



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales



A report on

**Isle of Anglesey Local Authority
Learning Services
Council Offices
Glanhwfa Road
Llangefni
Anglesey
LL77 7TW**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

**Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Isle of Anglesey County Council

Isle of Anglesey County Council has a total population of approximately 70,000. The local authority maintains 45 mainstream schools. There are 40 primary schools and five secondary schools. The local authority also maintains one special school. The chief executive took office in March 2022 and the Director for Education, Skills and Young People was appointed in September 2019. The leader of the council has been in the role since 2017 and the main portfolio holder for learning services took office in May 2022. The local authority's last inspection was conducted in 2012. Isle of Anglesey County Council is one of six local authorities in the GwE regional consortium supporting its improvement to schools. In 2021-2022, the Council's net education budget is approximately £69,500,000. The delegated school budget per pupil in 2021-2022 is £5,022, which is higher than the average in Wales. Inspectors consider a wide range of information about the local population when evaluating the outcomes and quality of education services. They consider this information alongside information about the national population. Here is some of the most useful information about children and young people on the Isle of Anglesey:

- Over a three-year average, 17% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the average in Wales of 20%
- 45% of pupils aged 5 and over are fluent in the Welsh language, which is higher than the average in Wales of 16%
- 4% of pupils aged 5 and over are from ethnic minorities, which is lower than the average in Wales of 12%
- 23% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), which is higher than the average in Wales of 20%. (Please note that this data is from January 2021, before changes were made to the way in which SEN provision is allocated)
- 121 children per 10,000 were looked after by the local authority in 2021

Summary

The robust quality and effectiveness of the Learning Service leaders within Isle of Anglesey authority contribute very effectively towards ensuring high quality education services. They set high expectations, lead teams effectively and co-operate well to drive strategic priorities. They have developed the 'Team Môn' ethos and mindset where everyone's co-operation and contribution are valued, nurtured and used for the benefit of the island's children and young people.

The way in which the authority's leaders, officers and different departments consider the long term and work very closely with schools and external partners and each other is a strong feature. This contributes significantly to evident improvements in provision, for example in ensuring integrated experiences for learners at risk of disengagement; support for vulnerable learners; establishing hubs in schools and improving practitioners' understanding of the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences on pupils' achievement and well-being.

Education is a high priority for the Council. There is a clear vision in terms of improving the quality of education, and education budgets have been protected from cuts compared with other departments within the authority. Leaders and teams within the Learning Service have a sound understanding of what they need to achieve. Through open, regular and thorough self-evaluation processes, they have a good understanding of the education provision and identify sensibly the strengths and areas for improvement. However, there is room to strengthen the authority's use of this information in order to evaluate the effect of some of their activities.

Leaders, including elected members, are prepared to make difficult and timely decisions by changing and refining plans and priorities as circumstances require. For example, when making decisions about school modernisation or when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Scrutiny arrangements are in place; however, there is room to strengthen these in order to offer better identification of, and public accountability for, the effectiveness of education provision.

The beneficial co-operation that exists between the authority and the North Wales school effectiveness and improvement service (GwE) contributes well to ensuring that they have a robust understanding of schools' needs. Together, they provide good support for Anglesey schools to improve the quality of teaching and leadership.

The work to strengthen Welsh-medium provision is ongoing, with a number of elements, such as support for latecomers, representing good practice within the authority.

Recommendations

R1 Strengthen processes for evaluating the effect of the Learning Service's work

R2 Develop and strengthen formal scrutiny arrangements

What happens next

Following publication of the inspection report, the local authority should update its plans in order to address the recommendations and consider the shortcomings identified by the inspection process. The local authority should update its plans within three months of publication of the inspection report.

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare case studies linked to its coordinated work to protect and improve the well-being of learners and in terms of their work to strengthen the Welsh language. These will be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Outcomes

We cannot provide a full evaluation of outcomes. This is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension of inspections of schools and most other education providers since March 2020. It is also due to the lack of data on outcomes that can be compared over time, since the pandemic changed the way in which qualifications were awarded, and affected most of the other data we consider when making evaluations, such as school attendance, school exclusions and the destinations of post-16 learners.

Any evaluations that follow provide context by reporting on outcomes before the pandemic or relate to more recent outcomes where the evidence base is valid and reliable.

Between September 2017 and March 2020, we inspected one secondary school, where we judged that standards were good. Over the same period, we inspected 16 primary schools, in which we judged that standards were good in 12 of them, excellent in two schools and adequate in two. One of those schools was placed in the statutory follow-up category and three were placed in the follow-up category review by Estyn. These schools managed to improve, and no longer require follow-up activity. We also inspected 12 non-maintained settings, in which we judged that standards were good in most of them. Three settings required monitoring by Estyn, but following appropriate progress, they are no longer in a category.

Overall standards at the end of key stage 4 in the three years before the pandemic were variable. Outcomes for Anglesey secondary pupils in a minority of schools were in line with expectations, but were below expectations in a few of the schools.

The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals over this period was generally higher than the national average. Overall, the rate of pupils achieving 5 A/A* grades or equivalent was lower than the national average.

The judgement on well-being and attitudes to learning was good or better in most inspections and settings in Anglesey during the latest inspection cycle since September 2017. Of the 17 schools inspected between 2017 and 2020, well-being and attitudes to learning were found to be good or better in almost all. Over the same period, attendance rates in Anglesey schools were similar to the national rates.

Children and young people within the authority have benefited greatly from the provision to support and promote their well-being during the period of the pandemic. The authority's current senior leadership team was established during the early stages of the pandemic at the beginning of 2020, and the Director of Education had been in office for just a few months. The team succeeded in maintaining services throughout the lockdown periods, providing effective support to help the well-being of Anglesey's children and young people. Detailed attention was also given to maintaining the well-being of the workforce.

Through co-operation between the Learning Services, the family support service and the youth service, the authority's staff have supported and promoted the well-being of children and young people successfully through a range of valuable activities and events. Pupils have benefited from regular engagement with youth officers established in their schools. A significant number of pupils benefited from enjoyable physical activities during the summer holidays that were aimed at promoting their awareness of keeping fit and healthy eating.

There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to corporate decisions. For example, they have contributed to a 'have your say' survey, discussing their experience of living in Anglesey, and referring to aspects such as their employment hopes for the future. Representatives from among the island's pupils are taking part in research work to adapt and agree on menus for the revised catering service for schools.

Education services

Under Inspection Area 2, Estyn sets local inspection questions that are relevant to each local authority. Local inspection questions focus on education services that relate to the local authority's current strategic priorities or derive from information that Estyn has about education services in the local authority.

How well do the local authority and the regional service support schools to improve the quality of teaching and leadership?

Isle of Anglesey local authority has a close and productive working relationship with the North Wales regional schools effectiveness and improvement service (GwE). As partners, they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in school improvement processes. Over an extended period, there is a stable situation in terms of regional service staff working with the authority and its schools. This contributes to their thorough identification of schools' needs. There is a sense that everyone contributes to the work of 'Team Môn' and there is purposeful co-operation in order to ensure valuable support and appropriate challenge for schools. The local authority has worked closely with the region to provide valuable training and opportunities for school staff to develop their leadership skills. In addition, the work of supporting secondary schools and primary catchment areas to develop teaching is developing appropriately following the period of the pandemic.

During lockdown periods, co-operation between the local authority and the region contributed beneficially to providing training and resources to help schools to respond to the need to support pupils' well-being and provide virtual teaching. Improvement support advisers were in regular contact with school leaders and this strengthened the relationship between them. As schools returned to teaching pupils face-to-face, the region and the authority provided valuable support for schools to develop their provision in support of basic skills and pupils' well-being. Following the easing of pandemic restrictions, improvement support advisers use school visits beneficially to identify their support and training needs.

The region provides a comprehensive professional learning programme including support from advisers who specialise in core or key stage subjects. GwE facilitates co-operation beneficially between clusters of schools in order to develop teaching.

For example, work between primary schools to develop provision for improving pupils' oracy skills. In addition, the local authority works beneficially in partnership with GwE to offer specific services and training in response to the needs of individual schools and their priorities. For example, the early years team and the language centres team co-operate effectively with schools to support the common priority of Anglesey schools in developing the Welsh language and supporting newcomers to the language. Staff from these teams visit schools to train teachers and teaching assistants and model the use of immersion strategies in teaching. The authority recognises the need to evaluate more incisively the quality and effect of professional learning provision on pupils' outcomes.

The region and authority provide valuable opportunities for teachers and leaders to co-operate in networks including primary catchment areas and an alliance of secondary schools. This supports schools beneficially to respond to national priorities such as the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the Curriculum for Wales. The region and the local authority encourage schools to be learning organisations that take responsibility for their own improvement by researching and co-operating on common priorities. They facilitate valuable opportunities for schools to take increasing ownership and accountability for each other's improvement journey. For example, the secondary alliance has recently been co-operating to develop aspects of inclusion and attitudes to learning in response to a common priority following the pandemic. In facilitating this work, the supporting improvement advisers and school leaders model good practice and are beginning to validate schools' processes and findings. This supports schools to plan for improvement, but it is too early to measure the effect of this initiative on pupils' well-being and progress.

GwE offers a comprehensive range of development programmes for leaders including National Leadership Programme courses. The local authority and Anglesey schools place a clear priority on ensuring that staff attend these programmes to develop their leadership skills in order to ensure succession. The authority's CAMU group, a strategic group of secondary school leaders, which has been established for a number of years, has a positive effect on the quality of leadership. For example, individuals are given valuable opportunities to shadow experienced leaders and to lead specific networks or areas. The authority offers an appropriate programme of training for governors in order to support them in their role as a critical friend.

The authority's Education Quality Standards Board holds the region to account for its work in an appropriate manner. Multi-agency groups of senior officers, lead officers from relevant services and GwE staff meet regularly to share information and evidence about Anglesey's schools. This useful process allows the authority to identify schools that may cause concern and those with good practice that is worth sharing further. Thresholds and triggers are used to harmonise the procedure for identifying concerns in relation to standards, learning and teaching, assessment, leadership, inclusion, and management issues.

How effective is the local authority's provision for supporting vulnerable learners at risk of becoming disengaged?

Strong co-operation between different departments and agencies in seeking to provide a single integrated experience of support for learners at risk of becoming

disengaged, and their families, is a strong feature of the authority's work. The Learning Service co-operates productively with partners including social services and youth services to respond to the needs of vulnerable learners but also in order to work proactively to prevent problems.

The principle of preventative work is at the core of the authority's work. A clear aspect of this principle is the work to raise awareness of the impact of trauma on children and young people. All Learning Services' staff, staff in all schools on the island, and staff in other departments, such as children's services, have had access to purposeful training so that they understand what trauma is and its effect on children and young people. Another aspect of this preventative work is the 'Early Help Hub' which includes approximately 20 different agencies. They work together and plan together to support vulnerable learners and their families and to put strategies in place to tackle problems at an early stage.

There is a wide range of strategies, provision and panels to support vulnerable learners. These include welfare officers, a behaviour support service, provision to promote the emotional well-being of learners and the 'Stepping Up' course which helps vulnerable learners to progress between different stages in their educational life and into employment. It also currently includes the 'TRAC' programme, which supports pupils that are at risk of disengagement, but this programme is about to end, leaving a gap in provision. The authority has recognised the need for a clearer, more cohesive strategy for the work of supporting vulnerable learners, and this is part of the job description for a new manager who will have responsibility for youth services, children in care, and the well-being of children and young people.

The work of the youth service is a notable aspect of the support for vulnerable learners. There is a youth officer in every secondary school on the island. They offer a drop-in service for learners, support the school's personal and social education provision, and run youth clubs and evening activities in the community. A lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) group has been established by youth officers in each secondary school. The service also offers opportunities for learners at risk of disengagement to gain qualifications and experiences, such as employment preparation courses and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The authority's officers collect a range of useful data about vulnerable learners. This includes attendance data, de-registrations and exclusions. They also collect information about pupils with individual development plans and track their progress appropriately against their targets. The authority has also formalised the process of identifying vulnerable learners at risk of disengagement by ensuring that their provision goes through the same process as the one for learners with additional learning needs. The current system for collecting and monitoring all this useful information is not sufficiently cohesive.

Learning Service officers have responded robustly and promptly to concerns about the number of exclusions over time and the number of pupils who do not continue in education in their schools until the end of key stage 4. They re-examined their arrangements for these vulnerable learners and worked with secondary schools and the children's service to put new arrangements in place. They are in the process of establishing a hub in every secondary school, which will enable learners to receive purposeful provision in the hub and provision within the mainstream, where

appropriate. In order to provide more complete support for these learners and their families, the hubs are staffed by teachers and staff from the children and families service who can work during evenings and at weekends. Since these hubs are a recent development, it is too early to evaluate their effect.

Leaders conduct continuous scrutiny on arrangements for pupils who receive their education outside the county. They work practically to ensure suitable provision within the local area, by opening children's homes. Where appropriate, they train the workforce within local schools to be able to re-admit pupils to continue their education within their communities.

How effective is the local authority's provision for promoting the well-being of all children and young people?

Senior leaders in the Learning Service place great emphasis on promoting the well-being of the island's children and young people. They co-operate closely and successfully with different departments within the authority. This facilitates the work of ensuring manageable and effective provision. A notable example of this is the co-operation between the senior well-being officer of the Learning Service and the head of the children and family services department, who also has responsibility for leading the social services department within the authority. The arrangements ensure that services within their departments operate smoothly and without any boundaries.

Leaders consult regularly with schools and settings in order to be able to adapt provision as necessary. For example, as a result of identifying the need to support elements of personal and social education more effectively, the healthy schools service organised training for youth workers so that they can offer elements of sex and relationships education in schools.

In co-operation with the children and families service, officers operate an 'Early Intervention Hub'. The Hub allows different agencies to work together to discuss and offer different options for supporting pupils. For example, they work together closely to develop and implement a cross-county strategy for responding actively to concerns about domestic violence.

The early years advisory team delivers a wide range of training that facilitates preparations in non-maintained settings for delivering the curriculum. They have delivered training focused on child development, and how to adapt planning methods so that they respond better to the interests and needs of the youngest children. A useful website has been set up to share information and provide guidance to practitioners on aspects of child development, including well-being.

The work of the Family Support Team contributes to the successful promotion of child development and well-being. An example of the effect of their work is the 'Taith i Saith' scheme which outlines the authority's plans for promoting the development and well-being of the youngest children. The authority offers a rich range of activities to promote health and well-being, including during school holidays. For example, they provide 'food and fun' activities to promote awareness among children and their families of the importance of taking part in physical activities and emphasising the importance of healthy eating. The authority recognises the important role of the youth service in maintaining the well-being of children and young people. During pandemic

lockdown periods, they used their close and supportive relationship with pupils and their families to give them additional beneficial support.

Leaders have established an extremely robust vision for developing the awareness of practitioners at all levels of the importance of being trauma-informed, and the impact of trauma on children and young people. Officers have worked very diligently to coordinate training at several levels for teachers and assistants in schools and settings. This succeeds in equipping them to be aware of the impact of adverse experiences on the development, self-image and confidence of individuals. There is effective interweaving with the work of educational psychologists within the authority's additional learning needs and inclusion service, since professional development of the workforce has built the capacity for schools to respond effectively to pupils' needs.

How effective is the local authority's approach towards modernising schools, including strengthening Welsh-medium provision?

There is a clear vision on the reorganisation and modernisation of schools, based on ensuring that schools are suitable for the 21st century and making the best use of modern technology. Prominent attention is given to developing provision for Welsh-medium and bilingual education within the modernisation strategy. Some elements of the vision are in place and having a positive effect, for example the expansion of provision of language centres and reducing surplus places in schools. Some aspects of the vision, for example the modernisation of post-16 education on the island, are in their early days.

Leaders and officers across the authority are working together successfully to implement the objectives of the education modernisation strategy. Leaders and officers now use a good range of sources of information, for example about the condition and size of buildings, the linguistic nature of different areas, and the services available to or needed by specific communities. They engage effectively with stakeholders including teachers, governors and parents to ascertain their views on school modernisation plans. This ensures that their voices are considered and offers beneficial opportunities for the authority to adapt its proposals as necessary. A positive feature of these engagement arrangements is the co-operation between the authority and specific groups such as the Anglesey Language Forum, Mudiad Meithrin and Flying Start, to ensure that provision matches the area's requirements. This work helps the authority to fulfil its aspiration of ensuring that schools are an integral part of their communities and help to meet local needs.

The authority has invested in a range of capital projects during the first stages of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme. They are making good progress in ensuring suitable schools of the appropriate type in the appropriate locations to meet learners' needs. They have built three new schools, updated and extended two schools, and closed 11 schools. Although this has reduced the number of surplus places in schools across the county, the percentage remains relatively high in the secondary sector. The authority has appropriate plans to address this in the near future, although the timetable for the introduction of this programme has been delayed somewhat due to the pandemic.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-32 interweaves appropriately with the vision, aims and objectives of the modernisation programme. There has been joint preparation for the plan with partners, local authority departments, schools and settings and also partners on a wider scale such as the regional consortium and Bangor University. There is a strong emphasis on offering beneficial opportunities for the children and young people of Anglesey to achieve the highest standards in order to maintain the Welsh language, culture and the economy in the area. The WESP includes an ambitious aspiration in terms of ensuring that all pupils are bilingual by the age of 16. The WESP builds successfully on existing good practice, such as the useful support available to latecomers through Welsh language immersion centres. Although this support is not directly available to secondary school pupils at present, leaders have recently made use of additional funding to support participating pupils in Years 7 and 8. The language centres also offer beneficial opportunities for teachers and practitioners to develop their linguistic skills and awareness of language immersion methods in their schools and settings. The use of digital technology together with close co-operation within and beyond the county is a notable element of the authority's work in terms of developing the Welsh language and bilingualism. For example, leaders co-operate successfully with the regional consortium and Bangor University to create digital resources and to support the development of pupils' oracy skills through an innovative project.

Leadership and management

The authority's Learning Service has taken great steps in the last three years under the leadership of a very effective director and management team. They have developed the ethos and mindset of 'Team Môn' where everyone's co-operation and contribution are valued, nurtured and implemented for the benefit of the island's children and young people. The director provides the Service with energetic and purposeful leadership and vision.

The Council leader is passionate about improving the quality of education and life for the island's residents and has a clear vision for doing so. She is prepared to take responsibility for difficult decisions and has a firm grasp of the Council's work across services.

The Chief Executive, although new to the role, was instrumental in guiding the vision in his previous role, and provides stability, continuity and a strong understanding of the challenges facing the island. The aim of developing a 'learning island with learning communities' is clear in the relevant strategic plans. That vision has been developed through informal and formal engagement at different levels across the Council and with partners. The quality of the Council's governance has developed effectively in recent times and relationships and the culture are now much more positive and mature.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, education leaders were energetic and effective in supporting schools. The local authority's supportive work during the pandemic has strengthened relationships with its learning communities and this has been beneficial in terms of building trust and confidence among stakeholders. Better engagement with partners has opened up opportunities to discuss and gather opinions on sensitive issues, for example on the reorganisation of schools in the Llangefni area, with discussions leading to a different proposal from the one put forward initially. The

authority's officers have a strong belief in developing relationships and building bridges where there is dispute.

The Learning Service co-operates effectively with a number of partners, for example GwE (the North Wales school effectiveness and improvement service). The relationship is robust and benefits from established staff who know the authority's schools well.

At their best, the Council's formal scrutiny processes are appropriate, and elected members are seen to own the reports and respond confidently to questioning. The Schools Progress Review Panel provides an informal scrutiny procedure in which representatives from specific schools are invited to present information, which often leads to purposeful inquiry in order to identify strengths and areas for development. School leaders are invited back if necessary, and purposeful visits are made to schools in order to reinforce the panel's understanding. There is good quality support for the panel, which focuses on developing the understanding of elected members, and members have opportunities to contribute to evaluation sessions on the panel's work and identifying further areas for focus. Since the pandemic, they have examined areas such as well-being, the Welsh language and distance learning. There is an opportunity to raise key issues with officers and service providers and to approve key issues to be presented in member briefing sessions.

Reports on the work of the Schools Progress Review Panel are presented to the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. However, there are currently few opportunities for specific, formal and public scrutiny of the effectiveness of the work of education provision. In line with the desire for continuous improvement, the Council has recognised the need to strengthen and improve the scrutiny process with the intention of focusing on standards, quality of provision and leadership in education.

There is a strong corporate commitment to open, regular and thorough self-evaluation to support planning for improvement. This includes a decisive focus on evaluating the strategic priorities of the Learning Service. Leaders have a good understanding of education provision and recognise strengths and areas for improvement. The Learning Service's own evaluation of progress against its priorities is in line with most of the findings of this inspection, and plans and projects are ready to begin on many aspects where improvement is needed.

Overall, the authority engages well with stakeholders in steering, evaluating and planning education services. They have strengthened methods whereby stakeholders, especially those with links to schools such as governors and headteachers, can contribute their opinions. One of the authority's strengths is the way in which headteachers are included in various forums in order to ascertain their opinions, and to influence, shape and plan new provision, for example creating focused microsites for sharing information more efficiently following the pandemic. Although the learning service prioritised the strengthening of communication methods with stakeholders within their improvement plans last year, some parents have identified a lack of opportunities to convey their views in order to influence certain elements of provision.

Since the previous inspection by Estyn in 2012, there has been definite progress in the way in which the authority plans strategically for improvement. There is a strong culture of planning services which correspond well to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. By thinking about the long term and working effectively with people and partners, the authority continues to strengthen the way it works as an organisation on a day-to-day basis. Leaders tailor provision sensibly, such as officers' duties and new appointments, and as the authority's different departments work much more smoothly and efficiently together. This contributes well towards, for example, the authority's ability to work co-operatively to maintain and improve the well-being of the island's residents, including children and young people.

Following local elections a few weeks before the inspection, the Council's leader and senior officers are embarking on drawing up new objectives for the Council for the period from 2022 to 2027. The previous Council had a good reputation for putting sensible objectives in place and implementing them between 2017 and 2022. This includes decisive action by leaders in tailoring corporate plans to deliver a rapid response to the challenges of the pandemic. A transitional plan was put in place with a clear focus, for example, on maintaining well-being and ensuring that nearly all pupils completed their secondary school education up to the end of Year 11.

On the whole, there is clear consistency and coherence between the Council's 2017-2022 plan and the Learning Service's plans. Although tackling deprivation and poverty is a clear priority for the Council and the Learning Service, plans by the authority, such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy, do not highlight clearly enough the Learning Service's contribution to this work in order to evaluate the impact of provision.

Leaders and teams within the Learning Service have a sound understanding of what they need to achieve. The service improvement plan identifies relevant key priorities, including delivering strong support to sustain the emotional and mental well-being of children and young people. In addition, the archive service and Oriel Môn have specific objectives for action to support learning and the new curriculum in schools. Each priority has relevant progress indicators and clear steps for improvement, although there is room for some of these to be more measurable.

Performance management arrangements are robust. There is a range of processes in place throughout the year which ensure that education services are, for the most part, monitored carefully. The authority is aware of the need to tailor a number of performance indicators that were delayed due to the pandemic or where national data is no longer reported. The authority manages risks that affect education services well and escalates them to the corporate risk register if necessary.

The authority gives purposeful attention to promoting professional learning for its staff through a corporate training and development plan. Staff receive beneficial opportunities to discuss their personal professional learning needs at regular meetings with line managers and performance management reviews. This leads to professional learning opportunities such as attending courses, regional and national networks, and undertaking accredited courses. The authority gives careful consideration to succession within the service. Staff have beneficial mentoring and shadowing opportunities that are aimed at co-operation and developing their expertise. In addition, staff receive valuable opportunities to attend leadership

courses and to take responsibility for leading cross-departmental projects in order to develop their leadership skills and experience. Although there is a wide-ranging professional learning offer, leaders do not always consider the effect of professional learning on improving the quality of Learning Service provision.

The Learning Service conveys a strong culture of safeguarding and sets firm and high expectations across the workforce. At a strategic and operational level, the service has built productive and effective working relationships with all the services working with children and families across the Council. In addition, through sensible restructuring, the Learning Service's contribution to safeguarding the island's children and young people has strengthened over time.

The corporate safeguarding policy gives clear guidance to schools and settings on the implementation of their duties to protect pupils' well-being. A senior education officer operates as a designated safeguarding officer and the effect of her strategic and operational work on a wide range of the authority's procedures is notable. The officer chairs the Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Board. This means that education has a prominent voice in the Council's decisions regarding its strategy on protecting children and young people.

Safe employment arrangements are robust and clear, and Learning Service officers carry out an annual audit of staff appointment arrangements to ensure that safe recruitment procedures are followed. In addition, there are robust arrangements for monitoring school safeguarding processes through the scrutiny of annual safeguarding reports to governing bodies. These arrangements ensure that the authority has up-to-date information about safeguarding processes in schools and can submit detailed reports on these to the Corporate Safeguarding Panel.

Coherent leadership has resulted in a strong link between corporate priorities on well-being and the practical and preventative work undertaken in non-maintained settings and schools across the authority. For example, the corporate strategy of providing training to improve practitioners' understanding of the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences on pupils' achievement and well-being has a positive effect on the quality of provision. The Learning Service has invested significantly in strengthening safeguarding provision in all schools and settings by creating 'Safeguarding Champions' in each catchment area. Over the past three years, the work of the Safeguarding Champions has had a positive effect on the quality of child protection and safeguarding work. For example, the Champions group discusses and co-ordinates beneficial preventative work and considers and responds to relevant research when planning their well-being curriculum.

The Learning Service plays a leading role in local and national preventative work. For example, a few primary and secondary schools in Anglesey were part of a national pilot scheme to develop resources on the theme of hate crimes. In addition, the authority is part of a national task and finish group working on updating the relationships and sexuality policy to match new requirements within the Curriculum for Wales. Recently, the service contributed to important work on reviewing the Home Office's Prevent training resource.

The authority has a good understanding of its financial position within the Learning Service. Since 2018-19, the authority has increased its education budget from a low

starting point to a level that is closer to expectations. Its net education budget per pupil is in the highest quartile of Welsh authorities. The authority has funded school staff salary settlements in full, and education budgets have been protected from cuts compared to other departments within the authority. Following an overspend situation in 2018-19, learning services have been provided within budget over the past three years.

The authority is aware of current financial risks and those on the horizon. They recognise that it will be necessary to respond to increasing challenges, including potential increases in costs relating to staff, heating and electricity, transport, and repair and renewal. While there have been small changes to the school funding formula, it has not been fully revised since 2007, and there is an opportunity for the authority to assure itself that the formula remains appropriate, given the changes in the provision of education services.

School balances, as in other authorities, have increased significantly from £198k in 2019-20 to £7.9 million at the end of 2021-22. In 2019-20, 10 of the authority's 46 schools had a financial deficit, however, by 2020-21 many of these had a surplus. Plans are underway to address the three schools in deficit in 2021-22. The authority has received plans from schools indicating how they will use the additional balances and it is recognised that some plans need to be strengthened.

The authority and the schools budget forum engage effectively, openly and constructively with key issues affecting school funding and services provided by the authority to schools. School leaders appreciate the support they receive from the authority's finance and human resources team.

Almost all schools make use of a range of service level agreements that are available. The arrangements for placing and managing education contracts have been strengthened over the past three years, and it is intended to review them regularly, and also to seek opportunities to support schools with new purchasing. The authority is developing evaluation processes both for services commissioned externally and those provided internally, in order to provide assurance about their effectiveness.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- consulted the local authority on the local inspection questions to be used during the inspection, based on the authority's self-evaluation, strategic plans and relevant data held by Estyn
- analysed the outcomes from open questionnaires, including the views of learners, parents, school staff and governors, local authority staff, regional consortium staff, elected members and general public
- carried out a preliminary visit to the local authority to meet with a range of relevant partners to education services, such as learner representatives, headteachers and governors, and leaders from statutory and third sector agencies working with children and young people

During the inspection, inspectors:

- met with the leader of the council, elected members responsible for education services, elected members responsible for the scrutiny of education services, the chief executive, the director of education, other leaders and managers in education services, other relevant staff in the local authority, the managing director of the regional consortium for school improvement and other relevant staff from the regional consortium
- looked closely at the local authority's self-evaluation processes
- considered the local authority's strategic and operational plans for improvement
- scrutinised a variety of documents, including information on learner outcomes, information on the performance of schools and other education settings, including information from the regional consortium for school improvement, minutes from a range of meetings, reports presented to council or scrutiny, information relating to the safeguarding of learners and other information relevant to the local authority's education services held by Estyn

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- reviewed the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, standardise and ensure the quality of the inspection
- provided a draft copy of the report for the local authority to note any concerns with factual accuracy, and made amendments where necessary

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the local authority and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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