwydd ydy bod cymhwysyo cyd-destun yn disgyn ar fympwy arolygwyr unigol.

Croesewir crisialder hefyd ar y pwyt dilynol - oddi fewn i'r drefn ddiwygiedig o arolygu, os bydd ysgol wedi adnabod diffygion neu lithriadau [boed hynny mewn sgiliau neu ddiffyg cynnydd ymhlið grwpiau o ddysgwyr neu mewn agweddau at ddysgu] ac os bydd ysgol yn gallu dystio eu bod yn gweithredu cynlluniau i fynd i'r afael â'r diffygion yna ond nad ydy effaith y gweithredu hwnnw i'w weld mewn safonau hyd yma - a fydd hynny yn debygol o'u cadw allan o unrhyw weithgaredd dilynol? Ynte a fydd yffaith NAD oes effaith ac 'impact' ar safonau yn golygu'r angen i ymweliad pellach ymhen y flwyddyn? Os mai'r diwethaf sy'n wir, yna rhagwelir cynnydd sylweddol a chyflym yn y ganran o ysgolion fydd yn cael eu gosod mewn categori neu ddilyniant.

Mewn cyfnod pan fo reciwtio a dargadwad yn cyflwyno her sylweddol i ni oll, fe allai hyn arwain at nifer nid ansylweddol o arweinwyr ac athrawon yn cymryd y penderfyniad anffodus i adael y proffesiwn.

quality or improving weak aspects of the provision. Again, as is known to all of us, in almost every school, it is slippages rather than progress that can be seen across many aspects.

In addition to this, no guidance has been presented by Estyn in terms of how the context of a school will be taken into account when lesson observation and scrutiny activities are carried out by them during an inspection. This is a matter of real concern for all of us and places those schools that operate within the most deprived areas at a significant disadvantage. At least with the historical model of analysing attainment data, it was possible to look at a school's performance in the context of similar schools. Not so with scrutiny and observation and the likelihood is that the application of context would be at the whim of individual inspectors.

Clarity would also be welcomed on the following point - within the revised inspection process, if a school has identified shortcomings or slippages [whether they be in skills or a lack of progress among groups of learners or in attitudes to learning], and if a school is able to evidence that they are implementing plans to tackle those shortcomings but that the effect of that action is not reflected in standards to date - will that be likely to keep them out of any follow-up activity? Or will the fact that there is NO impact on standards mean that there is a need for a further visit within a year? If the latter is true, then a significant and rapid increase is predicted in the percentage of schools that will be placed in a category or follow-up.

At a time when recruitment and retention present a significant challenge to us all, this could lead to a not inconsiderable number of leaders and teachers taking the unfortunate decision to leave the profession.



Rydym yn llawn sylweddoli nad oes datrysiau rhwydd i lawer o'r heriau gaiff eu rhestru ond rydym yn awyddus i ymgysylltu mewn modd cadarnhaol a chynhyrchiol hefo Llywodraeth Cymru ac Estyn i adnabod ac i ddiffinio y ffordd mwyaf cadarnhaol o symud ymlaen.

Gallwn eich sicrhau, yn gwbl ddidwyll, y cewch ein cefnogaeth lawn ac edrychwn ymlaen at dderbyn eich sylwadau fel ein bod oll yn gallu cyd-weithio'n effeithiol i wireddu disgwyliadau y Canllaw Gwella Ysgolion newydd.

Yn gywir,

Cyng. Julie Fallon (Cyngor Bwrdeistrefol Sirol Conwy) a Chadeirydd Cyd-Bwyllgor GwE

Cyng. Ian Roberts (Cyngor Sir y Fflint)

Cyng. Beca Brown (Cyngor Gwynedd)

Cyng. Ieuan Williams (Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn)

Cyng. Phil Wynn (Cyngor Bwrdeistrefol Sirol Wrecsam)

Cyng. Gill German (Cyngor Sir Ddinbych)

We are fully aware that there are no easy solutions to many of the challenges listed but we are keen to engage in a positive and productive way with the Welsh Government and Estyn to identify and define the most positive way forward.

We can assure you, in all good faith, that you will have our full support and we look forward to receiving your comments so that we can all work together effectively to realise the expectations of the new School Improvement Guidance.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council) and Chair of Joint Committee

Cllr. Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council)

Cllr. Beca Brown (Gwynedd Council)

Cllr. Ieuan Williams (Anglesey County Council)

Cllr. Phil Wynn (Wrexham County Borough Council)

Cllr. Gill German (Denbighshire County Council)

Copy to:

Ownain Lloyd - Director of Education and the Welsh Language, Welsh Government

Owen Evans – His Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales

Copi i:

Ownain Lloyd - Cyfarwyddwr Addysg a'r Iaith Gymraeg, Llywodraeth Cymru

Owen Evans - Prif Arolygydd Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru



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